

Dear colleagues,

Please find below the mainstream news on Haiti for January 4-15, 2007.

Two successive AP/Washington Post stories highlighted the problems facing Haitian authorities trying to control drug smuggling through Haiti. President Preval criticized the US (the world's largest consumer of illegal drugs) for failing to stem demand which leads to the transshipment of drugs through Haiti and causes instability in the country. In the second article, Senator Bill Nelson (D-FL) addresses the differences in modes of transportation employed by smugglers, increasingly using planes as US boat interdictions increased since 1998. Small planes reportedly carry cocaine from Colombia, flown out of Venezuela, transit through Haiti and the DR on their way to the US. The US claims it has contributed "more than \$40 million to Haiti's national police since 2004" though the force and the judiciary unable to quell the drug trade much less the overall insecurity issues. Neither article discusses how the US contribution to political instability in Haiti, especially the 2004 coup d'etat, provided shelter to traffickers in Haiti.

A Boston Globe article features various Haitian opinions on how best to spur tourism in Haiti. The annual Jacmel film festival cofounder Patrick Boucard opines on innovative ways to entice travelers to the festival without having to pass through violent Port au Prince. Boucard suggests mini cruises from Santo Domingo could encourage visitors to Haiti's cultural or artisan tourism. Countering Boucard's vision is Haitian businessman, Philippe Armand "pushing for enclosed, all-inclusive resorts and cruise ships to come to Jacmel, among other ports." Other innovative ideas involving greater exposure of tourists to Haiti's rich culture and history are offered by leaders of Milot, cite of the Citadel fort, who want Royal Caribbean to pave the 16 mile road to Milot. Haitian hip-hop star Wyclef Jean was recently appointed roving ambassador for Haiti. The Guardian describes his new role as "an attempt to bring investors and tourists back to a country ravaged by internal violence and civil disturbance."

Two high powered M-50 assault rifles taken by Cite Soleil residents following an attack and abandonment of a UN armored vehicle on December 21st, were peacefully returned to the UN by the residents. This offering was made in spite of the murderous attack by UN soldiers on Cite Soleil residents on December 22nd. Members of the Cite Soleil Development Committee claimed that they had always intended to return the weapons.

Another Brazilian, Major General Carlos Alberto Dos Santos, was named U.N. commander of international forces in Haiti. "He said he would not change any tactics implemented" by his predecessor, also a Brazilian.

A suspected killer and "alleged gang member" was arrested for the killing of two Jordanian peacekeepers in November when their jeep came under heavy gunfire as they returned to their base. The article mentions 14 UN peacekeeper deaths but fails to mention the much larger number of citizens who have died in the same period from MINUSTAH shootings.

Reed Lindsay's January 8th Newsday story about UN soldiers' sexual abuse and exploitation in Haiti expands on his December 18th report in the Washington Times. Lindsay's reports spotlight the rape of 'Natasha' by UN soldiers in Leogane and the inadequate UN investigation of the incident. Lindsay's report highlights how the UN, despite claiming to have a 'zero tolerance' policy for sexual abuse and exploitation, has done little to inform the Haitian public of their rights and was slow in establishing a Port-au-Prince office to hear sexual abuse complaints (Leogane still does not have one). Former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan last month admitted the UN maintains "an overall climate that makes it difficult to report and expose abuses."

A Reuters report claims that as "police step up arrests of alleged gangsters blamed for a wave of violence and kidnappings" the prisons are growing increasingly crowded. The national penitentiary in Port-au-Prince was originally "built to hold 800 prisoners and now houses over 2,000." The problem is apparently the same all over the country indicating not only a problem with prison space as much as with the judicial system to effectively do its job. An additional burden on the penal system is the increasing number of Haitian deportees returning to Haiti at a rate of 100 per month (up from 25 per month). Detainees apparently take turns sleeping on the floor, "live in inhumane conditions and are deprived of adequate medical care said Renan Hedouville, head of the Haitian Lawyers Committee for Human Rights."

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1. U.S. Defends Anti-Drug Efforts in Haiti

By STEVENSON JACOBS

The Associated Press

The Washington Post

Wednesday, January 10, 2007

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/01/10/AR2007011001812.html>

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti -- The U.S. defended on Wednesday its anti-drug efforts in Haiti, two days after the Caribbean nation's president accused America and other major drug-consuming countries of failing to adequately fight the narcotics trade.

In a strongly worded speech to Parliament on Monday, President Rene Preval called drug trafficking the main cause of instability in his impoverished nation and said failed efforts by the United States and other countries to stop the trade had made Haiti a "victim."

U.S. Embassy spokeswoman Shaila B. Manyam said Wednesday the United States has undertaken a range of measures to defend Haiti against drug trafficking, including strengthening its weak justice system and training its coast guard.

The U.S. has also contributed more than \$40 million to Haiti's national police since 2004, Manyam said.

"The United States shares Haiti's concern about drug trafficking," Manyam said. "Our two countries have a long history of cooperation on combatting this scourge and that cooperation will continue."

Drug traffickers have long taken advantage of Haiti's weak defenses and vulnerable coastline to smuggle in cocaine bound for the United States, Canada and Europe.

Manyam said Preval's comments "indicate the government of Haiti shares our strong commitment to deal with the threats to stability and security posed by drug trafficking."

Preval's cash-strapped government has struggled to contain gang violence sparked by a bloody 2004 revolt that ousted former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, Haiti's first democratically elected leader.

Ransom-seeking gangs have kidnapped dozens of people in recent weeks, prompting criticism that police and an 8,800-strong U.N. peacekeeping force are not doing enough to fight crime.

U.N. troops and police have stepped up patrols in recent days and arrested two suspected kidnappers.

2. Sen.: Drugs Smuggled to Haiti by Plane

By STEVENSON JACOBS

The Associated Press

Washington Post

Saturday, January 13, 2007

<http://www.iht.com/articles/ap/2007/01/14/news/CB-GEN-Haiti-US-Drug-Trafficking.php>

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti -- Drug traffickers are increasingly favoring planes over boats to smuggle U.S.-bound cocaine from South America into Haiti and the Dominican Republic, U.S. Sen. Bill Nelson said Saturday.

The Florida Democrat attributed the drop in sea smuggling to a 1998 agreement allowing U.S. drug agents to patrol Haitian waters for drug traffickers.

"It has been successful and the amount of drugs coming in by sea has been reduced," Nelson told reporters at the end of a two-day visit. "But the amount of drugs coming in by airplane has considerably increased."

Most of the small planes originate from southern and northwestern Venezuela, Nelson said. Venezuela is a major transit point for drugs _ primarily cocaine _ being smuggled out of Colombia for the United States and Europe.

In a speech this past week, Haitian President Rene Preval said U.S. anti-drug aid has not significantly stopped the flow of illegal drugs into his impoverished Caribbean country.

Nelson, who sits on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, said Washington's agreement with Haiti only allows U.S. authorities to stop drug traffickers at sea _ not by air _ "because obviously we cannot interdict the plane unless we shoot it down."

The senator said he agreed with Preval's call for more help fighting drug traffickers but stressed that Haiti's national police is the main defense against cocaine-smuggling flights.

"The main way of solving the drug problem coming by air into Haiti is to get the Haitian national police to where they can arrest them when they land," Nelson said.

Haiti's police is among the region's most corrupt, with only a few thousand officers to patrol the nation of 8 million.

3. In violence-racked Haiti, a push to spur tourism

Goal is to build resorts, attract cruise ships

By Amy Bracken,

The Boston Globe

January 8, 2007

http://www.boston.com/news/world/latinamerica/articles/2007/01/08/in_violence_racked_haiti_a_push_to_spur_tourism/?page=2

JACMEL, Haiti -- On a sunny day in November, Haitian-American hip-hop star Wyclef Jean visited this mountain-fringed seaside town for the first time. Descending from a plane at the tiny airport, he said in Creole to a crowd of Haitian journalists that he could already see the country was more beautiful than Jamaica.

The comparison with Jamaica is a common one here, as people bemoan the fact that visitors flock to their Caribbean neighbor while tourism is virtually dead in Haiti because of years of unrest.

Jean had long planned to give a large, free "concert for peace" in Port-au-Prince, but the level of violence in the capital made such an event impossible. He switched venues to Jacmel's town beach, where tens of thousands of fans gathered to hear him play in December without incident.

The words "tourism" and "Haiti" once fit harmoniously together. But after the overthrow of the Duvalier dictatorship in the 1980s, the country's economy fell apart and instability reigned. In Port-au-Prince today, kidnappers and gangs humiliate Haiti's weak police force and the UN peacekeepers who support them.

The United States advises its citizens against visiting the country. And with few exceptions, travel guides to the Caribbean ignore the western half of Hispaniola, while giving extensive coverage of the resort-filled eastern side, the Dominican Republic.

But Jacmel is a different place from Port-au-Prince. Patrick Boucard, cofounder of Jacmel's annual film festival, is spearheading a music festival set for May. The music festival is part of an ongoing effort to make the outside world understand that his town is far removed from the Haiti that makes headlines overseas.

Most of Haiti "is not Port-au-Prince," Boucard said. "We should not be penalized by what happens [within] a tenth of the country."

Today, well-to-do Port-au-Prince residents visit Jacmel on weekends. They can stroll through the town, visit galleries, listen to live music, and eat grilled lobster and conch at nearby beaches. But few foreigners venture to Jacmel.

Boucard is looking for ways for tourists to visit Haiti without having to set foot in the capital. There are 15-minute flights from Port-au-Prince to Jacmel, but some visitors fear traveling on the half-mile strip of road that runs from the capital's international airport to its domestic airport -- never mind make the three-hour drive from Port-au-Prince to Jacmel, 25 miles to the south.

So Boucard is trying to get "boutique cruises," small sailing ships, to take 60 to 100 passengers from Santo Domingo, the Dominican capital, to Jacmel for the music festival.

Boucard and other advocates of "integrated," or cultural, tourism don't want Haiti to become just another Caribbean get away. When Boucard envisions tourism in Haiti, piña coladas on the white sands don't feature in.

"I would like us to grow gradually with ecotourism, artisan tourism, [with a] better quality of tourists, who can appreciate our culture and arts and crafts," he said.

But to others, especially self-described realists, the poorest and least-developed country in the Americas can hardly be picky about who lands on its shores and spends money.

"If you think you're just going to do without the international corporations, you're fooling yourself," said Philippe Armand, a Haitian businessman and vice president of the Regional American Chambers of Commerce.

Armand is pushing for enclosed, all-inclusive resorts and cruise ships to come to Jacmel, among other ports. "We have to create secured environments," he said, similar to those in the Dominican Republic and Jamaica.

Already, a Royal Caribbean cruise ship anchors off the north of Haiti two to three times a week, and thousands of tourists spend the day on jet skis, water slides, and lounge chairs at the enclosed beach of Labadee.

As recently as a year ago, passengers were told that they were debarking not in Haiti but onto a private island off the coast of Hispaniola. Since then, a sign has been built welcoming visitors to Haiti, and some are aware that they are on the mainland, but they are penned in by razor wire, with no option of leaving the grounds.

Royal Caribbean pays \$6 per passenger per day in taxes, which amounts to about \$3 million per year. And hundreds of Haitians are employed at the beach. But locals say the benefits are minuscule compared with what they would be if passengers were able to enter "the real Haiti."

Officials in Milot, a small town about 16 miles and more than an hour's drive from Labadee, want Royal Caribbean to help pave the rough dirt road that connects them and let the ship's passengers make the journey.

Milot was once a significant tourist destination. It is home to the Citadel, a massive 19th-century mountain-top fort built under "King" Henri Christophe to defend Haiti against France, its former colonizer and enslaver. The monument was declared a world heritage site by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization and stands as a symbol of liberty and empowerment in the world's first black republic.

Milot's mayor-elect, Telfort Paul, said he has no problem with enclosure tourism, but he also believes there is a market for tourists who want exposure to Haiti's history, culture, art, and food. He calls it "djon-djon tourism," named after a black mushroom that Haitians use to flavor rice.

In October, a delegation of more than 50 mostly African-American affiliates of the US-based Haiti Support Project toured Haiti, including Milot and the Citadel. Led by the project's head, Ron Daniels, and Representative Sheila Jackson-Lee, a Texas Democrat, the group met with politicians, attended a Haitian vodou ceremony, and took an eight-hour bus ride across the country.

Upon his return, Daniels declared: "The participants on this extraordinary pilgrimage are returning to the United States with a commitment to be ambassadors of hope for Haiti.

Their charge is to spread the word, that every person of African descent should visit the Citadel at least once in a lifetime."

4. Wyclef Jean becomes Haiti ambassador

Duncan Campbell

Friday January 5, 2007

The Guardian

The Haitian musician Wyclef Jean has been appointed as a roving ambassador for the country in an attempt to improve its image abroad. The appointment comes amid reports of violence and protests against the role of UN forces in Haiti.

President René Préval, who won office last year after many postponed elections, has given Jean the new role in an attempt to bring investors and tourists back to a country ravaged by internal violence and civil disturbance.

"We wish we could have several Wyclefs as roving ambassadors because the country could have gained so much," foreign affairs minister Rénald Clérisme told Reuters. He added that Jean was seen as an inspiration for young Haitians.

Jean was born in Croix-des-Bouquets in Haiti but moved with his family to Brooklyn, New York, at the age of nine. He and friends formed a group, the Fugees, whose second album, *The Score*, sold more than 17m copies and turned Jean into a major international star. He has always maintained links with Haiti, starting an aid foundation, *Yele Haiti*, and often wearing the country's flag. He has campaigned successfully for the US Congress to pass a trade bill aimed at helping the textile industry in Haiti, the poorest country in the hemisphere. He has even been talked of as a potential president.

Last month supporters of former president Jean-Bertrand Aristide, who remains in exile in South Africa, marched through Port-au-Prince, the Haitian capital, in his support and in protest against the UN peacekeeping forces who have been accused of firing indiscriminately in disturbances.

5. In Haiti, UN recovers 2 high-powered weapons taken during attack

The Associated Press

International Herald Tribune

January 12, 2007

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti: Residents of a gang-controlled slum surrendered two high-powered rifles Friday, three weeks after the weapons were removed from a U.N. armored personnel carrier that came under attack.

U.N. peacekeepers were driving through the seaside Cite Soleil slum on Dec. 21 when their vehicle broke down. The troops tried to fix it but came under heavy fire from unknown assailants and fled in another armored vehicle.

U.N. troops and Haitian police raided the slum the next day in a previously planned operation and killed at least six people. They found the abandoned armored vehicle burned and stripped of its M-50 assault rifle and another large caliber firearm.

In a brief hand-over Friday, the 4-foot-long (1.2-meter-long) weapons were loaded onto a pickup truck and taken to a U.N. base under escort by Filipino peacekeepers as AP journalists and dozens of onlookers watched.

"We're turning over the guns, so now we want peace," said Frantz Mar Guerrier of the Cite Soleil Development Committee, which said it organized the weapons hand over. "We always intended to return them, as that was the will of the community."

A U.N. spokeswoman declined to comment Friday evening, saying she had not independently confirmed the hand over.

Guerrier said the weapons were taken "out of frustration over the killings of our people by Minustah," using the acronym for the U.N. peacekeeping mission in Haiti.

The United Nations said the six people killed in the Dec. 22 raid were later identified as gang members wanted for a string of recent kidnappings. However, Cite Soleil residents said 10 people were killed and that all were civilians.

U.N. peacekeepers had no casualties.

The U.N. weapons can only be fired when connected to the armored vehicle. Their loss was an embarrassment for the 8,800-strong U.N. force, which has struggled to rout armed gangs that flourished in the aftermath of a February 2004 revolt that toppled former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide.

U.N. troops and gangs wage frequent gunbattles in Cite Soleil, a bullet-scarred slum of 200,000 people who live mostly in squalid, dirt-floor hovels or scrap-metal shacks

6. Brazilian Takes Command of Haiti Troops

The Guardian Unlimited, UK

Friday January 12, 2007

<http://www.iht.com/articles/ap/2007/01/12/news/CB-GEN-Haiti-UN-Commander.php>

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (AP) - A Brazilian general took command of U.N. peacekeepers in Haiti on Thursday and said he plans no change in the strategy to stabilize the troubled Caribbean nation.

Maj. Gen. Carlos Alberto Dos Santos became the fourth U.N. commander since the international force arrived in July 2004 to quell unrest sparked by an uprising that ousted former president Jean-Bertrand Aristide.

Dos Santos assumes control as Haitian police and the 8,800-strong U.N. force fight a wave of killings and kidnappings blamed mostly on armed gangs that control several large Port-au-Prince slums.

Dos Santos, speaking after a brief ceremony at a Brazilian military base in a Port-au-Prince suburb, said he would not change any tactics implemented by Lt. Gen. Jose Elito Carvalho, another Brazilian who finished his one-year term as commander.

“We are going to work in the same way as we have worked before,” Dos Santos said. “Nothing has changed about our mission or our obligations.”

7. Suspect arrested in slaying of two Jordanian peacekeepers in Haiti
San Diego Union Tribune
ASSOCIATED PRESS
January 5, 2007

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti – U.N. troops and local police raided a slum in Haiti's capital Friday and arrested an alleged gang member wanted in the slaying of two Jordanian peacekeepers, the U.N. mission said.

No shots were fired during the pre-dawn operation in Port-au-Prince's Cite Soleil slum, a base for well-armed gangs blamed for a spate of kidnappings and shooting deaths, the mission said in a statement.

An alleged gang member identified only as Zachari was captured and turned over to Haitian police for the Nov. 10 killing of the Jordanians, who were driving back to base when their jeep came under heavy gunfire.

A suspected kidnapper also was arrested in the raid.

The U.N. mission said Zachari directed kidnappings for the feared Beloney gang, which authorities allege is behind a wave of recent abductions for ransom.

In December, U.N. troops and Haitian police raided Cite Soleil and killed five people in the peacekeeping mission's bloodiest crackdown in months.

U.N. troops have announced plans to increase patrols next week to prevent kidnappers from targeting children returning to school after the Christmas holiday.

The 8,800-strong U.N. force arrived in July 2004 to restore order in the Caribbean nation after a chaotic uprising toppled former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, Haiti's first democratically elected leader.

Fourteen peacekeepers have died since the mission began, including six Jordanians.

8. Peace at a price in Haiti

Teen girl recounts alleged rape by peacekeeper, one of dozens of sex cases brought before the UN

BY REED LINDSAY

Special to Newsday

January 8, 2007

<http://www.newsday.com/news/nationworld/world/ny-wohait085044372jan08,0,6111055.story?coll=ny-worldnews-print>

LEOGANE, Haiti - Natasha says she was walking home after school when the Sri Lankan soldier called to her.

Peacekeepers in this small town an hour west of Port-au-Prince often give candy and food to children, so 15-year-old Natasha, whose real name is being withheld to protect her, readily followed him into a sugarcane field behind the military base.

There, she says, he covered her mouth with his hand, forced her to the ground and raped her.

For Natasha, the nightmare had just begun. When her mother found her, bloody and covered in dirt, she beat Natasha savagely in the middle of the street. The girl's headmaster expelled her in order not to "stain" the school's reputation. Her classmates and neighbors taunted her, calling her "Madame Minustah." MINUSTAH is the acronym for the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti, the peacekeeping mission here.

The investigation begins

Natasha's mother forbade her to tell anyone about the attack until now - nearly two years later. The UN, which says it did not know about the rape allegation, has begun to investigate. "I thought they came for peace, not war," said Natasha, who speaks English moderately well and whose teacher said she was the top student in her class. "I thought they came to protect us. I never thought they could abuse me in this way."

Natasha is not alone. The peacekeeping mission in Haiti, which arrived in June 2004 to help stabilize the country after the ouster three months earlier of former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, has investigated 34 other cases of alleged sexual abuse and exploitation. No case of rape and only one case of sexual exploitation by UN personnel has been substantiated by the mission, which has more than 6,600 soldiers, predominantly from Latin America, and 1,700 police officers from three dozen countries.

In the single case of exploitation, a UN investigation in March 2005 concluded that two Pakistani riot police officers had paid for sex with a woman in the city of Gonaives. They were removed from Haiti, dismissed from the police force and sentenced to 1 year in prison by the Pakistani government, according to UN spokesman David Wimhurst.

The UN has been rocked by a series of abuse scandals in recent years, implicating peacekeepers from missions in 12 different regions - Burundi, Cyprus, Ivory Coast,

Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia/Eritrea, Georgia, Haiti, Liberia, Western Sahara, Sierra Leone, Sudan and East Timor. More than 150 peacekeepers in the Congo were implicated in 2004 for raping women and paying for sex with food, jobs or as little as \$1.

Former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan publicly admitted last month to the United Nations' failure to stop sexual misconduct and launched an internal effort to fight the problem. Since January 2004, the UN has investigated 319 peacekeepers for sexual abuse or exploitation, resulting in the repatriation of 144 military personnel, 17 police officers and 18 civilian officials serving in several countries. The UN has no authority to punish wrongdoers and can ask only that their home countries do so.

Disputed investigations

Some alleged victims dispute the conclusions of the UN Haiti probes - among them a 15-year-old girl who accused a Brazilian peacekeeper in September 2004 of raping her at a UN naval base. Wimhurst said three investigations were conducted, but no evidence was found substantiating the allegations. The girl's lawyer called the findings a whitewash and said the UN never gave him or his client a final report.

"We take it very seriously. We investigate everything that comes to our attention," Wimhurst said. "Clearly, the vast majority of our people are behaving themselves. And indeed, since some of these allegations don't pan out, I would say it's not a huge problem."

But some human rights activists say many victims are either too afraid or too intimidated by the UN bureaucracy to come forward. "There are likely many more cases," said Polin Aleandre, a social worker who claims peacekeepers offered five girls he helps, aged 9 to 13, \$20 for oral sex in front of the national palace. The girls, usually barefoot street children who wash windows and beg for change, told Aleandre they refused. "Sex has a huge stigma in Haiti and rape even more so. People don't talk about it at all," he said.

In Haiti, incoming peacekeepers are instructed about the UN's "zero-tolerance" policy for sexual abuse and exploitation, which includes exchanging money for sex and having consensual sex with a minor.

"We have a very strong deterrent program in place and that's really where we have to put all our effort," Wimhurst said. "Some people might do this anyway, but the very few who do, tarnish the rest who behave correctly." In July 2005, the UN assigned a civilian official to Port-au-Prince, the capital, to receive sexual misconduct complaints brought by the population.

But many Haitians say they haven't heard about the UN's efforts to stem sexual misconduct. While the UN has organized large-scale publicity campaigns in Haiti that promote elections and disarmament, there has been no visible effort to educate or inform the population about their rights regarding sexual abuse and exploitation.

Unheard complaints

In Leogane, a relatively peaceful city that has not seen armed conflict since the peacekeepers arrived, there are no civilian officials to hear complaints about possible abuses by Sri Lankan forces. And in Port-au-Prince, the office dealing with sexual abuse complaints was not established until several months after Natasha claims she was raped.

Last month in New York, Annan lamented "an overall climate that makes it difficult to report and expose abuses" and proposed a new strategy to help victims.

Natasha, now 17, says she hopes the UN mission will help her return to school and leave Leogane, where she continues to be tormented by name-calling and the sight of the peacekeepers. "Even now, whenever I see a Minustah soldier I feel uncomfortable," she said. "I fear them and at the same time I hate them."

But Wimhurst said the United Nations is unlikely to be able to substantiate her allegations and, as such, would not be able to help her.

"The longer time goes by in these cases, the more difficult it is to get the evidence," he said.

9. Prisoners take turns sleeping in Haiti's overflowing jails

Saturday, January 6, 2007

Caribbean Net News

by Joseph Guyler Delva

<http://www.caribbeannetnews.com/cgi-script/csArticles/articles/000050/005018.htm>

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (Reuters): Haiti's prisons have grown so crowded prisoners must take turns sleeping as police step up arrests of alleged gangsters blamed for a wave of violence and kidnappings, government and human rights officials said on Friday.

"We're facing a critical situation with our prisons which have no more room to hold prisoners," Haiti's Secretary of State for Public Safety Eucher Luc Joseph told Reuters.

The national penitentiary in the capital, Port-au-Prince, was built to hold 800 prisoners and now houses over 2,000.

"We're experiencing the same situation in all the other prisons and police custodies around the country," Joseph said.

Haitian police have intensified operations against criminal gangs and the number of arrests has increased considerably in the past few months.

The United States has also increased the number of Haitian criminals deported to their homeland to about 100 a month, from 25. Haitian officials said many of those deportees

have long criminal records and will be held even though they have not been charged with crimes in Haiti and have already served their sentences in the United States.

"We have to detain those deportees because they pose a threat to the country's national security," said Joseph.

In many prisons, detainees sleep in turn on the floor, live in inhumane conditions and are deprived of adequate medical care, said Renan Hedouville, head of the Haitian Lawyers Committee for Human Rights.

"Some prisoners have to stand up, while others sleep for one or two hours before giving up their place to other inmates," Hedouville told Reuters.

"The living conditions in those prisons are in total violation of the principles of human rights."

Government officials acknowledged that the situation in the country's detention centers is critical, but argue that they have an obligation to hold prisoners while they work to change conditions.

10. Fire destroys large street market in Haiti's capital

The Associated Press

International Herald Tribune

January 8, 2007

<http://www.ihrt.com/articles/ap/2007/01/08/news/CB-GEN-Haiti-Market-Fire.php>

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti: A fire ripped through a large indoor food market in Haiti's capital Monday, destroying merchandise but causing no injuries.

The blaze began before dawn and quickly consumed the La Couple market in the Port-au-Prince suburb of Petionville. The normally bustling market was closed at the time and no vendors or shoppers were inside, witnesses said.

The cause wasn't immediately clear, but some bystanders accused political militants of torching the market in a feud over last month's disputed local elections. Police did not immediately comment on the fire.

Firefighters arrived hours later and extinguished the flames, which destroyed thousands of dollars worth of vegetables, fruit, rice, flour and oil.

Vendors wept as they sifted through smoldering mounds of corrugated tin and charred vegetables to salvage anything of value.

The market is a vital economic hub for hundreds of landless peasants who make long treks from the countryside each morning to sell their wares