

Dear Colleagues,

Please find below the mainstream media news on Haiti for July 21 – August 1, 2006.

The South Florida newspapers had the best coverage of former Prime Minister Yvon Neptune's release from prison last week. Caricom issued a statement applauding Neptune's release and reiterating the need for the release of all those arbitrarily arrested under the interim government. Neptune's legal status remains in limbo as an appeal requesting all charges be dropped has yet to be resolved. Though arguably one of the highest profile political prisoners Neptune is only one of a few (estimated from 10 to 100) among hundreds of political prisoners to be released since Haiti's democratic return. The Miami Herald continues to misrepresent Neptune's hunger strike as 'on and off' when in fact he has been continually on a limited hunger strike ingesting only liquids.

An AP story entitled "Is racism behind treatment of Haitians?" revealed the discrimination against Haitians in the US immigration system. The story noted that Haitians, despite enduring devastating human and natural disasters, were not granted Temporary Protected Status (TPS), while TPS has been routinely awarded to Hondurans. The article also highlighted the work of South Florida lawyers and activists in combating this racist treatment.

The Miami Herald and South Florida Sun Sentinel covered the Donors conference held in Port au Prince on July 25th. International donors pledged \$750 million in assistance to Haiti over the next year, 50% more than the Government of Haiti had requested. But as a Miami Herald Editorial noted, the international community is notorious for [failing to translate](#) 'pledges' into actual assistance. The Herald listed its own set of lessons to the Haitian Government, placing special emphasis on the issues of fiscal responsibility, corruption and transparency. Curiously, the Herald recalled an earlier failed USAID-funded justice program, headed by an ex-felon and disbarred lawyer, saying "let's hope they get better consultants". It did not explain why this should be a lesson to the Haitian government, who did not choose the consultant, instead directed at the U.S. government, which did.

An Op-Ed in the South Florida Sun Sentinel by IJDH explains that if the international community really wanted to help Haiti, it would replace its charity with justice, by paying back the \$21 billion Independence debt that France extorted from Haiti.

An AP article addresses the resurgence of kidnappings in the past few weeks. Overall reported kidnappings surged in July, well ahead of the 30 reported in June. Blame for this resurgence varies depending on the source. The UN, as usual, blames gangs associated with Aristide. The Haitian Police say the violence is a result of gang warfare and turf battles. President Preval believes it is criminal and not political in nature. FBI agents in Haiti claim that Haiti is now worse than Colombia for kidnappings.

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1. Haiti's former PM Neptune freed from jail

Thu Jul 27, 2006

By Joseph Guylor Delva

Reuters

http://today.reuters.com/news/newsArticle.aspx?type=worldNews&storyID=2006-07-27T210623Z_01_N27382163_RTRUKOC_0_US-HAITI-NEPTUNE.xml&archived=False

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (Reuters) - Former Haitian Prime Minister Yvon Neptune was freed on Thursday from the prison where he was held for more than two years on what he called imaginary charges after the ouster of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide.

Frail from an on-and-off hunger strike, the 59-year-old walked out of the National Penitentiary annex supported by two U.N. peacekeepers. They helped him into an ambulance that took him to a U.N.-run hospital for a checkup.

Neptune was never tried and has repeatedly denied wrongdoing.

"It's not freedom yet," he told Reuters as he left the prison. "The machinery of injustice didn't stop with my release today. The laboratories that invented those kind of imaginary crimes are very strong."

Human rights groups had repeatedly called on Haiti to free Neptune, who was arrested in June 2004, a few months after the populist Aristide gave up the presidency in the face of a bloody rebellion.

Neptune was detained on accusations he masterminded what Aristide's opponents called a massacre on February 11, 2004, in La Scierie, a small village near the western port city of St. Marc. U.N. investigators characterized the incident as an armed clash with casualties on both sides.

An appeals court ordered Neptune's release on Thursday and he was escorted from the prison amid heavy security shortly afterward.

Brian Concannon, a U.S. lawyer who has campaigned for his release, said he believed Neptune had been freed on humanitarian grounds.

"This is very good, but he's only been provisionally released. The charges haven't been dropped," Concannon said.

"An appeal of the charges is before the appeals court in Gonaives. The prosecutor has recommended charges be dismissed because they are unjustified."

FREEDOM 'FOR ALL'

Neptune served under Aristide and was among hundreds of Aristide supporters jailed by a U.S.-backed interim government after Aristide was driven into exile.

He said he had been on a hunger strike for the past 15 months, consuming only liquids. Neptune expressed reservation his release was unaccompanied by a declaration absolving him of wrongdoing. He said he bore no hatred toward those who put him in prison but would continue to fight for justice.

"At a certain age, one should not be fighting for himself anymore. In such cases he would be selfish," he said as he left the prison.

"I am fighting for generations to come. ... The Haitian people show that they know what freedom means, and they will continue to fight for freedom, freedom not just for a few but for all."

The order for his release was made public a day after Neptune talked to reporters from his cell. He said then the government of President Rene Preval, who took office in May, would be partly to blame if he died while in prison on charges he called false and politically motivated.

Among the hundreds of Aristide supporters jailed by the interim government on vague charges, Concannon said only a few had been released.

There haven't been mass releases. There's been a trickle. I'd say maybe 10 have gotten out," he said.

Preval said recently about 100 had been released

2. Aristide's premier is now a free man

Former Haitian Prime Minister Yvon Neptune was released after two years in jail.

BY NANCY SAN MARTIN

Miami Herald

July 28, 2006

<http://www.miami.com/mld/miamiherald/news/world/haiti/15141002.htm>

PORT-AU-PRINCE - Former Prime Minister Yvon Neptune, looking frail in the wake of his on-and-off hunger strike, was freed Thursday after two years in prison and ferried away by an ambulance escorted by heavy security.

Neptune won his freedom one day after he spoke to the media for the first time since his arrest and vowed to fight what he called the "machine of injustice" responsible for his prolonged imprisonment without trial.

"The machine of injustice must stop," the barefoot Neptune told a small group of reporters in the barren bedroom that served as his cell. ``This is not something that concerns just me. It is something that concerns all the Haitian people who don't have the means to face the machine of injustice."

Neptune's release brought a small measure of respect and goodwill toward the 2-month old government of President René Préval, who has called for national reconciliation in the aftermath of a revolt that toppled former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide in 2004. Neptune served as prime minister for Aristide.

Human rights activists hailed the new government's decision to free a man they had long considered as a political prisoner jailed by the U.S.-backed interim government that preceded Préval.

"It is a day of victory for a fight against injustice," Patrick Elie, a founding member of a Haitian citizens watchdog group that joined the international campaign for Neptune's release, said outside the prison walls. ``Prime Minister Neptune has given us all a lesson in courage."

MANY DENIED JUSTICE

But scores of Aristide supporters and several thousand alleged criminals remain jailed without trials.

"I don't think that the justice system in Haiti has really redeemed itself," Elie said. ``We've opened a chink in the armor of the beast. A lot remains to be done."

Neptune made no statements after his release and was taken to a hospital for a medical checkup. It was unclear what the next legal step in his case will be.

The U.N. mission in Haiti, in a written statement, said Neptune's health had "declined dramatically during his time in prison," and added that he would remain under medical care until he was well enough to go home.

2004 MASSACRE

The 59-year-old Neptune was jailed in connection with a 2004 massacre of Aristide opponents near the western port city of St. Marc. He has demanded his unconditional release and last year refused a deal that would have allowed him to leave for the neighboring Dominican Republic. An appeal seeking that the charges be dropped remains at a standstill since October.

"The appeals court has violated the rights of the political prisoner," said Neptune's attorney Mario Joseph. ``As a political prisoner, he needs to fight for justice."

Elie called the case "emblematic" of Haiti's problems. His group claims that of an estimated 4,000 prisoners in jail here, only 10 percent have been tried and that many of them were arrested simply for supporting Aristide.

Neptune had been held in a two-story house next to the headquarters for the National Police that serves as a prison for high-profile inmates. The house, in the upscale neighborhood of Pacot, is surrounded by a tall steel fence topped with razor wire and guarded by police and some of the U.N. peacekeeping forces deployed here.

Neptune's room on the second floor had no furniture except for a cushion on the floor that served as a bed. The cushion was taken out of the prison Thursday, along with a suitcase carrying his belongings, including books on the Haitian constitution.

In his cell, Neptune kept two pieces of cardboard with handwritten messages in French and Creole. One welcomed "all who support truth and liberty" and the other called for doing away with injustice.

In his brief meeting with reporters Wednesday, Neptune spoke barely above a whisper as he lay on his bed, his head propped up by three thin pillows. He said that soon after Aristide fled, unnamed authorities came to him to tell him he had three options: exile, prison or death.

"Exile, they will never get me to leave; Prison, I'm already here; And death, that can come any time," Neptune said, speaking in English and Creole.

Asked if he blamed the U.S. government, which opposed Aristide, for his predicament, Neptune rolled his cloudy-looking eyes and snickered.

'THE DAGGER IS HERE'

"The dagger is here," he said, pointing to his stomach. "You want me to give them the ability to twist it?"

"The truth is known now. It doesn't have to come from my mouth," Neptune added.

U.S. Ambassador Janet Sanderson told The Miami Herald Thursday that Washington played no role in the Neptune case. "We had absolutely no hand in his being arrested and have consistently condemned, both publicly and privately, his prolonged detention."

Since his arrest, Neptune has issued written statements questioning the arrests of other Aristide supporters, such as singer Annette Auguste, known as Só Ann, also incarcerated without trial since 2004. He also has implied that pressure from foreign opponents of Aristide -- not the revolt by armed gangs and former soldiers in 2004 who were at the doors to Port-au-Prince when Aristide fled abroad -- led to the president's downfall.

Aristide himself has said that U.S. and French officials all but forced him to surrender power and leave the country. Washington and Paris have denied the allegation.

"I have written and will continue writing about what I know," Neptune said. "I write about facts, not fiction. I will continue to do that as long as I live."

3. Jailed former Haitian prime minister speaks out

By NANCY SAN MARTIN

Miami Herald

July 27, 2006

<http://www.miami.com/mld/miamiherald/news/world/haiti/15137484.htm>

PORT-AU-PRINCE - Former Prime Minister Yvon Neptune was freed Thursday afternoon, just hours after vowing that he remained as determined as ever to fight a "machine of injustice" that kept him jailed for two years without trial.

"The machine of injustice must stop reproducing itself," a barefoot Neptune had told a small group of reporters Wednesday in the barren bedroom that served as his cell. "This is not something that concerns just me. It is something that concerns all the Haitian people who don't have the means to face the machine of injustice."

Neptune's 20-minute talk with reporters came as human rights activists try to persuade him to end his on-and-off hunger strikes, even though they agree with his contention that his arrest was politically motivated. Neptune spoke barely above a whisper as he lay on a cushion set on the floor with his head propped up by three thin pillows.

"People understand the injustice they are doing to Neptune and other prisoners," said Ronald St. Jean, head of the Defense of Political Prisoners, a group that has collected about 1,500 signatures in Haiti and abroad appealing for a resolution in the case.

"Neptune also understands the significance of his message," St. Jean said. "We hope that he will give up his hunger strike and be set free."

The 59-year-old Neptune, who served under President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, was jailed in connection with a 2004 massacre of Aristide opponents near the western port city of St. Marc. He was among several prominent people jailed by the U.S.-backed interim government following a revolt that sent Aristide into exile in February 2004.

Neptune has been demanding his unconditional release and last year refused a deal that would have allowed him to go to the neighboring Dominican Republic. An appeal seeking that the charges be dropped was at a standstill since October.

"The appeals court has violated the right of the political prisoner," said Neptune's attorney Mario Joseph. "As a political prisoner, he needs to fight for justice."

Patrick Elie, a founding member of a citizens watchdog group that has joined the international campaign for Neptune's release, called the case "emblematic" of Haiti's problems. The group claims that of an estimated 4,000 prisoners in jail here, only 10 percent have been tried and that many of them were arrested simply for supporting Aristide.

"If we are able to spring Neptune loose, it will open doors for other prisoners arbitrarily arrested for political reasons," Elie said.

Neptune was being held in a two-story house next to the headquarters for the National Police that serves as a prison for high-profile inmates. The house, in the upscale neighborhood of Pacot, is surrounded by a tall steel fence topped with razor wire and is guarded by police and at least one soldier from the U.N. peacekeeping force deployed here.

Neptune's room, on the second floor, had no furniture, except for the cushion on the floor that served as a bed. He had a private bathroom and access to a balcony enclosed by bars that overlook the sprawling capital city and its seaport.

At his bedside were several plastic bottles of water, books on liberty and the Haitian constitution, a radio and a yellow legal pad with a few scribbled lines in his handwriting. Also nearby were an unlit candle and a small electric burner, a clock and his glasses.

Leaning against a wall a few steps away, were two pieces of cardboard with handwritten words in French and in Creole. One welcomed "all who support truth and liberty" and the other called for doing away with injustice.

Neptune said that soon after Aristide fled, unidentified authorities came to him with three options: exile, prison or death.

"Exile, they will never get me to leave; prison, I'm already here; and death, that can come any time," said Neptune, speaking in English and Creole. Asked if he blamed the U.S. government for his predicament, Neptune rolled his eyes and snickered.

"The dagger is here," he said, pointing to his stomach. "You want me to give them the ability to twist it?"

"The truth is known now. It doesn't have to come from my mouth," Neptune added. "I'm accused of being the mastermind and the accomplice for something that at first was a genocide and then a massacre and now I don't know if it's been reduced to a killing.

"And the supposed democratic government is now offering me the opportunity to run away. Does that make sense?"

During the interim government's tenure, Neptune said he received many visits from foreign diplomats, including some from the United States. But those visits have stopped.

"In quite some time, I don't see them anymore," he said. "I guess they don't like my line of thought and they don't like to hear the truth."

4. Caricom welcomes release of Haiti's former leader, criticizes 'arbitrary' detentions

The Associated Press

South Florida Sun Sentinel

July 30 2006

<http://www.sun-sentinel.com/news/local/caribbean/sfl-0730caricom,0,5071838.story?coll=sfla-news-caribbean>

GEORGETOWN, Guyana--The Caribbean Community regional group has welcomed former Haitian prime minister Yvon Neptune's release from jail but criticized the "arbitrary" detentions of other prisoners in the troubled country, the group said in a statement.

Neptune was released from a Haitian jail Thursday, more than two years after he was arrested on charges of orchestrating the killing of opponents of ousted President Jean-Bertrand Aristide at the start of a rebellion that engulfed the country.

But Neptune's release "should not obscure the fact that a large number of persons supportive of former President Aristide arrested arbitrarily for what appeared to be political reasons under the interim administration have also been denied justice," the 15-member group, known as Caricom, said. It did not disclose further details.

Still, the group praised Haiti's new President Rene Preval, who took power in May, for efforts in strengthening the nation's judicial system.

Neptune's release came a day after the regional alliance announced plans to give Haiti US\$17 million (euro13 million) as part of an international effort to aid the impoverished nation of some 8 million people.

5. Is racism behind treatment of Haitians?

By PAULINE ARRILLAGA

Seattle Post Intelligencer

July 29, 2006

<http://www.sun-sentinel.com/news/nationworld/nation/wire/sns-ap-dantica-discriminatory-treatment,1,5055512.story>

MIAMI -- The conference room at the law offices of Kurzban, Kurzban, Weinger and Tetzeli was crammed tight. Attorneys took turns at the microphone, their faces etched with frustration. The question they kept coming back to: Why?

Why, they asked, are Haitian immigrants singled out by the U.S. government for unequal treatment?

On this day, earlier in the year, the topic was temporary protected status, a designation the federal government can grant to foreigners allowing them to remain part time in the United States because of political unrest or environmental disasters at home.

Central Americans have repeatedly been granted protected status following hurricanes and earthquakes in Nicaragua, Honduras and El Salvador. Immigrants from Burundi, Liberia, Somalia and Sudan also enjoy such protections.

But Haitians have never obtained relief, despite decades of political turmoil, kidnappings and killings, and tribulations from tropical storms.

"Why aren't Haitians good enough for the same basic protections?" demanded Steve Forester, of the group Haitian Women of Miami.

The question has long haunted Haitians seeking refuge in the United States. But underlying it is a more provocative issue, one that some say reflects how ill-designed and blatantly discriminatory the U.S. immigration system has become:

Are Haitian immigrants treated differently simply because they are black?

Erns Joseph, an orphaned Haitian boy, was among hundreds of migrants who waded ashore after their sailboat grounded off Miami in 2002. Though just 15 when he arrived, Joseph spent almost three years battling Department of Homeland Security officials who insisted he was over 18 and eligible for deportation. Even after a judge granted him asylum in 2003, the government kept Joseph in detention while it appealed the decision.

Last summer, after a juvenile court ruled that Joseph was a minor, an immigration judge granted him permanent residency.

"I feel like I went through a lot, but it was worth it," says Joseph, who lives in Miami and is going to school to learn English. Still, he says: "All the Haitians and all of the nationalities should get equal treatment when they come here."

At the news conference earlier this year, 6-year-old Stephann Jasmin sat curled like a kitten in his mother Jeannette's lap. Jeannette Jasmin lives under a deportation order, having escaped Haiti seven years ago after being kidnapped and beaten by political foes. Denied asylum in the United States, she and her American-born son face separation now.

Renes Ledix was there, too. His daughter, 28-year-old Renette, remains in detention after fleeing storm-ravaged Gonaives, Haiti, to join her family in Florida last year. Her father, a U.S. resident, sought to bring Renette here under provisions of a 1998 law allowing Haitians with legal status in the United States to apply for admission of their minor children.

However, Renette "aged out" - turned 21 - while the application was being processed, making her ineligible for admission. Now asylum has been refused, and officials won't release Renette during her appeals process.

What accounts for the treatment of these Haitians?

Some, like former Attorney General John Ashcroft, have said Haitian restrictions are a matter of national security - that migrants from countries such as Pakistan have used Haiti as a staging point for entry into the United States.

Haiti is not on the list of nations the U.S. Border Patrol considers of "special interest" because of alleged sponsorship or support of terrorism.

But while Haitians are uniformly detained or turned back, at least 148 immigrants from Pakistan, Iran and other listed countries were arrested in 2004-05 - and then released on their own recognizance, according U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services.

Meanwhile, the Border Patrol apprehended 30,843 Brazilians at the Mexican border in fiscal year 2005, an increase of 258 percent over the previous year. And though Brazil's border region with Paraguay and Argentina has been labeled a source of fundraising for radical Islamic groups by U.S. officials, more than 20,000 of these immigrants were released on their own recognizance.

Consciously or unconsciously, says Alex Stepick, director of the Immigration and Ethnicity Institute at Florida International University, the American policies on Haitians are driven by racism.

But such "specific, restrictive and repressive" policies, he says, also derive from negative stereotypes of Haitians as poor, uneducated and diseased because they hail from the Western Hemisphere's most impoverished nation.

"We have this perception of Haitians being basically pathetic. It's a misperception, and it simplifies the reality of Haiti extraordinarily," says Stepick, whose book "Pride Against Prejudice" examines the backlash against Haitians who emigrate to America.

"Nevertheless, it's a perception that does lie behind many of the actions of the U.S. government and general public opinion."

Immigration officials maintain race has nothing to do with their rules.

Jan Ting, an assistant commissioner for refugees, asylum and parole at the Immigration and Naturalization Service during the first Bush Administration, acknowledges policies have singled out Haitians for "undeniably harsher treatment." However, he holds that such measures are warranted to deter dangerous, and sometimes deadly, surges by sea.

"The government has a genuine fear of triggering a mass migration. Because Haiti is so close to the United States and because there are so many people in Haiti who would like

to come to the United States, there is a fear ... that if we treat people too nicely or too gently and give them release from detention too quickly that will simply encourage lots of people in Haiti to make the effort," Ting says.

One such exodus occurred in 1980, when an estimated 25,000 Haitians joined 125,000 Cuban exiles in the outflow known as the Mariel boatlift. From 1991 to 1994, the U.S. Coast Guard intercepted another 69,000 Haitians.

Since then, however, the numbers have plunged. From 2000 on, the Coast Guard has discovered more Dominicans making the journey by sea than Haitians: more than 14,000 compared with some 12,000. Interdictions of Cubans aren't far behind, at more than 10,245.

Some Haitian rights advocates argue that the government's deterrance-for-safety's-sake argument also carries little weight in light of its open-door policy toward Cubans, allowing most Cubans who reach U.S. shores to apply for permanent residency one year later.

"It doesn't make any sense," says Marleine Bastien, who heads Haitian Women of Miami. "Does that mean that the Department of Homeland Security is more concerned about Haitians' lives than Cubans' lives?"

"Is it a crime to want to flee for freedom, for safety?" she adds. "Why is it a crime for Haitians?"

Nowhere are these inequalities more glaring than in South Florida, where even Haitians and Cubans arriving on the same beach at the same time in the same manner are treated differently.

In April, authorities detained 44 Haitians after they landed on a beach north of Miami in a 45-foot cabin cruiser. Also aboard was a Cuban man. The Haitians were processed for removal.

The Cuban, said Border Patrol spokesman Steve McDonald, "by virtue of the fact that he's Cuban and eligible to adjust his status under the Cuban Adjustment Act will ... have the opportunity to request to stay."

6. \$750 million in aid pledged to help Haiti

BY NANCY SAN MARTIN

Miami Herald

July 26, 2006

<http://www.miami.com/mld/miamiherald/news/world/haiti/15122838.htm>

Haiti's prime minister praised 'a new window of opportunity' for his scarred nation after foreign donors pledged \$750 million in initial aid -- 50 percent more than had been asked.

PORT-AU-PRINCE - Representatives from more than 50 international organizations and nations Tuesday promised \$750 million in aid toward Haiti's efforts to claw its way out of an economic and social pit.

The pledge was \$250 million above Haiti's appeal for an immediate cash input of \$500 million over the next year and a total of \$7.1 billion over five years to fund eight priority projects, including road construction and strengthening the security, education and health systems.

"We are happy for the support and commitment," Prime Minister Jacques Edouard Alexis said at the closing of the daylong International Conference for the Economic and Social Development of Haiti. "This will allow us to erase the burden and errors of past governments."

'AN OPPORTUNITY'

President René Préval called the promises "an opportunity for Haiti to get back on track on the path to democracy."

The support comes as Haiti struggles with a wave of violence and kidnappings that threatens to destabilize his 10-week old presidency.

Alexis said that even though Haiti is going through a "difficult and turbulent moment," the country's leaders remain hopeful and welcome support for programs that would allow Haiti to "recover its international sovereignty on the path to development, lasting development."

"We are at a new starting point, a turning point where all of our efforts must yield a democratic society," Alexis said. "A new window of opportunity is opening up before us. We must seize this opportunity. We have a country to build."

Alexis said the initial funds would be used to develop projects that would help create jobs, raise salaries and improve electricity, potable water supplies and roads. He called

security an "unacceptable" problem and, when asked how he planned to combat that issue, said: "There are going to be carrots and sticks."

Alexis also said that before Haiti can ask for outside help, it must do more at home. He had a strong message for people who evade taxes or contribute to rampant corruption and the smuggling of goods.

"The country considers you all as traitors," he said. "My government will fight mercilessly against corruption, smuggling and tax evasion."

International aid just recently began to trickle back into Haiti after years of frozen funds due to political troubles. The European Commission blocked some \$90 million in aid five years ago during the government of former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, forced out by a revolt in 2004.

Albert Ramdin, assistant secretary general for the Organization of American States, said Haiti's economic proposal was a "work in progress" that will be reviewed each year.

'STEP BY STEP'

"Slowly, step by step, we'll have to lay the foundation for sustained growth," he said. "Everybody wants to see Haiti grow and prosper, and not always as a problem."

Edmond Mulet, the U.N. representative in Haiti, pledged continued support but warned that if the security problems were not solved development would be hindered. The capital has experienced relative calm in the months since Préval's election in February, but a recent rash of killings and kidnappings has heightened tensions again.

Mulet said that in order to preserve stability, the government "must uphold the principles of good government" and develop a strong alliance with the international community.

Among the other organizations that pledged support were the Inter-American Development Bank, the U.S. Agency for International Development, the World Bank, the Organization of American States and the 15-nation Caribbean Community.

"Haiti is emerging from a long winter of discontent," said Jamaican Foreign Minister Anthony Hylton. "We all have a responsibility to ensure that the sun remains shining for all Haitian people."

7. Haiti, donors need to avoid mistakes of the past

Miami Herald

Editorial

July 28, 2006

<http://www.belleville.com/mld/belleville/news/editorial/15163040.htm>

It sure sounds good: Foreign donors pledge \$750 million in aid to Haiti, well beyond the \$500 million the country had requested to jump start its economy. Hold the applause. In

Haiti, the road to misery is paved with good intentions and extravagant promises. Sometimes, the promises aren't kept. Too often, aid is mismanaged. For the average Haitian, it seems nothing ever changes. To ensure a different outcome this time, a different approach is required.

_Lesson One: involves security: The U.N. "stabilization" mission of 7,600 peacekeepers has to stay in Haiti if the government of President Rene Preval is to have any chance of success. Nothing can be accomplished in the absence of safety and security. A premature withdrawal of U.N. forces would invite street gangs and organized criminals to take over. Just as there has been a U.N. military force in Cyprus since 1964, so there may have to be an armed U.N. presence in Haiti for years to come.

_Lesson Two: There is no quick fix. Preval's government smartly set out a five-year agenda to take in pledges of \$7.1 billion in foreign aid. That's the minimum amount of time it will take to get Haiti back on its feet. What mismanagement, rampant crime and civil strife have not destroyed has been blown away by devastating storms. Want to help Haiti? Be prepared to stay for the long haul.

_Lesson Three: Watch every penny. Previous efforts to aid Haiti have been riddled with gross incompetence. Take the effort to reform Haiti's judicial system. We tried that once before, after the restoration of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide.

It didn't work, perhaps because one of the supervisors of the U.S.-funded effort was a convicted felon and disbarred U.S. lawyer who resigned from his \$271-a-day consultant's job in 1996 after his record became known. This time around, the Preval government is asking for \$1.5 billion to fix its broken public-safety and judicial systems over the next five years. Let's hope they get better consultants.

_Lesson Four: Haitians must be united. The first Preval administration, 1996-2000, was one big lost opportunity. Then, too, there were U.N. troops on the ground keeping the peace and much aid had been promised. But political infighting made progress impossible. Fed-up donors gave up and walked away.

This is the last chance for Haiti's political class to show that it is capable of governing. To do that, it must be able to make compromises and put the national interest above personal political ambitions.

The people of Haiti are desperate for a chance to improve their country, but they don't celebrate progress until they see it. The donor conference was a good start, but talk is cheap.

8. Provide justice, not charity

South Florida Sun Sentinel

Op-Ed By Brian Concannon Jr. and Anthony Phillips

July 24 2006

<http://www.sun-sentinel.com/news/opinion/sfl-52forum24jul24,1,2903285.story>

When international diplomats and financiers convene Tuesday in Port-au-Prince to discuss development assistance with Haiti's newly elected government, the one issue certain to be off limits is the one certain solution to Haiti's grinding poverty: repayment of the "independence debt" that France illegally extorted from Haiti in 1825. The crushing burden imposed by that debt -- over \$21 billion in today's dollars -- is the principle historic cause of Haiti's underdevelopment, and is directly responsible for today's grinding poverty in Haiti.

Haiti's history is remarkable. In 1804, Haiti became only the second independent country in the Americas, the world's first "black republic" and the only nation in history born of a successful slave revolt.

Haitians won their independence by beating the French army in a bloody 12-year war, but European countries and the United States forced them to pay a second price to gain entry to the international community. The world powers refused to recognize Haiti's independence, while France posted warships off her coast, threatening invasion and the reinstatement of slavery. After 21 years of fighting this isolation, Haiti succumbed to France's unjust terms in 1825. In exchange for diplomatic recognition, Haiti agreed to take out a loan from a designated French bank and pay compensation to French plantation owners for their loss of "property," including the freed slaves.

The amount of the debt, 150 million French francs, was 10 times that of Haiti's total 1825 revenue and twice the price paid in 1803 by the United States to France for the Louisiana Purchase, some 74 times more land.

This imposition of compensation by a defeated power and reimbursement by freed slaves of their former owners is unique in history and violated international law even in 1825. The agreement began a cycle of debt that has condemned the Haitian people to poverty ever since. Haiti did not finish paying the loans that financed the debt until 1947. Over a century after the global slave trade was recognized and eliminated as the evil it was, the Haitians were still paying their ancestors' masters for their freedom. The crippling legacy of debt begun in 1825 has stifled Haitian development ever since.

The government could not invest in education, health care or infrastructure projects because all available funds went overseas. In 1915, for example, 80 percent of government revenues went to debt service. The need for hard currency forced Haitian farmers to favor financially or environmentally risky cash crops such as coffee and hardwood, rather than development of a diverse national economy. Over-farming and over-logging led, in turn, to catastrophic deforestation and soil erosion, which put more pressure on the remaining arable land.

Economic instability has engendered political instability: Haiti has been beset by dozens of coups, rebellions, foreign military interventions and a cycle of violence that paralleled the country's downward economic spiral. Today Haiti is the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere, with 80 percent of its people living below the poverty line, and is

ranked 153rd out of 177 on the U.N. Human Development Index, far behind all of its Caribbean neighbors.

The \$21 billion, in current terms, that France extorted illegally, and therefore owes Haiti, dwarfs the aid packages being debated in Port-au-Prince this week. Unlike loans and other foreign assistance, a just repayment of the independence debt would not extend dependence on foreign aid, and would allow the people of Haiti to develop their country as they, not the international community, think best.

If the international community were serious about lifting Haiti out of its desperate poverty, repaying the independence debt would be at the top of the agenda, not off the table.

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9. Wave of Kidnappings Leaves Haiti Shaken

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AP

By STEVENSON JACOBS

The Guardian Unlimited

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (AP) - A new rash of kidnappings has raised fears that well-armed, politically aligned street gangs are seeking to destabilize Haiti's new government, threatening U.N.-led efforts to restore security 2 years after a crippling revolt.

Others say the gangs are simply after cash and see kidnappings as a lucrative source of revenue to buy more arms and fuel other criminal enterprises in this impoverished country.

But most agree on one thing - the problem is getting worse.

It reached boiling point this week when scores of people - including three Americans - were snatched by gunmen in an unprecedented series of bold, daylight attacks in the capital of Port-au-Prince.

Almost no one has been spared - missionaries, employees of foreign embassies and Haitians rich and poor have fallen victim to the trend that has given Haiti the highest kidnapping rate in the Americas.

``We are beyond afraid," said Patrick Gadere, owner of ceramic tile factory that has been forced to close its warehouse because of violence and whose brother was abducted.

``We've been shot at, robbed, kidnapped. We have no other way to make a living."

The kidnapping surge has destroyed a tense calm that prevailed since President Rene Preval took power in May, and prompted new criticism against the U.N. peacekeeping force sent to restore order after the 2004 revolt that toppled ex-president Jean-Bertrand Aristide.

At least 30 people have been kidnapped so far in July, about the same number for all of June, said Leslie Dallemand, chief of the U.N.'s anti-kidnapping unit in Haiti. The number is likely much higher because many families prefer to negotiate with kidnappers rather than notify police.

"I haven't had this high of volume since last year," when gangs went on a kidnapping spree before elections, Dallemand said.

Among the victims were three Americans, including two missionaries grabbed by gangsters on their way to church. All three were released unharmed Thursday after negotiations involving the FBI.

Charles Adams, a 70-year-old from Queensbury, N.Y., was working on a water treatment program. He was stuck in traffic, driving back from a meeting, when armed men ambushed his vehicle near the capital's international airport.

"All the sudden I looked up, doors were being ripped open and there were all these people with revolvers and long guns walking around. It was quite an awakening," said Adams, who was freed after a day without paying a ransom.

The abductions come amid sharply rising violence in the capital, including this month's slum massacre of 22 people. Police blamed the killings on warring gangs but have made no arrests.

U.N. and Haitian officials disagree on whether the recent violence is politically motivated.

The U.N. mission says the coordinated nature of the recent attacks suggest an attempt to stir chaos by the gangs, many of which are loyal to Aristide and are demanding his return from exile in South Africa.

"Their violence is motivated to draw attention to the government that they are dissatisfied," U.N. spokesman David Wimhurst said. "It obviously has a destabilizing effect."

But Preval insists the troubles are criminal - not political - acts by wanted fugitives, corrupt police and drug traffickers.

Members of Preval's Lespwa party and the business community are calling on the 8,800-strong U.N. peacekeeping mission to take a harder line against gangs.

“This is the first time in our country's history that we've had so many armed forces and yet we're still in this mess,” said Gadere, the tile factory owner.

U.N. and police officials say they're doing all they can and blame Haiti's notoriously corrupt justice system for releasing suspected kidnapers and other criminal suspects who can afford bribes.

“We can't keep criminals off the streets if the courts keep letting them go,” police chief Mario Andresol said.

Kidnappings were once rare in Haiti, the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere. The trend flourished after Aristide's departure but leveled off shortly after elections in February.

Foreigners have been particularly vulnerable because they fetch a higher ransom, usually around \$10,000, compared to about half that for a Haitian.

Last year, 43 Americans were kidnapped in Haiti, including three who were killed in attempted abductions, according to the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Consular Affairs.

“We have agents down there almost constantly working kidnappings,” said Judy Orihuela, an FBI special agent in Miami. “It's surpassed Colombia.”

10. Hundreds flee Haiti's gang violence

Compound near capital slum takes in 300 refugees as fighting escalates

By Myrna Domit

The Associated Press

South Florida Sun Sentinel

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<http://www.sun-sentinel.com/news/caribbean/sfl-ahaiti29jul29,0,3301133.story>

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti · Hundreds of people fled their homes in a hillside slum of the Haitian capital Friday to escape fierce fighting between gangs that has killed at least 30 people in the past two months, officials said.

Families streamed away from the Grand Ravine slum with whatever they could recover from their houses -- many of which were set on fire by gangs from neighboring slums that are fighting for control of the area.

"I have no money, no house, no idea where I'm going," said Joseline Louis, a 55-year-old fruit seller.

Witnesses said at least three people were killed in recent days, but United Nations spokeswoman Sophie Boutaud de la Combe said she could not confirm any casualties.

A nearby compound run by the Haitian Evangelical Baptist Union became a makeshift refugee camp for about 300 people. The compound is three miles from Grand Ravine along roads patrolled by U.N. peacekeepers.

Florice Mepolelet, 30, squatted in the corner of the crowded compound with her two young children. She said her family has received only one bowl of rice with bean sauce from the Red Cross since fleeing the neighborhood on Thursday.

Most houses in the slum -- home to several thousand people -- appeared abandoned Friday, their tin roofs and concrete block walls blackened by fire. Blood was smeared on the door and the floor of one house.

Gang violence and kidnappings have surged in Haiti after months of relative calm following the election of President René Préval in February.

U.N. officials say the coordinated nature of the violence suggests an attempt to stir chaos by well-armed, politically aligned gangs.

Danel La Roche, 23, showed a wound in his upper back that he said was from a bullet.

"I have nothing to do with this fight," he said.

Peacekeepers did not shoot at the gang members because civilians were in the area, de la Combe said.