

Dear Colleagues,

Please find below the mainstream news on Haiti for June 16 – July 16, 2007.

On Sunday July 15<sup>th</sup>, residents of Bel-Air, Port-au-Prince, marched to the National Palace marking former President Aristide's 54<sup>th</sup> birthday and demanding President Preval to return Aristide to Haiti. The AP/USA Today article reported 1,000 marchers while independent media sources estimated 6,000 marchers.

A Canadian Press/CTV article "Gangs stalling Haiti's reconstruction: MacKay" was written in advance of Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper's expected visit to Haiti in mid-July. The article largely refers to a January briefing prepared for Foreign Affairs Minister Peter MacKay that paints "a grim picture of Haiti as a nation where 'chronically high' crime has kept United Nations forces from 'advancing as was hoped.' The title of this article squarely blames gangs for the lack of reconstruction while the article itself cites both the Canadian briefing saying that drug trafficking is the "most daunting threat" and Haiti expert Robert Maguire of Trinity University saying "it [drug trafficking] fuels the gangs, it fuels corruption, it undermines trying to build institutions based upon rule of law." A University of Florida anthropologist, Gerald Murray, is widely quoted recommending "non-governmental organizations could, at least temporarily, oversee Haitian government aid money spending. Development money should be allocated for short-term aid projects instead of trying to 'change the character of the Haitian state.'" Murray's Haitian experience appears largely related to his leadership of a 20-year US-funded reforestation project.

A June 28<sup>th</sup> AP/International Herald Tribune article reported on the two-week strike by janitors and hospital support staff that forced closure of Haiti's largest hospital. The strikers were pressuring the government for back wages, more ambulances and rehiring colleagues who had recently lost their jobs.

A Miami Herald article "Smugglers, poverty fuel Haiti exodus" spotlights the rising numbers of people fleeing Haiti despite the well-publicized tragedy in Turks and Caicos, as well as government and radio ads advocating against such risky voyages. Smugglers are increasingly to blame, but the blame continues to lie solely on the poverty, misery and hopelessness of the Haitian people. Haitians are increasingly fleeing to Turks and Caicos and other more economically stable islands. While the Preval government is internationally acclaimed for controlling inflation, currency stability, political stability and improving security. Such benchmarks, while vital to pleasing international financial institutions and foreign donors, have done little to directly improve livelihoods and inspire hope among Haiti's poor.

A Los Angeles Times/AP article reports on the possible creation of a new security force for Haiti. A Haitian commission is studying two options: reconstituting the old Haitian military or developing a new unit under the Haitian police. Senator Youri Latortue, president of the Senate commission on justice and security and nephew and former security chief of ex-interim Prime Minister Gerard Latortue, says his colleagues support a

new military force while President Preval prefers a French model police force instead of reinstating the military.

The Miami Herald reported on an early July visit by Miami Dade County officials to Haiti. The 12 elected officials of South Florida generally reported a surprisingly positive and altered perspective of Haiti, very different from what they had seen in the media. The delegation held meetings with Preval and Prime Minister Alexis, US Ambassador Sanderson and others. The delegation said they are committed to improving the image of Haitians in South Florida and building 'bridges' between their communities. PM Alexis recommended they offer more concrete assistance in the form of investment and technical assistance.

Washington Post Think Tank Town contributor, Johanna Mendelson Forman wrote about the lack of media (and US) attention around the June meeting of 15 Caribbean countries in Washington for the Caribbean 20/20 Vision Conference. According to Mendelson Forman the Caribbean region ranks rather low on the US foreign policy agenda, which is basically limited to drug trafficking and terrorism as potential threats to US security. Mendelson Forman advocates a broader US policy towards our Caribbean neighbors. However, Mendelson Forman's recommendation that Caribbean countries could be future providers of biofuels to the US, is not a strategically, economically or environmentally good idea for the Caribbean countries themselves. Research in biofuel production indicates such large-scale monocropping would further reduce already limited agricultural lands devoted to food production, not to mention the historically risky prospect of dependence on certain export commodities.

Mendelson-Forman correctly suggests the US should focus more attention on the potential security threat posed by the Caribbean's vulnerability to hurricanes, and the increasing severity of these storms projected for years to come, large numbers of Caribbean residents could easily become storm refugees flooding Florida's shores. She makes her most compelling point from the Caribbean perspective that the US has been a bad neighbor and Caribbean states were betrayed "after the US intervened in Haiti for a second time in 2004. Our actions not only created ill will among Caribbean Community states, but it also reduced our effectiveness in the corridors of multilateral institutions like the OAS and the UN." The US needs to address regional concerns such as "stimulating trade and development, reducing poverty, stabilizing Haiti and mitigating climate change through expanding renewable energy resources."

Reuters interviewed President Preval following the 20/20 Vision Conference in Washington DC. Preval emphasized fighting drug trafficking and corruption as fundamental to achieving sustainable social and economic development. Preval and the other 14 Caribbean leaders met with President Bush. Preval solely addressed the issue of drug trafficking.

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#### **1. Aristide supporters march in Haiti**

**AP, USA Today**

**July 15, 2007**

[http://www.usatoday.com/news/world/2007-07-15-aristide-protest\\_N.htm](http://www.usatoday.com/news/world/2007-07-15-aristide-protest_N.htm)

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (AP) — Supporters of exiled former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide marched through Haiti's capital on Sunday, demanding the ousted leader's return and accusing President Rene Preval of turning his back on his one-time ally.

Chants of "Preval is a traitor!" and "Bring Aristide home!" rose up as more than 1,000 protesters marched from the Port-au-Prince slum of Bel-Air to the heavily guarded National Palace, Preval's official residence.

"We helped Preval get in power and now he has turned his back on us. We still love Aristide and we want him home," Erick LeBon said during the march, which was called to mark Aristide's 54th birthday.

UNREST: Haitian government, U.N. seek to disarm gangs

A former slum priest-turned-president, Aristide was toppled during a 2004 rebel uprising. He was flown out of the country aboard a U.S.-supplied jet and later accused the United States of kidnapping him in a coup — a charge Washington denies.

Currently exiled in South Africa, Aristide has said he wants to return to Haiti but that the timing depends on Preval, his former prime minister and political protege.

Preval, a champion of the poor overwhelmingly elected last year with help from Aristide supporters, has said Haiti's constitution allows Aristide to return but has not taken steps to bring him back. The two men are no longer close and reportedly have not spoken in years.

No disturbances were reported during Sunday's protest, monitored by blue-helmeted U.N. peacekeepers and Haitian police.

Aristide supporters periodically hold street marches calling for his return, but the events attract far fewer people since the departure last year of an unpopular U.S.-backed interim government appointed to replace Aristide.

## **2. Gangs stalling Haiti's reconstruction: MacKay**

**July 1, 2007**

**Canadian Press**

**CTV.ca**

[http://www.ctv.ca/servlet/ArticleNews/story/CTVNews/20070701/haiti\\_mission\\_070701/20070701?hub=Canada](http://www.ctv.ca/servlet/ArticleNews/story/CTVNews/20070701/haiti_mission_070701/20070701?hub=Canada)

TORONTO -- Haiti remains a "volatile" nation plagued by gangs and drug trafficking more than three years after an uprising ousted former president Jean-Bertrand Aristide, despite Canada's half-billion dollar pledge to help stabilize the troubled country, says a newly released document.

A briefing prepared in January for Foreign Affairs Minister Peter MacKay, obtained by The Canadian Press through an access to information request, paints a grim picture of Haiti as a nation where "chronically high" crime has kept United Nations forces from "advancing as was hoped" following last year's election of current Haitian president Rene Preval.

"Haiti's security situation remains volatile," the briefing paper says. "Temporary improvements, followed by peaks in criminal activity demonstrate that security and stability has not been achieved."

Andre Lemay, MacKay's press secretary, said the foreign affairs minister was travelling through Atlantic Canada over the long weekend and was unavailable for comment.

Dan Dugas, MacKay's communications director, said in an e-mail that authorities have made "significant progress" clamping down on Haitian gangs. Still, he acknowledged Haiti's security situation remains "fragile."

"Important challenges remain in dismantling criminal gangs throughout the country, strengthening Haitian law enforcement capacity and modernizing the penal and justice systems," Dugas wrote.

University of Florida anthropologist Gerald Murray, who estimates he has been to Haiti to do fieldwork nearly 100 times since 1974, including two stays of a year or more, said the country has become "more chaotic" since Aristide was ousted. Murray, who last visited Haiti in January, attributes the heightened violence to Haiti's "deteriorating" economy and a police force he calls ineffective.

"The country has fallen to pieces," Murray said.

An 8,800-member UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti, known by its French acronym MINUSTAH, provides the only real protection in the impoverished Caribbean nation.

The briefing called the UN security force "irreplaceable as the only institution that can provide stability and security in Haiti."

While the briefing says there has been tangible progress reforming the Haitian National Police, it also says the force needs another 14,000 officers by 2011 "to be fully capable of handling all Haitian police requirements." To reach that target - which would bring force strength to 20,000 police officers and administration - the briefing says the national police must recruit 1,500 people a year for the next four years.

Murray said it's unlikely more police officers alone will curb violence in Haiti. The country lacks the necessary checks and balances on its police and public officials to weed out possible corruption, he said.

Prime Minister Stephen Harper is expected to travel to Haiti in mid-July as part of a larger tour of the region as he tries to bolster Canada's profile in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Haiti is second only to Afghanistan on the list of Canada's long-term development commitments. Canada pledged \$520 million last year, spread over a five-year period ending September 2011, to help Haiti's reconstruction and development.

The Canadian International Development Agency allocated \$485 million for reconstruction projects. Foreign Affairs contributed \$15 million to support security and justice, while \$20 million is funding up to 100 Canadian police officers as part of the UN security force.

But some critics say there are no safeguards to ensure the Haitian government properly allocates foreign aid. Murray suggested non-governmental organizations could, at least temporarily, oversee Haitian government aid money spending.

Development money should be allocated for short-term aid projects instead of trying to "change the character of the Haitian state," he said.

"If the Canadian government just gives the money to the Haitian government, kiss it goodbye," Murray said.

A CIDA spokesman wouldn't say how the development agency ensures Canada's aid money is properly spent by the Haitian government.

One of the most daunting threats facing authorities is drug trafficking. The briefing says Haiti has become a "major transit hub" for drugs, with traffickers taking advantage of the country's security situation to smuggle drugs from South American through Haiti to North America and Europe.

Robert Maguire of Washington, D.C.-based Trinity University, who has visited Haiti at least 100 times in the last three decades, and since 1990 has served as chair of Haiti

Advanced Area Studies at the U.S. State Department's Foreign Service Institute, called the Caribbean nation's drug trafficking problem "enormously bad."

"Haiti is caught by virtue of its geography in this kind of trafficking network where cocaine flows into it and flows out of it," he said.

"It fuels the gangs, it fuels corruption, it undermines trying to build institutions based upon rule of law. Haiti will remain vulnerable as long as it has the poverty and corruption and lack of institutional capacity to clamp down on the drug trafficking."

However, Maguire said, following two years in which Haiti's situation worsened, the country's lot has improved somewhat in the last six months after the Preval government arrested gang leaders with a "minimum of collateral damage" to Haitians.

Foreign aid money and Preval's efforts to work with different political and economic factions have also helped Haiti's progress, he said.

### **3. Janitors strike forces Haiti's biggest hospital to turn away patients**

**The Associated Press**

**IHT**

**June 28, 2007**

<http://www.iht.com/articles/ap/2007/06/28/news/CB-GEN-Haiti-Hospital-Strike.php>

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti: A two-week strike by janitors and support staff has forced Haiti's largest hospital to turn away patients, officials said Thursday.

Doctors and nurses are not taking part in the protest but say garbage piling up inside Port-au-Prince's General Hospital has made it impossible to practice medicine.

"We can't even use the operating room due to the garbage and unhealthy conditions," said one doctor, Dezard Ulick.

Only homeless patients with nowhere else to go are staying at the hospital.

The striking employees are demanding four weeks' worth of unpaid wages, ambulances and the rehiring of colleagues who recently lost their jobs. They say hospital and government officials have not met with them about their concerns.

Workers held a similar protest last year, at one point removing the corpses of 11 infants from the morgue and laying them out in a courtyard to pressure the government for back wages.

Haiti's cash-strapped government, still reeling from a 2004 rebellion that toppled former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, has struggled to pay thousands of public employees, many of whom have gone months without a salary.

#### **4. Smugglers, poverty fuel Haiti exodus**

**BY JACQUELINE CHARLES**

**Miami Herald**

**July 8, 2007**

<http://www.miamiherald.com/579/story/163926.html>

CAP-HAITIEN -- For decades, Haitians have boarded rickety boats and fled the country - some coming ashore in South Florida -- to escape political turmoil.

After a lull following the election last year of President René Préval, Haitians have resumed risking their lives at sea -- but this time, politicians and others say, the country's moribund economy and more-aggressive smugglers are behind the surge.

In recent months, after scores of migrants drowned near the Turks and Caicos Islands, Haitian officials have scrambled to curtail the flight. Police have become more vigilant in patrolling the coast and cracking down on smugglers. And some lawmakers have held town hall meetings and produced radio ads in the north, from where most boats leave, in the hope of deterring others by describing the dangers of the voyage.

Marc Antoine François, a member of parliament from Ile de la Tortue, who is behind the campaign, acknowledged in a recent interview that he faces a daunting task in a country where few people have jobs.

"When you have a problem, you have to attack it at its root," says François, who last month launched his anti-migration campaign on Ile de la Tortue, an island off Haiti's northwest coast known as a boat-building hub.

Préval, in turn, doesn't deny that work needs to be done. But he added on Friday: "When they say things are not good, they don't have a frame of reference because they did not live the past when things were really bad," referring to the period after the 1957 seizure of power by François "Papa Doc" Duvalier.

During the next four months, there are plans to run radio ads in certain communities urging people not to board the boats and to report clandestine voyages to authorities. Also planned is travel to South Florida to urge Haitians abroad to stop financing the trips on behalf of family members -- but instead to invest in the country to create jobs.

While Préval's government receives high marks from the international community for creating political stability, improving security and reducing inflation, a complicated portrait of misery is emerging, and it is fueling the migration surge.

'ONE AVENUE'

"The majority of the young are of the age where they should be in school, but they cannot go to school," François says of life throughout this impoverished nation of eight million

people. ``They have no means of getting an education or learning a trade. They only see one avenue: Take a boat and go to Nassau or the United States. We have to change that."

So far this year, U.S. Coast Guard cutters have intercepted 1,221 Haitian migrants, more than the 1,198 for all of last year. And that worries some international and Haitian officials, who fear that the desperate voyages could easily cause political unrest.

"There is something that is happening that we don't quite understand," says Maureen Achieng, chief of mission in Port-au-Prince for the International Organization for Migration, which has teamed up with Francois and other lawmakers to tackle the problem. ``We don't know what's really pushing things in the last couple of months because the situation isn't any worse necessarily."

Achieng and others say they know that poverty and misery are major reasons that people attempt to leave. But what they want to know is if something else is at play. They hope that a comprehensive study of the factors compelling people to leave will provide answers. They then hope to create programs to address the issue.

## HUMAN SMUGGLING

Meanwhile, Haitians told The Miami Herald that smugglers are increasingly profiting from their misery. As Préval increases the pressure on drug traffickers, unscrupulous boat owners turn to human smuggling.

Aggressive smugglers capitalize on desperation and recruit passengers on the false belief that if they are caught at sea, they would be sent to Australia, rather than returned to Haiti, according to residents and lawmakers.

"They are exploiting the masses," says Georgemain Prophète, a local official.

Their message is reinforced by return visits from emigrants who look better fed and better dressed.

Prophète and others say the Haitian coast guard has stepped up efforts to arrest smugglers, but it's hard to shut down a business where there is a waiting list. It's also a business with no set fees: Some people barter food in payment for their voyage. Others say they pay hundreds of dollars; a Miami Herald reporter was told that in at least one instance, \$5,000 was paid.

"People want to change their situation, and they are not concerned if they don't have legal papers," Prophète says. ``We talk about hope in [Cap-Haitien], but we haven't seen any benefits yet."

U.S. Coast Guard officials say that while the numbers of individuals leaving Haiti by boat are up, there is no indication that the final goal is South Florida. Many migrant-crammed

vessels leaving Haiti are island-hopping with an eye toward the financially stable Turks and Caicos, a British dependent chain 150 miles north of Haiti.

"It has been an increasing problem for us," Jean Harrod, a spokeswoman for the governor's office in Turks and Caicos, says, noting that last year they repatriated almost 3,000 Haitians back to Haiti. "We don't have a big population. We estimate we have 33,000 people. That would represent nearly 10 percent of our population."

Despite the Haitian government's success at controlling inflation -- it's down from 40 percent in 2003 to 8 percent today -- and keeping the local currency stable, the economic outlook remains grim.

The government needs to create jobs, entrepreneurs and regional economic development, says Haitian economist Kesner Pharel. "That is the main challenge of the government," he says.

Life has not become more expensive, Pharel says -- it just feels that way.

"Because I am not working, I don't have any money and I am saying my condition isn't any better," he says. "This time last year, inflation was more than 10 percent, and now it's less."

Economists also cite another factor for the pinch many feel: Nearly three million people receive remittances totaling \$1.6 billion annually, most from the United States. The increasing strength of the Haitian currency has resulted in a loss of purchasing power, and local market prices have risen.

Michel St. Croix, the mayor of Cap-Haitien, says that less than 10 percent of the city's 800,000 residents have jobs. The city is Haiti's second-largest and, like others, has lost countless jobs in the wake of political turmoil.

When he entered office a few months ago, St. Croix says, there was only \$81,081 in the city's coffers. He was able to collect \$135,135 more through taxes, but it's still not enough to satisfy the city's myriad needs, he says.

Recently, his office launched a street-cleaning program, one of several small projects it hopes to introduce with international community help. So far, about 400 Haitians have been put to work cleaning the streets, earning a little less than \$3 a day. That's almost \$1 more than the pay for most Haitians, 76 percent of whom live on less than \$2 a day.

St. Croix is demanding more money from Port-au-Prince -- and more attention.

"I am mounting pressure on the government to give the people a way to make a living," he says.

After a boat washed ashore in Hallandale Beach earlier this year, Prime Minister Jacques-Edouard Alexis told The Miami Herald that stimulating Haiti's economy was one of his biggest challenges.

He had hoped that international donors would fund a project aimed at creating jobs in several cities.

When donors declined, the government decided to fund the projects itself. But the jobs, like the foreign investments, have been slow in coming.

Residents may not be willing to wait much longer.

"If this government was an illegal one, the country would have been in flames already," says Fritzner Vital, an unemployed construction worker, after another unsuccessful day of looking for work. "There would have been protests because things are that bad. If things don't change, the same people who supported Préval will be left with no other choice but to take to the streets."

### **5. Haitians risk death `in search of a life'**

**BY JACQUELINE CHARLES**

**Miami Herald**

**July 8, 2007**

<http://www.miamiherald.com/582/story/163901.html>

CAP-HAITIEN, Haiti -- Gina Sévère and her five children's dreams of a better life are now in the hands of her younger brother, two months after her husband drowned off the Turks and Caicos Islands on a risky voyage from Haiti.

Sévère fully expects her brother to attempt to leave, too.

"The country doesn't offer you anything," says Sévère, tears trickling down her face. "Things are not getting better."

Sévère's view is shared by many here, fueling an increase in the number of Haitians who have boarded dangerously flawed and overcrowded boats for the perilous journey out of the country.

In one such journey nine weeks ago, Sévère's husband, Anold Jacques-Magloire, was among 61 Haitians whose bodies were recovered in the shark-infested sea near Providenciales in the Turks and Caicos.

"People have problems, they have difficulty," says Sévère's brother, Jocenel St. Ange, 25, who is unemployed. "That is why they are taking boats -- to find a better life."

Although the tragedy provoked an outpouring of grief among Haitians, and for a few weeks halted the deadly clandestine voyages, they later resumed. Turks and Caicos

officials say that three weeks later, they repatriated 37 Haitian migrants after a boat attempted to land on May 28 in the British dependent territory, 150 miles from Haiti's northern coast.

The U.S. Coast Guard also intercepted and returned 50 Haitians in June. So far this year, the U.S. Coast Guard has intercepted 1,221 Haitian migrants, more than the 1,198 for all of last year.

### A WOMAN'S SECRET

Florence Joachin, 25, didn't tell her mother that she was heading to Providenciales when she asked to borrow \$285. Clairecida Osias recalls her daughter saying only that she was ``leaving in search of a life."

"I thought she was headed to Port-au-Prince," says Osias, who borrowed the money. ``What was I to do? When you have a child who is trying to help you even though she has her own two children to take care of, and she says she wants to go in search of a life, you are resigned to help her."

Osias learned the truth when someone brought Joachin's crumpled passport to the house and asked if the photo was of her daughter.

As she recalled the moment, she stares at the mass grave, her eyes surveying the tiny white wooden crosses standing atop the white slab. Osias' days are now consumed with grief and worry over food and money.

"There is no money, no work," Osias says. ``Things are worse now."

An expectant father, Antoine JeanBaptiste, and his two best friends were among the 78 survivors who managed to stay alive by stripping naked to prevent others from pulling them under.

The three, like other survivors, accuse the Turks and Caicos police patrol of ramming the wooden boat at least twice before towing it from shallow water and into the deep just as they were preparing to disembark.

The British government has launched an investigation into the allegations and the accident, and is expected to issue a report next month.

### POOR CONDITIONS

"Just look at the miserable conditions in which people here are living," Jean-Baptiste says, walking through a neighborhood of rundown and unfinished houses with overgrown weeds and debris on the outskirts of Cap-Haitien.

It was the second time that Jean-Baptiste had tried to make it into Turks and Caicos, where he hoped to find work as a plumber. He doesn't rule out trying again.

"The way it works here, you cannot work for a certain rate," he says. "If you find something but don't do it, someone else will jump at the chance. That is why the minute you find something, you have to jump at the chance."

Some, however, don't get that luxury. They go months and even years without work despite their skills, says Vilsaint Dorvilien, 31, noting that many of the men aboard the boat were laborers seeking jobs in Turks and Caicos' building boom.

Dorvilien, who can barely afford the one-room shack he shares with five others, including his wife and two children, says he sold two goats and borrowed the rest of the money he needed from his father and brother to make the ill-fated trip. He says he paid \$333.

"You wake up each day looking at the telephone, hoping someone will call, or you go from job to job hoping to find something," Dorvilien says, describing his daily routine. "I'm sitting here now, not doing anything. I want to work."

## **6. Haiti Studies Creation of Security Force**

**By STEVENSON JACOBS**

**Associated Press**

**June 21, 2007**

**Los Angeles Times**

<http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/world/wire/sns-ap-haiti-security-force.1,7036940.story?coll=sns-ap-world-headlines>

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti -- Haiti is considering the creation of a security force to one day replace U.N. peacekeepers sent three years ago to stabilize the troubled country.

A special commission named by President Rene Preval will decide whether such a force should take the form of a reconstituted military or act as a supporting unit of Haiti's outgunned police, said Sen. Yuri Latortue, president of the Senate commission on justice and security, on Thursday.

Preval is expected to appoint the commission next week and the commission's report would be due eight months later, Latortue said.

An 8,800-member U.N. force provides the only real security in the impoverished Caribbean nation, which is still recovering from a violent uprising that toppled former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide in February 2004.

Latortue, the nephew and former security chief of ex-interim Prime Minister Gerard Latortue, said his Senate colleagues support creating a new military force.

"We can't provide our own security yet. But once the U.N. soldiers leave, the country will need a military force to keep the peace and protect our borders," Latortue, a former officer in the Haitian armed forces, told The Associated Press in an interview.

Preval has said he prefers creating a police force similar to that of France's national police over reinstating the military, which orchestrated several coups throughout Haiti's history.

Aristide dismantled the military in 1995, after a U.S. military intervention restored him to power following the 1991 coup that first ousted him.

### **7. Haiti trip gives altered image**

**Officials from Miami-Dade County visited Haiti on a goodwill mission, finding both progress and challenges.**

**By JACQUELINE CHARLES**

**Miami Herald**

**July 7, 2007**

<http://www.miamiherald.com/582/story/163182.html>

PORT-AU-PRINCE -- Miami City Commissioner Michelle Spence-Jones still remembers the cautions she received when she told relatives and friends that she was headed to Haiti. Don't go, they said. The place is steeped in problems.

But after two days here, Spence-Jones and 12 other elected officials representing the Florida Legislature, Miami-Dade County and five of its municipalities -- Miami, North Miami, North Miami Beach, Miami Gardens and El Portal -- are finding something far different.

"It's nothing like what people say it is," Spence-Jones said, between meetings with Haitian President René Préval and U.S. Ambassador Janet Sanderson. "I am glad I came. I can see for myself. We have to begin to change the image."

After months of facing violence from armed gangs and an unprecedented spree of for-ransom kidnappings, Haitian government officials have returned a measure of security to the capital. But much remains to be done.

"We cannot accomplish everything at the same time," Préval said. "Today, I am happy to hear people are discussing other problems besides crime and kidnapping. They are discussing the problem of the [exchange rate]. They are discussing privatization. They are discussing energy."

### **OTHER PROBLEMS**

"They are discussing all of the problems that truly remain as problems. But it is a good sign they can discuss all of the matters besides kidnapping and insecurity."

Indeed, as the South Florida delegation traveled through the jammed streets here, its members saw for themselves the progress -- and the work that remains.

"We want to show the people not only in Miami but in the United States that what they think about Haiti, what they read in the paper, what they see on the TV is not the truth," said Philippe Derose, one of four North Miami Beach council members, three of whom are Haitian American, on the four-day fact-finding trip.

As local government officials who represent communities with large Haitian populations, Derose and North Miami Councilman Jacques Despinosse, who organized the visit, said they want to build a bridge between Haiti and their cities.

Prime Minister Jacques Edouard Alexis welcomed the gesture but also offered one cautionary note: What Haiti really needs, he said, is investment and technical assistance.

NO JUNK

Don't send us junk, he said referring to used cars and other equipment that cities often send here but that often don't work.

"It's better you send less but send equipment that is new," Alexis said.

"Haiti is a country with a lot of opportunities. The question before us now is investments, and how do we attract investments?"

Also in the South Florida delegation were North Miami Mayor Kevin Burns, Miami-Dade Commissioner Audrey Edmonson and state Rep. Ronald Brise, D-North Miami.

## **8. On the Caribbean, 20/20 Blindness**

**By Johanna Mendelson Forman**

**The Washington Post**

**Friday, June 22, 2007**

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/06/21/AR2007062101743.html>

This week leaders of 14 Caribbean countries will meet in Washington, D.C. to discuss the future of the region and its relationship with the United States. For U.S. leaders, the Caribbean 20/20 Vision conference is a low priority on the foreign policy agenda.

The media silence on this event underscores the lack of understanding that exists about the region. Although the Caribbean states vary in size, (most are small), wealth and population, we underestimate the region's geopolitical potential. These states represent votes at the United Nations and the Organization of American States (OAS), and make it possible for the U.S. to advance its agenda in multilateral organizations. And the Diaspora population that resides in the U.S. provides sizeable portions of national GDPs in the form of remittances.

Since 2001, when the United States and our Western Hemisphere neighbors declared the Caribbean our "third border," U.S. policy toward the region has been limited to fighting drug traffickers and preventing terrorists from advancing to U.S. shores. (Note the capture of would-be bombers of New York's John F. Kennedy International Airport, who hailed from Trinidad and Tobago and Guyana, happened because there was excellent cooperation with Caribbean law enforcement officials.) Yet the U.S. does little to recognize the importance of countries at our third border as both a potential for energy independence as well as a geopolitical area that brings with it a large voting block in multilateral organizations like the UN and OAS.

The last seven years have failed to generate a coherent policy to manage our relationships with the Caribbean, having handed the Haiti mess off to the UN and Brazil. Only in March, 2007 did President George W. Bush pay some attention to Latin America on a whistle-stop tour that yielded a memorandum of understanding on biofuels with Brazil, but little hard cash to help give the leaders of the region a reason to change their minds about the loss of an ally and friend.

The Caribbean is a region where broad policy issues on energy security, climate change and international trade and development converge. The small island states could help reduce U.S. dependency on foreign oil through the development of biofuels for export and their own use. The transformation of the Caribbean to an energy powerhouse could also create new jobs, reduce the exodus of poor islanders to the U.S., and generate a whole new group of trading partners who would seek these energy crops for their own needs.

But our third border also carries great risks. In addition to the narco-trafficking and other illicit trade that pours through the region, the Caribbean sits in the path of most Atlantic hurricanes. And if climate change predictions are accurate, the 60 percent of the Caribbean population who live on the coast will be at even greater risk to the growing severity of weather patterns. The resulting humanitarian crisis that could be generated from environmental refugees is coming, and no one in our emergency planning sector, save U.S. Southern Command, is really prepared to deal with this matter. The state of Florida, the southern most tip of the continental U.S, is also at risk as the closest safe haven for people of the Caribbean fleeing environmental devastation.

U.S. effectiveness as a good neighbor in the Caribbean could help erase the sense of betrayal that many of the Caribbean states felt after the U.S. intervened in Haiti for a second time in 2004. Our actions not only created ill will among Caribbean Community states, but it also reduced our effectiveness in the corridors of multilateral institutions like the OAS and the UN, where the U.S. had counted on the Caribbean to help support U.S. interests through their votes.

If the United States is to once again rely on the support of these small island states, it will have to demonstrate that it takes its commitment to the third border seriously by crafting a policy that addresses regional concerns: stimulating trade and development, reducing poverty, stabilizing Haiti and mitigating climate change through expanding renewable

energy resources. Only by putting greater emphasis on a collaborative approach to the complex policy issues of security and development in the Caribbean will the U.S. once again be able to regain its legitimacy as a trusted actor and ally.

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## **9. INTERVIEW-Haitian leader says priorities drugs, corruption**

**21 Jun 2007**

**Reuters**

**By Joseph Guylor Delva**

<http://www.alertnet.org/thenews/newsdesk/N21419973.htm>

WASHINGTON, June 21 (Reuters) - Haiti's president said on Thursday that fighting drug trafficking and corruption in his impoverished Caribbean country was now the priority of his government.

Rene Preval said in an interview in Washington, D.C., that sustainable social and economic development was not possible unless both plagues were fought.

"Police officers, judges, customs and government officials are bought off by drug dealers and there will be no stability if traffickers are not defeated," Preval told Reuters during a meeting of Caribbean leaders in the U.S. capital.

"They will do anything to destabilize the government."

Haiti, the poorest country in the Americas, has suffered frequent waves of violent instability as it tried to build a democracy after decades of dictatorship.

Its first democratically elected leader, former Roman Catholic priest Jean-Bertrand Aristide, was ousted early in his first term in a military coup and then again during a later term through an armed rebellion in February 2004.

Preval's election last year revived hopes for peace and a U.N. peacekeeping force has in recent months had some success in tackling the street gangs that had taken control of the sprawling slums of the capital Port-au-Prince.

But Haiti remains a significant transshipment route for South American cocaine and its police and courts are notoriously corrupt, presenting challenges to efforts to build democratic institutions and economic conditions that would ease grinding poverty.

Preval and 14 other Caribbean leaders met with U.S. President George W. Bush on Wednesday to discuss trade, economic development and regional security.

Preval said when it was his turn to speak he addressed only the problem of drug trafficking.

"Because if this problem is not solved, there is no point in talking about a strong state, about investments, progress and stability," said Preval.

Preval, who recently submitted to parliament a bill that would force government officials and their close dependents to declare their assets every year, said corruption was a major threat to development.

"...If we allow smugglers and other corrupt officials to go unpunished, honest investors won't come to do business in our country," he said.