

Dear Colleagues,

Please find below the mainstream news on Haiti for June 6 – 9, 2006.

The newly elected Haitian Parliament overwhelmingly approved the new coalition Cabinet, representing six political parties, and formally confirmed Preval's Prime Minister, Jacques-Edouard Alexis. A Miami Herald Op-ed exhorts Preval to "heal social rifts", achieve national reconciliation and address the thousands of illegal prisoners. However the Herald ignores the international community's complicity in creating these problems in the past two years. The Herald further recommends international judicial assistance to process prisoner cases.

On Wednesday Cite Soleil gangs and UN troops exchanged gunfire. Witnesses reported three people killed.

Caricom officially reinstated Haiti as a member of the Caribbean regional trading bloc.

Toro magazine published an investigative story on the circumstances surrounding RCMP Mark Bourque's gunshot wound and death in Haiti. The writer claims Mr. Bourque's colleague begged for and were refused help by fellow Jordanian UN soldiers. UN officials deny any wrongdoing. The Globe and Mail article refers local gangs, those purportedly responsible for Bourque's death, as "chimere" and claims they are "responsible for a wave of kidnappings aimed at Haiti's elite." 'Chimere' is a derogatory term, often applied to those who are poor, black and supportive of the Lavalas movement. Investigations have proven that kidnappings were organized by wealthy elites, police and many other diverse members of Haitian society and kidnapping victims represented all of Haiti's social classes.

Canadian Foreign Affairs Minister Peter Mackay visited Haiti last weekend and apologized for Canada's entry denial to Jacques Edouard Alexis last month. The Canadians have yet to reveal whether the visa denial was a mistake or why Alexis and other Haitian officials are on a list of people accused of crimes against humanity. The CBC article closes with a brief mention of allegations against Haitian policemen for killing civilians and Aristide opponents during Preval's first presidency (1996-2001).

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1) Haiti Parliament approves new Cabinet

CNN.com

Associated Press

Thursday, June 8, 2006

<http://edition.cnn.com/2006/WORLD/americas/06/08/haiti.ap/>

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti -- Haiti's Parliament has overwhelmingly approved a new Cabinet that includes members from six political parties, a strong show of support for President Rene Preval as he steers the impoverished nation toward peace and stability.

In a vote late Wednesday, 84 of 86 deputies in the lower house voted to approve the 18-member Cabinet, which was unanimously endorsed by the Senate a day earlier.

The new government reflects Preval's need to unite the conflict-torn Caribbean nation after a February 2004 revolt toppled former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide and touched off a wave of violence.

The vote also formally confirms Preval's prime minister, Jacques-Edouard Alexis, who replaces U.S.-backed interim Prime Minister Gerard Latortue. Latortue left the country last month and has not spoken publicly about the new government.

Speaking to the Senate on Tuesday, Alexis said the government would work to improve security, boost access to basic services and foster national reconciliation.

But unifying the deeply divided country of 8 million won't be easy.

Aristide's supporters are demanding his return from exile in South Africa and the release of scores of prisoners jailed without charge in the aftermath of the revolt. Some have accused Preval of sidelining them from the new government, a move that could stir resentment in Port-au-Prince's volatile, pro-Aristide slums.

Preval, whose Cabinet includes one member of Aristide's Fanmi Lavalas party, has said Aristide is free to return home but hasn't said whether he'd welcome back his one-time ally and political mentor.

Preval, 63, was sworn in last month after winning elections in February, and has since been in talks to form the Cabinet.

Preval was Aristide's premier in September 1991, when the army staged a bloody coup. Three years later, 20,000 U.S. troops intervened to restore Aristide's democratically elected government.

Aristide later backed Preval in 1995 elections because the constitution barred the president from running for a consecutive term.

2) Préval appoints coalition government

By Stevenson Jacobs

Associated Press

Miami Herald

June 7, 2006

<http://www.miami.com/mld/miamiherald/14758843.htm>

PORT-AU-PRINCE - Haiti's president appointed a coalition government Tuesday in an effort to unite the nation two years after a bloody revolt toppled the previous elected administration.

The new government includes members of six political parties, underscoring President René Préval's need to bring together Haiti's bitterly divided political factions. Haiti's Parliament must approve the Cabinet in a vote due to be completed today.

Haiti's powerful business community and large network of popular organizations offered no immediate reaction to the new government, which was announced after days of intense negotiations with Parliament, where no party holds a majority.

Prime Minister Jacques Edouard Alexis said the government would embark on a 25-year development plan, including boosting access to basic services for Haiti's poor, reinforcing the country's brittle state institutions and attracting private investment.

In an address to Parliament, Alexis said Préval's administration would also work to restore security after the February 2004 revolt that toppled former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide and plunged the Caribbean nation of roughly eight million into chaos.

"We no longer have the right to fail," Alexis said. "The consequences would be too heavy a burden to carry. The country cannot be content with just hoping anymore. It must finally take the path that will lead to its development."

The 18-member Cabinet includes five members of Préval's 1999-2001 government, including Justice Minister René Magloire and Agriculture Minister François Séverin. Former priest Jean Raynald Clérisme was named foreign affairs minister.

The government is mostly members of Préval's Lespwa Party but includes members of FUSION, the Struggling People's Organization and one from Aristide's Fanmi Lavalas Party, Planning Minister Jean Max Bellerive said.

Lavalas officials, who are calling for Aristide's return from exile in South Africa, had complained that they were being sidelined by Préval, a former Aristide ally who has since severed ties with his political mentor.

In his address, Alexis vowed that the government would embrace voices from all political stripes, calling a plural government ``a requirement for the blooming of a healthy democratic life."

He said the government would seek to develop Haiti's crippled economy by promoting tourism, manufacturing and agriculture, and would "reconsider" some legal statutes enacted by the U.S.-backed interim authority that was appointed to replace Aristide.

Préval was Aristide's premier in September 1991, when the army staged a bloody coup.

Three years later, 20,000 U.S. troops intervened to restore the democratically elected government. Aristide backed Préval in 1995 elections because the constitution bars presidents from running for consecutive terms.

3) President Préval's chance to govern

OUR OPINION: NEW CABINET A PROMISING SIGN OF CHANGED POLITICS

Editorial Opinion

Miami Herald

June 8, 2006

<http://www.miami.com/mld/miamiherald/news/opinion/14765998.htm>

Haitian President René Préval's new cabinet is a heartening sign of a break with the winner-take-all tradition of Haitian politics. In one of his first significant moves, he has named members of five opposition parties to work with him. That's a positive effort to unify a nation splintered by warring political factions for far too long. The multi-party cabinet and Mr. Préval's 25-year development plan provide a measure of hope for a nation that has been on the brink of anarchy. But the true test will come as they set about the task of governing.

For the greater good

That's particularly the case for five former ministers brought back into office by Mr. Préval, including Prime Minister Jacques Edouard Alexis, and opposition cabinet members. Their job is to look out for the greater good, not just for a political party or other narrow interest. Now is their chance to show that Haiti can be set on the road to an independent, prosperous, well-functioning and inclusive democracy.

The new government needs to focus on improving Haiti's security, economy and governance. Those are tough challenges best conquered with cooperation among all players in Haitian society. Such inclusive government has been virtually absent in Haiti's history. The rule of dictatorships gave way to democratically elected governments in 1990. Yet even then, political payback and violence led to increasing misery.

Mr. Préval's government would be wise to try to heal social rifts created by decades of class warfare. Up per- and middle-class people who may not have voted for Mr. Préval

still have a stake in improving Haiti's future. The government should engage the business community and groups representing the poor in the hard work of rebuilding.

One way to signal a fresh start -- both at home and to the international community -- is for the Préval government to address the issue of thousands of prisoners who have not been convicted of crimes. Among them is former Prime Minister Yvon Neptune, widely considered a political prisoner because of his ties to former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide. Panels of Haitian and international jurists could be convened to review each case and determine its merits.

Support and investment

In this way, Mr. Préval can demonstrate the importance of judicial fairness and an impartial rule of law -- regardless of the politics involved in any given case. It will also be an antidote to corrupt judicial practices.

President Préval has the opportunity to set the tone for a new Haitian way, one of inclusiveness, political debate and compromise and respect for divergent views. Not only would such an approach encourage international support and foreign investment, but it would also lay a foundation for a stable democracy.

4) UN peacekeepers, gangs clash in Haiti slum

Friday, June 9, 2006

by Joseph Guyler Delva

Reuters

Washington Post

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/06/08/AR2006060801440.html>

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (Reuters): UN troops and gangs exchanged gunfire in Haiti's largest slum in the first such clash in months, and witnesses said on Thursday that three people were killed.

The shooting occurred late on Wednesday in Cite Soleil, the vast seaside slum on the northern edge of the capital that was the scene of routine gunfights between gangs and foreign troops last year, but had been relatively peaceful since before Haiti's Feb. 7 presidential election.

A spokesman for the UN mission in Haiti, Lt. Col. Elamarti Abdesslam, said peacekeepers returned fire after gunmen shot at them, but could not confirm if anyone was killed.

"All I can say is that no one on our side was hurt, but we don't know if anyone was killed among the gang members," Abdesslam said.

Witnesses and gang members said at least three people were killed but it was not clear if all of them were shot when UN troops returned fire.

"I saw one young man killed after the foreign soldiers shot in our direction," said Marjorie, a 24-year-old woman who did not want to give her last name. "But there were other people with weapons too."

Cite Soleil, a bastion of support for former president Jean-Bertrand Aristide, was rife with violence after he was pushed from power by a bloody rebellion in February 2004.

The peacekeepers, now numbering about 8,700 soldiers and police, were sent to the poor Caribbean nation after Aristide's ouster to support a U.S.-backed interim government.

The violence in Cite Soleil diminished when Rene Preval, a one-time Aristide protege who was the favorite of Aristide's slum supporters, emerged as the front-runner for the presidency. Preval won the February election and took office in May.

Preval's prime minister, Jacques Edouard Alexis, and his coalition cabinet, were approved by Parliament this week and were scheduled to be sworn into office on Friday.

5) Caribbean group reinstates Haiti

Associated Press

Miami Herald

June 8, 2006

<http://www.miami.com/mld/miamiherald/news/world/haiti/14765983.htm>

GEORGETOWN, Guyana - (AP) -- A Caribbean regional group has lifted its 28-month suspension of Haiti in response to the country's return to democratic rule after elections earlier this year.

The 15-member Caribbean Community suspended Haiti's membership shortly after former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide fled in 2004 after a bloody revolt.

The group refused to recognize a U.S.-backed interim government, calling it unconstitutional.

Caricom had said it would reinstate Haiti if February's presidential and parliamentary elections were deemed free and fair. Haitians elected René Préval, an agronomist and former Haitian president, as their leader.

"Heads of government wish to congratulate the people of Haiti who, through their patience, resolve and courage, demonstrated their attachment to the democratic process," the Guyana-based secretariat said in a statement late Tuesday.

Preval will make a speech at Caricom's annual conference in St. Kitts in July. On Tuesday, Préval named a coalition government in a bid to unite the impoverished nation. Haiti's Parliament must approve the Cabinet in a vote due to be completed Wednesday.

**6) UN troops left Canadian to die in Haiti, magazine says,
Blank stares greeted pleas for help, but soldier found time to pose for photo
The Globe and Mail
June 6, 2006**

<http://www.theglobeandmail.com/servlet/story/LAC.20060606.BOURQUE06/TPStory/National>

As Mark Bourque lay dying from a bullet wound under the blazing Haitian sun, a group of soldiers from the same United Nations mission he was assigned to snapped photos of their gravely wounded Canadian colleague. However, none of them lifted a finger to save him, according to a magazine article published today.

The article in Toro magazine, by writer Christopher Shulgan, paints a harrowing account of Mr. Bourque's last moments as a frantic colleague begged for help that might have saved his life from UN soldiers in a nearby armoured personnel carrier.

The deadly attack occurred last December in Port-au-Prince, in a dangerous gang-controlled section of the capital city, the slum known as Cité Soleil.

Mr. Bourque and his colleague, Pierre Perrault, were just five minutes away from reaching their destination when their rented jeep was surrounded by young men.

One had a gun.

Mr. Bourque, the driver, gunned the accelerator and shots were fired.

"Pierre, I'm hit," he cried out.

Mr. Bourque, 57, was a retired Mountie who had been hired to train security guards to protect polling stations in the February election.

He and Mr. Perrault worked for the policing arm of the United Nations stabilization mission in the Caribbean country. It included troops from Brazil, Argentina and Jordan.

According to the article written by Mr. Shulgan, an Argentine-run hospital was just five minutes from the ambush scene, but Mr. Bourque lay unconscious and bleeding for half an hour before an ambulance came.

He arrived at the hospital at 10:55 a.m., nearly an hour after the 10 a.m. shooting.

Mr. Bourque, who was married and had two grown sons, died at 11:08 a.m.

In the article, Mr. Perrault describes his increasing frustration with the inaction of the UN soldiers at the scene of the fatal ambush. At first, he believed that a language barrier was responsible for the confusion.

After the shooting, Mr. Perrault grabbed the steering wheel and pulled their SUV off the road. The troop carrier parked in front of the vehicle, providing the two men with some cover from the band of attackers.

Mr. Bourque was unconscious, slumped at the wheel. Blood was pouring from his leg wound, pooling on the floor underneath the driver's seat.

Mr. Perrault lifted Mr. Bourque from the vehicle and tied his belt around the injured man's thigh to serve as a tourniquet. Mr. Bourque's pulse was weak and his colleague could see the colour fading from his face.

Mr. Perrault yelled at the soldiers in French, asking them to get his friend into the troop carrier. They stared back at him blankly.

He tried again, this time in English, but still there was no response.

Mr. Perrault noticed the soldiers wore Jordanian shoulder patches. He tried miming, and then he tried begging.

"Please! Please!" Mr. Perrault pleaded.

"Please help me.

"He's going to die. If we don't get him in your tank.

"To get to the hospital. Please."

A spokesman for the UN mission in Haiti defended the soldiers. "They're not supposed to leave their station," David Wimhurst told *Toro* magazine -- even in a matter of life and death.

"Not if there's another form of transportation available. I don't think, for example, [Mr. Bourque's] car was out of service."

Yesterday, in a brief telephone interview from Haiti, Mr. Wimhurst refused to discuss the circumstances of Mr. Bourque's death, saying it was presently the subject of a UN inquiry.

Mr. Wimhurst would not explain the policy for UN soldiers who come across a wounded colleague.

"I don't want to comment, in general, because you're calling about a specific case," Mr. Wimhurst said.

According to the article, the Jordanian troops were milling beside Mr. Bourque, when one soldier crouched beside the pool of blood at the dying man's feet. Another soldier snapped his photo.

Mr. Shulgan, who travelled to Haiti last spring to research the article, was given copies of the photographs by a documentary filmmaker, who obtained them from a contact in the UN's Jordanian detachment.

The writer said one of the photos, of an armed soldier crouched beside Mr. Bourque's feet, resembles a so-called trophy photograph pose, the kind that people e-mail to friends.

"The soldier's facial expression, and its absence of urgency, is the most concrete evidence I saw of how tragic -- and avoidable -- Bourque's death was," Mr. Shulgan wrote.

The officers were hired by a non-governmental organization called Canadem, which the Canadian government contracted to assemble a team to send to Haiti.

The group of 25 officers was made up of retired and inactive police officers.

Once there, the Canadians noted there was a shortage of cars, so they rented unmarked SUVs from a Hertz rental agency in Port-au-Prince.

At the time of his death, Mr. Bourque was wearing a white shirt and brown pants, and not a UN uniform.

Quoting a Haitian source, the article said gang members involved in the incident believed that the Canadians were American civilians.

The gang, one of many such local gangs known as chimère, has been responsible for a wave of kidnappings aimed at Haiti's elite.

In the months following Mr. Bourque's death, the UN has urged its staff to put UN markers on the hoods and doors of vehicle, the article reported.

7) IADB agrees to new infrastructure works in Haiti

06 Jun 2006

Reuters

<http://today.reuters.com/News/CrisesArticle.aspx?storyId=N06400285>

WASHINGTON, June 6 - The Inter-American Development Bank has agreed to build roads, expand drinking water services and improve electricity services in Haiti, a bank statement on Tuesday said.

IADB President Luis Alberto Moreno met with Haitian President Rene Preval and members of his cabinet in Port-au-Prince on Monday where the request for new infrastructure projects was made.

Preval, who was sworn in as president of the Western Hemisphere's poorest country last month, wants to speed up development projects in infrastructure, education and agriculture to create jobs and improve living conditions.

Other requests included basic sanitation in rural areas and a nutrition, health and early education program for infants and young children, the IADB said.

No cost estimates were provided.

The IADB to date has invested \$525 million in Haiti for needs ranging from water and sanitation, health, education and job training to flood prevention.

Meanwhile, the International Monetary Fund said it plans to send a mission to Port-au-Prince from June 19 to June 30 to discuss a three-year Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility with Haitian officials.

IMF projections show Haiti's economy growing 2.5 percent this year and 4.0 percent in 2007 while inflation should slow from 13.1 percent in 2006 to 8.9 percent next year.

8) Visa denial for Haitian PM 'regrettable,' says MacKay

04 Jun 2006

CBC News

Foreign Affairs Minister Peter MacKay, visiting Haiti on the weekend, apologized on Canada's behalf for a border incident in May that involved the Caribbean country's prime minister.

Jacques Edouard Alexis was denied a Canadian entry visa because his name was on a list of people accused of crimes against humanity.

He was eventually given a visa, but not an explanation.

"This is an unfortunate and regrettable occurrence," MacKay told reporters after meeting with Alexis and President René Préval in Port-au-Prince on Saturday.

"But Mr. Alexis has been very gracious and very patient and understanding, and my presence here today is a demonstration that we're going to work through this."

Earlier in the week, Alexis complained that his "honour has been soiled" by the incident.

While MacKay tried to make amends, he wouldn't say whether Canadian officials made a mistake.

"We are committed to working through this," he said. "I've given my personal word that we are going to give this the priority that it deserves and we're going to find a way to fix it."

The incident was embarrassing for Ottawa, which has sent millions of dollars in funding and dozens of police officers to join a UN peacekeeping force to help restore calm in Haiti after Jean-Bertrand Aristide was ousted as president in a violent rebellion in February 2004.

Alexis, 58, is an agronomist who previously served as prime minister and education minister during Préval's first presidency from 1996 to 2001.

During that time, Haitian police allegedly killed civilians, including political opponents of Aristide.