

Dear Colleagues,

Please find below the mainstream news on Haiti for November 1-13, 2006.

Transparency International (TI) published its latest Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) ranking Haiti as the world's most corrupt country. The CPI ranks 163 countries for "perceptions of the degree of corruption as seen by business people and country analysts" (TI). TI admits it is impossible to use hard empirical data for their rankings. Countries are ranked based on a minimum of three, of a possible twelve, surveys and expert assessments. Haiti, and other countries listed at the bottom, were assessed on an average of only three to four reports. The methodology is limited by the fact that it compares *perceptions* in each country, rather than an objective metric of actual corruption. Haitian business people and country analysts are notorious for their misunderstanding and misrepresentations of Haitian politics and economy.

The death of two Jordanian UN soldiers was widely covered in the MSM. The two soldiers were shot near Cite Soleil as they were returning to their base. The AP/Los Angeles Times article reported the UN is "stepping up patrols to quell violence in the...dense slums...but there is growing opposition among slum dwellers to the Brazil-led U.N. force." Residents of the poor neighborhoods complain that too many civilians have been killed and wounded by indiscriminate shooting of civilians by UN troops. The UN, as always, denies shooting unless provoked. However, there have been too many incidents where large casualties and injuries of unarmed young, old and women civilians occur without appropriate UN investigations and public reporting of such incidents. The UN claims nine peacekeepers have died since 2004 while civilian casualty figures for the same period are unavailable.

The Toronto Star's "Crime, chaos in Haiti" exposes a few horrific cases of gang violence, retribution, killing and kidnapping as justification to keep Canada's 100 police officers, 450 troops, support personnel and six helicopters in country to improve Haiti's rampant insecurity. "With no security here, there can be no investment. No investment, no jobs. No jobs, more violence---and the cycle continues." The story did not mention the continuing cycle of Canadian foreign policies that feed a cycle of destabilization, insecurity and poverty in Haiti. The cheerleading of Canada's efforts in Haiti includes a reference to the "leading Haitian human rights organization, the National Human Rights Defence Network" (RNDDH) reporting on 150 civilian and 11 police officer deaths reported in May and June. The RNDDH (formerly NCHR-Haiti) is funded by the Canadian and US governments, and formally collaborated with the police and prosecutors of the Interim Government in repressing political dissidents. The Star article fails to analyze the role of MINUSTAH attacks and killings of civilians as a contributor to the 'crime and chaos in Haiti'.

A South Florida Sun-Sentinel editorial regrets Haiti's loss of a key proponent, Senator Mike DeWine (R-Ohio) who recently lost his re-election bid. DeWine, along with former Senator Bob Graham (D-FL), cosponsored the Haiti Economic Recovery and Opportunity Act (HERO), which passed in the Senate but remains stalled in the House.

Editors emphasize the urgent need for Florida Representative Kendrick Meek to step up and push passage of the HERO/HOPE legislation.

The Washington Post/AP article "Hunger seen as big enemy in war on AIDS" spotlights critical worldwide need for malnourished AIDS patients to receive food supplementation along with their medications. Adequate food intake is needed to absorb the drugs and ultimately slow the virus. "Hungry people are six times more likely to die when going on AIDS medication than those with good nutrition, according to a study in the British journal HIV Medicine." Donors have been willing to give the medications, but now programs such as the UN World Food Program's nutrition programs in Haiti and 50 other countries with the worst HIV rates are "providing monthly food supplements for patients and their families."

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1. Haiti, Iraq rated as most corrupt Reuters November 6, 2006

BERLIN, Germany -- Iraq, racked by violence since the 2003 U.S.-led invasion, and impoverished Haiti, Myanmar and Guinea are ranked as the most corrupt countries in the world in a new survey.

Finland, Iceland and New Zealand are ranked as the least corrupt, with Denmark, Singapore and Sweden just behind.

Berlin-based corruption watchdog Transparency International (TI) ranks 163 countries based on perceived levels of corruption among public officials and politicians in its 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI).

Haiti, the poorest country in the Americas, was ranked last, just below Iraq, Myanmar and Guinea, reflecting what TI said was a high correlation between violence, poverty and corruption.

"This survey suggests that corruption in Iraq is very bad," TI Chief Executive David Nussbaum told Reuters.

"When you have high levels of violence, not only does security break down, but so do checks and balances, law enforcement and the functioning of institutions like the judiciary and legislature. If all that is under strain the very system that works to prevent corruption is undermined."

Iraq has suffered rising sectarian violence and bloodshed since the invasion, heaping pressure on U.S. President George W. Bush ahead of congressional elections on Tuesday.

Nussbaum pointed to U.S. engineering giant Bechtel Corp's decision last week to pull out of Iraq as a sign of how bad the security situation had become. Fifty-two Bechtel employees have been killed in Iraq since 2003.

Haiti is plagued by armed gangs despite the presence of U.N. forces brought in after the 2004 ousting of former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide.

Just ahead of Haiti and Iraq at the bottom of the rankings, stood Sudan, Democratic Republic of Congo, Chad and Bangladesh.

Worsening ratings

TI said several countries had a significant worsening of their ratings, including Brazil, Cuba, Israel, Jordan, Laos, Seychelles, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia and the United States.

Countries which saw a major improvement included Algeria, the Czech Republic, India, Japan, Latvia, Lebanon, Mauritius, Paraguay, Slovenia, Turkey, Turkmenistan and Uruguay.

Nussbaum, noting the recent Enron trial, said U.S. court cases had highlighted the scale of corruption there and may have contributed to the deterioration in the U.S. score. The United States was ranked 20th, next to Belgium and Chile.

Enron's former chief executive Jeff Skilling was sentenced last month to 24 years in prison after being found guilty of defrauding investors by using off-the-books deals to hide debt and inflate profits. Once the seventh largest U.S. firm, Enron collapsed into bankruptcy in 2001 when the deals were disclosed.

2. Crime, chaos in Haiti

Nov. 5, 2006

TIM HARPER

The Toronto Star

http://www.thestar.com/NASApp/cs/ContentServer?pagename=thestar/Layout/Article_Type1&c=Article&cid=1162680610046&call_pageid=968332188492

PORT-AU-PRINCE

They came calling at the Termonfice residence late in the afternoon, carrying with them enough bravado and heavy weaponry that they saw no need to wait for the cover nightfall would bring.

Vengeance was their goal and 17-year-old Achlin Termonfice was their intended prey.

Fifteen of them, some as young as 13, wielding pistols and long guns, quickly scaled the craggy rock and garbage-strewn path up to the one-room shack in search of the teenager.

When they discovered their target had fled, they took a consolation prize.

They snatched Achel Julien, the youth's middle-aged aunt, firing their weapons to chase away onlookers and dragging the screaming woman down the blind alleys and hairpin turns of the slum known as Ti Bois.

They vowed to return to burn down the shack under cover of Port-au-Prince's inky, humid night.

Julien Termonfice, mother of Achlin and sister of the abducted Achel, let out intermittent wails as she told her story of the attack. Her face contorted in grief, she said her son was not a gang member and might have been targeted for his reluctance to become one.

Five-year-old Jose said nothing, his eyes wide with fear and wonder at the commotion around him.

He had just watched his mother's abduction.

Chronicling this tragedy, their guns drawn for what would prove to be a futile search, is a United Nations patrol composed of 29-year-old Patrick Tremblay, a highway patrol officer for the Sûreté du Québec, his Filipino partner Freddie Ergo, two Haitian police officers, a handful of Sri Lankan peacekeepers and a heavily armed Nigerian SWAT team.

Here in Ti Bois, says Tremblay, "they don't kidnap for money — they kidnap to kill."

The peacekeepers in Ti Bois this day are among the 6,500 UN troops currently in Haiti, members of a stabilization force known by its French acronym, MINUSTAH. They patrol Port-au-Prince, setting up checkpoints in areas where gangs trade gunfire by night and do murder and abductions in broad daylight.

MINUSTAH troops come from Benin, Nigeria, Brazil, Jordan, Sri Lanka and a number of other nations. But not Canada.

The Canadian presence here is limited to fewer than 100 police officers, at a cost of \$20 million, as part of the 1,600-strong UNPOL program to rebuild a Haitian police force that has been stripped of essential equipment and is shot through with corruption.

The Canadians' mandate is to "coach, advise and train," meaning they have little investigative power.

When 450 Canadian troops, support personnel and six CH-146 Griffon helicopters packed up and left two years ago, Gen. Rick Hillier, chief of defence staff, assured the Paul Martin government they could return if needed.

Canadians could also head to Darfur if required, he said.

But the Afghanistan mission has eaten up the assurances.

Haiti is not engulfed in a traditional or insurgent war, the types of conflict in Iraq or Afghanistan with which the world is familiar.

Some call it an urban war.

With no security here, there can be no investment.

No investment, no jobs.

No jobs, more violence — and the cycle continues.

There are an estimated 200,000 privately owned guns in Haiti now, but the UN thinks there are no more than 700 heavily armed gangsters in the capital's slums.

According to the leading Haitian human rights organization, the National Human Rights Defence Network, 150 civilians and 11 police officers were killed in May and June of this year.

July and August showed a significant spike in murders and kidnappings, with attacks and shootings reported even in the hills of Petionville, the relatively secure enclave of Port-au-Prince.

Twenty-one residents were massacred in Gran Ravine on one night of terror in July and nine bodies were found dumped in that area one morning during the last week of September.

The emergency ward at the downtown Médecins Sans Frontières hospital treated more than 200 gunshot wounds in July.

In August, there were more than 100 reported kidnappings, but the number was likely twice that because relatives of the victims often negotiate with the kidnapers themselves, avoiding the police.

In Haiti, even missions of mercy are often an invitation to violence.

"Please pray for change in my country," urges Protestant pastor Jean-Yves Vigue, victim of a vicious attack in his suburban home. "All the youth of my country are armed and they have no pity."

Vigue sent his family to safety in the United States but stayed on because he thought the work he was doing, delivering potable water in the notorious Cité Soleil slum, was too important to abandon.

The water deliveries ended when a gunman burst into his Croix-des-Bouquets home at 3 a.m. and pumped a couple of rounds into his stomach.

Today, Vigue lies in a sweltering hospital recovery room filled with gunshot victims, moaning in pain, his face bathed in sweat, seeking international help for his country but despairing of the future.

"I was targeted because I am a preacher and I help people and I am radically against violence," he says.

Vigue doesn't think there are enough police and troops to protect the people.

"When one gang chief is dead, 200 more are there to take his place and they are even more dangerous," he says.

The kidnappings here have become sloppier — acts of desperate criminals, not political ideologues — and failure to pay a ransom is usually met with murder.

Sometimes, even paid ransoms are met with murder.

"Some are very innovative with firearms," says Brian Moller, an Australian who is the director of nursing at the emergency hospital operated by Médecins Sans Frontières.

"They like to shoot people in the hips so they will never walk again. They like to shoot people in the eyes so they can never see again. We've had people come in here with bullets lodged in their eyeballs."

Moller has served in combat zones and sees Haiti as one of them.

"This is a war," he says. "We sit out on our terrace at night and listen to the gunfire."

Some of the brutality here is so random, so senseless, that it shakes officers who've been trained to respond to violence.

"I have seen many people killed. For nothing," says the Sri Lankan captain who leads the command post in the slum of Gran Ravine.

One man, he said, was killed because he would not hand over one Haitian gourde, the basic unit of local currency and worth less than a penny.

With the Afghanistan mission taking precedence, the Canadian presence here is limited to fewer than 100 police officers

The UN, in concert with a newly formed Haitian disarmament commission, is offering money — about \$50 per month in a country where half the people live on less than \$1 a day — to those who will lay down their arms. There appears to be some early, sporadic successes.

The people of Cité Soleil report two occasions in September when gang members in the slum turned in guns — 30 weapons one day, 20 on another.

Real weapons, they say. Machine guns, not rusty relics.

President René Préval is personally negotiating with gang leaders and has told officials privately that some of the most notorious of the men want to lay down their arms.

But diplomats and UN officials warn that this is a perilous program that has been made more so with Préval taking the lead hand rather than delegating negotiations to mid-level authorities closer to the communities.

"If he fails, there is no higher level to move these talks," one diplomat said.

The plan is to disarm those who work for the gang leaders, leaving the bosses vulnerable if the slums are stormed.

Many of the leaders would face murder charges if they lay down their guns.

If they aren't given amnesty, asks one UN worker, "why would they disarm?"

Alix Fils-Aimé, who heads the Haitian national disarmament commission, says an amnesty plan has not been rejected, but then wonders aloud whether the sight of someone who has perhaps killed your mother or raped your sister walking cockily out of the slums might just spark more killing.

"Sometimes, the cost of peace is higher than the cost of war," he says. "While we will not promote amnesty, we must weigh our responsibility to shut down those guns."

Some gang leaders like to style themselves as freedom fighters, but authorities are not buying it.

"There are no Robin Hoods in there," says Fils-Aimé, who is trying to foster an "ambience of non-violence" by appealing to all sectors to lay down their arms, including the business sector, which is now heavily armed for its own defence.

"The security situation here is a serious concern," he says.

"People are scared. People are afraid to take their children to school. They are afraid to go out at night, to go out and shop.

"We have to loosen the grip of criminality in the city and allow room for investment to come to Haiti."

Right now, the gang leaders are the de facto political leaders in places like Cité Soleil, Cité Militaire and Martissant.

When they hijack a rice truck or take over a supply of water at gunpoint, they distribute the plunder among the inhabitants of their slum to curry favour and maintain support.

"They have the sweet and they have the sour, too, because they control the weapons," Fils-Aimé says.

The Ti Bois kidnapping is a textbook example of the enormous task facing UN peacekeepers.

Had they stumbled upon their quarry, they would have been outgunned.

As the incident unfolded, they had difficulty communicating with the Haitian police and motivating them to help pursue the abductors.

With guns drawn, the UN team uncertainly followed the lead of a 10-year-old known to all as "Love," the abducted woman's nephew, and Achlin's brother, as he led them down the warren of blind turns and rain-slick rocky paths.

He knows these guys and he will help catch them, the boy said.

At each home, curtains were drawn, but frightened eyes peered out warily at the unfolding drama. The kidnapers were likely hiding nearby, but no one would say where. They could have been drawing a bead on the UN force at any time.

This was the home turf of the criminals. They knew the terrain. The peacekeepers were more vulnerable than effective, more targets than sleuths.

Could a 10-year-old lead peacekeepers into a trap?

When the team left the neighbourhood — the search having encountered a dead end — the local people came out on the street.

In their midst were some members of the next generation of Haitian gangsters — kids who seem to be just hanging out but are actually spies for the gang leaders, paid to identify neighbours who speak to the police.

Those who aid the law can expect a lethal visit from gang assassins.

When the UN team returned to the scene of the Achel Julien kidnapping, the relatives of the abducted woman and her missing nephew were already packing their things. And as the peacekeepers departed, the family was trudging down the unpaved road of Ti Bois.

While the Star was in Haiti, there was no further word on the fate of the kidnapping victim. Nor did the missing youth, Achlin Termonfice, surface.

There would be no police report, in any case. There are no local police in Ti Bois.

If one slum is pacified, killings flare in another, in the manner of a tropical storm that abates in the south but gains steam in the north. Sometimes, the most dangerous criminals are merely dispersed.

Much of the real danger now lies in Gran Ravine, perhaps the most dangerous of all the Port-au-Prince slums.

The July massacre here was blamed on members of the Ti Machete gang, named for the weapon they used to hack spectators fleeing a police and firefighters' soccer game a year ago.

At least 21 men, women and children were slaughtered — including a woman who was shot in her mouth at point-blank range and a boy whose head was split open.

It was that atrocity that served as a wake-up call for Préval and shattered a time of relative calm in Port-au-Prince's slums.

On this day, however, a man who calls himself Max explains to visitors that residents are happy after the arrest the night before of a notorious gangster in the neighbourhood, a man who goes by the name Apoupam.

He was arrested by Sri Lankan peacekeepers, who didn't know his identity when they found him in a shack after a gunfight with rivals.

But as he takes visitors into the hills to display the homes the gangs burned down after the mass slayings, Max says people in the slum are still fearful that Haiti's dysfunctional justice system will just spit Apoupam back onto the streets.

And even if he were to face jail time, his henchmen would return to take vengeance.

"We want peace," Max says. "Tell the world our neighbourhood needs peace.

"We want our children to go to school. Now, if you give a kid in this neighbourhood \$10 to kill someone, he will do it.

"He has no hope. But we want some hope.

"This is no way to live."

3. Gunmen kill 2 Jordanian U.N. peacekeepers in Haiti

Associated Press

Los Angeles Times

November 12, 2006

<http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/world/la-fg-haiti12nov12,1,317677.story?coll=la-headlines-world>

PORT-AU-PRINCE, HAITI — Unidentified gunmen attacked U.N. peacekeepers near a restive slum in Haiti's capital, killing two Jordanian members of the force, officials said Saturday.

The attack came late Friday as peacekeepers headed back to base near the Cite Soleil neighborhood, where well-armed gangs blamed for kidnappings are based, a U.N. police spokesman said. One soldier died en route to a hospital, the other while being treated.

U.N. officials said the slayings appeared premeditated.

The U.N. peacekeeping force of 8,800 troops has been stepping up patrols to quell violence in the Caribbean nation's dense slums.

But there is growing opposition among slum dwellers to the Brazil-led U.N. force, sent to restore order after a bloody February 2004 revolt ousted then-President Jean-Bertrand Aristide.

The residents of the poor neighborhoods have accused U.N. troops of firing indiscriminately during gun battles with gangsters, killing and wounding civilians.

The U.N. denies the charge and says the troops shoot only when attacked. No overall civilian casualty figures were available.

Students and slum dwellers recently have staged street protests calling for withdrawal of the U.N. force.

Nine peacekeepers have died in clashes since the force arrived in June 2004.

4. DeWine's defeat is a loss for Haitians

South Florida Sun-Sentinel

Editorial Board

November 8, 2006

The defeat of Sen. Mike DeWine, R-Ohio, in Tuesday's elections deals another blow to the interests of Haiti and Haitians in the United States. DeWine had joined with former Sen. Bob Graham, D-Fla., in an effort to pass legislation friendly to the impoverished Caribbean nation and its expatriates.

Now both men are gone. Graham retired from the Senate in 2005, and DeWine was beaten Tuesday by Democratic U.S. Rep. Sherrod Brown. Graham and DeWine sponsored the Haiti Economic Recovery and Opportunity Act, which would use trade incentives like duty-free status for Haitian apparel to spur reforms in Haiti and encourage foreign investment. The Senate has passed the measure, but the House has yet to do so.

It should now be time for supportive South Florida members of the House, such as Rep. Kendrick Meek, D-Miami, to step up to the plate and deliver this long-overdue legislation.

5. Hunger Seen as Big Enemy in War on AIDS

By STEVENSON JACOBS

The Associated Press

The Washington Post

Saturday, November 11, 2006

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/11/11/AR2006111100605.html>

CANGE, Haiti -- AIDS made Marie Lourdes Israel so sick she could barely move her bowed, stick-thin body. The medicine almost killed her. Her plight wasn't due to a problem with the drug, but with something more basic: She had no food, and taking the AIDS cocktail on an empty stomach caused severe stomach aches, dizziness and nausea.

"Sometimes I would eat once a day, sometimes not at all because I couldn't find anything," said Israel, 51, who lost her meager earnings as a schoolteacher after falling ill to the virus that kills 15,000 Haitians each year.

Starvation and malnutrition are fast becoming the twin perils of the AIDS fight, and doctors and health experts say millions of infected people in the developing world are rapidly approaching a tipping point where food will replace drugs as the biggest need.

The U.N. World Food Program has launched nutrition programs in Haiti and 50 other countries with the worst HIV rates, providing monthly food supplements for patients and their families.

Without adequate nutrition, AIDS sufferers cannot absorb the drugs needed to slow the virus. As in Israel's case, side effects from taking the pills without food can lead patients to neglect treatment.

"When you have the meds and don't have the food ... then the bigger problem becomes food security," said Harvard University professor Dr. Paul Farmer, founder of Partners in Health, a pioneering medical mission in Haiti's highlands that gives free treatment to thousands.

Worldwide, an estimated 3.8 million people with AIDS needed food support this year, possibly rising to 6.4 million by 2008, according to the World Food Program.

Hungry people are six times more likely to die when going on AIDS medication than those with good nutrition, according to a study in the British journal HIV Medicine.

Robin Jackson, chief of the World Food Program's HIV/AIDS service in Rome, said it was unthinkable to give drugs to a malnourished patient, because "not only will the drug not be very effective, but you're not going to feel well either" because of severe stomach aches and nausea.

"Would you think in the West we would ever give drugs to someone who was malnourished? No, we don't do that," Jackson said.

Many people in Africa and Haiti simply refuse free drugs unless they come with food, leaving little hope for their survival, doctors say.

A recent World Food Program study found that it would cost only 66 cents a day to feed an AIDS patient and family, but health experts say that having poured billions into free drug programs, many donors are reluctant to take on the added costs of food supplements.

At a recent AIDS conference in Toronto, Stephen Lewis, special U.N. envoy for HIV/AIDS in Africa, called the lack of funding for food "madness."

The experts say health workers in the Third World must view food security as being no less important to a person's health than the right drugs and regular checkups.

Although health professionals don't want to be food distributors, Farmer said, "We need to be in the business of handing out food."

The fight against AIDS and malnutrition is evident in Cange, a mountain hamlet in Haiti's barren Central Plateau and ground zero for the Caribbean country's struggle with AIDS.

A three-hour drive from the capital along a spine-jarring, rutted road, the town attracts thousands of people who flock to Farmer's Zanmi Lasante Hospital for free AIDS drugs and, more recently, free food from the World Food Program.

"Before when I had nothing to eat, it was painful to take the drugs. I was suffering," said Judy Andre, a 38-year-old mother of six, as she hauled away a sack of rice, beans, meat and oil at a WFP-run food distribution site.

For Israel, months with little food left her weak and so depressed she could barely get out of bed. Now she has regained the weight and has a healthy glow.

"I have hope because I look completely different from before," she said, her braided hair tucked beneath a red ball cap.

Others aren't as lucky.

Inside the infectious disease ward at St. Michel Hospital in Boucan Carre, another Central Plateau town, a man in his 30s lay motionless on a bed, flies buzzing around his emaciated body.

Diagnosed with AIDS two weeks earlier, he should be on his feet once the drugs kick in. But with no way to earn a living in his miserably poor village, finding a meal will be a challenge.

Dr. Chevrin Francky, one of the ward's two physicians, said he has lost several patients this year to the food problem and expects to lose more.

"We have the medicine, but many patients don't have food," Francky said. "The biggest problem is poverty."