

Dear Colleagues,

Please find below the mainstream news on Haiti for the period of September 26 – October 11, 2006.

The US is partially lifting its 15-year old arms embargo against Haiti. Its ‘partial lifting’ means that only the government can “apply for licenses to buy firearms, body armor and other items for police....private groups, companies and individuals are still restricted from buying arms under the embargo.” The US originally imposed the embargo in 1991 allowing weapons sales only “in a case of exceptional or undue hardship, or when it is otherwise in the interest of the United States government.” The US tightened the embargo in 2000 to prevent the Aristide government from importing necessary police supplies including tear gas, and then relaxed it under the brutal Latortue dictatorship.

The US southern textile lobby derailed the HOPE bill from advancing through Congress. Congressman (R-Alabama) Mike Rogers requested the HOPE Act (HR 6142) be pulled from consideration as it would “hurt struggling textile companies and give countries like China, Haiti, and some African nations *another unfair advantage*[emphasis added].” Republican Congressmen from the Carolinas successfully lobbied the House Speaker to pull the bill in pre-election politicking, protecting incumbents in vulnerable districts. Representative (D-Texas) Sheila Jackson-Lee led a 52-person trade delegation to Haiti exploring trade and investment opportunities, especially in tourism. She remains optimistic the HOPE bill will pass before the end of the year.

Canada and France signed a cooperation agreement to support programs in reforming security and judicial sectors and economic development. The agreement aims to improve governance in Haiti and other underdeveloped countries.

An AP story reveals a proposal by the Haitian legislature, led by Senator Youri Latortue (ex-PM Gerard Latortue’s nephew and former security chief), to create a new security force leading to a possible reinstatement of the Haitian military. The story claims that “daily kidnappings, killings and other violence has fueled debate over the need for a security force to support Haiti’s ill-equipped police, which has 4,000 officers.” President Preval, other lawmakers and most Haitians citizens favor boosting the Haitian police force’s numbers and capabilities and not creating a new ‘security force’.

An AP report claims that “hundreds of people cheered as dozens of heavily armed police” walked through Cite Soleil on a goodwill visit to the area, their first in almost three years. The story mentions accusations against both the Haitian police, for killings and attacks against Pro-Aristide Cite Soleil residents during the U.S.-backed interim government, and gang leaders, broadly accused of kidnappings and killings during the same period. Like most mainstream news stories this article ignores the role of UN troops, the heavily armed perpetrators of well-documented massacres and a steady stream of assaults against Cite Soleil residents. One Cite Soleil community leader summed up residents’ hopes that a police presence will open up the area allowing for “those of us who want to leave Cite Soleil”, and ending the ‘imprisonment’ by UN troops controlling the area’s access roads.

## **CONTENTS:**

- 1. U.S. partially lifts arms embargo against Haiti, AP and International Herald Tribune**
- 2. U.S. says revised Haiti arms embargo doesn't prohibit sale of high-powered weapons, AP and International Herald Tribune**
- 3. Cong. Mike Rogers seeks to derail trade bill, Associated Press, Columbus-Ledger Enquirer, GA**
- 4. Trade bill nixed over textiles, McClatchy Newspapers and The Charlotte Observer**
- 5. Haiti could benefit from stalled trade bill, legislator says, AP and International Herald Tribune**
- 6. France, Canada sign Haiti aid deal, Calgary Sun**
- 7. Haitian lawmakers propose new force to tackle insecurity, AP and International Herald Tribune**
- 8. Haiti police make goodwill visit to slum, AP and Seattle Post Intelligencer**

### **1. U.S. partially lifts arms embargo against Haiti**

**The Associated Press**

**International Herald Tribune**

**October 10, 2006**

[http://www.ihf.com/articles/ap/2006/10/10/news/CB\\_GEN\\_Haiti\\_US\\_Arms\\_Embargo.php](http://www.ihf.com/articles/ap/2006/10/10/news/CB_GEN_Haiti_US_Arms_Embargo.php)

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti The United States has partially lifted a 15-year-old arms embargo against Haiti, the U.S. Embassy said Tuesday, allowing the troubled Caribbean nation to buy weapons for police battling violent — and often better armed — street gangs.

The move comes after President Rene Preval's new government openly criticized the embargo, saying it was hampering its ability to restore order and confront gangs that flourished after a February 2004 revolt toppled President Jean-Bertrand Aristide.

The modified embargo approved by the U.S. State Department is aimed at helping Haitian and U.N. authorities "fight against rampant criminal and gang activity," said U.S. Embassy spokeswoman Shaila B. Manyam.

It allows the government to apply for licenses to buy firearms, body armor and other items for police, Manyam said. Private groups, companies and individuals are still restricted from buying arms under the embargo.

The policy change appears to underscore Washington's vote of confidence in Preval, a soft-spoken champion of the poor who took office in May and has worked to reform the corruption-riddled police force while challenging gangsters to lay down their guns or face death.

"The United States government has taken note of the great changes in Haiti since the imposition of this embargo, namely a peaceful and democratically elected government," Manyam said.

The United States imposed the embargo in 1991 when Aristide was overthrown the first time, barring sales of weapons except "in a case of exceptional or undue hardship, or when it is otherwise in the interest of the United States government."

Aristide tried to have the ban lifted after 20,000 U.S. troops returned him to power in 1994 but was rebuffed by U.S. officials, who cited police ties to cocaine trafficking and the slaying of government opponents.

Haiti's ambassador in Washington, Raymond Joseph, called the easing of the weapons ban a "welcome decision."

"I think it will be quite helpful to Haiti's police," Joseph said, noting that the embargo was also criticized by the U.S.-backed interim government that replaced Aristide in 2004.

"We thought that it was tying Haiti's hands behind its back while the bandits had all the heavy weapons," Joseph added.

Steven Benoit, a congressman from Preval's Lespwa party, said the modified embargo would even the playing field by allowing police to purchase high-powered weapons.

"Now police can buy the M-4 and M-16 rifles they need to work," Benoit told private radio Vision2000.

Haiti's capital fell into chaos after the 2004 revolt as well-armed pro-Aristide street gangs, former rebels and rogue police clashed almost daily, killing hundreds.

Since the revolt, U.S. and U.N. officials have been working to bolster a revamped police force. Gangs have been attacking police and U.N. peacekeepers with high-powered weapons.

An 8,800-strong U.N. peacekeeping force currently provides the only really security in Haiti, which has just 4,000 police for a population of 8 million. Experts say it needs at least 10 times that many.

In an exception to the embargo last year, the United States authorized two shipments of weapons for Haiti's police but required they remain in U.S. custody and only be given to officers who were properly vetted.

## **2. U.S. says revised Haiti arms embargo doesn't prohibit sale of high-powered weapons**

**The Associated Press**

**International Herald Tribune**

**October 11, 2006**

[http://www.ihf.com/articles/ap/2006/10/11/news/CB\\_GEN\\_Haiti\\_US\\_Arms\\_Embargo.p hp](http://www.ihf.com/articles/ap/2006/10/11/news/CB_GEN_Haiti_US_Arms_Embargo.p hp)

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti

Haiti can apply for licenses to buy high-powered weapons for police under a modified U.S. arms embargo, the U.S. Embassy said Wednesday, disputing suggestions by a Haitian legislator that only small arms sales were permitted.

Detailing changes to a 15-year-old arms embargo, the embassy said Haiti can apply for U.S. export licenses to buy guns, body armor and other defense items for the Caribbean country's police.

A congressman from President Rene Preval's Lespwa party, Steven Beniot, told reporters on Tuesday that the relaxed embargo restricted poorly equipped police from obtaining high-powered weapons, but a U.S. Embassy spokeswoman said no such restriction exists.

"The modification of the embargo is intended to facilitate the government of Haiti and (U.N.) efforts to address crime and violence in Haiti and does not restrict them to applying only for licenses for small arms," Shaila B. Manyam said.

The United States imposed the embargo in 1991 when former president Jean-Bertrand Aristide was overthrown the first time, barring sales of weapons except under special circumstances.

The loosening of the embargo is aimed at helping Haitian and U.N. authorities combat street violence that flourished after a second revolt in February 2004 toppled Aristide.

Reached by phone Wednesday, Beniot said he hadn't seen the details of the modified embargo but reiterated his call for the ban's full removal. He also said many law-abiding Haitians have resorted to the black market to buy firearms for protection, a practice he called "a vicious cycle."

Manyam said that while individuals, private groups and companies are subject to the embargo, they can apply for a special waiver to buy firearms.

Haitian officials have long complained the U.S. embargo hampered efforts to fight politically aligned gangs that operate in dense slums of the capital and are often better armed than police.

**3. Cong. Mike Rogers seeks to derail trade bill**

**Associated Press**

**Columbus-Ledger Enquirer, GA**

**September 26, 2006**

WASHINGTON - Alabama's Representative Mike Rogers wants to stop a controversial trade bill making its way through Congress that he sees as a threat to the already hobbled state textile industry.

The Saks Republican said the proposed legislation would hurt struggling textile companies and give countries like China, Haiti, and some African nations another unfair advantage.

Rogers says American industry continues to be restricted while the bill would lift restrictions for those nations.

The measure would allow apparel made in Haiti and Africa from Chinese fabrics to enter the U.S. duty-free. Yesterday, Rogers signed a letter to House Speaker Dennis Hastert and House Majority Leader John Boehner asking for H-R 6142, known as the Hemispheric Opportunity Partnership Encouragement Act of 2006, to be pulled from consideration.

#### **4. Trade bill nixed over textiles**

**JAMES ROSEN**

**McClatchy Newspapers**

**The Charlotte Observer**

**September 29, 2006**

WASHINGTON - Republican congressmen led by lawmakers from the Carolinas have blocked a trade bill that they say would harm American textile producers by enabling China to ship cheaper clothes and other goods to the United States.

In an unusually bitter revolt against a powerful committee chairman, the GOP lawmakers persuaded Speaker Dennis Hastert to pull legislation intended to aid Haiti and sub-Saharan Africa by lowering or eliminating U.S. tariffs on garments exported from those countries.

"Textiles are still an extremely important business in South Carolina and throughout the South," Rep. Gresham Barrett, an S.C. Republican, said Thursday.

Barrett and other lawmakers from textile-producing states were upset by the actions of Rep. Bill Thomas, a California Republican and author of the Africa and Haiti measure. They said that he introduced the bill Sept. 21, then bypassed committee hearings and rushed it to the floor for a vote this week.

In a letter to Hastert and other House Republican leaders, the textile lawmakers complained that the measure would give apparel made from Chinese fabrics, but assembled in Haiti and Africa, duty-free access to the U.S.

"This will be devastating to our domestic textile industry and places at risk the almost 700,000 textile and apparel jobs that it provides in the United States," the lawmakers wrote.

The letter was signed by 16 Republican lawmakers, including Reps. Robin Hayes, Charles Taylor, Walter Jones Jr., Virginia Fox, Howard Coble and Sue Myrick of North Carolina, and S.C.'s Barrett and Rep. Joe Wilson.

Congressional sources said Hastert pulled Thomas' bill partly so as not to embarrass GOP representatives who face stiff re-election challenges and hail from major textile states, such as Hayes and Taylor.

Textile lobbyists in Washington said the legislation would ease a requirement that most duty-free garments imported from Haiti or sub-Saharan Africa be made with at least half American-made fabrics, or with fabrics containing at least half American-made yarn.

That loophole, they said, would enable China to produce clothes in Haitian and African garment-assembly factories, then sell the goods to Americans.

"The Chinese will use these loopholes to ship product through as if it's coming from these countries," said Richard Dillard, spokesman for Milliken & Co., a major textile firm based in Spartanburg.

In introducing the bill last week, Thomas said its chief aim was to help alleviate poverty in Haiti and sub-Saharan Africa.

Lloyd Wood, spokesman for the American Manufacturing Trade Action Coalition, said the bill would hurt U.S. workers. The group lobbies on behalf of 40,000 workers at textile mills, furniture factories and other plants. "The result of (Thomas' measure) is that U.S. producers lose market share," Wood said. "When U.S. producers lose market share, it means that North Carolinians and South Carolinians lose their jobs."

##### **5. Haiti could benefit from stalled trade bill, legislator says**

**By STEVENSON JACOBS / Associated Press**

**International Herald Tribune**

**10/09/2006**

<http://www.kltv.com/Global/story.asp?S=5516896&nav=1TjD>

A stalled U.S. trade bill designed to bring thousands of apparel assembly jobs to impoverished Haiti could receive a vote in Congress by the end of the year, a U.S. legislator said Monday.

U.S. lawmakers last month delayed consideration of the HOPE bill, but U.S. Rep. Sheila Jackson-Lee said there's enough bipartisan support to revive the legislation that would extend trade preferences to Haiti's crippled apparel assembly industry.

"The HOPE bill is very much still alive," Jackson-Lee, a Democrat from Houston, told reporters in Haiti's capital at the close of a four-day trade mission to the conflict-torn Caribbean nation.

The HOPE bill — or the Haitian Hemispheric Opportunity through Partnership Encouragement — would grant duty-free access to clothes made in Haiti with fabric from third-countries.

If approved, the legislation could almost immediately create up to 20,000 assembly jobs in Haiti, where a February 2004 revolt toppled former president Jean-Bertrand Aristide and threw an already dying economy deeper into ruin.

Explosive street violence in the aftermath of the revolt forced most apparel assembly factories in Port-au-Prince to shut down. Some have reopened, but others say they need U.S. trade protection to get back in business.

Supporters of the bill accused Washington lawmakers who postponed the vote of bowing to pressure from powerful U.S. textile lobbyists opposed to certain provisions, including one that would allow Haiti to use yarn and fabric from Asian competitors.

Jackson-Lee called such concerns "appropriate" but said she and colleagues believe they can "re-ignite the passage" of the HOPE bill before Congress adjourns, probably in December.

"We believe we have the support, Republicans and Democrats, that can give the HOPE bill another hearing," said Jackson-Lee.

Jackson-Lee visited Haiti as co-leader of a 52-person delegation exploring trade and investment opportunities, especially in tourism.

She said a major congressional delegation would visit Haiti in coming months as a follow-up to her trip, and said she would urge Americans to consider Haiti as a future vacation spot.

"The tourism industry is about to emerge again in Haiti," she said. "We want to be part of a new secure Haiti."

## **6. France, Canada sign Haiti aid deal**

**By NORMAN DELISLE**

**Calgary Sun, Canada**

**September 26, 2006**

BUCHAREST, Romania (CP) - Canada and France signed a deal Tuesday to help rebuild Haiti that sets a framework for aid to other disadvantaged countries.

"We will work together for the development of this country," said Josee Verner, the federal minister responsible for La Francophonie. "Haiti is among our priorities." Her French counterpart, Brigitte Girardin, echoed Verner's commitment during the signing ceremony held at the summit of Francophone nations.

"This country was destroyed and this protocol which we signed today opens the door to a very close co-operation," she said. "Taking into account our involvement, it is necessary to provide mutual assistance and work together."

The text of the deal says Canada and France "will endeavour to accompany the efforts by the Haitian authorities to create conditions favourable with the rebuilding of a State in Haiti."

Particular support will be given to reforms in the areas of security and justice as well as economic development, which will see assistance in the form of co-financing of projects.

Verner pointed out the Canadian government had announced \$520 million in aid for Haiti last July. The amount will be spread over five years.

The Canada-France deal not only affects Haiti but sets out a framework for aid to other disadvantaged countries.

The protocol aims at the improvement of governing in the countries, mainly meaning an effort to seek improvements in the respect of human rights, prevention of conflicts, improvement in security and gender equality.

The new collaboration between Canada and France will be evaluated in the first quarter of 2007 at a meeting of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development to be held in Paris.

Quebec and Romania also expressed their desire to create a network of schools in public administration to improve the quality of the bureaucracy.

"All the countries that have succeeded have a strong and qualified civil service," said Premier Jean Charest.

## **7. Haitian lawmakers propose new force to tackle insecurity**

**The Associated Press**

**International Herald Tribune**

**September 26, 2006**

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti Legislators have proposed creating a new security force to bolster Haiti's outgunned police — raising the possibility of reinstating the Caribbean country's notorious and disbanded military, an official said Tuesday.

The force would be trained by Haitian and foreign security experts, and could take control of guarding the country's coasts and its porous border with the Dominican Republic, said Sen. Youri Latortue, president of the Senate commission on public safety.

"Haiti needs a force to be able to protect the country," Latortue told The Associated Press in an interview. "We think that it's the first step in (restoring) security because if our borders aren't protected, anyone can come to Haiti and do what they want."

Funds to study the new force were included in a draft national budget agreed upon by lawmakers this week, Latortue said. President Rene Preval must approve the budget before sending it back to Parliament for a final vote expected later this week.

Daily kidnappings, killings and other violence has fueled debate over the need for a security force to support Haiti's ill-equipped police, which has 4,000 officers to serve a population of 8 million.

An 8,800-strong U.N. peacekeeping force currently provides the only real security in the impoverished nation, which is still reeling 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 he and other colleagues support a new force to replace Haiti's demobilized military, although other lawmakers have said they favor a national police force.

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

The 1990-1994 military coup regime is blamed for the murders, rapes, maimings and torture of thousands of Aristide supporters, and today's former soldiers include convicted murderers.

Latortue said anyone convicted of human rights abuses should be barred from joining any future security force.

"We are not going to have people who violated human rights in the past. We are going to have some new elements," said Latortue, who has denied alleged links to drug and arms trafficking.

The government offered no immediate reaction to the proposed force. Before taking power in May, Preval expressed support for creating a police force similar to that of France's national force, but stopped short of saying he would favor reinstating the armed forces.

## **8. Haiti police make goodwill visit to slum**

**By STEVENSON JACOBS  
ASSOCIATED PRESS**

**Seattle Post Intelligencer**

**October 3, 2006**

[http://seattlepi.nwsourc.com/national/1102AP\\_Haiti\\_Lawless\\_Slum.html](http://seattlepi.nwsourc.com/national/1102AP_Haiti_Lawless_Slum.html)

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti -- Police entered Haiti's worst slum for the first time in nearly three years on Tuesday, strolling past bullet-scarred buildings and shaking hands with onlookers in a goodwill visit aimed at restoring order in the gang-controlled area.

The hour-long tour of Cite Soleil was the latest sign of easing tension between President Rene Preval's new government and gang members blamed for a wave of violence that threatens to destabilize the impoverished Caribbean nation.

Hundreds of people cheered as dozens of heavily armed police walked through the lawless slum, not far from the bullet-riddled shell of the area's old police station - destroyed during a February 2004 revolt that toppled former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide.

Smiling and waving, the police chatted with residents and visited a U.N. military base that has served as the slum's only authority since the revolt.

"The people of Cite Soleil have been waiting a long time for police to have a presence in the community. It's a very happy day," police inspector general Jean Saint-Fleur said as U.N. troops atop armored cars kept guard, their rifles trained down dirt alleys.

Saint-Fleur called the police visit "the first steps" at reopening a base in Cite Soleil but declined to say when that would happen.

Many Haitians said they couldn't remember the last time they saw police inside the staunchly pro-Aristide slum, a warren of scrap metal shacks where clashes between militants and U.N. troops are common.

Haitian police were accused of summary executions and arbitrary arrests of pro-Aristide slum dwellers during the 2004-2006 rule of a U.S.-backed interim government.

"We welcome the police back. Maybe now we'll have peace in Cite Soleil," said Gillen Jean, a 26-year-old fruit vendor.

Only a few months ago, the visit would have provoked a clash with area gang leaders accused in scores of kidnappings and killings since the revolt. In May, two policemen were shot to death and their bodies burned after chasing a suspect into the slum's outskirts.

The government recently began negotiating with gang members in Cite Soleil to persuade them to lay down their arms and dozens have so far agreed. The talks came after Preval warned gangsters in August to disarm or face death.

Jean Yves Laguerre, a Cite Soleil community leader, said the visit should improve life in the area.

"Now the police and the people can work together, and those of us who want to leave Cite Soleil can," Laguerre said, describing the slum as "a prison."