

Haiti

Response to Information Request Number:	HTI99001.ZMI
Date:	August 12, 1999
Subject:	Haiti: Information on Human Rights Abuses by CIMO
From:	INS Resource Information Center
Keywords:	Haiti / Arbitrary arrest / Demonstrations / Extrajudicial execution / Journalists / Organizations / Police / Police brutality / Students

Query:

What is CIMO and has it been responsible for human rights abuses?

Response:

According to Human Rights Watch, "[t]wo police units, the Company for Intervention and Maintaining Order (Compagnie d'Intervention et de Maintien de l'Ordre, CIMO) and the Intervention Group (Groupe d'Intervention), [have] emerged as particularly abusive elements within the HNP. The units, which were modeled after U.S. Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) teams and received U.S. equipment and training, [have] violated Haitian police law by carrying heavy weapons. Rather than defuse crises, the units' aggressive practices, which [have] included gratuitous destruction of property and beating and kicking passersby, [have] often worsened tense situations." (HRW December 1998)

Human Rights Watch reported that, "[o]n April 5, [1998] CIMO ransacked the Womens Clinic (Klinik Fanm) in Port-au-Prince, claiming that the staff had hidden weapons in boxes of medicine. CIMO found no weapons but caused extensive damage, destroying medical equipment, medicine, and furniture. Several months after the intervention, the clinic, which had provided women's health care and assistance to rape survivors, including those who had suffered politically motivated rapes under Haiti's military government, from 1991 to 1994, remained closed due to CIMO's destructive actions. In March, the HNP sent CIMO to respond to an ongoing land dispute in Milot. CIMO officers entered a radio station run by the Milot Peasants' Movement (Mouvman Peyizan Milo) after midnight on March 19, ransacked the station, and shot the janitor. In February 1998, a melee erupted in Mirebalais after local police killed a resident, in unclear circumstances. The police had been trying to disperse a crowd that included members of Put Order Into Disorder (Met Lod nan Dezod), an organization linked to the political party of former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide. Angered by the death, the crowd entered the police station and killed the police chief, Ricelin Dormeus. Hours later, the Intervention Group and CIMO arrived in Mirebalais, carried out some forty warrantless arrests, and beat many detainees severely." (HRW December 1998)

Though not on the scale of the former military regime, the brutal and lawless behavior exercised by CIMO has nonetheless led to widespread popular denunciations. Catholic priest Daniel Roussiere, secretary-general of the Gonaives Justice and Peace Commission, has described CIMO as: "a series of corps inside the PNH. These corps are mostly created with international support. They are an anti-people type of corps created to try to implement a democracy. The last events clearly showed that even though this corps can destroy a radio station and make several arrests in Mirebalais, at the same time the Haitian authorities refused to execute a series of warrants issued by the Gonaives judge in the scope of the Raboteau slaughter. So, we have within the PNH a division of the police that is anti-people. This is very serious because in the past we have always been in favor

of a community police that embraces the Haitian reality and the Haitian culture." (RMN 20 April 1998)

Members of the Senate Justice and Public Safety Commission have commented on CIMO's behavior, including their dress: "You can not just tell me that among several groups of policemen dressed in black you can figure out who is CIMO," said Senator Gelerme Laguerre. (RMN 15 April 1998)

Other parliamentarians have also commented on CIMO's actions. Signal FM Radio reported that Deputy Garconnet stated that the Antineoliberal Bloc favors "the setting up of a government that can ensure effective control over the Haitian National Police, in particular over the Intervention and Maintenance of the Order Company, CIMO, which, the parliamentarian says, is sowing terror in several regions of the country." (Signal 9 April 1998)

On the 11th anniversary of the Constitution, former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide called for a constitutional amendment to make official and final the abolition of the army, and seized the occasion to call on "the members of the Intervention and Maintenance of Order Company [CIMO] to cool down while denouncing a plot to tarnish the image of the Haitian National Police [PNH]. The former president denounced the bad and repressive actions that were committed against the inhabitants of Milot when a team of CIMO members raided the area recently. Such behavior surprisingly recalls the former Haitian Army that has been destroyed, stated the former Saint-Jean Bosco parish priest in front of an excited crowd at the premises of the Aristide Foundation for Democracy in Tabarre on the 11th anniversary of the vote for the Haitian Constitution on 29 March. Aristide reminded the national policemen of their duties to serve and to protect the Haitian population." (Signal March 1998)

In 1999 reports of excessive violence by CIMO continued. According to Signal FM Radio, the police of Saint-Marc repressed residents of Deluge after the murder of a policeman and an assault on two others on 6 June. One of the assaulted policemen was the Saint-Marc police superintendent whom the people had accused of being a zenglando [criminal] and a drug dealer. On 29 June, CIMO policemen allegedly arrested and manhandled six young men in connection with the murder and assault. Members of CIMO in lower Artibonite also arrested the director of the National School of Deluge. (Signal 30 June 1999)

There have been a few reports, though mixed, indicating that members of CIMO have acted responsibly in carrying out their duties. For example, Signal FM Radio reported that CIMO restored order during the second day of a demonstration by the National Port Authority (APN) union. However, on the first day of the demonstration, Radio Vision 2000 claimed that CIMO policemen were in the area, but only stood by and observed the incidents doing nothing to clear the burning barricades blocking La Saline boulevard. (Signal 30 June 1999 / RV 2000 28 June 1999) Earlier in June, Radio Metropole Network reported that CIMO restored order during a demonstration at the headquarters of Lafanmi Se Lavi (Family is Life), a charitable organization founded by former President Aristide and located on Rue Camille Leon. At the latter event, the police were praised for their intervention and careful use of teargas. (RMN 24 June 1999)

Additional reports:

In May 1999, four Haitian journalists, Phares Duverne of Radio Solidarite, Claudy Jean-Jacques of Radio Nationale, Wakim Exume of Magik Stereo, and Roudy Chery of Haiti Progres, called for the removal of Port-au-Prince police commissioner Coles Rameau, whom they accused of having struck them during a private sector rally on the Champ-de-Mars. The journalists announced "that they were going to bring a suit against Mr. Rameau and some police officers of the crowd control unit (CIMO) who also manhandled them." (AHP 31 May 1999)

Also in May 1999, 11 persons were killed by members of CIMO. According to Agence France Presse, reports on the killings have been contradictory. The HNP has claimed that the 11 individuals died in a shoot-out between members of CIMO and local gangs in the neighborhood of Carrefour Feuille. However, some neighbors have rejected this version and claim "that the victims were killed by policemen after the brother of one of them [the brother of one of the policemen] was murdered in the neighborhood." (AFP 31 May 1999)

Following rumors of the death of Frantz Camille (alias Franco), an employee of the National Port Authority (APN), several dozen people demonstrated in downtown Port-au-Prince. According to the Agence Haitienne de Presse (AHP), these "rumors spread while measures were being taken concerning the election of a new leadership of the APN union. Contacted by phone by AHP, a relative of Frantz Camille said that the news of his death was only a farce seeking to create trouble. The protesters had in fact set up barricades in flames on several main streets of the commercial center, namely in the streets of Macajoux and Des Remparts, and on La Saline Boulevard. Members of CIMO, dispatched to the area to restore order and peace, were received by showers of stones and broken glasses. Stones were hurled at the APN premises. The windshields of several vehicles parked on the court were shattered. The policemen proceeded to arrest at least two demonstrators and severely beat one of them, said an AHP reporter on the scene." (AHP 5 May 1999)

On the 9th of April, police allegedly killed five youths in Fontamara 27. Witnesses reported that police presence in Fontamara 27 had greatly increased following the murder of a CIMO agent by strangers and that the five youths had been subsequently killed by policemen. (RMN, 12 April 1990)

Police and students clashed at the Lycée Alexandre Petion in February, particularly along the Rue des Miracles. When students began to throw rocks, the police retaliated with tear gas. In the melee that followed, one student was shot by a member of CIMO and was later taken to the hospital by members of CIMO. (Signal 1 March 1999)

This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the RIC within time constraints. This response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum.

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Signal FM Radio. "Aristide Seeks Amendment to Disband Former Army" (Port-au-Prince, 30 March 1998) - as reported by the Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS).

Attachments:

All articles referred to above as reported by the Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS) are attached to this Query Response.

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