



Armed Conflicts Report

Haiti (2004 - first combat deaths)

Update: January 2009

Because there have been few reported conflict deaths over the past two years (less than 25 per year), this armed conflict is now deemed to have ended.

Summary

Type of Conflict

Parties to the Conflict

Status of the Fighting

Number of Deaths

Political Developments

Background

Arms Sources

Economic Factors

Summary:

2008 Throughout 2008, an increased number of kidnappings caused many protests and an increase in security forces throughout the country. Former rebel leader Guy Phillipe evaded a joint U.S./Haiti operation in February. Violence drastically declined throughout 2008, with 6 people dying in protests over the cost of food in April. The food crisis resulted in the ousting of Prime Minister Alexis, took three months and three candidates before new Prime Minister Michele Pierre-Louis was approved by Senate and Parliament. The United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) and the Haitian National Police increased checkpoints and mounted anti-gang operations to combat the increased number of kidnappings. Hurricane Gustav hit Haiti hard in the summer months, killing hundreds and destroying crops, prompting fears over a new food crisis. The MINUSTAH mission was extended for one year by the UNSC at the end of 2008, and the humanitarian situation continued to be desperate as 2009 approached.

2007 Throughout 2007, the U.N. mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) conducted several raids on the Boston section of Cite Soleil, a Port-au-Prince slum notorious for heavy gang activity. The raids resulted in the successful arrest of gang leader Evans Jeune and secured the slum from further violent activity. Violence and kidnappings have drastically declined since the crackdown began. 108 Sri-Lankan peacekeepers were forced to depart following a scandal that involved their solicitation of underage prostitutes. In November, Heddi Annabi took over as commander of the MINUSTAH force and expressed willingness to remain in Haiti at least throughout Preval's term, which ends in 2011. President Preval continued to chastise the international community for failing to regulate the import of illegal narcotics from Haiti to the West.

2006 In February, Rene Preval, supported by the country's poor, was elected president, and his government has given the country its first functioning parliament in nearly a decade. Low-level violent clashes between gangs and U.N. forces occurred throughout the year, though the number of deaths (less than 50) and kidnappings in 2006 were significantly lower than in previous years, a decrease that can be attributed to the elections and Preval's ascent to power. Preval's government made some inroads in the campaign to disarm gangs through a U.N.-administered initiative that promises food and job training in exchange for weapons. In October, after criticism from Preval, the U.S. partially lifted a 15-year-old arms embargo in order to aid Haitian and U.N. security forces in efforts to restore order in the midst of continued gang violence. MINUSTAH's (United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti) mandate was extended into 2007.

2005 Low-level urban warfare continued mostly between the Haitian National Police, the former Haitian

military, urban gangs and UN troops on one side and armed political groups linked to various Lavalas factions and allied urban gangs on the other. Violent criminal inter-gang turf wars also occurred in Haiti's urban areas. National elections were postponed on four occasions and eventually scheduled for 2006. Despite the establishment of a National Commission on Disarmament, the transitional government showed little political will to address disarmament. The Caribbean Community, the African Union and several states continued to withhold recognition of the transitional government calling for an official investigation into the forced departure of former President Aristide.

Type of Conflict:

State control/Failed state

Parties to the Conflict:

Government:

1) Haiti's government is currently headed by the democratically elected Rene Preval and his Lespwa Party. Preval is a one-time ally of Aristide, and was elected president in February 2006. Preval replaced a transitional interim government led by Prime Minister Gerard Latortue, who was appointed by the Council of Eminent Persons following former president Jean-Bertrand Aristide's forced departure in early 2004. Preval nominated his close political ally Jacques Edouard Alexis to the post of Prime Minister.

"[O]n Thursday [Cite Soleil] was a scene of spontaneous celebration after election officials, pressured by foreign diplomats, settled the impoverished Caribbean nation's disputed Feb. 7 vote and named Preval, a one-time Aristide ally and champion of the poor, the winner." [Jim Loney, *Reuters*, February 16, 2006]

a) Haitian National Police (HNP) – Officially Haiti's only security force after the 1995 disbandment of the Haitian Armed Forces. Since the establishment of the transitional government it has played a major role in the violent oppression of Lavalas activists and has come under heavy criticism for widespread human rights abuses and involvement in criminal activity, though activity of this sort has decreased since Preval came to power in February 2006. The HNP continues to be involved in initiatives to reduce gang-related violence. Various sources put the size of the HNP at between 2,000 and 4,500 members with its strength concentrated in Haiti's capital. It exercises significantly less authority in the Haitian countryside. In January 2005, about 200 troops from the former Haitian military, which has a long record of human rights abuses committed during Haiti's previous dictatorships, were integrated into the HNP while almost the entire HNP high-command is constituted by former army and paramilitary officers. This latter group has been accused of being the leading force behind the HNP's systematic human rights violations.

"According to a leading NGO representative, 'many of the killings and summary executions in pro-Aristide slums are believed to have been carried out by ex-soldiers who became police....The victims are sometimes killed with their hands tied or behind their head.'" [*Spoiling Security in Haiti: Latin America/Caribbean Report No. 13*, International Crisis Group, May 31, 2005]

2) Haiti's economic elite – Historically Haiti's most powerful actors by virtue of their control over much of the country's productive resources and wealth, Haiti's elite were key leaders of the Aristide opposition alliances, the Democratic Convergence and the Group of 184. They are known to have ties with the former Haitian army and paramilitary forces and various other armed political groups.

"Ten years later, a significant part of the political class and the business community seem to favour a reestablishment of the army. Their links, including financial, to the ex-FAD'H who led rebel forces challenging the Aristide government in late 2004 and early 2005 remain somewhat obscure. Many in the transitional government and the economic elite would also prefer to see the army reinstated despite the expense, lack of strategic purpose, and history of deep involvement in widespread and systematic human rights violations...They want the army directly involved in internal security as a guarantor of the political outcomes they seek – a throwback to a different era, which contradicts most modern defence strategies." [*Spoiling Security in Haiti: Latin*

Armed Opposition Groups

3) Various urban gangs and armed "political" groups operating in the capital and other cities. Some urban gangs are mainly political in nature fighting in support of various powerful individuals or factions while some are criminal organizations engaged in inter-gang fighting, clashes with the HNP and MINUSTAH and at times partake in politically-related fighting out of personal gain. Their numbers have grown with the freeing of numerous prisoners by rebels. [*Based upon information contained in *Spoiling Security in Haiti: Latin America/Caribbean Report No. 13, International Crisis Group, May 31, 2005]*

a) Armed political groups allied to various anti-Lavalas political parties and/or economic elites or "big men."

b) Criminal organizations based mainly in the drug and contraband trade who are taking advantage of the collapse of state institutions and have engaged in violent clashes with the HNP and may at times be involved in fighting for political reasons acting as mercenaries for various political groups.

"According to information received by Amnesty International, which could not be verified independently, the killers were members of a criminal gang which included escaped prisoners and was led by an escaped convict known as 'Ti Junior.' The gang is reported to be working with the police and the MIF in the identification of Fanmi Lavalas supporters." [*Haiti: Breaking the cycle of violence: A last chance for Haiti, Amnesty International, June 21, 2004*]

c) Various armed gangs previously mobilized by the Aristide government, some of whom may still be fighting in support of the Lavalas movement, although allegiances are known to be fluid. Some have evolved into criminal organizations.

d) Armed political groups loyal to former President Aristide who viewed the transitional government as illegitimate. They are mainly based in Haiti's poorest neighbourhoods such as Bel Air and Cite Soleil in the capital, Port-au-Prince. They have been involved in violent clashes with the HNP and other armed groups (see above) as well as clashing with the MIF and MINUSTAH.

"There are some difficulties in identifying these groups, as they often operated in the shadows and are adept at saying one thing in public and another in private. It is clear, however, that these groups have common goals and are extremely powerful, powerful more so than those groups that would benefit from stabilization. ...

The armed groups are also composed of: society's outcasts, including deportees from the U.S. and street children; individuals formerly carried on the payrolls of state companies [who largely became unemployed with the end of Aristide's presidency]; some former police under Aristide who were dismissed after his departure. Again, a common denominator is that most of these, in one way or another, are reacting to Haiti's extreme disparities of wealth." [*Spoiling Security in Haiti: Latin America/Caribbean Report No. 13, International Crisis Group, May 31, 2005*]

4) Various armed groups consisting of members of the former state security apparatus, including the disbanded Haiti Armed Forces (FADH), the paramilitary group, the Front Revolutionnaire Arme pour le Progres d'Haiti (FRAPH) and the disbanded former local security forces, known as the rural section chiefs. Although exact numbers remain unclear, in total the former military/security elements are reported to number between 3,000 and 5,000 combatants. They are organized in various armed groups led by a handful of former military/security officials. While these groups were involved in violence during and immediately after the coup, they were not reportedly implicated in any incidents of violence in 2006. At the time of writing, in 2006 they include but were not limited to the following groups: [Accurate information on these groups remains scarce due to the current situation in Haiti and to constant changes in alliances, group names, leadership and political outlooks.]

a) The Front de Reconstruction Nationale (FRN) led by gang leader Buteur Metayer and Guy Phillippe, a former officer and one-time National Police commissioner, and a leader of the February 2004 insurgency. The group combines a number of gangs, the most important being the former Cannibal Army, at one-time allied with former President Aristide.

b) Arme Du Nord, based in Cap-Haitien and also led by Guy Phillippe.

- c) The Kosovo Army, based in the Northeast department and said to have links with the Armee du Nord.
- d) Former paramilitary personnel led by Louis-Jodel Chamblain, former second in command of FRAPH and a key leader of the February 2004 insurgency.
- e) Former military personnel led by Joseph Jean-Baptiste, self-proclaimed leader of former military personnel based in the Central Plateau.
- f) Former military personnel also based in the Central Plateau led by Remissainthe Ravix until he was killed during a clash with the HNP and UN troops. Ravix had been among the leaders of the February 2005 rebellion and later called for attacks against the transitional government and UN troops.
- g) The Front de Resistance du Sud, which controls parts of the Southern Department.
- h) Various armed groups operating in parts of the Haitian countryside based upon the former "chefs de section" who ruled local rural administrative areas with dictatorial powers under the second Duvalier regime. They were disbanded in 1995 after a history of human right violations. In several parts of the country, particularly the Central Department, they have reestablished themselves, often with the support of former military leaders after the police force was forcefully removed or abandoned their posts.
- i) Large landowners, known as "grandons" have organized private militias in several parts of rural Haiti and have violently reclaimed land lost during land reform implemented by the former Lavalas governments.

"...three days after taking office, Prime Minister Gerard Latortue – sharing a platform with convicted murderer 'Jean Tatoune' – hailed the former insurgents as 'freedom fighters.' His remarks were all the more symbolic for being made during his visit to Gonaives, where the insurgents had burned the police station, chased off the police forces and freed the prisoners."
[*Haiti: Breaking the cycle of violence: A last chance for Haiti*, Amnesty International, June 21, 2004]

Political Movements

5) The Lavalas movement – Presently Haiti's largest political force, its popular support is based among Haiti's poor who make up the vast majority of the population. Since the forced departure of Aristide, Lavalas has been divided into various factions, some armed (see above) and led by a number of community leaders and former government officials including current president Rene Preval. In 2007, regional Lavalas leader Johnson Edouard was murdered in Gonaives.

"Figures show 18 kidnappings in March, lowest since April 2006. Journalist and regional leader of opposition Fanmi Lavalas party (FL) Johnson Edouard murdered 12 April in Gonaives." [*Crisis Watch*, 01 May 2007]

International Actors

6) United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH). MINUSTAH began deployment in June 2004, taking over from the UN-mandated Multinational Interim Force, with the mandate to support the transitional government and the political process in general, assist and reform the HNP, help provide security and disarmament and monitor the human rights situation. MINUSTAH's mandate was most recently extended through October 2008. As of March 2009, MINUSTAH forces numbered 9,055, including:

- a) 7,044 soldiers
- b) 2,011 police, supported by 506 international civilian personnel, 1,255 local civilian staff and 194 United Nations Volunteers

Contributors of military personnel include: Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Croatia, Ecuador, France, Guatemala, Jordan, Morocco, Nepal, Pakistan, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Sri Lanka, United States and Uruguay.

Contributors of police personnel include: Argentina, Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Canada, Chad, Chile,

China, Colombia, Egypt, El Salvador, France, Grenada, Guinea, Jordan, Madagascar, Mali, Mauritius, Nepal, Niger, Nigeria, Pakistan, Philippines, Romania, Russian Federation, Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Spain, Togo, Turkey, United States, Uruguay, Vanuatu and Yemen

[Source: United Nations: *Haiti – MINUSTAH – Facts + Figures*
(<http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/missions/minustah/facts.html>)]

Status of Fighting:

2008 In April 2008, protests over food security killed 6. Numerous kidnappings, including a peak of 36 in the month of June demanded increased security.

2007 In February 2007, MINUSTAH conducted numerous raids on the Boston area of Cite-Soleil, one of the largest slum areas of Haiti's capital, Port-au-Prince. The UN mission was successful in securing the area and captured notorious gang leader Evans Jeune.

"MINUSTAH held major operations on February 9 and 20 to strengthen grip on Cite Soleil slum, gang leaders Evans and Amarai evaded capture but their bases seized by peacekeepers. At least 59 taken into custody including gang leader Ti Bazil as result of joint Haitian police-MINUSTAH operations. Former Army general Cal Dorelien found liable by Miami court in 1993 torture of Port au Prince labour leader and 1994 death in neighbourhood massacre." [*Crisis Watch*, 01 March 2007]

"Haitian police arrested Cite Soleil gang leader Evens Jeune on the 13 of March." [*Crisis Watch*, 01 April 2007]

2006 Fighting sharply decreased early in the year when gangs called for a cease-fire prior to the February elections. Incidence of violence remained scarce for a number of months following the elections, though increased in the middle of the year, including a July massacre of 21 civilians caught in the middle of a gang turf war, and a number of clashes between gangs and U.N. forces. Clashes and kidnappings subsided during the fall, though increased late in the year in response to anti-gang U.N. initiatives. Low-level violent clashes in the country's slum areas—most notably in the Cite Soleil area of Port-au-Prince—were reported throughout the year, though the level of violence and number of kidnappings and deaths in 2006 was much lower than in previous years.

"Five months into Haiti's latest attempt at democracy, small but important improvements have pulled the Caribbean nation from the brink of collapse. Perhaps most notably, an unprecedented wave of kidnappings that terrorized Haitians rich and poor seems to be leveling off." [Stevenson Jacobs, *Associated Press*, October 20, 2006]

"Renewed clashes in the Haitian capital of Port-au-Prince involving various armed groups—including United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (Minustah) forces—has brought an abrupt end to the short respite from violence in the city since elections in February. In July 2006, Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF) treated more than 200 gunshot victims at three medical facilities in Port-au-Prince... This represents a 110 percent increase from gunshot-related admissions in June." [*MSF*, August 24, 2006]

2005 Low-level urban warfare continued particularly in the capital, Port au Prince. The Haitian National Police (HNP), the former Haitian military, urban gangs and UN mission (MINUSTAH) troops clashed with armed political groups linked to various Lavalas factions and allied urban gangs. On a few occasions, the HNP and MINUSTAH clashed with the former military. The HNP and MINUSTAH also engaged in low-level clashes with heavily-armed criminal gangs operating mainly in Haiti's largest urban areas. Violent inter-gang (criminal organizations) turf wars also occurred.

Number of Deaths:

Total: Over 2,000 people have been killed since the beginning of armed conflict in February 2004. One controversial report claims that as many as 8,000 have been killed.

"The Lancet, a prestigious British medical journal, is investigating complaints about a potential conflict of interest involving the author of a recent article that found systemic human-rights violations in Haiti despite the presence of a Canadian-led United Nations police force and peacekeeping mission. The study, co-authored by Athena Kolbe, found that 8,000 Haitians have been slain and 35,000 women and girls raped since the ouster of president Jean-Bertrand Aristide in early 2004.... However, Ms. Kolbe herself is now the subject of controversy after revelations that the 30-year old master's degree student at Wayne State University's school of social work in Detroit used to be an advocacy journalist who wrote under the name Lyn Duff and worked at a Haitian orphanage founded by Mr. Aristide." [Marina Jineez, *The Globe and Mail*, September 9, 2006]

"In all, political and gang violence which replaced the armed revolt that swept Aristide from power has taken around 2,000 lives since the former president's departure on Feb. 29, 2004, according to human rights groups." [Reuters, January 26, 2006]

"Approximately 1,600 individuals have been violently killed since then President Jean-Bertrand Aristide's ouster in February 2004...Given the difficulties of accessing the affected areas, and fluctuations in violence from month to month, the 1600 figure probably represents only a fraction of all excess deaths in the unstable post-Aristide environment. The total number of excess deaths might be two to four times higher still." [Robert Muggah, "Securing Haiti's Transition," Switzerland: *Small Arms Survey*, 2005]

2008 Casualties were very low in 2008 and restricted to deaths during protests or from kidnappings. One suspected kidnapper was lynched by civilians on February 9th.

2007 Casualties were low in 2007 and were mainly restricted to gang members killed during U.N. raids on Cite-Soleil, a slum in Haiti's capital, Port-au-Prince.

"4 gang members killed in clashes 24 January. President Rene Preval in annual address to parliament cited drug trafficking as primary cause of instability, accused US and other "drug consuming" states of failing to tackle drug trade." [Crisis Watch, 01 February 2007]

2006 46 people were reportedly killed this year, including 25 civilians, and a number of U.N. peacekeepers and gang members. [Source: CrisisWatch]

2005 The number of people killed is likely over 1,000 although current conditions in Haiti have made exact figures difficult to calculate.

Political Developments:

2008 Thousands protested throughout the year demanding former President Aristide's return to Haiti. Tensions mounted between the Dominican Republic and Haiti, as kidnappers kidnapped workers from the Dominican side of the border. Protests over food resulted in the ousting of former Prime Minister Alexis. While Ericq Pierre and Robert Manuel were suggested replacements, both were denied by either the Senate or Parliament and Michele Pierre-Louis was sworn in as new Prime Minister in September. Protests continued in December regarding Aristide's return.

2007 In August UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon visited Port-au-Prince and pledged to request a 12-month extension of MINUSTAH's mandate which was subsequently renewed until October 2008. 108 Sri Lankan peacekeepers were removed from duty following a scandal involving their solicitation of underage prostitutes. Haitian President Rene Preval continues to speak out against drug trafficking, claiming that the United States and other international countries are not doing enough to stop the export of illegal narcotics from Haiti. In November, Hedi Annabi took over as commander of the 7, 800-strong UN mission and reinforced that the mission is not seeking early departure.

"President Rene Preval in annual address to parliament cited drug trafficking as primary cause of instability, accused US and other "drug consuming" states of failing to tackle drug trade." [Crisis Watch, 01 February 2007]

2006 Rene Preval was elected president in February. Preval's new government is the first functioning

parliament the country has had in nearly a decade, and his ascent to power, aided by the country's poor, has significantly altered the country's political climate and led to a de-escalation in violent conflict. Following Preval's election, MINUTSAH's mandate was extended for six months, and extended for an additional six months in August. In September, the government launched a U.N.-administered initiative to disarm gang members in exchange for money, food and job training. This new initiative followed a failed disarmament ceremony that gang leaders called off, citing hostility by U.N. forces. In October, the U.S. partially lifted a 15-year old arms embargo against Haiti, after the embargo was criticized by President Preval. The modified embargo is aimed at helping Haitian and U.N. security forces in efforts to restore order in the midst of continued gang violence. The lifting of the embargo was seen as a vote of American confidence for Preval's government. Long-delayed municipal and local elections took place in early December.

"Today, a new government led by elected President Rene Preval has passed a budget, begun to collect taxes, raised \$750 million in foreign aid and launched a campaign to disarm hundreds of gangsters." [Stevenson Jacobs, *Associated Press*, October 29, 2006]

"Haiti's government and U.N. peacekeepers will launch a major campaign to disarm up to 1,000 gang members with promises of money, food and job training, but top gang leaders will not be eligible for the plan, a U.N. envoy said Monday....Participants will receive ID cards entitling them to money, medical assistance, food for their families, and training for manual labor." [Stevenson Jacobs, *Associated Press*, September 5, 2006]

2005 National elections were postponed on four occasions and eventually scheduled for February 7, 2006 with over 35 candidates announcing their candidacy for president. The transitional government accepted the former military's demand for financial compensation in the form of back-pay and pension funds since the military's disbandment in 1995. Despite the establishment of a National Commission on Disarmament, the transitional government showed little political will to address disarmament. The Caribbean Community, the African Union and several states continued to withhold recognition of the transitional government calling for an official investigation into the forced departure of former President Aristide.

Background:

The current conflict can be traced to the 1990 election of Jean-Bertrand Aristide during Haiti's first free presidential elections. Prior to the 1990 elections, Haiti had been ruled historically by a small elite supported by various foreign powers (France and the US). The election of Aristide, riding a wave of popular support after years of organizing among Haiti's poor majority, threatened the historical dominance of Haiti's economic and military elite. Subsequently, a military coup removed Aristide from power and instigated an era of widespread human rights violations as military leaders violently attempted to eliminate the Lavalas movement, the social movement behind Aristide's election to the presidency.

In 1995, Aristide was returned to power by the US after agreeing to serve a shortened term and to implement IMF-backed neoliberal economic policies. In response Haiti's economic elite and former military continued to oppose the Lavalas-led government eventually with the support of key countries, in particular, the US and France. In 2000, disputed elections won by Aristide were boycotted by the opposition and in 2001 an attempted coup failed to remove Aristide. A US-led economic embargo was placed on Haiti which devastated Haiti's economy, one of the poorest countries in the world. The US also began financing opposition parties and civil society organizations led by Haiti's economic elite. Unable to build upon initial improvements in the quality of life for Haiti's poor, popular support for Aristide began to erode following the 2000 elections. In response the Aristide administration turned increasingly authoritarian arming urban gangs that were used to violently suppress dissent and guard against potential coup attempts.

In February 2004, insurgents led by former military and paramilitary personnel launched an armed uprising quickly taking over much of the country. On February 27, 2004, with the capital Port-au-Prince surrounded by the rebels, Aristide was flown out of the country by the US military. The exact circumstances of Aristide's departure remain disputed with the US military claiming Aristide left voluntarily while Aristide claimed he was forced to leave. In March 2004, a transitional government led by Gerard Latortue, a US resident for 15 years, was created and began governing with the assistance of the UN-mandated Multinational Interim Force (led by US, France, Canada and Brazil) later replaced by the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH).

At the same time, widespread violence against Lavalas members and their associates by the Haitian National Police (HNP) and the former military began throughout the country. The conflict and collapse of state authority also allowed powerful urban armed gangs or criminal organizations to emerge further escalating violence.

Arms Sources:

In 2006, the US partially lifted 15-year old arms embargo, after it was criticized by President Preval, allowing Haiti to legally buy firearms and other items for police. Despite the former embargo, the transitional government of Latortue and Haitian National Police received small arms directly from the US. MINUSTAH provides training, material and operational support to the HNP. All armed groups rely on crude domestically manufactured small arms and on the illegal arms trade. Sources of illegally traded small arms include a number of countries such as the US (Florida), the Dominican Republic, Jamaica, Colombia, South Africa, Israel and various Central American countries.

"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." [Associated Press, October 10, 2006]

"Established smuggling routes between Haiti and the United States (Florida) are also well known, and automatic and semi-automatic weapons have also been sourced from the Dominican Republic, Brazil, Jamaica, South Africa and Central America." [Robert Muggah, *Securing Haiti's Transition*, Switzerland: Small Arms Survey, 2005]

"Research by the Geneva-based Small Arms Survey (SAS) in 2004 and early 2005 indicates that in Haiti there are nearly 170,000 small arms in the hands of individuals, diverse armed groups and criminal gangs, security agencies and law enforcement officials." [Haiti: *Disarmament delayed, justice denied*, Amnesty International, July 29, 2005]

Economic Factors:

The current conflict is rooted in Haiti's socioeconomic inequality which is marked by a small mulatto, French-speaking elite (about five percent of the population) controlling vast amounts of wealth and productive resources while the vast black, Creole-speaking majority live in extreme poverty. Haiti is the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere whose level of development ranks 153 out of 177 countries according to the United Nations Development Programme. More than half the population is unemployed and food insecurity affects over 40 percent of households. In some regions famine has become a real danger since the current conflict erupted. AIDS is widespread and public infrastructure from healthcare to running water and electricity is virtually non-existent. Haiti also suffers from ecological disaster including massive deforestation.

"Close to 80 percent of the population lives on less than two dollars a day, and 42 percent of children under five suffer from chronic malnutrition, according to the UN's World Food Program. Haiti's national budget of \$300 million is less than the budgets of many large US school districts." [Danna Harman, "Ready or not, Haiti preps for vote," *Christian Science Monitor*, September 27, 2005]

"...the nation's most serious social problem, the huge wealth gap between the impoverished Creole-speaking black majority and the French-speaking mulattos, 1% of whom own nearly half the country's wealth, remains unaddressed." [BBC News, "Country Profile: Haiti," August 31, 2005]

57 Erb Street West
Waterloo, Ontario, Canada N2L 6C2
tel (519) 888-6541 fax (519) 888-0018 Email: plough@ploughshares.ca