



Haiti In Crisis

MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT



PETER GOLDRING

Unrelenting civil disorder in Haiti continues, including multiple murders of police and civilians, despite months of international effort to bring order and stability to the country. Throughout last fall, matters were aggravated by the effects of Hurricane Ivan and Tropical Storm Jeanne, which has created a humanitarian crisis in Haiti.

In August of 2004, Canada's 500-troop UN peacekeeping contingent to Haiti was inexplicably withdrawn. The contingent had been sent in February, 2004 and staged from the Turks and Caicos Islands, to help the United States and France secure Haiti after the overthrow of the Aristide regime. The withdrawal of Canadian troops occurred at the very time that the United Nations security requirement for Haiti was staffed at only 50% of the recommended troop strength of approximately 6,000. Subsequent to August of 2004, Canada continued its contribution of financial aid to Haiti, but contributed very few personnel beyond some 50 police officers. Even sending 50 police officers to

Haiti was well short of the 100 police officers initially committed by Canada. Canadian medical relief workers sponsored by Quebec, operating in and around the storm-ravaged Haitian city of Gonaïves, became Canada's principal "front line" presence in Haiti, largely unprotected.

By way of contrast, citizens of Grenada were shocked by the nature and extent of civil disorder that followed the August devastation of that country by Hurricane Ivan, which damaged or destroyed 90% of all buildings. It was through the quick and direct intervention of security forces, primarily from Trinidad and Tobago and Venezuela, that civil order was restored. Similarly decisive security actions are required in Haiti, so that civil order may be finally restored and the delivery of aid and reconstruction assistance continued in an orderly manner. Restoration of order becomes particularly important in view of elections planned for November of 2005.



Map of Haiti - Haiti shares the island of Hispaniola with the Dominican Republic, and occupies the Western half of the island, with Port-au-Prince as its capital.

Prime Minister Martin visited Haiti for



but one day last November, accompanied by nine other Members of Parliament. This followed on the heels of a visit to Haiti by Foreign Affairs Minister Pettigrew, accompanied by ex-Minister Denis Coderre—a trip that was notable more for its cost than its outcome. Ex-Minister Coderre was later appointed the Prime Minister's "special advisor" on Haiti.

During the course of his November visit to Haiti, the Prime Minister publicly expressed his support for the U.S.-backed interim government in Haiti. He also stated that beyond pledging money, the world needed to focus on security as a priority in Haiti. The Prime Minister acknowledged that the world had largely "turned its back" on Haiti, and on the government of then President Aristide, ten years previously, and that this should not occur again.

The following issues must be addressed in formulating current Canadian policy towards Haiti:

- Had Canada not removed its 500 troops from Haiti last August, it would now be in a position to provide enhanced security and leadership to the UN peacekeeping force, which is now Brazilian-led. This force has operated at less than full

strength for most of its current deployment in Haiti. Even Canada's commitment of 100 police officers has not been honoured. It is time for Canada to re-assume a leadership role through a redeployment of much-needed Canadian peacekeepers and a full police commitment. Even China has a greater physical presence than Canada in Haiti now, having sent 125 of its own police officers to help maintain order.



The Haitian Flag - The flag of the Republic of Haiti was adopted on May 18, 1803. The Haitian flag is a red and blue bicolor, reminiscent of its French colonial past.

widespread concern about Canada's association with the US and France in deposing the democratically elected Aristide government in Haiti. This action resulted in the member states of the principal social and economic union in the Caribbean, CARICOM, refusing to recognize the unelected interim Haitian government. Member states of CARICOM are deeply displeased with the fact that, shortly following the US and France-led overthrow of the Aristide regime, Canada, the United States and France inexplicably withdrew their forces from Haiti, thus contributing to the ensuing chaos. In effect, the strategic error of ten years ago identified by Prime Minister Martin has in fact been repeated through Can-

- During my fact-finding trip to the East Caribbean in September of last year, I discovered a



ada's withdrawal of troops, just this past August.

- It is to be noted that Brazil, which now leads the UN peacekeeping force in Haiti, has cautioned against harsh measures being taken against Aristide supporters in Haiti, and has stated that Brazilian forces will remain in Haiti until fair elections are considered to have been held. France has formally declared that it is opposed to the return of Aristide in any event. Our Prime Minister should carefully reflect on the pros and cons of uncritically following a "US-France" line on the future of Haiti, in contrast to respecting CARICOM sensitivities. The Prime Minister will hopefully appreciate that he cannot please all displaced Haitians in Canada by favouring one government over another. What is most important is that all the people of Haiti embrace a peaceful and democratic process that will bring stability to the country.



Haitians going about their business in downtown Port-au-Prince in a local shopping district. Recent events in Haiti have made everyday activities like this difficult to engage in.

Caribbean nations in relation to Haiti's future and in relation to other geopolitical issues in the region.

In many respects, CARICOM members have a stronger emotional tie to Haiti and a stronger desire to help resolve matters than any larger, distant nation could possibly have. This Caribbean "family" behaviour was very much evident in the responses to last fall's disaster in Grenada, resulting from the devastation of Hurricane Ivan. Caribbean countries all pulled together to help, whether by way of providing troops, donations, supplies or even by way of the street side coin collection boxes for "Grenada trust" that I saw in Barbados and St. Lucia. While Caribbean nations remain fiercely independent, they will strongly pull together to help each other in crisis.

There are many more international implications to the situation in Haiti than may at first appear. At a minimum, respect should be accorded to the wishes and sensitivities of the CARICOM organization of

In my view, it is time for some fresh thinking with respect to the future of Canadian social, economic and humanitarian relationships with the Caribbean, such as that of establishing a permanent platform in the Caribbean to address Canadian-Caribbean interests. I favour consideration of the Turks and Caicos Islands, given long-standing interest on the part of residents of these islands for a more formal relationship

with Canada. Other Caribbean nations could also benefit, directly or indirectly, through such a Canadian platform in the Caribbean.

In a general sense, there must be greater Canadian political involvement in issues involving the Caribbean and in the representative organizations in the region, such as CARICOM. Canada is inextricably tied to the Caribbean through culture, immigration and history, but could do much better in the enhancement of its current economic and humanitarian efforts in the re-

gion. In an era of seeking new trade markets and development partnerships, Canada could and should be far more robustly engaged in the Caribbean. As Canada becomes less involved in the Caribbean, China, Taiwan, Japan, Brazil, Venezuela and a number of other countries are continuing efforts to establish their own major spheres of political and economic influence in the region. From the perspective of lost Canadian opportunities, this is a regrettable state of affairs.

Update: Recently, His Excellency Eduardo Fernandez of the Dominican Republic, met with Mr. Goldring to provide specific insights into the ongoing situation in Haiti. His Excellency Eduardo Fernandez also substantiated the widely held view in the Caribbean that Canada needs to be more aggressively engaged in Haiti, socially and economically, by more specifically directing foreign aid in the rebuilding of schools and educational infrastructure.

9111 - 118th Ave.
Edmonton, AB T5B 0T9
(780) 495-3261
Fax: 495-5142

Web Site:
www.petergoldring.ca
Email:
goldrp1@parl.gc.ca

411 Justice Bldg.
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6
(613) 992-3821
Fax: 992-6898

This brochure series is intended to highlight special issues that Member of Parliament, Peter Goldring, has been involved in. If you wish to comment, please take a moment to fill out the survey below, write or call to the address above.

Your Opinion Matters...

Question #1 Should Canada's monetary aid be more focused on security and the rebuilding of education infrastructure in countries like Haiti?

Yes No

Question #2 Should Canada work more closely with CARICOM in establishing a functional democratic society in Haiti?

Yes No

Comments: _____

Name: _____
Address: _____
City: _____
Postal Code: _____
Telephone: _____



Peter Goldring
Member of Parliament
Edmonton East
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6