



Haiti PAPERS

US Policy Toward Haiti: Engagement or Estrangement?

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Inquiry into the size of a country, usually elicits a straight-forward answer. In the case of Haiti, that answer, from a US point of reference, is generally something like, 'about the same size as the state of Maryland.' The question of Haiti's size, however, when posed two decades ago to a wizened Haitian community leader, evoked an intriguing, figurative answer. "Haiti," the old man stated, gesturing with his hands and arms, "is like an accordion. Sometimes it is large and sometimes it is small."¹

From the perspective of US foreign policy, Haiti over the past 200 years has fit this pattern of a metaphorical accordion: sometimes large and sometimes small. And, without doubt, there have been times when the accordion's bellows have opened very wide. If nothing else, geography - that is, Haiti's proximate location to the US - demands that American policy-makers watch their southern neighbor closely and maintain at least a minimal engagement.

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At times, American policy makers have watched Haiti with deep concern over the impact of developments there on the US. Certainly this was the case in the aftermath of Haiti's independence in 1804, when American leaders, particularly in its plantation South, feared that the Caribbean country's 'virus of freedom' would spread to the slave plantations in the Carolinas, Georgia, Maryland and Virginia. Other times, American engagement in Haiti has evolved far beyond observation to direct intervention, most notably during the 19-year US military occupation of 1915 to 1934.

Had US policy makers in the late 1980s and 1990s used the accordion metaphor, they would have proclaimed its bellows to be wide-open. Great attention was paid to Haiti in the period leading up to and following the

¹ "Haiti: Dreams of Democracy," 1987, a documentary film produced by Jonathan Demme.



demise of the Duvalier family dictatorship in 1986, and then again in the period following the 1990 presidential election of Jean-Bertrand Aristide, his subsequent removal from office in 1991 as a result of a violent military coup d'état, and his later restoration to office as a result of a UN-sanctioned and US-led military intervention. Today, Haiti's geographical proximity, a variety of developments there linked to ongoing US policy interests, and the presence in the United States of a large and growing Haitian-born and Haitian-American population combine to keep the bellows of that metaphorical accordion open.

As much as US officials and policy makers at times may have wanted those bellows to close tightly so Haiti would 'just go away,' this simply does not happen. And it will not happen short of a highly improbable geological episode that will either physically displace, or submerge, the island that Haiti shares with the Dominican Republic!

Since the late 1970's... migration has been a hot rail of US-Haiti policy.

The exact nature of the engagement the US maintains with Haiti, and the relationships it spawns, has varied over time since 1804 and among differing sets of actors. Looking at the broad sweep of the US-Haiti relationship over the past two hundred years, however, the New York-based National Coalition for Haitian Rights (NCHR) has concluded that the hemisphere's two oldest republics "share a long, sordid love-hate relationship," adding that "unfortunately, the last three years have fit tragically into that pattern."²

THE "THIRD RAIL" OF US HAITI POLICY

Before exploring the nature of the US relationship with Haiti over the past three years it is useful to reflect on contemporary US policy maker's views of that country as both a foreign and a domestic policy issue, particularly given its proximity to US shores. A key underlying factor of this hybrid policy focus is migration, a phenomenon that bridges both foreign and domestic issues and that has been characterized

by at least one US diplomat as the "third rail" of US-Haiti policy. And, as those who ride mass transit systems such as the Washington, D.C. Metrorail know, the third rail is the hot one that threatens to burn those who touch it.

[T]he specter of Haitian boatpeople... puts fear not only in the minds of policy makers, but also in the hearts of politicians

Since the late 1970's brought the first significant wave of Haitian boatpeople onto the beaches of South Florida, migration has been a hot rail of US-Haiti policy. To keep from being burned, a succession of administrations - from that of Ronald Reagan, through those of George H. W. Bush and Bill Clinton, to the current administration of George W. Bush - viewed Haitians fleeing by boat as unwelcome economic migrants and not political refugees. Accordingly, each developed immigration - and interdiction - policies aimed specifically at keeping Haitians in Haiti, or sending them back.³

Today, the specter of Haitian boatpeople arriving on the beaches of South Florida puts fear not only in the minds of policy makers, but also in the hearts of politicians seeking either elective office in Florida or the American presidency. As demonstrated in November 2000, electoral victory in Florida is a political prize that hangs by a thread. How Floridians react at the ballot box to issues surrounding Haitian boatpeople, including policies in Washington toward Haiti that may be perceived as either provoking their outpouring or keeping them in Haiti, could be the difference between electoral victory or defeat - in Florida and, by extension, in a Presidential race.⁴ To this

³ For an overview of the evolution of US immigration policy toward Haiti see "Haitian Migration to the U.S.: Issues and Legislation," Ruth Ellen Wasem, Congressional Research Service (CRS) Issue Brief, February 28, 1992. See, also, "Haiti and Asylum Seekers: A Chronology of Major Events," Ruth Ellen Wasem, CRS Report for Congress, June 23, 1994.

⁴ In regards to the fragility of Florida's political prize, the growing population of naturalized Haitian-Americans in South Florida - and the extent of its participation at the ballot box - is potentially key as an electoral 'swing vote' in the Sunshine State. According to 2000 US Census data, the number of Haitians residing in Florida is 228,949, a 117 percent increase since the 1990 census. ("Newcomers from around world set up shop in Broward," Fort Lauderdale Sun-Sentinel, January 12, 2003.)

² "Yon Sel Dwet Pa Manje Kalalou: Haiti on the Eve of its Bicentennial," National Coalition for Haitian Rights, Policy Report September 2003, p. 34.

end, issues linked to Haitian boatpeople have received unrelentingly tough responses from the current Bush Administration, which has even associated the arrival of illegal Haitian migrants with US terrorism vulnerability.⁵ In view of the weight of Florida in American electoral politics and of the heat generated by Haitian migration over the past four presidential administrations, it is easy to understand why migration, in terms of US-Haiti policy, is viewed in Washington as a hot rail issue.⁶

THE LAST THREE YEARS: WHAT KIND OF ENGAGEMENT?

For the Clinton administration, neighboring Haiti was certainly a wide-open accordion, receiving attention highly disproportionate to its size and to other global issues. To appreciate how large an issue Haiti was for that administration, think back to such developments as:

- the efforts - and ultimate success - of Clinton to rally international support around United Nations Resolution 940 that sanctioned the US-led multinational military intervention in 1994 to displace an authoritarian military regime and restore democratically-elected government;
- the creation within the US Department of State of the ambassadorial level post of Special Haiti Coordinator, and the post-intervention shuttle diplomacy between Washington and Port-au-Prince of such senior officials as

- the US National Security Advisor, and;
- the visit to Haiti by President Clinton in 1995, the first of a sitting US President since that of Franklin Delano Roosevelt in 1934.⁷

This attention to Haiti underscores not just the country's dominance as a policy issue, but also that the approach toward Haiti under Clinton was one of direct, and sustained, engagement at the highest levels of the US government.

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The Democratic administration's high level executive branch engagement did not play well with everyone in Washington, especially a number of key elected officials in the US Congress who sat on the other side of the political aisle and their allies in such think tanks and political advocacy organizations in the nation's capital as the Center for Strategic and International Studies, the Heritage Foundation, and the International Republican Institute for International Affairs. While some were simply critical of the disproportionate attention bestowed upon Haiti by the administration vis-à-vis other global hot spots, others took issue with the administration's approach to Haiti's problems.

These latter critics received a boost when the political balance of power in Washington shifted following the November 1994 off-year congressional elections that brought control of the US House of Representatives to Republican lawmakers. Coming less than two months after Clinton's successful efforts to restore elective government to the coup-ravaged Caribbean country, the shift of political power in Washington provided an enlarged platform for critics to attack the administration's Haiti foreign policy 'success' and to place constraints on follow-up actions. Those leading the charge against President Clinton and his Haiti policy tended also to be relentlessly critical of the highest profile beneficiary of that policy: Jean-Bertrand Aristide.

Verbal criticism evolved into congressional

⁵ The tough response of the Bush Administration to Haitian boatpeople was demonstrated in October 2002 with the detention and subsequent removal of the 211 Haitians who washed up near Miami Beach (a handful are still in detention). The administration has justified this tough and ongoing response, at least in part, by linking Haitian boatpeople with the illicit arrival of foreign terrorists on US soil. For a discussion of how Haitian boatpeople have been linked with terrorism vulnerability, see, "The War Comes Back Home: Can John Ashcroft fight terrorism on our shores without injuring our freedoms?" Richard Lacayo, *Time*, May 4, 2003. For a discussion of Haitian boatpeople policy options see, "Next Steps for U.S. Policy Toward Haiti," Robert L. Bach and Robert Maguire, November 6, 2002, posted at http://www.trinitydc.edu/academics/depts/Interdisc/International/Haiti_Program.htm

⁶ Given that the first significant wave of Haitian migrants arriving by boat on US shores actually occurred toward the end of the Carter Administration, an argument can be made that five successive administrations have been seized by the issue.

⁷ Roosevelt visited Cap Haitien in July 1934, a month prior to the end of the US Occupation of Haiti.

action aimed at constraining, stalling, or undermining Clinton's Haiti policy initiatives. One such action was the passage of the Dole Amendment, which set stringent conditions on the release of aid to the Haitian government.⁸ Combined with continued unsettled conditions in Haiti and reports of such post-intervention concerns as questionable legislative elections, episodic incidents of politically-linked street violence, increased drug trafficking, and delays in economic privatization, congressional actions eventually had the effect of limiting US assistance to the Haitian government, including aid to support the critically important, yet exceedingly fragile, newly formed Haitian National Police.

Following the controversial vote-counts that accompanied Haiti's May 2000 legislative and municipal elections, there was little prospect for the Clinton Administration to argue successfully before Congress for the continuation of direct bilateral assistance. The failure of Haitian officials to respond to and quickly resolve the 2000 election controversy added strength to those critical of the administration's policy and took the wind from the sails of perplexed policy makers.⁹

In early 2001, the US approach toward Haiti began to move in a different direction.

Republican-led legislative branch efforts to constrain the Clinton administration's engagement with Haiti turned out to be a type of pre-season practice in view of the outcome of the November 2000 US presidential election. Following the January 2001 transition to the administration of President George W. Bush, some

individuals who had been highly critical of the Clinton administration's Haiti policy moved from legislative, advocacy organization and think tank positions into executive branch posts with varying degrees of responsibility over policy creation and oversight. Others who remained in influential legislative, advocacy and think tank jobs experienced heightened access to, and consideration from, executive branch policy makers.

In early 2001, the US approach toward Haiti began to move in a different direction. The new administration began its tenure by stating that the "Eight Steps to Address the Post-2000 Election Political Crisis" - an agreement hammered out in December 2000 by then-former National Security Advisor Anthony Lake during his last 'shuttle diplomacy' mission of the Clinton Administration - was "an appropriate road map to get started."¹⁰ The administration then began to scale back direct engagement with the Haitian government, abandoning the position of Special Haiti Coordinator in the State Department and removing such senior officials as the US National Security Advisor from day-to-day involvement with Haiti.

With the discontinuance of high level, direct engagement from Washington, the US Embassy in Port-au-Prince assumed the principal role for direct contact with the Haitian government. Concurrently, in Washington, Bush policy makers, while maintaining support of the diplomatic efforts of the Organization of American States to resolve the political crisis in Haiti that flowed out of the flawed 2000 elections, intensified their use of the OAS as a forum for strenuously voicing concerns about the Haitian government. Voicing those concerns at the OAS for the administration was a new US Representative to the hemispheric organization, appointed to this post from the staff of Republican Senator Jesse Helms, one of the most vociferous critics of the Clinton Haiti policy.¹¹

By mid-2001, a definitive trend had emerged. Washington's relations with Haiti had moved

⁸ Section 583 of P.L. 104-107, the Dole Amendment, became law on January 26, 1996. It "prohibited assistance to the Government of Haiti unless the President reported to Congress that the Haitian government was conducting thorough investigations of political and extrajudicial killings and cooperating with US authorities in this respect." See: Statement of Alexander F. Watson, Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs, House of Representatives Appropriations Committee, March 21, 1996.

⁹ For an analysis of the May 2000 elections see, Robert Maguire, "Haiti's Political Gridlock," *Journal of Haitian Studies*, Vol. 8 (2), Fall 2002, pp.30 - 42.

¹⁰ Testimony of Sec. Powell, Committee on Foreign Relations, U.S. Senate, Secretary of State Nomination, Part II, January 17, 2001.

¹¹ Roger Noriega was appointed US Ambassador to the OAS in 2001, a post he held until his confirmation as US Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs in July 2003.

away from the direct engagement/dialogue approach of the Clinton administration toward less direct engagement through the embassy in Port-au-Prince and the OAS. Concurrently, several Washington-based think tanks and non-governmental organizations with active ties to Republican leaders in the White House and on Capitol Hill, most notably the International Republican Institute for International Affairs (IRI), emerged as stronger voices addressing US-Haiti policy issues.

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As these operational shifts took hold, other voices, critical of the new direction of Haiti policy, spoke out. One such voice, the aforementioned NCHR, has characterized the Bush administration policy toward Haiti over the past three years as “a policy of willful neglect and containment, a policy driven by an almost pathological aversion to direct engagement.”¹² This apparent aversion to direct engagement created a policy dynamic in Washington that appears to be taken from a page in the book of Haitian political strategy.

A NEW *POLITIQUE DE DOUBLURE*

In the late nineteenth century, when successive, regionally-based, Afro-Haitian military chieftains managed to gain power in Port-au-Prince, the capital city’s own, mixed-race (*mulatre*) economic and political leaders “easily manipulated their dark-skinned puppets,” a political strategy “Haitian historians have labeled... *politique de doublure* (government by understudies).” These alliances, albeit often short-lived, between the puppets and the urban elites ensured a mutually advantageous consolidation of political and economic power.¹³

In view of recent US-Haiti policy trends, a twenty-first century *politique de doublure* has emerged, only this time based principally in Washington, not in Port-au-Prince. Two some-

what distinct sets of understudies have been active over the past three years. One set of Washington-based US-Haiti policy *doublure* is those whose voices are stridently critical of the Haitian government and supportive of its political rivals. These understudies, with apparent connections to the Bush administration and influential Republicans in the US Congress, are listened to carefully, particularly in Port-au-Prince, where they are viewed as having significant influence over US policy and as speaking for the administration.

One Washington-based understudy that has gained particular prominence in this regard is the aforementioned International Republican Institute (IRI). The organization’s determined, ongoing efforts to organize and support political opposition to the Aristide government have raised eyebrows in Washington, particularly among some members of Congress on the Democrat side of the aisle who have expressed concerns about the Bush administration’s policy toward Haiti.¹⁴

The second set of understudies in Washington’s world of Haitian *doublure* is those who are less critical of the government in Haiti and less supportive of that government’s opponents. Among these understudies are eight US-based consulting firms, or lobbyists, who, during the last six months of 2002, received total representation fees in excess of \$1 million from the Government of Haiti. Their fees, tracked as part of the Foreign Agent Registration Act (FARA), are a matter of public record. Fees and funds exchanged between the first set of understudies and their associates in Haiti, however, are not a matter of public record.¹⁵

This second set of voices, although not speaking from positions of power within or aligned to the executive branch and therefore not generally viewed as successfully influencing adminis-

¹⁴ See, for example, the exchange between Mr. Noriega and Senator Christopher Dodd (D-CT), “Hearing of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, The Nomination of Roger Noriega to be Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs,” May 1, 2003.

¹⁵ Op. cit., “Yon Sel Dwete,” The NCHR notes that while it is possible to ascertain the amounts paid to Washington-based agents of the Haitian government on account of FARA regulations, it is not possible to ascertain the amount of support from Washington - and the IRI in particular - to opposition groups in Haiti (p. 6 & 7).

¹² Op cit, “Yon Sel Dwet”

¹³ *Haiti: State Against Nation, The Origins and Legacy of Duvalierism*, Michel-Rolph Trouillot (Monthly Review Press: New York, 1990), p. 76.

tration policy, contributes to a cacophony on Haiti that exists in the US capital and that bounces along a north to south axis between Washington and Port-au-Prince. Characteristic of this cacophony is limited direct dialogue between policy protagonists and the tendency of various players – in Washington and in Port-au-Prince - to speak *at* each other, not *with* each other.

The emergence of Washington's own brand of *politique de doublure* has been noted with considerable dismay recently by a US Ambassador to Haiti. In July 2003, in Port-au-Prince, during a farewell address to the Haitian-American Chamber of Commerce (HAMCHAM), the American envoy reflected on Haiti's long-standing political crisis, stating, "There is an incoherence (in Haiti) that has troubled me: the incoherence of the way Washington's views are interpreted here. Those of you who know me will realize that since I arrived here as President Clinton's Ambassador and then President Bush's, I have always talked straight about US policy and what might and might not be new policy directions. But there were many in Haiti who preferred not to listen to me, the president's representative, but to their own friends in Washington, sirens of extremism or revanchism on the one hand or apologists on the other. They don't hold official positions. I call them the *chimeres* of Washington... When you want to understand US policy, you will listen to my successor, an experienced and coherent career diplomat, and not to the *chimeres*."¹⁶

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The ambassador's comments reinforce the supposition that US engagement with Haiti over the past three years increasingly has become the domain of diverse Washington-based under-studies. They also suggest that the answer to

the engagement-or-estrangement paradigm posed in the title of this essay is neither one nor the other. Rather, US policy toward Haiti over the past three years, viewed as part of a continuum of a long term, sordid love-hate relationship, has devolved into a particular admixture of 'estranged engagement.'

"The United States accepts President Aristide as the constitutional president of Haiti for his term of office ending in 2006."

THE PILLARS OF US-HAITI POLICY

Following his reflections on Washington's *chimeres* the US envoy to Haiti summarized his country's current policy orientation. "(L)et me be clear and coherent about US policy toward Haiti," stated the ambassador. "The United States accepts President Aristide as the constitutional president of Haiti for his term of office ending in 2006. We believe the legislative and territorial elections of May 2000 were seriously flawed and that the government of Haiti bears the principal responsibility for rectifying them. We strongly supported OAS efforts to bring about a negotiated compromise between the parties leading to new elections... We continue to support (OAS) Resolution 822..."¹⁷

A more complete enunciation of Bush administration policy toward Haiti was made in mid-2002 in a speech delivered in Washington by the State Department's then-Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State.¹⁸ "Our objective in Haiti is clear," the official stated. "We desire a fully democratic Haiti - one that is more prosperous and more respectful of human rights. With a robust democracy, the Haitian people will enjoy a better standard of living."

The State Department official then elaborated that "our Haiti policy rests on four pillars, *all*

¹⁷ Ibid. OAS Permanent Council Resolution 822, "Support for Strengthening Democracy in Haiti," was passed on September 4, 2002.

¹⁸ "U.S. Haiti Policy: Remarks by Ambassador Lino Guitierrez, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State," Dinner Discussion, Inter-American Dialogue Conference "Haiti and Development Assistance," Washington, DC, May 22, 2002.

¹⁶ "Reflections," Brian Dean Curran, Port-au-Prince, Haiti, mid-July 2003 (unpublished). In Haiti, *Chimeres* are partisan political street activists prone to taking extreme measures, including violence, to represent their viewpoints.

equally important (author's emphasis). We seek to:

- Support efforts to strengthen democracy and improve respect for human rights;
- Provide humanitarian assistance to the most vulnerable Haitians, and actively promote sustainable economic development;
- Discourage illegal migration, which threatens maritime safety and the lives of those who risk dangerous sea travel; and
- Stem the flow of illegal drugs through Haiti to the US..."

Are these four policy pillars *really* equal? An answer to this question is suggested by the NCHR in its recent report. "It is clear," analyzes the human rights organization, "that, while concerned with the political gridlock and subsequent deterioration of human rights in Haiti, the US's priorities - as judged by the areas in which it has actually poured resources and taken concrete steps to address the problem - are narco-trafficking and refugee flight by boat." The United States, continues the NCHR assessment, "is quietly preparing for a potential implosion (in Haiti). In addition to making plans to build a proverbial fence around the country, in an effort to avoid a humanitarian disaster, the US has also increased its emergency food aid program to the country."¹⁹

Comments from US government officials support this conclusion. The State Department official cited above acknowledged that "mitigating humanitarian distress is among our immediate priorities."²⁰ The former American envoy to Haiti acknowledged an impending Haitian humanitarian crisis, linking it directly to migration, that hot rail of US-Haiti relations. "In the United States," he elaborated, "we also see the crisis in terms of a steadily increasing outward flow of illegal migrants." In response to this crisis and the subsequent migratory flow, he told his audience in Port-au-Prince that, "(t)he United States this year has increased its assistance to Haiti to \$70 million. The traditional migrant source zones will be particularly targeted for assistance."

In view of the current US approach of less-than-direct engagement with the government of Haiti, at issue is how this aid is delivered. The US Ambassador addressed this topic in his Port-au-Prince speech when he reminded his audience, "As you know our assistance program in Haiti reflects our ongoing unwillingness to deal directly with the government for political reasons. US assistance is delivered to the people of Haiti through NGOs and the private sector."²¹ In his speech in Washington, the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs also addressed the issue of how the United States delivers humanitarian assistance to Haiti, stating that the US chooses "to channel our assistance to the Haitian people through international and local non-governmental organizations."²²

[O]ur assistance program in Haiti reflects our ongoing unwillingness to deal directly with the government for political reasons.

Several aid-related developments, however, appear to contradict this apparent approach of engagement with the people of Haiti accompanied by estrangement from their government, and to reinforce the supposition that all policy pillars are not created equally. The first of these developments, direct US bilateral support of the Haitian Coast Guard, also suggests that US assistance is even more strongly linked to the migration issue than alluded to by the US Ambassador in his Port-au-Prince speech. Aid channeled to this Haitian government entity not only strengthens its ability to curtail migrant flows but also reinforces its ability to engage in surveillance and pursuit of drug traffickers.²³

Secondly, through its support of OAS Resolution 822, the US has cast its vote to de-link Haiti's political crisis from the suspension of direct, multilateral funding of the Haitian government. Although the US maintains that its bilateral aid is not channeled through the Haitian government, through its support of OAS Res. 822, it now supports the resumption of multilateral assistance to that government by

¹⁹ Op. cit, "Yon Sel Dwet," p. 34-35

²⁰ Op. cit, "U.S. Haiti Policy"

²¹ Op. cit, "Reflections"

²² Op. cit, "U.S. Haiti Policy"

²³ Op. cit, "Yon Sel Dwet," p. 34

way of the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and the World Bank, both of which are heavily dependent on US government funding. Or, as stated by the US Ambassador in Port-au-Prince, "(W)e are encouraging the IDB to be prepared to move quickly, but appropriately, as soon as arrears are paid. The World Bank should not be far behind."²⁴

TOWARD ANOTHER US - HAITI POLITIQUE?

In recent months, several other developments have further complicated the picture of 'estranged engagement' sketched out above. Altogether, they may be indicative of a gradual shift of the Bush administration away from understudies and *chimeres* toward more direct engagement with its Haitian counterparts.

One development relates to the important policy pillar of narco-trafficking. In a somewhat surprising move last June, the Aristide government arrested and expelled the alleged, notorious Haitian drug kingpin, Jacques Ketant. Then, in mid-October, Haitian authorities followed with the arrest and expulsion of another notorious drug kingpin, Eliobert Jasme, a.k.a. ED1, a prominent Port-au-Prince businessman.²⁵ Both Ketant and Jasme are in US custody in South Florida. Ketant, according to one official, is "singing like a bird." Which tunes, exactly, he is singing, are yet to be revealed. The fact that Mr. Ketant is chirping loudly, however, poses considerable risk to President Aristide and his government, particularly if the supposed drug kingpin alleges, as many of his political detractors already have, that neither President Aristide nor his government have clean hands insofar as Haitian drug

trafficking and the riches it brings are concerned.

Speculation abounds in Washington and Port-au-Prince as to why Haitian authorities have moved when they did to arrest and expel two notorious drug traffickers that the US has requested for some time. Given the great importance of action against drug trafficking as a key US interest in Haiti, much of that speculation revolves around the question of whether the government of Haiti is giving the US something of great importance to set the stage for receiving something in return. Might that something be a reduction of US political heat on President Aristide and his administration, particularly in so far as it relates to allegations of government collusion with drug traffickers, accompanied by more resolute support from Washington of the Aristide government's stated intentions to take steps to resolve, at long last, the controversial results of the 2000 legislative elections? In addition to lowering the political heat, one must ask, of course, whether or not any *quid pro quo* might also have something to do with lowering the heat along the dreaded third rail of migration, especially as US elections appear just over the horizon.

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Concurrent with movement by the Government of Haiti on the narco-trafficking front, are developments on the policy front linked to the arrival of Washington's new envoy to Haiti.²⁶ In public statements and, reportedly, during a September 19 private meeting with President Aristide, Washington's ambassador has enunciated several key components of the US stance vis-à-vis the current Haitian government, along with obstacles toward heightened US-Haiti political cooperation. Specifically, the US Ambassador has reiterated the legitimacy of Aristide's February 7, 2001 to February 7, 2006 term of office, while calling firmly for there to be no change vis-à-vis the Haitian constitutional

²⁴ Op. cit, "Reflections" The Government of Haiti paid \$32 million in arrears to the IDB in July, thus opening the door for about \$200 million in loans from that organization. In early October, the World Bank's private sector financing unit, the International Finance Corporation (IFC), approved a \$20 million loan for investment in a trade free zone near the Dominican Republic border, the bank's first loan to Haiti since 1998. ("World Bank arm OKs first loan to Haiti since 1998," Anna Willard, Reuters, October 10, 2003.)

²⁵ "Haiti hands accused drug trafficker to U.S.," Reuters, October 16, 2003. In between the arrest and expulsion of Kettant and Jasme, the Government of Haiti arrested and expelled two other high profile drug traffickers, Eddy Aurelien and Carlos Ovalle (a Columbian resident of Haiti). They, also, are in the hands of US authorities.

²⁶ Ambassador James B. Foley arrived in Port-au-Prince in mid-September, 2003.

parameters that govern presidential terms in office. Also, the envoy has identified US administrative and security concerns regarding legislative elections in 2004, setting forth key steps to address them.²⁷

[T]here is little doubt that this involvement of a senior American diplomat represents a modified policy approach.

Another recent development is linked to the involvement in Haiti of a well-respected and prestigious American diplomat. In the June meeting of the OAS General Assembly in Santiago, Chile, US Secretary of State Powell suggested that if tangible progress had not been made soon by the Government of Haiti toward the achievement of steps set forth in OAS Resolution 822, an OAS re-assessment of the situation should occur.²⁸ As a result, Terence Todman, a retired U.S. diplomat, and only one of a handful of Americans who hold the penultimate Foreign Service Officer rank of Career Ambassador, has been present in Haiti frequently since August of this year. Mr. Todman, who is also a native of the U.S. Virgin Islands, is working under the auspices of the Secretary General of the OAS.

Whether the designation to the OAS of this prestigious US diplomat in response to the US Secretary of State's recommendation represents a shift in the Bush Administration from its understudy orientation toward more direct engagement is another matter for speculation. While few in Washington believe that there will be a return to the high-ranking Washington/

Port-au-Prince shuttle diplomacy of the previous administration, there is little doubt that this involvement of a senior American diplomat represents a modified policy approach. One indication of the potential impact of the retired diplomat's engagement emanates from Port-au-Prince, where his visits have been compared in significance with that in 1978 of then-US Ambassador to the UN Andrew Young. Young's visit resulted in important, albeit temporary, gains in the respect of human rights during the Jean-Claude Duvalier regime. Hope runs strong among at least some Haitians that this new US-recommended initiative will be instrumental in breaking the seemingly endless political gridlock that is choking their country.²⁹

As Washington and Port-au-Prince await the incorporation of Special Envoy Todman's findings and recommendations into upcoming reports of the OAS Secretary General, speculation abounds that the perspective of the West Indian native and senior US diplomat may be inclined toward breaking that gridlock through increased engagement with a President Aristide and Haitian government that will more robustly address US concerns. That engagement would be paralleled by less US patience with the 'zero option' political delaying tactics of Aristide's understudy-influenced opponents. Should this be the case, the currently stalled OAS diplomatic initiatives toward easing Haiti's political crisis, as written into Resolution 822, may begin to move forward.

A FINAL CONSIDERATION

In reference to the tenor and direction of current US-Haiti relations, the NCHR suggests that it is strikingly apt to consider the axiom that "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure."³⁰ In the long run, a policy of estranged engagement that heightens the risk of implosion and humanitarian crisis in Haiti is in no one's rational interests. All this approach has accomplished is to make things worse for all involved, especially ordinary citizens in Haiti who are already suffering tremendously not just from unmet expectations, but from increased

²⁷ Key issues addressed by Ambassador Foley during his Sept. 19 meeting with President Aristide, summarized in an article in Haiti's *LeMonde* newspaper, included changes to strengthen the objective electoral oversight capacity of the Haitian National Police, improved election security vis-à-vis steps toward disarmament of the civil population (i.e. "popular organizations"), and the constitution of the long-awaited Provisional Electoral Commission required to oversee elections. The security issue included specific concern regarding fugitive gang-leader Amiot Metayer. Metayer was found murdered in late September. (See "Un certain 'plan américain' dononce mais déjà en marche," *Haiti en Marche*, 15 au 21 Octobre 2003, XVII (37).

²⁸ "U.S. Commits Another \$1 Million to OAS Efforts in Haiti – Colin Powell," OAS Press Statement GA-09-03, June 9, 2003.

²⁹ "Nouvelle configuration politico-electorale," in *Haiti en Marche*, XVII(30), 27 Aout, 2003.

³⁰ Op. cit, "Yon Sel Dwet," p. 35

violence, insecurity, and deprivation.

In spite of all its faults and blemishes, “Haiti,” the NCHR points out, “is not nearly as much of a Pandora’s Box as some of the world’s other hot spots. Effective, respectful diplomatic engagement in Haiti,” the organization states, “does not dictate a protracted, prohibitively costly ‘nation-building’ exercise for the US.”³¹

[A] policy of estranged engagement that heightens the risk of implosion and humanitarian crisis in Haiti is in no one’s rational interests.

In view of the “ineffective... utter failure over the past three years” of the US policy of estranged engagement “to compel positive change in Haiti,”³² time is overdue for Washington to reassess its approach toward Haiti. Developments such as US support through OAS Res. 822 of the de-linking of economic aid from the political crisis, the engagement with the OAS of

³¹ Ibid, p. 36

³² Ibid, p. 35

Ambassador Terence Todman, the arrest and hand-off of drug traffickers, the reiteration by the new US ambassador of the legitimacy of President Aristide, and - not mentioned previously - indications of renewed US consideration to complement the current OAS effort to assist and strengthen the Haitian National Police, all point in this direction.³³

Experience as a child and a parent, a student and a teacher, and a worker and a supervisor have all indicated to this writer that positive feedback and positive reinforcement are a much more effective means of getting something done - and done well - than are negative steps that result in estrangement. In that regard, a policy of direct, positive and effective engagement might lead to salubrious developments for all. Perhaps it is still not too late, especially with Haiti’s bicentennial upon us, for the perpetual US-Haiti love-hate relationship to focus more on the former and less on the latter.

³³ For an assessment of lessons learned in the creation of the Haitian National Police force, see “Building the Haitian National Police: A Retrospective and Prospective View,” Janice M. Stromsem and Joseph Trincellito, Trinity College Haiti Program, *Haiti Papers*, Number 6, April 2003.

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- *Bootstrap Politics: Elections and Haiti's New Public Officials*, Robert Maguire, February 1996
- *Rural Localities, National Reality: Issues in Haitian Development*, Michel-Rolph Trouillot, March 1996
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- *Building the Haitian National Police: A Retrospective and Prospective View*, Janice M. Stromsem and Joseph Trincellito, April 2003
- *Who is Afraid of Democracy in Haiti? A Critical Reflection*, Alex Dupuy, June 2003

SYMPOSIUM REPORTS

- *Economic Development in Haiti: Investment, International Assistance and Governance*, March 1, 2002
- *The Emerging Presence in the U.S. of the Haitian Diaspora, and its Impact on Haiti*, June 28, 2002
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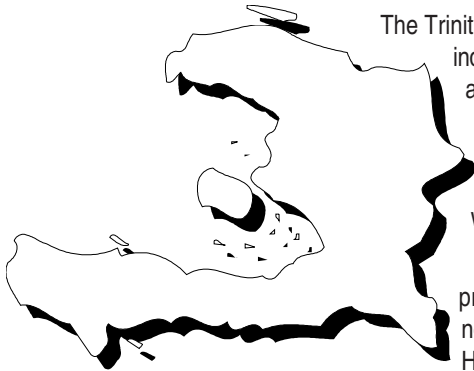
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COURSE ON HAITI OFFERED AT TRINITY COLLEGE, JANUARY 2004

A three credit college course entitled *Haiti 2004: Two Hundred Years Since Independence* will be taught at Trinity College during the Spring Semester, 2004. The course, taught by Dr. Robert Maguire, will examine issues of economic development, migration, politics, race & ethnicity, history, environment, and international relations as viewed through the lens of Haiti on its 200th birthday. Classes meet once a week, either on Thursday afternoon from 1:30 – 4:00 or on Thursday evening from 6:30 – 9:00, commencing January 22nd. Participants may take the course for academic credit, transferable to their home institution, or for personal or professional interest. Those not interested in receiving academic credit may audit the course as a non-matriculating student. For information, call the Haiti Program at 202-884-9514.

Information on the Haiti Program



The Trinity College Haiti Program seeks to provide accurate, up-to-date, and insightful information and analysis to individuals and organizations involved in current Haitian political, economic and social issues. The Haiti Program also seeks to raise awareness of the forthcoming 200th anniversary of Haiti's independence in 2004 by providing a forum for the exchange and dissemination of information on the contributions made over space and time by Haiti and the U.S.-based Haitian Diaspora population to the well being of the United States. The Trinity College Haiti Program is a continuation and expansion of the Georgetown University Haiti Program, which was founded in 1994 in collaboration with Johns Hopkins University.

The Haiti Program works with two core constituencies. One constituency is composed of policy makers and program planners in agencies and branches of the U.S. government as well as representatives of academic, non-governmental and international organizations. The second constituency is composed of members of the Haitian-American population actively involved in Haiti and US-Haiti issues. Members of both constituencies are convened periodically under the auspices of the *Haiti Study Group* to participate in seminars and symposia on topical issues.

The Haiti Program achieves its objectives through seminars and symposia, publications, and the development of educational materials. Seminars, usually off-the-record and by invitation only for members of the Haiti Study Group (HSG), last for two hours and involve specially invited guest speakers. The full-day symposia, also by invitation for members of the HSG and other guests, address issues related to Haiti's political and economic development; the significance of its independence to the United States; and the contemporary contribution of Haitian-Americans to U.S. political, economic, and social vitality.

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The Trinity College Haiti Papers are designed to serve the needs of decision makers and analysts interested in Haiti and the Haitian Diaspora in the United States. The Papers are an occasional publication of the Haiti Program, a unit of Programs in International Affairs at Trinity College, Washington, D.C. The opinions expressed herein are those of the author, and not the Haiti Program or the College. Copies of this and other Haiti-relevant publications can be obtained by writing to the Haiti Program, Trinity College, 125 Michigan Ave. NE, Washington, DC 20017 or by visiting the Project's website at: http://www.trinitydc.edu/academics/depts/Interdisc/International/Haiti_Program.htm

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