

Ousting Aristide and Protecting the Illegal Regime

By Richard Sanders

Canada's military played a significant role in ensuring the success of the violent, U.S.-led regime change that deposed Haiti's democratically-elected government and forced President Jean Bertrand Aristide into exile. On February 29, 2004, Aristide was threatened with death by U.S. officials and forced to sign a "letter of resignation." U.S. Marines then kidnapped Aristide, taking him to the Port-au-Prince airport, which had just been "secured" by Canadian troops that day. Aristide was then flown against his will to the Central African Republic.

By seizing Haiti's main airport, Canadian troops helped facilitate the kidnapping of President Aristide by U.S. Marines.

In an interview with Canadian journalist Naomi Klein, Aristide said: "The coup, or the kidnapping, was led by the U.S., France and Canada. [They] were on the front lines by sending their soldiers to Haiti before February 29, by having their soldiers either at the airport or at my residence, or around the palace, or in the capital to make sure that they succeeded in kidnapping me, leading [to] the coup."¹

Canada's military assistance included sending "a team of JTF2 [Joint Task Force 2] commandos to Haiti four days before the coup."² As reported by *Agence France Presse*:

"Canadian troops took control of the Port-au-Prince airport on... February 29, 2004.... About 30 Canadian special forces soldiers secured the airport and two sharpshooters [were] positioned on top of the control tower overlooking the tarmac."³

Apparently, Canadian troops also "secured key locations in Port-au-Prince during the coup."⁴

According to Canada's "Defence" ministry, its troops "provided extensive support" for the week before the coup: "More than 100 CF [Canadian Forces] personnel and four CC-130 Hercules aircraft... [were deployed] to assist with emergency contingency plans and security measures."⁵

Joint Task Force 2 commandos/sharpshooters were among Canadian troops that seized Haiti's main airport on February 29, 2004. This was instrumental in that day's kidnapping and forced removal of President Aristide by U.S. Marines. Then, 500 Canadian troops joined U.S. and French occupation forces (MINUSTAH) to prop up the new regime that was illegally-imposed. MINUSTAH has been responsible for human rights abuses including the murder and detention of thousands of supporters of the deposed government. Canada pressured MINUSTAH to use even more excessive force.

After the coup, troops from the U.S., France and Canada protected the illegal regime of Prime Minister Gerard Latortue, and suppress its opponents.

References

1. "Naomi Klein interviews J.B. Aristide," Haiti Action Network, June 23, 2005.
2. Anthony Fenton, "Engineering the Overthrow of Democracy: Canada in Haiti," *ZNet*, Aug. 26, 2004.
3. "Canadian troops secure airport," *AFP*, March 2, 2004.
4. Anthony Fenton, "Canadian Politicians Travel to Haiti on Eve of Elections," *The Dominion*, April 22, 2006.
5. Canadian Air Force video, "Operation PRINCIPAL, Haiti" Feb. 28, 2004.

Operation HALO

Under Operation HALO, Canada sent about 500 army and air force personnel to Haiti in early March 2004.

Canada's 500 troops included:

- A group primarily from the 2nd Battalion [India Company], Royal Canadian Regiment (Gagetown, NB),
- 430 Tactical Helicopter Squadron, with six CH-146 Griffon helicopters (Valcartier, QC),
- A National Command Element linking Task Force Haiti with the Chief of the Defence Staff (Ottawa, ON),
- A National Support Element providing administrative and logistics support services to Task Force Haiti.

Troop deployment was done using CC-130 Hercules and CC-150 Polaris transport aircraft 8 Wing (Trenton, Ontario).

Source: "Op HALO: Canadian Forces Commitment in Haiti," Aug. 17, 2004. <www.forces.gc.ca>



Paul Martin

"We were the ones who secured the airport in Haiti. Those were Canadian forces who did that.... My view is, you begin with military security, but you can't leave it there. What you've got to do after that is put in place the institutions that will allow those democracies to grow." *As It Happens*, CBC, Dec. 13, 2004.

"The coup, or the kidnapping, was led by the U.S., France and Canada. [They] were on the front lines... sending their soldiers to...the airport,...my residence, ... around the palace, ... the capital ... they succeeded in kidnapping me, leading [to] the coup."



Jean Bertrand Aristide

Occupation by the Multinational Interim Force (MIF)

www.airforce.forces.gc.ca/abroaddocs/abroad_1_2_e.asp



One of six Canadian CH-146 Griffon helicopters used in Haiti, flies over the Presidential Palace.

Military Doublespeak

By Richard Sanders

In describing deployment of the 3600-strong, U.S.-led Multinational Interim Force (MIF) to Haiti in 2004, the Canadian Air Force website (see above), says Canada's army, navy and air force "helped restore peace and democracy in Haiti following that country's democratic elections."¹

In reality, Haiti's "democratic elections"—which swept Aristide and his party to power—occurred *four years earlier*, in 2000. The MIF deployment actually helped overturn Haiti's democracy by deposing its duly-elected government. The claim that the MIF "helped restore peace" is equally ludicrous. The illegal coup-installed regime presided over a vicious, two-year reign of terror in which thousands were murdered with impunity by police and their brethren from the disbanded military and their death squads. Thousands more were imprisoned without trial as MIF troops from the U.S., Canada, France and Chile stood by and provided cover.

On March 13, 2004, the U.S. chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Air Force Gen. Richard Myers, thanked America's MIF "partners"—and said the "force's presence probably prevented a coup.... [and] the political process is uninterrupted."²

References

1. "Serving the World, Peace Support, UN Mission," Canada's Air Force website.
2. Jim Garamone, "Myers Praises Interim Force for Haitian Progress," American Forces Press Service, Mar. 14, 2004.



MIF "raising tensions"

The first National Lawyers Guild delegation [March 29-April 5, 2004] documented a wave of political violence directed at supporters of President Aristide, his political party Fanmi Lavalas, and Haiti's elected authorities, and the repression of popular organizations working with his government to address basic community needs.

The delegation concluded that the multinational force was not functioning to protect supporters of President Aristide or prevent killings, kidnappings and arsons directed at his supporters.

The multinational force was generally limited to guarding fixed positions or engaging in heavily-armed patrols in the poorest areas. Its presence generally was seen as raising tensions in those areas rather than contributing to a sense of security.

Recommendations included:

- Immediate replacement of the U.S.-led Multinational Force with a UN Peacekeeping Mission that does not include the U.S., France or Canada.
- An immediate investigation within the Canadian Parliament into the Canadian role in supporting U.S. policy and the Haitian intervention.

Source: Summary Report, Phase II of NLG Delegation to Haiti, April 12-19, 2004. <www.nlg.org>

Mass Graves

On July 29, 2004, Lt. Colonel Jim Davis, Commander of Canadian Forces in Haiti, acknowledged that at least 1000 bodies had been buried in a mass grave in Port au Prince, within one month of "restoring stability."

Davis also would not deny the eyewitness testimony that spoke of a massacre of President Aristide's supporters committed by occupying forces on March 12, 2004. According to eyewitnesses, international forces staged an attack in a Port-au-Prince slum, killing dozens. These international forces reportedly took all but two of the bodies away.

At the time, U.S., French and Canadian forces were in Haiti, including Canada's "Secret Commandos": Joint Task Force Two. French troops had explicit rules of engagement: they were not to shoot unless attacked. Canadian and U.S. occupying forces had no such burdens.

Said Davis: "I do not deny that these things have happened."

Source: Anthony Fenton, "Canada in Haiti: Who Engineered the Overthrow of Democracy?" *The Dominion*, Aug. 25, 2004. <www.dominionpaper.ca>



Jim Davis

Human Rights Failures and Abuses by UN Forces

MINUSTAH's Failure

The UN Security Council established MINUSTAH on June 1, 2004, and gave it a strong mandate to:

- (1) Provide secure, stable environment, particularly through disarmament,
- (2) Support the political process and good governance in preparation for upcoming elections, and
- (3) Monitor and report on human rights.

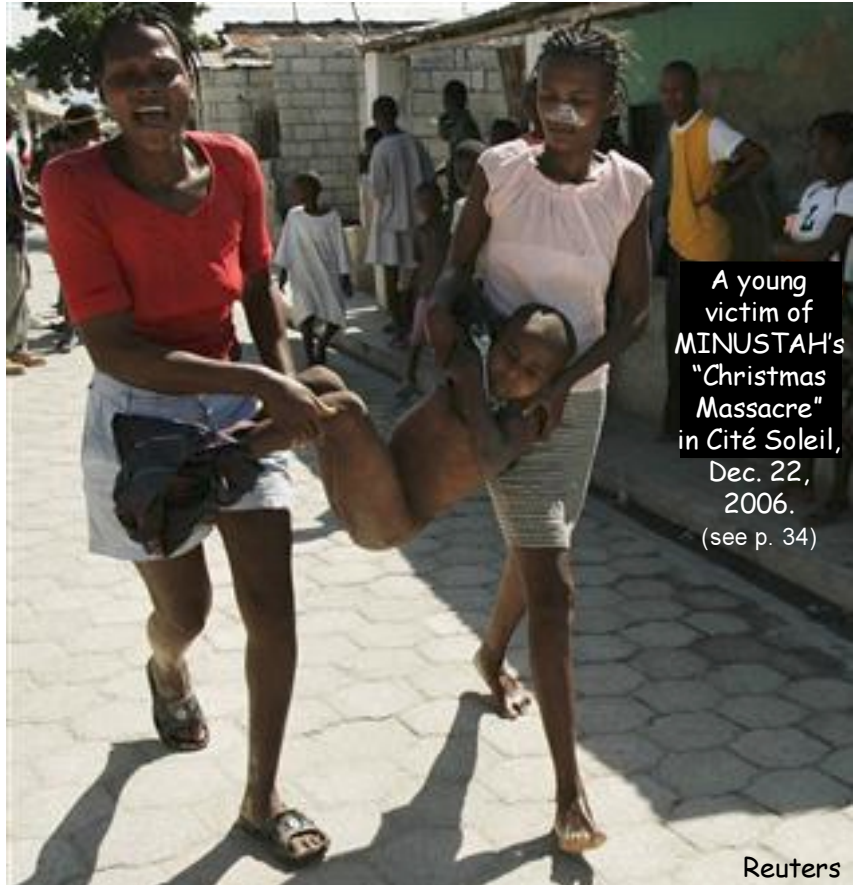
MINUSTAH has made little, if any, progress on any of these fronts. Its failures are largely the result of the timid interpretation of its mandate.

MINUSTAH has failed even to begin to implement a comprehensive program for disarmament, leaving large pockets of the country effectively ruled by illegal groups with guns and other weapons. Civilian casualties remain common in Port-au-Prince's slums, where gangs wage daily, low-level urban warfare. Large swaths of the poor countryside remain under the control of the former military, historically the major domestic force behind coups d'état and among the foremost violators of human rights.

In the area of human rights, MINUSTAH has been equally lax. Numerous allegations of severe human rights abuses by the Haitian National Police (HNP) remain uninvestigated. Even more distressing than MINUSTAH's complicity in HNP abuses are credible allegations of human rights abuses perpetrated by MINUSTAH. However, it has virtually ignored these allegations as well, relegating them to obscurity and thus guaranteeing that abuses go uncorrected.

Instead of following the prescription of its mandate by putting an end to impunity in Haiti, MINUSTAH's failures have ensured its continuation.

Source: *Keeping the Peace? An Assessment of the UN's Stabilization Mission in Haiti*, March 18, 2005. Produced by Harvard Law Student Advocates for Human Rights (Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA) & Centro de Justiça Global (Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, Brazil). <www.fidh.org>



A young victim of MINUSTAH's "Christmas Massacre" in Cité Soleil, Dec. 22, 2006. (see p. 34)

Reuters

MINUSTAH's Victims Demand Reparations

On May 3, 2006, over 200 victims and their families met to demand justice and reparations for injuries inflicted by MINUSTAH. There were victims in wheelchairs, on crutches, people without arms, without feet, and parents whose children are illegally in jail. Several families brought pictures of loved ones killed by MINUSTAH.

While the international press was absent, many national journalists made the effort to come to Cité Soleil and cover this moving event. The room was filled with victims chanting, "Justice, Reparation" in a well-organized and disciplined chorus about their sad but determined bid for justice.

Attorney Evel Fanfan, President of the Association of University Graduates Motivated for a Haiti with Rights (AUMOHD), declared that the Boniface/Latortue regime had established a record of human rights violations and that MINUSTAH troops had committed violent acts of abuse against whole neighborhoods like Cité Soleil

and Pele. "AUMOHD demands justice and reparation for all deaths, crippling and property loss." Fanfan cited the Haitian Constitution, UN peacekeeping decrees and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in grounding these demands. In particular these international conventions call for civilian victims to be cared for, something that has not been done.

Fanfan called for the MINUSTAH authorities to establish a fund for reparations and an independent commission to investigate these atrocities. In addition, AUMOHD demanded the liberation of all those illegally imprisoned and the cessation of all intimidation by MINUSTAH troops against the civilians. He pointed out that more than half of the residents from Cité Soleil and Pele have had to flee their homes to escape the bullets of MINUSTAH.

Source: Tom Luce and Evel Fanfan, "MINUSTAH Victims Cry 'Justice, Reparation,'" Human Rights Accompaniment in Haiti, May 5, 2006. <www.hurah.revolt.org>

U.S., Canada and France Pressure UN Commanders

By Richard Sanders

Gen. Ribeiro's Resignation

In December 2004, Brazilian General Augusto Heleno Ribeiro Pereira, Commander of UN troops in Haiti (MINUSTAH), said he would not bow to "extreme pressure" to use increased violence against opponents of Haiti's transitional government, which had been installed after the illegal coup.

Pereira identified the U.S., France and Canada as the source of this "extreme pressure." He also told a congressional commission in Brazil:

"We are under extreme pressure from the international community to use violence.... I command a peace-keeping force, not an occupation force... we are not there to carry out violence, this will not happen for as long as I'm in charge of the force."¹

As Brazil's Foreign Minister, Celso Amorim, told Brazilian legislators:

"to do this would require a force of 100,000 men prepared to seek and kill in large numbers and this is not our role, nor do we want it."²

However, on July 6, 2005, MINUSTAH forces *did* lead a deadly raid into Cité Soleil, a shanty town in Haiti's capital. In this assault, UN troops inflicted dozens of civilian casualties, including women and children.³

Two months later, he resigned.

Gen. Bacillar's "Suicide"

On September 1, 2005, Ribeiro was replaced by another Brazilian, General Urano Teixeira da Matta Bacillar.⁴ He too came under intense pressure to conduct military raids targeting Aristide supporters in Haiti's poorest neighbourhoods. On January 6, 2006, Bacillar died in an alleged suicide. However, many believe he was murdered.

On the night before his death, Bacillar had a "tense meeting with the president of Haiti's Chamber of Commerce, Dr. Reginald Boulos, and Group 184 leader Andy Apaid."⁵

The Haiti Action Committee reported that "Bacillar had tense meetings with UN, coup-regime officials and the right-wing business elite" which:

"put 'intense pressure' on the gen-



Brazilian General Urano Teixeira da Matta Bacillar



Chilean General Eduardo Aldunate Herman

General Pereira resigned after saying he would not bow to "extreme pressure" from the U.S., France and Canada, to increase violence against Aristide supporters. His replacement, Gen. Bacillar, died of an alleged suicide the day after a tense meeting with coup-regime officials and right-wing businessmen. He was replaced by a U.S.-trained, Chilean who was linked to Pinochet's secret, political police.

eral 'demanding that he intervene brutally in Cité Soleil.'...This coincided with a pressure campaign by Chamber of Commerce head Reginald Boulos and sweatshop kingpin Andy Apaid...who made strident calls in the media for a new UN crackdown on Cité Soleil."⁶

On January 6, 2006, the day of Bacillar's "suicide," his second in command, Chilean Juan Gabriel Valdès, said UN troops would "occupy" Cité Soleil:

"We are going to intervene in the coming days. I think there'll be collateral damage but we have to impose our force, there is no other way."⁷

Reuters reported that Bacillar "had opposed Valdès' plan."⁸

Gen. Aldunate's Dark Past

Bacillar was replaced by General Eduardo Aldunate Herman, a former member of Chilean dictator General Pinochet's dreaded secret police. Aldunate, a graduate of the U.S. Army's School of the Americas (aka the School of the Assassins), had helped storm Chile's presidential palace during the U.S.-backed coup that killed demo-

cratically-elected, socialist president Salvador Allende in 1973.⁹ Aldunate has been accused of involvement in the murder of a UN-employed, Spanish diplomat.¹⁰

In January 2006, Brazilian General Jose Elito Carvalho de Siqueira became the permanent replacement for Bacillar as the head MINUSTAH.¹¹ However, Aldunate then became MINUSTAH's second in command.¹²

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1. "Brazil rejects U.S. call for Haiti crackdown," *Reuters*, Dec. 3, 2004.
2. *Ibid.*
3. *Ibid.*
4. UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti <news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/4624962.stm>
5. "UN commander dead in Haiti amid pressure from elite." <www.haitiaction.net>
6. "New Massacres Loom: Questions Surround UN General's Death," *Haiti Progres*, Jan. 11, 2006.
7. *Ibid.*
8. *Ibid.*
9. Alex Sánchez, "General Eduardo Aldunate," Council on Hemispheric Affairs, Jan. 18, 2006.
10. "New Massacres Loom," *Op Cit.*
11. "UN Stabilization Mission," *Op. Cit.*
12. "General Eduardo," *Op. Cit.*