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# Executive Summary Report



This “ExSum” focuses on the worsening conditions in Haiti that are gaining international concern and attention.

Haiti, with a population of 11.4 million people, is the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere. Haiti has a reputation of dictatorships, corruption, crime, natural disasters, and humanitarian crises. The United States has a long history of involvement in Haiti, from occupation early in the twentieth century to frequent humanitarian assistance missions. Despite many opportunities to stabilize after several U.S. and international interventions, Haiti not only sinks back to despair, but suffers ever-worsening conditions. And now, the country borders on anarchy and civil war.

## Key Points:

- Recent events in Haiti:
  - Haiti’s precarious political situation worsened in 2021 with the assassination of President Moïse. Today, Haiti has a controversial prime minister, lacks an elected president, legislature, mayors, and there are no elections currently scheduled.
  - More than 200 well-resourced violent gangs challenge the authority of the police and weak judicial system. Eighty percent of the capital is estimated to be under the control of gangs, port access is stymied, and kidnappings and homicides are skyrocketing.
  - Prime Minister Henry agreed to resign, but only when a temporary replacement has been determined and a transitional presidential council has been formed.
- Natural disasters: Haiti experiences frequent tropical storms, hurricanes, and earthquakes. Poor governance, allegations of corruption and theft of international aid, bad infrastructure, and large-scale poverty compound the damage.
- For the foreseeable future, Haiti’s outlook is dim. Unfortunate for Haiti, it is not in the national interest of major powers, to include the U.S., to make the long-term and costly commitment to address Haiti’s deep-root causes of corruption, lawlessness, and poverty.
  - Until the situation gets so bad that it begins to impact the American public, the United States will seek to manage and contain the situation, while monitoring it and taking the necessary measures required to keep it from getting worse.
  - Mass and uncontrolled migration, mass narcotics production, and terrorism safe havens are examples of factors that could affect southern U.S. citizens (voters) and subsequently force greater action by the United States.
- Forming a transitional presidential council to select an interim president is problematic, as rival gang leaders are currently not allowed to participate in the process.
- Haiti’s economy is almost non-existent. While it has tourism potential, it is the poorest country in the region, with corruption, crime, political instability, and a bad infrastructure.
- If a Multinational Security Support Mission is formed, it is unlikely to be successful due to well-armed, organized gangs and difficulties with a multinational force. Since Haiti is not a top priority for the major powers, the United Nations (UN) will rely on the Developing World whose security forces are not well trained or equipped for these difficult missions.

## Discussion:

Haiti is the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere, with a history of dictatorships, corruption, crime, natural disasters, and humanitarian crises. The United States has a long history of involvement in Haiti, from the nineteenth century's Monroe Doctrine to occupation early in the twentieth century, with recent, frequent humanitarian assistance missions as well. Despite many opportunities to gain prosperity after several U.S. or international interventions, Haiti not only sinks back to despair, but endures ever-worsening conditions, and now, borders on anarchy and civil war.

Haiti stands in stark contrast to its neighbor sharing the same island of Hispaniola. The Dominican Republic has the top economy in the Caribbean with the most annual visitors in the region.

The history of Haiti, to include its often-strained relationship with the United States, is interesting, but in the interest of brevity, let's focus on recent history.

## 1980s to 2021:

After several coups in Haiti in the 1980s and early 1990s with general unrest and significant numbers of Haitians fleeing the country for their safety, the United States intervened. In 1994, the U.S. negotiated with the Haitian military junta to step down and allow U.S. troops to deploy to Haiti in what was called Operation Uphold Democracy. This operation involved more than 20,000 U.S. military forces, providing stability for the previous democratically elected president, Jean-Bertrand Aristide, to resume office, as well as enabling humanitarian aid and rebuilding critical infrastructure. With its mission complete in 1995, the U.S. operation ended. After this, various UN missions operated in Haiti, underpinned by U.S. logistical support until 2000.

Political turmoil resumed. After several elections and changing of the guard, division within Haiti steadily increased, yet Aristide was once again elected to office in 2000. But, by 2004 rebellion ensued, forcing Aristide into exile, and leading to general lawlessness.

A UN mission called the United Nations Stabilization Mission tried to restore order from 2004 to 2017, attaining about 7,000 soldiers from dozens of nations augmented with UN police forces. This UN involvement was very mixed. The mission provided a degree of stability. But, the inadvertent introduction of cholera, likely from Nepalese forces, combined with delays in responding to the crisis, led to years of disease with about 10,000 Haitian fatalities. In addition, misconduct from several UN contributing nations that included sexual assaults and human rights violations, tainted the reputation and effectiveness of the UN mission.

Why did these interventions not get Haiti back onto its feet? Most likely, because the root causes of a deep culture of corruption, lawlessness, and ineffective governance, combined with abject poverty, all of which are very complex and difficult problems to resolve, requiring long-term commitment to be successful, did not take place. It would require a massive effort from the Developed World to attempt to address these root causes and it simply is not in the national interests of the major powers, to include the U.S., to make this commitment.

As for the situation today, the advisory from the U.S. State Department says it all: "Do not travel to Haiti due to kidnapping, crime, civil unrest, and poor health care infrastructure...the Department of State ordered the departure of family members of U.S. government employees and non-emergency U.S. government employees. U.S. citizens in Haiti should depart Haiti as soon as possible..."

## **Natural Disasters:**

Haiti experiences frequent tropical storms, hurricanes, and earthquakes. Poor governance, bad infrastructure, and large-scale poverty compound the damage whenever disaster strikes. Here is a recent rundown of disasters:

- Hurricane Gordon (1994) killing up to 2,000 with about 11,000 homes damaged and over 3,000 destroyed. Tropical Storm Jeanne (2004) with 3,000 fatalities, which included massive mudslides due to decades of deforestation.
- Tropical Storm Fay and Hurricanes Gustav, Hanna, and Ike (all in 2008) resulted in hundreds of deaths but left about 800,000 in need of humanitarian aid.
- 7.0 magnitude earthquake (2010), with up to 300,000 dead and 1.6 million homeless.
- Cholera outbreak (2010-2017) with over 800,000 cases and with 10,000 fatalities.
- 7.2 magnitude earthquake (2021), killing over 2,000 with 650,000 in need of aid, along with over 130,000 buildings damaged or destroyed.

## **Recent Events:**

Haiti's precarious political situation went off the rails in 2021 with the assassination of President Moïse (of note, his term had expired – he was governing extra-constitutionally) followed shortly thereafter with the 2021 earthquake mentioned above.

Just before his assassination, Moïse nominated Ariel Henry as prime minister, to replace the incumbent, Claude Joseph. Regardless, Joseph stated that he was in charge of the country after Moïse's death. Following a political intervention by many nations and international organizations, Joseph stood down and allowed Henry to become the Prime Minister. Some believe that Henry had a role in the assassination of Moïse. Bottom line, Haiti has a controversial prime minister, lacks an elected president, legislature, mayors, and there are no elections currently scheduled.

More than 200 well-resourced violent gangs in Haiti challenge the authority of the police and weak judicial system. Eighty percent of the capital is estimated to be under the control of various gangs and 60 percent of the rural areas as well. Kidnappings and homicides are skyrocketing, with the gangs controlling increasing amounts of territory, access to fuel, and the delivery of humanitarian aid. Violence has prompted closures of schools, businesses, markets, and medical facilities.

According to the UN, more than 3,000 Haitians have been killed, the country experienced over 1,500 kidnappings, and at least 200,000 are homeless. Haiti has about 10,000 police officers deployed, but, according to Human Rights Watch, they face logistical challenges, they lack training, and they are shorthanded with equipment. Further, many of the police officers may also have ties to the gangs.

In recent days, Prime Minister Henry agreed to resign, but only when a temporary replacement has been determined and a transitional presidential council has been formed. Those that are convicted of criminal charges are barred from being part of the council, so the many gang bosses will most likely not only disagree with this arrangement, but very well will undermine it. This includes the two leading gang contenders, "Barbecue" Chérizier and his opponent Gabriel Jean-Pierre.

The U.S. administration is unlikely to play a direct role in stabilizing Haiti, to include sending in military forces. Secretary Blinken recently stated "we support the plan to create a broad-based, inclusive, independent presidential college that would, in particular, first, take concrete steps to meet the immediate needs of the Haitian people; second, enable the swift deployment of the Multinational Security Support Mission; and third, through that deployment, through a reinforced Haitian National Police, create the security conditions that are necessary to hold free and fair elections, to allow humanitarian assistance to get to people who need it, and to help put Haiti back on a path to economic opportunity and growth."

The U.S. pledged \$300 million to fund the Multinational Security Support Mission, which was also authorized last year by the UN Security Council. The challenge is finding nations willing to contribute police forces for this endeavor. And, very important, is recruiting nations that have forces capable of restoring and maintaining order and stability.

Kenya offered to provide the core of police forces with other nations making promises of smaller contributions. But the Kenyan High Court determined the deployment was unconstitutional and that the government cannot send police officers to another country, instead, Kenyan defense forces should be sent.

It bears noting the Kenyan defense forces have deployed in several UN peacekeeping and peace-enforcement missions with mixed-to-negative results. For example, in a Sierra Leone peace-enforcement mission, hundreds of Kenyan soldiers surrendered to rebels without a shot fired.

## **Implications and Forecast:**

- For the foreseeable future, Haiti's outlook is dim. Unfortunate for Haiti, it is not in the national interest of major powers, to include the U.S., to make the long-term and costly commitment to address Haiti's deep-rooted causes of corruption, lawlessness, and poverty.
  - Until the situation gets so bad that it begins to impact the American public, the United States will seek to manage (or contain) the situation, monitoring it and taking the necessary measures required to keep it from getting worse.
  - Mass and uncontrolled migration, mass narcotics production, and terrorism safe havens are examples of factors that could affect southern U.S. citizens (voters) and subsequently force greater action by the United States.
- Forming a transitional presidential council, one of the conditions for the ineffective prime minister to stand down, is problematic at the very least, as the rival gang leaders are currently not allowed to be part of the process.
- Haiti's economy is almost non-existent. While it has tourism potential just like its neighbor the Dominican Republic (DR), contrasting with DR, Haiti is the poorest country in the Americas, with major corruption, political instability, bad infrastructure, rampant crime and violence, dismal health care, and little education.
- Haiti will remain reliant on external humanitarian aid for the long-term.
- If or when the Multinational Security Support Mission is formed, it is unlikely to be successful due to well-armed, organized gangs and the difficulties with a multinational force. Since Haiti is not a top priority for the major powers, the UN will largely rely, if not exclusively, on the Developing World whose security forces are not well trained or equipped for these difficult missions.

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