



Haiti Before the Earthquake

By Chuck Kaufman

As Alliance for Global Justice National Co-Coordinator James Jordan and I, Chuck Kaufman, participated in a Latin America Solidarity Coalition delegation to Haiti from Dec. 28-Jan.7. We left Haiti five days before the earthquake. The purpose of the delegation was to investigate reports on UN Stabilization Force (MINUSTAH) human rights abuses against supporters of President Jean Bertrand Aristide who was kidnapped and sent into exile by the US on Feb. 29, 2004.

The shock of the earthquake and all the pictures of destruction overlay, in my mind's eye, the views of Haiti I experienced before the quake. Haiti

was so devastated and the people so desperate, the progressive movements so divided, and the international aid so predatory before the earthquake that my mind fails to comprehend how much worse it is for Haitians now.

I see...

Site Soley is the compact ghetto of 200,000 astoundingly impoverished people who moved to this neighborhood of Port au Prince drawn by the promise of export manufacturing jobs only to find there

This Haitian woman told the delegation about returning home after a UN attack on her community to find her husband bleeding to death under their bed. She has been homeless since the 2005 attack. (Photo: Marc Becker)

were no jobs... The good houses were made of cement block, deathtraps in the quake; the bad were made of sticks and boards, tin and cardboard. Site Soley is the heart of the Lavalas movement that propelled Aristide to office. We were told, "Delegations don't come to Site Soley. Those who don't come [here] hear a different story about Haiti."

The overcrowded school in Site Soley, which is run by a woman named Florence, receives no government support. The children sat quietly, dressed in their best outfits, for our visit. The school doesn't need windows because the gaps between boards in the wall let in enough light.

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Homeland Security Harasses Haiti Activists

By Tom Burke (Published in Fight Back News)

The U.S. government is stepping up its surveillance and harassment of U.S. activists in an attempt to intimidate them and dampen their spirits for the change we believe in. International solidarity activist James Jordan was returning from a two week trip to Haiti, on Jan. 7, five days prior to the terrible earthquake disaster. When his flight touched down in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, flight attendants called out for “James Patrick Jordan” and asked him to come to the front of the airplane. Homeland Security came on board the airplane to escort him off.

Jordan said, “The agents put me up against a wall, kicked my legs apart and frisked me. They took me to a detention area, then a back room where two agents began going through all my papers, my cell phone and camera, all my bags, looking for Lord knows what?” Homeland Security was most interested in his notebooks concerning Haiti and Colombia.

The Haitian groups James met with organize against the grinding poverty, support workers’ rights and work to improve health care for the masses. Now hundreds of thousands of Haitians are dead in the earthquake and more will die due to poverty and lack of doctors and medicines. The U.S. government is responsible for the dire conditions in Haiti, holding the people down and suppressing any progressive change. In 2004, the U.S. military kidnapped President Aristide and overthrew his government. Aristide had disbanded the Haitian army a few years earlier to prevent a U.S.-backed military coup. President Aristide, a former Catholic priest, was making mild reforms to help the people of Haiti, but U.S. companies wanted privatization of the electric system and other services.

The Latin American Solidarity Coalition (LASC) in the U.S. sponsored Jordan’s delegation, and his Colombia work was the focus of the interrogation. Jordan said, “I told them that two of us were in Haiti representing the Alliance for Global Justice [AFGJ] and that, specifically, I worked with the Campaign for Labor Rights, a part of AFGJ. And I explained that AFGJ was

part of LASC. They asked about Chuck Kaufman and what kind of work he did. They wanted to know his flight information and I told them I didn’t know what it was. They asked me about the other delegates and I told them that I didn’t know their flight information and that I didn’t feel comfortable giving them names and other information about those delegates and they ceased questioning about them.”

Chuck Kaufman, also on his way home from Haiti, was detained and questioned in New York City. Chuck said, “I told them I was in Haiti. They asked what other countries I’ve visited and what I did there. I described a trip to Hiroshima, Japan and swimming with nurse sharks in Belize. They dropped the subject.” Chuck was held for a couple of hours and missed his connecting flight, forcing him to spend the night in New York.

James Jordan continues, “They were very interested in the folder I had about the terrible situation with the Colombian prisons, political prisoners and human rights violations. I am working on a project to advocate for better conditions at La Tramacua prison in Valledupar, Colombia - a prison that is very overcrowded, rife with violence and intimidation aimed at the political prisoners and imprisoned guerrillas, where inmates do not have access to sanitary toilet facilities and have access to drinkable water only ten minutes a day. There was also information about the relationship of the U.S. Bureau of Prisons in funding, advising and restructuring this and other maximum-security prisons in Colombia. We are calling for an investigation of the U.S. Bureau of Prisons’ relationship with these prisons and what responsibility it bears for the conditions that exist there. Everyone hears about the White House closing Guantanamo, but the U.S. government is overseeing terrible things in Colombian prisons.”

Jordan emphasized, “There was a flier for my speaking at the School of the Americas protest this [past] year that featured a picture of Lily Obando. Lily Obando is a political prisoner we support and campaign for.

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“The agents put me up against a wall, kicked my legs apart and frisked me. They took me to a detention area, then a back room where two agents began going through all my papers, my cell phone and camera, all my bags, looking for Lord knows what...”

The Impacts of Militarized Aid

By Jamie Way (Published in *Upside Down World*)

As the story of the tragedy in Haiti continues to unfold, the spotlight seems to have turned away from human suffering, and instead now largely focuses on the U.S. military presence and aid effort. Doctors Without Borders, the Haitian prime minister and the director of French aid have all complained that the U.S. military has impeded the progress of the relief mission. Many have noted that the priority of the military would appear to be security over rescue, causing the delivery of medical supplies to be postponed while the military brings its troops and supplies.

Both the UN and the US have raised troop presence to high levels. *The Telegraph* reports that the US has some 10,000 troops on the ground and the UN is expected to add 3,000-9,000 more in addition to the force that they had in Haiti prior to the earthquake. This military presence may be the result of a number of factors. Some have claimed that there is an exaggeration of security problems and violence. Others say that it could be due to historic racism and assumptions about Haitian culture. Some argue that the military presence is benevolent and necessary for keeping the peace. And yet still, many have claimed that the increase of foreign military presence is an occupation and a continuation of US and foreign colonization and domination in the region.

Regardless of what troop increases may represent, it undoubtedly highlights a problematic trend in development aid effort; aid is all too often militarized.

Development aid has long been accused of being imperialistic, and with good reason. The concept of development aid truly came into fruition during the Cold War. Nervous



about the temptations of communism for poor countries, the US developed the concept of foreign aid. In order to keep poverty stricken countries from falling prey to the USSR, the US would insure the continuation of its prized capitalist system through the extension of aid to these countries.

Even beyond the state function of development, the most benevolent forms of its practice incorporated a distinctly Western set of assumptions about what made life valuable, and what made one modern. Hoping to help the world reach the level of comfort the West had attained, many idealists devoted their life to the goal of development. While these actions may have been well intentioned, they were (and often are) undoubtedly Eurocentric, and in the case of governmental programs, have often been a political tool. Aid was offered as an incentive for policy changes within a country, perhaps ironically including demilitarization.

More recently, aid has developed into a multilateral instrument for enforcing neoliberal policies. This is evident in the requirements put forth by aid institutions such as the International Monetary Fund. Structural Adjustment Programs are enforced as a mechanism for implementing neoliberal policies in countries that accept international loans. So clearly, for many decades, the global North has employed the concept of aid and the promise of a life like ours as a way of “winning hearts and minds” or at least twisting wrists until we can reach a compromise.

In the last decade, however, the use of aid as a political weapon has taken on even more dangerous and overtly hegemonic posture. The trend toward the militarization of aid has been met with great concern, but also, widespread acceptance. Suddenly, under this new paradigm, human rights are used to justify wars and help comes in the form of military presence. This trend is far from exclusive to Haiti, which up to this point may be amongst the mildest of such cases. Human rights violations were used to justify US intervention in Yugoslavia/Kosovo, Iraq and Afghanistan.

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Hondurans protest outside of the presidential inauguration. (Photo: Mirian Huezco Emanuelsson, published by the Quixote Center)

Honduran Coup d'état, A 'Win' for the U.S.?

By Tom Loudon (Published by the Quixote Center)

Today, Pepe Lobo will be inaugurated as the new President of Honduras in what many consider to be an institutionalization of the coup d'état which took place seven months ago. Lobo comes to the Presidency as a result of a highly disputed election process carried out by the coup regime. The elections, which have been widely condemned as illegitimate were boycotted by a large percentage of the Honduran population.

U.S. Undersecretary Thomas Shannon, in a maneuver that totally subverted an extended negotiation process, announced that the U.S. would recognize the election, even if there was not a prior return to constitutional order. The U.S. celebrates today's inauguration as the 'way forward' for Honduras and has aggressively pressured other Latin American countries to recognize Lobo's government.

While the United States is eager to normalize the situation and to get on with business as usual, the June 28th coup d'état has yielded unexpected consequences for Washington, both inside and outside of Honduras. Unforeseen by the coup plotters and the United States, the military takeover of Honduras unleashed a broad based, sustained resistance movement inside the country. A spirit long dormant in Honduras was awakened, transforming the country into a hub of political activity previously unimaginable.

The resistance movement has brought together people from many sectors of Honduran society, including large numbers of disaffected Liberal Party members. The unifying theme is that

they no longer accept the status quo for their country. Events of the last seven months have accelerated and deepened a process demanding deep structural change. Organizations such as "Los Necios", a small, left wing organization of students and young people struggled to maintain a membership of around 100. In these few months, their membership has swelled to over 1000.

Currently 57 local expressions of the national resistance organization operate in cities and towns around Honduras. Confounding the coup leader's strategy, the movement is gaining strength despite brutal repression, state terror and the attempt to institutionalize the coup via elections. The resistance movement is holding large protest marches today and is working to implement a four-year plan for movement building in preparation for the next national elections.

In Latin America, the coup in Honduras is widely understood to be a test case for U.S. policy towards Latin America. By attacking the weakest and most vulnerable of the ALBA countries, the U.S. hoped to strike a blow to this alternative economic block which the U.S. counts as enemy. However, in the wake of the coup, the U.S. found itself in a historically unprecedented position at the OAS. Viewed by Latin American governments from both the right and the left as a potential direct threat to each of them, the OAS took a unanimous position denouncing the coup and ejecting Honduras from the OAS. The U.S. was forced to accept this decision. Most countries in Latin America continue to refuse to recognize the results of the coup regime sponsored "elections" on November 29th despite heavy pressure and arm twisting on the part of the United States to do so.

Disappointment stemming from the contradiction between statements of a recently inaugurated President Obama to Latin American heads of state at the Summit of the Americas in April of 2009, and a virtually unchanged U.S. policy has been articulated by leaders throughout Latin America. Three recent 'moments' have contributed to a rapid readjustment of expectations.

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Nicaragua Assists Haiti; Worries Mount About Earthquake in Nicaragua

(Compiled from *El Nuevo Diario*, Jan. 15, 17, 18, and *Radio La Primerisima* Jan. 20)

The Nicaraguan rescue brigade has pulled six people out alive in their visits to almost 50 neighborhoods in Port au Prince, according to Army General Mario Perezcassar. Amongst those rescued are two young university students. The women had been buried by the rubble for 7 days. The Nicaraguan workers said that they worked alongside Peruvian and Venezuelan soliders in solidarity with the Haitian people.

“After seven days, we were sure we wouldn’t find anything. It is a miracle that we saved the lives of two university students. Both had been buried. One was 21 and the other 19. This is truly a miracle,” the general said.

The Nicaraguans arrived in Haiti on Jan. 14 with 31 military officers, specialists in civil defense and in search and rescue in collapsed structures, a surgeon, a traumatologist, an epidemiologist, two primary care physicians and four nurses.

Unfortunately, he said, “We haven’t seen an aid center of the size that we expected given the magnitude of the event in spite of the immense assistance that is arriving.” He went on to say, “When [the people] see you they think that you have food or water or masks, some immediate solution. We explain that we are looking for life and they are the ones who have taken us to the places where you hear the sounds.”

Perezcassar noted that rich and poor neighborhoods were affected and that tall buildings on the many hills fell down on top of the neighborhoods below, making rescue even more difficult. Remembering 1972, he said, “Managua was a quake of 6.2 in a flat area where around 300,000 people lived; here it is the size of four cities with three million people with perhaps two million in extremely poor houses.” He said that roofs were made of concrete to prevent their blowing off in the frequent hurricanes and they became deadly traps when they fell on residents.

President Daniel Ortega criticized the sending of US troops to Haiti along with aid, calling it a manipulation

of the tragedy. He said, “It is not logical that United States troops are landing in Haiti. What Haiti is begging for is humanitarian aid; it is not asking for troops. It’s crazy to send troops to Haiti.” He demanded that U.S. troops leave and at the same time said that he was pleased that the international community, including the member countries of the Bolivarian Alliance for Our Americas (ALBA), was participating.

Meanwhile, the Haiti earthquake was serving as a warning to the city of Managua which has been destroyed

three times in recent memory at intervals of approximately 40 years [1885, 1931, 1972]. William Martinez Bermudez, secretary of the National Association of Geologists, said on Jan. 18 that some 400,000 Managuans are at risk because they live near faults. He said that new houses were being built without proper technical supervision and without any urban planning especially in the southeast and southwest parts of the city. He added that of every 10 houses constructed only three are properly built and

that this “urban structural disorder” is likely to result in another catastrophe.

Dionisio Rodriguez, also a geologist, said that the structures that are essential at the time of a natural disaster, such as hospitals and schools, should be inventoried by the National System for the Prevention and Mitigation of Disasters (SINAPRED). Geologist Angelica Calderon added, “You’ve got the experience, the geological conditions are present, there are trained people, prevention agencies, the building code” and all that is lacking their combination.

City Council member Luciano Garcia added that 95% of the people who build in Managua do not get a building permit from the city which leads to great disorder. He said that the Municipal Markets Authority doesn’t regulate construction in the city’s markets, and is merely interested in the fees that the market vendors pay.

“When [the people] see you they think that you have food or water or masks, some immediate solution. We explain that we are looking for life and they are the ones who have taken us to the places where you hear the sounds.”

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Is the school still standing? I couldn't understand what was holding it up even then. Only 40% of children were in school before the quake. How many fewer are in school now?

Bel Air, another Aristide stronghold, with its spectacular view down the hill of the now-destroyed Presidential Palace... The buildings were pock-marked by 50 caliber machine gun bullets from MINUSTAH attacks against the neighborhood. We took testimony from a

We took testimony from a paralyzed man who still has a UN bullet lodged next to his spine, and others who had family members killed by MINUSTAH.

paralyzed man who still has a UN bullet lodged next to his spine, and others whose family members were killed by MINUSTAH. Bel Air was one of the communities most devastated by the earthquake. Are any of the people whose testimony we took still alive? Does the evidence of UN violence still exist? I don't know.

The Matthew 25 guest house where we stayed in Port au Prince... The second floor, where we stayed, is uninhabitable. The adjoining soccer field “houses” 1,300 injured by the quake or made homeless. The dining room table where we ate our meals has been used by Doctors Without Borders as an operating table where they even did amputations with minimal sedatives.

The Peace of Mind hotel where we spent our final nights in Jacmel... It was three stories tall when we were there; now it is one. They still have not found the bodies of the owners. A famous artist was killed when he stopped in to have a drink at the bar. It makes me realize how tenuous is life.

After a day teaching the kids whose parents can afford to pay, the SOPADEP School in the Petionville neighborhood runs a second shift for 200 street kids, and feeds them a meal as well... SOPADEP receives no government or international NGO help despite the fact that the Save the Children headquarters is literally across the street. Twenty children and two teachers were killed in the quake.

The late Fr. Jean Juste's St. Clare feeding program that provides one meal on weekdays to 800 kids; the only meal of the day for many of them... St. Clare is still standing, but where is the food coming from? We've heard stories of food and water piling up at the airport, but only the US embassy seems to have a sure

supply.

So what do we do with all the heart-wrenching stories we heard? What do I do with the anger I feel about my country derailing democracy in Haiti whenever it begins to take root? What is my obligation now that I know my government deliberately keeps Haitians poor, hungry and uneducated? What do we do with the information we gathered about how the UN “peacekeeping” troops have become the bandits they were supposed to protect Haitians from?

For those who risked their own safety to tell us their stories, whether they are now living or dead, we owe it to them to tell those stories to others. The essence of solidarity is that we use our positions of privilege

in the heart of the empire, to amplify the voices of those who are on the front line of struggle for dignity, democracy, and a better life for their children. We owe it to them to oppose rebuilding Haiti as a vast garment industry sweatshop, which is what the Clintons and Soros would have us believe is Haiti's “comparative advantage.” We owe it to Haiti, the first African republic to throw off the bonds of slavery, to join their struggle to govern themselves free of the heavy hands of the United States, Canada, and France, which would leave them hungry and divided.

Our delegation will soon release a report detailing the stories and evidence we took from over 70 Haitians and representatives of Haitian organizations. The report will be posted on the Alliance for Global Justice web page among others. For now, here is the draft section on the UN that I wrote for the report:

UN Peacekeeping Mission: Part of the Problem Mandate

The United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) was established on June 1, 2004 by Security Council resolution 1542, following the Feb. 29, 2004 kidnapping and removal from the country of democratically elected President Jean Bertrand Aristide by US diplomatic and military personnel. MINUSTAH's stated mandate is to restore a secure and stable environment, to promote the political process, to strengthen Haiti's government institutions and rule-of-law-structures, as well as to promote and to protect human rights.

MINUSTAH's mandate was extended through Oct. 15, 2010 by Security Council Resolution 1892 on Oct. 15,

2009. MINUSTAH's budget for July 1, 2009-June 30, 2010 is \$611.75 million. As of Nov. 30, 2009 MINUSTAH's strength included 7,031 soldiers, 2,034 police, 488 foreign civilian personnel, 1,212 Haitian civilian staff, and 214 United Nations volunteers. Countries contributing military personnel are: Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Ecuador, France, Guatemala, Jordan, Nepal, Paraguay, Peru, Phillipines, Republic of Korea, Sri Lanka, United States and Uruguay. Countries contributing police officers include: Argentina, Bangladesh, Benin, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Canada, Central African Republic, Chad, Chile, China, Colombia, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Egypt, El Salvador, France, Guinea, India, Jamaica, Jordan, Madagascar, Mali, Nepal, Niger, Nigeria, Pakistan, Philippines, Romania, Russian Federation, Rwanda, Senegal, Serbia, Spain, Sri Lanka, Switzerland, Togo, Turkey, United States, Uruguay and Yemen. Brazil commands the UN Mission.

Haitian's Hope for Stability Unrealized

The primary purpose of the LASC delegation to Haiti was to investigate disturbing reports of serious human rights abuses by MINUSTAH, reports that have seldom appeared in the US corporate press. One incident that did receive international media attention was in November 2007 when 108 Sri Lankan troops were sent home for "sexual misconduct and abuse."

Our delegation met with more than 70 individuals and organizational representatives over the course of our 10 day visit. We took direct testimony from 12 victims of UN human rights abuses; four in Bel Aire and eight in Site Soley, two of Port au Prince's most impoverished neighborhoods and bastions of support for ousted President Aristide's Fanmi Lavalas Party. What we heard was testimony about UN human rights abuses even more serious than sexual misconduct and abuse. Full transcripts of audio recordings of testimony from the 12 victims are included in the report. Below I will summarize and describe the testimony we heard.

To place the testimony in context, we heard from many people who we met with that Haitians initially welcomed the UN Mission. In the months following the US-engineered coup, violence escalated sharply. Haitians feared a return of the three year bloodbath carried out by the Front for the Advancement and Progress

in Haiti (FRAPH) coup government which overthrew President Aristide in 1991, only 7 months into his first term. The FRAPH regime was so brutal, US President Bill Clinton ordered a military invasion in 1994 to restore Aristide to office.

But Haitians welcoming of MINUSTAH quickly turned to dismay. Minto Philistine, a Lavalas organizer in Site Soley and a National Assembly candidate in the February legislative election (now indefinitely postponed) on the Solidarity Party ticket said, "The situation after the coup [2004] was really difficult financially, socially and especially [regarding] security. People thought the UN would improve security but it actually got worse. There were daily shootings. You can see the 50 caliber bullet holes in the houses on the road in."

Monique Fritz Joseph told us, "After Feb. 29 we started a women's group to demand the release of our husbands and sons. We thought the UN Mission would stop the violations but instead, like in Site Soley, they killed people. UN soldiers sometimes rape girls 12-14 years old."

Yves Pierre Louis, journalist with Haiti Liberte, told us, "Since 2004 the only human rights violations are by the UN. In Site Soley they break into houses and kill people. They shot into a protest by students. At Jean Juste's funeral, the UN shot one mourner. People from the Central Plateau were demonstrating for electricity and the UN killed two of them. They commit rape and sexual abuse. They steal peasant's goats. They stole a bronze cannon from an old ship wreck. Most recently a helicopter landed late at night and people gathered

"Since 2004 the only human rights violations are by the UN. In Site Soley they break into houses and kill people. They shot into a protest by students...They commit rape and sexual abuse..."

thinking it was drugs. The UN shot people. They are protecting the elites by terrorizing the population." Louis added, "MINUSTAH is handicapping Haiti's opportunity to develop. It is a repressive force. MINUSTAH has cost US\$5 billion over the last five years. If that money had been used to build schools, they wouldn't need to build prisons."

Oril Cadeau, founder of the Centre de defense des droits haiti, a human rights group for farmers in the Central Plateau, also confirmed the two deaths during the electricity demonstration. "What I can say about

human rights in Haiti is that there are no human rights.” Cadeau’s children were killed and he lost his property in the aftermath of the 1991 coup.

A Lavalas organizer in Site Soley told us, “Now that there are no bandits, the UN are the bandits. If they search you and find jewelry, they steal it. They make women take off their clothes to humiliate them.”

Raymond Davius, representing Governail de Liaison des Organisation de Bases (GloBs), told us of an incident he witnessed near his home on Sept. 16, 2009. He saw many UN trucks at the home of Raymond [last name withheld], a UN informer living in the neighborhood. Davius said the soldiers “put a broomstick in his rectum. I tried to protest but even the gentleman did not want me to pursue it. If something like this could happen to him, it can happen to anyone.” Davius said he saw the trucks take the victim to the police station, but that he was so injured that the police refused to accept him. The trucks took him to the prison, after which he was taken to the hospital and later released. Davius speculated that the victim must have been threatened not to pursue charges. Davius said, “If the UN is here for peace it doesn’t make sense that they are committing abuses. Is it about fear or stabilization?” We asked him what percentage of the soldiers speak Kreyol? He answered, “None. Some speak French, and sometimes they have a translator.”

William Clerville, President of the Association Nationale pour Defense des Marchands et des Consommateurs Haitiens, an association to defend street vendors, described another attack by MINUSTAH. He said, “On April 12, 2008, a Nigerian UN soldier, not in uniform, was killed in a robbery. The UN came and shot up the market, killing some and wounding some. Vendors lost everything and couldn’t pay back their loans. Vendors have been demanding compensation and the UN refuses. They have sent letters to human rights groups and the US and Canadian embassies but there has been no response. 268 vendors were affected. The bodies of two who were killed have never been found. A woman who was wounded was sent to the hospital in Del Mar. The UN came and took the bullet. Nigerian soldiers beat a

man so badly he would have died if not rescued by the Haitian Police. The UN said it would investigate but it has been more than a year and nothing.”

We met with four leaders of the September 30 Foundation, a human rights organization founded by Pierre Antoine Lovinsky to work with the victims of the 1991 and 2004 coups. Lovinsky was disappeared on Aug. 12, 2007 after announcing his candidacy for the Senate. Neither the Preval government nor MINUSTAH have released any information about his disappearance. We were told that cell phone and rental car evidence has subsequently disappeared.

Wilson Meselein, one of the September 30 Foundation leaders said, “Haiti used to be independent. Now we are under the occupation of the international community. MINUSTAH violates our rights, even the most basic ‘right to life.’ Their very presence violates our rights. They arrest whoever they want. They detain them without any hearing. They commit sexual abuses. The victims cannot denounce them because they are constantly repressed.” Co-leader Vaudre Abelard told us, “It is clear to us that Haiti’s problems are caused by the US, French, and Canadian governments, not the people. I’m a witness of MINUSTAH at a checkpoint watching an attack and not doing anything.”

Meselein added, “We used to work with accompaniment and medical care for the victims of MINUSTAH in Site Soley, but after Lovinsky was kidnapped, with no resources, we have only been able to work on Lovinsky’s disappearance. That’s why he was disappeared. When you go home, please pressure on Lovinsky, to respect human rights, and to get rid of MINUSTAH.”

Rene Civil, a top level Lavalas organizer, summed up the sentiments we heard from dozens of people. He said, “The occupation is killing and humiliating the people. At any time it could explode into a revolt. MINUSTAH has incited the people to be violent. They live and eat well while we are hungry, homeless, and without schools. The occupation is not here to help the country but to defend the interests of the minority. Haiti wants to defend its freedom and its second independence [Aristide’s democratic election]. If not for the UN guns, Haiti would already have its freedom.”

“Now that there are no bandits, the UN are the bandits. If they search you and find jewelry, they steal it. They make women take off their clothes to humiliate them.”

“Activists” Continued from Page 2

The agents asked about Lily Obando, if she was part of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia [FARC] or accused of being part of the FARC. I told them Lily is so accused, but the evidence against her is not credible. They seemed especially interested in notes I had taken from a Counter Punch article concerning the Valledupar prison in Colombia and the targeting of FARC members held as prisoners of war. I tell you the U.S. government is up to no good there.”

Lily Obando is internationally known for her recent report exposing the death squad murders of 1500 farm organizers and union members with FENSUAGRO. Obando is one of 7000 political prisoners and prisoners of war. Many are trade unionists, peasant organizers and community leaders; some are FARC and ELN guerrilla fighters, held by the Colombian government, many without trial.

There is a massive movement against the wealthy elite, including narco-traffickers, that rule Colombia. The U.S. government funds the notoriously corrupt Colombian military, giving it nearly \$7 billion in the last ten years. The White House announced it is occupying seven military bases inside Colombia. This will expand the U.S. war in Colombia and threaten neighboring countries like Venezuela and Ecuador. Pentagon generals and the U.S. Southern Command direct the war that brings poverty, misery and death squads to the lives of

Colombian peasants and workers. The U.S. Congress funds and covers for the most reactionary, corrupt and unsavory elements of the Colombian elite.

James Jordan, though a seasoned activist, said, “Certainly the process was intrusive, uncalled for and intimidating. I was unsure of what my rights were when they took me off the plane. I did not know if I should answer their questions or ask for a lawyer?”

Bruce Nestor, of Minneapolis, Minnesota and past President of the National Lawyers Guild, advises, “Homeland Security asserts an unprecedented right to search people’s papers and even the entire contents of their computers, when they cross the border back into the United States. In addition to treading upon constitutional rights to privacy and against unreasonable searches, much of this activity appears to be intelligence gathering directed at political activists traveling to countries which are actively challenging United States foreign policy. People need to know and assert their rights, to refuse to answer unwarranted questions and refuse consent to search of personal papers and electronics.”

We have heard from a number of activists and their families that they have been detained when returning from holiday trips abroad. The line of questioning is



Haiti activist and Alliance for Global Justice employee James Jordan speaks during a press conference in Haiti during the delegation. (Photo: Marc Becker)

similar to the case of James Jordan where they are asked of political history regardless of the purpose of the trips the activists were taking. U.S. agents made insinuations and demanded answers that had nothing to do with the trips that these people were taking. It is clear the U.S. government is stepping up its harassment and repression of people organizing for fundamental social change.

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Militarized aid, and aid as a mechanism of counterterrorism, can be seen in countries such as Mali and Northern Uganda. Militaries have been sent to aid in disaster relief in New Orleans and Haiti. In an effort to galvanize popular support, US military efforts in Afghanistan have also begun to focus on the concept of aid. While these cases vary greatly in their justifications (disaster, drug trafficking, human rights violations, disasters, etc.), they all result in military presence as a function of delivering on the promises of humanitarian aid and protection of human rights.

Beyond the obvious questions that the militarization of aid raises about possible occupation, this phenomenon is problematic for a number of other reasons as well. It raises questions about the importance of expertise, priorities, dangers and risks, and the intent of providing aid.

If we learn nothing else from the Haiti example, it should now be obvious that the military’s area of expertise is not humanitarian aid. Many argue that the military is able to mobilize faster and more efficiently than many other organizations and institutions. This is true, in the case of war. This is not necessarily the case with aid, however. The military consists of a highly



trained group of individuals, but these individuals are not aid workers. They are trained to be able to kill other human beings. This training, even

when there is a humanitarian component, does not develop the type of expertise necessary to be a good development practitioner. Regardless of how great the need and how well development workers knew the land, no one would ever suggest that they help fight a war, much less lead the battle. It is equally ridiculous to expect trained killers to run a humanitarian relief effort.

Perhaps due to the fact that their training largely focuses on combat rather than relief efforts, the military tends to hold a distinct set of priorities. These priorities do not always bode well for relief missions. For example, the US has been widely criticized because during the critical 72 hours after the earthquake, the US military,

which seized control of the airport, prioritized military flights over flights carrying medical supplies, doctors and relief experts. After a firestorm of international condemnation, they agreed, at least on paper, to give aid flights precedence. These actions were not simply due to lack of expertise in running a relief operation. They were due to the fact that the military sees its primary objective as creating and maintaining a secure atmosphere. Because their priority is security, rather than simply providing supplies, they often do not do as well with supplying aid. Moreover, when aid is slow to arrive, it creates more desperate situations of violence and chaos.

Another major issue that many aid organizations have taken with the militarization of aid is that it ruins their appearance of neutrality amongst warring populations. This critique, while based on the faulty assumption that a NGO can be neutral, does point to the increased danger that the militarization of aid has caused. In order to pursue a truly sustainable development, it is impossible to be apolitical. If relief aid and development are to be successful, it can only happen through a process of empowerment in which the marginalized confront the systems of power that have oppressed them. Political neutrality (in which power structures and systems of disenfranchisement are not challenged) is not a viable solution for organizations that wish pursue a sustainable development that addresses the root causes of marginalization.

That being said, it is possible to avoid taking sides in particular conflicts. NGOs can attempt to stay out of local disagreements and official political disputes. But, when the military, often from the same country as the aid worker, arrives and plays the dual role of warrior and aid worker, NGO workers have difficulty distinguishing themselves and their political views from their armed countrymen. This jeopardizes not only the safety of the workers, but the success of the entire aid project.

Aid, especially disaster relief aid, should not be used as a way to introduce economic policies, a way to exercise military might or a way to recruit supporters. Even if the aid supplied by militaries and governments were entirely altruistic, the fact remains that militaries are not aid experts. They do not have the same priorities that successful aid workers share. Their mere presence often endangers the relief and aid efforts, the local civilian population, aid workers and their own lives, by creating an atmosphere of fear and confusion. Aid should never (even appear to) be used as a weapon.

During great tragedies, many of us wish to supply help.

But, despite the emergency atmosphere, we must be willing to take the time to look at the implications of our actions. In the case of Haiti, a history of violence, domination and paternalism is largely to blame for the almost unimaginable scope of the disaster. In this moment of need, we must not respond with more of the same. The global North's relief and aid efforts must not be shows of strength and power. Instead, they must simply assist Haiti as it determines its own future. As Haitians define their own rebirth, aid workers need to follow their lead, and the military needs to go home.

“Coup” Continued from Page 4

First was the coup in Honduras and refusal of the U.S. to take proactive policy measures against it. Second was the announcement of seven new U.S. military bases in Colombia. And the third was Secretary of State Clinton's declaration that Latin America countries should “think twice about flirting with Iran.”

The willingness of Latin American countries to challenge U.S. positions indicates a slowly changing balance of power in the Hemisphere. Soon after Arturo Valenzuela was confirmed as Assistant Secretary of State for the Western Hemisphere he paid a visit to the Mercosur Countries. Far from the diplomatic protocol to which the U.S. is accustomed, in Brazil and Argentina, the first two countries which he visited, Mr. Valenzuela was not received by the President or the Foreign Minister in either country. In a press statement near the time of Valenzuela's visit, Brazil's Foreign Minister, Celso Amorim criticized the US for being “extremely

tolerant” of the coup and the de facto regime.

What seems most clear is that the U.S. State Department remains mired in an outdated cold war mentality, failing to recognize and adapt to the profound and complex changes that have occurred in Latin America during the last decade. Unfortunately, there seem to be few signs that this will change anytime soon.

Today's inauguration in Honduras is happening in a context in which the old ghosts from the worst decades of U.S. policy toward Latin America have been conjured in an attempt to silence opposition. The sharp escalation of human rights violations and use of state terror in an attempt to destroy the resistance movement has now entered a phase which human rights defenders describe as “silent, selective and systematic.” Death squads and paramilitaries relentlessly pursue those resisting the coup. Many have been executed, and others have fled in order to save their lives.

The repression continues in the context of a people who are empowered, determined and who are not afraid. The resistance movement has declared that it will not recognize Porfirio Lobo as President, but rather consider him to be the continuation of the dictatorship imposed though the June 28th military coup. Their non-violent struggle for deep structural change via a constituent assembly will continue. What has happened in Honduras serves as a marker for change in Latin America. It signals that attempts by the United States to rule the hemisphere through coercion and force will be met with new and unexpected challenges and forms of resistance.

News from Nicaragua

Politics

President Daniel Ortega sidelined an apparent campaign to paralyze the Nicaraguan government through inaction by the National Assembly to fill expiring positions on the Supreme Electoral Council, Supreme Court, Comptroller's Office, Superintendent of Banks, and Human Rights Ombudsman, all of which have expired or are set to expire in the coming weeks.

On Jan. 9, Ortega issued a decree to extend the terms until their replacements are approved by the National Assembly. Ortega said, “It's their [National Assembly deputies'] job to choose [these officials]; it's not my job. They don't want to choose them even if by not doing so they are violating the law. It's not important

to them because they have legislative immunity. Therefore, it is my obligation under the Constitution to prevent chaos.” Reaction from the opposition was swift. Former President Arnoldo Aleman, leader of the Constitutional Party (PLC), said, “We are confronting a dictator, a contemptible little king who exercises the office of president.” He said that his party intended to bring Ortega before a court for abuse of authority in exercising power that belongs to the legislative branch. PLC leaders said that any officials who remained in their posts after their terms have expired would be challenged legally as well. The newspaper El Nuevo Diario said that Ortega had “declared himself absolute monarch.” Opposition parties were unable to muster

the votes in the National Assembly to overturn the decree and finally appointed a Special Committee on Appointments which met for the first time on Jan. 22 and agreed to meet again on Feb. 4, which is the the deadline for presentation of candidates for the numerous expiring government posts.

The campaign for the March 7 election of regional authorities of the North and South Atlantic Autonomous Regions (RAAN and RAAS) began on Jan. 21. Supreme Electoral Council (CSE) Magistrate Jose Luis Villavicencio said that observers will monitor the election. The European Union has already agreed to send observers.

CSE President Roberto Rivas said that by law no candidate can receive funds from foreign institutions including those that receive money from a foreign government as is the case for the International Republican Institute and the National Democratic Institute, both of which are funded by the US Congress. He said, "The parties can receive help for training and technical assistance although these funds must not come from a [foreign] State because that is also against the electoral law.

The FSLN is running in alliance with the Party of the Nicaraguan Resistance (PRN) of former Contras. President of the PRN Julio Cesar Blandon said, "We are working to win. The alliance has to take both regions because that will help the people of the Coast exercise their autonomy to a greater degree. We, who yesterday confronted each other, today are together to move the country forward."

Meanwhile, leaders of the Nicaraguan Liberal Alliance (ALN), the Independent Liberal Party (PLI), and the "Let's Go with Eduardo" Movement, and the Nicaraguan Democratic Bench (BDN) said that they were "smoothing over differences" over how their joint campaign should be run on the Coast. PLC leader Aleman, said he was confident that, in spite of maneuvers by the Sandinistas, the results would be favorable for the PLC, which is not running in alliance with the other Liberal parties.

In an incident that may or may not be linked to the PLC's electoral campaign, 1,500 mestizo peasant farmers, many of them former Contras, living in the area southeast of Bluefields marched on Jan. 20 in the regional capital. They demanded that communal property titles granted to Rama indigenous and Afro-Nicaraguan Creole communities be annulled. Thirty-three communities in the RAAS are comprised of immigrants from the Pacific, Spanish-speaking side

of the country. Many were encouraged to migrate to indigenous land on the Caribbean Coast during the 1990s Aleman government. Marcelino Andino, said that the mestizo farmers do not accept the communal form of property ownership traditional among the indigenous and Creole cultures and threatened to boycott food supplies to Bluefields if the government did not recognize the mestizos' right to individual land ownership.

The migrants from the Pacific side of the country filed a demand for annulment of the Rama and Creole communal property titles before the Civil District Court in Bluefields and demanded that the Commission of Demarcation and Land Titles suspend its work.

In National electoral news, former President Arnaldo Aleman, who leads the PLC, declared that he expects to take first place in a Liberal Party presidential primary and be the Liberal candidate for president in 2011. Aleman, who served as President from 1997 to 2002, told La Prensa that he expects the various Liberal parties to unite and hold a single primary election which he intends to win. The PLC, ALN, PLI, and MVE are holding unity negotiations under the auspices of Bishop Juan Abelardo Mata of Esteli.

An unclassified US intelligence report, released by the Open Source Center (OSC), a public documents office of the US Director of National Intelligence on Dec. 30, 2009, revealed that the US continues to push for a united opposition to President Ortega in the 2011 presidential election, but not behind the candidacy of former President Aleman.

The Supreme Court ended 2009 without issuing a number of important decisions that had been expected during the year. Court President Francisco Rosales had announced that the decision on the constitutionality of the prohibition of therapeutic abortion was written and the full Court had only to meet to approve it. Women's and human rights groups along with medical associations, who filed the appeal, continued to demand that the Court rule, holding marches and sit-ins and issuing proclamations.

Finally, Managua's Channel 8 television was bought for a reputed US\$10 million by "Sandinista capital." An unconfirmed rumor had it that the purchase was made with money from ALBANISA, which invests funds from the Bolivarian Alliance for Our Americas (ALBA) in anti-poverty and other projects. The new heads of the station are Juan Carlos Ortega Murillo, son of President Ortega, and Alberto Mora whose program "En Vivo" is aired by Channel 4 Television.

Economy

Unions and corporations in the Free Trade Zones signed a comprehensive minimum wage agreement for 2010-2013 that will provide workers with an 8-10% per year increase over the current US\$146.85 monthly base salary. Both workers and employers were happy with the agreement which promises investment and job stability.

Industry and Trade Minister Orlando Solorzano announced that talks are beginning on a free trade agreement among the ALBA countries. "It won't be the usual free trade agreement like Nicaragua has with the United States where all the countries of the region compete under unequal conditions and the poorest one loses," he said. "The main principle of this treaty will be its support for those countries with less economic development relative to the others; that is to say that the nations with greater resources will invest in the countries with fewer resources in order to increase their levels of production, whether in food or industrial products."

On Jan.5, talks mediated by the Ministry of Labor (MITRAB) failed to produce an agreement in a battle that has raged for weeks between the management of the state-owned Nicaraguan Water and Sewerage Company (ENACAL) and its unions. Domingo Perez, general secretary of the National Union of Employees (UNE), a public employees' union affiliated with the Sandinista-aligned National Workers Front (FNT), said that officials of the water company refused to comply with the hours rules established in a 2005 labor contract.

Minister of Agriculture Ariel Bucardo said on Jan. 7 that Nicaragua has enough food to feed its population through the current period of drought caused by the El Niño climate pattern. He said, "There are sufficient basic grains. The production of corn was good; the same for rice and even for beans the production at the national level was good." Cattle production increased by more than 10% in 2009, he noted.

While the national food supply picture is positive, the departments of Madriz and Nueva Segovia are hard hit by El Niño. The Nicaraguan Institute for Territorial Studies (INETER) identified 25 municipalities severely affected by the drought and another 73 moderately affected. A study done by the Totogalpa mayor's office indicated that for the first harvest, 58% of the corn harvest had been lost, 63% of the bean harvest and 45% of the millet harvest was also lost.

But the figures were even more alarming for the second harvest where the study revealed 96%, 94%, and 89% lost respectively for corn, beans and millet

Social Programs

At the start of the school enrollment process for 2010, the floor for enrollment is 1.6 million students (the number already in the school system), said Minister of Education Miguel De Castilla, but the sky is the limit. Enrollment is open to all children, youth and adults who wish to get an education, he said. In this campaign for universal school enrollment, there are to be no barriers to education. As part of the government's Zero Hunger program, students will be guaranteed a meal of cereal, milk, beans and rice each day.

The Ortega government has distributed over 55,000 property titles with a goal to distribute another 28,000 in 2010. These numbers compare to a total of 30,000 titles granted during the 17 years of neoliberal governments following the 1990 Sandinista electoral defeat. Another 10,000 property titles will be distributed in Managua bringing the city into compliance with a presidential mandate to legalize property in all the neighborhoods in Managua. One of the highest priorities of the Ortega government is to give clear titles to the poorest families. The first Sandinista government was criticized because properties distributed under land reform measures in the 1980s were not legalized thus creating insecurity under the neoliberal governments and opening the way for a reconcentration of property ownership.

The Ortega government has also distributed collective land titles to 12 indigenous communities on the Caribbean Coast. During a ceremony in Bluefields, nearly 407,000 hectares were titled to six indigenous and three Creole groups.

The year 2009 was, in the main, a good year for the Mining Triangle in the interior of the North Atlantic Autonomous Region (RAAN) of Nicaragua. The year began with municipal elections in January that had been postponed from November 2008 to allow for recovery from Hurricane Felix in 2007. The FSLN retained the city hall in Bonanza and also won in Rosita. The PLC won Siuna.

Some 10,450 square kilometers of indigenous territory was demarcated and titled, fully one third of the territory of the RAAN. In the case of the Mayangna (Sumu), of nine territories, only two (Mayangna Sauny Arunka and Sumu Mayangna Tuahsa Takln Balna) remain to be titled and those have been approved with the titles to be given to the communities early in January.

The Zero Hunger Program had an impact on the region with a total of 6,000 women benefitting from the program. More than 60% of those who participated were successful in caring for their pregnant cow and pig, along with the chickens, seeds, and tools which are part of the program. The Zero Usury Program benefitted another 1,500 women with loans of up to US\$250 to set up their own small businesses.

Environment

The environmental organization Children of the River called on the Nicaraguan government to “suspend diplomatic relations” with Costa Rica over the expected approval of what will be Central America’s largest open pit gold mining concession, Las Crucitas, only three kilometers from the San Juan River which forms the border between the two countries. The group said that the project would poison the river and underground aquifers with cyanide and that it violates international law and United Nations accords for environmental protection. The group also called on President Daniel Ortega to sue Costa Rica under the Rio Charter and other agreements. Las Crucitas is a project of Industrias Infinito, S.A., a subsidiary of the Canadian mining company Vanessa Ventures. The mining company expects to extract 650,000 ounces of gold over 12 years.

As part of a program to promote eco-friendly production of cacao, the International Humane Society (IHS) and the Pueblos en Acción Comunitaria (PAC) organized a cacao fair in Nicaragua to promote the conservation of forest life and responsible agricultural practices. The program was initiated in 2003 by the IHS to encourage small cacao producers to improve their growing conditions in order to guarantee the protection of the natural habitat and the numerous wildlife species,

while simultaneously increasing their quality and efficiency.

There was also an environmental education campaign for populations located near the reforested areas, to teach them about proper trash disposal in order to avoid contamination of rivers and the spread of illnesses. The campaign will continue through 2010 with the goal of caring for sources of water and trees so that they can be inherited by future generations, thereby strengthening preservation of the rivers, and maintaining the river basins.

The island of Ometepe, in the middle of Lake Cocibolca (Lake Nicaragua), attracts not only 40,000 human tourists per year, but also numerous migratory birds that fly down from Canada and the United States to spend almost seven months in warm Nicaragua. Fauna and Flora International, working with the Nicaraguan Minister of the Environment on the island, established in 2007 a station that is part of the network of the Monitoring Avian Winter Survival Project of the Institute for Bird Populations. However, the bird refuge is being threatened by the increased human population on the island. In the last half century, 16,000 hectares of forest have been lost.

Miscellaneous

Former sugar workers from the Nicaraguan Association of Those Affected by Chronic Renal Insufficiency (ANAIRC), which is affiliated with the International Union of Agricultural and Food Workers (UITA), have been camped in Managua for ten months. They are demanding compensation for their illness which they attribute to working conditions while they were employed by Nicaragua Sugar Estates, Ltd.

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