

LATIN AMERICA & HAITI WEB SITE

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A ***QUARTERLY JOURNAL*** that describes life in different Latin American countries and Haiti; these include human-interest pieces, political analysis, discussions of US relationships. We will emphasize pieces about indigenous peoples, labor and human rights. We will publish literary pieces. Many of our articles will be reprinted from other sources. **WE WILL CONSIDER SUBMITTED MANUSCRIPTS.**

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EDITOR'S NOTE

"It seems ironic that former presidents Clinton and George W Bush are functioning as spokespeople for the US aid to reconstruction of Haiti."

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Editor's Note: This issue of our Quarterly Journal is a tribute to the spirit of the Haitian people. We publish two pieces: the first was received as an E-mail from Bill Quigley. This article captures the horror shortly after the earthquake which persists to this day. Because history, at least to some extent, determines the present, I republish an article about the removal of President Aristide. As this Journal is being published there are arguments about the US role in reconstruction. I think we need to remember that President Clinton has recently stated in an interview that he was wrong in 1994 when the US government decided to destroy the ability of Haiti to feed itself by flooding that country with cheap rice. He said the aim was to force people into the cities which would help industrialization of the country which in his view would help its future. He has yet to apologize for this, or for the price that President Aristide and his people had to pay for the return of President Aristide to Haiti in 1994. It seems ironic that former Presidents Clinton and George W Bush are functioning as spokespeople for the US aid to reconstruction of Haiti. It sends the message that our foreign policy towards Haiti will not change.

The second theme of this issue of our journal is the US policy toward Mexico and Colombia and our drug war. I picked this theme because of the inflammation of violence in these countries related to drug cartels and insurgency and the US foreign policy toward these countries. Another article about the Merida Initiative was published previously in this Journal (David Loeb, Vol. 001 Summer 2008). To quote from that article; "The Merida Initiative is a hodgepodge of assistance programs dominated by the providing of hardware such as helicopters and inspection equipment for the Mexican Military." Also, there was a previous article about Colombia, *The US Cold War Foreign Policy Hasn't Worked in Colombia; Can It Work Anywhere Else?* (Lynn Biddle, Vol. 003, Winter 2009.)

HAITI



HAITI

HAITI: HELL AND HOPE

By Bill Quigley

Smoke and flames rose from the sidewalk. A white man took pictures. Slowing down, my breath left me. The fire was a corpse. Leg bones sticking out of the flames.

Port au Prince police headquarters is gone, already bulldozed. A nearby college is pancaked. Government buildings are destroyed. Stores fallen down. Tens of thousands of buildings destroyed. Hundreds of thousands homeless.

"Giant piles of concrete, metal pipes, plastic pipes, doors and wires. Corpses are still inside."

Giant piles of concrete, rebar, metal pipes, plastic pipes, doors and wires. Corpses are still inside many of the mountains of rubble. No estimates of how many thousands of people are dead inside.

Electrical poles bend over streets, held up by braids of thick black wires. On some side streets the wires are still down in the street.

Buildings take unimaginable shapes. Some are half up while the other side slopes to the ground. Some like collapsed cakes. Others smashed like children's toys.

Everywhere are sheet shelters. In parks, soccer fields, in the parking lot of a TV station, tens of thousands in the streets and on sidewalks.

Thousands of people standing in the hot sun waiting their turn. Outside the hospital, clinics, money transfer companies, immigration offices, and the very few places offering water or food.

Troops and heavy machinery are only seen in the center of the city.

After days in Port au Prince I have seen only one fight - two teens fighting on a street corner over a young woman. No riots. No machetes.

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"No matter what, we will never give up. Haitians are strong hopeful people. We will rebuild."

Hope is found in the people of Haiti. Despite no electricity, little shelter, minimal food and no real government or order, people are helping one another survive.

Men and boys are scavenging useful items from the mounds of fallen buildings. Women are selling mangoes and nuts on the street. Teens are playing with babies.

Beautiful hymns are lifted as choirs calling to God in every sheet camp every evening. People pray constantly. The strikingly beautiful tap tap cabs trumpet "In God We Trust" or "Merci Jesus" on bright colors.

Everyone needs tents and food and medical care and water. But when you talk to them, most will lead you to the ailing great grandma or the malnourished child.

What should outsiders do, I asked Lavarice Gaudin? Lavarice, who helps the St. Claires community feed thousands each day through their What If Foundation, said "help the most poor first. Some who labored their whole lives to make a one bedroom home will likely never have a home again. Haiti needs everything. But we need it with a plan. Pressure the Haitian government, pressure USAID to help the poorest."

International volunteers who work hand in hand with Haitians are welcomed. Others not so much.

Lavarice saw the Associated Press story that reported only one penny of every US aid dollar will go directly in cash to needy Haitians. "I can understand that they distrust the government but why not distribute aid through the churches and good community organizations?"

"We hope this will help us develop strong leadership that listens and responds to the people."

HAITI

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REMEMBERING PRESIDENT ARISTIDE

By Ronald Coburn

(This piece was written in 2004 and published previously in this journal.)

This could be a time to celebrate. It is the 200th anniversary of the Haitian slave revolt against their masters. Instead we are now mourning both the loss of the democratically elected Haitian President, Jean-Bertrand Aristide, who was forced from his position, and the hope of the poor of Haiti communicated by their chant Kite Ayiti Viv. And it is even sadder that our country was involved in this coup de etat. I have memories of my first trip to Haiti just after the 1991 military coup that removed President Aristide from office and from Haiti. I was told that a first exposure to life in Haiti would bring tears, and this was correct. During this trip, Amnesty International people took depositions that revealed all the horrible things that people can do to other people. The poor live in indescribable poverty. If you don't work one day, your family doesn't eat the next day. The situation seems similar now. I can remember the hope of the Haitian people and those interested in helping Haiti, when President Aristide returned to Haiti in 1994 with some support of the US Government and the US Marines. There were promises of generous economic aid that would help make governing and development of democratic institutions possible.

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This photograph was taken just prior to President Aristides return to Haiti.

“He seemed, at that time driven to help the poor in Haiti.”

I can remember meeting Aristide when he visited in Philadelphia, a mild mannered, likeable man who had the persona of a caring Priest. He seemed, at that time, driven to help the poor in Haiti. Haitian people believed this and they elected him President twice, in legal UN monitored elections, each time with over 90% of the vote.

What happened? You certainly won't find out from reading most US press releases that seem to be written by people not familiar with Haitian history or politics who have a political agenda. I recommend two books: “Rainy Season”, by Amy Wilentz (Simon and Shuster) and “Pathologies of

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"There was trouble almost immediately after Aristide returned to Haiti."

Power", by Paul Farmer (Univ. of California Press), and any op-ed pieces written by Tracy Kidder.

There was trouble almost immediately after Aristide returned to Haiti. The World Bank-International Monetary Fund people demanded privatization of the airport and postal service. Aristide refused. The US Marines when they occupied Haiti had seized thousands of pages of documents that incriminated Haitians involved in the 1991 military coup and human rights violations. For unknown reasons the US State Department refused to release these documents to the Aristide government. Aristide had abolished the Army, but US soldiers did not, or could not, help disarm Haitians involved in the coup. A police force was formed but as time went on there was little money to support it.

Looking back, it is obvious that Aristide had most of the cards stacked against him. He was committed to social programs aimed at the poor. His speech on land reform triggered the first coup. Haitian citizens are polarized in that approximately 1% of their people, the wealthy "elite", live in walled in communities, speak French (often not Creole), have access to medical and educational institutions in Miami and the US, and are comfortable with US officials and corporation people. Of course, most of the elite opposed President Aristide and the current coup can be viewed as a chapter in their class war. President Aristide, trained as a

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Catholic Priest, adopted liberation theology and was defrocked by the Catholic Church. So the Church in this most Christian of countries did not support him. Finally the US government has not been supportive of President Aristide, as has often been the case with other democratically elected leaders in our hemisphere.

"The role of the US government in the past and at the present time, is a shame for US citizens."

The role of our government in the past, and at the present time, is a shame for US citizens. Paul Farmer notes that monetary aid flowed freely in the days of the Duvalier-US-friendly dictators, and ceased when Aristide was elected President in 1990, resumed in days after the coup, then ceased after President Aristide was returned as President. The promised economic aid never materialized. Our government organized an international aid embargo. As a result, the Aristide administration simply did not have the money to effectively govern Haiti. First we heard that money transfers were held up due to the rejection of the privatization demand and the demand for structural readjustment, later because of political instability and accusations of manipulations in the May 2000 parliament elections. About \$500 million dollar transfers were blocked which included loans that required interest payments and non-interest grants directed to improve medical care including their AIDS program, and for education.

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"Haiti's fragile economy collapsed which engendered political chaos, starvation and health crises."

Certainly, economic sanctions and embargos have been used by the US government in the past to achieve political and corporate ambitions. Paul Farmer has movingly described the effect of the economic sanctions on Haitian people where the medical and educational programs, and law enforcement could not operate. Haiti's fragile economy collapsed which engendered political chaos, starvation and health crises. In addition to this, ominously, it became clear that the US was supporting a political party, the Democratic Convergence, which opposed President Aristide and his base of support, the Lavalas Party. It is public knowledge that US funds flowed to the Democratic Convergence Party, reputedly made up, in part, of FRAPH people, the Ton Ton Macoutes who were loyal to Duvalier dictators, and former soldiers, all of whom were involved in the 1991 military coup. Now we are hearing allegations, still not proven, that the US supplied arms and training via the Dominican Republic that supported the coup makers.

Over the past years there have been political murders. The disputed parliament election led to the dissolution of the parliament. The failure of law enforcement led to anarchy, and, finally, both pro- and anti-Aristide bands roamed, pillaged, and terrorized. The Organization of American States tried to mediate with pro- and anti-Aristide leaders, and recommended that the embargo be lifted. Members of the US

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House of Representative's Black Caucus introduced legislation that would have ended the embargo. But our Republican-dominated Congress never allowed these bills to get out of committee.

Finally, there is evidence of recent direct US actions aimed at overthrowing the Aristide government. Our Secretary of State announced "Frankly there is no enthusiasm for sending in military or police forces to put down the violence" giving permission for the continuation of the insurrection. Our leaders than announced that President Aristide must resign. Then our troops intervened resulting in the direct removal of President Aristide from the National Palace and out of Haiti. The photograph shows US Marines standing guard at the palace on March 3, 2004, the day Aristide left Haiti.

"There is evidence of recent direct US actions aimed at overthrowing the Aristide government."



MEXICO

US-TRAINED DEATH SQUADS? How America's latest drug war initiative could aid the cartels and enrich military contractors—all at the expense of the Mexican public.

By Frank Koughan

(This article was originally published in *Mother Jones*, July-August 2009.)

OFFICIALLY, it's called the Merida Initiative, but critics have another name for the three-year, \$1.4 billion plan to fight the drug war, unveiled by George W. Bush and Mexican president Felipe Calderon in 2007. They've dubbed it Plan Mexico, a reference to Plan Colombia, the controversial US-funded drug eradication effort; under the \$6 billion (and counting) program, the production of Colombian cocaine has actually increased. Critics say Merida is destined to be just as ineffective and may contribute to rampant human rights abuses by Mexican authorities, and provide US military training to soldiers notorious for ending upon the payrolls of the cartels.

Though the plan does direct some funds toward reforming Mexico's corrupt justice system, the bulk of the money is slated for military training and hardware—equipment ranging from surveillance planes and Black Hawk helicopters to ion scanners and *X-ray* vans (to see inside other vehicles). By law, all of the funds must be spent by the US government, in the US, on US suppliers and contractors—a fact not lost on the private sector. Almost none of the money has been disbursed yet, but DynCorp International, the Virginia-based military contractor with a history of controversy in Colombia and Iraq, has already begun advertising for a Merida Initiative "Program Director."

"We've blown \$300 billion; death squads roam Mexico."

MEXICO

“There’s a very clear correlation between the increased deployment of the military and increased human rights violations.”

Mexicans are already wary of private security contractors. Last July, videos surfaced showing security consultants training members of an elite Mexican police unit in what appeared to be torture techniques. (Officers are seen squirting water up a man’s nose and forcing a trainee to roll through his own vomit.)

Since Calderon mobilized the military against the cartels in December 2006, complaints to the Mexican National Commission of Human Rights have skyrocketed, from 182 in 2006 to 1,230 in 2008. “There’s a very clear correlation between the increased deployment of the military and increased human rights violations,” says Stephanie Brewer of the Miguel Agustin Pro Juarez Human Rights Center in Mexico City. Allegations have included rape, sexual abuse, torture, and, in 28 cases, murder. In 2007, two women and three children died in a hail of bullets when they failed to stop at a checkpoint in Sinaloa. “The soldiers’ response, given their military training, was to fire on the vehicle,” says Maureen Meyer of the Washington Office on Latin America. “Police and the military are not interchangeable. Mexican armed forces should not be involved in anti-drug operations.”

But the biggest risk in providing Mexican soldiers with US training is the career progression from Army grunt to cartel henchman. More than 120,000 soldiers have deserted since 2000, with many taking more lucrative jobs with the cartels. Los Zetas, who started as Gulf cartel enforcers and now provide muscle to various cartels, were formed by Army veterans.

A better strategy might be to concentrate on the factors that are fueling the drug war. Yet nothing in the Merida Initiative addresses American drug use or the smuggling of US weapons into Mexico. In fact, though presented as a bi-national agreement, “it contains not one single obligation on the part of the United States,” says Laura Carlsen of the Center for International Policy. Rep. Eliot L. Engel, the New

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York Democrat who chairs the House Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere, acknowledges this flaw. But he pushed for its passage anyway. "It's the only game in town," he says. "You have Merida, or you don't have anything." Engel is hopeful the new administration will formulate a broader strategy; a hint came during Hillary Clinton's first visit to Mexico as secretary of state, when she said that "our insatiable demand for illegal drugs fuels the drug trade."

It's worth noting that the cocaine trade only moved to Mexico after Caribbean routes were choked off and the Colombian cartels were reduced to suppliers. Could success in Mexico displace the problem again? Mexican attorney general Eduardo Medina-Mora expressed concern in April that "our victory may very well mean that Central America becomes a hell of its own." Congress apparently agrees, recently increasing Merida funding for Central America, the Dominican Republic, and Haiti.

So far, Merida is mostly talk. One of the few projects to reach fruition was a conference on arms trafficking at a resort in Cuernavaca. What came of this meeting of the minds? According to Medina-Mora: "an agreement to create a joint working group that could produce a timely report."

" Our insatiable demand for illegal drugs fuels the drug trade." - Hillary Clinton.



COLOMBIA

TELL THE US TO STOP SUPPORTING THE DESTRUCTION OF COLOMBIAN COMMUNITIES -

The Eperara Siapidaara People
Condemn the Destruction of their
Community Plots

(Published by Jenzera on March 24, 2010)

On March 16, 2010 several anti-narcotics police planes sprayed with chemicals the communal gardens and plots of the Eperara Siapidaara women of the Joaquincito Indigenous reservation, in the Naya River near the township of Puerto

Merizalde (located in the municipality of Buenaventura, Colombia). These plots are located within walking distance of the Casa Grande, a Siapidaara religious and ceremonial center.



The planes also sprayed the plots of

their Afro-Colombian sisters from the Santa Cruz township who have joined the Eperara women in developing an agro-ecological production project. This project seeks to expand alternatives to a growing illegal coca economy. The growth of illicit crops is disturbing Colombia's Pacific coast rivers, and destroying traditional cultures, communal economies and sustainable ways of using environmental resources. The government disregarded the community's peaceful claims and sprayed their crops with even greater intensity. Several women were looking to move to the health post of Puerto Merizalde for medical care.

Fumigations in the Naya River, one of the most important watersheds and biodiversity hotspots

"The government disregarded the community's peaceful claims and sprayed their crops with even greater intensity."

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"As the government succeeds in other regions, coca production is simply moving to other areas."

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in the Colombian Pacific, are not new. The government has sprayed with glyphosate both illegal but mostly legal crops. The Organization of Blacks United from the Anchicaya River reported that on September 7, 2009 residents from the lower Naya were also sprayed. Subsequently, on February 15, 2010 the communities of Juan Santos and Juan Nunez in the lower Naya were sprayed. The government claims that its intention is to eradicate coca crops. However, residents deplore the intensity with which the operations are carried out, affecting food crops and people's health, but little of the coca plantations.

Until recently, in the lower Naya River, inhabited by about 23,000 Afro-Colombians and 300 Eperara Siapidaara, areas planted with coca were minimal if nonexistent as demonstrated by a 2005 Socioeconomic Survey prepared by the Colombian Institute of Rural Development in a study conducted with the Inter-ethnic Territorial Union of the Naya. In less than three years and following the violent interdiction of coca cultivation in southern departments such as Narino and Putumayo, coca growers are invading the Pacific coast, including the Naya River. As the government succeeds in other regions, coca production is simply moving to new areas, destroying communities and environmental resources.

It is in this context that black and Eperara Siapidaara women developed their production strategy to defend communal economies based on the need for healthy and sufficient food. In other words, they sought to develop an economy that would curb the uprooting of the native population by a predatory and illegal coca economy. Their modest project defended cultural survival, native seeds and traditional agricultural techniques. The project also sought to empower the women who live from the mangroves. This was an inter-ethnic strategy that received the

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support of community organizations as well as of the region's Interethnic School for Conflict Resolution.

The government who is even spraying the mangroves is destroying these ecological projects in one of the richest and most bio-diverse regions on the planet. And that in our opinion constitutes a crime against humanity. Although we condemn the presence of illegal crops in these, our territories, we also condemn the practice of fumigating our plots and communal gardens by a government intent on ending coca production at any cost.

The U.S. began funding the forced eradication of coca in Colombia with the 2000 implementation of Plan Colombia, a multi-billion dollar funding package, 80% of which was allocated for military aid and drug eradication. **Fumigations** spray the herbicide glyphosate (a high powered version of Monsanto's Roundup) and other unknown chemicals from planes. **Forced manual eradication** involves eradication teams, accompanied by the police and military, ripping out coca plants at the root.

In 2006, the White House's Office of National Drug Control Policy found that despite \$5.4 billion in aid to Colombia and the fumigation and/or forced manual eradication of over two million acres of coca, there was still more coca than when Plan Colombia began.

Forced eradication spreads coca and harms the environment. When Plan Colombia began, coca was grown in 12 of Colombia's 32 provinces; today it is grown in 23 provinces. As long as U.S. cocaine demand stays steady, forced eradication of coca crops in one area often only pushes growers further into the jungle to clear virgin forests for coca farming in the world's second most biodiverse country.

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Fumigations kill desperately needed food crops.

Experience shows that coca is quite resistant to aerial spraying of glyphosate and often survives fumigation missions. Unfortunately, the spraying **IS** effective at killing the less hardy food crops, such as yuca, plantains, corn and other subsistence crops that small-scale farmers and their families rely upon for survival.

Fumigations spray also frequently drifts onto neighboring farms where no coca is grown. Their food crops are also killed. Fumigations leave poor farmers desperate and without alternatives and fuels internal displacement.

The U.S. began funding the forced eradication of coca (the raw material in cocaine) in Colombia with the 2000 implementation of Plan Colombia, a multi-billion dollar funding package, 80% of which was allocated for military aid and drug eradication.

“Fumigations are detrimental to humans and ecosystems.”

Fumigations are detrimental to humans and ecosystems. Evidence suggests that glyphosate causes severe ecological damage such as increased deforestation and harm to aquatic ecosystems while posing a serious threat to human health and reproduction.

U.S.-funded fumigations have sprayed rivers, lakes, houses, churches, and schools, even when humans are present. Children and the elderly are more susceptible to these health concerns which include respiratory and gastro-intestinal problems as well as skin rashes.

Forced Manual Eradication teams sow terror as they rip out coca. Teams are often made up of soldiers and/or former paramilitary fighters. Many farmers report home break-ins, theft of food, radios, livestock, and money as well as sexual violence against women during the forced eradications.

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Past Forced Manual Eradication programs failed in Bolivia and Peru. These programs led to mass riots, years of political instability in Bolivia, sustained poverty, and human rights violations committed by the military units involved in eradication activities. Coca is still grown in both countries.

Forced eradications do not provide poor farmers with any feasible financial alternative to coca. Eradicated farmers face hunger. Without alternative crops, farmers are left without food or money to support their families and must replant coca to survive. U.S.-funded alternative investment programs should respond to farmers' requests for alternative projects.



OUR AUTHORS

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Jenzera (*Tell the US to Stop Supporting the Destruction of Colombian Communities*) is an interdisciplinary and inter-ethnic group of men and women committed to the organizational efforts of indigenous peoples, Afro-Colombians and peasants trying to overcome poverty and social exclusion.



This is their logo.

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