

Executive Memorandum

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Securing a Fresh Start in Haiti

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The United States is neither capable of fixing every problem in the world, nor is it obligated to ensure that all countries have good governments. Troubles are too numerous, the U.S. treasury is limited, and other societies must learn to pull their own weight. Nevertheless, Haiti's stability is critical to the economies of neighboring Caribbean islands. Additionally, the U.S. has an economic and strategic interest in helping Haiti to become self-sufficient and self-governing.

Past U.S. interventions have produced little success. Current efforts to bring peace and stability to the island nation will fare no better unless the United States and its international partners—Canada, France, the Caribbean Community, the Organization of American States (OAS), and the United Nations—encourage Haitians to do more for themselves, to build durable institutions, and to maintain consistent policies over time.

Failed Strategies. From 1915 to 1934, the U.S. Marines ran Haiti. They paid foreign debts, constructed roads, and built hospitals. However, because most local politicians were figureheads, the U.S. occupation left behind no durable institutions except for a security force. Despite follow-on elections, Haiti descended into a series of dictatorships.

In 1986, the ouster of president-for-life Jean-Claude Duvalier cleared the way for a new democratic constitution, and Jean-Bertrand Aristide—a politically inexperienced former priest with ties to

street gangs—won the 1990 presidential election. Within months, the Aristide government lapsed into chaos, and his security chief overthrew him. Exiled to the United States, he obtained access to frozen Haitian bank accounts and lobbied Congress and the White House to return him to power.

In 1994, the Clinton Administration sent U.S. troops to force the ruling military officers to leave, and restore Aristide as president. In so doing, it invested as much political capital in Aristide's personal success as it did in rebuilding Haiti. Interpreting U.S. actions as a license, Aristide undercut development efforts, politicized the police, and incited mobs to threaten and murder opponents. He also broke numerous promises to assistance donors and the OAS, and his actions sowed distrust both at home and internationally.

History Repeats. By February 2004, armed mobs, once loyal to Aristide, joined thugs from previous governments in a revolt against him. On February 29, with the rebels controlling most of Haiti, Aristide resigned. Unwilling to bail out his presi-

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- Self-help, durable institutions, and consistent international engagement are keys to Haiti's success.
 - America and its international partners should avoid backing divisive personalities like former President Aristide.
 - An educated citizenry is essential to curbing future despotism.
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dency a second time, the Bush Administration flew Aristide and his wife to the Central African Republic—the only country willing to accept them.

In accordance with Haiti's constitution, Supreme Court Justice Boniface Alexandre assumed the presidency and appointed a new prime minister and cabinet. Meanwhile, the United States, France, Chile, and Canada have sent 3,300 peacekeepers to protect the government, help reconstruct Haiti's tiny police force, collect weapons, and secure humanitarian aid.

Starting Over. While helping Haiti rebuild, the United States and its international partners should avoid the mistakes of the past and should instead:

- **Help Haitians become stakeholders in a democratic society.** The United States' encouragement of an interim cabinet staffed by non-partisan technocrats is a good start. The U.S. should now urge these officials to reactivate Haiti's government at all levels, to vet and integrate non-criminal members of all factions and parties into public service, and to plan for new, multi-party elections.
- **Support institutions, not divisive leaders.** In 1994, the Clinton Administration restored a fiery, undemocratic Aristide to the presidency. This time, America and its partners should promote the rule of law, checks and balances, functioning ministries, and fair elections—fundamentals of real democracy. Progress will depend on an educated citizenry that can judge the efforts of its public servants. Literacy and civic awareness should be top priorities.
- **Promote a modern justice system.** U.S. diplomats should encourage Haiti to reform its justice system to permit oral arguments, independent prosecutors, and trial by jury. With international security assistance, Haiti can bolster its meager 5,000-member police force to 20,000 members—a force comparable to other nations its size. Reforms will be critical to prosecuting those accused of corruption, drug trafficking, and human rights abuses—including Aristide.
- **Reconstruct the private sector.** Haiti's basket-case economy was suffering before the February revolt, which ended with more than \$100 million in looting damages. International donors should help local businesses obtain low-cost credit in order to rebuild. For the long-term, the Bush Administration should guide Haiti toward low tariffs and market economics, which will spur foreign investment and possibly lead to a U.S.–Haiti free trade agreement.
- **Coordinate donor initiatives.** In the 1990s, more than 300 non-governmental organizations were operating in Haiti—often at cross-purposes. Haiti cannot manage conflicting programs until it has a functioning government. In the meantime, U.S. officials should call for a multilateral donor commission to oversee aid and to ensure accountability and coordination between donor objectives and Haitian government goals.
- **Sustain efforts over time.** Developing an educated, democratic society will take at least one generation. For its part, the United States should continue to participate in post-election peacekeeping activities and should maintain support for democratic reform programs for at least a decade. The OAS should supervise elections until Haiti has established a durable, self-sustaining electoral infrastructure.
- **Extend no more credit.** Small grants are better for a nation unable to pay its debts. The U.S. should also continue to investigate what happened to prior aid to Haiti—especially any links among Aristide's business holdings, money laundering, and lobbying activities.

Conclusion. So far, the Bush Administration has helped Haiti salvage constitutional order from a crumbling autocracy. Senator Bob Graham (D–FL) has called for sustained U.S. leadership to promote a new, broad-based democratic Haitian government. Florida Governor Jeb Bush (R) has asked Haitian-Americans to participate in the rebuilding process. However, nothing will work unless Haitians help themselves, shun demagogues, and build durable institutions. U.S. leadership in maintaining international support is key to helping them succeed.

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