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Official Name

Republic of [Haiti](#)

PROFILE

People

Nationality: Noun and adjective - Haitian(s). Population (est.): 6.9 million. Annual growth rate: 1.8%. Ethnic groups: African descent 95%, African and European descent 5%. Religions: Roman Catholic 80%, Protestant 10%; voodoo practices widespread. Languages: Creole (official), French (official). Education: Years compulsory - 6. Attendance - primary school 45% of school-aged children; secondary 15%. Literacy - 25%. Health: Infant mortality rate - 101/1,000. Life expectancy - 56 yrs. Work force (est.): 2.8 million. Agriculture - 67%. Industry and commerce - 20%. Services - 13%.

Geography

Area: 27,750 sq. km. (10,714 sq. mi.); about the size of Maryland. Cities: Port-au-Prince (1993 est. pop. 1.5 million). Other cities - Cap Haitien (65,000). Terrain: Mountainous; rest is plain. Climate: Warm, semiarid; high humidity in many coastal areas.

Government

Type: Elected government. Independence: 1804. Constitution: 1987. Branches: Executive - President. Legislative - Senate (27 seats) Chamber of Deputies (83 seats). Judicial - Court of Cassation. Administrative subdivisions: Nine departments. Political parties: Numerous. Suffrage: Universal at 18.

Economy

GNP (1994 est): \$1.38 billion. GNP growth rate (1994): -10%. Per capita GNP (est.): \$204. Natural resources: Bauxite, copper, calcium carbonate, gold, marble. Agriculture (20% of GNP): Products - coffee, sugarcane, rice, corn, cacao, sorghum, pulses, fruits. Industry (30% of GNP): Types - textiles, light industrial products; processing coffee, cacao, mangoes, and other agricultural products. Services (50% of GNP): Types - Commerce, government, tourism. Trade (1994 totals unavailable): Oct. 1994-March 1995: Exports to U.S.: \$38 million: light manufactured products, coffee, cocoa, mangoes, essential oils. Major market - U.S. (historically about 75%). Imports from U.S.: \$258 million: consumer durables, foodstuffs, industrial equipment, petroleum products, construction materials. Major market - U.S. (historically about 60%). Official exchange rate (fixed in Constitution): 5 gourdes=U.S.\$1. A free foreign exchange market exists in which the U.S. dollar traded in early 1995 for approximately 14 gourdes.

PEOPLE

Haiti is one of the world's most densely populated countries, with approximately 250 people per square kilometer (650 per sq. mi.). About 95% of Haitians are of African descent; the rest of the population is mostly of mixed African-Caucasian ancestry. A few are of European or Levantine stock. About 70% of the people live in rural areas.

French is one of two official languages, but it is spoken by only about 10% of the people. All Haitians speak Creole, the country's other official language. English is increasingly spoken among the young and in the business sector.

The state religion is Roman Catholicism, which most of the population professes. Some have been converted to Protestantism by missionaries active throughout the country. Haitians, however, tend to see no conflict with voodoo

traditions of African origin coexisting with Christian faiths.

Although public education is free, less than half of Haitian school-aged children attend school. Private and religious education provide perhaps 75% of programs offered. Though Haitians place a high value on education, most families cannot afford to send their children to secondary school.

Recent large-scale emigration to the U.S., and secondarily to Canada and Caribbean neighbors, has created what Haitians refer to as the "Tenth Department." About one out of every six Haitians lives abroad.

HISTORY

The Spaniards used Hispaniola (of which Haiti is the western part and the Dominican Republic is the eastern) as a "jumping-off point" to explore the rest of the Western Hemisphere. French buccaneers later used the western third of the island as a point from which to harass English and Spanish ships. In 1697, Spain ceded the western third of Hispaniola to France. As piracy was gradually suppressed, some French adventurers became planters, making Saint-Domingue - as the French portion of the island was then called - one of the richest colonies of the 18th-century French empire.

During this period, African slaves were brought to work the sugarcane and coffee plantations. In 1791, the slave population - led by Toussaint L'Ouverture, Jean Jacques Dessalines, and Henri Christophe - revolted and gained control of the northern part of Saint-Domingue.

In 1804, local forces defeated an army deployed by Napoleon Bonaparte, established independence from France, and renamed the area Haiti. The defeat of the French in Haiti is widely credited with contributing to Napoleon's decision to sell the Louisiana territory to the [United States](#) in 1804. Haiti is the world's oldest black republic and, after the United States, the second-oldest republic in the Western Hemisphere. Haiti actively espoused and assisted the independence movements of Latin American countries. Haitians had already fought beside American troops during the American Revolution, at the battle of Savannah.

Two separate regimes (north and south) emerged after independence but were unified in 1820. Two years later, Haiti conquered Santo Domingo, the eastern, Spanish-speaking portion of Hispaniola. In 1844, however, Santo Domingo broke away from Haiti and became the Dominican Republic.

With 22 changes of government from 1843 until 1915, Haiti experienced numerous periods of intense political and economic disorder. In 1915, the United States intervened militarily during an especially unstable period. U.S. military forces were withdrawn in 1934 at the request of the elected Government of Haiti.

In 1957, Francois Duvalier was elected president following a year of political turmoil during which six different governments held power. He became president for life in 1964 and maintained absolute political control until his death in 1971. During Duvalier's rule, a small black middle class emerged, but Haiti suffered from domestic political tension, severe corruption, severe repression, and economic stagnation. The United States suspended all economic and military assistance to the government of Francois Duvalier in 1963; aid was resumed only in 1973.

Duvalier's son, Jean-Claude, assumed the presidency and continued many of his father's policies. Although the country experienced a true period of economic recovery and investment, Jean-Claude Duvalier ultimately failed to provide the leadership necessary for Haiti's sustained development. As a result, the country stagnated politically and economically, and public discontent mounted. On February 7, 1986, after months of tension and civil disorder, Duvalier fled Haiti for France.

A military regime - the National Governing Council (CNG) - led by General Henri Namphy inherited power following the flight of Jean-Claude Duvalier. In late 1986, the CNG organized local and Constituent Assembly elections. In March 1987, a national referendum approved a new and thoroughly democratic constitution. But the CNG canceled general elections scheduled for November 1987 amid popular discontent and regime repression.

In January 1988, in elections marred by the refusal of most major candidates to participate and by low voter turnout, Leslie Manigat was elected President. Manigat, a moderate conservative, was toppled by the military after only four months in power, and General Namphy again took control. Namphy was in turn overthrown by elements of the military

in September 1988, and another military regime, headed by General Prosper Avril, took power. Avril permitted the formation of an Electoral Commission to prepare for long-awaited elections, but Avril's increasingly authoritarian leadership eroded public confidence in his commitment to [democracy](#). On March 12, 1990, faced with escalating civil unrest, Avril resigned in favor of Supreme Court Justice Ertha Pascal Trouillot, who became provisional president.

In elections held in December 1990, Jean-Bertrand Aristide, a Roman Catholic priest and long-time opponent of Haiti's former dictatorship, was elected President by an overwhelming majority. The election was witnessed by international observers from the U.S., UN, and OAS and was declared to be Haiti's first free and honest election. Voters also elected members of parliament and mayors of Haiti's major towns. Aristide was inaugurated on February 7, 1991. But on September 30, 1991, Aristide was overthrown by dissatisfied elements of the military and left the country first for Venezuela, then for the U.S.

From October 1991 to June 1992, an unconstitutional de facto regime, led by Joseph Nerette as President and Jean-Jacques Honorat as Prime Minister, governed with the support of a parliamentary majority and the armed forces. In June 1992, both Nerette and Honorat resigned, and parliament, with the support of the [armed forces](#), approved Marc Bazin as Prime Minister to head a new de facto government. No replacement was named for Nerette as President. Bazin's mandate was to negotiate a solution with President Aristide, in exile in the U.S., and to end the economic embargo and diplomatic isolation of Haiti imposed after Aristide's ouster. In June 1993, Bazin resigned and the UN imposed an oil and arms embargo, which brought the Haitian military to the negotiating table.

President Aristide and the then head of the Haitian Armed Forces, General Raoul Cedras, signed the UN-brokered Governors Island agreement on July 3, 1993, establishing a 10-step process for the restoration of constitutional government and the return of President Aristide by October 30, 1993. As part of this process, Robert Malval was sworn in as Prime Minister on August 30, 1993. The military derailed the process and the UN reimposed economic sanctions. Prime Minister Malval resigned on December 15, 1993, but remained as acting Prime Minister for 11 more months.

In May 1994, the military installed a third de facto regime, illegitimately selecting Supreme Court Justice Emile Jonassaint to be provisional president. The UN and the U.S. reacted to this extraconstitutional move by tightening economic sanctions and their enforcement in May 1994 (UN Res. 917). By the end of July 1994, the international community suspended all commercial air passenger flights with Haiti, and Haiti's military restricted travel across the land border with the Dominican Republic. On July 31, 1994, the UN adopted a resolution (940) authorizing member states to use all necessary means to facilitate the departure of Haiti's military leadership and restore constitutional rule, including the return of President Aristide.

In August 1994, Haiti had parallel governments, the illegitimate military-backed Jonassaint regime that controlled the government apparatus in Haiti, and the constitutional government, whose members - like President Aristide - were in exile or who - like acting Prime Minister Malval - were blocked from carrying out their duties.

Parliament, with a parallel leadership in the Senate that mirrored the dual governments, was unable to function effectively. The political and human rights climate continued to deteriorate as the military and the de facto government maintained repression and terror, sanctioning widespread assassination, killing, torture, beating, mutilation, and rape in open defiance of the international community's condemnation.

With UN authority to use all necessary means to facilitate the departure of Haiti's military leadership and restore the constitutional government, including President Aristide, President Clinton dispatched former President Jimmy Carter, Chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee Sam Nunn, and former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Colin Powell to Haiti on September 16, 1994, to meet with the de facto Haitian leadership. The purpose of their trip was to discuss the departure of the de facto leaders within the framework of goals established by President Clinton and the UN Security Council.

Facing imminent [military intervention](#) by the United States and a coalition of multinational forces, the regime leaders agreed to step down from power by October 15. The agreement signed by former President Carter and the military-installed Haitian President Jonassaint included the following. the Haitian military and police agreed to work in close cooperation with the U.S. military mission to achieve a smooth transition to the return of President Aristide and constitutional government to Haiti. The regime consented to retirement by Generals Cedras and Biamby and Lt. Col. Francois in accordance with UN Resolutions 917 and 940 when a general amnesty would be voted into law by the

Haitian Parliament, or by October 15, 1994, whichever came first.

The de facto authorities also agreed to work with the Haitian Parliament to expedite this action and accept that their successors would be named according to the Haitian constitution and existing military law. The agreement also guaranteed that the economic embargo and economic sanctions would be lifted without delay in accordance with relevant UN resolutions, and that forthcoming legislative elections would be held in a free and democratic manner.

On September 19, U.S. forces began a remarkably peaceful deployment to Port-au-Prince and other points throughout the country to establish a safe and secure environment for the legitimate government to take up its responsibilities. During the next several weeks, about 20,000 U.S. troops and a battalion of nearly 300 from CARICOM nations, under the command of U.S. Gen. Henry Shelton, were deployed to accomplish this mission.

The transition period leading up to President Aristide's return on October 15 included the return of his cabinet members to their ministries, the convening of both houses of Parliament for a special session, the reinstatement of Port-au-Prince Mayor Evans Paul, and the departure from Haiti of Cedras, Biamby, and Francois. The military's heavy weapons were seized and destroyed by the Multinational Force (MNF), the militant anti-Aristide group FRAPH was effectively broken up, and numerous arms caches around Haiti were confiscated.

POLITICAL CONDITIONS

Within a month of Aristide's return, his nominee for Prime Minister - Smarck Michel - and a new cabinet were sworn in. The formation of a new government whose composition is aimed at a consensus of Haiti's major political, economic, and social forces should accelerate democratic and structural change in the Haitian Government. Elections for Haiti's next president should take place by December 1995. Aristide is constitutionally barred from seeking re-election.

Among the accomplishments of Haiti's Parliament between its reconvening on September 28, 1994, and its adjournment on February 4, 1995, were passage of an amnesty; adoption of a law which created a new civilian police force separate from the military; a ban on paramilitary organizations; passage of a budget for the central government; and approval of an electoral law authorizing legislative and local elections, the first round of which is scheduled to take place on June 25, 1995. If necessary, run-off elections are scheduled to take place on July 23, 1995.

International Support

Twenty-nine countries committed to participate along with the U.S. in the MNF with military troops and/or police monitors. These countries are: Argentina, Australia, Bangladesh, Belgium, Benin, Bolivia, Costa Rica, Denmark, Israel, Jordan, Nepal, the Netherlands, Norway, [Panama](#), the Philippines, Poland, and the U.K., in addition to 12 of the 13 members of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM): Antigua and Barbuda, The Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and Trinidad and Tobago.

On January 30, 1995, the UN Security Council determined that the MNF had succeeded in establishing a secure and stable environment in Haiti, paving the way for the deployment of the UN Mission in Haiti (UNMIH) on March 31, 1995. UNMIH consists of about 6,000 peacekeepers, including some 2,500 U.S. troops and about 900 civilian police. UNMIH's mission is to help the Haitian Government sustain a secure and stable environment, in particular an environment conducive to the conduct of free and fair elections; protect Haitian Government personnel and facilities, as well as the staffs of human rights and humanitarian organizations; and, as required, assist the Haitian Government with the professionalization of the Haitian security forces. UNMIH works in concert with the UN Secretary General's Special Representative on Haiti. Experts from the U.S., Canada, France, and Norway are working with the legitimate government to assist in training a new civilian police force.

Principal Government Officials

President - Jean-Bertrand Aristide Prime Minister - Smarck Michel Minister of Foreign Affairs -

Claudette Werleigh Ambassador to the U.S. - Jean Casimir The embassy of Haiti is located at 2311 Massachusetts Ave., NW, Washington, DC 20008 (tel. 202-332-4090).

ECONOMY

Haiti is the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere and one of the poorest in the world. A comparison of social and economic indicators reveals that in the 1980s, Haiti was falling behind even other low-income developing countries. Haiti's relatively dismal economic performance is in part the result of a severe shortage of cultivable land, continued reliance on traditional technologies, declining GDP, rising prices, under- and unemployment rates estimated to be as high as 60%, and emigration of large numbers of skilled workers. Weak development management capability and an acute scarcity of financial resources further constrain growth.

The consequences of the 1991 coup and the irresponsible policies of the de facto authorities greatly accelerated the economic decline begun in the early 1980s. After the 1991 coup, the OAS adopted voluntary trade sanctions against Haiti aimed at restoring constitutional rule to the country and resulting in commercial restrictions between Haiti and the U.S., its largest trading partner. The international sanctions culminated in a May 1994 UN embargo of all goods entering Haiti except humanitarian supplies, such as food and medicines. By May 1994, the Port-au-Prince industrial park, which employed some 35,000 workers in the late 1980s, was largely inactive. The assembly sector, heavily dependent on the United States as its main market for exports, employed more than 50,000 people in the early 1980s, but has effectively ground to a halt following successively tighter economic sanctions. Employment in the assembly sector is growing slowly as domestic firms resume or expand production and foreign firms reopen operations. Activity in this important sector, however, remains far below earlier levels.

New investment and commercial bank lending virtually disappeared, as businesses waited for political change and an end to the embargo. Many businesses remain uncertain about the course of political/economic developments and have not begun to invest at previous levels. The physical infrastructure will require large investments of , capital in the near future to restore the country to its pre-coup status. International agencies and bilateral donors have committed substantial sums to assist Haiti to restore and improve infrastructure essential for [economic growth](#).

A previously adopted UN resolution lifted UN-sponsored sanctions the day after President Aristide's return to Haiti. As political stability increases in Haiti, tourism, the assembly industry, and light manufacturing hold promise as potential sources of foreign exchange. Remittances from relatives abroad (primarily in the U.S.) serve as a significant means of support for many Haitian households.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Haiti is one of the original members of the [United Nations](#) and several of its specialized and related agencies and the Organization of American States (OAS). The Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the UN Development Program (UNDP), and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) maintained resident representatives in Haiti prior to the 1991 coup. Both the IDB and the UNDP contributed economic assistance to Haiti in the past, as did the European Union, under the terms of the Lome Accords to which Haiti became a full member in December 1989. Most assistance was suspended following the 1991 coup. Other donors include the United States (the largest single country donor), Canada, France, Germany, and [Japan](#). At a consultative group meeting of international donors on January 31, 1995, nearly \$1 billion was pledged for Haiti's reconstruction.

Haiti maintains diplomatic relations with most countries in Latin [America](#) and Europe, although many of these countries do not maintain embassies in Haiti.

U.S.-HAITIAN RELATIONS

U.S. policy toward Haiti is designed to foster democracy, promote the observance of fundamental human rights, and help alleviate poverty in the hemisphere's poorest country. The U.S. has taken a leading role in organizing international efforts at the UN, the OAS, with CARICOM, and individual countries to achieve this objective.

President Clinton's decision to dispatch U.S. forces to Haiti was based on the need to "protect our interests, to stop the brutal atrocities that threaten tens of thousands of Haitians; to secure our borders and to preserve stability and promote democracy in our hemisphere; and to uphold the reliability of the commitments we make and the commitments others make to us."

After September 19, 1994, the U.S. lifted most of its unilateral financial, visa, and travel sanctions against Haiti and completed this process following the return of President Aristide on October 15, 1994. The U.S. has been the largest single country donor to contribute economic aid to Haiti since 1973, when the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) resumed its assistance programs. The overall goal of the USAID program is to establish conditions necessary for the majority of Haitians to improve the quality of their lives. The USAID program has three basic objectives:

- * Strengthening governance and responsiveness in public sector institutions and strengthening private sector participation in an emerging civil society;
- * Supporting sustainable private sector economic growth; and
- * Protecting and developing the human resource base.

Since the 1991 coup, U.S. development assistance has been largely channeled through nongovernmental organizations, due to lack of a constitutional government counterpart. During this period, the USAID program has been guided by two principles: preventing the deterioration of humanitarian conditions and restoring constitutional democracy. Over the next 12-18 months, USAID has committed about \$200 million for Haiti's economic recovery, as well as humanitarian and democratic governance programs. The economic recovery funding (\$87 million) includes \$24.5 million for payments of its arrears to international financial institutions and \$45 million for balance-of-payments and budget support. The international community is expected to provide about \$700 million in the next year.

U.S. humanitarian aid programs have included funds to promote and protect human rights by providing medical care to victims of abuses, including rape and beatings, assisting families in hiding, and establishing small-scale safe havens. Led by the U.S., the international community feeds about 1.3 million people each day. More than 2 million people (one-third of the population) have access to basic health care services financed by USAID.

USAID funding of \$40 million for democratic governance, plus contributions from other donors, will focus on several areas of need for sustaining democracy, including: the restoration of government operations, elections, formation of an independent system of justice with the establishment of a police force separate from the military, reintegration of Haitian soldiers into civilian life, and expansion of the capacities of local government. In the long run, these may be the most critical steps, as they are essential in transforming the relationship of the Haitian citizen to the Haitian state.

Principal U.S. Officials

Ambassador - William Lacy Swing Deputy Chief of Mission-

Vicki Huddleston

The U.S. embassy in Haiti is located on Harry Truman Blvd., Port-au-Prince (tel. 22-0200).

Travel Notes

U.S. citizens traveling to Haiti are urged to register at the U.S. embassy's consular section upon arrival. Citizens may obtain updated information from the embassy on travel and security within Haiti.

Health: Medical care is limited. Travelers face the range of diseases normally found in a tropical country, including malaria, typhoid, polio, and dengue fever. AIDS poses a significant health risk and is prevalent in tourist areas. The level of community sanitation is low. Public water sources often contain impurities that can cause severe intestinal disorders. Bottled water is generally safe. For additional information, travelers should contact the Centers for Disease Control's international travelers' hotline at (404) 332-4559.

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