

## Securing Disaster in Haiti

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By **Peter Hallward**

Source: Haiti Analysis

Nine days after the devastating earthquake that struck Haiti on 12 January 2010, it's now clear that the initial phase of the U.S.-led relief operation has conformed to the three fundamental tendencies that have shaped the more general course of the island's recent history. [1] It has adopted military priorities and strategies. It has sidelined Haiti's own leaders and government, and ignored the needs of the majority of its people. And it has proceeded in ways that reinforce the already harrowing gap between rich and poor. All three tendencies aren't just connected, they are mutually reinforcing. These same tendencies will continue to govern the imminent reconstruction effort as well, unless determined political action is taken to counteract them.

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Haiti is not only one of the poorest countries in the world, it is also one of the most polarised and unequal in its disparities in wealth and access to political power. [2] A small clique of rich and well-connected families continues to dominate the country and its economy while more than half the population, according to the IMF, survive on a household income of around 44 US pennies per day.[3]

Mass destitution has grown far more severe in recent decades. Starting in the 1970s, internationally imposed neo-liberal 'adjustments' and austerity measures finally succeeded in doing what no Haitian government had managed to do since winning independence in 1804: in order to set the country on the road towards 'economic development', they have driven large numbers of small farmers off their land and into densely crowded urban slums. A small minority of these internal refugees may be lucky enough to find sweatshop jobs that pay the lowest wages in the region. These wages currently average \$2 or \$3 a day; in real terms they are worth less than a quarter of their 1980 value.

Haiti's tiny elite owes its privileges to exclusion, exploitation and violence, and it is only violence that allows it to retain them. For much of the last century, Haiti's military and paramilitary forces (with substantial amounts of US support) were able to preserve these privileges on their own. Over the course of the 1980s, however, it started to look as if local military repression might no longer be up to the job. A massive and courageous popular mobilisation (known as Lavalas) culminated in 1990 with the landslide election of the liberation theologian Jean-Bertrand Aristide as president. Large numbers of ordinary people began to participate in the political system for the first time, and as political scientist Robert Fatton remembers, 'panic seized the dominant class. It dreaded living in close proximity to la populace and barricaded itself against Lavalas.' [4]

Nine months later, the army dealt with this popular threat in the time-honoured way, with a coup d'état. Over the next three years, around 4,000 Aristide supporters were killed.

However, when the US eventually allowed Aristide to return in October 1994, he took a surprising and unprecedented step: he abolished the army that had deposed him. As human rights lawyer

Brian Concannon (director of the Institute for Justice and Democracy in Haiti) observed a few years later, 'it is impossible to overestimate the impact of this accomplishment. It has been called the greatest human rights development in Haiti since emancipation, and is wildly popular.' [5] In 2000, the Haitian electorate gave Aristide a second overwhelming mandate when his party (Fanmi Lavalas) won more than 90% of the seats in parliament.

## II

More than anything else, what has happened in Haiti since 1990 should be understood as the progressive clarification of this basic dichotomy - democracy or the army. Unadulterated democracy might one day allow the interests of the numerical majority to prevail, and thereby challenge the privileges of the elite. In 2000, such a challenge became a genuine possibility: the overwhelming victory of Fanmi Lavalas, at all levels of government, raised the prospect of genuine political change in a context in which there was no obvious extra-political mechanism - no army - to prevent it.

In order to avoid this outcome, the main strategy of Haiti's little ruling class has been to redefine political questions in terms of 'stability' and 'security', and in particular the security of property and investments. Mere numbers may well win an election or sustain a popular movement but as everyone knows, only an army is equipped to deal with insecurity. The well-armed 'friend of Haiti' that is the United States knows this better than anyone else.

As soon as Aristide was re-elected, a systematic international campaign to bankrupt and destabilise his second government set the stage for a paramilitary insurrection and a further coup d'état, and in 2004, thousands of US troops again invaded Haiti (just as they first did back in 1915) in order to 'restore stability and security' to their 'troubled island neighbour.' An expensive and long-term UN 'stabilisation mission' staffed by 9,000 heavily armed troops soon took over the job of helping to pacify the population and criminalise the resistance. By the end of 2006, thousands more Aristide supporters had been killed.

Over the course of 2009, a suitably stabilised Haitian government agreed to persevere with the privatisation of the country's remaining public assets, [6] veto a proposal to increase minimum wages to \$5 a day, and to bar Fanmi Lavalas (and several other political parties) from participating in the next round of legislative elections.

When it comes to providing stability, today's UN troops are clearly a big improvement over the old indigenous alternative. If things get so unstable that even the ground begins to shake, however, there's still nothing that can beat the world's leading provider of peace and security.

## III

In the immediate aftermath of the earthquake that struck on 12 January 2010, it might have seemed hard to counter arguments in favour of allowing the US military, with its 'unrivalled logistical capability', to take de facto control of such a massive relief operation. Weary of bad press in Iraq and Afghanistan, US commanders also seemed glad of this unexpected opportunity to rebrand their armed forces as angels of mercy. As usual, the Haitian government was instructed to be grateful for whatever help it could get.

That was before US commanders actively began - the day after the earthquake struck - to divert aid away from the disaster zone.

As soon as the US air force took control of Haitian airspace, on Wednesday 13 January, they explicitly prioritised military over humanitarian flights. Although most reports from Port-au-Prince emphasised remarkable levels of patience and solidarity on the streets, US commanders made fears of popular unrest and insecurity their number one concern. Their first priority was to avoid what the US Air Force Special Command Public Affairs spokesman (Ty Foster) called another 'Somalia effort' [7] - which is to say, presumably, a situation in which a humiliated US army might once again risk losing military control of a 'humanitarian' mission.

As many observers predicted, however, the determination of US commanders to forestall this risk

by privileging guns and soldiers over doctors and food has only succeeded in helping to provoke a few occasional bursts of the very unrest they set out to contain. In order to amass a sufficiently large amount of soldiers and military equipment 'on the ground', the US Air Force diverted plane after plane packed with emergency supplies away from Port-au-Prince. Among many others, World Food Program flights were turned away by US commanders on Thursday and Friday, the New York Times reported, 'so that the United States could land troops and equipment, and lift Americans and other foreigners to safety.' [8]

Many similar flights met a similar fate, right through to the end of the week. Médecins sans Frontières (MSF) alone has so far had to watch at least five planeloads of its medical supplies be turned away. [9] On Saturday 16 January, for instance, 'despite guarantees given by the United Nations and the US Defense Department, an MSF cargo plane carrying an inflatable surgical hospital was blocked from landing in Port-au-Prince and was re-routed to Samana, in Dominican Republic', delaying its arrival by an additional 24 hours. [10] Late on Monday 18 January, MSF 'complained that one of its cargo planes carrying 12 tonnes of medical equipment had been turned away three times from Port-au-Prince airport since Sunday,' despite receiving 'repeated assurances they could land.' By that stage one group of MSF doctors in Port-au-Prince had been 'forced to buy a saw in the market to continue the amputations' upon which the lives of their patients depended. [11]

While US commanders set about restoring security by assembling a force of some 14,000 Marines, residents in some less secure parts of Port-au-Prince soon started to run out of food and water. On 20 January people sleeping in one of the largest and most easily accessed of the many temporary refugee camps in central Port-au-Prince (in Champs Mars) told writer Tim Schwartz, author of the 2008 book *Travesty in Haiti*, that 'no relief has arrived; it is all being delivered on other side of town, by the US embassy.' [12] Telesur reporter Reed Lindsay confirmed on 20 January, a full eight days after the quake, that the impoverished south-western Port-au-Prince suburb closest to the earthquake's epicentre, Carrefour, still hadn't received any food, aid or medical help. [13]

The BBC's Mark Doyle found the same thing in an eastern (and less badly affected) suburb. 'Their houses are destroyed, they have no running water, food prices have doubled, and they haven't seen a single government official or foreign aid worker since the earthquake struck.' Overall, Doyle observed, 'the international response has been quite pathetic. Some of the aid agencies are working very hard, but there are two ways of reporting this kind of thing. One is to hang around with the aid agencies and hang around with the American spokespeople at the airport, and you'll hear all sorts of stories about what's happening. Another way is to drive almost at random with ordinary people and go and see what's happening in ordinary places. In virtually every area I've driven to, ordinary people say that I was the first foreigner that they'd met.' [14]

Only a full week after the earthquake did emergency food supplies even begin the slow journey from the heavily guarded airport to fourteen 'secure distribution points' in various parts of the city. [15] By that stage, tens of thousands of Port-au-Prince residents had finally come to the conclusion that no aid would be forthcoming, and began to abandon the capital for villages in the countryside.

On Sunday 17 January, Al-Jazeera's correspondent summarised what many other journalists had been saying all week. 'Most Haitians have seen little humanitarian aid so far. What they have seen is guns, and lots of them. Armoured personnel carriers cruise the streets' and 'inside the well-guarded perimeter [of the airport], the US has taken control. It looks more like the Green Zone in Baghdad than a centre for aid distribution.' [16] Late on the same day, the World Food Programme's air logistics officer Jarry Emmanuel confirmed that most of the 200 flights going in and out of the airport each day were still being reserved for the US military: 'their priorities are to secure the country. Ours are to feed.' [17] By Monday 18 January, no matter how many US embassy or military spokesman insisted that 'we are here to help' rather than invade, governments as different as those of France and Venezuela had begun to accuse the US of effectively 'occupying' the country. [18]

#### IV

The US decision to privilege military over humanitarian traffic at the airport sealed the fate of many thousands of people abandoned in the rubble of lower Port-au-Prince and Léogane. In countries all over the world, search and rescue teams were ready to leave for Haiti within 12 hours of the

disaster. Only a few were able to arrive without fatal delays - mainly teams, like those from Venezuela, Iceland and China, who managed to land while Haitian staff still retained control of their airport. Some subsequent arrivals, including a team from the UK, were prevented from landing with their heavy lifting equipment. Others, like Canada's several Heavy Urban Search Rescue Teams, were immediately readied but never sent - the teams were told to stand down, the Canadian Foreign Affairs Minister Lawrence Cannon eventually explained, because 'the government had opted to send Canadian Armed Forces instead.' [19]

USAID announced on 19 January that international search and rescue teams, over the course of the first full week after the disaster, had managed to save a grand total of 70 people. [20] The majority of these people were rescued in quite specific locations and circumstances. 'Search-and-rescue operations', observed the Washington Post on 18 January, 'have been intensely focused on buildings with international aid workers, such as the crushed U.N. headquarters, and on large hotels with international clientele.' [21] Tim Schwartz spent much of the first post-quake week as a translator with rescue workers, and was struck by the fact that most of their work was confined to places - the UN's hotel Christophe, the Montana Hotel, the Caribe supermarket - that were not only frequented by foreigners but that could be snugly enclosed within 'secure perimeters.' Elsewhere, he observed, UN 'peacekeepers' did their best to make sure that rescue workers treated onlooking crowds as a source of potential danger rather than assistance. [22]

Until the residents of devastated places like Léogane and Carrefour are somehow able to reassure foreign troops that they will feel 'secure' when visiting their neighbourhoods, UN and US commanders clearly prefer to let them die on their own.

Exactly the same logic has condemned yet more people to death in and around Port-au-Prince's hospitals. In one of the most illuminating reports yet filed from the city, on 20 January Democracy Now's Amy Goodman spoke with Dr. Evan Lyon of Partners in Health/Zamni Lasante from the General Hospital, the most important medical centre in the whole country. Lyon acknowledged there was a need for 'crowd control, so that the patients are not kept from having access', but insisted that 'there's no insecurity [...]. I don't know if you guys were out late last night, but you can hear a pin drop in this city. It's a peaceful place. There is no war. There is no crisis except the suffering that's ongoing [...]. The first thing that [your] listeners need to understand is that there is no insecurity here. There has not been, and I expect there will not be.' On the contrary, Lyon explained, 'this question of security and the rumours of security and the racism behind the idea of security has been our major block to getting aid in. The US military has promised us for several days to bring in machinery, but they've been listening to this idea that things are insecure, and so we don't have supplies.' As of 20 January, the hospital still hadn't received the supplies and medicines needed to treat many hundreds of dying patients. 'In terms of aid relief the response has been incredibly slow. There are teams of surgeons that have been sent to places that were, quote, "more secure," that have ten or twenty doctors and ten patients. We have a thousand people on this campus who are triaged and ready for surgery, but we only have four working operating rooms, without anaesthesia and without pain medications.' [23]

Almost by definition, in post-quake Haiti it seems that anyone or anything that cannot be enclosed in a 'secure perimeter' isn't worth saving.

In their occasional forays outside such perimeters, meanwhile, some Western journalists seemed able to find plenty of reasons for retreating behind them. Lurid stories of looting and gangs soon began to lend 'security experts' like the London-based Stuart Page [24] an aura of apparent authority, when he explained to the BBC's gullible 'security correspondent' Frank Gardner that 'all the security gains made in Haiti in the last few years could now be reversed [...]. The criminal gangs, totalling some 3,000, are going to exploit the current humanitarian crisis, to the maximum degree.' [25]

Another seasoned BBC correspondent, Matt Frei, had a similar story to tell on 18 January, when he found a few scavengers sifting through the remains of a central shopping district. 'Looting is now the only industry here. Anything will do as a weapon. Everything is now run by rival armed groups of thugs.' If Haiti is to avoid anarchy, Frei concluded, 'what may be needed is a full scale military occupation.' [26]

Not even former US president (and former Haiti occupier) Bill Clinton was prepared to go that far. 'Actually', Clinton told Frei, 'when you think about people who have lost everything except what they're carrying on their backs, who not only haven't eaten but probably haven't slept in four days, and when the sun goes down it's totally dark and they spend all night long tripping over bodies living and dead, well, I think they've behaved quite well [...]. They are astonishing people. How can they be so calm in the face of such enormous loss of life and loved ones, and all the physical damage?' [27]

Reporters able to tell the difference between occasional and highly localised bursts of foraging and a full-scale 'descent into anarchy' made much the same point all week, as did dozens of indignant Haitian correspondents. On 17 January, for instance, Ciné Institute director David Belle tried to counter international misrepresentation. 'I have been told that much US media coverage paints Haiti as a tinderbox ready to explode. I'm told that lead stories in major media are of looting, violence and chaos. There could be nothing further from the truth. I have travelled the entire city daily since my arrival. The extent of the damage is absolutely staggering [but...] NOT ONCE have we witnessed a single act of aggression or violence [...]. A crippled city of two million awaits help, medicine, food and water. Most haven't received any. Haiti can be proud of its survivors. Their dignity and decency in the face of this tragedy is itself staggering.' [28]

As anyone can see, however, dignity and decency are no substitute for security. No amount of weapons will ever suffice to reassure those 'fortunate few' whose fortunes isolate them from the people they exploit. As far as the people themselves are concerned, 'security is not the issue', explains Haiti Liberté's Kim Ives. 'We see throughout Haiti the population themselves organizing themselves into popular committees to clean up, to pull out the bodies from the rubble, to build refugee camps, to set up their security for the refugee camps. This is a population which is self-sufficient, and it has been self-sufficient for many years.' [29] But while the people who have lost what little they had have done their best to cope and regroup, the soldiers sent to 'restore order' treat them as potential combatants. 'It's just the same way they reacted after Katrina', concludes Ives. 'The victims are what's scary. They're black people who, you know, had the only successful slave revolution in history. What could be more threatening?'

'According to everyone I spoke with in the centre of the city', wrote Schwarz on 21 January, 'the violence and gang stuff is pure BS.' The relentless obsession with security, agrees Andy Kershaw, is clear proof of the fact that most foreign soldiers and NGO workers 'haven't a clue about the country and its people.' [30] True to form, within hours of the earthquake most of the panicked staff in the US embassy had already been evacuated, and at least one prominent foreign contractor in the garment sector (the Canadian firm Gildan Activewear) announced that it would be shifting production to alternative sewing facilities in neighbouring countries. [31] The price to be paid for such priorities will not be evenly distributed. Up in the higher, wealthier and mostly undamaged parts of Pétionville everyone already knows that it's the local residents 'who through their government connections, trading companies and interconnected family businesses' will once again pocket the lion's share of international aid and reconstruction money. [32]

In order to help keep less well-connected families where they belong, meanwhile, the US Department of Homeland Security has taken 'unprecedented' emergency measures to secure the homeland this past week. Operation 'Vigilant Sentry' will make efficient use of the large naval flotilla the US has assembled around Port-au-Prince. 'As well as providing emergency supplies and medical aid', notes The Daily Telegraph, 'the USS Carl Vinson, along with a ring of other navy and coast guard vessels, is acting as a deterrent to Haitians who might be driven to make the 681 mile sea crossing to Miami.' While Senegal's president Abdoulaye Wade offered 'voluntary repatriation to any Haitian that wants to return to [the land of] their origin', American officials confirmed that they would continue to apply their long-standing (and thoroughly illegal) policy with respect to all Haitian refugees and asylum seekers - to intercept and repatriate them automatically, regardless of the circumstances. [33]

Ever since the quake struck, the US Air Force has taken the additional precaution of flying a radio-transmitting cargo plane for five hours a day over large parts of the country, so as to broadcast a recorded message from Haiti's ambassador in Washington. 'Don't rush on boats to leave the country', the message says. 'If you think you will reach the U.S. and all the doors will be wide open to you, that's not at all the case. They will intercept you right on the water and send you back home where you came from.' Not even life-threatening injuries are enough to entitle Haitians to a different

sort of American reception. When the dean of medicine at the University of Miami arrived to help set up a field hospital by the airport in Port-au-Prince, he was outraged to find that most seriously injured people in the city were being denied the visas they would need to be transferred to Florida for surgery and treatment. As of 19 January the State Department had authorised a total of 23 exceptions to its golden rule of immigration. 'It's beyond insane,' O'Neill complained. 'It's bureaucracy at its worst.' [34]

V

This is the fourth time the US has invaded Haiti since 1915. Although each invasion has taken a different form and responded to a different pretext, all four have been expressly designed to restore 'stability' and 'security' to the island. Earthquake-prone Haiti must now be the most thoroughly stabilised country in the world. Thousands more foreign security personnel are already on their way, to guard the teams of foreign reconstruction and privatisation consultants who in the coming months are likely to usurp what remains of Haitian sovereignty.

Perhaps some of these guards and consultants will help their elite clients achieve another long-cherished dream: the restoration of Haiti's own little army. And perhaps then, for a short while at least, the inexhaustible source of 'instability' in Haiti - the ever-nagging threat of popular political participation and empowerment - may be securely buried in the rubble of its history.

## NOTES

[1] An abbreviated version of this article first appeared in *The National*, 21 January 2010, <http://www.thenational.ae/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20100121/REVIEW/701219960>.

[2] See Pål Sletten and Willy Egset, *Poverty in Haiti* (FAFO, 2004), 9.

[3] IMF, *Haiti: Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper* (November 2006), 7.

[4] Robert Fatton, *Haiti's Predatory Republic* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2002), 86-87, 83.

[5] Brian Concannon, 'Lave Men, Siye Atè: Taking Human Rights Seriously', in Melinda Miles and Eugenia Charles, eds. *Let Haiti LIVE: Unjust US Policies Towards its Oldest Neighbor* (Coconut Creek FL: Educa Vision, 2004), 92.

[6] See for instance Jeb Sprague, 'Haiti's Classquake', *HaitiAnalysis* 19 January 2010, <http://www.haitianalysis.com/2010/1/19/haiti-s-classquake>.

[7] BBC Radio 4 News, 16 January 2010, 22:00GMT.

[8] Ginger Thompson and Damien Cave, 'Officials Strain to Distribute Aid to Haiti as Violence Rises', *New York Times* 17 January 2010.

[9] 'Médecins Sans Frontières says its plane turned away from US-run airport', *Daily Telegraph* 19 January 2010, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/centralamericaandthecaribbean/haiti/7031203/Haiti-earthquake-Medecins-Sans-Frontieres-says-its-plane-turned-away-from-US-run-airport.html>.

[10] 'Doctors Without Borders Cargo Plane With Full Hospital and Staff Blocked From Landing in Port-au-Prince', 18 January 2010, <http://doctorswithoutborders.org/press/release.cfm?id=4165&cat=press-release>.

[11] 'America sends paratroopers to Haiti to help secure aid lines', *The Times* 20 January 2010, [http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/us\\_and\\_americas/article6994523.ece](http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/us_and_americas/article6994523.ece).

[12] Email from Tim Schwartz, January 20, 2010.

[13] 'No aid [in Carrefour]. In the morning at UN base they said they would distribute there, but it didn't happen' (Reed Lindsay, Honor and Respect Foundation Newsletter, 20 January 2010, <http://www.hrfhaiti.org/earthquake/>). Cf. Luis Felipe Lopez, 'Town at epicenter of quake stays in

isolation', The Miami Herald 17 January, 2010.

[14] BBC Radio 4, News at Ten, 18 January 2010.

[15] Ed Pilkington, 'We're not here to fight, US troops insist', The Guardian 18 January 2010.

[16] 'Disputes Emerge over Haiti aid control', Al Jazeera 17 January 2010.

[17] Ginger Thompson and Damien Cave, 'Officials strain to distribute aid to Haiti as violence rises', New York Times 17 January 2010.

[18] 'Haiti aid agencies warn: chaotic and confusing relief effort is costing lives', The Guardian 18 January 2010, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/jan/18/haiti-aid-distribution-confusion-warning>.

[19] Don Peat, 'HUSAR not up to task, feds say: Search and rescue team told to stand down', Toronto Sun 17th January 2010, <http://www.torontosun.com/news/haiti/2010/01/17/12504981.html>.

[20] USAID, <http://www.usaid.gov/helphaiti/index.html>, accessed on 20 January 2010.

[21] William Booth, 'Haiti's elite spared from much of the devastation', Washington Post, 18 January 2010.

[22] Tim Schwarz, phonecall with the author, 18 January 2010; cf. Tim Schwartz, 'Is this anarchy? Outsiders believe this island nation is a land of bandits. Blame the NGOs for the "looting,"' NOW Toronto, 21 January 2010, <http://www.nowtoronto.com/news/story.cfm?content=173333>.

[23] 'With Foreign Aid Still at a Trickle, Devastated Port-au-Prince General Hospital Struggles to Meet Overwhelming Need', Democracy Now! 20 January 2010, [http://www.democracynow.org/2010/1/20/devastated\\_port\\_au\\_prince\\_hospital\\_struggles](http://www.democracynow.org/2010/1/20/devastated_port_au_prince_hospital_struggles).

[24] Stuart Page is chairman of Page Group, <http://www.pagegrouppltd.com/aboutus.html>.

[25] Gardner then explained that, with the police weakened by the quake, 'thousands of escaped criminals have returned to areas they once terrorised, like the slum district of Cité Soleil [...]. Unless the armed criminals are re-arrested, Haiti's security problems risk being every bit as bad as they were in 2004' (BBC Radio 4, Six O'clock News, 18 January 2010). In fact, when some of these ex-prisoners tried to re-establish themselves in Cité Soleil in the week after the quake, local residents promptly chased them out of the district on their own (see Ed Pilkington and Tom Phillips, 'Haiti escaped prisoners chased out of notorious slum', The Guardian 20 January 2010; Tom Leonard, 'Scenes of devastation outside Port-au-Prince "even worse"', Daily Telegraph 21 January 2010).

[26] BBC television, Ten O'clock News, 18 January 2010.

[27] BBC Radio 4, News at Ten, 18 January 2010. It sounds as if Clinton, in his role as UN special envoy to Haiti, may be learning a few things from his deputy - Zanmi Lasante's Dr. Paul Farmer.

[28] David Belle, 17 January 2010.

[29] 'Journalist Kim Ives on How Western Domination Has Undermined Haiti's Ability to Recover from Natural Devastation', Democracy Now! 21 January 2010, [http://www.democracynow.org/2010/1/20/journalist\\_kim\\_ives\\_on\\_how\\_decades](http://www.democracynow.org/2010/1/20/journalist_kim_ives_on_how_decades). Ives illustrates the way such community organisations work with an example from the Delmas 33 neighbourhood where he's staying. 'A truckload of food came in in the middle of the night unannounced. It could have been a melee. The local popular organization was contacted. They immediately mobilized their members [...]. They lined up about 600 people who were staying on the soccer field behind the [Matthew 25] house, which is also a hospital, and they distributed the food in an orderly, equitable fashion. They were totally sufficient. They didn't need Marines. They didn't need the UN. [...] These are things that people can do for themselves and are doing for themselves.' Kershaw makes the same point: 'This self-imposed blockade by bureaucracy is a scandal but could be easily overcome. The NGOs and the military should recognise the hysteria over "security" for what it is and make use of Haiti's best resource and its most efficient distribution network: the Haitians themselves. Stop

treating them as children. Or worse. Hand over to them immediately what they need at the airport. They will find the means to collect it. Fill up their trucks and cars with free fuel. Any further restriction on, and control of, the supply of aid is not only patronising but it is in that control and restriction where any "security issues" will really lurk. And it is the Haitians who best know where the aid is needed' (Andy Kershaw, 'Stop treating these people like savages', The Independent 21 January 2010).

[30] Andy Kershaw, 'Stop treating these people like savages', The Independent 21 January 2010.

[31] Ross Marowits, 'Gildan shifting T-shirt production outside Haiti to ensure adequate supply', The Canadian Press, 13 January 2010,  
[http://www.canadianbusiness.com/markets/headline\\_news/article.jsp?content=b131693719](http://www.canadianbusiness.com/markets/headline_news/article.jsp?content=b131693719).

[32] William Booth, 'Haiti's elite spared from much of the devastation', Washington Post 18 January 2010.

[33] Bruno Waterfield, 'US ships blockade coast to thwart exodus to America', Daily Telegraph 19 January 2010; 'Senegal offers land to Haitians', BBC News 17 January 2010,  
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/8463921.stm>.

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**From:** Z Net - The Spirit Of Resistance Lives

**URL:** <http://www.zcommunications.org/securing-disaster-in-haiti-by-peter-hallward>

The death toll in Haiti from Hurricane Matthew, the most powerful Caribbean storm in a decade, soars to 400 as the storm reaches the coast of Florida. Haiti - one of the world's poorest countries - has never fully recovered from the earthquake that killed thousands of people in 2010 and the cholera epidemic that followed. Image copyright AFP. Image caption Some coastal structures there were completely destroyed. Image copyright AP. Image caption A tomb is crushed by a falling tree in Les Cayes, southern Haiti. The Red Cross has launched an emergency appeal for \$6.9m (£5.6m) "to provide medical, shelter, water and sanitation assistance to 50,000 people". The US is sending nine military helicopters to help deliver food and water. Authorities in Haiti have reported 339 deaths, Reuters reports, citing local officials. Many of the deaths were caused by falling trees or other debris. The Caribbean nation has been the hardest hit by the hurricane, suffering the most casualties and severe structural damage. The storm has destroyed more than 3,200 homes, displaced 15,000 people and decimated plantations and livestock. "Haiti is facing the largest humanitarian event witnessed since the earthquake six years ago," said Mourad Wahba, the UN special representative for Haiti, as quoted in USA Today. "Much of the population is displ