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## ***Kenya Disappoints Haiti; the Gangs Rejoice***

*I mentioned in an earlier Journal this week that a delegation of Kenyans arrived in Port-au-Prince last Sunday to meet with Haitian authorities. I noted that I saw a huge US military cargo plane on the ground at the airport as I was traveling back to Florida. Yesterday's **Miami Herald** had a front-page story by Jacqueline Charles detailing what transpired in the meeting. Here is the article.*

### **'You don't have a plan to stop' gangs? Kenya's proposal for Haiti draws scorn**

BY JACQUELINE CHARLES

Haitian police, government officials and some members of the foreign diplomatic corps have been hoping that an offer by Kenya to lead an international intervention into a troubled Haiti would mean thousands of additional cops helping to fight heavily armed kidnapping gangs.

Instead, however, the proposal is shaping up as an offer to protect key government infrastructure such as the airport, sea ports and main roads. Critics say the plan will fail.

"Most of the critical infrastructures they were quoting are in the hands of the gangs. Before protecting this critical infrastructure, you have to first take them back," a diplomatic source told the Miami Herald.

The "static protection force," which one Haiti security expert calls "not effective," was presented by a 10-member security-assessment team headed by Ambassador George Orina the general director of Kenya's Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The team met Monday with members of the Haitian government, Haiti National Police brass, foreign diplomats and the special representative of the U.N. secretary-general inside a hotel room not far from Port-au-Prince's international airport.

The delegation — which was under the protection of the U.S. and accompanied by more than a dozen U.S. State Department personnel — departed Wednesday after two days of meetings. What is emerging, according to several people who spoke to the Miami Herald on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak, is not what some Haitian government ministers envisioned when they agreed in October to appeal for the international community's help.

Sources told the Herald that during the Port-au-Prince conversations, the Kenyans gave no commitment on whether they will make good on their offer to consider the urgent request, which has the backing of U.N. Secretary-General António Guterres.

However, should they agree to do so, the Kenyans made clear that their deployment would depend on several factors. They include a U.N. Security Council resolution and a minimum threshold of 2,000 officers to be deployed. Kenya has said it would send 1,000 of its police, leaving other countries to contribute the rest.

But the mission is stirring concerns among those who participated in the discussions as well as others who are experts on Haiti's violent history with gangs and U.N. peacekeeping operations. "To simplify an intervention in Haiti with the security of public buildings or airports, for me this is not effective," said a former United Nations peacekeeper who worked in Haiti with the U.N.

mission that spent 13 years battling gangs and providing stability. “How do we imagine such a static force to be effective? We need to have action against the gangs.”

The security expert, who asked to remain anonymous in order to speak frankly, said any multinational force going into Haiti has to have a mandate of bringing relief to the population, more than 200,000 of whom have been displaced from their homes in the last two years by armed groups, according to the U.N.

“The gangs are attacking facilities, attacking the police, killing people, forcing the displacement of people from their houses, and you don’t have a plan to stop this?” he said. “Amazing.”

Guterres has said Haiti needs “a robust use of force” by foreign police and military units to disarm gangs, which control most of the capital and are spreading around the country. Last month, he was asked by the U.N. Security Council to provide a report on Haiti’s options to combat the armed groups. Ahead of the report, the U.N. office in Haiti met with Prime Minister Ariel Henry and presented four scenarios on how a multinational force might help. Options included the force providing logistical and operational support and helping disarm gangs through combined operations with the Haitian police. The government requested a hybrid of the two.

During the consultations with the U.N., the Haitian government reiterated that gangs were committing acts of extreme violence and human-rights abuses, and the police do not have the capacity to restore security. Later, government ministers, including Henry, voiced concerns among themselves that just using an international force to secure critical infrastructure would not work, two people confirmed to the Herald.

Still, both Biden administration officials and the Kenyans have pressed that approach. State Department officials have said it’s up to the Haitian government to define with the Kenyans how the mission should be shaped. But they’ve also repeatedly highlighted that a non-U.N. multinational force, such as what’s being considered, would free up the Haiti National Police to focus on battling gangs while the foreign officers protect critical infrastructure.

The problem with the proposal, critics say, is that to get to the so-called critical infrastructure, the multinational force would have to go through gang-controlled areas, even though the facilities themselves aren’t technically under the control of gangs.

The proposal also does not take into account the difficult reality of the country’s beleaguered police force, which less than two hours after the Kenyans left, announced a new departmental director for the Port-au-Prince region, where gangs last week invaded several neighborhoods. Neither the police nor the Haitian prime minister’s office gave a reason for the change.

The U.N. has said there were 14,295 officers on the Haitian police payroll as of June 30, but only 3,300 officers are actually on public-safety duty on any given day. Not all are engaged in anti-gang operations and no one can say with certainty just how many officers there are in the force because many have recently left for the United States under a humanitarian-parole program.

In addition to the departures, internal tensions and corruption have helped make the force so ineffective that the population has resorted to taking justice into its own hands by forming vigilante groups to kill suspected gang members.

“What is the financial support for the gangs? It is kidnappings, smuggling, drugs, extortion. And you are not going to attack the gangs? You’re not going to attack these four points?” said the former peacekeeper. “You’re going to give them the freedom to continue to control Gonaives, to continue to control the neighborhoods in Port-au-Prince?”

Any foreign intervention, he said, must include a plan to neutralize the gangs. It also needs to address government corruption and investment in communities using Haitian government revenues. Otherwise, he said, it will not succeed.

“Frankly speaking, they are playing a game here with the suffering of the people,” he said. “They only want to provide security for facilities, and for politicians to exercise incompetence. What are the benefits this plan is bringing to the population? Securing facilities is not the end state, the end state is the population.”

A diplomatic source agreed.

The U.S., which supports a foreign intervention, has said it doesn’t want to lead a security mission into Haiti. However, officials in Washington, which wants a return to democratic order in Haiti through elections, say they recognize that the Haitian police need help tackling the armed groups, which continue to carry out indiscriminate attacks on women and children. The violence includes sexual violence and killings.

“Kenya stepping up in offering assistance is a positive development,” said Eddy Acevedo, who was an aide to former Miami Republican Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen and is now the principal adviser on national security and a foreign-policy adviser at the Wilson Center, a Washington think tank. “An international force is desperately needed to stabilize the security situation in Haiti, which is dire and continues to deteriorate.”

But if what the Kenyans are contemplating comes to pass? Acevedo said “solely protecting key installations is not enough.”

“Who will protect the people of Haiti?” he said. “As the violence continues unabated, the focus needs to concentrate on combating the gangs, who control the majority of the territory of the capital.”

#### ‘KEY POLITICAL ISSUE’

Paul D. Williams — who studies peace operations, emerging security threats and warfare (mainly in Africa) and teaches at George Washington University’s Elliott School of International Affairs — said he believes the chances of success for any anti-gang operation in Haiti “are very low.”

The reasons include the relatively small size of the mission being proposed and the lack of legitimacy of the current government, which has failed to find an agreement with opposition and civil-society groups over the country’s governance and is once more facing calls of resignation from a leading civil-society coalition known as the Montana Accord.

“The key political issue for any multinational force is, how legitimate and capable is Haiti’s current government? If the government’s legitimacy is low this will tarnish any international force from the outset,” Williams said.

People familiar with the talks with the Kenyan delegation pointed to one worrisome sign: the delegation saw very little of Port-au-Prince.

Several sources told the Herald that the Kenyans were so fearful of the gangs, which days earlier had turned the capital into a war zone with attacks in several neighborhoods, that they stayed at U.S. Embassy housing and chose to hold their meetings at a hotel near the airport in case they needed to leave quickly.

*That last paragraph sums it all up. Fear has become an epidemic in Haiti.*

*Not to end on such a dark note, here is a photo by Steph of the older girl's new dorm.  
Steph has moved Baby Love into the new dorm*



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