

Mercenaries flown back to US after their arrest in Haitian capital

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The threat of a military intervention in Haiti was demonstrated last Sunday afternoon, when five Americans, two Serbians, and one Haitian were arrested under circumstances that have no innocent explanation. Armed with pistols, assault rifles, drones, a telescope and three satellite phones, they were trying to gain access to the roof of the Banque de la Republique d’Haiti (BRH).

Neither of the two vehicles from which they were arrested had license plates showing. Prime Minister Jean-Henry Céant, whose secretary has an office directly opposite the bank, claims to be in possession of a letter from Behrman Motors documenting that one of the vehicles—a Ford Ranger with serial number SA2LPJJ77628—is registered in the name of Jean Fritz Jean-Louis, a former director of the national lottery. Jean-Louis joined President Moïse on his viewing stand at a Christmas parade in December. The Ford Ranger was purchased last August by Magalie Habitant, who at the time was Director of the Metropolitan Waste Collection Service. She was fired without notice last September.

The five Americans have been flown out of the country. While US agents made a show of arresting them as their American Airlines flight arrived in Miami, they skipped their scheduled court appearance in Haiti and, according to the *Miami Herald*, “airport employees say the men seemed quite at ease and were taken inside the VIP diplomatic lounge to wait on the flight after their tickets were purchased at the counter. One of the two Serbians initially was not allowed to board the flight by Haitian immigration because he had no stamps showing where he resides. After a few calls were made, he was put on the flight.”

The *Herald* reported that one of the five Americans, Kent Leland Kroeker, is a Marine veteran who now heads a company with a website boasting of “Military, Police, Professional Mechanics, Entrepreneurs and the best volunteers that America has to offer.” Christopher Mark

McKinley, who also uses the last name Heben, is a former Navy SEAL. Christopher Osman was one of the first Navy SEALs to fight in Afghanistan after the September 11 attacks. Dustin Daniel Porte owns a company called Patriot Group Services, which counts the US Department of Homeland Security among its clients.

Although the purpose of their mission and identity of their employer were still unclear as of Wednesday evening, there can be no doubt that these eight men are mercenaries. Early reports stated that Minister of Justice Jean Roody Aly pressured the Haitian National Police and a government prosecutor to release the eight, but on Tuesday Port-au-Prince Chief Prosecutor Paul Eronce Villard denied having received such instructions from Aly.

Presidential counselor Reynold Georges denied on Tuesday that Moïse had intervened on the mercenaries’ behalf, and then claimed that the eight were just trying to rob the bank. However, on Tuesday afternoon a spokesman for Prime Minister Céant told CNN that far from being bank robbers, “the mercenaries wanted access to the roof of the BRH in order to be able to dominate the Prime Minister’s office and also the parliament.”

The same afternoon Jorchemy Jean Baptiste, counselor to Céant, told radio station Vision 2000 that the eight “absolutely wanted to make an attempt on the life of the PM.”

This episode must be taken as a warning by Haitian workers and peasants that imperialism is making ruthless plans to suppress their protests while the country’s politicians and big bourgeoisie fight amongst themselves.

The government of Haitian President Jovenel Moïse, who on February 14 gave a defensive seven-minute speech after having stayed silent for a week during protests demanding his resignation, continues to find itself in a weak position. In 2016 Moïse won an election in which barely more than 20 percent of eligible voters

turned out, and last July a weekend of violent protests against cuts to fuel subsidies led to the resignation of his first prime minister.

The response of the imperialist powers to the growing likelihood of Moïse's overthrow has been curiously silent. The US State Department made a desultory promise of food "aid" as this month's protests were shutting down large sections of the economy, while the Core Group of the UN, the European Union, the Organization of American States, the US, France, and others, issued a statement urging "national authorities to engage in a deep and inclusive dialogue with all other key actors in the country in order to restore calm, promote social cohesion, and ensure the safety of people and goods, while respecting the rule of law."

During a lull in the protests at the beginning of this week, the Haitian government took its imperialist backers up on their advice, with the prime minister promising economic reforms while his communications minister announced a program to create 200,000 temporary jobs. The Senate, with barely a quorum, forwarded yet another report about the PetroCaribe corruption scandal to judicial authorities.

In an indication of the desperation prevailing among the bourgeoisie, the Professional Association of Banks (APB) issued a statement that was carried in *Le Nouvelliste* on Monday denying that its member banks have been profiting from the fall of the gourde's value against the US dollar. Accusations of such profiteering have spread on social media and radio stations.

On the border with the Dominican Republic, Haitians have taken to purchasing gas at cheaper Dominican prices and then selling it on the black market in Haiti because of shortages on that side of the border. *Haiti Libre* reported Wednesday that the Dominican military is now patrolling gas stations, leading to a protest in which Haitians used their cars to block the bridge between Ounaminthe and Dajabón.



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