

Haitian government calls for international military intervention after President's assassination

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In the aftermath of the assassination of Haitian President Jovenel Moïse in the early hours of the morning last Wednesday, the impoverished Caribbean nation's interim government has appealed for a foreign military intervention to protect key infrastructure. The call was made as evidence emerges that the 28 mercenaries accused of invading Moïse's home and firing dozens of rounds at the president and his wife had the support of powerful sections of the Haitian ruling elite.

The assassination occurred at 1 a.m. local time on July 7 and involved 26 Colombian nationals and two Haitian Americans. Seventeen suspects have been detained, three have been killed, and eight are still being pursued. Underscoring that the attack enjoyed inside support, the armed gang gained access to Moïse's residence in Petionville, a suburb of the capital Port-au-Prince. The gunmen reportedly had access to plans indicating the layout of Moïse's home, and none of the president's security detail was injured during the assault.

Haiti's ambassador to Washington, Bocchit Edmond, addressed a letter requesting the presence of American troops to US Secretary of State Antony Blinken. "We look forward to working with the US embassy in Port-au-Prince as we seek truth and justice for the family of President Moïse and the people of Haiti," he wrote.

The idea that the military intervention of the United States or any other imperialist power, including Canada or France, could stabilize the situation is preposterous. In reality, it is the decades-long imperialist domination of Haiti, the Western hemisphere's most impoverished country, that has created the disastrous social and economic conditions under which the present political conflicts are raging.

The last assassination of a Haitian head of state in 1915 triggered a two-decade-long American occupation of the

country. In the more recent past, US imperialism, with the support of Canadian and United Nations troops, ousted the elected president Jean Bertrand Aristide in 2004 in a regime-change operation that was cynically labelled a "liberation." The US and Canadian forces collaborated with the most right-wing political forces to establish a government more amenable to Washington's interests, overseeing the creation of a regime supported by privately funded death squads that rampaged with virtual impunity through Haiti's impoverished slums. The thirteen years of military operations in the country under the auspices of the United Nations that followed included repeated accusations of human rights abuses against the Haitian masses and the triggering of a devastating cholera epidemic that claimed the lives of tens of thousands of people.

Moïse, a right-wing politician who was widely despised, was the hand-picked successor of Michel Martelly, a former singer who was installed as president following the direct interference of the US State Department led by Hillary Clinton into Haiti's elections in 2010 and 2011. Both Martelly and his successor enjoyed close ties to representatives of the US-backed Duvalier dictatorship, which ruled the impoverished country with an iron fist for three decades until 1986. Washington supported Martelly and Moïse because they made clear their determination to abide by International Monetary Fund-dictated policies aimed at upholding the interests of the imperialist powers.

However a possible military intervention is packaged, its aim would be to deepen the already horrendous levels of exploitation of the Haitian masses by the local ruling elite and its imperialist patrons. The *Washington Post* has already begun a propaganda offensive for a fresh military occupation, declaring in an editorial following Moïse's assassination that "swift and muscular international

intervention” is required. Haiti is “at risk of anarchy,” the paper wrote, which “poses an immediate humanitarian threat to millions of Haitians and an equally urgent diplomatic and security challenge to the United States and major international organizations.”

Although the Biden administration has said it has no immediate plans to send in the military, a US-led international intervention is already under way. Washington has vowed to deploy FBI and Department of Homeland Security officials to Port-au-Prince, ostensibly to help with the investigation into the Haitian president’s assassination.

The aim of this deployment will not be to expose, but rather to cover up, the real sponsors of the assassination of Moïse and their likely backers within rival sections of the Haitian ruling elite. Sections of the ruling elite had a fallout with Moïse over the latter’s attempts at remaining in power as a dictatorial figure and using his control of the state apparatus to grab a bigger share, for himself and his cronies, of some of the most profitable sectors of the Haitian economy. This included his challenging of the monopoly historically enjoyed by the country’s richest families over public works contracts, the distribution of fuel, and cell phone networks, which has resulted in exorbitant prices for the impoverished population and outrageous profit margins.

Behind the cover of “helping with the investigation,” US officials will no doubt be engaged in a combination of arm-twisting and bribery to cobble together some sort of power-sharing agreement between the various factions, equally venal and corrupt, of the Haitian ruling elite that are engaged in a bloody struggle for political power and the wealth and privileges that come with it.

The hope of the foreign policy strategists in Washington is to establish enough of a political truce in Haiti to enable the holding of another round of bogus elections later this year, so as to maintain the fiction that the poorest country of the Western hemisphere—the result of over a century of US imperialist domination and plunder—is on the path to “democratic renewal.”

This is a tall order, given the level of animosity among the competing sections of the Haitian ruling elite, which led to the assassination of a sitting president for the first time in over a century. No less than three individuals have already laid claim to the position of interim president that would be in charge of holding new elections: Moïse’s outgoing Prime Minister Claude Joseph; Moïse’s nominated but yet-to-be-sworn-in Prime Minister Ariel Henry; and the head of Haiti’s dismantled Senate, Joseph

Lambert.

Moïse’s attempts at a power grab included: rule by presidential decree for more than a year after failing to hold parliamentary elections; refusing to step down in February this year after his five-year term ended under Haiti’s constitution; the unconstitutional “retirement” of three Supreme Court justices; and a planned referendum to amend the country’s constitution to eliminate the position of prime minister and strengthen presidential powers.

In the months immediately prior to his assassination, Moïse attempted to strike a populist pose against sections of the ruling elite, including by railing in speeches against “oligarchs.” This was an utter fraud, given that Moïse was a despised figure due to his ruthless enforcement of IMF-backed austerity, including a sudden hike in gas prices of 50 percent in 2018 that triggered mass protests against him and his government.

Even if some political deal is worked out and elections are held later this year, they will be no less marred with fraud, intimidation and violence than the last elections that brought Moïse to power with a participation rate of barely 23 percent of the electorate. And they would in no way constitute even a small step out of the political, health and socioeconomic chaos in which the country is engulfed, which has only been deepened by the catastrophic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The overcoming of the disastrous conditions facing the Haitian masses can only be accomplished in an independent political struggle led by the Haitian working class, at the head of the oppressed masses and in the closest unity with their class brothers and sisters in the US, Canada and the entire region, to end the imperialist oppression of the country.



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