United Nations, diplomatic preparations for military intervention in Haiti met with widespread protests

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As protests and violent clashes in Haiti rage, the United Nations, Washington and Ottawa are mulling over the deployment of foreign troops to quell widespread political and social opposition to Prime Minister Ariel Henry.

Discussions among Haitian government officials and foreign diplomats have been held in recent days around how to crush the growing insurrectionary movement developing within Haiti's working class and prop up the illegitimate, US-installed Henry regime. An intervention is seen as necessary to both safeguard the operations of American multinationals and repel the homicidal gangs affiliated with powerful sections of Haiti's oligarchy.

In a letter sent to the UN Security Council last week, Secretary-General Antonio Guterres made it a matter of "urgency" that one or more nations consider the Haitian government's request for the deployment of an "international specialized armed force" to eliminate a blockade being imposed by gangs on the Varreux fuel terminal, located north of the capital Port-au-Prince, and buttress Haiti's crumbling security forces.

Thousands of demonstrators took to the capital Port-au-Prince this week to oppose the government's request for a military deployment. The repeated occasions in which American imperialism and its allies imposed bloody colonial occupations to pursue their predatory economic interests are lodged deeply in the public's memory. Demonstrators on Monday shouted against any plans for "foreign occupation" and reiterated their demand for the removal of Henry.

Haiti's national police responded with brutality, shooting several people and killing at least one young woman. According to the AFP, one protester denounced any invocation for the placing of "boots on the ground" while another claimed Henry's regime, which was never formally elected by the population, had "no legitimacy to ask for military assistance."

The plans being crafted for a foreign occupation have nothing to do with ensuring the welfare of the Haitian masses, but of placing Haiti yet again under the direct control of one or another imperialist power to suppress dissent in the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere and secure the strategic interests of finance capital.

The fraudulent rhetoric being issued to justify an expedition is associated with a bloody record in Haiti, replete over the last century with violent colonial takeovers that saw the death and torture of tens of thousands. The assassination of Haitian president Jean Vilbrun Guillaume in 1915 led to President Wilson sending in the US Marines under the pretext of resolving the nation's "unstable" conditions. What transpired was the looting of Haiti's treasury for two decades by American financiers, forced labor under the Corvée system enforced by troops, and the smashing of the *cacos*, a peasant-based nationalist rebel insurgency that rose up in response to the occupation.

Guterres' letter came two days after Haiti's Council of Ministers adopted a resolution authorizing Henry to request an armed intervention in response to the rout of its security forces at the hands of a coalition of armed gangs.

The UN chief noted the specialized force "would, in particular, support the HNP (Haitian National Police) primarily in the Port-au-Prince metropolitan area … to remove the threat posed by armed gangs." Guterres had not suggested if the intervention would be a UN deployment. Thus far Washington has stated that it is reviewing Haiti's request for military assistance.

Haiti's ambassador to the United States, Bocchit Edmond, echoed demands for an intervention by appealing on Monday that the United States and Canada take the lead in a so-called strike force sent to Haiti. It should be recalled that the same imperialist interests now sounding the tocsin for foreign intrusion introduced a military intervention from 2004 to 2017 known as MINUSTAH, under the auspices of the United Nations, that was complicit in countless human rights abuses, killed thousands of peaceful protesters and triggered the first modern outbreak of cholera.

Whether or not a troop deployment to the island nation would be long-term or of a temporary duration has not been made entirely clear. What is strongly suggested however from the formulations of Guterres and the desperate appeals of Haiti's ruling class is that plans are being drawn up for a substantial crackdown on the civilian population under the guise of combating "armed gangs."

A few days prior to Guterres' letter, the Organization of American States (OAS), headquartered in Washington D.C., released a statement during a session of its General Assembly acknowledging that the agency was "concerned" by the inability of Haiti's police forces to maintain order. The OAS asked its member states to "urgently offer direct support to the Government of Haiti to improve the training of port security agents" and "strengthen the capacities and the means of the PNH."

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The drumbeat for closer US control over the Haitian government's policymaking, and possibly another incursion in the Caribbean, is being sounded within the Democratic Party. On the same day of the OAS statement, the National Haitian American Elected Officials Network sent out a statement in coordination with Florida Democratic Congresswoman Sheila Cherfilus-McCormick calling on Biden to take "immediate" action on the country's social breakdown.

Opposing layers of Haiti's corrupt political and academic establishment are seizing on the turmoil to make a bid to imperialism for their installation into power. The main opposition group is the Commission for a Search to a Haitian Solution to the Crisis, an organization comprising Clinton Foundation-backed operatives and privileged intellectuals that drafted the so-called Montana Accord, a petition for the overthrow of Henry's regime. The Montana Accord group has expectantly come out against the government's request for foreign intervention to reinforce Henry's rule.

Fritz Alphonse Jean, the President-elect of the Montana Accord, labeled the calling for international military intervention in Haiti "shameful." Steven Benoit, premier-elect of the Montana Accord, declared that the prime minister's office had "committed a crime of high treason" and that they should "Prepare to pay the consequences."

The catalyst for the political crisis lies in the protesters' demand that the unelected Henry be ousted from power and escalating class tensions—fueled by skyrocketing prices for basic necessities, including the government's ending of subsidies for fuel that served as a lifeline for Haiti's impoverished masses. The protest movement has grown at the same time as a renewed outbreak of cholera, the fatal waterborne diarrheal illness that killed about 10,000 people after the 2010 earthquake.

The blockade of the Varreux fuel terminal has led to a crippling shortage of bottled water amid the resurgence of cholera, with 19 confirmed cases and 170 suspected cases, 40 being infants. The outbreak has reportedly reached Haiti's National Penitentiary in Port-au-Prince, one of the most overcrowded prisons in the world, where those incarcerated face serious illness and death. Inmates have told the press they believe more than 60 people have died since the outbreak began on October 2.

Political rivals of Henry's regime allied with layers of the ruling elite are vying for control over the nation's most lucrative assets in Haiti's coastal region. The Varreux terminal is a storage center holding about 70 percent of the country's fuel and is being controlled by the G9 Family and Allies gang federation, headed by former police agent Jimmy "Barbecue" Chérizier.

As of late September, the volume of fuel stored in the dock's tanks amounted to 10 days of diesel consumption and 12 days of gasoline, while access to these facilities by government-appointed operators and trucking units has proven impossible.

Tensions at the fuel terminal began to flare in July when Henry named a new director for Haiti's customs agency amid an investigation from the US that his government was involved in illegal arms trafficking, an accusation that coincided with Haitian customs and police authorities interdicting roughly 120,000 rounds of ammunition on board a container ship at a ferry terminal in Port-au-Paix on July 1.

Henry, after having his US visa revoked and facing mounting pressure to strengthen customs security, launched a crackdown at the seaports to collect an estimated $600 million in undeclared duties from Haiti's wealthiest businesspeople and stop the gun trafficking trade that has fallen into the hands of G9. The former customs director, Rommel Bell, has been under investigation by Haiti's anti-corruption unit, which has accused Bell of smuggling illegal arms.

The involvement of state institutions in arming gangs can be traced back several years, when a Florida gun shop owner, Junior Joseph, was convicted in 2019 for trafficking illegal arms with the help of Haitian police and Senator Herve Fourcand. The former government led by President Jovenel Moïse, who was assassinated in 2021, and his Haitian Tèt Kale Party (PHTK) collaborated with Chérizier in sanctioning extrajudicial killings and massacres against civilians, which included providing weapons and vehicles to the G9 gang alliance.

Chérizier was a political sponsor of Moïse in the latter's effort to use G9 to suppress social opposition to his corrupt regime and direct the gang federation against his political and business opponents until he was assassinated in July 2021. From then on Chérizier and his allies have vowed to depose Henry under the false banner of fighting for a "revolution."

Henry has commanded a de facto dictatorship over the country since being handpicked to replace Moïse by the so-called CORE group of countries, which flung the surgeon into the prime minister's role due to his being a longtime lackey of US imperialism. A year after the assassination, Henry heads a frail regime hated by Haiti's working class and peasantry and menaced with gang warfare financed by sections of the ruling elite. The requests for "specialized forces" arises from the bitter internecine opposition Henry has faced from gang-affiliated cronies.

Haiti's workers and poor peasants must take the conduct of the struggle into their own hands without placing support for any section of the Haitian bourgeoisie or middle-class layers seeking to channel the popular upsurge behind bankrupt appeals for reform. This movement must be guided by a political leadership armed with Leon Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution. This entails recognizing the incapacity of the bourgeoisie to oppose imperialism and base the struggle on the unification of the Haitian and international working class in a fight for world socialist revolution.

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