



Evaluation of the U.N. Peacekeeping Mission in Haiti

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Introduction

The United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (known by its French acronym of MINUSTAH) is one of the UN's most successful and most controversial of all peacekeeping missions. It had done much to stabilize the Caribbean island nation of Haiti, one of the world's poorest and most densely populated. It helped stabilize the country and endure paralyzing political controversies, a massive earthquake on 12 January 2010 that killed 220,000 Haitians and 94 peacekeepers and repeated hurricanes. But the mission also has caused problems itself, including a cholera epidemic in 2010 that killed over 10,000 Haitians, and weathered accusations of sexual abuse and disruption to the national economy. Is MINUSTAH essential to Haiti and regional stability, or is it a barrier to the country's political development? That's the question before the Security Council.



Argentinian civilian personnel with MINUSTAH delivering healthcare supplies
Source: MINUSTAH

The United Nations (UN) is tasked with the maintenance of global peace and security,

and many responsibilities and powers in pursuit of this are within the purview of its principal security organ, the Security Council (UNSC). One of the pillars of the UNSC is its power to establish, following the conclusion of a conflict, peacekeeping and peacebuilding operations all over the world *with the permission of the mission's host state.*

Typically, precursor missions are tasked to conflict areas to first oversee mediation between the warring parties until a ceasefire or peace agreement is reached, to organize humanitarian relief, or to allow for other international intervention. Only *after* the fighting has stopped do peacekeepers enter a region. Once the region in question has reached some sort of ceasefire, or after a natural disaster horrific enough to warrant an international response has ended (like in Haiti), a peacekeeping operation is mandated from the UN Security Council. Once mandated, the responsibility for the mission's implementation is rests with the UN Secretary-General, relying on their Department for Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO).

From there peacekeepers are assembled from the UN's member states, equipment and funding are directed from member states and the DPKO, and the host state for the mission coordinates with the Department for Peacekeeping Operations for the deployment of the mission. Once a mission is implemented and is underway in a region, it then becomes the responsibility of the UN Security Council and of the DPKO to evaluate the mission on the ground, and to decide how long the mission is to remain in place.

ODUMUNC 2017 Issue Brief

Evaluation of the U.N. Peacekeeping Mission in Haiti

Each year, unless specifically stated in its mandate as being a shorter or longer interval of time, the DPKO assembles a report with the help of the Secretariat and presents the report and other observations about the mission to the UNSC on the goings on for the mission. Once briefed on the mission, the UN Security Council must decide

whether to extend the mandate for the mission for another calendar year, or to end the mission by non-renewal. Several factors play in to this decision, because not only the effectiveness of the mission and the availability of resources, both capital and human, decide the fate of missions, but the political nature of the organ in charge of them is often the death of missions.





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The UN in Haiti, the creation of MINUSTAH

UN political and security involvement with Haiti began in 1990, after years of tyrannical misrule and when severe political turmoil left the country ungovernable. With civil war looming, the Haitian government requested election assistance from both the Organization of American States (OAS) and the United Nations. With the help of the UN and the OAS Haiti underwent elections smoothly, which was declared free and fair by the UN. Former catholic priest Jean-Bertrand Aristide became Haiti's first freely democratically elected president. Despite the UN and OAS' efforts in overseeing the election, by September of 1991 President Aristide had fallen victim to a coup d'état by the military and fled to Venezuela.

After two years of lobbying, President Aristide found sympathetic ears at the UN which created the UN Civilian Mission in Haiti (MICIVIH). This mission was tasked with investigating and monitoring the human rights situation in Haiti. Upon MICIVIH's arrival in Haiti, the dire status of both the Haitian political system and of human rights in the country resulted in the MICIVIH leadership's immediate declaration of Haiti as a human rights disaster. Several reports on the deteriorating human rights situation in Haiti produced by MICIVIH staff prompted the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) in 1993 to write and pass Resolution 841. This resolution levied a weapons and oil sanction upon Haiti and established a naval blockade to enforce the sanctions, which would stay in place until the Haitian military government opened to a diplomatic solution.

After one year of sanctions, the international community lost patience with the military government, prompting the UN's authorization of an international military coalition to intervene to restore democratically elected President Aristide to power. Following a deadly revolution against the military junta and the return of President Aristide to the presidential palace by the coalition in 1994, the United Nations Mission in Haiti (UNMIH), previously mandated under Security Council Resolution 867 in September of 1993, tried to stabilize the country and to assist in the rehabilitation of the political system. The United States tried to stabilize the country but after heavily publicized failures in Somalia and Rwanda, the U.S. public was unwilling to support further intervention. Instead the UN was left as the dominant foreign actor. This mission ran from September of 1993 to 1996, its mandate repeatedly renewed for six months at a time.

Though UNMIH saw important successes, major goals of UNMIH in public security, disarmament, Haitian National Police (HNP) reform, and political stability proved elusive. Gradual deterioration in the situation led to spiraling social and political chaos. President Aristide was overthrown in a revolution again in 2004. These events culminated in establishment of the second UN mission in Haiti, known by its French acronym MINUSTAH. This mission continues today more than twelve years later.

While the UN does not rule Haiti, it remains an essential element of national stability, generally accepted by the Haitian people, despite crippling controversies and hideous

ODUMUNC 2017 Issue Brief

Evaluation of the U.N. Peacekeeping Mission in Haiti

failures, above all the Cholera epidemic introduced by peacekeepers from Nepal.

The future of MINUSTAH is not certain. Donor countries—those financing the operation or supplying troops—are increasingly fatigued. Many Haitian leaders



Armored Peacekeeper/Emergency Medical Vehicle in Port-au-Prince after the 12 January 2010 earthquake. *Source:* UN News Centre

believe the long mission has weakened Haitian social and political institutions, weakening the ability for self-rule. They insist the mission is essential to the nation's political stability, a major reason people remain on the island and do not emigrate to the United States or other destinations. Major issues regarding mandate extension are reviewed below.

MINUSTAH in Action

In 2004 President Aristide, after being elected to a second term in a widely contested election in 2000, fled Haiti into exile following the outbreak of widespread violence in several Haitian cities. In response to this turmoil, the UNSC passed a resolution (SC Resolution 1542) restoring a UN peacekeeping mission in Haiti in 2004, called MINUSTAH. The differences between the two Haitian missions are clear.

MINUSTAH's mandate is clearer in its intended goals and key points, HNP reform and police reform became a central and more seriously taken task, and controlling widespread gang violence became a source of offensive strikes from the HNP and peacekeepers. The changes in the goals of the second mission were a culmination of several aspects of the UN's history and development between each mission's establishment. These aspects include the UN's comprehensive review of Peacekeeping operations published in the Brahimi Report in 2000, the change in leadership for the mission from the United States in UNMIH, to leadership by Brazil for MINUSTAH. Also important is the newer tendency for the UN to invest more time into each mission. Several key moments have shaped the current MINUSTAH.

Between 2004-2006, after the coup d'état, there was chaos between supporters of Aristide and supporters of the new government. The United States, France, and Canada, with the promise of eventual support from the UN, controversially (to many within Haiti) supported forces that were committing human rights violations. The infighting was not abated by the peacekeepers.

Elections held in 2006 led to the democratically elected Rene Preval, and MINUSTAH remained in Haiti. By 2008, civil unrest began to grow again because of economic stress.

The catastrophic 2010 Haiti earthquake led to a further decline in political and economic stability on top of the tragic loss of hundreds of thousands of Haitians. The earthquake also caused the mission headquarters to collapse, killing 96 UN peacekeepers including three key members of the mission; the chief, deputy, and police commissioner.

ODUMUNC 2017 Issue Brief

Evaluation of the U.N. Peacekeeping Mission in Haiti

In the aftermath of the earthquake, diseases spread as well, causing even more death and destruction. These disasters shifted MINUSTAH's focus to maintaining security and stability in the parts of the country most damaged by the earthquake. Security Council Resolution 1908 increased the force level of MINUSTAH for this purpose.

In 2011, MINUSTAH experienced one of its greatest successes as they helped ensure that elections were peacefully done, and President Martelly was elected to office. The country has been in political transition since February of 2016. A new President will enter office in February of 2017, which could be a new point of contention for the fighting groups in Haiti, but it can also be another showing of strength if a President is democratically and peacefully elected.

Today, MINUSTAH is continuing to work within Haiti to maintain and improve stability as the rebuilding from the earthquake continues. There are currently around 5,000 personnel. Roughly half acting are military personnel, and the other half police, as determined by Security Council Resolution 2313. There are also over 1,000 civilian personnel for administration and development activity.



Arguments For and Against

For: There is no question that the political and economic instability in Haiti led to dire need for help. Haiti is one of the poorest nations in the world and has a high level of human rights violations, corruption, and poor infrastructure. After the 2010 earthquake, which killed several hundred-thousand and leveled several cities, these issues got even worse. MINUSTAH gives Haiti a boost in security that has helped prevent further political instability and economic chaos, while giving Haiti important resources in the midst of serious events like the coup in 2004 and the earthquake.

The successful exchange of power in recent presidential elections prove that MINUSTAH has been able to help provide a stabilizing force for democracy to grow in the state.

Because the United Nations is leading the effort, there is no threat of a country trying to influence the Haitian government for its own political gain. Security Council Resolutions regarding MINUSTAH pass unanimously. States from around the world have dedicated aid and personnel to MINUSTAH, and the focus is always on creating a Haiti that is independent and self-sufficient. The fact that there have been two democratically elected Presidents since MINUSTAH entered Haiti shows that some gains have been made, or at least political stability has been maintained as well as it could in light of natural disasters.

Against: Some state and individual actors both inside and outside of the country see MINUSTAH as an overreach of power by Western nations, especially the United States. Considering the United States' past with influencing politics in countries around

ODUMUNC 2017 Issue Brief

Evaluation of the U.N. Peacekeeping Mission in Haiti

the Americas, there is clearly enough evidence to see the dominant role of Brazil and the United States as dubious at best. Perhaps most concerning is the large number of allegations against UN peacekeepers associated with MINUSTAH. The worst surround the cholera epidemic which killed over 10,000 civilians, left a gulf of mistrust, and probably will leave the UN responsible for restitution worth billions of U.S. dollars. Since the mission began, dozens of peacekeepers also have been accused of the rape of hundreds of Haitian citizens, including some well documented and highly publicized cases. Haitians often see the Peacekeepers as an antagonistic force, and they have killed Haitian citizens in the past. Diseases have also been spread by foreign troops in Haiti. A peace mission can not continue if the peacekeepers commit acts that lead to distrust and further instability.



Brazilian peacekeepers in Haiti

Country and Bloc Positions

Haiti: There is a wide range of opinions within Haiti regarding MINUSTAH. Many of its citizens see MINUSTAH as US imperialism, and resent them because of the violence, rape, cholera, and other controversies peacekeepers have been involved in. Nevertheless, the government has signed a Status of Forces Agreement and continues to cooperate with MINUSTAH and peacekeepers.

Other Caribbean States: Many Caribbean states, especially the Dominican Republic,

have supported Haiti with foreign aid and through other means. The current head of MINUSTAH is Sandra Honore of Trinidad and Tobago.

Africa: In keeping with the United Nations goal of having a widely diverse group of peacekeepers in every mission, there is a large number of African peacekeepers in MINUSTAH from a dozen African countries. For African participants, the peacekeeping operation is a financially beneficial way to pay for the costs of the armed forces. It is popular with the troops, who are better aided by the UN than by their home governments. They can be expected to be highly supportive.

China is one of Haiti's largest trade partners. China has sent 143 police personnel in Haiti. But China is very sensitive to charges of meddling in the internal affairs of other countries, and would be quick to withdraw if Haitian government support were to decline in the least.

Other Asian countries with personnel in Haiti include Burkina Faso, India, Indonesia, Philippines, Pakistan, and Nepal.

Other Asian Member States: Japan and Malaysia voted for Resolution 2313, affirming MINUSTAH's role in Haiti. However, Japan has been less active in UN peacekeeping and more focused on counterterrorism efforts. *Sri Lanka:* Over 100 Sri Lankan peacekeepers were accused of sexual misconduct while stationed in Haiti with MINUSTAH. Even more controversy surrounds Nepalese peacekeepers, with proven responsibility for the cholera epidemic.

Middle East: Egypt's Mourad Mahba holds a high leadership position in MINUSTAH. Israel, Egypt, Yemen, and Turkey currently have police/civilian personnel active in Haiti.

ODUMUNC 2017 Issue Brief
Evaluation of the U.N. Peacekeeping Mission in Haiti

North America: The United States and Canada are two of the largest financial supporters of Haiti. One point of contention between these states and Haiti can be the close relationship that Haiti has with Venezuelan oil. Under President Obama, the United States showed full support for maintaining MINUSTAH's current strength in order to maintain stability during the upcoming elections. The American position under the incoming Trump administration is unknown. Canada's Prime Minister Justin Trudeau is highly supportive, and Canadian financial support is essential to the mission's success.

South America: Brazil has been one of the leading forces in terms of boots on the ground in Haiti since the coup in 2005, both before and in conjunction with MINUSTAH. The country led the original MINUSTAH force. Haiti is part of the Petrocaribe oil alliance (between *Caribbean* states and *Venezuela*) that helps provide energy for their people, but this connection is unlikely to survive now that Venezuela's economy is collapsing and the rulers growing isolated internationally as they become more repressive at home. *Argentina, Chile, and Peru* are also invested in the Haiti peacekeeping mission and were part of the original deployment of peacekeeping troops. Every other South American country currently has peacekeeping personnel in MINUSTAH.

Europe: Only the United States and Canada give more aid than the European Union to Haiti, and therefore have a vested interest in the stability of the government and country. Members of the European Union, especially France and the United Kingdom take active

roles in foreign aid and foreign missions by the United Nations.

Proposals for further UN Action

Extend the mandate of MINUSTAH for a set period, with the possibility of renewal. This is what the Security Council has done since 2004. The advantage of a limited period is it allows the Member States of the Security Council to review their commitments and obligations as circumstances evolve. The disadvantage is the temporary mandate greatly raises costs, by preventing long-term logical contracts, and makes political planning difficult for the government and people of Haiti.

A long-term mandate would benefit some factions in Haiti, while antagonizing others. It would help ensure long-term political stability and allow a great reduction in expenses, by facilitating long-term logical contracts. A long-term mandate would need the agreement of peacekeeping donor countries to assure long-term financing and troop commitments. It also would require the full cooperation of the government of Haiti.

End the MINUSTAH mandate. After some thirteen years, is it time for the UN to allow Haiti to find its own future? The disadvantage is the likely return of political chaos, sooner or later, which has always been Haiti's tendency. In other words, a pull-out only too likely would lead to chaos and a peacekeeping return, under worse circumstances.



ODUMUNC 2017 Issue Brief
Security Council



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