



progressive  
policy  
institute

ppi

## Haiti After the Quake: Nation-Building Next Door

by Jim Arkedis and Mike Derham

**A**s the tragedy in Haiti plays out in nightly newscasts, Americans can be proud of their contribution to the relief effort. With over 16,000 U.S. forces already deployed and \$100 million in reconstruction money pledged from the government – on top of over \$500 million [donated privately](#) – America's commitment is firm.<sup>1</sup>

Following the earthquake, President Obama wrote, "[I]n times of tragedy, the United States of America steps forward and helps. That is who we are. That is what we do." America's can-do spirit and a large supply of humanitarian resources are certainly a promising start, but all the good intentions in the world won't stabilize and rebuild our ravaged neighbor. In undertaking this mammoth task, Americans should embrace the implications of the president's words: the

United States' and international community's effort in Haiti is nothing short of a long-term nation-building exercise.

And that's good news. Helping Haiti firmly stand on its own over the long term – both with reconstructed buildings and a functioning government – is not only the right thing to do but will lead to a more stable region.

In a time when U.S. military deployments in Iraq and Afghanistan evoke uncomfortable associations with the term "nation-building," it's important to note that America's troops have been unquestionably welcomed with open arms in Haiti. "It's high time for those troops to have been deployed. They are crucial to help restore security in our devastated towns," [said](#) Yvon Jerome, mayor of the hard-hit Carrefour district on the outskirts of Port-au-Prince.<sup>2</sup>

On a day-to-day level, any major disaster relief effort will face a set of serious yet

---

### About the author

Jim Arkedis is the director of the Progressive Policy Institute's (PPI) National Security Project. Mike Derham is the chair of PPI's Innovative Economy Project.

known problems: controlling the spread of infectious disease, staving off immediate hunger and dehydration, establishing basic order in a chaotic situation. Since we're not on the ground in Haiti, we'll leave decisions like where to put aid stations and which neighborhoods to secure first to responding disaster relief experts.

Though immediate relief is of course today's pressing need, this memo takes a longer view to highlight potential roadblocks along the way to a robust and effective nation-building effort. First, we prioritize steps required to bring good governance to Haiti, both within the international chain-of-command and the Haitian government. Second, we identify reconstruction priorities and funding issues that must be addressed now to give Haiti a chance at meaningful recovery once the immediate humanitarian crisis is controlled.

Thousands of lives will be saved by the massive international effort underway. But the consequences of an ineffective reconstruction effort could be huge: If the main players in Haiti don't figure out who's in charge and plan for the next set of challenges, the international community could do as much damage as good, and billions of dollars and thousands more lives could be lost.

### **Who's in Charge, Anyway?**

The U.S. military (with 16,000 troops), United Nations (12,000 soldiers), and thousands of international non-governmental organizations have arrived in droves since the earthquake. Coordinating roles, missions, and even arrivals at Port-au-Prince airport between these groups has been confusing. Continued lack of clarity could hamper aid distribution and ultimately cripple reconstruction efforts in the long term.

Broadly speaking, the UN's Blue Helmets have taken charge of street-level security in a peacekeeping role. U.S. Southern Command has [control of the major ports](#) of entry and supply routes that distribute relief aid throughout the city and region.<sup>3</sup> NGO's have undertaken a variety of humanitarian missions in accordance with their respective specialties.

These missions evolved on an *ad hoc* basis from mandates or delegated authorities in the panicked aftermath of the quake. For example, Haitian President René Préal signed over air traffic control to the U.S. military in order to better manage the arrival of relief supplies.

But the UN's mandate is to conduct the Stabilization Mission in Haiti (the UN's presence is most often referred to by its French acronym MINUSTAH), established in April 2004 under [Resolution 1542](#).<sup>4</sup> In the post-earthquake context, its mission – supporting the Haitian government and enforcing public safety – appears constrained. MINUSTAH originally provided for a maximum of 1,622 civilian police and 6,700 soldiers. Since the earthquake, the only modification has been in MINUSTAH's number, not its role – the Security Council has approved an increase in force size to 12,000 soldiers.

Friction between competing missions has hampered efforts. In one anecdote that typifies these complications, French Secretary of State for Cooperation Alain Joyandet [implied](#) that the Americans were giving preferential landing rights to U.S. planes and called on the UN to clarify the American role in Haiti, saying the priority was "helping Haiti, not occupying Haiti."<sup>5</sup>

## Fixing the Authority Problem

Such bureaucratic infighting decreases trust between international partners working toward the same goal. The lack of a unified command will slow the relief effort as governments and institutions must constantly cross-check with one another before taking meaningful action. We make the following recommendations for beginning the long struggle to rebuild Haiti:

- Establish Meaningful Governance:**  
 In its current incarnation the UN mission lacks the capacity to address what needs to be done, missing the mandate to deal with post-earthquake reconstruction. MINUSTAH should be upgraded to become a full “nation-building” program, designed to last 10 years. The UN and EU missions in Kosovo offer the best model. The UN’s experience in Kosovo shows that just “peacekeeping” isn’t sufficient to help rebuild a society. The UN Interim Administration in Kosovo (UNMIK) had four pillars—policing and justice, civil administration, institution-building, and reconstruction and development—that can be adapted to address the multiple problems Haiti faces as it rebuilds from the earthquake.

Edmond Mulet, the former and now interim head of MINUSTAH, should be elevated to Special Representative of the Secretary General to give him a clearer mandate. (He replaced his successor in the role, Hédi Annabi, who perished in the quake.) In addition to the “peacekeeping” pillar currently in place, other duties of development, civil administration, and institution-building should be added and all international troops on the ground,



including America’s, should be brought under its chain of command. A beefed-up MINUSTAH would work with the remaining Haitian government, by assisting with oversight and capacity building.

- Police, Not Peacekeepers:** Under the pre-earthquake MINUSTAH, Brazil led 7,000 troops – mostly from the Americas – in Haiti. Immediately after the quake, Brazilian Defense Minister Nelson Jobim was in Port-au-Prince to [oversee his troops](#) and committed to doubling them and having them stay for at least five more years.<sup>6</sup> While a peacekeeping role will be vital in the months to come to get Haiti back on its feet, the role of Brazilian and other blue-helmeted troops will need to change.

Once order is established, the UN mission will essentially become a national police force in the absence of a Haitian alternative. To transfer power back to the local government, the UN mission should be tasked with building an effective security force and justice system. That means in addition to cops, the UN may solicit prosecutors and judges in a proxy judiciary. It’s a tall order, but it may be

the only way that allows the remaining Haitian government to fully concentrate on reconstruction.

- **Consider Moving the Capital:** Port-au-Prince has been reduced to a rubble heap. To solve an immediate problem, we recommend that the government consider transferring its functions and offices from Port-Au-Prince to Cap-Haïtien, per George Mason University economist Tyler Cowen's [suggestion](#).<sup>7</sup> The new capital would also serve as the new base for MINUSTAH. A move would allow the government to focus on core issues of governance in the wake of the disaster. Cap-Haïtien, Haiti's second-largest city, was relatively untouched by the earthquake. It has a harbor and the longest runway outside of Port-au-Prince, allowing for reconstruction efforts to be staged from there.

To transfer power back to the local government, the UN mission should be tasked with building an effective security force and justice system.

### Priorities for Haitian Reconstruction

Beyond the complex and immediate issues surrounding relief aid, the international community must already begin work on second-order concerns once immediate humanitarian priorities are brought under control.

Front and center is economic stabilization. Though signs are emerging that basic economic activity is returning, it must be solidified. International institutions and donor

countries are set to meet again at the UN in March to discuss funding for reconstruction. It would be useful to come up with a battle plan for rebuilding by establishing priorities among competing interests in government, business, and communities.

- **Remittances:** Haitians need cash in hand, and quickly. It's the best hope of sustaining any meaningful economic activity when banking has slowed dramatically and business within the Port-Au-Prince region is struggling to survive. With the announcement that Haitians can take advantage of TPS (Temporary Protective Status) from the U.S. Immigration Service, upwards of 200,000 undocumented Haitians will be able to join 600,000 Haitians working legally in the U.S.

That diaspora, along with similar groups in Canada and elsewhere, [sent home at least one-third of Haiti's GDP](#) last year.<sup>8</sup> To capitalize on the outpouring of goodwill by the Haitian diaspora, money must flow directly to individuals. Wire services expect to get money transfers going to Haiti in the short term. However, with the banking sector of Haiti already fragile, and many local money transfer agents (i.e. the local corner store) wiped out by the earthquake, making sure remittances arrive will be key. Here a simple technological solution can meet the challenge. Sub-Saharan Africa has adopted programs like [M-PESA](#) to allow people to use their cell phones as checking accounts.<sup>9</sup> The time and effort necessary to establish a similar system in Haiti would be worthwhile.

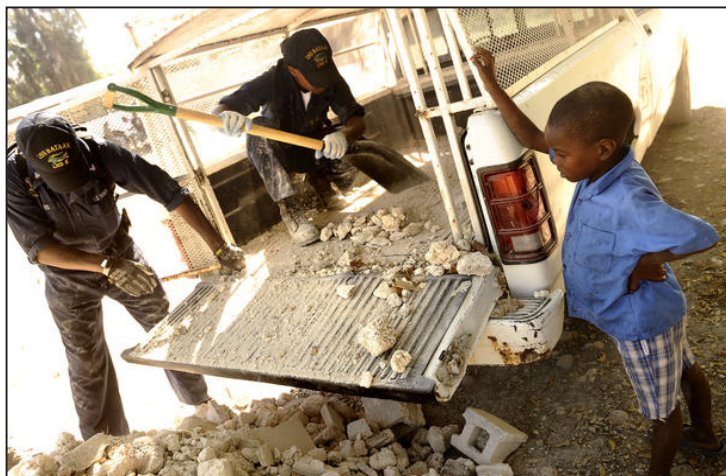
Credit can be transferred to individual phone numbers – including from overseas – and that credit can then be used for purchases from other phone owners who



have a similar plan (including prepaid) from their provider. Cell coverage is one of the few institutions that [covers](#) all of Haiti.<sup>10</sup> It is also an institution that has worked through the crisis, and that the American military is [working to make sure](#) stays running.<sup>11</sup> But only 30 percent of Haitians have cell phones – so in addition to cell phone credit transfer, increasing cell phone penetration should be another priority.

- **Empower the State Department:** The U.S. military's presence cannot and should not be sustained at 16,000 troops. Once the humanitarian crisis is controlled, American troops should be withdrawn, and the American component of the UN mandate should be headed by the State Department. The State Department should focus on building long-term civil institutions through accountable governance programs. Further, it should actively engage the NGO community to build the unions, a free press, and political parties. Haiti's fragile democracy has been unable to respond to this crisis, and long-term American involvement in the country's civil institutions will better enable it to do so in the future.
- **Debt Relief:** Many have suggested that the key to Haiti's fortunes is finishing the "Highly Indebted Poor Country Initiative" debt-forgiveness process by getting France, Venezuela, and the Inter-American Development Bank (Haiti's three largest creditors) to wipe out Port-Au-Prince's debt.<sup>12</sup> But this is hardly a panacea. Haiti's debt amounts to service payments of only \$50 million per year. In other words, debt forgiveness will help, but it will not be significant enough to alleviate any real suffering.

- **Infrastructure:** Infrastructure investment offers the quickest way to rebuild Haiti. Rebuilding the roads, bridges, and major points of transportation benefits individuals, businesses, and government. The international community should work with the Haitian people to make sure that building codes are drawn up and, more importantly, enforced. The destructiveness of the earthquake was magnified by the fact that almost no rebar was used to reinforce concrete structures in the country. This turned Port-au-Prince into a rubble field instead of a quake-struck city. Building-code enforcement would also protect against the hurricanes that frequently lash the country. To rebuild Port-au-Prince, the idea of acknowledging [squatter's rights](#) may be the most effective way to rebuild quickly, by recognizing the tools for development that individuals already have at hand.<sup>13</sup>



- **Funding:** Given France's colonial past with Haiti, the Obama administration and UN should invest significant political capital to press Paris to take the lead in funding infrastructure development. The colonial relationship between France and Haiti has been [historically strained](#) as France demanded – and received – compensation for its lost colony from a newly independent

Haiti.<sup>14</sup> Since it took Haiti 122 years to clear the books, France should seize the opportunity to right this historic wrong. Even in the aftermath of this disaster, the French have been shamefully outpaced by the British in the initial round of pledges, but they can rebound by making a more sizeable pledge at the Haiti donor conference in March.

- **Renew and Expand the CBI:** But while France can take the lead on the debt-forgiveness front, the U.S. can take the lead on fostering development. The Caribbean Basin Initiative (CBI), a trade-preferences act signed by President Reagan in 1982 is designed to promote development in the Caribbean countries – including Haiti. Its [expiration](#) – set for September 30 of this year – would be a further blow to the economic redevelopment of Haiti.<sup>15</sup> In addition to just renewing it, however, the Congress and administration [must expand the CBI](#) to remove tariffs on Haiti's agricultural production, specifically sugar.<sup>16</sup> Allowing these vital drivers of the Haitian economy to be competitive in its largest export market would go far in giving Haitians a chance at sustained economic growth.

The rebuilding of Haiti after such a devastating event will be a long and difficult process. Local factors (corruption, lack of infrastructure, poverty) and international circumstances (the global recession, lack of focus by the international community) could forestall recovery. But firm resolve behind a nation-building project is critical if Haiti is to stand again. These prescriptions for both relief and reconstruction offer Haiti a meaningful chance to overcome the worst of the disaster and give the Haitian people hope for a better tomorrow.

***Jim Arkedis is the director of the Progressive Policy Institute's National Security Project, which fosters the integration of sound security strategies and pragmatic foreign policy decisions. He has written on Afghanistan, terrorism, national security strategy, and defense spending for a number of publications, including Foreign Policy, RealClearPolitics, and The Huffington Post, and has appeared on CNN, Fox News, and Air America.***

***Mike Derham is the chair of the Progressive Policy Institute's Innovative Economy Project. Prior to joining PPI, Derham was head of Emerging Market Sales for MarketAxess, the leading electronic trading platform. He previously served on the editorial team of LatinFinance Magazine, covering financial, political and security issues throughout the western hemisphere. Derham is a fellow at the Truman National Security Project.***

1 Caroline Preston and Nicole Wallace, "Donations to Help Haiti Exceed \$560-Million as of January 29," *Chronicle of Philanthropy*, January 29, 2010; available at <http://philanthropy.com/article/Donations-to-Help-Haiti-Exceed/63824/>.

2 Joseph Guyler Delva, "Haitians Look to Obama to Keep Hopes Alive," *Reuters*, January 19, 2010; available at <http://www.reuters.com/article/idUKTRE60I4A720100119>.

3 Voice of America, "US Marines to join relief effort, hospital ship to arrive Wednesday," January 19, 2010, available at <http://www1.voanews.com/english/news/americas/US-Marines-Join-Relief-Effort-in-Haiti-Hospital-Ship-to-Arrive-Wednesday-82090202.html>.

4 United Nations Resolution 1542 of April 2004, available at [http://www.un.org/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/1542\(2004\)](http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/1542(2004))

5 AFP, "US military defends efforts to manage Haiti airport logjam." January 20, 2010, available at [http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/AleqM5jkG6AVse8STcejoWk\\_o4-4\\_AuZIA](http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/AleqM5jkG6AVse8STcejoWk_o4-4_AuZIA).

6 Neri Vitor Eich, "Defesa quer dobrar número de militares brasileiros no Haiti," *Reuters*, January 20,

2010; available at <http://www.estadao.com.br/noticias/internacional,defesa-quer-dobrar-numero-de-militares-brasileiros-no-haiti,498876,0.htm>.

7 Tyler Cowen, "Other ways to help Haiti," Marginal Revolution blog, January 19, 2010, <http://www.marginalrevolution.com/marginalrevolution/2010/01/other-ways-to-help-haiti.html>.

8 Dilip Ratha, "Helping Haiti through migration and remittances," People Move blog, World Bank website, January 19, 2010, <http://blogs.worldbank.org/peoplemove/helping-haiti-through-migration-and-remittances>.

9 Olga Morawczynski, "What You Don't Know About M-PESA," CGAP blog, July 14, 2009, <http://technology.cgap.org/2009/07/14/what-you-dont-know-about-m-pesa/>.

10 See [http://www.digicelhaiti.com/en/coverage\\_roaming/coverage\\_map](http://www.digicelhaiti.com/en/coverage_roaming/coverage_map).

11 Taren Reed and Ann Butler, "Cell Phone Towers, Lumber, Vehicles to Haiti," First Coast News, January 20, 2010; available at <http://www.firstcoastnews.com/news/topstories/news-article.aspx?storyid=150968&catid=3>.

12 Annie Lowrey, "The big three that need to forgive Haiti's debt," ForeignPolicy.com, January 19, 2010; available at [http://blog.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2010/01/19/the\\_three\\_entities\\_that\\_need\\_to\\_cancel\\_haitis\\_debt](http://blog.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2010/01/19/the_three_entities_that_need_to_cancel_haitis_debt)

13 Robert Neuwirth, "Squatters' Rights," *New York Times*, January 16, 2010, p. WK9; available at <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/01/17/opinion/17neuwirth.html>.

14 Ben Macintyre, "The fault line in Haiti runs to France," *Times Online*, January 21, 2010; available at [http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/comment/columnists/ben\\_macintyre/article6995750.ece?utm\\_source=newsletter&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=rcw-today-newsletter](http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/comment/columnists/ben_macintyre/article6995750.ece?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=rcw-today-newsletter).

15 See "Caribbean Basin Initiative," Office of the United States Trade Representative website, <http://www.ustr.gov/trade-topics/trade-development/preference-programs/caribbean-basin-initiative-cbi>.

16 See "Appendix D – Caribbean Basin Initiative – Islands of the Commonwealth Caribbean," Library of Congress, Federal Research Division – Country Studies, [http://memory.loc.gov/frd/cs/caribbean\\_islands/cx\\_appnd.html](http://memory.loc.gov/frd/cs/caribbean_islands/cx_appnd.html).

---

## About the Progressive Policy Institute



The Progressive Policy Institute (PPI) is an independent research institution that seeks to define and promote a new progressive politics in the 21st century. Through research, policy analysis and dialogue, PPI challenges the status quo and advocates for radical policy solutions.

© 2009 Progressive Policy Institute  
All rights reserved.

Progressive Policy Institute  
1730 Rhode Island Ave. NW  
Suite 308  
Washington, DC 20036

Tel 202.525.3926  
Fax 202.525.3941  
Email [info@ppionline.org](mailto:info@ppionline.org)  
[www.progressivefix.com](http://www.progressivefix.com)