

Mass US Military Presence in Haiti Arouses Contention

By [Global Research](#)

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PORT-AU-PRINCE: The dominant US role in earthquake-hit Haiti has been questioned by some countries. A French minister claimed on Monday that international aid efforts should not “occupy” Haiti, while Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez accused the US of occupying Haiti in the name of an aid operation.

Questions from home and abroad

Referring to the turning back of a French aid flight by US force last week in the congested airport in Haiti’s capital, French Cooperation Minister Alain Joyandet complained the US military had monopolized the airport.

“This is about helping Haiti, not about occupying Haiti,” he said on French radio, in Brussels for an EU meeting on Haiti.

Joyandet said he expects the United Nations to investigate the problem of how governments should work together in Haiti and hopes “things will be clarified concerning the role of the United States.”

One day earlier, Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez made a similar query about the US role in Haiti.

“I read that 3,000 soldiers are arriving, Marines armed as if they were going to war. This is not a shortage of guns there, my God. Doctors, medicine, fuel, field hospitals, that is what the United States should send,” Chavez said on his weekly television address, “They are occupying Haiti in an undercover manner.”

“You don’t see them in the streets. Are they picking up bodies? ... Are they looking for the injured? You don’t see them. I haven’t seen them. Where are they?” he added.

Chavez also said he did not mean to depreciate US humanitarian efforts and was only questioning the need for so many troops.

Meanwhile, US local media also wondered what kind of role the country wanted to play in Haiti.

The American weekly Time published on Saturday a commentary named The US Military in Haiti: A Compassionate Invasion, saying that “Haiti, for all intents and purposes, became the 51st state at 4:53 pm on Tuesday in the wake of its deadly earthquake. If not a state, then

at least a ward of the state — the United States.”

Washington’s response

Facing these questions home and abroad, officials from Washington stressed that the US forces in Haiti for rescue operation are in cooperation with the Haiti government and the UN.

US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said last week during her visit to Haiti that the US government had no intention of taking power from Haitian officials. “We are working to back them up, not to supplant them,” she said.

US Defense Secretary Robert Gates said on Monday the motive of sending troops to Haiti was to protect innocent Haitians or foreigners if lawlessness boils over.

State Department Spokesman P.J. Crowley insisted even more directly, “We are not taking over Haiti.”

“The more we hear criticism, the more we are intent on trying to improve the lot of the Haitian people,” said Denis McDonough, a national security aide to US President Barack Obama.

Till Monday, the United States has sent to Haiti some 11,000 Marines and soldiers, 33 aid planes and several ships.

The United States recognized the Haitian government in 1864, 60 years after Haiti gained independence from France. From 1915 to 1934, US Marines occupied the country for nearly 20 years to quell political turmoil.

In 1994, then President Bill Clinton sent troops to Haiti to help ousted President Jean Bertrand Aristide return to power.

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