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Statement of
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Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for inviting me to speak before you and other members of the subcommittee. I am happy to have this opportunity to share my insights and analysis on Haiti. I have followed Haiti and Haiti-US policy issues for 25 years. Over that time I have come to know the country both from the 'bottom-up' through work at the Inter-American Foundation, a U.S. government agency, where I held responsibility for its grassroots development programs in Haiti, and from the 'top down' through work at the U.S. Department of State in the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs and scholarly activities at Johns Hopkins, Georgetown, and Brown Universities. I continue my involvement with Haiti as the Director of the Trinity College Haiti Program in Washington, DC, a program that has been supported by the Ford and the Rockefeller Foundations.

TODAY'S HAITI

Today, in the streets of Port-au-Prince and throughout the Haitian countryside, we have been seeing the kind of murder and mayhem that characterized the country between 1991 and 1994, following a violent coup d'etat carried out by Haiti's army, leading to three years of brutal de facto military rule. Gunmen roam with impunity. Civilians are fired upon by armed thugs and snipers. Bodies mysteriously appear, some of them face down with hands bound and bullet holes in their backs. Rampaging mobs of civilians and erstwhile soldiers and members of paramilitary death squads attack public and private property, looting, burning and destroying in a practice that Haitians call *dechoukaj*, or uprooting. U.S. and other international troops, hustled into Haiti to protect the lives of their nationals and to try to stabilize this situation find themselves drawn increasingly into the middle of Haiti's muddled environment of anger, frustration, and fear, as their mission 'creeps' to include disarming the multitudes of Haitians with weapons.

From the Central African Republic, Haiti's suddenly exiled President, Jean-Bertrand Aristide, insists that his removal was a coercive one while, concurrently, in Port-au-Prince a new, provisional President is sworn in under the watchful eyes of ambassadors and envoys, and a new Prime Minister is named by a group of citizens who now form a national political advisory board. All of this has this veteran Haiti-watcher thinking, Mr. Chairman, that we are seeing a case of "deja vu all over again."

MULTIPLE DISAPPOINTMENTS

Two weeks ago, Secretary of State Colin L. Powell stated that he had been "disappointed" with Haiti's now-deposed president, Jean-Bertrand Aristide. Secretary Powell is correct in this statement, as there is no doubt that Mr. Aristide provided much to be disappointed about. I will not elaborate here, as Mr. Aristide's detractors have already undertaken that task with much gusto.

I wonder, however, if Mr. Powell has also been disappointed in Haiti's self-proclaimed democratic opposition, a group of political and economic leaders who have also given us much to criticize and regret. The single-minded intransigence of this largely ad hoc group toward achieving its one, unifying objective - the removal of Mr. Aristide from office - has motivated it to behave rather undemocratically. Its leaders failed to engage in true democratic process as measured by elections and by negotiated solutions to political problems. Instead, particularly in recent months, they have appeared to practice that deeply rooted Haitian political practice of giving a 'wink and a nod' to violence in the street if you believe it furthers your political objectives, emulating, unfortunately, a strategy amply employed by Mr. Aristide in recent years.

And, over the past three years, they have acted with a veto from an empty chair at the negotiating table, repeatedly undermining or thwarting internationally-led attempts to find a solution to Haiti's political crisis. This included their rejection in late February of the urgings of Secretary Powell to accept the plan presented by CARICOM to achieve a peaceful, mediated solution to Haiti's longstanding crisis that would have permitted Haiti's elected President to serve out his term, while providing them with a shared role in the country's governance.

This failure of US influence when push came to shove in late February is doubly distressing since the personalities who comprise this opposition have been widely perceived as allies - even sycophants - of Washington. Among these personalities are individuals who have participated for years in an array of political strategy meetings organized by the International Republican Institute using US government funds, and who have repeatedly visited Washington over the past three years. And, at least one of the highest profile leaders of this faction, Mr. Andre Apaid, is a US citizen.

As I scan this political landscape, Mr. Chairman, I get a strong sense of *deja vu all over again*, as self-styled and unelected political chiefs broker their way into power. In their mind's eye, again taking a page from deeply rooted Haitian political practice, the means

justify the ends. And what are those ends? Allow me to state, Mr. Chairman, that what we have been seeing in Haiti over the past years is not a political struggle of competing issues, ideas, and principals. It is nothing more than a struggle among the political class and its allies, and the now-unseated government and its allies to seize, and/or to hold on to, power.

Let us hope that the dust of confrontation and violence settles in Haiti and that moderate, reasonable voices, with viable ideas, will emerge from among those struggling for power, and that some true democratic credentials will begin to be earned. Let us hope, also, that new democratic voices, less tainted by participation in the tragic political confrontations of the past, will come forth to relieve the country of its largely failed leadership on both sides of the current political equation. Hopefully, the process currently underway to lead Haiti through to new parliamentary and then presidential elections will provide that opportunity.

THE CONDUCT OF U.S. POLICY TOWARD HAITI

In terms of disappointment, Mr. Chairman and members of the sub-committee, I also wonder whether this sense of Mr. Powell has extended to those who have been largely responsible for the conduct of U.S. policy toward Haiti since January 2001. As I have outlined in Trinity College Haiti Program Briefing Paper Number 8, US Policy Toward Haiti: Engagement or Estrangement, published last November, over the past ten years, US policy toward Haiti has evolved from one where our government was constructively engaged with the government of Haiti in an attempt to nurture democratic institutions and democratic practice in this country trying to find its way out of 200 years of bad and mostly authoritarian governance, to a policy that worked to isolate the Haitian government, withhold resources from it, punish it, and push it into a corner.

Concurrently, as we constantly chastised that government, our efforts focused more and more exclusively on working with Haiti's opposition groups. In following this path, we sacrificed carefully constructed leverage and influence with Haitian elected political actors, many of whom are already pre-disposed to be distrustful of the United States as a dominant force in Haitian political reality that has not always made choices that have worked toward the benefit of Haiti's people.

If I may, Mr. Chairman, I would like to submit Briefing Paper Number 8 as a part of my written testimony since it elaborates this analysis in much greater detail than I have an opportunity to do in this testimony today.

Not all in Washington abandoned that leverage and influence we worked to achieve over many years. As I reminded the Honorable Cass Ballenger of North Carolina, at a hearing on Haiti called by his Subcommittee last week, in March 2001, I escorted to his office several high Haitian government officials who had traveled to Washington only a month after the inauguration of Mr. Aristide to his second term in office to participate in a symposium on Haiti at Trinity College. Among them were Mr. Yvon Neptune, who at

that time was the President of Haiti's Senate, and Mr. Leslie Voltaire, then the Minister for Haitians Living Overseas and currently the government's representative on the new tripartite commission established last week in Haiti. Also a part of the Haitian government delegation were two ministers who, even though members of the opposition, had accepted Mr. Aristide's invitation to join his government's cabinet. One of these ministers was Mr. Marc Louis Bazin, Mr. Aristide's principal opponent in the 1990 election who, subsequently, briefly served as the Prime Minister of the 1991-1994 de facto military regime. What better example could we have had of the potential for political reconciliation in Haiti than Mr. Aristide and Mr. Bazin working together. Sadly, because Mr. Bazin had rejected participation in the bitter opposition to Mr. Aristide (at that time called the "Democratic Convergence"), his credentials as a member of the opposition working within the Lavalas government were not accepted by Aristide's opponents in Haiti and in Washington.

On that same day, I escorted this high level Haitian delegation to the office of one of the members of this committee, Senator Dodd. Much to the credit of both Mr. Ballenger and Senator Dodd, they were open to meeting these Haitian government officials and engaging them in constructive conversation. And the Haitian officials were anxious to engage them and others.

Sadly, Executive Branch officials in Washington reacted quite differently to this March 2001 opportunity for dialogue. Not only did ranking officials choose not to engage these Haitian government officials, but, in the run-up to the symposium, they urged me not to invite them to Washington. This, Mr. Chairman, is my own personal story of a golden opportunity the Bush Administration lost to maintain and strengthen US influence and leverage in Haiti, and to assist Haiti emerge from its dark political past. Surely, this is not the only time that this kind of opportunity was lost.

Rather than taking advantage of this and similar opportunities, it seems to me that our government was not only busy isolating Haiti's elected government, but, through various intermediaries and political operatives in Washington, it was allowing signals to travel to Port-au-Prince that emboldened the opposition and its "zero option" policy of intransigence by suggesting that the opposition had Washington's support.

THE CHIMERES OF WASHINGTON, D.C.

This is not my assessment alone. This concern that presumptive policy signals were being sent to Port-au-Prince from Washington, and that those signals were highly damaging to efforts to resolve what was, back then, a relatively reparable political crisis, was shared by none other than the U.S. Ambassador to Haiti. In his farewell address in Port-au-Prince last summer to HAMCHAM, the Haitian-American Chamber of Commerce, the career diplomat who headed our embassy in Haiti, the Honorable Brian Dean Curran, reflected on Haiti's long-standing political crisis remarking:

“There is an incoherence (in Haiti) that has troubled me: the incoherence of the way Washington’s views are interpreted here. Those of you who know me will realize that since I arrived here as President Clinton’s Ambassador and then President Bush’s, I have always talked straight about US policy and what might and might not be new policy directions. But there were many in Haiti who preferred not to listen to me, the president’s representative, but to their own friends in Washington, sirens of extremism or revanchism on the one hand or apologists on the other. They don’t hold official positions. I call then the *chimeres* of Washington.”

And who, pray tell, might these irregular actors be? I would suggest, Mr. Chairman, that this subcommittee takes steps to get to the bottom of this. It might begin by heeding the supposition of the Washington Post that the International Republican Institute has played an important role in the ‘wink and nod’ messages from Washington sent to the opposition. In its February 19th edition, the Post editorialized: “In particular, it (the administration) has declined to exercise its considerable leverage on the civilian opposition parties, some of which have been supported by such U.S. groups as the International Republican Institute and which have rejected any political solution short of Mr. Aristide’s immediate resignation.”

In sum, Mr. Chairman, it seems to me that our policy - and practices - toward Haiti in recent years have been driven, unfortunately, by a deeply rooted animosity to one man – Jean-Bertrand Aristide – that has been held among a relatively small but powerful group of actors in Washington. Policies rigorously enacted under the auspices of this zealous group in order either to emasculate Mr. Aristide politically or to force him out of office, as we are witnessing today, have put the country and its citizens at grave risk, while concurrently creating potential spill over effects both in the Caribbean and on to our shores.

To achieve the narrow political goal of getting Mr. Aristide, the *chimeres* of Washington have, in essence, enacted policies that have devastated Haiti. What better example can one identify of being willing to throw out the bathwater in order to get the baby.

ACTS OF DESPERATION

As I reflect on the result of these policies of isolation, non-engagement, constant criticism and punitive action I get the sense of the gradual strangulation of an elected government. As the noose around its neck tightened, it was pushed increasingly toward ill-advised and desperate acts. The suspension of international assistance was a particularly key element of strangulation. The government of Mr. Aristide, like all governments in this tragically poor and resource-starved country, was deeply dependent on external assistance in order to enact government programs. During his inaugural address of February 7, 2001, Mr. Aristide took a quite unusual - perhaps even unprecedented - step for a Haitian President when he outlined a series of social welfare, infrastructure development and investment goals of his government, suggesting that his

term in office be judged according to his ability to meet these goals. These plans were derived from the Lavalas Family party's "White Paper" for Haiti, an unusual attempt – for Haitian political parties – to set forth a platform that directed itself toward the country's multitude of social, economic and environmental problems.

Sadly, following the virtual complete suspension of bilateral and multilateral aid to his government as a result of the May 2000 election's eight flawed senatorial vote counts and the Haitian government's bewildering failure to address this issue, few resources were available to the government to work toward these goals. As Mr. Aristide and his government were pushed more and more into a corner, predictable results emerged. With fewer and fewer resources to manage, the government was left to manage scarcity and, became increasingly desperate and corrupt. And, in Haiti's political reality, managing scarcity means managing power, with equally predictable results. Mr. Aristide, presiding over a resource starved government under constant assault from political opponents both in and beyond Haiti, took to the streets, aligning his government with impoverished urban youth - the now infamous *chimeres* of Haiti - who, by way of organized gangs, served as a means of managing the maintenance of power.

Mr. Chairman, when I was a boy growing up in the New Jersey suburbs in an area that had just recently been farmland, I occasionally encountered a rabbit that had found its way into my back yard that was enclosed with a chain link fence. Sometimes, I attempted to catch the rabbit, gradually backing it into a corner of the fence as what I perceived as the best strategy to do that. I never did manage to catch one of those elusive critters, but I remember how the rabbits that I managed to back into the corner of the fence became increasingly desperate as their maneuvering space shrank. In fact, I recall vividly on one occasion how a panicked rabbit that I had edged into the corner acted with such desperation that bashed itself against the fence, injuring itself in its attempts to elude my grasp. Aghast at the blood streaming from the animal, I quickly backed away. This was the last time I tried cornering a rabbit in order to capture it. It was not my goal to force self-inflicted damage.

I relate this story, Mr. Chairman, because I think of it when I reflect on what has happened in Haiti over the past several years. As the government of Haiti was increasingly backed into that corner, it acted more and more like that panicked rabbit of my youth, injuring itself in desperation. Ultimately, as its maneuvering space shrank, the government, in its increasing desperation to escape the trap, inflicted many wounds on itself. What a tragedy of huge proportions.

A PYRRHIC VICTORY

The departure of Mr. Aristide, at least for now, has been achieved. Those who have sought it for quite some time are now rejoicing in their political victory. But their victory is proving to be a Pyrrhic one as Haiti has descended deeper and deeper on the slippery slope of lawlessness. Revenge killing and settling scores – in Port-au-Prince and elsewhere in the country - have become the new *ordre du jour*. Prisons throughout the country have been emptied, reinforcing the unfortunate reality of criminal impunity. Secondary cities, towns and villages across the land have become the domain of gang leaders establishing fiefdoms in what is now a balkanized country. And, with the descent into lawlessness comes the prospect of Haiti's emergence as a kind of narco-trafficking free state, as the countryside's runways and ports fall within the domain of the local warlords, many of whom already have a history of involvement in drug trafficking.

The victory is Pyrrhic also, Mr. Chairman, because it was achieved through the slow strangulation of Haiti's capacity to respond to the humanitarian, social and environmental challenges and crises before it. And, in recent weeks, we have seen in particular a rash of significant damage to the country's already weak humanitarian and development infrastructure, as roads and ports have been severely damaged and destroyed, and public and private buildings looted and burned. This destruction has included attacks by marauding armed rebels on such medical installations as the highly-respected hospital in central Haiti operated by Dr. Paul Farmer's Partners in Health organization, where two members of the staff have been murdered, the hospital's only ambulance has been commandeered, and medical staff and patients have been constantly threatened by the bandits.

Perhaps the most Pyrrhic element of this victory, however, has been its achievement at the expense of the Haitian population's faith in democracy. This is illustrated most vividly by the enthusiastic welcome given by some to the return of the gunmen. While there should be no doubt that this welcome has been fueled by a realistic sense of self-preservation by those who do not have the guns, by the gratitude of those released from Haiti's jails and their families, and by former military and paramilitary figures who have been waiting patiently for such an opening to occur, this welcome is also fueled by another factor. Haiti's citizens are deeply disappointed, indeed, disgusted, with the comportment of all of the country's political leaders who, over the past decade, have been so intent on their own, personal struggles to maintain or attain power that they have sacrificed their country. To coin a phrase, Haiti's politicians have been fiddling while Rome has been burning.

This disenchantment with democracy is an enormously tragic and dangerous development. Haitians have harbored 'dreams of democracy' since the 1986 ouster of the Duvalier dictatorship. Their dreams have repeatedly been turned into nightmares. It is in everyone's interest in this room that we work together to deflect that disenchantment and restore faith in the resolution of disputes through participation, engagement, the peaceful mediation of differences, rule of law, and the rejection of all forms of political intimidation, violence and recidivism.

BREAKING THE CYCLE OF DEJA VU

So, where do we go from here?

I will leave to others the debate and the necessary investigation over the circumstances of Mr. Aristide's abrupt departure from Haiti on February 29th, 2004. Surely, the removal – regardless of how it occurred – of a democratically-elected leader prior to the completion of his term is a set-back to Haiti's democratic process and a threat to other nations in the hemisphere; indeed around the world. Regardless of whether or not Mr. Aristide is restored to the presidency to complete his term of office ending on February 7, 2006, however, there are several steps we can take, actions we can support, and principles that can guide us that will contribute toward a sustained resolution of Haiti's seemingly unending internal and external political warfare.

Bipartisanship in Washington

First, from a Washington and US perspective, we must forge a bi-partisan approach toward Haiti. Of course, this being Washington and ours being a democracy, we will agree to disagree over certain specifics. But, even amid our disagreements, we must be prepared to examine our role in Haiti's affairs in a more even-handed manner that does not chose sides, stem from deeply rooted personal animosities, or seek to profit from Haiti's misfortunes.

In this regard, it is of great necessity that the *chimeres* of Washington be removed from any real or perceived role in the future of U.S. policy toward Haiti. We must put an end to 'wink and nod' messages coming out of Washington. These messages – and actions that reinforced them - have caused considerable damage not only to Haiti, but also to the credibility of Washington's leadership on Haiti and around the world. I would urge you, Mr. Chairman and members of the subcommittee, to examine the roles of these *chimeres*, who, as the US Ambassador suggested, were aiding and abetting Haiti's tragedies.

Specifically, I would urge you to clarify the validity of various allegations that have been leveled at the International Republican Institute for its role in exacerbating and reinforcing an atmosphere of political intransigence and violence in Haiti. I would urge you, also, to explore alleged links among Haiti's resurgent gunmen once based in the Dominican Republic and drug trafficking, weapons smuggling, and money laundering.

Political Inclusion in Haiti

Second, I would urge us support policies and practices that will reinforce the notion of political inclusion in Haiti. Let us work – successfully this time – not to play favorites, but rather to get all the legitimate political actors in Haiti under its political tent. It is of vital importance that Haiti's once and future political actors all participate in the governance of their country and accept the responsibilities that come along with it. To this end, the framework offered by CARICOM that is now moving forward is an excellent one. Acts of *dechoukaj* and political intimidation aimed at politicians and their

supporters, including appointed and elected officials of the Aristide government and the Lavalas party, and the urgent flight from the country of these political actors, is not.

Ending the Political Culture of ‘Winner Takes All’

Third, and directly related to the need to have all legitimate political actors gain inclusion in governance, we must support steps to put an end to Haiti’s tried and true political practices of ‘winner takes all’ and ‘loser undermines the winner.’ In this regard, Haiti’s electoral laws that prescribe a winner takes all approach toward each and every elective office should be re-examined. In my view, Mr. Chairman, this approach, particularly in a country that has had one dominant party (Fanmi Lavalas - FL) competing with many smaller ones, and that may now have a weakened FL competing with a newly fragmented political opposition, has only exacerbated polarization and confrontation. Some form of proportional national representation, perhaps in Haiti’s Chamber of Deputies, would help to ensure broader political participation. A party that captures, say, 10 percent of the votes nationwide, could be awarded 10 percent of the seats in that parliamentary body. This would both bring that element into the process and force upon it the responsibilities of governance.

Putting the Genie Back in the Bottle

Fourth, there is an immediate need to move against the armed thugs and convicts who have been freed from prison, as well as against armed street gangs of all stripes, and to re-establish some semblance of rule of law. In this regard, Haiti’s civilian-led police will require immediate and long-term strengthening and support, while the country’s judicial system requires the same. The thugs must not find their way into the police force. Putting this genie back into the bottle will be a difficult, but necessary element not only to allow the country to move forward, but to provide a needed push toward ending impunity. The return of the army and of the FRAPH gunmen and criminals is in the best interests of only those particular individuals, not of the Haiti, its citizens, and the international community.

In this regard, Mr. Chairman, the announcement made yesterday that international forces already in Haiti will actively undertake disarming of the Haitian population is a welcome one. This task, of course, will be an elusive one, fraught with problems and may even lead to spates of violence and bloodshed, but it is a necessary one. It is quite unfortunate that disarmament did not take place in 1994/95, when there were 21,000 troops in Haiti and the restored government was asking for it. At that time, narrowly defined rules of engagement focused on force protection inhibited effective disarmament of Haiti’s soldiers, paramilitary members and others in the population with guns. Sadly, in the intervening 10 years, more weapons have entered the country, making today’s task – to be undertaken by 5,000 troops - a much more difficult one.

For effective disarming to occur, Mr. Chairman, and for Haiti not to become immediately re-armed once it does, we must also pay attention to the sources of Haiti’s weapons. Not a single gun is manufactured in Haiti. They all must come from somewhere. In this regard, it is important that we get to the bottom of allegations that illicitly acquired

weapons have been flowing into Haiti from the neighboring Dominican Republic, as well as ‘rebel commandos.’

Stay The Course

Fifth, we need to be prepared to stick with Haiti over the long haul. Staying the course will mean that our attention to Haiti can not be merely intense and short term, as it was in 1994/95, and then leaving the country to its own devices, while enacting partisan-driven policies in Washington that harmed gains that had been made. In this regard, I wholeheartedly agree with the statement made yesterday by UN Secretary General Kofi Anan that Haiti will require a decade (or even more) of intense international community commitment in order to avoid the repeat of the “band-aid” scenario of 10 years ago.

If the term nation-building gives some of this subcommittee a case of heartburn, perhaps it would help to think of it another way – say, “nation-nurturing” - where we provide active and sustained support to the non-governmental – **and governmental** – bodies in Haiti that will develop the country and its required institutions. In other words, we do not have to build Haiti, but we should have a long term commitment to all Haitians to help them rebuild their own country.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Mr. Chairman, the tragic developments in Haiti, some of which are still unfolding, are to some considerable extent the result of US policies and practices that have sacrificed the well-being of Haiti to achieve a narrow political goal – the removal of one man from elected office. These policies and practices have not served Secretary Powell; they have not served President Bush; they have not served the United States Congress, they have not served the American people, and they have surely not served the long-suffering people of Haiti.

Again, I thank you for this opportunity to share my thoughts and analysis with you, and I stand ready to work with all of you to help improving the way the government of the United States relates to and works with its Caribbean neighbor.

Thank you.