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FEATURED Q&A

Can a New 'Gang-Suppression Force' Stabilize Haiti?

The governments of the United States and Panama last month proposed a new "gang-suppression force" for Haiti, parts of which are overrun by gangs. Port-au-Prince is pictured. // File Photo: ChrisOvergaard via Adobe Stock.

Q The U.S. and Panamanian governments on Aug. 28 submitted to the U.N. Security Council a draft proposal for a "gang-suppression force" that would include as many as 5,500 uniformed personnel in order to wrest control of Haiti back from the gangs that control much of the country. The proposal calls for several countries to donate funding and forces, and it comes just weeks before the Oct. 2 expiration of the U.N. mandate of the Kenya-led Multinational Security Support mission that is currently in Haiti. How likely is the Security Council to approve the proposed force, and should it? Which countries are most likely to provide the money and personnel that such a force would require? Are 5,500 new troops enough to effectively combat Haiti's gangs?

A Daniel P. Erikson, former U.S. deputy assistant secretary of defense and National Security Council senior director, and non-resident senior fellow at the Atlantic Council: "Deadlines have a way of concentrating attention and focus. Haiti and the international community face an important deadline on Oct. 2, when the current mandate of the Kenya-led Multinational Security Support mission (MSS) is due to expire. Despite its challenges, the MSS has made an important contribution to security in Haiti, as demonstrated by the fact that a provisional Haitian government remains in place and a collapse into total gang-led anarchy has been averted. However, Haiti has not yet turned the corner in its efforts to fight the gangs, and the achievements to date could be easily reversed. While details for the 'gang-suppression force' proposed by the United States and Panama remain sparse, this

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TODAY'S NEWS

ECONOMIC

Carney Meets With Sheinbaum Ahead of USMCA Review

Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney meets with Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum in Mexico City today and tomorrow. Carney's visit is the first to Mexico by a Canadian prime minister since 2017.

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BUSINESS

Embraer Workers Go on Strike Amid Salary Dispute

The union representing metalworkers at Brazilian aircraft manufacturer Embraer's main production lines began a strike on Wednesday.

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POLITICAL

Brazil's Lula Sees Approval Rating Boost

Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva's approval rating hit a 20-month high in a recent poll conducted by AtlasIntel. Lula is reportedly considering running for a fourth term in next year's general election.

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Lula // File Photo: Lula Oficial via Flickr CC BY-SA 4.0.

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ECONOMIC NEWS

Carney Meets With Sheinbaum Ahead of USMCA Review

Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney is set to meet with Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum in Mexico City today and tomorrow to discuss their countries' postures ahead of next year's scheduled review of the USMCA free trade agreement, the Associated Press reported. Carney's two-day trip this week marks the first visit by a Canadian prime minister to Mexico since 2017, when former Prime Minister Justin Trudeau met with former Mexican President Enrique Peña Nieto amid the renegotiation of the NAFTA agreement (which was supplanted by the USMCA in 2020). "This is a very important relationship for Canada," Carney told reporters earlier this week, Reuters reported. "Highest level engagements have been few and far between, so this is an opportunity for us to reaffirm that leader-level engagement," an unnamed Canadian government official told Reuters. The administration of U.S. President Donald Trump, who negotiated USMCA during his first term in office, has publicly called for the agreement to be substantially revised in order to address concerns including Chinese firms' access to North American markets, the AP reported. Formal trade negotiations between the United States, Canada and Mexico, which are expected to start on a preliminary basis as soon as later this month, are likely to branch into other Trump administration priorities including border security, migration and drug trafficking, according to the wire service. "There are still issues causing tension, such as security concerns … the USMCA will be renegotiated, and not just revised," Nicolás Mariscal, member of the Advisor board and chairman of Grupo Marhnos in Mexico City, told the Advisor in a **Q&A** published Aug. 15. Carney said earlier this week that his meetings with Sheinbaum will also include discussions on boosting Mexico-Canada business ties, as well as enhancing bilateral cooperation on security and health policy, Reuters reported.

POLITICAL NEWS

Tens of Thousands Protest Spending Cuts in Buenos Aires

Tens of thousands of people gathered in front of Argentina's Congress in Buenos Aires on Wednesday to show their opposition to President Javier Milei's proposed cuts to social spending, EFE reported. The demonstrations, which were led by university students, teachers and left-leaning political groups, were triggered by Milei's vetoes last week of legislation to boost funding for public universities and pediatric hospitals, Reuters reported. Smaller protests against Milei's vetoes took place elsewhere in the country on Wednesday, including the cities of Córdoba, Rosario and Neuquén, EFE reported. Late Wednesday evening, Argentina's lower house of Congress voted to overturn both of Milei's vetoes; the Senate has yet to vote on the measures. A two-thirds majority in Congress is required to overturn presidential vetoes. Although Milei's party, La Libertad Avanza, often receives support from other right-leaning parties, it controls just six out of 72 seats in the Senate and 40 out of 257 seats in the lower house. Argentina has midterm legislative elections scheduled for Oct. 26, in which half of the seats in the Chamber of Deputies and one-third of seats in the Senate will be elected. Also on Wednesday, Argentina's national statistics agency published data showing economic activity grew by 6.3 percent year-on-year in the second quarter, the wire service reported. The country's central bank predicts year-end GDP growth of 4.4 percent.

Lula's Approval Hits 20-Month High After Bolsonaro Convicted

Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva's domestic approval rating is currently at a 20-month high, according to a poll published on Wednesday by AtlasIntel and Bloomberg

NEWS BRIEFS

Chilean Presidential Candidates Formally Begin Campaigning

The formal campaign period ahead of Chile's general election on Nov. 16 opened on Wednesday, the Associated Press reported. Polls show the most likely outcome of the presidential race is leftist former Labor Minister Jeannette Jara advancing to a runoff in December against right-wing lawmaker José Antonio Kast, according to the AP. Kast lost a runoff vote in 2021 to incumbent President Gabriel Boric, who is constitutionally barred from seeking a consecutive term in office.

Brazilian Central Bank Keeps Interest Rate Steady

The steering committee of Brazil's central bank on Wednesday unanimously voted to keep the benchmark Selic interest rate unchanged at 15 percent, Reuters reported. Policymakers said in a statement that the rate—the Selic's highest mark since July 2006—could be pushed even higher so long as inflation remains above the target of 3 percent. Brazil's annual core inflation rate is set to be 4.8 percent at year's end and decrease to 3.6 percent by the end of next year, Reuters reported.

Trinidad and Tobago Sees Limited Interest in Auction of Offshore Oil Blocks

Trinidad and Tobago's government on Wednesday concluded an auction for offshore oil and gas blocks in which bids were received for only four out of 26 prospective exploration areas, Reuters reported. China's CNOOC, which is a minority partner in Guyana's Stabroek Block, bid on three exploration blocks, and a consortium of smaller firms bid on the fourth block, according to the wire service. Trinidad and Tobago last month had awarded seven offshore exploration blocks near the country's maritime border with Guyana to ExxonMobil.

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News. Lula's approval rose by three percentage points from August to 51 percent this month; 48 percent of the nationally representative sample said they disapproved of his administration. Lula, who is eligible to seek re-election to a fourth term in Brazil's general election in October of next year, had registered negative net approval in surveys from the same pollster throughout this year. The data suggest Lula has benefited politically from recent developments including U.S. President Donald Trump's decision to unilaterally impose tariffs on a wide range of Brazilian goods, as well as the trial of former President Jair Bolsonaro for his involvement in a coup attempt following the 2022 election, Bloomberg News reported. Bolsonaro was convicted and sentenced to 27 years in prison last week by a panel of Brazil's supreme court. The former president, who is currently on house arrest, has denied wrongdoing and vowed to appeal the ruling. Bolsonaro was briefly hospitalized on Tuesday after falling ill at his residence in Brasília; he was discharged on Wednesday, Reuters reported.

BUSINESS NEWS

Embraer Workers Go on Strike Over Salary Dispute

The union representing metalworkers at Brazilian aircraft manufacturer Embraer's main production lines outside of São Paulo announced a strike on Wednesday, Reuters reported. The company recently offered metalworkers a 5.1 percent wage increase; union representatives had requested a raise of at least 11 percent, citing Embraer's strong financial performance this year. The company's valuation on the New York stock exchange has increased by 49 percent since January. Embraer said in a statement to Reuters on Wednesday that its plants in Brazil were operating normally, adding that negotiations with the metalworkers' union in São José dos Campos remained ongoing. The union says it plans to strike for an indefinite period of time, according to the wire service.

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effort will face the same set of questions that confronted the MSS. What forces will be deployed? What is their geographic jurisdiction and rules of engagement? How will coordination with Haitian authorities be achieved? And, critically, who pays? The MSS was based on the concept that the security situation in Haiti could best be addressed through a 'partner-led, U.S.-enabled' international force working to support that Haitian National Police. This model has shown its strengths and weaknesses in the past 18 months, and there is ample room for improvement. But for an MSS extension or replacement by a 'gang-suppression force' to help stabilize Haiti, it will need to gain stronger international support in Latin America, Europe and elsewhere. Ideally, new security measures will be accompanied by economic steps, such as renewing trade preferences for Haiti, that can stimulate job creation as well."

François Pierre-Louis, professor of political science at Queens College, City University of New York: "The idea of having the United Nations Security Council debating a draft resolution for a 'gang-suppression force' for Haiti is a nightmare for all Haitians. It feels like the adage of 'here we go again.' Unfortunately, it's likely that the council will approve the force to the detriment of the Haitian people; all the past U.N. missions have failed massively. In 2023, when the Security Council approved the deployment of the Multinational Security Support mission (MSS) led by Kenya, most Haitian organizations were unanimously against it because they knew that it was going to be a colossal failure. Today, the gangs that the MSS were supposed to combat have become stronger and have occupied more territory in the country. The Transitional Presidential Council has failed to hold elections and is marred by corruption. If the United States is willing to provide funding for the force, it will probably make a deal with Russia and China to send the troops given its outsize influence on the Security Council. However, 5,500 troops are far too few to combat the gangs in a country whose police force is wholly corrupt, ineffective and understaffed. Moreover, the Security Council's proposal to send the troops looks more like shoring up a dysfunctional and corrupt government instead of allowing Haitians to deal with their own problems by supporting a transitional government that can end gang violence and move the country to democracy."

Robert Fatton, emeritus professor of politics at the University of Virginia: "The United States and Panama have submitted to the U.N. Security Council a draft resolution to establish a multinational 'gang-suppression' force (GS) in Haiti to replace the Multinational Security Support mission (MSS) expiring Oct. 2. Led by Kenya, undermanned and ill-equipped, the MSS has failed to stem the territorial advances of the gangs which now control 90 percent of Port-au-Prince. Responding to worsening violence and appeals from Haiti's Transitional Presidential Council and U.N. Secretary-General Guterres, the Trump administration endorsed the GS force, projected at 5,550 troops: five times larger than the MSS. Approval and implementation face steep challenges. While Russia and China have acknowledged the limits of the MSS, their strained relations with Washington cast doubt on their support for the GS. Financing also remains unresolved. The Trump administration insists it will not shoulder Haiti's costs, yet no other country has pledged significant funds. Washington's financial assistance is uncertain but likely unavoidable. Staffing is another hurdle. Kenya may not transfer its forces to the GS, and few other nations are interested in putting boots on Haitian ground. Skepticism runs deep: Why would the GS do better than the failed but better-resourced missions of the past? Moreover, the GS' mandate authorizing it to operate independently of Haitian institutions

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risks intensifying popular resentment over the country's eroded sovereignty. Finally, questions remain over whether the GS will arrive in time to stop the gangs' advance. Indeed, the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration's ban on U.S. commercial flights to Port-au-Prince until March 2026 casts doubt on re-establishing civil order. With an ineffective, unpopular Transitional Presidential Council, escalating violence and hesitant international responses, Haiti's immediate future looks bleak."

Fulton Armstrong, senior fellow at American University's Center for Latin American & Latino Studies and former U.S. National Intelligence Officer for Latin America: "The allure of a silver-bullet solution, such as a gang-suppression force armed with military-grade weapons, to deal with Haiti's security crisis is understandably strong. The country's collapse is accelerating, with some 90 percent of Port-au-Prince now under gang control and 1.3 million people displaced. The 'transitional government,' weakened by internal tensions and corruption charges, is feckless. The need to reduce violence, including through direct challenges to the gangs, is compelling, but Haitian civil society leaders know that quick fixes, like the Kenya mission, have been disasters. Our penchant for Band-Aid solutions has never worked; the roots of the mess are in the 200 years of foreign extraction, predatory financing and collaboration with undemocratic forces. The drones and other high-tech terror of the professional military contractors haven't made a dent in the gangs' power, but they have caused civilian deaths and injuries. While perhaps morally gratifying for us and certainly profitable for the contractors, such operations—in the absence of comprehensive political and economic strategies—will deepen the power vacuum and terrorize the population that we want to help. Effective solutions will take time and resources. Gangs don't cause government collapse; they take advantage of it. In addition to security operations—which should continue only with effective oversight and full accountability—Haiti needs institution-building, legitimate leadership (not designated by foreign governments) and economic opportunity. Progress also means that next time the Montana Group or other civil society leaders speak with a clear Haitian voice—against odds—we should listen and support them."

The Advisor welcomes comments on its Q&A section. Readers can write editor Gene Kuleta.

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