



United States
General Accounting Office
Washington, D.C. 20548

Office of Special Investigations

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December 28, 1994

The Honorable John Conyers, Jr.,
Chairman
The Honorable Alfred A. McCandless,
Ranking Minority Member
Legislation and National
Security Subcommittee
Committee on Government Operations
House of Representatives

This letter responds to your June 14, 1993, request that we inquire into the extent of drug activity in Haiti and any related involvement by the Haitian military. Reports of increased trafficking of narcotics and other contraband in Haiti since the September 1991 coup d'état that removed President Jean Bertrand Aristide from power prompted your request. You were concerned that, if accurate, these allegations could have a negative impact upon the negotiations with the Haitian de facto military government regarding the return of President Aristide.¹

In subsequent discussions with your staff, you also asked us to examine what appeared to be conflicting reports by U.S. drug authorities on the extent of drug trafficking in Haiti and the role of the Haitian military in that trafficking.

We could neither confirm nor refute allegations concerning Haitian military officials' involvement in drug trafficking, nor could we resolve disparities in statements we received because of the lack of information and the lack of corroborating evidence. The Drug Enforcement Administration's (DEA) access to information in Haiti was limited to a "listening mode" after the 1991 coup d'état to avoid legitimizing the de facto government. Moreover, according to the Defense Intelligence Agency, drug traffickers have, in some instances, altered their trafficking patterns in favor of using less detectible

¹President Aristide returned to Haiti on October 15, 1994, pursuant to an agreement reached in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, on September 18, 1994, between the U.S. and the Haitian de facto government officials.

methods of transportation, such as transshipping via the Dominican Republic. For example, they currently use motherships,² small vessels, or containerized cargo ships instead of aircraft as the primary modes of transport. Finally, U.S. government officials--particularly the U.S. Department of State--were reluctant to interact with or criticize drug enforcement efforts by the Haitian de facto government because of (1) the Haitian government's instability; (2) concern for the then-ongoing negotiations with de facto government officials for the return of President Aristide; and (3) the safety of U.S. citizens in Haiti, including federal agents.

There is a consensus among U.S. law enforcement and intelligence agencies that overall Haiti plays a minor role in drug trafficking in the Caribbean. Nonetheless, because of its geographical position and its unstable political environment, Haiti has been vulnerable to drug trafficking via sea and air lanes and overland routes. Colombian cocaine cartels, which have used Haiti as a transshipment point since the 1980s, continued to transship drugs through Haiti under the de facto government (1991-1994). Additionally, Haitian-American drug trafficking networks have operated between Haiti and the U.S. mainland, transporting drugs to distribution networks in the Haitian-American communities.

U.S. law enforcement and intelligence agencies either could not or would not provide us with corroborated information to substantiate allegations of increased drug activity in Haiti and related involvement by the Haitian military, although the suspected involvement of Haiti's military in drug trafficking has been reported in internal U.S. government reports since the 1980s. These reports indicate that, under the de facto government, several Haitian military officials were involved in drug-trafficking networks for their own personal gain. The DEA is actively conducting investigations of some of the former military officials but would not provide us the names of the officials being investigated. However, we found no conclusive evidence that the Haitian de facto military government officials were engaged in an official conspiracy or that there existed any government-sanctioned profiteering from narcotics trafficking in Haiti. According to U.S. law enforcement officials, Haitian military officials were simply taking advantage of "targets of opportunity."

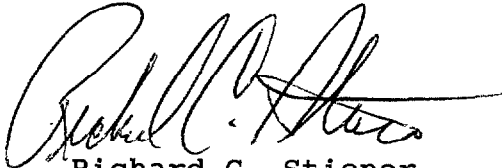
²A mothership is a larger ship that off-loads contraband to a smaller vessel.

We conducted our inquiry between June 1993 and October 1994. We met with representatives from various federal, state, local, and foreign agencies and organizations, including law enforcement and intelligence agencies. We reviewed "raw" intelligence messages,³ "finished" intelligence assessments,⁴ sensitive briefing documents, reports, and biographic sketches provided by law enforcement intelligence agencies. In some instances, we were denied access to documents and third-party information because of ongoing investigations and because the information would disclose the agencies' sources and methods of operation. In other instances, information was provided but appeared to be dated.

We also contacted former and current U.S. attachés to Haiti, the current U.S. Ambassador to Haiti, and his Deputy Chief of Mission for the U.S. Embassy. Further, we interviewed confidential informants and cooperating federal witnesses and prisoners with firsthand knowledge of Haitian military drug trafficking in Haiti prior and subsequent to the 1991 coup. We interviewed former Haitian military members and former Haitian government officials now in exile in the United States. We did not travel to Haiti.

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We will make copies of this letter available to individuals upon request. If you have any questions concerning this report, please contact me or Assistant Director Barbara Cart of my staff at (202) 512-6722.



Richard C. Stiener
Director

³Information received by intelligence and investigative agencies from various sources that has not been analyzed.

⁴Information that has been analytically interpreted and put into perspective as a finished product.

