

FULCRUM GLOBAL



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INTELLIGENCE BRIEF #3

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SUBJECT: Civil Unrest in Haiti: History Repeating

COUNTRY/REGION: Haiti/Caribbean Sea

BACKGROUND OF SUBJECT:

Haiti has a history of civil unrest that impacts the humanitarian efforts as well as the stability of the region. The reasons for the civil unrest is wide-ranging and has required outside assistance to allow for the civilian population to live semi-normal lives. The location of Haiti makes the stability of the country an important concern for the U.S. government; in part due to the influx of refugees seeking asylum and their continuous change of status while living inside U.S. borders.

CUSTOMER QUESTIONS:

1. What was the leading cause of the civil unrest?
2. How are aid workers being affected by the civil unrest and what is being done to ensure their safety?
3. How effectively is law enforcement handling the riots?
4. What impact has the rioting had on the international community?
5. What is the Haitian government doing to alleviate tensions between those participating in the civil unrest and the Haitian government?

CURRENT ASSESSMENT:

The continuous changes in the reasons for civil unrest in Haiti has ranged from: anti-government forces trying to overthrow the government; weather-related issues; and the change in government policies that the general public do not agree with. The most recent wave of civil unrest came when the Haitian government announced a proposal for an increase in the tax on fuel. This new tax was dropped following the start of the current civil unrest, but it would have been a burden on the general population since 60% live under the poverty line. The increase would have made it impossible for the local population to purchase any fuel that can help satisfy their basic needs.

During the civil unrest many tourists, missionaries, and humanitarian aid workers were told to shelter in place for their own safety. Many had feared for their lives as the civil unrest was leading to looting and the setting of fires in Port-au-Prince, Haiti. Many of the humanitarian aid workers have been in Haiti to assist with the rebuilding of the island following Hurricane Matthew and the 2010 earthquake that did major damage to urban centers, villages, and roads. There is a limited amount of resources that can be diverted to protecting only humanitarian aid workers without diverting the resources from trying to limit the damage done by the civil unrest.

The security inside of Haiti relies heavily on Haitian National Police and local police departments, following the withdrawal of the majority of U.N. Peacekeepers in October 2017. There is still a small contingent of U.N. Peacekeepers who have been assisting in the training of the Haitian National Police. The current civil unrest led the U.S. State Department to request extra U.S. Marines, from the Marine Security Guard Augmentation Unit, to provide security for the U.S. diplomatic missions in the country. The U.S. State Department issued a Travel Advisory advising against U.S. citizens traveling to Haiti at this time. As of July 10, 2018 travel restrictions for Embassy personnel was modified from shelter in place to limitation on the use of personal vehicles and traveling outside of Port-au-Prince.

The Haitian government had withdrawn their proposed increase in the fuel tax following multiple days of civil unrest. The Public Security Secretary Ronsard Saint Cyr had called for an end to the protest following this withdrawal of the proposal. The end of the protest has allowed for the airports to reopen, which is helping with moving those stranded in the country to leave safely.

ANALYSIS OF ASSESSMENT:

One of the leading causes of the poverty in the country is the high inflation rate of the Haitian currency, in 2017 it was estimated to be 14.7%. The impact of the increase in the fuel tax would have made it nearly impossible for the general local population to afford fuel. The level of poverty already makes it hard to attract foreign investors into Haiti. Having a lack of foreign interest and multiple bouts of civil unrest has led to a lower level of tourism to bring more money to the local population. The increased fuel prices would have led to higher costs for the limited tourism that Haiti already receives. This is due to a higher operating cost to get tourists to their destinations or to participate in activities that require fuel, such as boating.

Any civil unrest makes it more difficult for humanitarian aid workers to conduct their operations due to safety and security concerns for the personnel and supplies. The looting and damage caused by the civil unrest have the potential to make the humanitarian aid supplies a target for the rioters. It is also making them a target by the general public since it is harder for them to receive the supplies they need for everyday life. The safety of humanitarian aid workers would become an issue due to the level of violence that was being carried out by the civil unrest, which had already left multiple people dead.

In addition, the current civil unrest in the country may have impacted the status of Haitian refugees in the U.S., that earlier this year had their temporary protected status removed by the U.S. government. This decision was made due to the removal of the disaster-related conditions that allowed many of the refugees to enter the U.S. following Hurricane Matthew. The protective status by the U.S. government was mandated due to the severe damage to the Haitian infrastructure in 2016 .

The security and safety of the U.S. embassy and its staff was put at risk by the civil unrest due to the amount of violence and destruction that was being caused. The request for additional U.S. Marines to provide security for the embassy may have been made for numerous reasons. One being the general security of the embassy from any attempts at looting from the rioters. Another may have been to ensure that an outside force could not take advantage of the civil unrest to infiltrate the embassy, in a manner similar to what happened in Benghazi, Libya. The international community was not contacted by the Haitian government to help assist them with maintaining security during the civil unrest. This is important to note as the government was able to put an end to the civil unrest on their own without having to reach out like they had in the past.

The Haitian government's emergency decision to withdraw the proposed fuel tax increases was done in an attempt to put an end to the civil unrest. Despite the quick withdrawal of the proposed fuel tax, the organizers that lead the civil unrest are still calling for the removal of Haitian President Jovenel Moise. While it is still unknown if he will be removed from office, there is no guarantee that this would prevent more civil unrest from occurring in the near future.

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FINAL DATE OF ANALYSIS AND SUBMISSION:

Monday, July 16, 2018 - 11:00 AM

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