Feeling the fallout from the attacks on the US

The United States' declaration of a "war on terrorism" following the 11 September attacks was met with some scepticism, if not cynicism, by those familiar with the case of Emmanuel 'Toto' Constant. Haiti's number one terrorist fled to the US in early 1995 after murder charges were filed against him. Constant was the leader of the death squad organisation, FRAPH, which terrorised the Haitian population, killing and torturing hundreds, perhaps thousands of pro-democracy activists in the years 1993-4.

Although the Haitian government requested Constant's return to stand trial, he was released from custody by the US immigration service in mid-1996, and since then has been living freely in the Queens district of New York City. In his absence, the landmark Raboteau massacre trial went ahead in 1999, and he was one of 37 ex-soldiers and FRAPH members found guilty of the premeditated murder of innocent civilians in the city of Gonaïves in 1994.

Turning a blind eye
Yet, even as the US sends its forces half way round the world in 'hot pursuit' of Osama Bin Laden, Toto Constant still lives and works just a mile or two from the site of the World Trade Centre. Speculation as to why he is allowed to stay in the US and not sent to stand trial in Haiti, centres on his close involvement and cooperation with the US Central Intelligence Agency during FRAPH's reign of terror in Haiti.

Whether the US administration's new concern about terrorism prompts it to wash its own dirty laundry remains to be seen. What is clear is that Haiti will feel the consequences of the September attacks most severely in terms of the knock-on effects of the US's subsequent economic malaise.

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Reduced remittances
Each year, Haitians living in the US send back an estimated US$700 million to relatives and friends at home. This vast sum almost single-handedly keeps the country afloat. But with an estimated 600,000 expected job losses in the sectors of the US economy in which many Haitian immigrants have found low-paid, unskilled work - tourism, hotels, the restaurant trade, and taxi services - the amount of remittances to Haiti is likely to be severely reduced.

The Haitian assembly sector, that re-exports clothes and electronic equipment to the US, and accounted for seven per cent of the country's GDP last year, is also likely to suffer from the US recession. 11 September-inspired restrictions on freight have already damaged Haiti's lucrative mango export trade with the US.

Income from the transshipment of cocaine that, like it or not, makes a significant contribution to the Haitian economy, may also fall. Only too aware of the links between drugs trafficking, arms shipments and terrorism (remember Oliver North and the Contra-gate affair?), the US may increase its pressure on Haiti with regard to the flow of Colombian cocaine. In early November, the US announced that Haiti was once again on its list of major drug-transit countries, and, along with 22 others, can expect punitive aid sanctions to be applied.
Ten years after

An activist assesses the decade since the coup d’état

Drying rice in neutral Haiti — once self-sufficient, Haiti now imports half the rice it consumes

by Ronald Aronson

Ten years after the coup d’état that caused the deaths of over 5,000 people in Haiti, the government is in chaos, political opposition is weak, and the international community is divided. The question of how to restore democracy to Haiti remains unanswered.

The coup d’état, led by General Prosper Avril in 1991, was a brutal and bloody event that left a lasting impact on the country. It was a blow to the hopes of many Haitians who had longed for democratic reforms and a better future. The coup d’état was a turning point in the country’s history, and its aftermath has left a legacy of conflict and instability.

In this article, we will examine the lasting effects of the coup d’état on Haiti, and explore the challenges facing the country as it seeks to rebuild and move forward.

The Aftermath of the Coup

In the aftermath of the coup d’état, the government of Jean-Claude Duvalier was overthrown, and a new democratic government was established. However, the transition was not without its challenges, and the country faced a period of political instability and economic hardship.

One of the most significant challenges facing Haiti in the aftermath of the coup was the need to rebuild the country’s infrastructure and economy. The coup d’état had caused widespread destruction, and the country was in need of aid and assistance from the international community.

The Role of the International Community

The international community played a major role in the aftermath of the coup d’état, providing aid and support to help Haiti recover from the violence and destruction. However, the role of the international community has been a source of debate and controversy.

Some argue that the international community has not done enough to support Haiti, while others argue that the international community has played a vital role in helping the country recover.

The Future of Haiti

As the country begins to rebuild, the challenges facing Haiti remain. The country is still grappling with poverty, unemployment, and political instability. However, there are signs of hope, as the country works to build a better future for its people.

In conclusion, the coup d’état of 1991 had a profound impact on Haiti, and its effects continue to be felt today. The country faces a number of challenges, but there is reason to be hopeful that a better future is possible. As Haiti moves forward, it is clear that the role of the international community will continue to be crucial in helping the country to rebuild and find a稳定未来的道路.
Lineaments of the Lwa – new film about Vodou

Lineaments of the Lwa is a film essay on Vodou and its emergent spirits (lwa). It is a broad sketch of modern Haiti that reveals the roots of the spirits in all areas of life. The film portrays the spirits as manifest in Haitian arts and ritual, as well as in the elemental forces, the streets, markets and countryside.

The half-hour film shows that Vodou is not merely a vestigial primitive belief system nor a bizarre legacy of the slave trade, but a living and pertinent, contemporary religious practice that forms an essential part of cultural life in Haiti.

After a brief introduction to the history of Haitian Vodou, viewers are immersed in a journey through a sequence of montages, each portraying the essence of one of the primary deities. The montages combine footage from Vodou ritual and daily life, images of Haitian art, ambient sounds and the essential drumming and singing which accompany ritual. A voice-over describes the primary characteristics and functions of each spirit.

The film shows how the spirits reflect life and experience for Haitian people now, as they did hundreds of years ago, and how Haitian art functions to keep the spirits alive in the minds and hearts of the Haitian people. It assists in contextualizing the art of Haiti and the essence of the Vodou faith for those who have not been witness to it. It underscores the transformation of the everyday into the divine, and the divine into the everyday, which is the very basis of Vodou consciousness.

Lineaments of the Lwa is a collaboration between Leah Gordon, co-director of A Pig’s Tale TV documentary and author of The Book of Vodou, and Ranu Mukherjee and Maggie Roberts, video makers and visual artists from the Orphandrift collective.

Available on VHS PAL for £12.99 per copy, and VHS NTSC for £25.00, by sending a cheque to the Haiti Support Group, PO Box 29623, London E9 7UX. Please add the following amounts for postage and packing: in the UK – £1.20; in the rest of Europe – £1.90, and in the USA and Canada – £2.90 per copy.

Action update: Cointreau workers

In July, the Haiti Support Group (HSG) translated and distributed an open letter sent to Rémy Cointreau by the two Haitian orange workers’ unions. The letter countered the “mass of gross and deliberate lies” in the company’s Guacamal S.A. in Haiti brochure. With September’s announcement of Rémy Cointreau’s first quarter revenues of US$192 million/£134 million (up 30% from a year earlier), the HSG renewed its call for the French drinks giant to help resolve the dispute. We forwarded a press release to thousands of media and non-governmental organisations, trade unions and individuals in the UK, US, Canada and Haiti.

In an attempt to enlist the support of the British Labour Party, the HSG wrote to both Neil Turner, the Labour MP for Wigan, and the Labour Party leader of the Wigan Metropolitan Borough Council, asking them to support the Cointreau workers’ unions. Wigan is “an archetypal Northern working class town in culture, economy and politics”, and was the subject of George Orwell’s study of poverty in Depression-era Britain, The Road to Wigan Pier. It is also twinned with Angers, the French town where Rémy Cointreau’s distillery is based.

After reading that the Deputy Prime Minister enjoyed Cointreau nightcaps, we wrote to him too: “Mr Prescott, in Haiti, the British Labour Party is referred to in Creole as the Parti Trasyay which translates as the ‘Workers’ Party’! We trust that you can reassure us that the Labour Party still believes in internationalism and solidarity with workers on strike.”

Sadly, neither John Prescott nor the Labour Party’s Wigan representatives were able to reassure us or even reply. But we were not alone.

On 23 August The Guardian’s Matthew Norman wrote that Prescott’s staff at the Cabinet Office refused to answer his paper’s inquiries about this apparent lack of support for Haitian workers.

Better news from the International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers Associations which informed us it has been supporting the Cointreau workers’ campaign, and is interested in developing closer ties with Haiti’s new unions.

As the new orange-growing season has now started with the Haitian management still refusing to recognise the workers’ union at St Raphaël and only offering a derisory pay increase to workers at Madeline, activists in the US and Europe are planning to re-launch a concerted international campaign in late November.