It is common knowledge that the United States uses covert operations and the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) to destabilize and even overthrow progressive governments, and to subvert democratic political movements throughout the Americas and beyond. Guatemala in 1954, Cuba in 1961, Chile in 1973, and Nicaragua during the 1980s, are just some of the better known examples.

More recently, the CIA has admitted that its intelligence ‘assets’ in Haiti included Toro Constant, who was the leader of the FRAPH death squad, and, according to a leaked CIA memo, planned the 1993 assassination of Justice Minister Guy Malary. The refusal to return Haitian Army and FRAPH documents taken by US troops in 1994 can only be interpreted as an unwillingness to reveal more about US involvement in the 1991 coup d’état, and the terror campaign that followed.

The use of violence and repression is though only one strategy utilised to enhance US interests in Latin America and the Caribbean. In a recent interview with Haiti Briefing, Ben Dupuy, a spokesperson for the National Popular Assembly, drew attention to other techniques pioneered in Nicaragua and now being used in Haiti. After pointing to the similarities between the US-organised Contra in Nicaragua, and the FRAPH in Haiti, and the use of both to create a debilitating sense of insecurity, Dupuy compared the US-led process of building opposition party coalitions in both countries:

“In Nicaragua it took the form of uniting the extreme right and former Somocistas in a coalition of reactionary forces that won the election in 1990. I think they are trying to implement the same strategy in Haiti by creating a kind of platform of different organisations that include the party of the Duvalierist, Roger Lafontant, who staged an unsuccessful coup against Aristide in January 1991. It (the coalition) will put forward candidates in forthcoming elections, but I think they will have trouble finding a presidential candidate like Chamorro.”

The Nicaraguan National Opposition Union (UNO) that defeated the Sandinistas was designed and sponsored to the tune of $30 million by the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), a foreign aid programme founded by President Ronald Reagan and funded by the US government to ‘promote democracy abroad’. In Haiti, a NED subsidiary, the International Republican Institute (IRI) has been active in so-called ‘democracy enhancement’ since 1995. This April, after months of organising meetings and conferences, its efforts bore fruit when 26 small right wing, Duvalierist, and what have been described as “ex-Lavalas opportunist” political parties...
Interview with Claudette Werlegh

C Claudette Werlegh was Foreign Minister during the monarchical years 1993-94 when UN troops intervened, bringing an end to a long political deadlock and restoring the elected government. In November 1995, she was appointed to her current position, which is running the judicial reform programme, and the Ministry of Development (AID), which since the late 1980s in Haiti has channelled funds from USAID and NIH to small projects, like health clinics and conservative media outlets, and apologists for the 1991-94 coup regime, and the Ministry of Culture. The new government has been focusing on economic development, reducing poverty, and increasing political stability. The government has been working closely with international donors, including USAID and the World Bank, to secure financial assistance and support for its development agenda. The government has also been working to strengthen its institutional capacity and improve governance. Despite progress, there remain significant challenges, including poverty, inequality, and weak institutions. The government is committed to addressing these challenges through a combination of policy reforms, institutional strengthening, and increased investment in human capital and infrastructure. In your current position, you are responsible for the judicial reform programme and the Ministry of Development (AID). What are the key priorities for these departments? How are you working to improve economic development and reduce poverty in Haiti? The judicial reform programme is focused on strengthening the rule of law, improving access to justice, and promoting accountability. We are working to modernize the judiciary, increase efficiency, and ensure that justice is administered fairly and impartially. The Ministry of Development (AID) is focused on providing development assistance to the people of Haiti, particularly in the areas of education, health, and infrastructure. We are working to increase access to basic services, promote economic growth, and improve the livelihoods of Haitians. What are some of the most significant challenges you face in your work? How are you addressing these challenges? One of the biggest challenges is poverty and inequality. We are working to address this through a variety of programs, including education and health initiatives, and by providing assistance to the most vulnerable communities. Another challenge is corruption. We are working to strengthen the institutions that combat corruption and to promote transparency and accountability in all areas of government. How do you see your work as Foreign Minister fitting into the broader goals of the government? As Foreign Minister, my work is focused on promoting the interests of Haiti and its people on the international stage. This includes advocating forcallback to the broader goals of the government. How do you see your work as Foreign Minister fitting into the broader goals of the government? As Foreign Minister, my work is focused on promoting the interests of Haiti and its people on the international stage. This includes advocating for

Breaking the deadlock

The deadlock has persisted for so long but I think that it will only be broken when the political will on the part of the political leaders involved. There is conflict between institutions (the legislature and the executive), and there are conflicting political and personal interests. Until we realize that the people are suffering and put these interests aside, there will never be a solution to the crisis. Werlegh is critical of both of the lack of leadership provided by President Préval and the lack of popular participation in the political process. "I think that the President has the authority to make political institutions work properly, absolutely all of the parties involved should take a far way. He has discussions, but the results have never been made public. The problem is that time concentration on that little political group only, because it is not only the case of civil society too. Although people are

Photo by Leah Gooden

I would not be surprised if there are people who are asking for their help. They say they offer a service and when people don’t have the basic infrastructure or money they understand that people don’t even see the danger that you or I do. Some Haitians do however see the danger. The leader of the Anti-

neoliberal Bloc of MPs, Jasmín Joseph, said "IRI encourages impu-
rity. It is an agent of US imperi-

alism." Independent MP, Alix Filé-Amy called for the IRI to be re-

elected from the country, and re-
taining its role in creating the

CHPP, said, "You cannot have democracy with anti-democrats." In July supporters of Aristide’s Fanmi Lavalas broke up a confer-
estence organised by the IRI in the towns of St. Marc. In September popular organisations invited to an IRI meeting in the city of Aux Cayes walked out when they were asked to fill out questionnaires de-
tailing their political activities and affiliations. They denounced the "dubious methods of the IRI" and demanded its removal from the country.

Cadele Haitian Info, Agence Haiti Press, Haiti Press, USAID 1999 Congressional Pre-

sentations, Update on IRI Activi-

ties in Haiti.
Navassa Island — Haiti’s Malvinas?

Earlier this year a dispute over ownership of an uninhabited, two-square-mile island located 35 miles west of the southern tip of the Haitian mainland, flared into a diplomatic incident and ignited nationalist opinion across Haitian society.

The island of Navassa has been claimed as an integral part of Haitian territory in every Haitian Constitution since independence in 1804. But in 1857, a US entrepreneur seized the island and proclaimed it US territory under the US Guano Islands Act of 1856. This law unilaterally decreed that the US could take possession of any uninhabited island covered with guano (bird-droppings), which was used to make fertilizer and gunpowder during the 19th century.

Records found in the Public Records Office in London detail correspondence on the subject in 1858 between the British Ambassador in Haiti and the then Foreign Secretary, Lord Malmesbury. A British Navy ship had visited the island and found 60 employees of the Philadelphia Guano Company working there and claiming it as a US possession. However, in letters to London, the British Ambassador states that "Navassa was undoubtedly a possession of Haiti."

A British adventurer failed with a proposed deal with the Haitian government to exploit the guano deposits, and the US company continued to monopolise the resource until it went bankrupt in 1901. In 1917 the US built an unmanned lighthouse on the island to warn ships sailing to and from the newly opened Panama Canal.

Since then, Navassa has been ignored by all but Haitian fishermen who visit to harvest fruit and vegetable crops. But in August this year a team of scientists from the US Centre for Marine Conservation made a study of the island, and declared they had found at least 25 plant and animal species unique to Navassa.

Alerted to the existence of the island, a US businessman, seeking to capitalise on the growing demand for organic fertiliser, has claimed the island under the 1856 Guano Act.

Radio phone-ins and commentaries in Haiti buzzed with indignation at this latest affront to Haitian sovereignty. Haiti’s Foreign Minister declared "Navassa is part of Haitian territory", and Archbishop Willy Remus said, "They cannot come and write our land just because they think they are powerful. It’s not might that makes right, but international law."

Hurricane George appeal

Thank you to our supporters who donated money to the appeal launched by the Lambi Fund of Haiti in the aftermath of the destruction wreaked by Hurricane Georges. We have sent a cheque for £400 to the Lambi Fund which will be added to the £11,000 raised in the US.

In November, Lambi Fund director, Julie Meyer, wrote to thank the contributors in the UK: "We have been able to provide some immediate assistance to communities with which we have been working, as well as to begin to lay plans for longer-term reconstruction.

Though the effects of Hurricane Georges in Haiti were never well-publicised and the even more devastating Hurricane Mitch in Central America overshadowed Georges, conditions are dire in Haiti. With huge crop losses and infrastructure destruction, peasants - Haiti’s backbone - will have a very difficult time cleaning fields, rebuilding irrigation ditches and re-planting, at the same time worrying about feeding their families in the short term.

Your contribution is just one small part of a heroic effort under way in Haiti to rebuild rural communities. With an ineffective central government, peasant and women’s associations are more crucial than ever in providing organisation and coordination for this effort. Thanks for giving us the means to work alongside these groups."

Pinouch and Constant

Two Haitian human rights organisations have declared their solidarity with the victims of the Pinouch dictatorship by supporting the move to extradite President Jean-Claude Duvalier to the United States. At the end of November, the two organisations wrote to Home Secretary, Jack Straw, asking him to make a political decision that would once again demonstrate to the world the greatness of the British nation which had fought the abomination of Nazism.

In Haiti, the Pinouch affair has been followed with great interest. Numerous victims and families of victims of Haiti’s dictators are waiting to find out if they will be able to bring charges against Jean-Claude Duvalier, in exile in France, and General Raoul Cedras, now living in Panama.

Meanwhile, another notorious human rights violator, Toto Constant, the leader of the FRAPH death squad, continues to enjoy the protection of the US government which has blocked moves for his return from New York to face trial in Haiti. In October, a New York City Council committee voted to put pressure on the US government to deport or detain Constant. Michael Ratner, lead attorney for the Centre for Constitutional Rights, said in testimony to the committee on International and Intergroup Relations, "In my view, Constant is our Pinouch." He added, "Basically, we have here living with us a terrorist, a torturer and a murderer, and we should do no less than the Spanish are trying to do and the British are trying to do with Pinouch."