

**Testimony of
Adolfo A. Franco,
Assistant Administrator,
Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean
United States Agency for International Development**

Before

**The Committee on Foreign Relations
United States Senate**

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee, it is a pleasure to appear before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Subcommittee on Western Hemisphere, Peace corps and Narcotics Affairs, to discuss with you the unfolding humanitarian situation in Haiti and USAID's continuing assistance with helping the Haitian people realize their dream of peace, prosperity and democracy. The central focus of my remarks is on what USAID is doing through our humanitarian assistance programs to mitigate the effects of the social and political unrest on the most vulnerable segments of Haiti's population. This statement is an update of my presentation of March 3, 2004 to the House Committee on International Relations. This testimony reflects current events in Haiti, especially in the aftermath of President's Aristide resignation and departure from Haiti. The political situation remains fluid and the potential continues for further civil unrest and violence perpetrated by armed gangs. This is evident by Sunday's recent events with the demonstrations which lead to the deaths of four individuals including a foreign journalist, and 20 others wounded.

Food Security

The ongoing political turmoil and economic deterioration in Haiti have created the potential for a humanitarian crisis, and have affected numerous aspects of development such as food security, health and nutrition, and water and sanitation. While sufficient food stocks are currently in-country and no immediate food crisis exists at present, this could change quickly in coming weeks, especially in the north, due to insecurity and disruptions in the transportation and distribution system. USAID currently has in storage, more than 11,000 metric tons of P. L. 480 Title II food commodities for direct food distribution to Haiti's indigent populations and children's orphanages throughout the country. Most of the food stocks are under secured storage in Port-au-Prince. The World Food Program and European Union also have available for distribution, stocks of at least 5,000 metric tons, and 3,100 tons respectively.

Humanitarian Program

The U.S. Government through USAID is Haiti's largest bilateral donor. In FY03, USAID contributed \$71 million. Through fiscal years 1995-2003, USAID provided a total of \$850 million in direct bilateral assistance. Prior to the outbreak of violence, USAID had planned \$52 million in assistance in FY04 to programs ranging from health, democracy and governance, education and economic growth. We are currently analyzing additional

assistance options. To ensure that quality service delivery continues to benefit those Haitians who are most in need, USAID assistance is channeled principally through NGOs. USAID is also the lead donor in addressing critical transnational issues such as HIV/AIDS and other debilitating infectious diseases, a seriously degraded natural resource base, respect for human rights and the rule of law, and trafficking in persons.

USAID uses food aid both to supplement its humanitarian program and as a truly development tool. PL 480 Title II funds account for more than one-half of USAID/Haiti's funding. This food-assisted program promotes improvements in household food security, nutrition, and the welfare of women, children, and poor, marginal farmers in six out of the nine districts of Haiti--- affecting the lives of 640,000 poor Haitians. Emergency response is also critical. Last year, over \$3 million in emergency assistance was provided to communities affected by drought and flooding.

Civil Unrest and the USAID Program

Lawlessness continues and the situation remains fluid following the resignation of Aristide and the appointment of Supreme Court Justice, Boniface Alexandre as the interim president. The presence of international security forces has already improved the security situation in country. Nonetheless, there are a significant number of weapons in the hands of armed gangs in Haiti and there have been violent conflicts between opposition protestors and supporters of the former Aristide government, as well as, widespread looting, and robberies of civilians at roadblocks throughout the capital. On March 7, violence broke out during a protest in the capital city of Port-au-Prince, resulting in at least four deaths and at least 20 injuries. Aside from this most recent indication of unrest, the situation in Port-au-Prince has been relatively calm. According to the U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA), the situation in Port-au-Prince is returning to normalcy, as public transport has resumed and the security situation has become more stabilized. However, some public services, including the provision of water, electricity, and communications, are not functioning at normal levels. Basic health services are also inadequate.

Increasing conflict since early February has severely restricted movement of commercial goods and relief supplies, including food, fuel and medical supplies, creating difficult conditions in some areas, and for those normally dependent on food assistance. Access and distribution remain major obstacles for both humanitarian deliveries and regular consumption. USAID and its implementing partners continue to report that the primary humanitarian concerns at present stem from limited access, security, and unsafe passage for transporting and distributing relief supplies, fuel, water, and food commodities. There appears to be no massive shortages of food or other essential commodities at this time as Haiti benefited from good harvests over the last two agricultural seasons. However, an accurate assessment of the situation outside of Port-au-Prince has just begun.

Food Availability: USAID's NGO development food aid partners and the U.N. World Food Program (WFP) currently have approximately 15,000 metric tons (MT) of food stocks in country. The European Union (EU) has 2,500 MT at a warehouse and 600 MT

at the port in Port-au-Prince. There is also an additional 2,000 MT available from other donors. Thus the total amount of food assistance available from all donors is approximately 20,000 MT. There are no massive shortages of food or other essential commodities in Haiti at this time. Pockets of food insecurity have been reported and orphanages and institutional feeding programs in urban areas are vulnerable to prolonged food shortages; however USAID and cooperating sponsors are not requesting emergency programs.

Due to poverty and chronic malnutrition in Haiti, some segments of the Haitian population are vulnerable to severe malnutrition. However, daily reports from USAID's four partners in Haiti—CARE, Save the Children Foundation (SCF), World Vision International (WVI), and CRS—indicate that none believe the situation requires re-programming of planned food assistance. Region-specific reports from food aid organizations are summarized as follows:

- WVI does not anticipate a food crisis erupting in its targeted areas of Central Plateau and Île de la Gonâve, even if distributions stop for a short time because of the strong coping mechanisms among the populations and the good December harvest. WVI is currently operating at 100 percent on Île de la Gonâve.
- CRS reported that food supplies for orphanages in Haiti are limited and some orphanages have begun to run out of food. CRS is considering using existing funds to purchase food on the local market for vulnerable orphanages.
- On February 22, looters broke into a WFP warehouse in Cap-Haïtien and took 800 metric tons (MT) of food stocks, mainly vegetable oil and pulses. Despite the loss of food stocks, WFP estimates that it still has sufficient stocks either in Haiti or en route to the country to provide assistance to 373,000 people.
- WFP reported that the shipment of 1,200 MT of rice scheduled to arrive at the Cap-Haïtien port is on hold until the security situation improves. According to WFP, a total of 268,000 people are in need of food in the north and northeast, where prices have increased since early February.
- USAID and WFP have undertaken a rapid assessment in Cap-Haïtien to identify current needs in schools and health centers. WFP is also preparing a six-month Emergency Operation (EMOP) to provide assistance to the most affected people in the north areas of the country. WFP's assistance, in partnership with other agencies, aims to ensure that children and their families meet daily nutritional needs in order to prevent a decline in their nutritional status.

Fuel Availability: Fuel is vital not only for transport, but also for the continued operation of facilities and equipment such as hospitals, bakeries, and freight moving equipment at ports. According to the fuel companies, there is currently enough fuel in storage in Port-au-Prince to supply the country for two to three weeks, but the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) are concerned that fuel shortages may lead

to the shutdown of the capitol's electrical plant and water treatment station. CARE reported that there is a potable water crisis in Gonaives due to a lack of fuel. Although CARE has food stocks in Port-au-Prince, the organization lacks fuel for transportation, particularly for food distributions in the north.

Medical Supplies: A major humanitarian concern at present is the interruption of basic health services, particularly in the north. The ability to purchase and transport drugs and fuel to health facilities nationwide has been disrupted in major population centers due to the sporadic access to banks and insecure travel on the roads. The ICRC has been organizing regular convoys to both Gonaives and Cap-Haitien in cooperation with the Haitian Red Cross, and ICRC medical teams have also been stationed at facilities in these cities.

It is not clear at this time how many medical facilities have been affected by the recent unrest. Reports from the Hospital Communauté Haitienne in the capitol indicate that there is an increase in the number of trauma patients at the hospital and care is hindered by fuel shortages for generator power and lack of surgical and medical kits. Similar disruptions of supplies are occurring in Gonaives and other areas.

Currently there are no reports of an outbreak of the six major childhood vaccine-preventable diseases. However, increased cases of diarrhea and fever have been reported throughout the country. The Expanded Program on Immunization (EPI) has sentinel sites in Haiti, of which 30 percent to 40 percent are still functional and operating.

A Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) epidemiologist recently arrived in Haiti to reactivate the health surveillance system, as Haiti lacks adequate surveillance data from health facilities throughout the country. PAHO will monitor data on measles outbreaks, polio, diphtheria, typhoid, and violence, as well as acute malnutrition. According to PAHO, there is a shortage of tuberculosis (TB) drugs and a disruption of TB programs in the north. Médecins Sans Frontières-Belgium is requesting TB drugs from PAHO.

Port-de-Paix Assessment: On March 5, representatives of USAID/OFDA, USAID/FFP, U.N. World Food Program (WFP), U.N. Children's Education Fund (UNICEF), and CARE conducted an assessment of the humanitarian situation in the city of Port-de-Paix, located on the northwestern coast. The assessment indicated that looters broke into the city's Department of Health office, and the vaccines in the cold chain may have been compromised. There have been no reports of measles or any other disease outbreak in Port-de-Paix. Access to food is also becoming difficult for the poorest segments of the population, particularly since the suspension of WFP food distributions. Food prices have reportedly increased from 25 to 100 percent. Some fuel is available on the market, though the cost of one gallon has increased from approximately 23 Haitian dollars to 80 Haitian dollars. Lack of fuel has affected the city's electricity supply and hindered the local hospital's ability to sterilize equipment and thereby perform major surgeries.

Les Cayes Assessment: On March 5, representatives from USAID/OFDA, USAID/Haiti, CRS, and UNICEF conducted an assessment of the humanitarian situation in the southwestern town of Les Cayes. The humanitarian situation has not deteriorated

significantly as a result of the recent political unrest, and the only sector currently affected appears to be fuel.

Displaced Populations: USAID and its NGO partners continue to report very limited displacement and no “sites” with concentrations of internally displaced persons (IDPs). According to the U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA), numbers of IDPs cannot be accurately assessed at present. However, UNOCHA notes that significant numbers of residents are moving from insecure cities to other areas or returning to their places of birth in the mountains. Movements have also been reported from rural areas to main cities.

On February 23, the Government of the Dominican Republic (GODR) indicated that the Dominican Republic does not have structures in place to manage a migratory wave of refugees. The GODR also noted that Dominican authorities have closed the border with Haiti along critical points. On February 24, the GODR sent 1,200 additional troops to patrol its border with Haiti. The GODR has declined to state the total number of troops along the 225-mile border. According to the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees, approximately 400 Haitians have fled to the DR, Jamaica, and Cuba since early February 2004.

U.S. Government Humanitarian Response to Haiti’s Political Crisis

- On February 18, U.S. Ambassador to Haiti James B. Foley issued a disaster declaration due to the ongoing complex emergency in Haiti. As an initial response to the situation, OFDA has provided \$50,000 through USAID/Haiti to support the transport and distribution of emergency relief supplies, including 12 medical kits and three surgical kits, valued at approximately \$87,000. Each medical kit is equipped to serve 10,000 people for approximately three months. On February 26, the medical kits arrived in Port-au-Prince. In addition, OFDA approved \$400,000 in funding for PAHO to purchase additional medical supplies and to conduct emergency relief activities in Haiti.
- On February 24, OFDA deployed a three-person team to Port-au-Prince, including a Senior Regional Advisor as Team Leader, a Health Officer, and an Information Officer.
- OFDA has contracted with Airserve for two to three aircraft to move relief personnel and light cargo around Haiti if required in the coming days and weeks.
- USAID/Food For Peace has significant amounts of additional food stocks which can be transported to Haiti by sea for food assistance within 7-14 days if needed
- OFDA has awarded a grant in the amount of \$400,000 to CRS for local procurement and emergency cash grants to institutions serving vulnerable populations such as orphanages and hospitals.
- The U.S. Embassy in Port-au-Prince is currently developing a security asset plan that will address protection of people and USG buildings, transport of goods and people, and security of NGO partners, such as CRS, WVI, CARE, and Save the Children. A top priority of the security asset plan is to secure and protect the airport and port in the capital.

- There are approximately 15,000 MT of USG-procured food commodities immediately available for distribution in Haiti. USAID will continue to work with other members of the donor community to mobilize the additional resources required for the Haiti post-conflict effort.

CONCLUSION

In sum, the United States and the international community continue to stand with the people of Haiti. USAID is closely monitoring the humanitarian impact of the current political crisis in Haiti. With the presence of international forces in Haiti, the security situation has improved significantly and normalcy is slowly returning to the capitol, Port-au-Prince and other affected areas. Also, the delivery of humanitarian assistance has improved. USAID/Haiti and OFDA personnel are continuing to assess the situation, in order to deploy assistance where it is most urgently needed. Further, USAID is collaborating with the interim government of Haiti, other USG Agencies, donors, and implementing partners to develop a post-conflict program strategy that will ensure the continued provision of emergency relief and improved basic services, and generate productive employment over the immediate, short and medium-term. In addition, USAID is working with other donors to jointly identify long-term priorities in Haiti.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my testimony.

