



Consider Progress Made in Haiti

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The United States repeatedly has called for the disarming of Haiti's illegally armed groups, and DeWayne Wickhamis wrong to suggest otherwise ("Payoffs to Haiti's renegade soldiers won't buy peace," The Forum, Jan. 4).

At a news conference in Haiti on Dec. 1, Secretary of State Colin Powell said, "There must be no role in government for those who engage in political violence." He called on the United Nations stabilization mission in Haiti to "forcefully take on armed individuals and...remove weapons from the hands of all parties who are not part of the government." The U.N. mission is reviewing proposals that would allow former soldiers to be disarmed and reintegrated into civilian life.

Since illegal armed groups are a principal cause of Haiti's instability, the United States would support a comprehensive approach that dissolves gangs and armed political factions. Payments to former soldiers should not be made unless a comprehensive plan is in place. We would never agree to any plan that gives compensation to gross human-rights violators or people who face indictment for crimes in the United States.

The United States will continue to hold the interim government of Haiti to high human-rights standards. We will speak out when Haiti fails to adhere to the rule of law, as we did on Aug. 17, 2004, when a Haitian court hastily acquitted two former Haitian military and police officials for the 1993 murder of businessman Antoine Izmary.

The situation in Haiti is difficult but far from bleak, and progress is being made. Elections will be held this year to decide a constitutional government. The United States gave Haiti about \$230 million in aid in 2004, and it is working with Haiti's interim government, its friends in the international community and the Caribbean nation's talented diaspora to rebuild the country and improve the lives of Haiti's people.

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