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Media Analysis

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Office of Research

Americas: Don't Blame U.S. for Taking Lead in Haiti

Most Western Hemisphere media commend U.S. relief efforts as "sincere," with some rejecting allegations of U.S. imperialist intent. Several hope the international community will turn current aid into a long-term sustainable development plan for Haiti.

Regional media are quick to reject allegations of a hidden agenda behind U.S. assistance to Haiti. Criticism of U.S. leadership on relief has come in part from leaders such as Venezuelan President Chavez and associated media outlets. When pro-Chavez *Ultimas Noticias* called U.S. efforts "an invasion presented as relief assistance," the Dominican Republic's *Diario Libre* labeled such statements "silliness." Ecuador's popular *Diario Expreso* comments, "To provide assistance is not an invasion, it falls within the scope of humanitarian law."

Criticism also has come from countries, primarily Brazil and Jamaica, which see themselves as rightful leaders of Haitian assistance. Brazil's command of the U.N. peace mission led some Brazilian officials to see it as the "natural candidate to coordinate efforts to help the Haitian nation rise from the ruins." Jamaica's *Sunday Gleaner* argues Jamaica, as the "natural leader" of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and coordinator of its efforts in Haiti, "must spearhead" the nation's rebuilding.

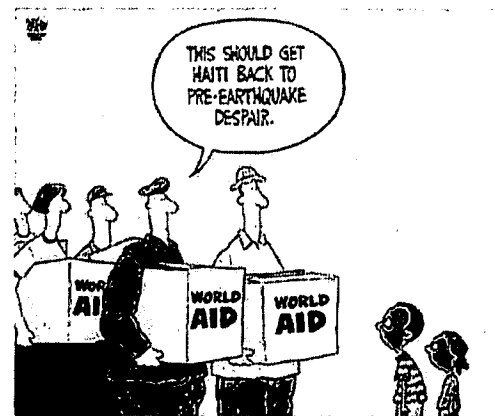
U.S. must take the lead now...

Some media in both Brazil and Jamaica, however, argue that the United States alone is able to lead efforts in Haiti. Brazil's center-right *O Estado de S. Paulo* scolds Brazilian authorities for their "less than awkward" initial reaction to U.S. operations in Haiti. The same paper argues "the Brazilian reaction ignored the basic reality, which was clear to President Preval, that no other country had comparable means to help Haiti other than the U.S." The *Jamaica Observer* concedes the

United States "is probably in the best condition" to "take charge of the situation," but argued it should do so with the support of the U.N. and the CARICOM Secretariat.

...Global community for the long haul

Several outlets note that Haiti has long lacked the infrastructure and institutions that could give its citizens "political, intellectual, and economic freedom." As a result, media, regardless of attitudes toward U.S. relief efforts, now call for the international community to take a more comprehensive approach to aiding Haiti. Chile's conservative *La Tercera* wants the international community, especially Latin America, to maintain a "long-term focus" on Haiti. Both Canada's *Toronto Star* and Jamaica's *Sunday Gleaner* want a "Marshall Plan" for Haiti, not as a U.S. initiative, but as part of a "global effort."



Canada's liberal *Toronto Star*
January 16, 2010

This product analyzes commentary from the Western Hemisphere January 14-22, 2010 reacting to the international relief effort in Haiti. Reports are selected by post for their relevance to U.S. policy and public diplomacy efforts. Prepared by the Office of Opinion Research, Media Reaction Division, rnrMail@state.gov; (202) 736-4330. Drafted by Andrew J. McLean and Julianne Paunescu.

The findings presented do not necessarily reflect the views of the U.S. Government.