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ACTION DS-00

RELEASED IN PART
B1, 1.4(B), 1.4(D)

INFO	LOG-00	MFA-00	NP-00	AF-00	AID-00	AMAD-00	USNW-00
	CIAE-00	INL-00	DNI-00	DODE-00	WHA-00	PERC-00	EAP-00
	H-00	TEDE-00	INR-00	IO-00	LAB-01	M-00	DCP-00
	NRC-00	NSAE-00	NSCE-00	OES-00	OIC-00	OMB-00	NIMA-00
	PC-01	FMPC-00	IRM-00	SSO-00	SS-00	ASDS-00	EPAE-00
	SCRS-00	DSCC-00	PRM-00	DRL-00	G-00	NFAT-00	SAS-00
	SWCI-00	/002W					

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R 011927Z AUG 05
 FM AMEMBASSY PORT AU PRINCE
 TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0569
 INFO HAITI COLLECTIVE
 AMEMBASSY BRASILIA
 AMEMBASSY PRETORIA
 AMCONSUL QUEBEC
 HQ USSOUTHCOM J2 MIAMI FL
 USMISSION USUN NEW YORK
 CCGDSEVEN MIAMI FL//OLE/OI//

C O N F I D E N T I A L PORT AU PRINCE 001964

WHA/EX PLEASE PASS USOAS
 SOUTHCOM ALSO FOR POLAD
 DEPT FOR DS/IP/WHA
 DS/DSS/ITA
 DSERCC

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/25/2014
 TAGS: PGOV, PREL, ASEC, HA
 SUBJECT: BRAZIL SHOWS BACKBONE IN BEL AIR

REF: PAP 1845

Classified By: Ambassador James B. Foley, reasons 1.4 (B) and (D)

1. (SBU) Summary: Since mid-June, MINUSTAH's Brazilian Battalion has conducted a series of successful operations to re-take control of the Bel Air district of Port-au-Prince. Led by the eager and capable new Battalion Commander Novaes and assisted at times by Haitian National Police (HNP) and CIVPOL units, the Brazilians established a permanent base in the heart of a zone that was previously dominated by armed criminal gangs and a source of destabilization for the entire city. Since entering Bel Air in force, the UN has captured or killed dozens of armed criminals, liberated several kidnap victims, seized weapons and ammunition, obliterated gang strongholds, and restored a sense of normal life to much of

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE
 CLASSIFIED BY DEPT. OF STATE, L. R. LOHMAN, DAS, A/RPS
 REVIEW AUTHORITY: MELVIN E SINN
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 DECLASSIFY AFTER: 25 OCT 2014
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the area. The assertive tactics have already produced a marked decrease in violence in and around the downtown area, restoring some confidence in prospects for stability throughout the city. End summary.

2. (SBU) A stronghold of pro-Aristide chimeres, Bel Air has been a hotbed of violence since the start of Operation Baghdad in October 2004. In recent months, the slum became ground zero for the wave of uncontrolled violence and kidnappings that gripped the city. Though separated geographically from Cite Soleil, Bel Air has been dominated by the same network of criminal gangs who used the neighborhood as a base for theft, kidnapping, and murder. The region has been ruled by three primary armed criminal gangs: the 'Armee sans Tet' led by "Toutou," Solino base led by "Ti About," and Delmas 2 base led by "Frank" and others. The location of Bel Air next to the Champs de Mars and downtown Port-au-Prince afforded the gangs a strategic base for terrorizing the population throughout central Port-au-Prince (as in the destruction of the Tet Boeuf Market on May 30). Uncontainable violence in the area was one of the reasons post was forced to increase security measures this summer.

3. (SBU) According to a variety of MINUSTAH sources, beginning on June 17, the Brazilian Battalion (whose Area of Responsibility includes Bel Air) launched "Operation Thunder": a series of raids to capture armed criminals and wrest control of Bel Air from the gangs. In one such raid on June 29 ("Operation Hammer"), MINUSTAH troops cordoned and searched the heart of Toutou's territory under heavy fire, capturing 13 armed criminals, killing 7 others, and liberating one hostage. Troops conducted similar raids in early July, culminating on July 14 with "Operation Freedom Bel Air," a final incursion in which MINUSTAH took over Toutou's base, turning it into a permanent MINUSTAH command center at the core of Bel Air. The new Brazilian base is now occupied 24 hours a day by a platoon of soldiers and is located in the nucleus of the Bel Air neighborhood where criminal gangs previously planned operations and held hostages (the base is situated on Rue Delmas 2 between Rue St. Martin and Rue Tiremasse). The Brazilians quickly dismantled the barricades and trenches erected by the armed groups and re-established transit through the surrounding area.

4. (C) Since establishing the permanent base on the west side of Bel Air, the Brazilian Battalion has continued operations to root out pockets of gang strength in lower Bel Air while preparing to eventually move into the Solino district to the east where many of the criminals (including Toutou) are

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presumed to have fled and where kidnappings continue unabated. "Operation Solino" on July 22 netted 7 arrests and liberated another hostage; "Operation Sunset" on July 25 captured 13 criminals; and "Operation Scissors" on July 26 cut the link between Solino and Bel Air, and also liberated one kidnap victim. On July 29, UN sources say Toutou attempted to strike back, launching a pre-dawn attack that was easily repelled by the Brazilian soldiers. One of the attackers was killed.

5. (C) MINUSTAH's Bel Air base has a permanent compliment of roughly 50 soldiers, supported by roving patrols of up to 300 more troops, plus Jordanian CIVPOL and HNP units. Together, the forces conduct foot patrols, extensive house searches, convoy escorts, and humanitarian missions. The operations continue to capture weapons and criminals, and are gradually

reducing the freedom of action of the armed individuals who refuse to cooperate. As part of a wider blanket of checkpoints throughout the city, the HNP have moved further into Bel Air as well, arresting 15 criminals and killing two in one operation to liberate a hostage July 14. The Brazilians say they still encounter resistance at times, but they have also gained the confidence of the residents of Bel Air who now share greater information with the troops and the HNP, openly thanking the UN for taking control and decrying the gangs who fled. Angry residents reportedly lynched one kidnapper in the area following an HNP operation that liberated a victim on July 23.

6. (SBU) Though pockets of gang activity remain (particularly in Solino), several significant Bel Air gang strongholds have collapsed. Toutou's band is now fragmented and largely defeated, according to MINUSTAH, and the area around Delmas 2 has been neutralized. People have returned to the streets and businesses are reportedly reopening. Shooting in and around Bel Air has slowed, and armed individuals no longer roam the neighborhood with impunity. Without the guns, political violence has decreased as well. Aristide's much feared birthday July 15 passed without incident, and a pro-Lavalas demonstration on July 27 in Bel Air generated only 30 participants (th same group mobilized over 4000 in May).

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28 that the pro-Lavalas gangs can only mobilize demonstrations at the point of a gun.

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7. (C) Remnants of the gangs have reportedly retreated into Solino (where MINUSTAH plans to attack next) but the different gangs and associated pro-Aristide groups apparently do not get along. Previously noted under Dread Wilme,

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sources suggest the groups are fighting each other for power and revenge. Infighting and fear has led several gang members and Lavalas cell members to make overtures to the U.S. and MINUSTAH for help. Poloff met with emissaries of a handful of gang leaders seeking safety and/or amnesty on July 26 and MINUSTAH met with the leader of Bel Air's Lavalas cell Samba Boukman on July 27 to entertain a similar request. MINUSTAH DDR is working on an assortment of programs to take vulnerable youth out of the area and assure safety to older, armed criminals willing to give themselves up.

8. (SBU) MINUSTAH has followed military operations in Bel Air with visible social projects aimed at encouraging gangs to disarm and convincing residents who fled to come back. Immediately following "Operation Freedom Bel Air," the Brazilian Battalion commenced road repair and clean-up activities, medical care programs and other humanitarian projects. The UN says that residents have actively assisted Brazilian troops with the clean-up, expressing satisfaction with the UN presence while denouncing the criminals that had paralyzed any humanitarian activity in the zone. Post is poised to begin similar humanitarian projects in Bel Air this month.

9. (SBU) Comment: Post has congratulated MINUSTAH and the Brazilian Battalion for the remarkable success achieved in Bel Air in recent weeks (see septel on July 28 Core Group meeting). The security situation in the capital has clearly improved thanks to aggressive incursions in Bel Air and the July 6 raid against Dread Wilme in Cite Soleil. The pacification of Bel Air in particular has spread calm throughout other parts of the city, lowering tensions and raising expectations for successful elections this fall. It is notable that when the people no longer live in fear of the armed gangs that ruled their neighborhoods, they willingly help the UN and shun Lavalas protests. But vigilance is still necessary and we have urged MINUSTAH to maintain pressure against criminal elements that remain in Bel Air. Moreover, MINUSTAH needs to wrest control of Cite Soleil from the gangs if there is to be durable security in Port-au-Prince and the conditions necessary for successfully holding elections.



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