

Haiti in Crisis: What Role for a Multinational Security Support Mission?

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The political and security situation in Haiti has deteriorated since late February, with nearly [1,200 killed](#) between January 1 and March 6, 2024. The Haitian government has declared and extended a state of emergency in response to widespread violence among gangs that now control prisons, police stations, highways, and the [main port](#), through which most food enters the country. These gangs—some of which have been aligned with political elites—amassed power and control over Haitian territory and illicit markets amid the deeply unpopular government of Acting Prime Minister Ariel Henry, who [assumed office](#) following the July 2021 assassination of President Jovenel Moïse. Henry resigned on March 12, in the face of U.S. and international pressure to allow the formation of a transitional government as well as threats from gangs and [armed groups](#) that prevented his return to Haiti from a trip abroad in late February. A [transition council](#) selected among a cross-section of [Haitian stakeholders](#) with U.S. and Caribbean Community (CARICOM) backing is to choose a new prime minister while a United Nations (U.N.)-authorized, Kenya-led multinational security support mission (MSS) prepares to deploy to the country.

The Biden Administration has [pledged support](#) for the MSS and asked other countries to contribute funding or forces. In October 2023, Secretary of State Antony Blinken [announced](#) plans “to work with Congress” to provide \$100 million in foreign assistance for the MSS and up to \$100 million in Department of Defense (DOD) “enabling support.” On March 12, Blinken [pledged](#) another \$100 million in DOD support.

Some Members of Congress have expressed concerns about the crisis in Haiti and its potential to [destabilize](#) the Caribbean and fuel migration. Some Members [support the MSS concept](#). Others maintain there has not been [adequate planning](#) for the mission and have reportedly [withheld requested MSS funds](#). It is uncertain whether the MSS would be able to deploy without U.S. funding.

Origins of the MSS

In October 2022, Henry [requested](#) the deployment of an international force to help the Haitian National Police (HNP) quell insecurity and facilitate humanitarian aid. Canada, Brazil, and other countries in the Western Hemisphere that had been involved in the U.N. Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH; 2004-2017) declined U.S. requests to lead such a force. MINUSTAH remains controversial in Haiti due to alleged [sexual abuse](#) by some of its forces and its inadvertent [introduction of cholera](#) into the country.

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In July 2023, Kenya announced it would [consider](#) leading a multinational force in Haiti and sending 1,000 police, if authorized by the U.N. Security Council. Whereas U.S. and CARICOM officials praised Kenya, some critics [questioned](#) the human rights record of the Kenyan police and whether they could overcome language and cultural barriers. Others [oppose](#) an international security force deployment, arguing that previous foreign interventions in Haiti have failed.

In October 2023, the U.N. Security Council adopted [Resolution 2699](#) to authorize a non-U.N. conducted multinational force, financed by voluntary contributions, to provide security for critical infrastructure and operational support to the HNP. The resolution called on member states to contribute personnel, equipment, financial, and logistical support.

Current Status of the MSS

In January 2024, Kenya's High Court blocked the government from deploying police officers to Haiti without a bilateral security agreement, amid debate about the deployment's [constitutionality](#). Kenya and Haiti signed [a reciprocal agreement](#) on March 1, intended to satisfy that requirement, but Kenya decided to [delay deployment](#) until a new Haitian government is in place.

Although [some countries](#) were initially willing to support the MSS, several more have pledged financial and personnel contributions since February 2024 conferences in [Brazil](#) and [Guyana](#). Commitments include [2,000 soldiers from Benin](#); additional forces from the Bahamas, Bangladesh, Barbados, and Chad; an [\\$80.5 million](#) pledge from Canada; and [\\$10.8 million](#) in donations from other countries.

Prior to deployment, the MSS needs to [present](#) an operational plan to the U.N. Security Council and create an oversight mechanism to monitor the mission's conduct. Participating personnel would be subject to U.N. vetting, while those receiving U.S. support would be subject to U.S. human rights vetting pursuant to the "Leahy Laws" ([22 U.S.C. §2378d](#) and [10 USC §362](#)). Some human rights experts have [advocated](#) additional training and mechanisms to prevent and punish human rights violations.

Some [observers](#) express concerns about how much more complex the security situation has become since the authorization of the MSS, saying it may need to be strengthened. The mission's key partner, the HNP, is weak and, at times, [allegedly complicit](#) with criminal groups. It is as yet unclear whether the Haitian transition council will choose a prime minister with sufficient support to begin establishing the political conditions needed to stabilize the country and bolster the mission's prospects for success.

U.S. Funding and Congressional Consideration

U.S. support for the MSS is intended by the Administration to complement funds that have been provided to train and equip the HNP through bilateral U.S. programs and the multi-donor [U.N. Basket Fund](#). The United States allocated [\\$230.9 million](#) to Haiti in FY2023, including \$45 million in International Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement (INCLE) assistance focused primarily on the HNP. It also allocated an additional [\\$112.9 million](#) in humanitarian assistance to the country. The Administration is requesting [\\$356.7 million](#) in bilateral aid to Haiti in FY2025, including \$169 million in INCLE—\$100 million of which would support the MSS.

In addition to evaluating the Administration's FY2025 budget request, Congress may consider whether or not to provide funding for Haiti and the MSS as part of the ongoing FY2024 appropriations process and/or shape how prior year appropriations are used in Haiti. For example, some Members of Congress [reportedly](#) have placed a hold on roughly \$40 million in FY2019 INCLE for MSS support notified to Congress in October 2023.

Congress also may monitor the MSS and efforts to broker a political transition in Haiti and may assess possible additional measures should the crisis in Haiti deteriorate further. U.S. marines have [deployed](#) to

Haiti to evacuate some embassy staff and enhance security at U.S. installations. Administration officials have thus far **ruled out** deploying U.S. troops for stability operations.

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