GLOBAL INITIATIVE
AGAINST TRANSNATIONAL ORGANIZED CRIME

PEACE OPERATIONS IN HAITI

LESSONS FROM TWO DECADES OF UN ENGAGEMENT

Sophie Rutenbar

JANUARY 2026

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author would like to thank Romain Le Cour Grandmaison, head of the Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime (GI-TOC)'s Haiti Observatory for his continuing support, as well as colleagues Ian Tennant, Walter Kemp and Mark Shaw for their thoughtful engagement, Eugene Chen and Arthur Boutellis for their generous review of portions of the document, and all of the interviewees who so willingly gave their time to share their reflections. The author would also like to thank the GI-TOC's Publications team for the effort put into producing this document.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Sophie Rutenbar is a researcher, writer and analyst in the field of international peace and security, with a particular focus on Haiti. She is a consultant for the GI-TOC, and a non-resident fellow with New York University's Center on International Cooperation and the Brookings Institution. A former United Nations staff member, she worked in Port-au-Prince with the UN Integrated Office in Haiti between 2019 and 2023, as well as serving at UN Headquarters in New York in various capacities, including with the policy planning team for UN peacekeeping operations from 2013 to 2015 and 2017 to 2019.

Cover: © *Chandan Khanna/AFP via Getty Images*

Please direct inquiries to:
The Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime
Avenue de France 23
Geneva, CH-1202
Switzerland
www.globalinitiative.net

CONTENTS

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ASIFU	All Sources Information Fusion Unit
BINUH	UN Integrated Office in Haiti
CAR	Central African Republic
CNDDR	National Commission for Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration
CVR	Community violence reduction
DDR	Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
GSF	Gang Suppression Force
HNP	Haitian National Police
JMAC	Joint Mission Analysis Centre
MICAH	International Civilian Support Mission in Haiti
MINUSCA	UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic
MINUSMA	UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali
MINUJUSTH	UN Mission for Justice Support in Haiti
MINUSTAH	UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti
MIPONUH	UN Civilian Police Mission in Haiti
MONUSCO	UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo
MSS mission	Multilateral Security Support mission
NSAG	Non-state armed group
OAS	Organization of American States
PSC	Private security contractor
SPM	Special political mission
SRSG	Special Representative of the Secretary-General
T/PCC	Troop and police contributing country
UCREF	Central Financial Intelligence Unit of Haiti
ULCC	Anti-Corruption Unit of Haiti
UN	United Nations

UNAMA	UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan
UNDP	UN Development Programme
UNMIH	UN Mission in Haiti
UNODC	UN Office on Drugs and Crime
UNSMIH	UN Support Mission to Haiti
UNSMIL	UN Support Mission in Libya
UNSOH	UN Support Office in Haiti
UNSOM	UN Assistance Mission in Somalia
UNTMIH	UN Transition Mission in Haiti
UNVMC	UN Verification Mission in Colombia

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In March 2025, the public appeals became urgent: Port-au-Prince is on the verge of falling to the gangs.[1] Over the previous weeks, the gangs of the Viv Ansanm alliance had seized community after community, infiltrating areas that had previously been considered safe and raising the question: exactly how hard would it be for the gangs to march up the hills from their seaside strongholds and take control of the prime minister's offices, the last major bastion of the Haitian government?

Gangs and organized crime are not new dynamics in Haiti. Armed groups have long been employed by elites to influence political and economic decision-making or even to control the population, while illegal arms and drug trafficking have been a part of the Haitian context for decades.

But Viv Ansanm is something different.[2] The gangs that make up this coalition have put aside turf wars and coalesced around common objectives, including political change. More significantly, they have developed a level of independence and control that puts them on a more equal standing with their former backers among the political and economic elite. In addition to engaging in a robust trade in illicit weapons and ammunition, gangs have developed strong and diversified streams of revenue, including from extortion, illegal checkpoints, kidnapping and various forms of trafficking, using Haiti as a transit point for drugs. Haiti's evolving illicit economy now has immediate and profound impacts on all aspects of daily life in the country, not to mention a significant effect on the security and economies of neighbours in the Caribbean and Latin America, as well as the US and Canada.

The increasing impact of organized crime, trafficking and illicit financial flows in Haiti mirrors concerns about the worldwide spread of transnational organized crime. According to a former head of INTERPOL, the recent 'growth in the breadth, scale and professionalism of organized crime is unprecedented'.[3] This raises concerns that the years to come will see a significant expansion in organized crime, especially given the weakening of long-standing multilateral structures and norms.

As a small island state in the Caribbean, Haiti has the potential to serve as a powerful test of the ability of international actors to support local actors in addressing organized crime. The Security Council's decision to establish a new Gang Suppression Force (GSF)[4] presents an opportunity to rethink past approaches in order to develop and deploy more effective methods of addressing transnational organized crime in the country. Given the increasing scale of organized crime, these methods could be of value in many different settings internationally in the coming years.

Gang leader Jimmy 'Barbecue' Cherizier patrols the streets of Port-au-Prince with G-9 federation gang members, February 2024. Haiti's armed groups have gradually taken control of larger areas of the capital, gaining greater influence over political and economic decision-making. *© Giles Clarke/Getty Images*

Reflecting on the successes and failures of past efforts in Haiti is critical to creating a clearer understanding of what is needed to confront organized crime in the country as well as in other contexts. In Haiti, the United Nations (UN) has been the primary actor on organized crime issues for decades; UN involvement goes back to the early 1990s, in the wake of the country's emergence from dictatorship. From the beginning of the new millennium, with the deployment of the UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH), the UN became increasingly aware of the role of organized criminal dynamics in the larger security situation. The peacekeeping mission, deployed from 2004 to 2017, produced crucial innovations, including the use of intelligence-led operations and the creation of the concept of community violence reduction. Its actions, coupled with efforts by its successor mission, the UN Mission for Justice Support in Haiti (MINUJUSTH), led to improvements in security and governance that were ultimately not sustained. After the October 2019 establishment of a small political mission, the UN Integrated Office in Haiti (BINUH), violence spiralled, leading to the assassination of President Jovenel Moïse in July 2021 and culminating in the ascendancy of Viv Ansanm.

This report takes stock of the changes that took place during this pivotal time. Based on these lessons, as well as lessons from other contexts, it proposes a set of actionable recommendations for the way forward in Haiti, as well as options for implementing these recommendations.

The way forward

Given the degradation in security in Haiti, the focus must be on improving the situation in Haiti in immediate ways while laying the groundwork for further improvement, particularly by addressing root causes. Efforts to improve security are critical, but not sufficient, and a strategy is needed to address the economic context as well as political dynamics. This multi-pronged approach is critical to re-establishing security while undermining and dismantling gang trafficking networks and financial flows, severing ties between gangs and their backers, countering impunity and building Haitian security capacity, while helping communities recover economically, socially and politically.

An appropriate solution would consist of a robust force to re-establish security across most of Port-au-Prince, appropriately sized to conduct operations as well as to provide a near-continuous security presence across Port-au-Prince and in neighbouring areas. This force would need to be well supported by an air component and, ideally, a maritime unit to patrol the coast, increasing pressure on traffickers and helping reduce the illicit flows that fund the gangs' operations.

However, the re-establishment of security constitutes only the first step. Unless it is complemented by additional lines of effort at the local, national and international level, including political, economic and social approaches, the use of force will be but a temporary fix, with organized criminal groups likely to re-emerge at a later date. These efforts would be delivered most effectively through a shared platform or, at a minimum, through a coordinated effort to avoid overlap and align sequencing.

First and foremost, attention should continue to be focused on increasing the size – and improving the leadership, training, coordination and resourcing – of the Haitian National Police (HNP), as well as the Haitian armed forces. These efforts will probably require expanded, long-term Haitian, bilateral and regional support, as well as multilateral advising and mentoring.

On the political side, a UN or regional special representative or special envoy should engage deeply with Haitian political, economic and civil society actors about severing the links between gangs and their backers. A political strategy should be coordinated with efforts to levy and enforce targeted sanctions.

An economic strategy should equally seek to address the roots of Haiti's illicit economy in coordination with the political strategy. Technical assistance should be provided to Haitian government efforts to tackle the economic aspects of organized crime, for example tackling money laundering. Another necessary intervention would be to engage with the Haitian banking sector to improve monitoring and flagging of suspicious transactions.

Additional efforts should include economic development initiatives, assistance with re-establishing the rule of law, cracking down on corruption, and supporting communities to improve their resilience and reduce community violence. Effective information-gathering capacities would be needed to monitor gang dynamics, understand illicit flows and tailor political strategies.

Background and methodology

This report focuses on UN and international responses to evolving transnational organized criminal dynamics in Haiti over the past two decades, dynamics that have resulted in significant shifts in the context in Haiti and have helped contribute to the current breakdown. The report builds on the Haiti case study discussed in 'The Elephant in the Room', published by the International Peace Institute in June 2013, which covers the early history of UN peace operations in Haiti, including the activities of MINUSTAH from its establishment in 2004 through 2012.[5]

The analysis is based on interviews with over 40 Haitians, Haiti experts, UN practitioners and other experts. Interviewees included experts on transnational organized crime and on security and governance dynamics in Haiti; former staff members of MINUSTAH and MINUJUSTH, and current and former staff members of BINUH; current and former staff members of UN agencies working in Haiti and of panels of experts; local analysts, academics, civil servants and civil society; industry regulation specialists; and current and former staff members of other UN peace operations.

A note about terminology: While most international observers use the label 'gangs' for armed groups with criminal or other objectives in Haiti, most Haitians call them simply *bandi* or bandits. Many of these groups have their roots in neighbourhood-based organizations called *baz*, which historically acted as community-level organizations providing services including security.[6] Referring to them as 'gangs' arguably leads to people underestimating the seriousness of the problem, associating them with groups of miscreant youth rather than the well-armed, well-organized and well-resourced organizations that they currently represent.[7] Arguably, the term 'criminal armed groups' would more accurately reflect their use of violence to achieve their aims and the fact that a large proportion of their objectives are criminal in nature. However, for ease of reference, this report maintains the use of the term 'gang', given its familiarity.

In line with the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, this report defines an 'organized criminal group' as a 'structured group of three or more persons, existing for a period of time and acting in concert with the aim of committing one or more serious crimes or offences [...] in order to obtain, directly or indirectly, a financial or other material benefit'.[8] As in the Convention, transnational organized criminal activities are seen as activities that have the primary purpose of obtaining profit illegally, using or threatening to use violence and corruption.[9] As such, this report focuses on conceptualizing the gangs as organized criminal structures, in recognition of their increasingly dominant role in the Haitian security, economic and political landscape.

INTRODUCTION

The use of violence has been a part of Haitian politics for decades.[10] Gangs have their roots in Haitian neighbourhood and community associations, some of which were supported and employed by elite actors for many years to achieve political and/or economic objectives.

However, increasingly well-resourced non-state armed actors have come to dominate Haiti's security, political and economic landscape. The near-takeover of Port-au-Prince by the Viv Ansanm coalition in March 2024, and subsequent efforts to expand the coalition's territory, demonstrate the gangs' increasing power, revealing a major shift in the political and security dynamics in Haiti, whereby criminal actors possess as much if not more influence than the country's traditional political and economic elites.

As these groups have evolved over the past two decades, efforts to combat them by both national and international actors have also developed. International actors, in particular successive UN peace operations deployed in Haiti, have sought to push back against the gangs. UN missions have helped create periods of relative calm, safety and economic improvement, but they have not managed to produce lasting peace.

This report provides an overview of efforts taken by UN peace operations against organized crime in Haiti. The lessons identified here may usefully be applied to peace operations – both UN and non-UN, active now or in the future – in transnational organized criminal contexts around the world. But more specifically, and more urgently, this report seeks to establish what is needed to contribute to the improvement of the situation in Haiti, as well as the ways that various actors, including UN bodies, may help.

This report contributes to ongoing consideration of the ways in which UN peace operations have and have not succeeded in complex contexts like Haiti, and how they might improve in the future. Adopted by UN member states in September 2024, the Pact for the Future requested the UN Secretary-General to conduct a 'review on the future of all forms of UN peace operations' – including UN peacekeeping operations and UN special political missions.[11] The review, projected to conclude in early 2026, is intended to consider 'lessons learned from previous and ongoing reform processes, and provide strategic and action-oriented recommendations for the consideration of Member States on how the UN toolbox can be adapted to meet evolving needs, to allow for more agile, tailored responses to existing, emerging, and future challenges'.[12]

The review is timely: it has been more than a decade since a new UN peacekeeping operation was last authorized, in addition to the fact that even the authorization of new special political missions (SPMs) has slowed, with only two multidimensional SPMs mandated in the last five years.[13]

Consideration of the efforts of UN peace operations in Haiti represents an important contribution to the review of peace operations, given the rising incidence of transnational organized crime around the world, as well as the UN's increased involvement in combating it.[14] For example, one recent report proposed exchanging multidimensional UN peacekeeping missions for a set of discrete mission models tailored for a range of circumstances, including a countering organized crime model.[15]

This report consists of two parts. After an overview of the current gang situation in Port-au-Prince, the first part of the report will provide a history of international efforts to tackle organized criminal dynamics in Haiti, in tandem with a discussion of the gradual development of these dynamics and how the UN did or did not seek to respond. It will discuss the various tools relevant to organized crime that have been employed by UN peace operations since 2004, specifically MINUSTAH (2004–2017), MINUJUSTH (2017–2019) and BINUH (2019–present). It will also attempt to identify some missed red flags and propose explanations for why many improvements in the situation in Haiti turned out to be incomplete, aborted or easily reversed.

The second part of the report will draw upon the discussion of anti-organized crime modalities by laying out a toolbox for the use of peace operations seeking to combat transnational organized crime in various settings, while establishing the challenges with implementing various tools in this toolbox. The toolbox will also incorporate lessons from UN efforts on transnational organized criminal issues in other contexts, including UN peace operations mandated in conflict settings where trafficking and organized crime play a role in dynamics – for example, currently in Sudan and South Sudan, or in Colombia.

Finally, the report will consider what measures are needed to improve the situation in Haiti and propose a way forward that represents the minimum practicable yet feasible option to ensure improvement.

THE CURRENT SITUATION IN HAITI AND THE ROLE OF ORGANIZED CRIME

The use of military control and the threat, or actual use, of violence to achieve political aims have been a part of the Haitian political landscape for decades.[16] For example, François and Jean-Claude Duvalier, Haiti's father and son dictators between 1957 and 1986, armed and resourced a paramilitary group commonly called the Tontons Macoutes to maintain their hold on power.[17] However, since the departure of Jean-Claude Duvalier in 1986, the use of violence for political and economic purposes has shifted.

Many of the current so-called gangs have their foundation in *baz*, neighbourhood-based popular organizations that formed around the campaign and election of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide in the early 1990s. After the 1991 coup against Aristide, many *baz* mobilized, supplying local security and political leadership, (including protection to their neighbourhoods), interfacing with NGOs to

A crowd surrounds members of the fleeing Tontons Macoutes, President Jean-Claude Duvalier's paramilitary police force. The use of military control to achieve political aims has been a part of the Haitian political landscape for decades, but nationwide demonstrations forced Duvalier into exile in February 1986. *© Jacques Langevin/Sygma/Sygma via Getty Images*

obtain services and serving as interlocutors for development projects. Over time, some of these groups developed into gangs. Notably, however, members of the population do not see the gangs and *baz* as the same: a *baz* gains its legitimacy by protecting the neighbourhood against outside threats, while gangs engage in predation and crime in their home communities.[18]

Over time, the gangs have become better armed and funded, as well as more organized and independent, in spite of national and international efforts to address violence and demobilize the gangs. These dynamics have produced the current armed group landscape in Haiti.

On 29 February 2024, armed gangs united to take control of Haiti's capital of Port-au-Prince, shutting the international airport, breaking out thousands of prisoners from jail, and looting and destroying dozens of hospitals, government buildings and other institutions, including the capital's main courthouses. Out of the country and prevented from returning to Port-au-Prince by this new gang coalition, called Viv Ansanm, former acting Prime Minister Ariel Henry offered his resignation on 11 March. Since Henry's departure, Port-au-Prince, as well as the neighbouring Artibonite and Center *départements* ('departments' – administrative divisions), have been increasingly dominated by Viv Ansanm.

Viv Ansanm is a super-coalition formed by the uniting of two former gang coalitions, the G-9 Family and Allies (in Creole, G9 Fanmi e Alye) and the G-Pep.[19] It is a loose umbrella organization comprising various armed groups that maintain their own territories and organizational systems. The agreement among major gang leaders to form the coalition has led to a significant reduction in conflict between gangs, with some exceptions,[20] as the groups focus their efforts on fighting against state security, private security forces and self-defence groups, rather than one another.

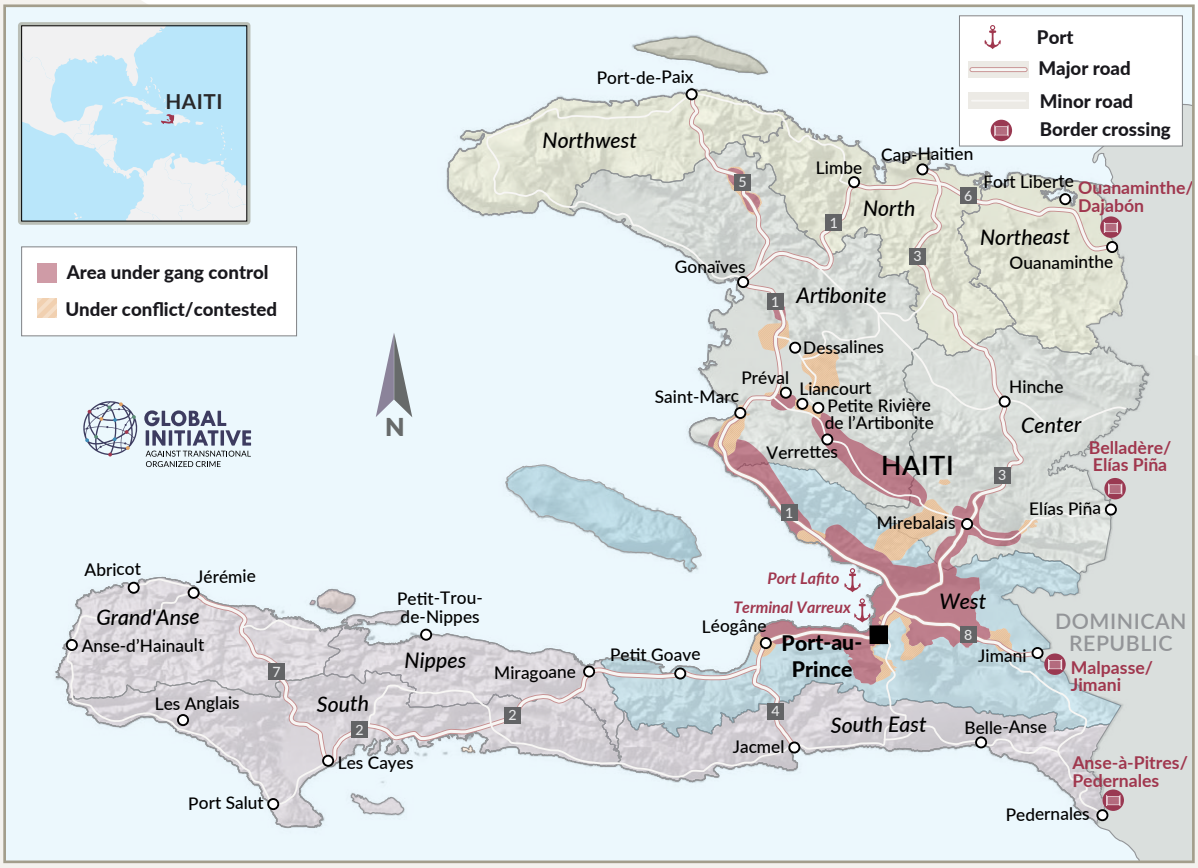

FIGURE 1 Gang territories in Haiti, as of December 2025.

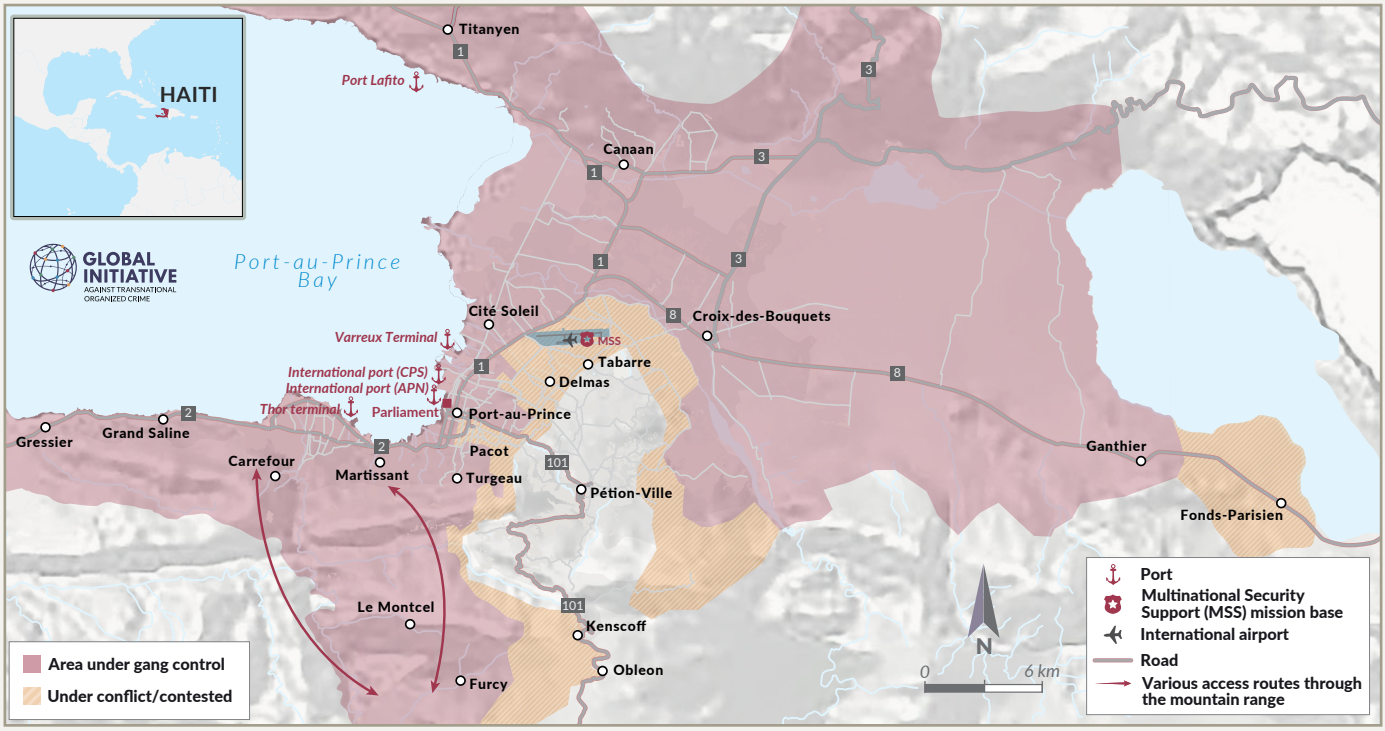

FIGURE 2 Gang territories in the Port-au-Prince region, as of December 2025.

Viv Ansanm represents a system of criminal governance that structures and manages illicit economies, while also setting up gang leaders as a set of shadow government authorities. The alliance does not have centralized leadership, but operational priorities and management seem to be agreed in a loose fashion among the top leaders.[21] With the creation of Viv Ansanm, non-state actors hold more power and possess stronger control of territory and economic activity than the state in large sections of the country, representing a major departure from previous periods of Haitian history. They are acting in a more structured way, able to make and pursue objectives over time,[22] like their months-long campaign in 2025 to take control of the area around Kenscoff, a commune strategically located in the mountains above Port-au-Prince.[23]

The gangs are surrounded by a network of individuals who profit from and abet gang activities, including politicians, businesspeople, police officers with connections to gangs, and transnational actors. Elite political and economic actors provide the backing, connections and coverage that allow the gangs to continue and to expand their control of the country's political economy.

Viv Ansanm differs from more traditional armed groups in its continuing relationships with political and economic actors, however diminished. The political difficulty of decoupling elites and gangs has frequently stymied efforts to address the root causes of gang violence and Haitian state dysfunction. Through Viv Ansanm, gangs have increasingly filled the space left by the state's absence after the Moïse assassination, aided by their connections with key domestic actors, regional ties and transnational linkages. In this shift, they have moved from neighbourhood-based *baz* to organized criminal groups – armed gangs that operate much like a form of governance.

INTERNATIONAL ENGAGEMENT AND ORGANIZED CRIME IN HAITI

Haiti has hosted UN peace operations for all but three of the past 30 years, in addition to two international interventions in 1994 and 2004. Although the Security Council and many member states lauded these missions upon their departure, they have not produced long-term stability and democratic functioning.[24] One reason for this is the difficulty of combining short-term security and law enforcement needs with effective follow-on programming to address the political, social and security needs of the population. Other issues include the propensity of peacekeeping to substitute for the state, the unwillingness of Haitian actors to support transformative economic changes, and insufficient measures taken to address root causes, such as impunity, corruption and the illicit economy that fuels organized crime.

After the end of the nearly 30-year Duvalier dictatorship in 1986, polls were held that resulted in the inauguration of Aristide as president in February 1991, although he was deposed in a coup in September 1991. After years of negotiations and US-led sanctions on the country to pressure the coup government, President Aristide was restored to leadership in October 1994.

The UN Mission in Haiti, the first UN peacekeeping mission in the country, was established in September 1993 to support the restoration of democracy. Between June 1996 and February 2001, it was succeeded by a series of small missions with the aim of professionalizing the newly established HNP, promoting institution-building, and supporting reconciliation and economic rehabilitation.

US soldiers belonging to the UN Mission in Haiti, the first such peacekeeping mission in the country. The UN has long been a primary actor on organized crime in Haiti. © *William F Campbell/Getty Images*

KEY EVENTS IN HAITI

February 1986
Dictator Jean-Claude Duvalier, son of former dictator François Duvalier, leaves Haiti.

December 1990
Jean-Bertrand Aristide is elected president.

September 1991
Aristide is ousted by a coup and replaced by a military dictatorship.

December 1992
A UN Special Envoy for Haiti is established.

September 1993
The UN Security Council establishes the UN Mission in Haiti (UNMIH).

September 1994
The multinational forces of Operation Uphold Democracy begin deploying, and UNMIH takes over leadership from the UN Special Envoy.

October 1994
Military leaders step aside, and Aristide is restored to the presidency.

December 1995
René Préval is elected president for his first term.

June 1996
UNMIH hands over to the UN Support Mission to Haiti (UNSMIH).

June 1997
UNSMIH hands over to the UN Transition Mission in Haiti (UNTMIH), which quickly hands over to the UN Civilian Police Mission in Haiti (MIPONUH).

March 2000
MIPONUH hands over to the International Civilian Support Mission in Haiti (MICAH).

November 2000
Aristide is elected president for a second, non-consecutive term.

February 2001
MICAH departs.

February 2004
Armed rebellion against Aristide forces him to leave the country; US-led Operation Secure Tomorrow deploys.

April 2004
The UN Security Council establishes MINUSTAH, effective 1 June 2004.

June 2004
The first MINUSTAH peacekeepers deploy.

Late 2004
Increasing amounts of violence in Port-au-Prince, with armed former loyalists to Aristide reportedly responsible.

July 2005
MINUSTAH conducts Operation Iron Fist in Cité Soleil.

February 2006
René Préval is elected president for a second, non-consecutive term.

December 2006–July 2007
After efforts to get gangs to disarm fail, the UN goes on the offensive against gangs in Cité Soleil.

January 2010
Magnitude 7.0 earthquake hits Port-au-Prince.

October 2010
First cholera cases are diagnosed.

November 2010
Parliamentary elections and the first round of presidential elections are held, followed by protests about alleged irregularities in the vote.

April 2011
Michel Martelly wins the presidential run-off election after protest by international actors leads him to be awarded second place in the first round of elections.

October 2015
Presidential elections are held, pointing to Jovenel Moïse as the winner, but are annulled due to fraud concerns.

February 2016
Martelly steps down as president and is replaced by Supreme Court judge Jocelerme Privert as transitional president.

August 2016
Release of first Haitian Senate report on PetroCaribe.

November 2016
Presidential elections are held again, resulting again in the election of Moïse.

February 2017
Jovenel Moïse becomes president.

October 2017
MINUJUSTH takes over from MINUSTAH.

November 2017
Release of second Haitian Senate report on PetroCaribe, implicating close Moïse associates.

2017–2020
PetroCaribe protests occur.

October 2019
BINUH takes over from MINUJUSTH.

July 2021
Moïse is assassinated. Ariel Henry subsequently becomes acting prime minister.

September–November 2022
Gangs hold the country's fuel stockpile hostage, leading to the re-emergence of cholera. Prime Minister Henry requests the deployment of an international force to support the Haitian police.

October 2022
UN sanctions regime established.

July 2023
Announcement that Kenya is willing to serve as the lead nation for the deployment of the international force.

October 2023
UN Security Council authorizes the deployment of the Kenyan-led Multilateral Security Support (MSS) mission.

February 2024
Protests and gang violence erupt while PM Henry is out of the country.

March 2024
Henry agrees to step down as PM; agreement is reached on a new transitional framework facilitated by the Caribbean Community.

April 2024
The nine-member Transitional Presidential Council is sworn in.

June 2024
Prime Minister Garry Conille is sworn in with his transitional government. The first group of Kenyans arrives as part of the MSS mission later in the month.

September 2025
The Security Council authorizes the conversion of the MSS into the GSF and the establishment of the UN Support Office in Haiti.

In February 2004, three years into Aristide's second term as president, faced with a rising armed rebellion led by former Haitian armed forces officers and increasing domestic and international political opposition, Aristide left Port-au-Prince because of a coup for the second time. Immediate stability was provided by the deployment of several thousand US Marines and other military, along with French, Canadian and Chilean troops as part of the US-led Operation Secure Tomorrow. On 1 June 2004, the operation handed over to a newly established UN peacekeeping operation, MINUSTAH.[25]

MINUSTAH

A Brazilian peacekeeper belonging to the UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH). MINUSTAH was deployed in 2004 with the mandate to support the state in restoring stability to Haiti. © *Roberto Schmidt/AFP via Getty Images*

MINUSTAH deployed in June 2004 with a mandate to re-establish a secure and stable environment in Haiti; to support the ongoing political transition process; and to promote and protect human rights. This would involve the 'restoration and maintenance of the rule of law, public safety and public order in Haiti' and operational support to the HNP and the Haitian coastguard.[26]

MINUSTAH was never given an executive mandate, whereby it might operate in replacement of the state in specific ways.[27] Nevertheless, MINUSTAH received a comprehensive mandate to support the state and restore stability, including by conducting activities that would normally be considered the role of the government, such as ensuring the integrity of the Haitian coastline.

MINUSTAH's political priority was working with the transitional government of Gérard Latortue to organize elections to replace Aristide. However, gang activity in large parts of the densely populated downtown area of Port-au-Prince, including in the Cité Soleil, Martissant and Gran Ravine neighbourhoods, was seen as impeding the organization of elections. Reported kidnappings peaked at 722 in 2006,[28] a level that would not be neared again until 2021.[29] Haiti's primary security institution, the HNP, was in disarray, unable to restore security in these areas.[30]

MINUSTAH initially sought to curb the influence of the gangs, first by patrolling Port-au-Prince.[31] Alongside its efforts to fill the security vacuum, the mission also aimed to strengthen the HNP, training and advising the police, and using programmatic funding to help rebuild police infrastructure and

increase the number of personnel.[32] MINUSTAH also helped establish a disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programme for gang members, managed by the National Commission on Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (CNDDR).[33]

These measures were unsuccessful, however. Not understanding the nature of their gang adversaries and the depth of their local support, MINUSTAH chose not to establish a long-term presence in neighbourhoods like Cité Soleil, and the DDR programme attracted more former armed forces than it did gang members.[34] MINUSTAH then turned to more heavy-handed tactics. One 2005 operation to take out a Cité Soleil gang leader saw more than 400 UN peacekeepers fire over 20 000 bullets, reportedly leading to dozens of civilian deaths as collateral damage.[35]

In addition to provoking domestic outcry, operations like these did not produce significant improvement in the security situation, partly because of difficulty providing follow-on assistance in a timely manner and strengthening national institutions and governance.[36] MINUSTAH was also forced to balance its efforts to restore order with its assistance to elections and other priorities of the transitional administration.[37]

When René Préval was inaugurated as president in May 2006,[38] he initially attempted to convince the gangs to disarm and participate in the national DDR programme. Throughout this effort, Préval maintained tight control of communications with them through the CNDDR.[39] However, dialogue efforts did not bear fruit. While the CNDDR and MINUSTAH continued to have relative success in persuading former soldiers and participants in the 2004 coup to disarm, the organizations faced much greater difficulties with bringing the gangs on board.[40] As the groups refused to disarm, Préval ratcheted up the pressure, calling publicly for them to 'disarm or die'.[41]

After failed attempts to obtain voluntary disarmament and with Préval's behind-the-scenes green light, MINUSTAH took a much more robust approach,[42] informed by the mission's Joint Mission Analysis Centre (JMAC) and military intelligence capacities.[43] The mission used a level of robustness that is unusual, although not unique in UN peacekeeping.[44] MINUSTAH reportedly engaged in more than a dozen operations in Cité Soleil alone between 2004 and 2007,[45] most of which sought to capture or kill key gang leaders to decapitate the leadership of influential gangs. The results were evident: some 800 gang members were arrested and 'all but one gang leader was either apprehended or killed'.[46]

The campaign caused the gangs to largely cease many visible activities, reducing kidnappings and violent crime and resulting in a substantial increase in freedom of movement for civilians.[47] However, it was not accompanied by a concerted effort to sever the links between the gangs and their political and economic elite backers, laying the foundation for the gangs to reorganize.[48] It also resulted in dozens of civilian casualties from exchanges of fire in densely populated urban settings.[49] Yet, on the whole, Haitian public opinion of MINUSTAH was largely positive following the operations, with two-thirds of individuals attributing improvement in their security situation to MINUSTAH.[50]

In 2007, the Security Council asked MINUSTAH to tackle some of the dynamics fuelling the gangs,[51] given that Haiti had long been recognized as a regional transit point for drugs.[52] The Security Council requested MINUSTAH to 'establish patrols along maritime and land border areas in support of border security activities by the HNP'.[53]

The Security Council also mandated MINUSTAH to provide technical expertise to support the government,[54] which resulted in the establishment of a small border management unit that provided capacity building and technical support to the development of an integrated border management plan. MINUSTAH also liaised with EU customs and NATO border management programmes on border-related efforts.[55]

Over time, the size and capacity of the HNP improved (Figure 3), and MINUSTAH was increasingly able to conduct joint operations with the police and, in some cases, gradually hand leadership over to them. However, the growth was slower, less complete and more affected by setbacks and attrition than the mission intended, reflecting issues of resourcing and staffing, as well as politicization of the institution.[56]

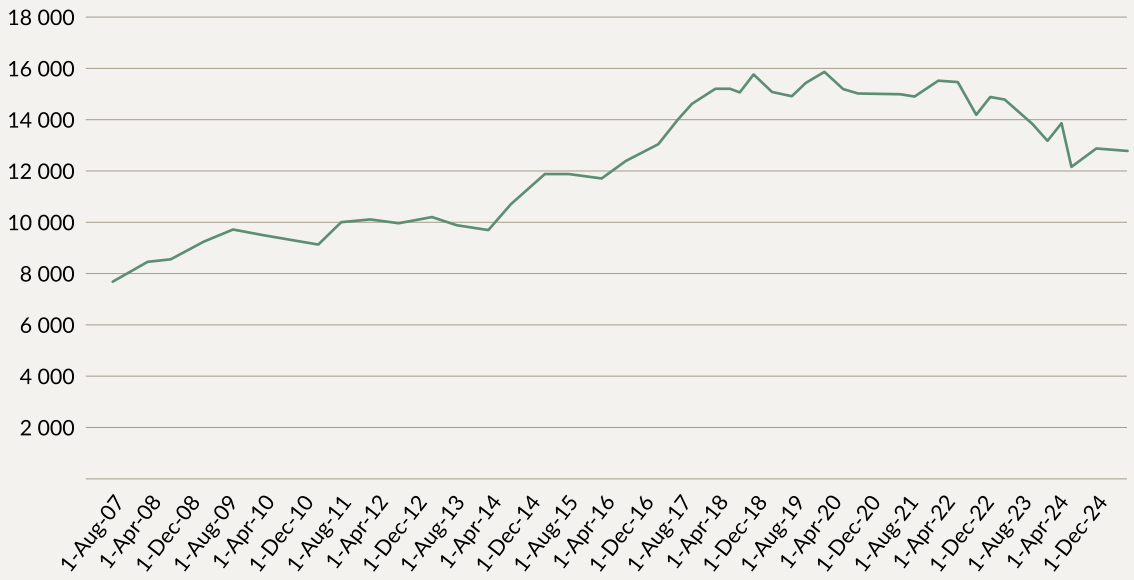

FIGURE 3 Strength of the Haitian National Police, 2007–2024.

SOURCE: UN Secretary-General reports on Haiti, 2007–2024

Successes and failures

Recognizing that traditional disarmament programmes were not suited to the Haitian gang context, in 2007 the mission created the UN's first formal community violence reduction (CVR) programme in response to a request by the Security Council to adjust the mission's DDR work.[57] While DDR efforts seek to support former members of armed groups with transitioning to civilian life, CVR programmes are intended to promote security and stability in communities where armed groups are present. Although they do not address the structural dynamics that permit organized crime to flourish, CVR may help reduce criminal groups' ability to recruit new members and DDR can facilitate the exit of members from criminal groups.[58] Through its CVR programme, the mission sought to address the needs of individuals living in informal settlements and provide support to prevent gang recruitment. Between 2011 and 2015, the MINUSTAH CVR programme carried out 225 projects.[59]

Underpinning all of these efforts was MINUSTAH's JMAC, established in 2006, which brought together international military, police and civilian capacities, and national civilian officers to create an integrated picture of the dynamics affecting Haiti's political and security situation.[60] By gathering unprecedented levels of information,[61] including through a network of compensated informants as well as surveillance capacities of troop and police contributing countries (T/PCCs),[62] the JMAC prepared tactical intelligence for the MINUSTAH police and military, issued weekly intelligence briefings and developed 'target packages' ahead of operations and gang leader arrests.[63]

Between 2007 and 2010, the context in Haiti improved somewhat. The Secretary-General noted in 2009 that five years into the stabilization process, Haiti was on the path to peaceful development, and yet still vulnerable to 'setbacks or reversal'.[64]

Impromptu tent cities established after a massive earthquake struck Port-au-Prince in January 2010. The flood of international aid into Haiti created an environment ripe for organized crime, undoing years of progress in combating it. *© Logan Abassi/MINUSTAH via Getty Images*

That reversal took the form of a massive earthquake that struck Port-au-Prince on 12 January 2010, killing thousands and destroying much of the city's infrastructure.[65] Subsequently, a flood of international aid into Haiti created an environment ripe for organized crime. The humanitarian response and reconstruction effort infused billions of dollars into the economy with little oversight,[66] in addition to undermining the role of the state by funnelling much of that money through parallel structures like international NGOs.[67] In October 2010, the disaster was compounded by an outbreak of cholera, almost certainly introduced at a UN peacekeeping camp near the Artibonite River, which killed more than 7 000 individuals over the following two years.[68]

In MINUSTAH's post-earthquake mandate renewal, the Security Council explicitly mentioned organized crime for the first time, recognizing that MINUSTAH must work with the Haitian government to tackle 'gang violence, organized crime and trafficking of children'.[69]

After controversy over alleged fraud in the first round of presidential elections in November 2010, Michel Martelly won a run-off election for president in April 2011.[70] For various reasons, during Martelly's presidency government actors felt able to form their own independent relationships with gangs.[71] As a result, the capacity of gangs grew as a function of the diversification of relationships with their political and economic backers. According to one source familiar with law enforcement efforts, after the earthquake, 'There was a lot of money, a lot of corrupt people, more trafficking. The gangs were there and nothing was being done to curb them. The police would get to the point of being able to arrest a gang leader and then would be called to call off the operation.'[72]

At the same time, MINUSTAH's efforts in the areas of governance, justice, police development, CVR, DDR and other mandate tasks were focused on supporting the government with typical institution-building and capacity-development tasks. Understanding, much less dismantling, the growing networks between elites and gangs was not a focus for the mission.[73]

In 2012, with Haiti having made important strides – including a peaceful transition of power – and focusing on long-term development goals, MINUSTAH began to formulate a consolidation plan centred on four areas: police development, electoral capacity building, the rule of law and human rights, and key governance issues.[74] Notably, the plan included no security benchmarks, only goals for processes and institutions, meaning that a potential mission withdrawal would be decided on the basis of procedural efforts, rather than the status of the situation on the ground.

However, the linchpin of the consolidation plan was the successful organization of the 2015 elections, which was seen as a signal that the mission would be able to disengage.[75] Yet perceptions of insecurity began to increase in 2014 ahead of the elections,[76] with homicides related to gang disputes over territorial control increasing.[77] The overall number of reported homicides annually rose in 2015, ahead of the elections (Figure 4). While the number then dipped slightly in 2016 and 2017, it is notable that MINUSTAH was simultaneously drawing down its presence across Haiti, potentially blunting its ability to gather accurate criminality data.[78]

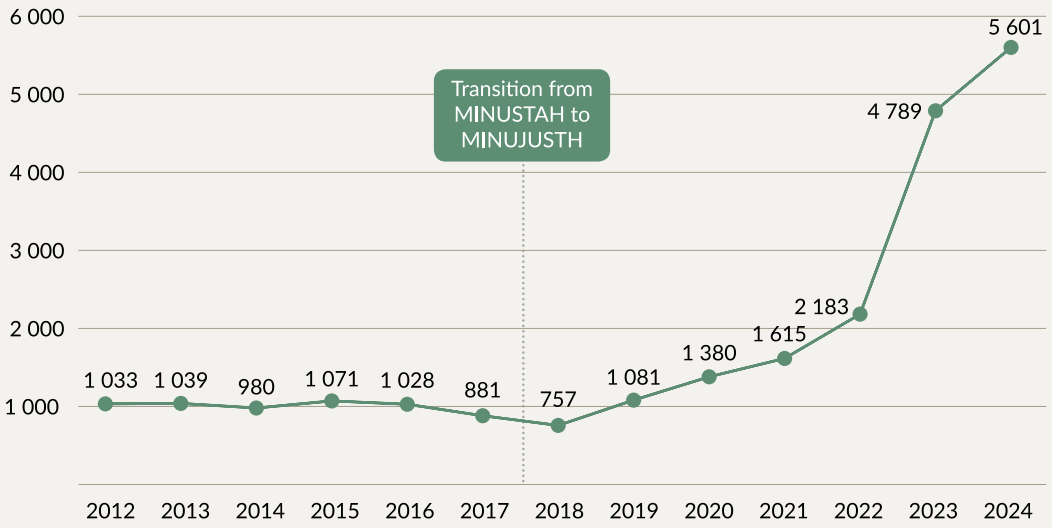

FIGURE 4 Number of intentional homicides annually in Haiti, 2012–2024.

SOURCE: UN Secretary-General reports, 2013–2025; UNODC annual homicide rates for Haiti

The first round of presidential elections was held on 25 October 2015, with Parti Haitien Tet Kale candidate Jovenel Moïse receiving the most votes, though the election was tainted by allegations of fraud.[79] Political infighting around the postponement and eventual re-run of the elections in November 2016 also fuelled the increasing strength of gangs.[80] When Moïse eventually took office on 7 February 2017, it was seen as a signal that conditions were ripe for MINUSTAH to depart.[81]

Conclusion

On 13 April 2017, the UN Security Council voted to end the mandate of MINUSTAH,[82] a political decision 'not necessarily based on needs and progress on the ground or aligned with the situation in the country'.[83] It reflected Haiti's dissatisfaction and frustration with the mission's presence, including over the cholera epidemic as well as cases of sexual exploitation and abuse by UN peacekeepers.[84] The decision also reflected pressures from member states, including France, which wanted to focus on deployments elsewhere, and the US, which was seeking to cut the cost of its peacekeeping budget.[85]

The departure of MINUSTAH meant the end of activities, including support to local government, border management, legislative capacity building, and a range of policing areas such as maritime patrolling, anti-kidnapping efforts, vetting activities, civil protection and close protection. The last report by MINUSTAH noted that 'strong government leadership and increased support from international partners, including the United Nations country team, will be vital to preserving the progress made thus far in these areas'.[86] In the years after MINUSTAH's departure, however, it would become apparent that the mission had failed to address the underlying issues, including lack of state capacity, corruption, persistent impunity, and the country's closed and limited-competition economic model. Its focus on creating stability in the short term and on a securitized response was prioritized over efforts to address governance challenges.[87]

MINUJUSTH

MINUSTAH handed over to a new, more streamlined peacekeeping operation, MINUJUSTH, on 17 October 2017. MINUJUSTH was established with a mandate to 'strengthen rule of law institutions in Haiti; further support and develop the HNP; and engage in human rights monitoring, reporting, and analysis'.[88] It was intended to solidify work done under MINUSTAH while addressing 'residual deficiencies in the judicial and corrections systems', which continued to experience 'chronic politicization, lack of accountability, limited access to justice for citizens and high rates of prolonged pretrial detention, [feeding] into the public perception that violence and corruption are more effective means of addressing grievances than the law'.[89]

Yet soon after MINUJUSTH took over, Moïse became embroiled in the PetroCaribe scandal,[90] in which much of the US$1.8 billion issued to Haiti through a Venezuelan development programme disappeared.[91] A Haitian Senate report named Moïse's chief of staff and a company owned by the president among the recipients.[92] Moïse attempted to respond to the report by promising reforms and firing some members of his government,[93] but refused to bow to calls to resign from massive demonstrations.[94]

Members of the Bangladeshi Formed Police Units greet Helen La Lime, the UN Special Representative in Haiti and Head of the UN Mission for Justice Support in Haiti (MINUJUSTH). A more streamlined peacekeeping operation, MINUJUSTH was tasked with strengthening the rule of law in Haiti. *Photo: Leonora Baumann/MINUJUSTH*

Mandate implementation

On 24 February 2018, MINUJUSTH publicly welcomed steps toward the prosecution of cases related to PetroCaribe and lamented a lack of progress in investigating cases of alleged human rights violations by the police.[95] In response, the Haitian government withdrew its ambassador to the UN.[96] The then special representative was eventually given another role, and Helen La Lime was named the new MINUJUSTH Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) in August 2018.[97]

Despite the apparent lack of high-level Haitian support for anti-corruption efforts, MINUJUSTH continued to work with the UN Development Programme (UNDP) and UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) to develop and implement anti-corruption efforts in support of government anti-corruption entities over the course of its two-year mandate. Different rule of law programmes advised Haitian oversight and accountability bodies,[98] and worked to build the capacity of Haiti's Anti-Corruption Unit, including providing case management software for investigations.[99]

However, the situation in Haiti during that time continued to degrade, with gang violence growing steadily. In addition, governance indicators decreased, with political parties increasingly polarized, elections delayed and the justice system increasingly non-functional,[100] as President Moïse grew isolated.

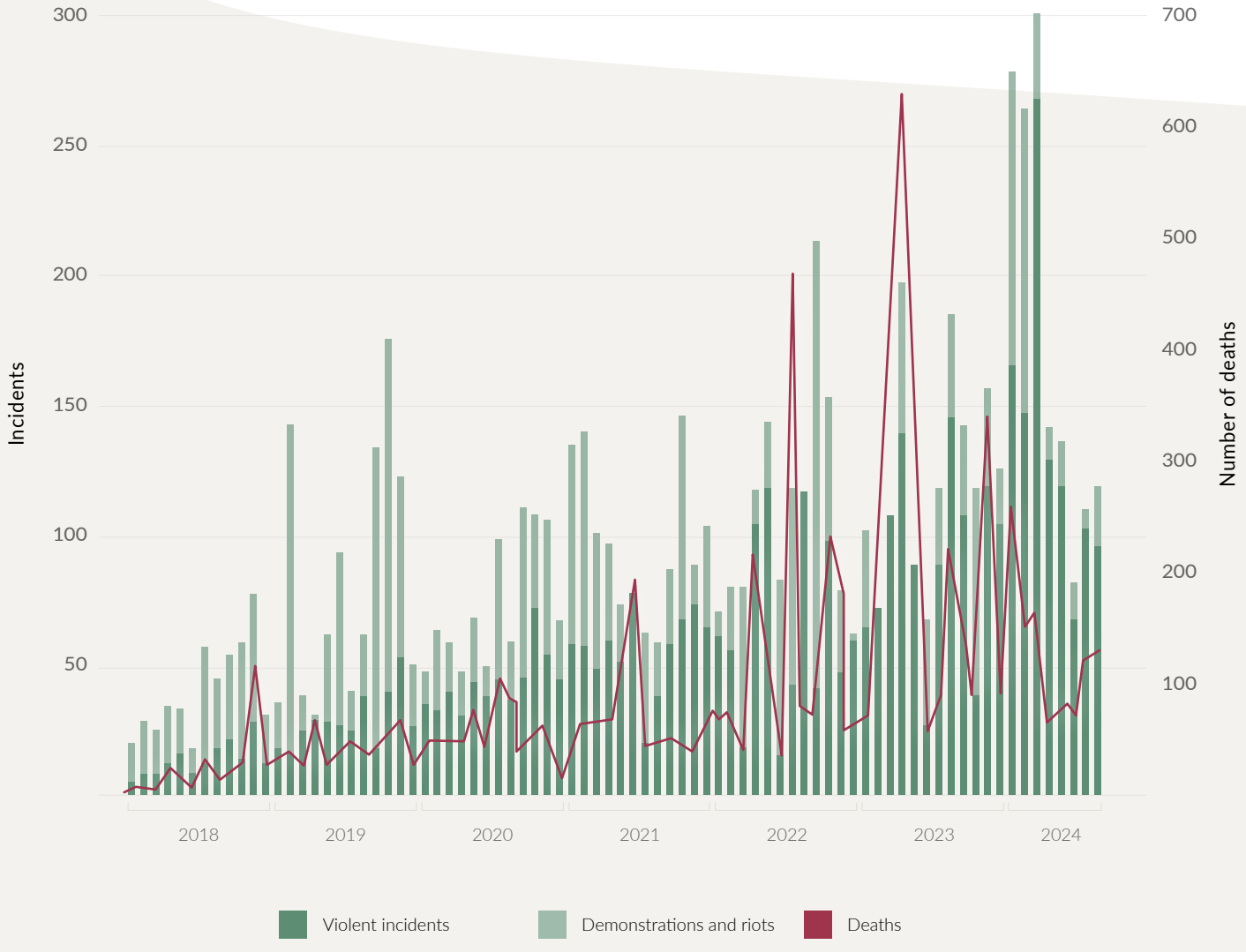

FIGURE 5 Violent events, deaths and protests in Haiti, 2018–2024.

SOURCE: ACLED

Successes and failures

Through quick impact projects and a joint MINUJUSTH–UNDP rule of law programme, the mission contributed to building or rehabilitating police stations, refurbishing courthouses and making improvements to corrections facilities. The police component also implemented a training, mentoring and advising programme for the police, which focused on building the HNP's capacities in strategic and operational planning, investigations, and a range of administrative and logistical areas, as well as in organized crime and criminal intelligence.[101]

But like the JMAC at the end of MINUSTAH, the MINUJUSTH JMAC faced pressure to make the situation look better than it was by not acknowledging the security vacuum that the HNP was failing to fill.[102] Whereas the MINUSTAH JMAC had close to 50 staff members from a range of sections and backgrounds, MINUJUSTH had a much smaller JMAC consisting of just three members. In most drawdowns, an analysis unit like a JMAC would continue operating until the mission's departure. However, the MINUJUSTH JMAC was scaled back early: by 1 July 2019, more than three months before the planned transition to BINUH, the unit consisted of only a single UN volunteer.[103]

In the April 2018 Security Council open debate on renewing MINUJUSTH, statements focused on whether to renew the mission's robust mandate to use force, with one representative noting the incongruity by asking, '[H]ow did the situation with human rights change in a country where there has been no armed conflict for a long time so that it suddenly became a threat to international peace and security?'[104]

The situation did not suddenly change for the better or for the worse – only interpretations of it changed in line with the objectives of different actors. President Moïse was determined to draw the era of peacekeeping in Haiti to a close and to open the country for investment without the black mark of a UN peacekeeping mission.[105]

Conclusion

Looking back, there were a handful of signs that the situation was worsening ahead of the planned departure in October 2019. In March 2019, the Chilean ambassador and his delegation were attacked by armed men while visiting a development project in Croix-des-Bouquets, a suburb of Port-au-Prince.[106] The attack on a foreign diplomat was an escalation in the boldness of armed groups. However, the incident was downplayed internally by some parties in MINUJUSTH, particularly the police component, which was reluctant to admit that the attack was anything more than an attempt at retaliating against a police operation the previous day.[107]

Changes in the Haitian government towards the end of the MINUJUSTH mandate were also concerning. Moïse's replacement of HNP Director-General Michel-Ange Gedeon in August 2019 reportedly disrupted the improving trajectory of the force.[108] Gedeon had just arrested a top gang leader, Arnel Joseph, and was respected for his efforts to improve the professionalism and address the politicization of the police.[109] However, Moïse reportedly wanted him to act more harshly against protesters, while Arnel Joseph's arrest revealed connections to a Moïse ally.[110]

In addition, the chief prosecutor for Port-au-Prince, Paul Eronce Villard, was forced to resign in September 2019 after nine months in the role, despite (or perhaps because of) his efforts to tackle corruption and trafficking.[111] The forced departures of these two officials point to the limitations of UN peace operations, which must operate in a context where they are deeply dependent on the goodwill – and good intentions – of national authorities, while balancing complex mandates and implementation efforts demanded by the Security Council and international stakeholders.

BINUH

On 16 October 2019, BINUH took over from MINUJUSTH. With the end of peacekeeping in Haiti, BINUH was established as an SPM, a type of unarmed UN presence,[112] with a focus on good offices,[113] strategic advising and advocacy in the areas of elections, support to the police, strengthening the justice sector, reducing violence, addressing human rights abuses and violations, and improving prison management. The mandate was on the broad side for an SPM, following on from the breadth of its peacekeeping predecessors.[114] But without programmatic funding or money for quick impact projects, nor an operational mandate, BINUH was given a much more limited set of tools to support the Haitian political apparatus than past missions.

BINUH was deployed with the expectation that it would last only two years, enough time to see through delayed legislative and later presidential elections before its departure. This, the narrative went, would wrap up a trajectory of recovery that had begun with the deployment of MINUSTAH in 2004, with only the temporary interruption of the 2010 earthquake.

The UN Integrated Office in Haiti (BINUH) was established in October 2019 as a type of unarmed presence, with a much more limited set of tools with which to support the Haitian political apparatus. *© Andres Martinez Casares/Reuters*

However, given Moïse's weakness in the face of scandals like PetroCaribe, to exert control he reportedly established links with gangs,[115] particularly a gang in Lower Delmas led by Jimmy Cherizier, known as Barbecue.[116] Barbecue led the formation of a reportedly pro-government gang coalition called the G-9 Family and Allies in June 2020. Gangs were reportedly paid to suppress PetroCaribe protests and keep slum areas under control, including through massacres in neighbourhoods like Grand Ravine, La Saline and Bel Air.[117]

Gangs that were not aligned with Moïse and the government – many of which united in 2020 in opposition to the G-9 under the umbrella G-Pep[118] – had to come up with different revenue sources. One of them was implementing a series of country-wide protests called *peyi lok* ('country lockdown' in Haitian Creole) for their ability to stop all economic activity in the areas where it was deployed.[119] In parallel, Moïse's administration saw a major rise in kidnappings for ransom, although the numbers and shock value of the kidnappings would be eclipsed by the volume of kidnappings after Moïse's death (Figure 6).[120] Extortion through checkpoints also began to rise, beginning with the June 2021 gang takeover of the key area of Martissant, which controls access to the country's southern peninsula.[121]

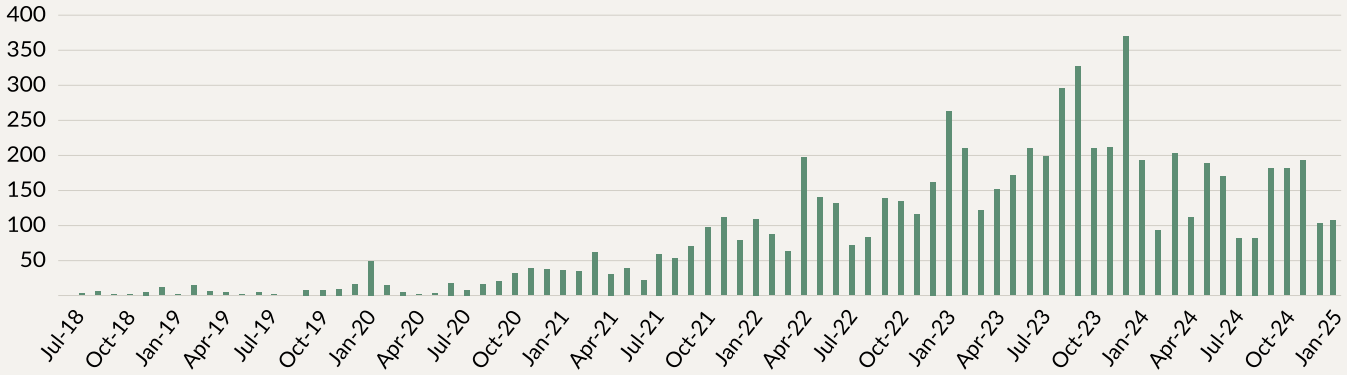

FIGURE 6 Monthly kidnappings, 2018–2025.

SOURCE: BINUH public human rights data

In parallel, a complete breakdown in relations between President Moïse and the parliament resulted in key election preparations not occurring before the end of the term of most legislators in January 2021. With only a handful of senators left in parliament, Moïse began ruling by decree.[122]

On 7 July 2021, Moïse was assassinated by a group of Colombian mercenaries. The true backers of Moïse's killing have yet to be convincingly identified, much less prosecuted,[123] although allegations have swirled that his death was linked to efforts to dismantle drug trafficking networks.[124] Following several weeks of negotiations after the assassination, Ariel Henry was named acting prime minister, tasked with restoring security and organizing elections.

Mandate implementation

After the assassination, there was a sense that the UN could no longer approach the situation in Haiti as business as usual – seeking to facilitate Haitian consensus to hold elections at the earliest possible moment regardless of the degenerating situation. In the following months, different parts of the UN began to take a more informed and engaged approach to organized crime. In June 2020, for example, SRSG La Lime, speaking in front of the Security Council, referred to the gangs as political instruments, seeking to gain control of increased territory 'likely in an effort to exert influence on the outcome of elections in those constituencies'.[125]

In October 2021, the Security Council issued a temporary extension of BINUH's mandate and requested that it be independently assessed in the interim.[126] Based on the assessment, in May 2022 the Secretary-General highlighted increasing concerns about high levels of illicit arms, organized crime and trafficking, warning that 'left unchecked, gangs could develop an almost insurgent capability. Porous borders have for years permitted the virtually unhindered flow of weapons and contributed to concerns that the situation in Haiti is becoming a threat to regional peace and security.'[127] The Secretary-General's report also noted 'adaptations towards a more organized, sophisticated gang profile, with militaristic command and control structures', with gangs in possession of some of the world's most powerful automatic weapons.[128]

The number of gangs in Port-au-Prince expanded significantly, reaching around 200 by 2022.[129] In September 2022, a two-and-a-half-month gang blockade of Varreux oil terminal began, which led to a significant deterioration in humanitarian conditions, including the re-emergence of cholera.[130] Ariel Henry formally requested that the Security Council immediately deploy an international specialized force to support the HNP in restoring order to enable the delivery of humanitarian aid across the country. In response, Security Council members began searching for modalities to respond to Henry's request for security support,[131] in addition to establishing a UN sanctions regime targeting individuals involved with the activities of armed groups and criminal networks, or providing financing, supporting drug or arms trafficking, or committing human rights abuses.[132] In early April 2023, BINUH observed that the level of insecurity in the capital, as measured by deaths and gang activity, was comparable to that experienced by countries embroiled in armed conflict.[133]

The renewal of BINUH's mandate in July 2022 acknowledged for the first time the impact of illicit financial flows to Haiti by enabling armed gangs to operate, and called for the prioritization of breaking links between political and economic actors and gangs. For the first time, the Security Council explicitly requested the deployment of the UNODC, mandating its cooperation with BINUH and the UN country team.

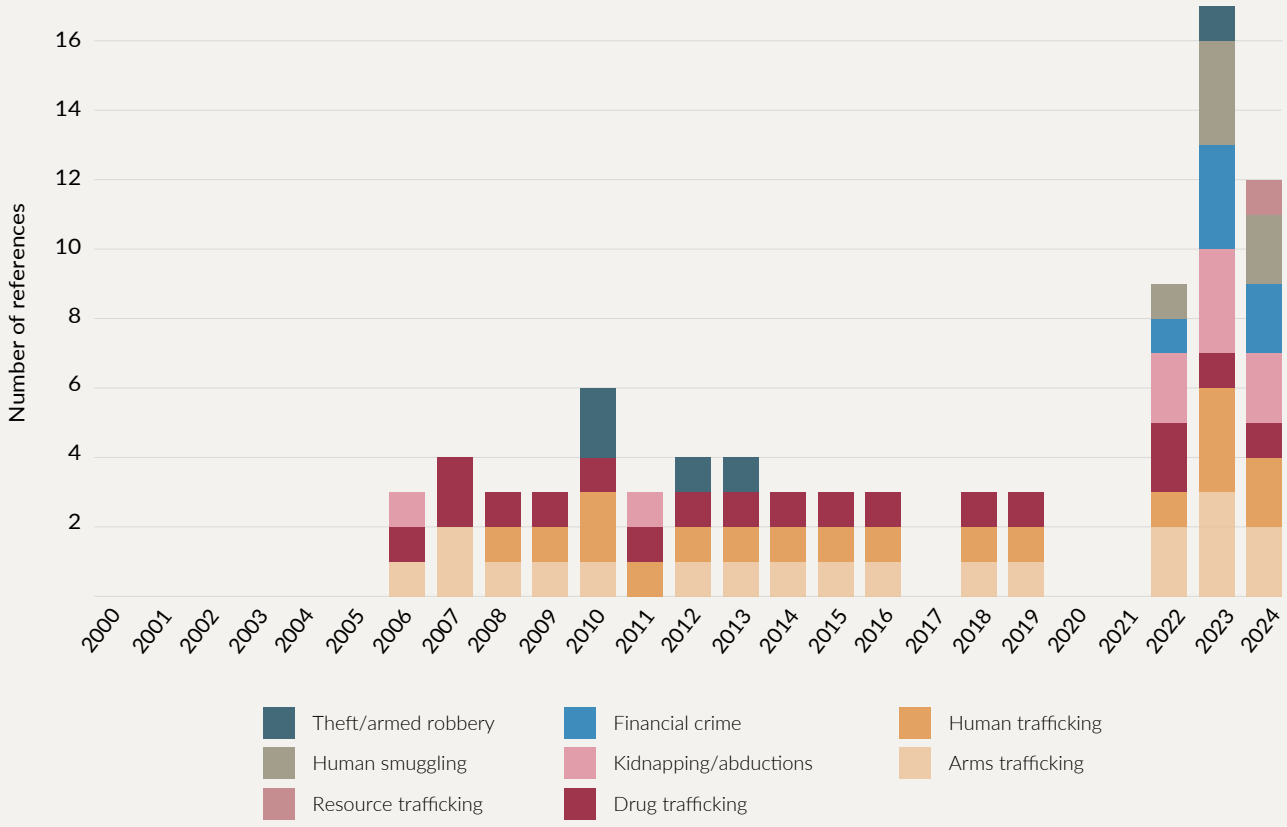

FIGURE 7 References to organized crime and illicit flows with regard to Haiti at the UN Security Council.

SOURCE: GI-TOC, 2000–2024: Charting organized crime on the UN Security Council agenda, https://globalinitiative.net/analysis/scresolutions/

To respond to the changed July 2022 mandate, BINUH was granted additional capacity relevant to organized crime. Unfortunately, most of these positions remain unfilled, as UN member states are reluctant to deploy their specialist police officers to roles meant to cover financial and economic crimes, as well as anti-kidnapping and anti-gang activities.[134] On the civilian side, some positions were frozen as a result of the UN's almost continuous hiring freezes in recent years due to liquidity issues.[135]

The arrival of a new SRSG, Isabel Salvador, in April 2023 also shifted the mission focus. Under Salvador's leadership, BINUH pulled back from reporting about or engaging on many issues related to the illicit economy to rather focus on mobilizing support for the deployment of and resourcing for the UN Security Council-authorized, Kenyan-led Multinational Security Support (MSS) mission.[136] Salvador left the mission and was replaced by Carlos Ruiz Massieu in July 2025.[137]

In June 2024, more than a year and a half after Prime Minister Henry called for international support for the HNP, the first officers of the MSS mission finally landed in Haiti.[138] The mission was authorized by the Security Council in October 2023 but is not coordinated by the UN, beyond the UN's administration of a trust fund supporting the mission.[139]

In October 2025, the Security Council voted to replace the MSS mission with a larger, more robust GSF supported by a UN Support Office in Haiti (UNSOH).[140] However, the timeline for deploying these new entities is unclear, and numerous obstacles stand in the way of their deployment.[141]

Successes and failures

Since its establishment in 2019, BINUH, together with other UN partners, has pursued several initiatives with respect to tackling organized crime. A notable shift was the deployment of a longer-term UNODC presence, which first re-entered Haiti in December 2021 as part of a joint project with the UNDP to strengthen anti-corruption mechanisms. At the urging of La Lime, the UNODC conducted an exploratory mission to Haiti in March 2022, and at the request of the Haitian government, it opened an office there in July that year. This led to the launch of technical programmes to strengthen Haitian border management and implement a container control programme, with the goal of addressing corruption and transnational drug and arms trafficking.[142] Although these programmes have had some success, the size and porosity of the Haitian border have limited their impact.

In the absence of internal BINUH capacity, the engagement of UNODC colleagues has helped inform BINUH's thinking, reporting and decision-making, and elevated the visibility of organized criminal dynamics in Haiti.

Efforts against corruption have also increased in salience. Since arriving in Haiti in early 2020, the UN resident coordinator, also the deputy head of BINUH, had been pushing the UN country team to engage more directly on the barriers to Haitian development. After considerable legwork, the coordination group for all development partners in Haiti agreed in mid-2021 to focus development assistance efforts on these issues, including impunity, corruption, and the transformation and modernization of the economy. Efforts initially focused on developing a joint anti-corruption strategy, in addition to implementing a joint UNDP and UNODC project to strengthen state–society relations by developing anti-corruption mechanisms, which began rolling out in late 2021.[143]

However, the mission's inability to recruit staff has constrained its capacity to conduct an analysis of the Haitian illicit economy. Unlike MINUSTAH or even MINUJUSTH, BINUH has never had an integrated analysis capability. Without dedicated technical expertise, the mission has had to rely on advice from the UNODC to shape its analysis of the impact of the illicit economy on Haitian political dynamics. Although the relationship between the UNODC and BINUH has been cooperative, the

absence of internal analytical capacity has limited the mission's ability to integrate these dynamics into its consideration.

The mission has also engaged little on the rule of law. A primary focus of the justice and human rights programmes has been working with the Ministry of Justice and the Superior Council for the Judiciary to establish two specialized judicial task forces: one focusing on financial crimes and the other on mass atrocity crimes. This effort is intended to create centres of expertise to facilitate prosecution, given a lack of crime scene investigation capacity.[144] However, it will still have to overcome the significant political obstacles that thwarted previous investigations.[145] Despite the passage of an important anti-corruption law in 2014, no high-level official has yet been convicted of corruption.[146] Although various ideas have been floated for helping strengthen the Haitian judicial system, including hybrid or extraterritorial courts, support for the rule of law in Haiti remains limited to programmes supporting the judicial task forces, vetting of judges and expansion of legal aid.[147]

BINUH has had more success with supporting the HNP. In late 2021, mission leaders began considering a larger-scale effort for the HNP, leading to the proposal of a basket fund to support police performance. The agreement covering the US$28 million project was signed on 3 June 2022.[148]

Aside from this fund, given the capacity constraints imposed by BINUH's advisory mandate, the BINUH police unit has focused on advising and supporting capacity building for the police, especially in countering kidnapping and illicit trafficking. BINUH has also led a series of advisory efforts that support anti-arms trafficking efforts, working with the Haitian government to develop a draft law and national action plan on weapons and ammunition management.

As for the MSS mission, it has struggled to obtain sufficient personnel, equipment and financial resources. Initial estimates called for a deployment of 2 500 police officers, but it has not managed to deploy much more than 1 000 personnel. This is largely due to the fact that the mission has been unable to attract sufficient voluntary support from partners, receiving only a little over US$100 million in donations to the trust fund.[149] As a result, the MSS mission has provided only minimal assistance to the police in addressing gang violence.[150] Notably, while BINUH senior leadership engaged robustly to call for the deployment of the mission, BINUH support for it has been limited, extending little beyond training for MSS officers, particularly in the area of human rights, and engaging with the MSS mission and the HNP to ensure coordination.

Conclusion

Despite the efforts undertaken by BINUH and other actors, as well as previously by MINUSTAH and MINUJUSTH, the situation in Haiti continues to deteriorate. Attempts to develop the Haitian police force fell short of the projected improvements and did not focus sufficiently on preparing the police to take robust action against the gangs. Initiatives aimed at understanding Haiti's political economy and gang landscape did not lead to fundamental shifts in the missions' approaches. Most critically of all, the initiatives of the UN mission did not include efforts to address the ties between elites and armed actors that have long underpinned Haitian political dynamics. The UN sanctions regime, established in 2022, has led to just six individuals being sanctioned, only one of whom can be considered to be a political or financial backer of the gangs.[151] Nevertheless, the situation in Haiti provides food for thought about how things could be done differently in the future, and what additional tools could be helpful in addressing the underlying dynamics.

A TOOLBOX FOR UN PEACE OPERATIONS TO ADDRESS ORGANIZED CRIME

This section of the report considers in detail the tools and capabilities that could be used by a peace operation or group of entities deployed to counter organized crime dynamics in Haiti, drawing on examples of UN practice. However, these tools could be adapted for use by non-UN, hybrid, ad hoc or regional operations. The tools considered include those with both direct and indirect effects on organized crime, as well as those that impact the drivers of organized crime as well as the consequences or effects of it (Figure 8).[152] In addition to covering tools that have previously been used by entities in Haiti and elsewhere, it discusses potential tools that could be considered in the future in addressing organized criminal activity.

Organized crime is increasingly on the radar of the UN Security Council, which establishes and mandates UN peace operations. Between 2022 and 2024, more than half of all Security Council resolutions mentioned at least one crime related to organized crime, with the greatest number of references concerning arms trafficking, financial crimes, kidnapping and human trafficking.[153]

In July 2023, the Security Council voted to extend the mandate of the United Nations Integrated Office in Haiti. The situation in Haiti continues to deteriorate, underscoring the need to directly address the connections between elites and armed actors that underpin Haitian political dynamics. *© United Nations Integrated Office in Haiti*

Security Council mandates may seek to affect organized criminal dynamics directly – through operations against criminal armed groups or by conducting searches for trafficked goods – or indirectly, for example by strengthening governance systems to make a context less hospitable to organized crime. In many cases, mandates target the most visible symptoms of organized crime, for example by seeking to undermine the capabilities of criminal armed groups or improve customs or border control regimes. Ideally, they should also seek to address the drivers of organized crime by creating alternative livelihoods, promoting equitable economic growth, strengthening institutions and building civil society, and supporting host governments with the provision of basic social services.

Under these mandates, UN peace operations have used a wide range of tools. An account of previous efforts can contribute to the ongoing review of all peace operations mandated by the Pact for the Future. An inventory of tools may also help flesh out the idea of a mission model for countering organized crime proposed in the 2024 report for the UN, 'The future of peacekeeping, new models, and related capabilities'.[154]

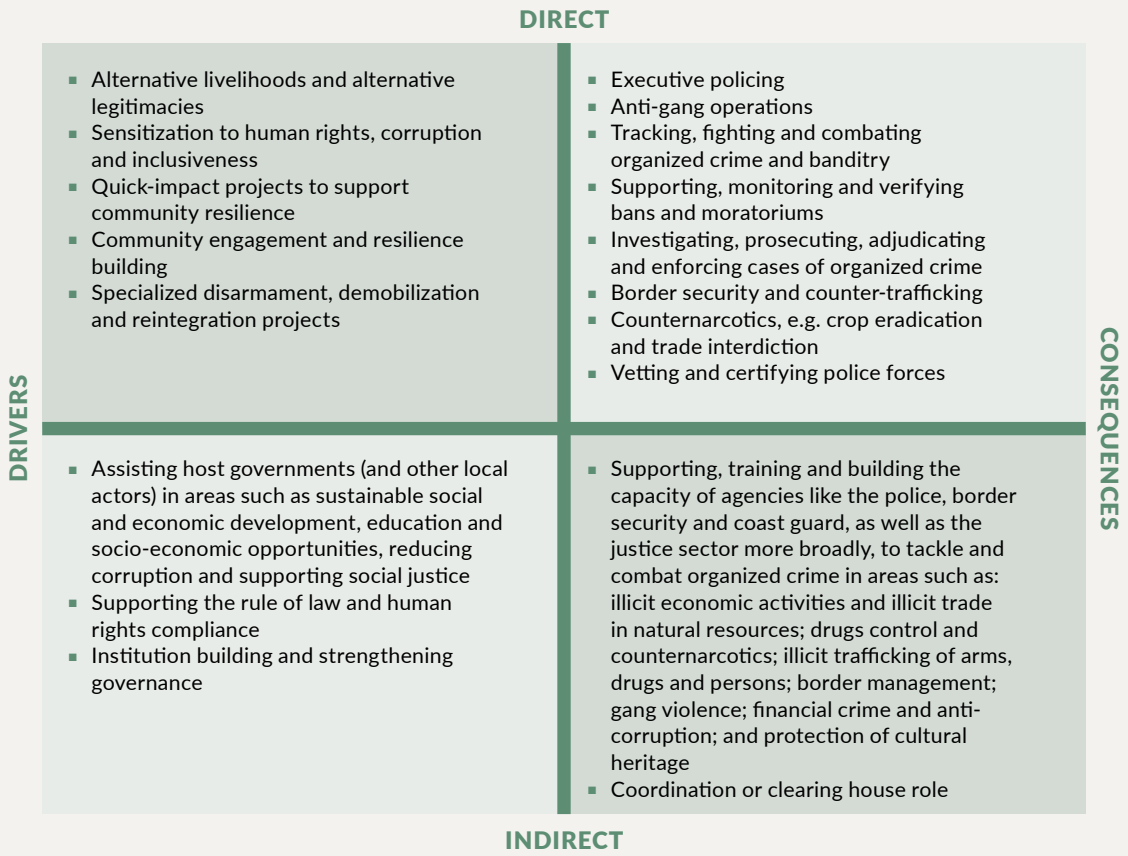

FIGURE 8 Activities multilateral peace operations could undertake to combat organized crime.

SOURCE: Jair van der Lijn, Multilateral peace operations and the challenges of organized crime, Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, 2018

Information-gathering and analysis

To counter organized crime dynamics, peace operations must first be able to make a clear-eyed assessment of the situation. In addition to understanding the political and security dynamics of the particular context, they should also be able to assess the political economy of their area of deployment, understood as the way 'political institutions, the political environment, and the economic system influence each other to produce certain outcomes', and spanning local, national and regional or global levels.[155] UN peace operations have made strides in institutionalizing political economy analysis in recent years, partly in response to repeated recommendations by review panels.[156]

The fundamental analysis unit in UN peacekeeping is the JMAC,[157] which integrates civilian, military and police analysis capacities to conduct medium-term assessment of 'issues, trends and threats and their implications for strategic and operational decisions that may impact mandate implementation and the security of UN personnel, assets and premises'.[158] While transnational organized criminal dynamics may (and should) be monitored by political affairs, police, military, human rights and DDR/CVR units, among others, the JMAC, which usually reports to the SRSG or chief of staff, is seen as the central coordinating body for bringing together an integrated view of the political, economic, security and criminal elements that define a context of transnational organized crime.

JMACs are staffed by a mix of UN military and police personnel seconded by T/PCCs, as well as national and international civilian staff members with expertise in information analysis. A variety of training materials have been developed over the years to support JMACs. Notable among these is the Joint Mission Analysis Field Handbook, which covers issues ranging from the structure and operations of a JMAC to how to define information requirements, acquire information, and analyze and secure it.[159]

UN peace operations have access to several technical tools for compiling data, including data relevant to organized crime, with the goal of improving situational awareness, force protection and informing substantive mandate delivery. UN peace operations have access to Sage, a UN proprietary system used for recording and tracking security incidents, although missions sometimes still use Excel spreadsheets for monitoring trends like human rights violations.

The UN also has a licence for UN peacekeeping operations to use IBM's i2 iBase, an analytical database tool used by the intelligence community to assist with network analysis.[160] However, the database has a steep learning curve, and adoption and maintenance is usually tied to the presence of rotating military staff members with previous experience. Nevertheless, when the capacity is present, i2 allows incident data in Sage to be analyzed over the medium and long term in conjunction with network analysis approaches.[161] None of these tools is perfect. Sage, in particular, is sometimes criticized for being rigid, accepting only certain types of information in specific formats, while i2 requires substantial expertise. Greater levels of training on i2 iBase while maximizing connectivity with Sage may help improve the utility of both tools and enhance analysis capacity for the specific dynamics of organized crime.

A major innovation in recent years has been the development of the concept of 'peacekeeping-intelligence', defined as 'acquiring, processing and analyzing information to enable missions to enhance the safety and security of UN personnel and inform operations related to the protection of civilians'.[162] The development of the concept was in part due to the creation of the All Sources Information Fusion Unit (ASIFU) within the Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) in

2014. This unit brought together military intelligence capabilities to support the mission by gathering, analyzing and securely storing intelligence to inform operational decision-making.

The creation of the ASIFU turned out not to be a panacea. Challenges included information sharing and coordination, and an overreliance on advanced technological tools,[163] which require a different sort of expertise than the human intelligence typically prioritized by JMACs.[164] In addition, some states expressed concerns about the applicability of the use of intelligence in peacekeeping. These have been gradually assuaged by the development of 'peacekeeping-intelligence', which allows T/PCCs to use techniques and capacities from the intelligence community while addressing concerns from some member states about the potential applications of these techniques.[165] In particular, the UN peacekeeping-intelligence policy focuses on ensuring effective and efficient sharing of information while protecting sensitive data, which is critical in the realm of organized crime research.

Notably, however, the implementation of peacekeeping-intelligence has received greater attention from the military side of peacekeeping, with specialized training materials regarding intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance, open-source intelligence and human-sourced intelligence, among others, developed for military use.[166] Given that organized crime is typically considered a police matter, the lack of guidance on the use of intelligence tools by police personnel is a hindrance for UN Police efforts. However, a manual on intelligence-led policing and UN Police crime intelligence was published in September 2025, and implementation is underway.[167]

Almost as a rule, SPMs do not have JMACs, the exception being the two-person JMAC in the UN Mission to Support the Hudaydah Agreement in Yemen.[168] Part of the reason that SPMs so rarely have JMACs is a cultural barrier between UN peacekeeping and SPMs that has kept the latter from adopting a JMAC model even where it might make sense, like in the military observation missions in Colombia and Libya.[169] It is also difficult to replicate the diverse and integrated analytical capabilities of a JMAC, given that many SPMs are small and have little to no military or police capacity, an important part of a JMAC.

Instead, it is vital for any peace operation to maintain a standing capacity to bring together information from different sectors and areas of expertise, for example a two- or three-person 'special analytical team' reporting to the head of the mission to coordinate and integrate inputs for joint analysis products or to carry out specific ad hoc analytical tasks.[170] In addition to the BINUH Integrated Analysis Unit, which has yet to be stood up, several other SPMs have some analytical capacity. For example, the UN Assistance Mission in Somalia has an Integrated Analysis Team, and both the UN Support Mission in Libya and the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) possess Joint Analysis and Reporting Sections (JARS).[171] The largest SPM analysis unit, the JARS in UNAMA, has 10 staff members who are responsible for monitoring and analyzing political developments and the security situation, and producing regular summary and analytical reports and contextual information.[172]

Good offices, convening and coordination

The UN has long recognized that, to be effective, its peace operations must be focused on the pursuit and implementation of political solutions.[173] In the same vein, the good offices of the head of the mission must play a primary role in any mission efforts to address the influence of organized crime on national political dynamics. As the representative of the UN Secretary-General, the SRSG has the responsibility for leading political engagement with national counterparts, as well as various local, regional and international interlocutors, to implement the mission's mandate.

In Haiti, these efforts have focused at different times on supporting the development and implementation of successive national anti-corruption strategies, in addition to building the capacity of anti-corruption investigation units such as the Anti-Corruption Unit (ULCC) and Central Financial Intelligence Unit (UCREF) or the customs and border management administrations.

However, these approaches may not be feasible in all contexts. The good offices of the head of mission must be shaped by information and analysis that identifies the main interlocutors, including both potential proponents and spoilers. This is particularly important, and must be handled delicately, if national political figures are suspected of or implicated in involvement in organized crime, as has been the case with recent administrations in Haiti.

If sanctions have been levied on a country, the head of mission could play an important role in informing and engaging national leaders on this issue. Emphasizing to national leaders the importance of transparent, accountable and effective administration of public funds could be a critical step. If an external actor like the UN is seen to be present and paying attention, this could have an impact on national criminal dynamics, causing the political actors connected to criminal networks to reduce their involvement or at least assume a less visible role.

Similarly, the head of mission can play a role with advocacy on the international stage. The recognition of the importance of organized criminal dynamics by SRSG La Lime and her willingness to highlight these dynamics in the mission's reporting played a critical role in the increasing recognition of organized criminal dynamics in Haiti and the visibility in Security Council resolutions. This in turn helped international actors realize the insufficiency of previous efforts and the need to address illicit economies in Haiti.

UN peace operations are also frequently asked to support other UN actors who are working from outside the country to help address organized criminal dynamics, in particular panels of experts, in addition to special rapporteurs and non-resident UN agencies. The mission's role in supporting non-resident actors is ultimately mutually beneficial and, ideally, can even contribute to a more coordinated and more holistic UN response.

The coordination of several agencies leading different relevant efforts could help produce a more comprehensive and effective effort against crime, although integration has run into challenges in many different settings.[174] As with BINUH's successful effort to bring the UNODC to Haiti, the mission's convening role can help ensure that the right actors are present in the right configurations to support nationally owned strategies and institutions working against organized crime – although presence does not necessarily mean impact.

Addressing root causes

UN peace operations have been mandated with numerous activities that are intended to directly or indirectly help address the root causes of illicit economies. While many of these activities involve addressing security dynamics, efforts in these areas can also help strengthen the state and limit the operating space available to organized criminal groups. For example, programmes to strengthen the judiciary and increase its independence can improve judicial capacity, capability and willingness to undertake politically sensitive prosecutions for offences related to transnational organized crime. Ideally, however, specific mandate activities should be aligned and conducted in an integrated effort to support the state and key institutions.

Justice and the rule of law

The UN has led various efforts in recent decades to support justice for victims of conflict, violence and criminality. In countries where the rule of law is weak, UN peace operations have implemented a variety of programmes to strengthen judicial systems and access to justice. These have ranged from training, mentoring and capacity building, to the provision of technical support, to programmatic efforts to construct or refurbish courthouses and prisons – all efforts that have been implemented in Haiti at various points.

Some initiatives in other international settings have gone beyond these technical efforts. For example, the International Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala was requested by the government of Guatemala and was active for 12 years starting in 2007. It conducted dozens of prosecutions of senior officials, including former presidents, ministers and congressional representatives.[175] However, its model carries risks. The commission was eventually shut down because support for it within the Guatemalan government collapsed. When the mechanism was closed and international staff members left, national staff were targeted for their work and some were imprisoned.[176]

Other models have been considered to address the risks of conducting investigations and prosecutions within certain countries. A combination of special and extra-territorial courts was proposed for Somalia to try accused Somali pirates in relative safety outside of Mogadishu.[177] The model would have established two standalone courts in the semi-autonomous Somali provinces of Somaliland and Puntland, solely to process piracy cases. A third extra-territorial court would have been established in the region to process cases from the area surrounding Mogadishu, but employing Somali judges to conduct cases in the Somali language according to Somali law.[178] However, the Somali authorities, including both the Transitional Federal Government and regional governments, opposed the idea, and it was never implemented.[179]

So far in Haiti, efforts have focused on strengthening the system as it is: helping vet judges; training lawyers, clerks and magistrates; fast-tracking cases in the penal chain; and rebuilding or refurbishing courthouses, for example. However, it may be time to consider a special, hybrid or even extra-territorial court modality for Haiti, given the near collapse of the justice system and the takeover of many court premises by gangs. This could permit the prosecution of high-value targets in courts outside Port-au-Prince, perhaps in Cap Haïtien or Les Cayes, or even in a neighbouring country. While it would be difficult and expensive to move the court system entirely out of Port-au-Prince, if the trials of prominent accused individuals could proceed in safety, keeping judicial actors relatively isolated from the capital's political and security pressures, this would help counter Haiti's burden of impunity.

While beyond the scope of this report, it should be noted that improvements to the Haitian judicial system should also be matched by an improved corrections system to hold detainees and convicted prisoners (82% of Haiti prison inmates are pre-trial detainees).[180]

Police advisory support

UN Police presence takes two forms: the deployment of formed police units, which are mandated to engage in operational efforts like in MINUSTAH and MINUJUSTH, and UN Police advisory support provided either by uniformed individual police officers seconded from national police forces or by civilian advisers with policing backgrounds.

As in Haiti, UN engagement of police experts elsewhere has tended to focus on providing technical support, mentoring, training and capacity building to national police counterparts. Areas of technical support provided in Haiti and other countries have included capacity building in strategic planning, vetting and human resources, as well as border management, anti-kidnapping, anti-drug trafficking and serious organized crime more broadly, including the establishment of serious and organized crime teams in the Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA), UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) and MINUSMA.[181] To support this serious crimes work, a small dedicated team was established in the Police Division at the UN headquarters in 2015, but it has been heavily affected by recent budget issues and currently represents only part of the portfolio of a single staff member.[182]

However, a focus on training and capacity building can be insufficient for the more dynamic and difficult requirements of countering illicit economies.[183] Mobilizing political will through engagement with international partners, civil society and key stakeholders can help move implementation outside of the training room. Collocation and on-site mentoring and advising are critical to ensuring that training skills are put into practice, as many UN Police staff discovered in Haiti before recent security issues limited access.

One challenge specific to UN peacekeeping operations when it comes to countering transnational organized crime is the division between the UN Police and UN military components. Unless it is specifically mentioned in the mandate as a driver of conflict, a spoiler or an aspect of the protection of civilians, organized crime is seen as the domain of the police. Without an overarching mandate, the military focuses its efforts on dealing with heavily armed groups while civilians engage on the mandate's political aspects.[184] This segmentation of different aspects of the response can hinder efforts to create a holistic approach.

In addition, there are more fundamental philosophical differences between the military and police. UN peacekeeping-intelligence rules, which are mainly but not exclusively implemented by UN military contingents, do not permit paying sources for information, while payment for information is a standard tool in criminal intelligence.[185] Partly as a result of the need to reconcile issues like these, and partly given staffing issues, the UN Police have lagged behind their military counterparts in codifying and formalizing approaches to intelligence. However, a recently issued UN manual on intelligence-led policing and UN Police crime intelligence should help clarify these processes and relationships.[186]

Border management

Several UN peace operations have been tasked with border management mandates, for example the UN Mission established in Chad and the northern Central African Republic. In Haiti, MINUSTAH was mandated starting in 2007 to support the Haitian government with border management, by conducting patrols to assist the HNP with border security. MINUSTAH worked with the Haitian government to set up a Technical Border Commission, which it supported with developing and carrying out an integrated border management strategy focused on strengthening control of the border, increasing revenue collection, and reducing human trafficking and other forms of trafficking. The UN Police deployed alongside the HNP at all land crossing points and airports starting in December 2007, and provided training and capacity building for Haitian border officials, including in immigration, customs and the security forces.[187] Similar efforts have been carried out in UN peace operations in Cambodia and Eastern Slavonia.

Some UN peace operations have also carried out border management initiatives that encompass maritime borders, which is critical given the role of maritime transportation routes in international trafficking. For example, by the end of 2009, 16 Uruguayan patrol boats based out of six Haitian ports were patrolling the entire Haitian coastline. As part of MINUSTAH support for the Haitian coastguard, the mission also constructed boat ramps, barracks and helicopter landing sites.[188] UN missions in Lebanon and Burundi have also had a maritime patrol component. Since its deployment in 2006, the UN Interim Force in Lebanon Maritime Task Force has stopped and questioned over 100 000 ships.[189]

Sanctions and embargo support

UN peace operations have long been mandated to support the work of Security Council sanctions regimes and the Panels of Experts established to inform the Security Council's sanctions committees, although the first sanctions regime focused on organized crime issues dates to as late as 2017, in Mali.[190] In Haiti, the Security Council requested BINUH to facilitate the work of the Panel of Experts supporting the Sanctions Committee established through Resolution 2653 (2022), which includes the authorization of sanctions for individuals and entities in relation to illicit trafficking and organized crime.[191]

Support for Panels of Experts frequently falls into two categories: logistical support and information provision. UN peace operations frequently provide or facilitate ground and/or air transportation and offer security escorts and accommodation at UN peace operations premises as required. This support must be provided within the scope of available mission resources and in line with established mission processes and timelines, but logistical support from missions has rarely been a concern for Panels of Experts. In Haiti, BINUH has facilitated the travel of panel experts within Port-au-Prince, including using armoured vehicles, and around Haiti. The mission also facilitated initial meetings with key interlocutors while the panel was being established, although the panel is now mostly self-sufficient in this regard.

Panels of Experts also rely on the mission for information to support them in compiling their reports. In contexts like the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) or the Central African Republic (CAR), or even in Haiti, the peace operation is often among the best sources of information, and the Security Council typically mandates information sharing between missions and experts. However, this cooperation can vary depending on an individual staff member's level of awareness of the panel's mandate. In addition, levels of institutional cooperation can vary, particularly if the mission has taken issue with the information published in a panel report.[192]

Even when information sharing between the mission and panel is strong, UN peace operations (including BINUH) have not often engaged in a strategic manner with the relevant Sanctions Committee. Occasionally, a mission might engage in behind-the-scenes advocacy or public messaging about the importance of a specific sanctions target. However, the potential political impact of sanctioning is diminished without a more coordinated or strategic approach to potential sanctions targets.[193] Moreover, in recent years, increasing tensions in the Security Council have put pressure on the use of sanctions as a tool,[194] including limiting the extent to which Sanctions Committees are willing to levy sanctions. As previously noted, in the case of Haiti, only six individuals have been sanctioned, five of whom are gang leaders. Improved coordination could increase the odds of sanctions being levied, in addition to increasing their impact.

Several peace operations, including in Cambodia, the DRC and Côte d'Ivoire, have also had various roles in monitoring and enforcing international sanctions and arms embargo regimes. For example, the UN Operation in Côte d'Ivoire established an Embargo Cell in 2004 to train, support and coordinate

UN embargo inspection teams, made of UN Police and military observers, in the country. The team's role expanded in 2008, when, as Integrated Embargo Cell, they became tasked with inspecting military facilities in support of the weapons embargo, monitoring diamond production and trade, and providing support to the Ivorian customs administration. A three-person Embargo Quick Reaction Task Force was established to respond quickly to possible embargo violations at the airport and seaport in Abidjan.[195]

In February 2025, the Secretary-General also proposed expanding BINUH to include a UN Integrated Sanctions Support Unit to raise awareness of the Security Council's sanctions regime and help increase the technical capacity of Haitian authorities to implement the sanctions. However, the Security Council has not yet taken up this recommendation.

State authority support

The extension of state authority to areas controlled by armed groups, including by criminal groups, is an important step in addressing the dynamics that allow armed groups to flourish in an environment of weak state control.

A substantial number of UN peace operations in the 2000s and 2010s received mandates to help support the restoration, extension or expansion of state authority, including the missions in Haiti as well as in Afghanistan, the DRC, the CAR, Liberia and South Sudan. Under these mandates, missions undertook a range of activities relevant to countering transnational organized crime, including building the capacity of local government officials, developing roads and other local infrastructure, and carrying out security sector reform, in addition to carrying out the police and justice activities discussed above.

The breadth of the restoration and extension of state authority mandate has provided, and could still provide, considerable space for missions to develop approaches to counter organized criminal groups as a way of supporting a stronger host state. At the same time, however, the entanglement between organized criminal networks and governments limits the potential usefulness of this mandate as a tool to enable missions to engage on transnational organized crime. If the state itself does not wish its authority to be expanded or supported, it is difficult to see how a UN peace operation could change its mind.

The extension of state authority is not the only Security Council mandate with the aim of supporting state authority by addressing drivers of violence and criminality. For example, CVR efforts may complement activities to restore and extend state authority. CVR activities have been associated with the promotion of social cohesion and community pride. They also provide tangible, if short-term, benefits to individuals and communities in the form of paid work and infrastructure projects, creating a temporary space for the government and other actors to step in with medium- to longer-term development and community resilience efforts.

However, while peace operations have been tasked with supporting state authority through various avenues, very few peace operations have been directly tasked with tackling the root causes of conflict, including the political economy of conflict. As one exception, MINUSCA's mandate to provide 'support for the extension of State authority, the deployment of security forces, and the preservation of territorial integrity', includes a reference to MINUSCA support for the CAR government, the UN country team and international financial institutions in addressing the illicit trade in natural resources.[196]

To that end, the Panel of Experts for sanctions in the CAR recommended establishing a dedicated natural resources expert or focal point within the mission.[197] As a step in this direction, MINUSCA

hired a short-term consultant on natural resources and mining in 2017. However, the position was not extended, and MINUSCA has still not established a focal point for natural resources. Reportedly, the mission backed away from implementing this mandate over concerns about the sensitivity of the issue with the CAR government.[198]

MONUSCO has gone further than MINUSCA in implementing its natural resources anti-trafficking mandate. Robust member state engagement has allowed the mission, which has 18 000 personnel, to obtain one staff member, loaned by a member state's national geological institute, to focus on natural resources dynamics. However, fundraising challenges have delayed the expansion of this capacity into a larger, multi-person unit. A recent capacity mapping of the UN system in the DRC found that the entire system, deploying around 3 500 staff members, had only half of a full-time equivalent staff member focusing on corruption, with another focused part time on land issues.[199]

Beginning in 2010, the Security Council mandated MINUSTAH to support the Haitian government in tackling organized crime and drug trafficking.[200] The Security Council maintained the mandate in various forms until the mission's closure, and mission reporting indicates that its training, advisory and operational support to the police was the focus of implementation efforts in this regard.[201] In 2022, the Security Council requested BINUH 'to work with the UNODC and other relevant UN agencies to support Haitian authorities in combating illicit financial flows'.[202] And in 2023, it also mandated that BINUH, 'in close cooperation with relevant United Nations agencies, regional organizations, subregional organizations, and international financial institutions, [...] explore options to enhance the Haitian criminal justice sector in order to fight impunity'.[203] However, given the lack of dedicated staffing, the mission has not been able to implement these mandates more than minimally.

Directly engaging organized criminal groups

The most robust and challenging line of effort against organized criminal groups is direct engagement. This can take the form of dialogue with criminal groups, but it has also taken the form of a kinetic response seeking to physically engage with criminal groups, curb their activities and undermine their capacities.

An armed gang member in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, February 2024. Direct engagement with Haiti's armed groups could help curb their activities and undermine their capacities.
© Giles Clarke/Getty Images

Speaking with criminal armed groups

Engagement with criminal armed actors should not be considered a first choice, even if dialogue with armed groups is a central part of pursuing and making peace, and ensuring that peace agreements are upheld.[204] The UN has played an important role as a third-party mediator and facilitator in dozens of political situations. UN senior leadership has specifically 'reaffirmed the principle that the UN has the prerogative to engage with NSAGs [non-state armed groups] for political purposes as required and appropriate in a given setting, and that engagement never legitimizes NSAGs'.[205]

Whether, when and how to engage in dialogue with armed actors is a sensitive question and, according to the UN, 'should be determined on a case-by-case basis, informed by an analysis of legal frameworks, conflict and stakeholder analysis, UNDG [UN Development Group] conflict-development analysis, and adequate consultations between relevant parts of the UN System'.[206] If a group has primarily criminal motivations, this is seen as a negative indicator for engagement, given that the group 'may not have interest in engagement or in a political settlement'.[207] However, engagement is never ruled out and is instead left up to the judgement of senior UN officials on the ground.[208]

An ongoing debate in Haiti concerns whether to engage in dialogue with the gangs. Most Haitians oppose this vehemently, arguing that negotiations would legitimize criminal groups. At the same time, gang leaders have become more vocal politically,[209] and discussions are reportedly ongoing behind-the-scenes between some political actors and some Viv Ansanm leaders about potential governance replacements for the Transitional Presidential Council.[210]

At the same time, there have been cases where dialogue with criminal armed groups has resulted in improvements in security. For example, in the 2000s, the Jamaican government facilitated a peace initiative to address fighting between rival gangs in the Mountain View area outside of Kingston, an effort that led to several years of relative calm before violence reoccurred.[211] Dialogue can form part of an inducement strategy to encourage criminal groups to pursue more legitimate paths.[212] In addition, practitioners argue for the value of negotiations at the local level, engaging neighbourhood by neighbourhood to reduce crime-related violence and encourage defection from armed groups.[213] UN peace operations are uniquely placed to support Haitians in this sort of dialogue, should the opportunity present itself.

Kinetic operations against organized criminal organizations

The Security Council gives UN peacekeeping operations the mandate to use force in self-defence and defence of the mandate.[214] For example, MINUSTAH was mandated to 'assist with the restoration and maintenance of the rule of law, public safety and public order in Haiti', as well as with the protection of UN personnel and facilities and the protection of civilians under imminent threat of physical violence, within its capabilities and areas of deployment, without prejudice to the responsibilities of the Transitional Government and of police authorities'.[215]

To implement these mandates, as noted above, both MINUSTAH military and police units adopted robust tactics against the gangs in Cité Soleil as part of Operation Baghdad in 2006–2007. These operations resulted in a reduction in gang activity, creating a potential window of opportunity to strengthen the state, particularly the HNP, and restore its presence in formerly gang-dominated areas. However, insufficient efforts were taken to address the root causes of the situation. Under President Martelly, different gangs quickly recaptured and expanded beyond the spaces they had previously occupied, as efforts to consolidate security gains through CVR and other programming

were outpaced by the gangs' growth. Moreover, MINUSTAH troops were accused of human rights violations, including high levels of collateral damage, during these operations.

While the use of force is permitted under the principles of UN peacekeeping,[216] directly conducting operations to tackle or neutralize organized criminal groups can create longer-term challenges. Offensive operations put the principles into tension or even undermine them. Using force against an actor can negatively affect the consent of various parties to a conflict or dent perceptions of the mission's impartiality, undercutting its unique comparative advantage in a situation of conflict or violence. As a result, direct operational engagement in organized criminal environments is not considered regular practice.

Limitations of the toolbox

Given the growth of organized crime worldwide, the UN is increasingly being called upon to tackle the conflict impact of illicit trafficking and illicit financial flows. However, the UN in general, and particularly its peace operations, was not designed to combat transnational organized crime. The UN has a successful track record of working with actors whose primary motivation is political, and whose involvement in conflict or violent activity is intended to further political objectives. UN peace operations struggle to engage with actors who are not looking to negotiate in good faith, or those whose main motivation is financial. Nevertheless, the UN can adapt. UN peace operations have learned to take financial motivations into account, given that these are often found alongside political motives, as the 'greed versus grievance' literature in conflict studies has debated for years.[217]

In addition, the cross-border nature of transnational organized crime represents a challenge to the state-focused model of UN peace operations, whose mandates typically end at the border of their host country. For example, although regional dynamics have a major impact on the situation in the eastern DRC, the MONUSCO mandate ends at the DRC border. To gather information or engage with other countries in the region, MONUSCO is reliant on the goodwill of the UN Special Envoy for the Great Lakes, a relationship that has not always been smooth.[218]

Given the considerable workload carried by many UN staff members, the siloing of backstopping resources in the regional divisions at UN headquarters,[219] and the lack of incentive to look beyond a narrow mandate, convincing UN missions to conduct analysis of regional dynamics is a challenge. Addressing it often requires internal leadership, for example a head of a JMAC willing to integrate cross-border dynamics into larger pieces of analysis. Specific offices of the UN Verification Mission in Colombia (UNVMC), based in border regions of the country, for example, have regularly covered cross-border criminal dynamics in their weekly reports.[220]

Moreover, UN peace operations are reliant on the consent of the host state, which is considered a prerequisite for a Security Council mandate to deploy a peace operation. Organized criminal groups frequently have ties to, or are even embedded within, local or national governments. Attempting to address transnational organized crime or criminal dynamics such as corruption can therefore threaten local power structures. The forced departure of the former SRSG from MINUJUSTH is an example of the risks posed by threatening these structures. If the threat is seen as sufficiently strong, or if national support for anti-organized crime efforts is insufficiently robust, then these efforts could jeopardize continued host government support. Missions may also face misinformation and disinformation campaigns fuelled by those who stand to lose from efforts against organized crime, and these campaigns may impact the mission's legitimacy at local, national or even international levels.

In this context, UN peace operations require a handful of prerequisites if they are to stand any chance of being effective. First, numerous studies have emphasized the importance of clear and prioritized mandates for the success of UN peace operations. A mandate to address organized crime or specific organized criminal activities is critical for several reasons. It represents a clear instruction to the mission to take on a particular task. Without a mandate, a UN peace operation is unlikely to engage with a task, or even, according to some perspectives, would be unable to do so. Even if addressing organized criminal dynamics might be seen as falling under an existing peace operation mandate, such as creating a stable and secure environment or restoring or extending state authority, effective implementation requires the mission to be able to clearly identify the task and options for implementing it before any further steps can be taken.

In addition to fielding the right expertise under the right mandates, technical approaches to address organized crime are not sufficient on their own. They must be treated as central to an overarching political approach under implementation at the national, regional and international levels, and accorded the political will and resources necessary for their implementation.[221] Efforts against organized criminal dynamics, particularly regional or transnational dynamics, have rarely been systematic. For example, in Haiti, BINUH, the UNODC, the Panel of Experts and the GSF all liaise with one another, but not in a unified, coherent or structured way. Efforts from across the UN system and international financial institutions should be coordinated, and they should be aligned with capacities and efforts being led by international donors wherever possible, as well as in support of the strategy and priorities of the host country.

However, a declining willingness within the Security Council to deploy multidimensional missions, whether UN peacekeeping operations or special political missions, is a problem when effectively combating transnational organized crime requires a holistic response.

Special political missions also face particular difficulties when implementing mandates meant to tackle different aspects of organized crime. SPMs, with a few exceptions, are unarmed peace operations, making them vulnerable to security threats in insecure environments and, as a result, particularly exposed to pressure to avoid or discontinue efforts that might disrupt the relationship between the state and the mission. The lack of a uniformed security component also means that SPMs have less leverage over, or less to offer to, a host government reluctant to take sensitive steps against organized crime. However, the Security Council has mandated several SPMs to deploy with guard units, as with the UN Assistance Mission for Iraq after 2004, the UN Integrated Peacebuilding Office in the Central African Republic, the UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) and the UN Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM). It has also authorized SPMs to have lightly armed military observer capacities, as with the UN Office in Timor-Leste, the UN Integrated Office in Sierra Leone and the UNVMC in Colombia.[222] Options are therefore available to address this vulnerability and should be considered more frequently.

Finally, peace operations must also implement and enforce stringent measures to firewall staff from involvement in organized criminal systems. UN peacekeepers in the CAR, for example, have been implicated in smuggling gold, diamonds and drugs to Europe, where they were connected with international networks.[223] Peace operations also must be careful to avoid supporting organized criminal networks through their engagement on the ground, not least through their procurement and logistical practices.[224] Given the reputational as well as operational impacts of UN involvement in crime, the UN must consider how to monitor and engage on these issues while maintaining the highest standards of conduct, including through effective risk management practices.[225]

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Throughout its history, Haiti has been an outlier. It was the first black republic and remains the world's only successful slave rebellion. This early success led to it being forced to the global periphery, made to pay a massive indemnity to France for its freedom and left out of the global diplomatic and trade order. The country has suffered significant amounts of external interference and intervention, and it has struggled to emerge from the decades-long dictatorship of the father-and-son Duvalier regime.

In the modern era, Haiti has also become a harbinger of things to come. The country is at the forefront of current international trends, including a regression from democratic norms, an increase in the application of violence as a means of governance, and an expansion of the presence, visibility and influence of non-state armed groups. Haiti also represents a vision of the potential future of many periphery areas of the world, as international engagement and aid decrease precipitously, international norms lose their potency and international institutions come under attack, leaving the weakest states to fend for themselves in the face of increasing political, economic and security challenges.

The Haitian state seems increasingly to be losing its battle against gangs, who have gained control of the country's licit and illicit marketplace, the landscape of Port-au-Prince and neighbouring *départements*, and even the political levers of power, like public opinion and control of physical state institutions, in an unprecedented way. Yet Haiti is not alone in confronting a rise in organized criminal groups; the world is seeing a boom in transnational organized crime, a trend that may be difficult to check in the face of shifting geopolitical dynamics.[226] The lessons learned from Haiti, as well as from UN involvement in Haiti, are therefore likely to have broader applicability in the years to come. The country's future as well the credibility of UN member states to deal with organized crime as a threat to peace and security are at stake if the situation in Haiti is not given the attention and resources that it merits.

Kenyan police officers arrive in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, December 2025, as part of a deployment of over 230 highly specialized police officers under the expansion of the Gang Suppression Force's mandate. *© Clarens Siffroy/AFP via Getty Images*

A new vision for Haiti

Haiti is a test case for the international community's ability to deal with organized crime as a threat to peace and stability. Organized criminal dynamics have a significant impact on the Haitian economy and daily life, but they also affect the entire region, including the safety, security and economic activity of neighbouring countries in the Caribbean, as well as Latin American neighbours, the US and Canada, who must deal with the side effects of trafficking in drugs, arms and people.

Haiti currently stands in a precarious position, with a fractured, ineffectual transitional government facing increasing pressure from the gangs and seemingly unable – or unwilling – to regain gang-controlled territory, counter transnational and illicit economic dynamics, and carry out basic governance functions. There are real concerns that the situation will further deteriorate, especially given gangs' ability to influence and weaken the government by wielding social media propaganda and threats against public institutions and actors.[227] Gangs could continue developing, expanding their capacity and improving their management, organization and structure to transform into organizations more like cartels than the *baz* of the early 2000s, taking on an increasingly stronger de facto governance function in the absence of the state. The situation in Port-au-Prince could continue to degrade until it resembles Mogadishu in the 1990s – a city without a functioning, unified government, divided along often deadly factional lines, and cut off in many respects from the international economy, banking and transit systems.

At the same time, the UN system is, at the very least, in a time of flux and retrenchment, posing a challenge to the organization's fundamental nature, ambition and utility. UN peace operations can no longer therefore be seen as a starting point for international engagement, much less a solution. New ways of providing support to countries in crisis must be considered, like regional or ad hoc coalitions

of actors or private security contractors – yet these actors should not be considered a panacea and are likely to face similar or even greater challenges than those confronted by UN missions in Haiti. It is therefore critical to look at previous interventions by the UN and other actors to identify lessons to inform these new models. The future of Haiti depends on the ability of all stakeholders, including the international community and the UN, to seriously address organized crime as a threat to peace and security.

Baseline requirements

To restore order in Haiti, a number of elements are needed to address the symptoms and drivers of violence. To be effective in the long term, an approach must not only include initiatives to improve security, but also strategies to address the economic and political dynamics. Many of the below requirements are immensely challenging. Given the scale of these aims, they are unlikely to be achieved immediately, but they are nevertheless essential elements for improving the situation in the country, as well as the long-term effectiveness of the Haitian state. Steps should therefore be taken towards these goals in the short term, with the aim of moving along a pathway over time towards an improved end-state:

- **Understanding changing organized criminal group dynamics:** This should include an ability to gather and analyze intelligence on gang activities (including human, satellite, signals and open-source intelligence) in near-real time to map, track and prepare responses to gang actions.
- **Control over all borders:** Haitian border patrol and customs capacities must be expanded, better trained and better resourced to be able to respond to potential illicit movement of goods and people across the Haiti–Dominican Republic land border. In addition, the deployment of appropriate numbers of suitable maritime assets and personnel sufficient for monitoring, interdicting and deterring illicit trafficking is essential for reducing organized criminal activity. Given the weakness of the Haitian coastguard, this is likely to require the deployment of external maritime assets.
- **Control over airspace:** Airspace control is critical for observation and information gathering, protecting assets from air attack, and pursuing offensive operations, in addition to deterring and interdicting illegal trafficking by air. Although the recent deployment of drones by private security contractors on behalf of the HNP has given the police a slight increase in control over Haitian airspace, this is limited and has triggered criticism over issues of legality and human rights. The deployment of fixed-wing and rotary air assets, particularly attack helicopters, would help temporarily extend control in this important domain.
- **Protection of critical infrastructure:** A sufficient security presence is required to reduce the threat posed by organized criminal groups to critical infrastructure including roads, ports and airports. Although mainly static in nature, there should be some capacity for kinetic engagement.
- **More effective security institutions:** Efforts should be continued and bolstered to strengthen the HNP and the fledgling Haitian armed forces. Police trainee classes should be increased from one to two or three per year using HNP trainers supplemented by external police trainers and employing training facilities in parts of Haiti outside of Port-au-Prince.
- **More effective and accountable governing institutions:** This should include more effective customs operations and better fiscal transparency.
- **Improvement in the rule of law:** It is critical to have the ability to prosecute some emblematic cases of mass crimes and financial crimes, including by prosecuting gangs' backers.

- **Addressing gang funding:** Efforts should be made to cut the links between politicians, business elites and criminal groups, including through sanctions. Haiti's anti-money laundering infrastructure should also be bettered, including by improving the way the Haitian banking system implements sanctions, and monitors and addresses potential illicit financial flows.
- **Agreement among key groups, including elites, on a political way forward:** Without this vital component, there will always be spoilers willing to fund gangs to disrupt efforts. Political and economic elites must be convinced that they will benefit more from opening up Haiti's economy and political system than they might lose. Intensive dialogue efforts with actors from the political, economic and civil society sectors should focus on developing a shared vision of the future for Haiti. The focus should be on the medium and long term, not on quick fixes, which no longer exist.
- **Measures to promote economic growth and strengthen community resilience:** Concessions by political and economic elites should be tied to and incentivized by a package of economic investment, business development and infrastructure improvement programmes meant to improve the competitiveness of and scale up Haitian businesses, large and small, in a range of sectors of the economy, including agriculture. In addition, to address the pipeline of potential gang recruits and improve communities' ability to stand up to gangs, communities should receive humanitarian and livelihoods support, as well as violence-reduction programming. This should include efforts to provide viable employment, educational and recreational options for youth.

Potential pathways

There are a number of options to improve the situation in Haiti, considering the above requirements. While the Security Council recently authorized the establishment of a new, larger GSF and a UN Support Office to operate alongside BINUH, many questions remain about these new entities, among them whether the GSF will be able to obtain sufficient personnel and funding, whether UN budgetary difficulties will permit the full operation of the UNSOH, and whether the GSF and UNSOH, alongside BINUH and many other actors, will be able to effectively contribute to medium- and long-term measures to improve the situation in Haiti.

As a result, this section overviews the full, broad range of options for supporting Haitian efforts to respond. Moreover, given the challenging situation for UN peace operations, it considers a number of options for promoting peace without peacekeeping, including hybrid, ad hoc and regional arrangements. Complex, hybrid operations involving multiple actors carrying out different roles have been successfully conducted before. A case in point is the international response to Somali piracy, which was authorized under UN Security Council Resolution 1851, supported by the Somali federal government, and involved naval deployments by NATO, the EU and national governments.[228] It also involved responses by shipping companies, including the hiring of private security contractors, and support from regional governments and the UN for judicial mechanisms and development assistance.

The below options variously address the symptoms and/or the root causes of violence, and range from eminently feasible possibilities to more ambitious proposals.

- **Special envoy:** A UN or regional political representative focused on good offices and political engagement to address the political root causes of the security situation. Based outside of Haiti to allow greater frankness, this individual could coordinate engagement at the Security Council, as well as with parties behind the scenes, seeking a grand political compromise while encouraging backers to cut ties with gangs. However, if an envoy's efforts are not accompanied by a robust security capacity and technical support, their impact will likely be limited.

- **International monitors:** This capacity could focus on monitoring the implementation of security and political arrangements, for example agreed ceasefire zones established for the return of displaced individuals or the implementation of a revised transitional agreement, using the observers deployed to the UNVMC as an example. With additional defensive capacity, monitors could also take on a protective role for key infrastructure like roads and ports. This option is more flexible and less expensive than a full peace operation or multidimensional mission, but it relies on permissive security conditions that do not currently exist, as well as agreement among diverse actors on parameters for monitoring.
- **Expanded, tailored sanctions and a more effective arms embargo:** An expansion – or the threat of an expansion – of targeted sanctions to encompass more political and economic elite backers of gangs could help increase pressure on elites, encouraging them to engage in political dialogue in better faith. In addition, an increase in international prosecutions for trafficking and financial crimes would also help increase pressure on key backers, despite the difficulties involved in extraditing and bringing them to trial. A strengthened arms embargo is critical to reducing the flows of arms and ammunition to Haiti, but many factors impede a crackdown by key actors in the US – the source for nearly all arms going to Haiti – on arms sales and transport. Given the difficulties recently confronting UN sanctions regimes and Panels of Experts, a regional panel of experts supported by the Organization of American States (OAS) or by the Caribbean Community could help circumvent Security Council stalemate while leveraging peer pressure from neighbouring countries to push for improvement.
- **A major push to strengthen Haitian security forces:** Significantly expanded Haitian, UN and bilateral funding could facilitate an increase and acceleration in recruitment, vetting and training of police and armed forces officers. Additional resources could increase the speed at which candidates are screened and selected, while the establishment of alternative basic and advanced training sites outside of Port-au-Prince could make training new officer promotions less subject to security-related interruptions. However, even with a significant increase in resourcing and successful identification of alternative training locations, this option still results in a lag time of at least a couple of years before the force receives significant expansions.
- **Expanded regional support:** One of the reasons for MINUSTAH's relative success against gangs was the significant support provided by countries in the Latin America and Caribbean region. Regional countries made up the majority of MINUSTAH T/PCCs for most of the mission's lifespan, providing robust military and police capabilities, technical support, development cooperation assistance, and political will. However, since the end of MINUSTAH, countries in the region have played a much less prominent role in the situation in Haiti, with the recent exception of mediation efforts by the Caribbean Community.[229] The involvement of regional countries and regional organizations in developing an OAS Roadmap to support Haiti is promising, given the potential of sustained support to police capacity building, economic investment, the humanitarian response and other areas of critical need.[230]
- **Adequate support for non-UN security forces:** The MSS mission was never resourced to allow its full deployment. To ensure the minimal effectiveness of the newly established GSF, a UN Support Office is intended to support the deployment of expanded and enhanced capacities, including an increased number of personnel, enhanced equipment and additional resourcing to allow the establishment of forward and temporary operating bases. However, given the current financial situation of the UN, assessed funding no longer offers the level of security it used to.

Moreover, the MSS mission also faced coordination challenges with Haitian, UN and international capacities that may not be resolved by an increase in resourcing for the GSF.

- **A larger, more robust force:** The MSS mission focused on supporting the HNP with policing operations, with limited success. In contrast, the Security Council-authorized GSF is intended to be able to undertake operations directly and independently against gangs, driving them out of gang-affected neighbourhoods and possibly attacking gang strongholds directly, or at least containing their activities within certain areas, reducing gangs' control of the capital and impact on its security. Contributing countries should strongly consider providing the GSF with airspace and maritime capacities like helicopters and patrol boats. But these options are costly, adding to concerns about the resourcing sustainability of assessed funding. Moreover, while the MSS mission theoretically worked to strengthen HNP capacities, its activities have not been connected to a wider set of efforts to address the political and socio-economic drivers of the situation. The GSF will risk its impact being short-lived unless it is complemented by efforts to address root causes, as well as to protect against risks of human rights violations and civilian casualties.
- **Private security forces:** Haitian private security companies are contracted for specific security tasks and often have limited capacity in terms of personnel, training and equipment. International private security contractors (PSCs), often known as private military contractors, have been and could in the future be called upon to supplement the capacity of Haitian security forces.[231] PSCs could undertake robust action, but mustering, paying and sustaining the substantial number of personnel required to establish a secure environment would be both difficult and expensive. Challenges with this option also include a lack of accountability and transparency around PSCs' actions, as well as a long history of human rights violations by private contractors.[232] Increased scrutiny of private security in recent years has led to the development of voluntary agreements like the Montreux Document and the International Code of Conduct for Private Security Service Providers,[233] but these tools are non-binding, meaning that Haiti's government would have to adopt and implement a decree setting out a legal framework to result in implementation.[234] Given the likely increase in the use of PSCs in the years to come, the international community should consider developing and applying more robust enforcement mechanisms, for example by aggressively pursuing the adoption of an International Convention on Private Military and Security Companies.[235]
- **Enhanced UN special political mission:** A political mission with a revised mandate focused on coordination and additional technical expertise in areas including political economy and sanctions, coupled with increased security capacity or a UN guard unit to ensure the continuity of service provision. A country-wide presence could increase the mission's resilience and impact. An enhanced political mission could also oversee the delivery of a UN support package to the GSF or other parallel security force without the need to establish a UN Support Office, avoiding the fragmentation of international support. However, this option faces challenges relating to current difficulties in the UN with authorizing and resourcing peace operations.
- **Hybrid or joint mission:** A form of multidimensional peace operation co-led by the UNODC or a regional organization with a specific focus on addressing the root causes of the current situation, including addressing corruption, tackling illicit financial flows, supporting enhanced transparency and accountability, and strengthening Haitian rule of law institutions. This form of peace operation could focus specifically on root causes, bringing assessed funding to expand political and technical work on corruption, impunity and illicit financing. It would also need to be mandated to look beyond the borders of Haiti to consider regional illicit flows, a key comparative advantage given the

limitations of Haitian law enforcement actors.[236] However, it would not be able to directly address security issues. Moreover, it would also depend on the continuing support of the Haitian state, which could limit its ability to push for controversial or challenging reforms, and might confine it to focusing on technical solutions rather than significant political change.

- **UN peacekeeping operation:** The option of a full, multidimensional UN peacekeeping operation would combine various areas of technical expertise, security capacity and political engagement under a single leadership structure, reducing the coordination challenges that affected the MSS mission. However, given current tensions in the Security Council and budgetary pressures on the UN, this option seems unlikely for the moment.

Three vital ingredients

All of these options, in whatever combination they are deployed, are likely to fail without dedicated capacity and well-resourced efforts in three key areas: data gathering and analysis, technical expertise in illicit economies, and support for the judicial system.

Nuanced and locally rooted understanding of organized crime dynamics

Haiti's lack of capacity to gather data on illicit activities is a serious challenge for efforts to assess and respond to criminal dynamics. Haiti has been referred to as 'a blind spot for international law enforcement when it comes to transnational criminal organizations',[237] and an objective for the Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime is to address the lack of data and understanding around these dynamics.

As discussed above, it is essential for any peace operation deployed in Haiti to have the capacity to carry out an integrated analysis of the complex elements forming the country's political-criminal dynamics. For a peacekeeping operation, this would likely take the form of a JMAC, but for an SPM, it could consist of a small, integrated analysis cell, like those in UNAMA, UNSOM or UNSMIL. Even if the capacity is authorized, recent budgetary challenges mean that this might not translate into actual capacity within the mission. Staff members working in an analytical capacity should be trained to conduct political economy analysis as well as stakeholder mapping and analysis exercises for armed groups. It would also be useful for them to understand illicit financial flows and illicit economies to help them identify ways to disrupt these and undermine criminal groups. Moreover, protocols should be developed to ensure smooth and effective information sharing within the mission and with key partners including members of the UN country team, as well as parallel operations like the MSS mission, in certain circumstances.

Tailored technical capacity and expertise in illicit economies

Key technical expertise should be embedded within any operation to ensure its ability to mount a coordinated, effective response, including political economy analysis and expertise on illicit financial flows and trafficking. The mission should also have a macro-level view of financial flows within Haiti as well as between Haiti and other countries in the region, in particular by finding ways to work with the Haitian domestic banking system, perhaps through some type of financial intelligence capacity.[238]

The peace operation should integrate the various technical responses under a strategic vision in support of a political strategy that seeks to address the dynamics underlying an illicit economy. The UN could consider novel or hybrid modalities for embedding this capacity, such as a peace operation led jointly by the UNODC and either the UN Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs or the Department of Peace Operations.[239]

A primary focus of this technical capacity should be supporting national actors with capacity building and advice. In Haiti, the ULCC, which has carried out important investigations of cases of fraud and abuse, should be supported further. Other key national institutions include the HNP's anti-narcotic brigade and UCREF. Efforts should be made to better connect these institutions with the judicial apparatus, including bringing investigative judges into inquiries at an early stage to facilitate and speed up prosecutions. The Law on Prevention and Repression of Corruption, adopted in 2014, criminalizes a broad range of offences, including nepotism, embezzlement, bribery, insider trading, harassment and conflicts of interest, and, assuming sufficient political will, should serve as a strong basis for prosecution.

Technical support should also include assistance to the Haitian state in implementing sanctions. This support does not need to be substantial and could be as minimal as a couple of individuals. Most of the capacities needed to support the implementation of sanctions already exist, including support to the police, customs and border management. As a result, a coordinated approach is needed to assist the Haitian authorities.[240]

At a minimum, the establishment of a transnational organized crime focal point within a more conventional peacekeeping or special political mission could help ensure dedicated capacity and a coordinating capability to maintain visibility of anti-organized crime efforts.[241]

Emphasis on the rule of law

The Haitian judicial system has ground to a halt in recent years. To counter impunity, a number of measures could be considered.

First, the UN peace operation should ramp up support for recent efforts to vet and certify judges. In addition, with courts in downtown Port-au-Prince inaccessible, courts should be provided premises that they can use for proceedings in the short term until the areas around their premises can be freed from gang control.

However, given the system's deep-seated weaknesses, including corruption, vulnerability to political pressure, and a lack of resources and expertise, broader efforts should be undertaken in order to advance prosecutions against, in particular, organized criminal group leaders, their political backers, financiers and money launderers, and those implicated in recent mass atrocity crimes. Several options could be considered. For example, the UN could establish a hybrid court, pairing Haitian and international judges. To deal with the risks posed by the continuing insecurity in Haiti, a temporary tribunal could be established extra-territorially in another country in the region. While this might reduce the impact of the judicial process on the continuing activities of the gangs, it could provide the safety and protection needed to permit an effective investigation and fair judicial process, although it could still face political pressure around sending suspects abroad.

As a more locally rooted alternative, international capacity should be embedded throughout the judicial system, supplementing Haitian institutions rather than replacing them. Although the heads of the prosecutorial service and judiciary should be nationals, internationals should collaborate from within the prosecutorial and judicial structures.[242]

As a final alternative, a small cadre of national judicial professionals, supported by the peace operation, could be established to focus on fast-tracking key cases to counter impunity. Training and technical support with investigative procedures would also be useful. These judges, lawyers and clerks should receive some level of physical protection so they can carry out their work without fear. Joint

investigations could be conducted with different rule of law apparatuses in the region, including the US, and INTERPOL.

These efforts require continuity. Haiti has had 47 ministers of justice since 1986, with each lasting on average only nine months.[243] Constant changes in policies, programmes and personnel prevent the effective implementation of programmes. In addition, many cases may take years to try; for example, the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda was active for a decade, between 1993 and 2004, while the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia was active for 24 years, between 1993 and 2017. Any alternative judicial approach would probably adjudicate according to Haitian law, in particular Haiti's 2014 Law on Prevention and Repression of Corruption, which offers an adequate basis for prosecution, assuming sufficient political will.[244] The Haitian state and the international community should commit at the outset to maintaining these initiatives for a minimum duration of three to five years, focusing on the most emblematic and impactful cases.

A proposed approach

Given the degradation in security in Haiti, the focus must be on improving the situation in crucial, immediate ways while laying the groundwork for further improvement, particularly by addressing root causes. Efforts to improve security are critical, but not sufficient. They must be accompanied by a political and an economic strategy. This multi-pronged approach is needed to re-establish security while taking urgent steps to undermine and dismantle gang trafficking networks and financial flows, sever ties between gangs and their backers, counter impunity and build Haitian security capacity, and at the same time help communities recover. A growing number of actors have expressed interest in supporting efforts in Haiti; given the scale of the need, the central question is how best to use all available capacities as effectively as possible, while avoiding duplication, ensuring alignment of efforts and coordinating in the most efficient manner possible. This section attempts to outline an approach intended to come as close as possible to responding to Haiti's need for assistance from external partners, noting where possible which entities might be particularly well suited to the various tasks.

A reasonable solution would start with a robust force to re-establish security across most of Port-au-Prince. The force would need to be sized appropriately to not only conduct operations in coordination with or separately from the HNP, but also to provide a near-continuous security presence in key areas of the city, including critical infrastructure like roads and important intersections, the airport, ports and markets. The force should also be large enough to establish forward operating bases in key neighbouring areas in the Artibonite and Center *départements*, as well as in outlying parts of the metropolitan Port-au-Prince area. By way of comparison, in August 2007, at the tail end of robust operations in Port-au-Prince, MINUSTAH had close to 5 000 uniformed military and police personnel in the metropolitan region. This included around 3 300 personnel in infantry, military police and formed police units, including more than 1 000 highly trained, robust Brazilian troops, plus around 750 infantry in the neighbouring areas of Croix-des-Bouquets and Carrefour, along with a handful of air units and engineer companies.[245]

A force of around 5 000 could therefore potentially be enough to provide coverage for metropolitan Port-au-Prince as well as for the neighbouring Centre and Artibonite *départements* and border crossings with the Dominican Republic. However, in addition to being well-resourced, equipped, trained and willing to engage in robust kinetic operations, it would also need proper support from an appropriate air component, including a range of fixed-wing and rotary capacities, such as attack helicopters as

well as transportation, medevac and casevac units. The force should also be supported by a maritime component to patrol the coast. The MINUSTAH maritime unit included 16 boats, but even a unit of half that size could, if properly deployed and managed, increase pressure on traffickers, helping reduce illicit flows and therefore restrict gang funding.

The difficulties of securing sufficient troop and police contributions may make the option of hiring private security contractors appealing. However, without proper precautions, this quick fix runs the risk of exacerbating underlying conditions. As seen in the earliest robust MINUSTAH operations, use of indiscriminate force may increase popular dissatisfaction and could actually increase support for the gangs as an alternative to official state leadership. Any PSCs hired to conduct operations in Haiti should commit to abiding by voluntary industry standards laid out in the International Code of Conduct and the Montreux Declaration. Furthermore, the Haitian government should consider adopting by decree (in the continuing absence of elections) enhanced national frameworks to regulate PSCs and hold them accountable.

The re-establishment of security is only the first step. Unless complemented by additional lines of effort at the local, national and international level, including political and economic approaches, the use of force will only serve as a temporary fix, with organized criminal groups likely to resurge at a later date. These efforts would be delivered most effectively through a shared platform or a coordinated effort to align sequencing and avoid overlap. The seeming proliferation of international leadership structures in Haiti is likely to facilitate the ability of Haitian spoilers of all types to derail the political process, while also increasing the risk that robust engagement is not appropriately backed by security and socio-economic follow-on measures, as well as longer-term institution-building programming. Close, intense and consistent engagement among partners is therefore essential for the efforts being considered for Haiti; without effective coordination, they run a real risk of failure.

First and foremost, attention should continue to be focused on increasing the size of the HNP and armed forces, and improving their leadership, training, coordination and resourcing. It is likely that these efforts will require expanded, long-term Haitian, bilateral and regional support, as well as multilateral advising and mentoring.

On the political side, a UN or regional special representative or special envoy should engage deeply with Haitian political, economic and civil society actors about severing the links between gangs and their backers. A political strategy to that end should be coordinated with efforts to levy and enforce targeted sanctions.

In addition to the political strategy – or, better yet, integrated with it – a strategy to address the economic aspects of the situation should be developed and deployed. This strategy should incorporate an approach to engaging with political, economic and local leaders to recognize and respond to the economic roots of the current situation. Technical assistance should be provided to Haitian government efforts to tackle the economic aspects of organized crime: for example, implementing the necessary measures to remove Haiti from the Financial Action Task Force's grey list for failures in stemming money laundering. Another area of intervention could involve engaging with the Haitian banking sector to improve monitoring and flagging of suspicious transactions. In this area, the OAS may be better placed to lead, given its ability to leverage pressure from countries in the region to address these sensitive issues, or perhaps the UNODC, given its technical expertise. A regional panel of illicit economy and sanctions experts could complement these efforts.

A focus on combating illicit economic activities should be coupled with economic investment and development initiatives intended to jumpstart Haiti's licit economy. This should be approached in a broad manner, focusing across economic investment, business development and infrastructure improvement, and combining technical support and assistance in a range of sectors of the Haitian economy, especially agriculture. The OAS Roadmap could help kickstart momentum in this area, but would need to be complemented by bilateral and multilateral efforts, including by UN agencies.

Efforts to establish the rule of law should include initiating prosecutions in key cases, in particular by prosecuting corruption through the 2014 anti-corruption law, in addition to some financial crimes and mass atrocity crimes. The establishment of an extraterritorial court or a hybrid national-international tribunal could help to advance some cases swiftly, setting a precedent for future prosecutions.

Effective information-gathering capacities would be needed to monitor gang dynamics, understand illicit flows and tailor political strategies, including to induce improved behaviour and reduce violence by criminal armed groups. Partnerships between regional and international organizations and national intelligence agencies could help improve the quality and quantity of information available.

These efforts should be complemented by the provision of humanitarian assistance to communities as well as programmes to support youth, women and other disadvantaged groups with livelihoods and other opportunities. These should include labour-intensive cash and food for work programmes, investment in local infrastructure, vocational training opportunities and youth recreation programming.

Finally, all actors engaging in Haiti need to implement appropriate oversight and risk management mechanisms, not least to ensure that they do not support criminal economies. This includes establishing firewalling to prevent staff members from being tempted by involvement in criminal ecosystems, in addition to ensuring that robust accountability measures prevent logistics, construction and other procurement contracts from benefiting criminal enterprises.

Although this solution may not be possible for political, budgetary or other reasons, any efforts to support a Haitian response to the situation should aim to come as close to this proposal as possible. For example, the impact of a smaller deployed force could be maximized by an increase in the number and capacity of available air and maritime assets. If a hybrid or special court is not an option, then perhaps the embedding of international judicial advisers, prosecutors and investigators in the courts would help advance key judicial cases. Similarly, a UN peacekeeping operation could be a useful platform for delivering a combination of political good offices, technical engagement and security assistance. However, given recent dynamics, a special political mission led by the UN, whether jointly with the UNODC or a regional organization, could also help serve as a platform for coordination and delivery, assuming effective alignment with non-UN security forces.

ANNEX: MULTILATERAL INTERVENTIONS AND UN PEACE OPERATIONS IN HAITI SINCE 1990

NAME	START	END	MISSION TYPE	AUTHORIZATION	MANDATE
UN Observer Group for the Verification of Elections in Haiti (ONUVEH)	1990	1991	UN special political	General Assembly Resolution 45/2	Election observation
Special Envoy for Haiti	Dec 1992	Sep 1994	UN/OAS special political	Appointed by Secretary-General at request of General Assembly	Good offices to return to democratic rule
UN-OAS International Civilian Mission in Haiti (MICIVIH)	Feb 1993	Apr 2000	UN/OAS special political	General Assembly Resolution 47/20	Human rights monitoring and institution-building
UN Mission in Haiti (UNMIH)	Sep 1993	Jun 1996	UN peacekeeping	Security Council Resolution 867 (1993)	Helping create a new police force
Operation Uphold Democracy	Sep 1994	Mar 1995	Multinational force	Security Council Resolution 940 (1994)	'All necessary means' to return to democratic rule
UN Support Mission to Haiti (UNSMIH)	Jul 1996	Jul 1997	UN peacekeeping	Security Council Resolution 1063 (1996)	Maintaining stability, helping build institutions and professionalize the police

NAME	START	END	MISSION TYPE	AUTHORIZATION	MANDATE
UN Transition Mission in Haiti (UNTMIH)	Aug 1997	Nov 1997	UN peacekeeping	Security Council Resolution 1123 (1997)	Helping build institutions, professionalize the police, promote reconciliation
UN Civilian Police Mission in Haiti (MIPONUH)	Dec 1997	Mar 2000	UN peacekeeping	Security Council Resolution 1141 (1997)	Assist the government in the professionalization of the police
International Civilian Support Mission in Haiti (MICAH)	Mar 2000	Feb 2001	UN special political	General Assembly Resolution 54/193	Democratization, justice, HNP support, human rights
Operation Secure Tomorrow	Feb 2004	Jul 2004	Multinational force	Security Council Resolution 1529 (2004)	Restore stability after the coup against Aristide
UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH)	Jun 2004	Oct 2017	UN peacekeeping	Security Council Resolution 1542 (2004)	Create a stable environment through HNP reform, DDR, and protecting civilians; support the constitutional and political process, including elections
UN Mission for Justice Support in Haiti (MINUJUSTH)	Oct 2017	Oct 2019	UN peacekeeping	Security Council Resolution 2350 (2017)	Assist the government of Haiti to strengthen rule of law institutions in Haiti; further support and develop the HNP; and engage in human rights monitoring
UN Integrated Office in Haiti (BINUH)	Oct 2019	Present	UN special political	Security Council Resolution 2476 (2019)	Good offices, advice and advocacy role focused on assisting with Haitian efforts on elections, community violence, human rights, and strengthening the HNP, prison management and the justice sector.
Multinational Security Support Mission in Haiti (MSS)	Oct 2023	Present	Multinational force	Security Council Resolution 2699 (2023)	Support the HNP to re-establish security in Haiti and build security conditions conducive to elections, by providing operational support to the HNP and helping provide security for critical infrastructure sites and transit locations.

NOTES

1 Jacqueline Charles, Haiti's capital is close to falling to armed gangs. Here's what you need to know, *Miami Herald*, 25 March 2025, https://www.miamiherald.com/news/nation-world/world/americas/haiti/article302671734.html.

2 *Viv ansanm* is a Haitian Creole term that translates to 'living together'.

3 The world is losing the fight against international gangs, *The Economist*, 26 November 2024, https://www.economist.com/international/2024/11/26/the-world-is-losing-the-fight-against-international-gangs.

4 UN Security Council, Resolution 2793 (2025), 30 September 2025, https://docs.un.org/en/S/RES/2793(2025).

5 Walter Kemp, Mark Shaw and Arthur Boutellis, The elephant in the room: How can peace operations deal with organized crime?, International Peace Institute, 3 June 2013, https://www.ipinst.org/2013/06/the-elephant-in-the-room-how-can-peace-operations-deal-with-organized-crime.

6 Chelsey Kivland, Street sovereignty: Power, violence, and respect among Haitian baz, in Robert Maguire and Scott Freeman (eds), *Who Owns Haiti? People, Power, and Sovereignty*. University of Florida Press, 2017.

7 Interview with a senior UN official, 29 April 2025.

8 UNODC, United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime and the protocols thereto, 2004, https://www.unodc.org/documents/middleeastandnorthafrica/organised-crime/UNITED_NATIONS_CONVENTION_AGAINST_TRANSNATIONAL_ORGANIZED_CRIME_AND_THE_PROTOCOLS_THERETO.pdf.

9 Fiona Mangan, Organized crime and conflict in the Central African Republic, UN University, 2025, https://collections.unu.edu/eserv/UNU:10172/Organized_Crime_and_Conflict_in_CAR.pdf.

10 For example, '[the reformers who overthrew Boyer] understood that political power in Haiti was always intimately tied to military power'. Laurent Dubois, *Haiti: The Aftershocks of History*. Metropolitan Books, 2012.

11 The Pact for the Future is a wide ranging, landmark global agreement with the goal of making the international system fit for purpose for the 21st century. UN, Pact for the Future, https://www.un.org/pact-for-the-future/en.

12 UN, Pact for the Future, Global Digital Compact and Declaration on Future Generations, September 2024, https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/sotf-pact_for_the_future_adopted.pdf.

13 The UN Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in Sudan was established by Security Council Resolution 2524 (2020) but closed at the request of the Sudanese government on 24 February 2024 (Resolution 2715). The UN Transitional Assistance Mission in Somalia succeeded UNSOM on 1 November 2024 (Resolution 2753).

14 UN, Transnational organized crime: 'It's time we pull together to push back', 14 November 2024, https://news.un.org/en/story/2024/11/1156981.

15 El-Ghassim Wane, Paul D Williams and Ai Kihara-Hunt, The future of peacekeeping, new models, and related capabilities, UN Peacekeeping, 1 November 2024, https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/study-on-future-of-peacekeeping-new-models-and-related-capabilities.

16 For example: '[The reformers who overthrew Boyer] understood that political power in Haiti was always intimately tied to military power [...]'. Laurent Dubois, *Haiti: The Aftershocks of History*. Metropolitan Books, 2012, p. 125.

17 Laurent Dubois, *Haiti: The Aftershocks of History*. Metropolitan Books, 2012.

18 Chelsey Kivland, Street sovereignty: Power, violence, and respect among Haitian baz, in Robert Maguire and Scott Freeman (eds), *Who Owns Haiti? People, Power, and Sovereignty*. University of Florida Press, 2017.

19 GI-TOC, Viv Ansanm: How a gang coalition has transformed violence in Port-au-Prince, Risk Bulletin of Violence and Resilience in Haiti, Issue 1, July 2024, https://riskbulletins.globalinitiative.net/ht-obs-001/01-viv-ansanm-gang-coalition-violence-port-au-prince.html.

20 For example, clashes between Chen Mechan and 400 Mawozo over the installation of a checkpoint. Europe External Programme with Africa, Haiti Situation Report:

Gangs expand control, In Depth News, 11 June 2025, https://indepthnews.net/haiti-situation-report-gangs-expand-control.

21 GI-TOC, Last chance? Breaking Haiti's political and criminal impasse, January 2025, https://globalinitiative.net/analysis/haiti-political-and-criminal-impasse.

22 For example, efforts between January and March 2025 to gain control of the Kenscoff and Belot areas in the mountains above Port-au-Prince. See: BINUH, Haiti Flash Report: April 2025: At least 262 people were killed and 66 others injured, resulting in a heavy humanitarian toll during gang attacks aimed at expanding territorial control over Kenscoff and Carrefour, 7 April 2025, https://binuh.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/flash_report_20250222_kenscoff-en.pdf.

23 Haiti - FLASH: 83rd day of the Battle of Kenscoff, 3 Fad'H soldiers killed in combat, *Haiti Libre*, 21 April 2025, https://www.haitilibre.com/en/news-44738-haiti-flash-83rd-day-of-the-battle-of-kenscoff-3-fad-h-soldiers-killed-in-combat.html.

24 Namie di Raza, Mission in transition: Planning for the end of UN Peacekeeping in Haiti, International Peace Institute, December 2018, https://www.ipinst.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/IPI-Rpt-Mission-in-TransitionHaiti.pdf.

25 Alex Dupuy, *The Prophet and Power: Jean-Bertrand Aristide, the International Community, and Haiti.* Roman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2007.

26 UN Security Council, Resolution 1542(2004), 30 April 2024, https://docs.un.org/en/S/RES/1542(2004).

27 In contrast, MINUSTAH's near-contemporary mission, the UN Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET), helped execute core Timorese state functions while building administrative capacity after the former Portuguese colony's independence on 20 May 2002. UN Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor, 17 April 2002, https://docs.un.org/en/S/2002/432; UN Department of Peace Operations, Completed peacekeeping operations: East Timor: United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor, 2001, https://peacekeeping.un.org/mission/past/etimor/etimor.htm.

28 UN Security Council, Report of the Secretary General on the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti, 5 October 2017, https://docs.un.org/en/S/2017/840.

29 UN Security Council, United Nations Integrated Office in Haiti: Report of the Secretary-General, 15 February 2022, https://docs.un.org/en/S/2022/117.

30 UN Security Council, Report of the Secretary General on the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti, 5 October 2017, https://docs.un.org/en/S/2017/840.

31 Guy Hammond, Saving Port-au-Prince: United Nations efforts to protect civilians in Haiti in 2006–2007, Stimson Center, June 2012, https://www.stimson.org/2012/saving-port-au-prince-united-nations-efforts-protect-civilians-haiti-2006.

32 UN Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti, 13 May 2025, https://docs.un.org/en/S/2005/313.

33 Ibid.

34 Guy Hammond, Saving Port-au-Prince: United Nations efforts to protect civilians in Haiti in 2006–2007, Stimson Center, June 2012, https://www.stimson.org/2012/saving-port-au-prince-united-nations-efforts-protect-civilians-haiti-2006.

35 Gabriel Stargardter, General behind deadly Haiti raid takes aim at Brazil's gangs, Reuters, 29 November 2018, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-brazil-violence-insight/general-behind-deadly-haiti-raid-takes-aim-at-brazils-gangs-idUSKCN1NY0GM.

36 UN Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti, 6 October 2025, https://docs.un.org/en/S/2005/631.

37 Guy Hammond, Saving Port-au-Prince: United Nations efforts to protect civilians in Haiti in 2006–2007, Stimson Center, June 2012, https://www.stimson.org/2012/saving-port-au-prince-united-nations-efforts-protect-civilians-haiti-2006.

38 Reuters, René Préval is inaugurated as president in uneasy Haiti, *The New York Times*, 15 May 2006, https://www.nytimes.com/2006/05/15/world/americas/15haiti.html.

39 Interview with a former NGO official, 8 May 2025; Chelsey Kivland, Street sovereignty: Power, violence, and respect among Haitian *baz*, in Robert Maguire and Scott Freeman (eds), *Who Owns Haiti? People, Power, and Sovereignty.* University of Florida Press, 2017.

40 UN Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti, 6 October 2025, https://docs.un.org/en/S/2005/631.

41 Robert M Perito, Haiti: Hope for the future, US Institute of Peace, June 2007, https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/resources/sr188.pdf.

42 Michael Dziedzic and Robert M Perito, Haiti: Confronting the gangs of Port-au-Prince, US Institute of Peace, September 2008, https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/91816/sr208.pdf.

43 A Walter Dorn, Intelligence-led peacekeeping: The United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH), 2006–07, *Intelligence and National Security*, 24, 6 (2009), 805–835.

44 The Force Intervention Brigade (FIB), part of the UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the DR Congo (MONUSCO), and the UN mission in Mali have used force in similar ways. A Walter Dorn and H Peter Langille, The evolution of the use of force in peacekeeping, *PKO: Peacekeeping Operation Journal*, PKO Centre, Korean National Defence University, December 2023, pp 22–45, https://walterdorn.net/walterdorn.net/320.

45 Siobhán Wills, Cahal McLaughlin and Ilionor Louis, Sent to Haiti to keep the peace, departing UN troops leave a damaged nation in their wake, The Conversation, 13 October 2017, https://theconversation.com/sent-to-haiti-to-keep-the-peace-

departing-un-troops-leave-a-damaged-nation-in-their-wake-85584.

46 Ibid.

47 Ibid.

48 James Cockayne, The futility of force? Strategic lessons for dealing with unconventional armed groups from the UN's war on Haiti's gangs, *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 37, 5 (2014), 736–769.

49 Andrew Buncombe, Civilians caught in crossfire during Port-au-Prince raids, *The Independent*, 2 February 2007, https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/civilians-caught-in-crossfire-during-portauprince-raids-434723.html.

50 Michael Dziedzic and Robert M Perito, Haiti: Confronting the gangs of Port-au-Prince, US Institute of Peace, September 2008, https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/91816/sr208.pdf.

51 UN Security Council, Resolution 1780 (2007), 15 October 2007, https://docs.un.org/en/S/RES/1780(2007).

52 Henry Shuldiner, Haiti resurfaces as transit hub for US-bound cocaine, InSight Crime, 18 April 2022, https://insightcrime.org/news/extradition-drug-smuggler-underscores-haitis-historical-cocaine-transit-hub-status.

53 Security Council, Resolution 1780 (2007), 15 October 2007, https://docs.un.org/en/S/RES/1780(2007).

54 Ibid.

55 Interview with a senior UN official, 29 April 2025.

56 Moreover, concerns about gang penetration of the HNP meant that, while HNP teams might be in the operational lead, MINUSTAH would sometimes bring units on board 'only in the last stages of operation planning', holding their phones in a UN safe until the operation was complete to prevent leaks. Finally, there was perhaps a misdiagnosis of HNP capacity issues that led MINUSTAH to focus on improving the HNP's crowd control and law enforcement capacities, rather than organized-crime issues. Walter Kemp, Mark Shaw and Arthur Boutellis, The elephant in the room: How can peace operations deal with organized crime?, International Peace Institute, 3 June 2013, https://www.ipinst.org/2013/06/the-elephant-in-the-room-how-can-peace-operations-deal-with-organized-crime; discussion with UN staff members, 11 August 2025.

57 UN Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti, 22 August 2007, https://docs.un.org/en/S/2007/503; UN Security Council, Resolution 1702 (2006), 15 August 2006, https://docs.un.org/en/S/RES/1702(2006).

58 UN, DDR and organized crime, in the Integrated Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Standards, February 2021, https://www.unddr.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/IDDRS-6.40-DDR-and-Organized-Crime.pdf.

59 Jan J Voordouw, Community violence reduction (CVR) programme in Haiti: Lessons learned exercise, MINUSTAH, 20 June 2016, https://resourcehub01.blob.core.windows.net/$web/Policy%20and%20Guidance/corepeacekeepingguidance/Thematic%20Operational%20Activities/Community%20Engagement%20and%20Conflict%20Management/MINUSTAH_Community%20Violence%20Reduction_Jun16_LL.pdf.

60 James Cockayne, The futility of force? Strategic lessons for dealing with unconventional armed groups from the UN's war on Haiti's gangs, *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 37, 5 (2014), 736–769.

61 Interview with a former MINUSTAH official, 18 May 2025.

62 Walter Kemp, Mark Shaw and Arthur Boutellis, The elephant in the room: How can peace operations deal with organized crime?, International Peace Institute, June 2013, https://www.ipinst.org/2013/06/the-elephant-in-the-room-how-can-peace-operations-deal-with-organized-crime.

63 Guy Hammond, Saving Port-au-Prince: United Nations efforts to protect civilians in Haiti in 2006–2007, Stimson Center, June 2012, https://www.stimson.org/2012/saving-port-au-prince-united-nations-efforts-protect-civilians-haiti-2006.

64 UN Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti, 1 September 2009, https://docs.un.org/en/S/2009/239.

65 Simon Romero and Marc Lacey, Fierce quake devastates Haitian capital, *The New York Times*, 12 January 2010, https://www.nytimes.com/2010/01/13/world/americas/13haiti.html.

66 The Center for Global Development estimated that US$6 billion in official aid and US$3 billion in private contributions were donated in the two years following the earthquake. While a much smaller amount actually reached the ground in Haiti, given that a large proportion of the money went to support the international non-governmental sector largely responsible for administering the funded projects, the amount of money infused into the Haitian economy in a short period of time was certainly in the low billions. See: Vijaya Ramachandran and Julie Walz, Haiti: Where has all the money gone?, Center for Global Development, 14 May 2012, https://www.cgdev.org/publication/haiti-where-has-all-money-gone.

67 Jake Johnston, *Aid State: Elite Panic, Disaster Capitalism, and the Battle to Control Haiti.* St Martin's Press, 2024.

68 Danielle Lantagne et al, The cholera outbreak in Haiti: Where and how did it begin?, in G Balakrish Nair and Yoshifumi Takeda (eds), *Cholera Outbreaks*. Springer, 2013.

69 UN Security Council, Resolution 1927 (2010), 4 June 2010, https://docs.un.org/en/S/RES/1927(2010).

70 Martelly 'won' Haiti's presidential runoff, Al Jazeera, 5 April 2011, https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2011/4/5/martelly-won-haitis-presidential-runoff.

71 Interview with a former NGO official, 8 May 2025.

72 Interview with a Haitian civil society member, 25 April 2025.

73 Walter Kemp, Mark Shaw and Arthur Boutellis, The elephant in the room: How can peace operations deal with organized crime?, International Peace Institute, June 2013, https://www.ipinst.org/2013/06/the-elephant-in-the-room-how-can-peace-operations-deal-with-organized-crime.

74 UN Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations: Stabilization Mission in Haiti,

31 August 2012, https://docs.un.org/en/S/2012/678; UN Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations: Stabilization Mission in Haiti, 8 March 2013, https://docs.un.org/en/S/2013/139.

75 UN Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations: Stabilization Mission in Haiti, 8 March 2013, https://docs.un.org/en/S/2013/139.

76 Interview with a UN staff member in Port-au-Prince, 4 April 2025.

77 UN Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti, 24 August 2014, https://docs.un.org/en/S/2014/617.

78 Interview with a former MINUSTAH official, 18 May 2025.

79 Martelly, the leader of Parti Haitien Tet Kale, reportedly hand-picked Moïse to be his successor, with the intention of Martelly running for a second presidential term at the end of Moïse's term; Haiti's 1987 constitution specifies that an individual may serve as president for a maximum of two non-consecutive five-year terms. However, amid allegations of electoral fraud, the runoff election was postponed indefinitely. Facing pressure from MINUSTAH and the international community, Martelly stepped down in February 2016, near the end of his term. With Martelly's departure, a transitional government took over planning of the election re-run. The election was held in November 2016, and the election council certified Moïse's win. Marie-Laurence Jocelyn Lassegue, Haiti runoff election postponed sine die, International IDEA, 23 December 2015, https://www.idea.int/news/haiti-runoff-election-postponed-sine-die; UN Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti, 8 March 2016, https://docs.un.org/en/S/2016/225; Camila Domonoske, 14 months after elections began, Haiti finally has a president-elect, NPR, 4 January 2017, https://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2017/01/04/508171191/14-months-after-elections-began-haiti-finally-has-a-president-elect.

80 Interview with a former MINUSTAH official, 18 May 2025.

81 Security Council Report, Haiti: Renewal of UN Mission's mandate for a final six-month period, 12 April 2017, https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/whatsinblue/2017/04/haiti-renewal-of-minustah-s-mandate-for-a-final-six-month-period.php.

82 UN Security Council, Resolution 2350 (2017), 13 April 2017, https://docs.un.org/en/S/RES/2350(2017).

83 Namie di Raza, Mission in transition: Planning for the end of UN Peacekeeping in Haiti, International Peace Institute, December 2018, https://www.ipinst.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/IPI-Rpt-Mission-in-TransitionHaiti.pdf.

84 Ibid.

85 Ibid.

86 UN Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti, 12 July 2017, https://docs.un.org/en/S/2017/604.

87 Interview with an international official, 7 May 2025.

88 UN Security Council, Resolution 2350 (2017), 13 April 2017, https://docs.un.org/en/S/RES/2350(2017).

89 UN Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti, 12 July 2017, https://docs.un.org/en/S/2017/604.

90 UN Security Council, United Nations Integrated Office in Haiti: Report of the Secretary-General, 20 March 2018, https://docs.un.org/en/S/2018/241.

91 The PetroCaribe programme was a concessional loan programme offered by Venezuela whereby participating countries could receive Venezuelan petroleum products at concessional prices, using the profit earned to fund development projects, while the principal would be repaid at a low rate in years to come. Jacqueline Charles, Haiti corruption scandal: Billions wasted in Venezuelan PetroCaribe aid, new report shows, *Miami Herald*, 19 August 2020, https://www.miamiherald.com/news/nation-world/world/americas/haiti/article245045015.html.

92 Jacqueline Charles, Haiti owes Venezuela $2 billion – and much of it was embezzled, Senate report says, *Miami Herald*, 16 November 2017, https://www.miamiherald.com/news/nation-world/world/americas/haiti/article184740783.html.

93 Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project, Haiti: Top officials fired after anti-corruption protests, 23 October 2018, https://www.occrp.org/en/news/haiti-top-officials-fired-after-anti-corruption-protests.

94 Ciara Nugent, Why a Venezuelan oil program is fueling massive street protests in Haiti, *Time*, 24 June 2019, https://time.com/5609054/haiti-protests-petrocaribe.

95 Jake Johnston, Haitian government on the defensive following UN welcoming of corruption investigation, Center for Economic and Policy Research, 7 March 2018, https://cepr.net/publications/haitian-government-on-the-defensive-following-un-welcoming-of-corruption-investigation.

96 Jacqueline Charles, Haiti didn't like what the UN said about corruption, so it recalled ambassador, *Miami Herald*, 27 February 2018, https://www.miamiherald.com/news/nation-world/world/americas/haiti/article202505404.html.

97 UN Secretary-General, Ms. Helen Meagher La Lime of the United States - Special Representative for Haiti and Head of the United Nations Mission for Justice Support in Haiti (MINUJUSTH), 1 August 2018, https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/personnel-appointments/2018-08-01/ms-helen-meagher-la-lime-of-the-united-states-special-representative-for-haiti-and-head-of-the-united-nations-mission-for-justice-support-haiti-%28minujusth%29.

98 UN Security Council, United Nations Mission for Justice Support in Haiti Report of the Secretary-General, 1 June 2018, https://docs.un.org/en/S/2018/527.

99 UN Security Council, United Nations Mission for Justice Support in Haiti Report of the Secretary-General, 30 August 2018, https://docs.un.org/en/S/2018/795.

100 Bertelsmann Transformation Index, BTI 2022 country report: Haiti, 2022, https://bti-project.org/fileadmin/api/content/en/downloads/reports/country_report_2022_HTI.pdf.
101 UN Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission for Justice Support in Haiti, 20 March 2018, https://docs.un.org/en/s/2018/241.
102 Interview with a former MINUJUSTH official, 30 April 2025.
103 UN General Assembly, Budget for the United Nations Mission for Justice Support in Haiti for the period from 1 July 2019 to 30 June 2020: Report of the Secretary-General, 5 November 2019, https://docs.un.org/en/A/74/532.
104 Jacqueline Charles, UN mission in Haiti extended for another year by Security Council, *Miami Herald*, 10 April 2018, https://www.miamiherald.com/news/nation-world/world/americas/haiti/article208522544.html.
105 Jacqueline Charles, After nearly 14 years, blue-helmet UN peacekeepers leave Haiti with an unclear future, *Miami Herald*, 13 October 2017, https://www.miamiherald.com/news/nation-world/world/americas/haiti/article178680966.html.
106 *Urgent – L'ambassadeur du Chili en Haïti échappe à un attentat qui fait 1 mort*, Rezo Nodwes, 27 March 2019, https://rezonodwes.com/?p=96079.
107 Interview with a former MINUJUSTH official, 30 April 2025.
108 Correspondence with UN staff, 26 March 2025.
109 Jacqueline Charles, He caught one of Haiti's most wanted criminals. Now the nation's top cop is out of a job, *Miami Herald*, 26 August 2019, https://www.miamiherald.com/news/nation-world/world/americas/haiti/article234403617.html.
110 Kim Ives, Haiti's police chief replaced, *Haiti Liberte*, 28 August 2019, https://haitiliberte.com/haitis-police-chief-replaced/.
111 Correspondence with UN staff, 26 March 2025.
112 UN General Assembly, Proposed programme budget for 2021: Part II, Political affairs, Section 3, Political affairs: Special political missions: Thematic cluster III: regional offices, offices in support of political processes and other missions, 5 June 2020, https://docs.un.org/en/A/75/6%20(Sect.%203)/Add.4.
113 Good offices are discreet diplomatic actions taken by senior UN officials to prevent or address disputes. See UN Department of General Assembly and Conference Management, UNTERM: good offices, https://unterm.un.org/unterm2/en/view/unhq/43d90703-45ac-43a6-95e9-e4650aef34ae.
114 Interview with a BINUH official, 28 April 2025.
115 Interview with a Haitian expert, 22 April 2025.
116 Jimmy Chérizier, alias 'Barbecue', InSight Crime, 10 November 2023, https://insightcrime.org/haiti-organized-crime-news/jimmy-cherizier-alias-barbecue.
117 G9 and Family, InSight Crime, 11 December 2023, https://insightcrime.org/haiti-organized-crime-news/g9-family-profile.
118 Scott Mistler-Ferguson, G9 vs. G-PEP – The two gang alliances tearing Haiti apart, InSight Crime, 21 July 2022, https://insightcrime.org/news/g9-gpep-two-gang-alliances-tearing-haiti-apart.
119 UN Security Council, United Nations Integrated Office in Haiti: Report of the Secretary-General, 3 February 2020, https://docs.un.org/en/S/2020/123.
120 UN Security Council, United Nations Integrated Office in Haiti: Report of the Secretary-General, 11 June 2021, https://docs.un.org/en/S/2021/559.
121 UN Security Council, United Nations Integrated Office in Haiti: Report of the Secretary-General, 27 September 2021, https://docs.un.org/en/S/2021/828.
122 At the same time, Moïse was himself embroiled in a controversy about the end of his five-year presidential term. He claimed that his presidential mandate would expire in February 2022, five years after he took office in February 2017. He had received the most votes in November 2016 in a re-run of the presidential election after allegations of fraud in the first set of elections in October 2015. However, Haitian precedent, set by Aristide in 1994 and Martelly in 2015, among others, limits presidential terms to the five-year period that would be expected if there were no issues with the election.
123 Evens Sanon and Dánica Coto, Haiti's president was killed 4 years ago. The questions around his death remain unanswered, Associated Press, 18 June 2025, https://apnews.com/article/haiti-president-killed-moise-investigation-court-judge-3292934f132e2da95a72b147c33550c9.
124 Maria Abi-Habib, Haiti's leader kept a list of drug traffickers. His assassins came for it, *The New York Times*, 12 December 2021, https://www.nytimes.com/2021/12/12/world/americas/jovenel-moise-haiti-president-drug-traffickers.html.
125 BINUH, SRSG Statement in Security Council Session on BINUH, 19 June 2020, https://binuh.unmissions.org/en/srsg-statement-security-council-session-binuh.
126 UN Security Council, Resolution 2600 (2021), 15 October 2021, https://docs.un.org/en/S/RES/2600(2021).
127 UN Security Council, Letter dated 29 April 2022 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council, 10 May 2022, https://docs.un.org/en/S/2022/369.
128 Ibid.
129 GI-TOC, Gangs of Haiti: Expansion, power and an escalating crisis, October 2022, https://globalinitiative.net/analysis/haiti-gangs-organized-crime.
130 In her September 2022 statement, La Lime noted the role of 'entrenched economic and political interests in driving, sustaining, and manipulating the unrest, deepening the political crisis', and recognized the increasing economic and criminal motivations of the gangs holding the Varreux gas terminal hostage. BINUH, Security Council open briefing on the current security crisis in Haiti 26 September, 3pm, 28 September 2022, https://binuh.unmissions.org/en/security-council-open-briefing-current-security-crisis-haiti-26-september-3pm-0.

131 Natalie Kitroeff, As Haiti unravels, U.S. officials push to send in an armed foreign force, *The New York Times*, 29 November 2022, https://www.nytimes.com/2022/11/29/world/americas/haiti-gangs-foreign-intervention.html.

132 UN Security Council, Resolution 2653 (2022), https://docs.un.org/en/S/RES/2653(2022).

133 UN Security Council, United Nations Integrated Office in Haiti: Report of the Secretary-General, 14 April 2023, https://docs.un.org/en/S/2023/274. The October 2024 report states, 'The heightened gang presence on main access and peripheral roads facilitates the collection of illicit revenues (e.g. demanding illegal tolls and extorting transport users), as well as smuggling operations, enabling gangs to generate significant illicit profits. Possession of heavy weaponry, combined with increased drug seizures by the police in various departments, highlights the likely affiliations of gangs with transnational organized crime networks across the Caribbean and Latin America.' UN Security Council, United Nations Integrated Office in Haiti: Report of the Secretary-General, 15 October 2024, https://docs.un.org/en/S/2024/742.

134 Interview with BINUH officials, 17 April 2025.

135 Interview with a BINUH official, 28 April 2025; Eugene Chen, The liquidity crisis at the United Nations: How we got here and possible ways out, Center on International Cooperation, New York University, 9 August 2024, https://cic.nyu.edu/resources/the-liquidity-crisis-at-the-united-nations-how-we-got-here-and-possible-ways-out.

136 Interview with a UN official, 15 May 2025.

137 UN Secretary-General's Office, Mr Carlos G. Ruiz Massieu of Mexico - Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Haiti and Head of the United Nations Integrated Office in Haiti, 2 July 2025, https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/personnel-appointments/2025-07-02/mr-carlos-g-ruiz-massieu%C2%A0of-mexico-special-representative-of-the-secretary-general-for-haiti-and%C2%A0head-of-the-united-nations-integrated-office-haiti.

138 Danica Coto and Evens Sanon, UN-backed contingent of foreign police arrives in Haiti as Kenya-led force prepares to face gangs, Associated Press, 25 June 2024, https://apnews.com/article/haiti-kenya-police-gangs-0e2c869427a5f7ff564355c5b10d6d5b.

139 GI-TOC, Who is in charge of the Haiti mission?, 18 June 2024, https://globalinitiative.net/analysis/who-is-in-charge-of-the-haiti-mission.

140 UN Security Council, Resolution 2793 (2025), 30 September 2025, https://docs.un.org/en/S/RES/2793(2025).

141 Frances Robles, UN Security Council approves larger force to fight gangs in Haiti, *The New York Times*, 30 September 2025, https://www.nytimes.com/2025/09/30/world/americas/un-haiti-security-gangs.html.

142 UN Security Council, United Nations Integrated Office in Haiti: Report of the Secretary-General, 13 June 2022, https://docs.un.org/en/S/2022/481.

143 UN Security Council, United Nations Integrated Office in Haiti: Report of the Secretary-General, 15 February 2022, https://docs.un.org/en/S/2022/117.

144 UN Security Council, United Nations Integrated Office in Haiti: Report of the Secretary-General, 15 October 2024, https://docs.un.org/en/S/2024/742.

145 Interview with a rule of law expert, 2 May 2025.

146 US Department of State, Report to Congress on developments in Haiti Section 107 of the Haiti Development, Accountability, and Institutional Transparency Initiative Act (Div. V, P.L.117- 103), 10 November 2022, https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Appendix-C-Developments-in-Haiti-004977.pdf.

147 Interview with a rule of law expert, 2 May 2025.

148 UN Security Council, United Nations Integrated Office in Haiti: Report of the Secretary-General, 13 June 2022, https://docs.un.org/en/S/2022/481.

149 UN Peace and Security Data Hub, Contributions to the trust fund for the Multinational Security Support (MSS) mission for Haiti authorized under SCR 2699 (2023), 10 May 2025, https://psdata.un.org/dataset/DOS-MSSTrustFund.

150 Frances Robles, They flew 7 000 miles to fight Haiti's gangs. The gangs are on top, *The New York Times*, 9 October 2024, https://www.nytimes.com/2024/10/09/us/kenya-police-haiti-gangs.html.

151 UN Security Council, UN Security Council Consolidated Sanctions List, 6 November 2025, https://main.un.org/securitycouncil/en/content/un-sc-consolidated-list.

152 Jair van der Lijn, Multilateral peace operations and the challenges of organized crime, Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, February 2018, https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2018-02/multilateral_peace_operations_and_the_challenges_of_organized_crime.pdf.

153 GI-TOC, 2000–2024: Charting organized crime on the UN Security Council agenda, 19 March 2024, https://globalinitiative.net/analysis/scresolutions.

154 El-Ghassim Wane, Paul D Williams and Ai Kihara-Hunt, The Future of peacekeeping, new models, and related capabilities, UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations, October 2024, https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/study-on-future-of-peacekeeping-new-models-and-related-capabilities.

155 UN Department of Political and Peacekeeping Affairs, *Political Economy Analysis: A Handbook for the UN Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs*, June 2019.

156 Dirk Druet, Commodities, commanders and corruption: Political economy in the evolving tradecraft of intelligence and analysis in UN peace operations, in Mats Berdal and Jake Sherman (eds), *The Political Economy of Civil War and UN Peace Operations*. Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2023.

157 JMACs usually work in tandem with a Joint Operations Centre, which takes on the daily tasks of situational awareness, crisis management and operational coordination. JMACs tend to focus their analysis on a time horizon of several days to several months in the future.
158 UN Department of Peace Operations, Policy: Joint Mission Analysis Centres (JMAC), 1 May 2020, https://bit.ly/3Kfk69O.
159 UN, Joint Mission Analysis Centre Field Handbook, 2018, https://bit.ly/43WvP3B.
160 Dirk Druet, Commodities, commanders and corruption: Political economy in the evolving tradecraft of intelligence and analysis in UN peace operations, in Mats Berdal and Jake Sherman (eds), *The Political Economy of Civil War and UN Peace Operations*. Routledge, 2023.
161 Interview with a UNOCC official, 9 May 2025.
162 UN Peacekeeping, UN Peacekeeping-Intelligence, https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/un-peacekeeping-intelligence.
163 Sebastiaan Rietjens and Erik de Waard, UN peacekeeping intelligence: The ASIFU experiment, *International Journal of Intelligence and CounterIntelligence*, 30, 3 (2017), 532–556.
164 Interview with UN University experts, 28 April 2025.
165 Interview with a UN staff member, 14 April 2025.
166 UN Peacekeeping Resource Hub, Policy, Guidance and Learning, https://peacekeepingresourcehub.un.org/en/policy.
167 Interview with UN Police experts, 15 April 2025. See UN Department of Peace Operations, Manual: Intelligence-led policing, September 2025, https://resourcehub01.blob.core.windows.net/$web/Policy%20and%20Guidance/corepeacekeepingguidance/Thematic%20Operational%20Activities/Police%20and%20Law%20Enforcement/2025.14%20Manual%20on%20Intelligence-Led%20Policing.pdf.
168 UN General Assembly, Proposed programme budget for 2025: Part II Political affairs, Section 3 Political affairs: Special political missions: Thematic cluster III: regional offices, offices in support of political processes and other missions, 28 May 2024, https://docs.un.org/en/A/79/6(Sect.3)/Add.4.
169 Eugene Chen, Managing peace operations: How to exit the Groundhog Day time loop of peace operations reform, Center on International Cooperation, New York University, forthcoming.
170 Interview with a UNOCC official, 9 May 2025.
171 UN General Assembly, Proposed programme budget for 2025: Part II Political affairs, Section 3 Political affairs: Special political missions: Thematic cluster III: regional offices, offices in support of political processes and other missions, 28 May 2024, https://docs.un.org/en/A/79/6(Sect.3)/Add.4.
172 UN General Assembly, Proposed programme budget for 2024: Part II Political affairs; Section 3 Political affairs: Special political missions: United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, 19 May 2023, https://docs.un.org/en/A/78/6(Sect.3)/Add.5; see this job advert for a 'Political Affairs Officer' for UNAMA from 2020: https://inspira.un.org/psc/UNCAREERS/EMPLOYEE/HRMS/c/UN_CUSTOMIZATIONS.UN_JOB_DETAIL.GBL?Page=UN_JOB_DETAIL&Action=A&JobOpeningId=131698&PostingSeq=1.
173 UN Secretary-General, Letter dated 16 June 2015 from the Chair of the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations addressed to the Secretary-General, 17 November 2025, https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/795940?v=pdf.
174 For example: Emily J Munro, Multidimensional and integrated peace operations: Trends and challenges, Geneva Centre for Security Policy, 2007, https://www.gcsp.ch/sites/default/files/2025-02/GP%201%20-%20Multidimensional%20and%20Integrated%20Peace%20Operations%20Trends%20and%20Challenges.pdf.
175 The Washington Office on Latin America, Fact Sheet: the CICIG's Legacy in Fighting Corruption in Guatemala, 27 August 2019, https://www.wola.org/analysis/cicigs-legacy-fighting-corruption-guatemala.
176 Interview with a senior UN official, 8 May 2025.
177 UN Secretary-General, Report of the Secretary-General on the modalities for the establishment of specialized Somali anti-piracy courts, 15 June 2011, https://docs.un.org/en/S/2011/360.
178 Sandra L Hodgkinson, Establishment of a special anti-piracy tribunal: Prospective and reality the challenges associated with prosecuting Somali pirates in a special anti-piracy tribunal, *ILSA Journal of International & Comparative Law*, 19, 2(2013), 305–318.
179 UN Media, UN/Somalia anti-piracy courts, 21 June 2011, https://media.un.org/avlibrary/en/asset/u110/u110621d.
180 UN Security Council, United Nations Integrated Office in Haiti: Report of the Secretary-General, 27 June 2025, https://docs.un.org/en/S/2025/418.
181 Arthur Boutellis and Kari M Osland, Preventing organized crime: The need for a context sensitive, UN system-wide approach, NUPI, 2020, https://www.nupi.no/publikasjoner/cristin-pub/preventing-organized-crime.-the-need-for-a-context-sensitive-system-wide-approach.
182 Interviews with UN Police, 15 April 2025.
183 Interview with an international official, 7 May 2025.
184 Interviews with UN Police, 15 April 2025.
185 Interview with a UN staff member, 14 April 2025.
186 Interviews with UN Police, 15 April 2025. See UN Department of Peace Operations, Manual: Intelligence-led policing, September 2025, https://resourcehub01.blob.core.windows.net/$web/Policy%20and%20Guidance/corepeacekeepingguidance/Thematic%20Operational%20Activities/Police%20and%20Law%20Enforcement/2025.14%20Manual%20on%20Intelligence-Led%20Policing.pdf.
187 MINUSTAH, Internal lessons learned document, March 2009.

188 UN Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti, 1 September 2009, https://docs.un.org/S/2009/439.
189 UN Interim Force in Lebanon, UNIFIL Maritime Task Force, https://unifil.unmissions.org/unifil-maritime-task-force.
190 UN Security Council, Resolution 2374 (2017), 5 September 2017, https://docs.un.org/en/S/RES/2374(2017).
191 UN Security Council, Resolution 2692 (2023), 14 July 2023, https://docs.un.org/en/S/RES/2692(2023).
192 Interviews with former Panel of Experts members, 8 April, 28 April 2025.
193 Interview with a former Panel of Experts member, 28 April 2025.
194 Erica Gaston and Fiona Mangan, Multilateral approaches to transnational organized crime and conflict: Global policy considerations and future directions, UN University Centre for Policy Research, July 2024, https://bit.ly/3LY9gpf.
195 UN, After action review: The establishment of the UNOCI integrated Embargo Cell [internal document], 4 December 2008.
196 UN Security Council, Resolution 2759 (2024), 14 November 2024, https://docs.un.org/en/s/res/2759(2024).
197 UN Security Council, Final report of the Panel of Experts on the Central African Republic extended pursuant to Security Council resolution 2196 (2015), 21 December 2015, https://docs.un.org/en/S/2015/936.
198 Fiona Mangan, Organized crime and conflict in the Central African Republic, UN University Centre for Policy Research, 10 May 2025, https://unu.edu/publication/organized-crime-and-conflict-central-african-republic.
199 Interview with a senior UN official, 1 May 2025.
200 UN Security Council, Resolution 1944 (2010), 14 October 2010, https://docs.un.org/en/S/RES/1944(2010).
201 For example, see: UN Secretary-General's reports S/2011/540, S/2013/139, and S/2013/493.
202 UN Security Council, Resolution 2645 (2022), 15 July 2022, https://docs.un.org/en/S/RES/2645(2022).
203 UN Security Council, Resolution 2692 (2023), 14 July 2023, https://docs.un.org/en/S/RES/2692(2023).
204 James Cockayne, John de Boer and Louise Bosetti, Going straight: Criminal spoilers, gang truces and negotiated transitions to lawful order, UN University Centre for Policy Research, 2017, https://cpr.unu.edu/going-straight-criminal-spoilers-gang-truces-and-negotiated-transitions-to-lawful-order.html.
205 Secretary-General's Executive Committee decision number 2017/59 of 5 May 2017.
206 UN Departments of Political Affairs and Peace Operations, Aide Mémoire: Engaging with non state armed groups (NSAGs) for political purposes: Considerations for UN mediators and missions, 12 May 2017.
207 Ibid.
208 UN Peacemaker, United Nations guidance for effective mediation, June 2012, https://peacemaker.un.org/en/documents/united-nations-guidance-effective-mediation.
209 Alex Papadovassilakis, Haiti gangs push for power amid political chaos, InSight Crime, 25 November 2024, https://insightcrime.org/news/haiti-gangs-push-power-political-chaos.
210 Henry Shuldiner, Haiti violence surges as gangs expand influence, InSight Crime, 25 January 2025, https://insightcrime.org/news/haiti-violence-surges-gangs-expand-influence.
211 Enrique Desmond Arias, *Criminal Enterprises and Governance in Latin America and the Caribbean*. Cambridge University Press, 2017.
212 Louise Bosetti, James Cockayne and John de Boer, Crime-proofing conflict prevention, management, and peacebuilding: A review of emerging good practice, UN University Centre for Policy Research, August 2016, https://unu.edu/cpr/project/crime-proofing-conflict-prevention-management-and-peacebuilding-review-emerging-good.
213 James Cockayne, John de Boer and Louise Bosetti, Going straight: Criminal spoilers, gang truces and negotiated transitions to lawful order, UN University Centre for Policy Research, 2017, https://cpr.unu.edu/going-straight-criminal-spoilers-gang-truces-and-negotiated-transitions-to-lawful-order.html.
214 See: UN Peacekeeping, United Nations peacekeeping operations: Principles and guidelines, 2008, https://peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/capstone_eng_0.pdf.
215 UN Security Council, Resolution 1542 (2004), 30 April 2004, https://docs.un.org/en/S/RES/1542 (2004).
216 UN peacekeeping operations are guided by three principles: consent of the parties, impartiality, and non-use of force except in self-defence and defence of the mandate, as outlined in peacekeeping's Capstone Doctrine. While consent of the parties is considered to apply to all parties to a conflict, including the government, in practice, UN peacekeeping operations are dependent on government consent to continue operating in the country, making it difficult for them to maintain full impartiality among all parties to the conflict. See: UN Peacekeeping, United Nations peacekeeping operations: Principles and guidelines, 2008, https://peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/capstone_eng_0.pdf.
217 For example: Anke Hoeffler, 'Greed' versus 'grievance': A useful conceptual distinction in the study of civil war?, *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism*, 11, 2 (2011), 274–284.
218 Interview with UN rule of law staff members, 28 April 2025.
219 Communication from a UN expert, 17 September 2025.
220 Interview with UN rule of law staff members, 28 April 2025.
221 Erica Gaston and Fiona Mangan, Multilateral approaches to transnational organized crime and conflict: Global policy considerations and future directions, UN University Centre for Policy Research, July 2024, https://bit.ly/3LY9gpf.

222 UN Security Council, Special political missions, https://main.un.org/securitycouncil/en/content/repertoire/political-missions-and-offices.

223 Catarina Demony, Gold, diamonds and drugs: Portuguese peacekeepers suspected of smuggling, Reuters, 8 November 2021, https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/gold-diamonds-drugs-portuguese-peacekeepers-suspected-smuggling-2021-11-08.

224 Arthur Boutellis and Kari M Osland, Preventing organized crime: The need for a context sensitive, UN system-wide approach, NUPI, 2020, https://www.nupi.no/publikasjoner/cristin-pub/preventing-organized-crime.-the-need-for-a-context-sensitive-system-wide-approach.

225 Marc Jacquand, Inside the engine room: Enabling the delivery of UN mandates in complex environments, International Peace Institute, July 2019, https://www.ipinst.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/1907-Inside-the-Engine-Room.pdf.

226 The world is losing the fight against international gangs, *The Economist*, 26 November 2024, https://www.economist.com/international/2024/11/26/the-world-is-losing-the-fight-against-international-gangs.

227 Mark Shaw and Romain Le Cour Grandmaison, Haiti is in a political and criminal crisis that should not be ignored, War on the Rocks, 29 April 2025, https://warontherocks.com/2025/04/haiti-is-a-political-and-criminal-crisis-that-should-not-be-ignored.

228 For example, see: Chapter 3: Operational challenges to counterpiracy operations off the coast of Somalia, and Chapter 4: Coping with piracy: The European Union and the shipping industry, in Bibi van Ginkel and Frans-Paul van der Putten (eds) *The International Response to Somali Piracy: Challenges and Opportunities*. Brill, 2010.

229 For example, see: Jean Daniel Senat, Caricom mediation begins in Haiti with a draft agreement on the table, *Le Nouvelliste*, 4 September 2023, https://lenouvelliste.com/en/article/244276/caricom-mediation-begins-in-haiti-with-a-draft-agreement-on-the-table.

230 OAS, Towards a Haitian-led roadmap for stability and peace with regional and international support, August 2025, https://www.oas.org/ext/en/security/Haiti-road-map.

231 Most recently, see: David C Adams, Frances Robles and Mark Mazzetti, A desperate Haiti turns to Erik Prince, Trump ally, in fight against gangs, *The New York Times*, 28 May 2025, https://www.nytimes.com/2025/05/28/us/haiti-erik-prince-blackwater-gangs.html.

232 Stavroula Pabst, Erik Prince brings his mercenaries to Haiti. What could go wrong?, Responsible Statecraft, 6 June 2025, https://responsiblestatecraft.org/erik-prince.

233 International Committee of the Red Cross, The Montreux Document on Private Military and Security Companies, Montreux Document Forum, 2008, https://www.montreuxdocument.org/about/montreux-document.html; International Committee of the Red Cross, The international code of conduct for private security service providers, The International Code of Conduct Association, 10 December 2021, https://icoca.ch/the-code.

234 Walter Kemp, Guns for hire: Should private military companies take on organized crime?, GI-TOC, 8 September 2025, https://globalinitiative.net/analysis/haiti-military-companies-organized-crime-gangs.

235 Open-Ended Inter-Governmental Working Group on Private Military and Security Contractors, Revised fourth draft instrument on an international regulatory framework on the regulation, monitoring of and oversight over the activities of private military and security companies, OCHR, 5 March 2025, https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/hrcouncil/igwg-military/session6/IGWG-PMSCs-Revised-fourth-draft-PMSCs-clean-version-copy.pdf.

236 Erica Gaston and Fiona Mangan, Multilateral approaches to transnational organized crime and conflict: Global policy considerations and future directions, UN University Centre for Policy Research, July 2024, https://bit.ly/3LY9gpf.

237 Patrice Deschenes, How naval interdiction could help curb Haiti's gangs, War on the Rocks, 13 November 2024, https://warontherocks.com/2024/11/how-naval-interdiction-could-help-curb-haitis-gangs.

238 Interview with a UN official, 15 May 2025.

239 Interview with a senior UN official, 29 April 2025.

240 Interview with a UN official, 15 May 2025.

241 Summer Walker and Catharina Nickel, Transnational organized crime and peacekeeping: Joint input paper to the Global Alliance on Peace Operations, UNU-CPR and GI-TOC, May 2025, https://globalinitiative.net/analysis/un-peacekeeping-ministerial-2025-gi-toc-joins-the-global-alliance-for-peace-operations.

242 Interview with a senior UN official, 8 May 2025.

243 Interview with a rule of law expert, 2 May 2025.

244 Anonymous interview, 7 May 2025. See also: Transparency International, Haiti: a new anti-corruption law brings hope, 17 April 2014, https://blog.transparency.org/2014/04/07/haiti-a-new-anti-corruption-law-brings-hope/index.html.

245 Author's own analysis. See also: UN Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti, 22 August 2007, https://docs.un.org/en/S/2007/503.

GLOBAL INITIATIVE
AGAINST TRANSNATIONAL ORGANIZED CRIME

ABOUT THE GLOBAL INITIATIVE

The Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime is a global network with over 700 Network Experts around the world. The Global Initiative provides a platform to promote greater debate and innovative approaches as the building blocks to an inclusive global strategy against organized crime.

www.globalinitiative.net