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Clinton, in Visit to Haiti, Brings Aid and Promises Support

By [MARK LANDLER](#)

PORT-AU-PRINCE, [Haiti](#) — Venturing to the edge of a once lawless part of this impoverished capital, Secretary of State [Hillary Rodham Clinton](#) vowed Thursday that the United States would not abandon Haiti, six months after it was devastated by storms and food riots.

She came with about \$300 million in American aid, including \$15 million in emergency food assistance, \$20 million to rebuild the country's shattered roads and bridges and \$2 million to train police officers, some of whom patrol the mean streets of this neighborhood, Cité Soleil.

"They've had a difficult time," Mrs. Clinton said, as she toured a dusty outdoor clinic staffed by [United States Navy](#) doctors and nurses. "Part of what we're trying to do is help Haiti reconstruct its services."

Mrs. Clinton also indicated that the Obama administration might suspend [deportation orders for 30,000 Haitian immigrants](#) in the United States, something Haiti has sought because of the money Haitians send home and because it says it could not cope with the returnees.

If the United States were to relax its policy, she said, it would apply only to Haitians who were living in the United States and served with deportation orders before [President Obama](#) took office.

"We don't want to encourage other Haitians to make the dangerous journey across the water," she said.

Mrs. Clinton's visit came a day before she was to join Mr. Obama at the Summit of the Americas in Trinidad and Tobago, and two days after an international donors' conference in Washington, which raised \$324 million in emergency and long-term assistance for Haiti.

That sum is barely a third of what experts say Haiti needs to rebuild, though officials here insisted that they were satisfied, given the global economic crisis.

After years of hard-fought progress, the mood here is bleak. [Four tropical storms](#) last September killed 800 people in Haiti and wiped out 15 percent of its annual economic output. The country now depends on foreign aid for 60 percent of its national budget.

Political tensions are also rising, with a long-delayed election scheduled for Sunday. Political parties barred from fielding candidates have threatened to disrupt the vote.

Several opposition leaders stood behind President [René Prével](#) at a news conference, and Mrs. Clinton reminded them, aides said, that she and Mr. Obama had put aside their differences after the election.

Mr. Prével played politics, too, urging the United States to lift its trade embargo against Cuba. That is a message Mr. Obama is likely to hear from several other Latin American leaders at the summit meeting.

Mrs. Clinton said the Obama administration, [having relaxed restrictions](#) on travel and financial transfers for relatives of people living in Cuba, was now waiting for a reciprocal gesture from Havana.

Mrs. Clinton is the first secretary of state to visit Haiti since 2005, and the most senior official to venture near Cité Soleil, which two years ago was a war zone under the control of armed gangs. But she confined herself to the clinic, which was heavily guarded.

Her husband, former President [Bill Clinton](#), was more adventurous when he visited Haiti two weeks ago, stopping at a school in the gritty heart of Cité Soleil. He and Mrs. Clinton have sentimental ties to Haiti, she said: they toured the country as newlyweds and bought five Haitian paintings, two of which hang in their kitchen in Chappaqua, N.Y.

With the help of [United Nations peacekeeping](#) troops, Cité Soleil has been largely pacified. Haitian and American officials hold it up as an example of the progress Haiti had made since [Jean-Bertrand Aristide](#) was ousted in a military coup in 2004.

Despite Mrs. Clinton's obvious feelings for Haiti, the country seemed too careworn to return the affection.

At a garment factory that benefits from an American law that guarantees tariff-free exports of clothing to the United States, Mrs. Clinton said, "What you're seeing is what needs to happen in Haiti."

But as she walked past banks of sewing machines turning out athletic pants, the mostly female workers watched her, silent and stone-faced. Then she slipped out a side door, and the machines began whirring again.

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