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SHORT-TERM PROSPECTS IN HAITI

Submitted by the  
DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

*The following intelligence organizations participated in the preparation of this estimate: The Central Intelligence Agency and the intelligence organizations of the Departments of State, the Army, the Navy, the Air Force, and The Joint Staff.*

Concurred in by the  
UNITED STATES INTELLIGENCE BOARD

*on 7 June 1961. Concurring were The Director of Intelligence and Research, Department of State; the Assistant Chief of Staff for Intelligence, Department of the Army; the Assistant Chief of Naval Operations (Intelligence), Department of the Navy; the Assistant Chief of Staff, Intelligence, USAF; the Director for Intelligence, Joint Staff; the Assistant to the Secretary of Defense, Special Operations; and the Director of the National Security Agency. The Atomic Energy Commission Representative to the USIB, and the Assistant Director, Federal Bureau of Investigation, abstained, the subject being outside of their jurisdiction.*

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# SHORT-TERM PROSPECTS IN HAITI<sup>1</sup>

## THE PROBLEM

To assess the short-term prospects in Haiti, with special reference to the likely consequences for Haiti of the assassination of Dominican dictator Trujillo.

## THE ESTIMATE

### I. THE INTERNAL SITUATION AND PROSPECTS

1. In contrast to the Dominican Republic, where the 30 May assassination of Generalissimo Trujillo was preceded by months of unrest, uncertainty, and intensified repression, the situation in Haiti has remained essentially static. President Duvalier has now conferred upon himself a new six-year term in office, two years before the old term was due to expire. In the 30 April parliamentary elections, in which the voters were called upon to choose among various hand-picked pro-Duvalier candidates, Duvalier placed his own name at the top of the ballot, thereafter asserting that he had been unanimously re-elected. Despite the palpable fraud of this procedure, Duvalier was reinaugurated on 22 May without protest, in the presence of thousands of peasants brought in from the countryside.<sup>2</sup>

2. By the forced retirement of some officers and the reassignment of others, President Duvalier has further ensured his control over the military establishment, the principal in-

strument of political power in Haiti.<sup>3</sup> Although the officer corps as a whole almost certainly resents his divide-and-rule technique, he has put in the key positions men on whom he relies. General Merceron, the army commander, strongly resents the growing influence of Major Raymond, the commander of the Presidential Guard, but has been unable to curb it.

3. Underlying opposition to Duvalier will of course continue. The President's arrogation to himself of a new six-year term has almost certainly increased the resentment of churchmen, students, military men, and others of the old mulatto elite, which has lost its power and influence since Duvalier came to power. Small exile groups continue to exist in New York, Caracas, and Havana; inflammatory broadcasts in Creole, directed at students and the peasantry, continue to emanate weekly from Cuba.

4. Nevertheless, the numerous opposition elements, both in and outside Haiti, still appear to lack the strength, vigor, and cohesion

<sup>1</sup> Supplements and brings up to date SNIE 86.1-60, "The Situation and Prospects in Haiti," dated 27 September 1960, which remains valid and provides a more detailed examination of the Haitian situation.

<sup>2</sup> Haitian Presidents have invariably sought to perpetuate themselves in office and have as regularly been thrown out at the expiration of their legitimate terms. Although Duvalier has got away with this "re-election" at this time, he has laid the basis for a coup attempt at the expiration of his legitimate term in October 1963.

<sup>3</sup> The army, which includes the small air force (160 men) and coast guard (300 men), numbers 5,200, but its ground forces are scattered over the country in small police and constabulary detachments, except for an 800-man battalion at Port-au-Prince and the Port-au-Prince police (730). The Presidential Guard (400), is an independent command responsible directly to Duvalier. In addition, Duvalier directly controls two paramilitary organizations, a civilian militia in Port-au-Prince (275) and a civilian "secret police" numbering 750-1,000 in the country as a whole.

to challenge effectively a man of Duvalier's political skill and determination. A four-month strike by students, who had been the most active of Duvalier's critics, collapsed in March 1961. According to the Haitian Government, a small group of Cuban-supported exiles were apprehended when they landed in late April. Although significant pro-Castro sentiment exists among students and other intellectuals, Castroism still appears to have had little impact on the peasantry.

5. An extremely impoverished country, even by Latin American standards, Haiti has had an unusually poor coffee crop this year, and the dead season is approaching. Nevertheless, the population at large will probably continue to eke out an existence. In November 1960 US financial and technical programs, which had been partially suspended earlier in that year, were resumed and expanded. The present level of US economic assistance (totaling about \$13.5 million for the present US fiscal year) appears sufficient to stave off a foreign exchange or budgetary crisis. Thus, current economic difficulties do not appear sufficient to cause any significant falling away of Duvalier's support. Preliminary indications with respect to the 1961-1962 coffee crop are promising.

6. In sum, we consider it unlikely that the internal opposition will be able to overthrow the Duvalier government in the short run. However, the 54-year-old Duvalier is a diabetic and has suffered at least one heart attack, although his health appears to have improved in recent months. His departure from the scene—whether by natural causes or assassination—would almost certainly be followed by a struggle for power. There is no one leader who could command the quick and widespread support necessary for strong government. The military would be likely to seize control of the government, but probably would not be able to stabilize the situation. The result would probably be a period of disorder similar to the nine-month hiatus preceding the installation of Duvalier, when six provi-

sional governments rose and fell. In such an unstable situation, pro-Castro elements would certainly strive to gain control of Haiti.

## II. CONSEQUENCES OF TRUJILLO'S ASSASSINATION

7. The assassination of Generalissimo Trujillo is unlikely to have any important direct effect on the Haitian situation. Despite the psychological encouragement Trujillo's death has almost certainly given to opponents of Duvalier, it has not changed the presently unfavorable situation confronting them in Haiti.

8. If guerrilla operations develop in the Dominican Republic, they might spill over the Haitian frontier, but probably not to such an extent as to involve major clashes or to have a serious unsettling effect on the position of the Duvalier regime within Haiti. We consider it extremely unlikely that either Castro or the present Dominican regime would undertake military operations in or against Haiti in view of the risks of US or OAS counteraction. Major subversive pressures on Haiti from the Dominican Republic would probably arise only in the event that pro-Castro elements gained power in the Dominican Republic.

9. The unsettled state of affairs in the Dominican Republic to his east, coupled with the presence of a revolutionary Cuba to his west, will probably reinforce Duvalier's sense of dependence on US economic, military, and diplomatic support. At the same time, Duvalier will probably attempt to trade on the notion that the US must support him as the only one capable of providing stable government in Haiti. Castro and his Latin American supporters will almost certainly seek to exploit indications of US support for Duvalier as evidence of US affinity for dictators. At present, with the troubles of the Trujillo dynasty focusing hemisphere attention on the island, such Castro propaganda would probably do some damage to the US position in Latin America.