

**Testimony of Colonel Justin B. Gorkowski,
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**The hearing is titled: “Confronting Haiti's Terrorist Gangs: The Gang
Suppression Force and the Path Ahead “**

Chairman Mast, Ranking Member Meeks, distinguished Members of the committee – thank you for the opportunity to speak today about Haiti and the Gang Suppression Force.

I am pleased to begin today’s testimony by informing you that exactly one month ago, the Gang Suppression Force, or GSF, initiated operations to retake territory in Haiti previously controlled by terrorist gangs. This may seem trivial, but it represents a significant benchmark for the stabilization efforts soon to come. Today, I will provide a brief overview of the force we designed to address the problem, expected deployment timelines, and considerations for the future of the force. My focus is security, on which all Haitian stability hinges.

The Problem

The absence of governance has created opportunities for informal power structures to thrive through use of force, financial independence, intimidation, and terrorism. Over 20 different gang leaders deploy their foot soldiers to fight for control over Haiti’s territory and dwindling resources. These gang leaders, whose forces outnumber Haitian security personnel, dictate daily life in the territories they control by providing security, jobs, school supplies, and condolence payments. This threat is multifaceted and has been entrenched within the corrupt fabric of Haiti’s political and economic elites. These are not simple gangs that can be jailed and

prosecuted—this isn't West Side Story. This threat requires a predominately military solution.

The Solution

We designed the GSF to address the threat I just described, differentiating it from previous multi-national force interventions. The international “peacekeeping” apparatus is ineffective against this threat. Instead, unlike the previous MSS, we opted for an intelligence-driven, joint military-law enforcement solution to conduct intelligence-led counter-gang operations. In collaboration with our Haitian partners, we designed this novel approach to source military and police forces from the international community and challenged the UN to adapt historic practices in a manner to sustain these forces in austere environments. This new hybrid approach – forward-leaning security operations underpinned by UN logistical support – offers the best chance of regaining territorial control from the gangs.

Timelines and Expectations

So how is it working out? To manage expectations, operations just began in mid-June and have far to go. This year, we selected a Special Representative, Jack Christofides, to lead the mission, as well as a Force Commander, Major General Erdenibat Batsuuri and his headquarters staff from Mongolia. We adjudicated over 17,000 pledges from 15 countries to optimize a fighting force of 5,500 from 10 countries. Together with the UN, we have deployed 1,500 security personnel from six of these countries since April to Haiti and are preparing to open our second area of operations. We expect to be at full operational capability this Fall.

As with any new approach, the mission has its challenges. We continue to push the UN to think creatively and repackage its concept of support in Haiti to evolve from peacekeeping to direct support to security operations. This hybrid UN-supported approach results in considerable savings to the American taxpayer—from over \$1 billion over two years to \$119 million annually, reflecting a 78% annual reduction —while also attracting massive interest from troop and police contributing countries, due to familiarity and experience with the UN brand.

Future Considerations

We still have a few months until full capacity, but there are indications the force we've designed will achieve its objectives. Our goal now is to get the remaining personnel from the four other countries deployed as fast as possible to consolidate gains and hold the territory we clear, while diplomatically, we pursue mandate renewal. We must simultaneously facilitate growth of the Haitian security forces, while integrating them into operations so they can secure their own country. Through full implementation of the GSF, the international community places Haitian security forces in the best position to take full responsibility for their own country's security. The hybrid approach we've taken with the UN is the best available solution to a national security threat less than 700 miles from American shores. I welcome your questions.

