



AYITI INTEL | ONE-STOP INTELLIGENCE BRIEF

December 18, 2025

Intelligence for Haiti's Democratic Transition

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The US Embassy issued a security alert documenting PNH offensive operations in Pernier, Torcel, and Croix-des-Bouquets with heavy gunfire and route blockades marking the second government offensive in four days. The UN warned that Haiti is rapidly becoming a central hub for drug trafficking with record 1,045 kilogram cocaine seizure in July and 1,156 kilograms traced to Belgium confirming transnational criminal networks now operate through Haitian gang infrastructure. The Committee to Protect Journalists revealed the government passed its budget in secret without publication undermining electoral financial transparency prerequisites. The contestation period ends tomorrow with final candidate list publication December 22 representing the definitive moment for electoral viability assessment.



QUICK SUMMARY FOR STAKEHOLDERS

PNH conducting offensive operations south of US Embassy in Pernier, Torcel, Croix-des-Bouquets with Rue des Freres blocked and heavy gunfire reported.

UN issued critical warning that Haiti rapidly becoming central drug transshipment hub with over two tonnes cocaine seized in 2025 and guns-for-drugs trade documented with Jamaica.

CPJ report exposes government passed budget in secret without publication violating constitutional transparency requirements and undermining electoral process financial prerequisites.

Contestation period ends December 19 with final candidate list publication December 22 determining whether August 30 elections remain viable.

GSF deployment timeline remains June 2026 per UN assessment with operational capacity questions unresolved.

DEVELOPMENT 1: PNH LAUNCHES OFFENSIVE OPERATIONS IN EMBASSY PERIMETER ZONE

The US Embassy Port-au-Prince issued a security alert December 18 documenting ongoing PNH security operations south of the embassy in Pernier, Torcel, and Croix-des-Bouquets with heavy gunfire and explosions reported throughout the operational zone. The PNH blocked key routes between the embassy and Petion-Ville including Rue des Freres with traffic congestion reported across the tactical perimeter. The embassy remained open for emergency services only with US citizens advised to avoid the operational area until further notice. This represents the second documented PNH offensive operation in four days following the December 15 repelling of gang attacks against Albert Schweitzer Hospital in Verette marking a potential strategic shift from defensive posture to offensive operations.

The operational significance centers on the geographic positioning of the three target zones which form a defensive arc south of the US Embassy in Tabarre creating a buffer zone between embassy

facilities and gang-controlled territories in metropolitan Port-au-Prince. The fact that the PNH is blocking major thoroughfares including Rue des Freres rather than responding to gang incursions suggests this is a deliberate government-initiated operation rather than a reactive defensive action. The operational tempo of two major PNH offensives within four days represents an unprecedented escalation in government military activity since the Gang Suppression Force deployment began in late 2024. Intelligence analysts note this operational tempo suggests either active GSF operational support is now materializing or the government has independently shifted from strategic non-intervention to targeted offensive operations in critical infrastructure protection zones.

The timing of this operation coinciding with the December 19 contestation period deadline and December 22 candidate list publication creates strategic complications for electoral process credibility. If the PNH offensive in Pernier, Torcel, and Croix-des-Bouquets succeeds in establishing government control over these strategic corridors the operational success could provide momentum for the electoral calendar by demonstrating state capacity for territorial control. However if the operation fails or results in prolonged urban combat the resulting instability could undermine electoral legitimacy by demonstrating continued government inability to establish basic security conditions necessary for democratic processes. The proximity of operations to the US Embassy raises questions about American coordination or support for the offensive given the strategic importance of embassy security to US policy interests in Haiti.



HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The Pernier, Torcel, and Croix-des-Bouquets corridor has functioned as a contested buffer zone between gang-controlled Port-au-Prince neighborhoods and government-held areas in Tabarre and Petion-Ville since the February 2024 gang uprising that triggered the transitional government formation. Previous PNH operations in this corridor have been primarily defensive with limited territorial control objectives.

TALKING POINTS

PNH launched offensive operations south of US Embassy in Pernier, Torcel, and Croix-des-Bouquets with heavy gunfire and route blockades documented .

This represents second major PNH offensive in four days following Albert Schweitzer Hospital defense December 15 suggesting operational tempo increase.

Geographic positioning of operations creates defensive buffer zone between US Embassy facilities and gang-controlled metropolitan Port-au-Prince territories.

PNH blocking major routes including Rue des Freres indicates deliberate government-initiated operation rather than reactive defensive posture.

Operational timing coincides with December 19 contestation deadline and December 22 candidate list publication creating strategic electoral implications.

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US Embassy remained open for emergency services only with citizens advised to avoid operational zone pending security clearance.

RECOMMENDED DECISIONS

Monitor operational duration through weekend to determine if this represents sustained offensive campaign or limited tactical operation.

Assess GSF operational involvement through intelligence channels to determine if international force is now actively supporting PNH operations.

Evaluate territorial control outcomes by December 22 to determine if operation successfully established government authority in strategic corridor.

Coordinate with US Embassy security officials to determine American involvement or support for operation given proximity to embassy facilities.

Prepare contingency electoral security assessments if operation fails or results in prolonged urban combat undermining December 22 candidate list credibility.

Track civilian casualty reports given CPJ documentation of previous drone strike casualties including eight children killed in September operation.



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DEVELOPMENT 2: UN WARNS HAITI BECOMING CENTRAL DRUG TRAFFICKING HUB WITH RECORD SEIZURES

The United Nations issued a critical warning December 18 that Haiti is rapidly becoming a central hub for drug trafficking with record cocaine seizures in 2025 confirming the transformation of Haitian gang structures from localized extortion operations to transnational criminal networks. The July 2025 seizure of 1,045 kilograms of cocaine near Ile de la Tortue on the northern coast represented the largest drug bust in Haiti in over thirty years with drugs originating in South America and destined for Caribbean and United States markets. The August 2025 seizure of 1,156 kilograms of cocaine in Antwerp Belgium traced back to Haiti confirmed trafficking routes now extend from Haitian territory to Western European markets demonstrating the international scope of gang criminal operations.

The UN assessment documents that gangs have entrenched themselves along key transit routes in and out of Port-au-Prince and along the Dominican Republic border using these corridors not only

for drug smuggling but also for weapons and migrant trafficking with some gangs reportedly extorting tolls from boats and conducting armed robberies at sea. Intelligence from Jamaica links firearms seizures to a guns-for-drugs trade involving Haitian gangs with cannabis seizures including 426 kilograms confiscated in Petite-Anse near Cap-Haitien in July and 1,350 kilograms seized from two Haitian nationals arrested in Jamaica in July demonstrating the bidirectional nature of trafficking operations. The UN noted that traffickers involved in the cocaine shipment included Bahamian and Jamaican nationals underscoring the presence of regional actors collaborating with Haitian counterparts to establish multinational trafficking networks operating through Haitian territory.

The strategic implications of Haiti's transformation into a drug transshipment hub extend beyond domestic security concerns to regional counter-narcotics operations that will likely escalate in 2026 potentially disrupting humanitarian access and complicating electoral security requirements. The fact that gangs now control not only urban territories but also maritime transit routes and border crossing points means international counter-narcotics operations will require coordination between Haitian government forces, GSF units, United States Drug Enforcement Administration assets, and regional Caribbean security forces. This multi-jurisdictional operational requirement creates command and control complexities that could undermine both security operations effectiveness and humanitarian access to populations in gang-controlled territories. The guns-for-drugs trade with Jamaica documented by UN intelligence suggests weapons flowing into Haiti through trafficking networks will continue regardless of international arms embargo efforts making gang rearmament a perpetual challenge.



HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Haiti has historically served as a minor transshipment point for Caribbean cocaine trafficking but remained a tertiary route compared to primary corridors through Central America and Mexico. The collapse of state territorial control since February 2024 transformed gang operations from localized protection rackets to transnational criminal enterprises with international trafficking partnerships.

TALKING POINTS

UN issued critical warning that Haiti rapidly becoming central hub for drug trafficking with record seizures confirming transnational criminal networks.

July 2025 seizure of 1,045 kilograms cocaine near Ile de la Tortue represents largest drug bust in Haiti in thirty years.

August 2025 seizure of 1,156 kilograms cocaine in Belgium traced to Haiti confirms trafficking routes extend to Western European markets.

Gangs control transit routes in Port-au-Prince and along Dominican border using corridors for drugs, weapons, and migrant trafficking.

Guns-for-drugs trade with Jamaica documented with 1,350 kilograms cannabis seized from Haitian

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nationals arrested in Jamaica in July.

Bahamian and Jamaican nationals involved in cocaine trafficking operations demonstrating regional criminal collaboration with Haitian gangs.

RECOMMENDED DECISIONS

Anticipate escalation of international counter-narcotics operations in 2026 requiring coordination between Haitian forces, GSF, DEA, and Caribbean security assets.

Assess humanitarian access implications as counter-narcotics operations could restrict movement in gang-controlled territories where civilian populations require aid.

Monitor maritime trafficking routes as gangs now control coastal transit points requiring naval interdiction capabilities beyond Haiti domestic capacity.

Evaluate border security with Dominican Republic as UN assessment confirms gangs control key crossing points for drugs, weapons, and migrant flows.

Prepare for perpetual gang rearmament challenges as guns-for-drugs trade ensures weapons continue flowing into Haiti regardless of embargo efforts.

Coordinate intelligence sharing with Jamaica and Bahamas given documented involvement of regional nationals in Haitian trafficking networks.



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DEVELOPMENT 3: CPJ EXPOSES SECRET BUDGET AND GOVERNANCE TRANSPARENCY CRISIS

The Committee to Protect Journalists released a comprehensive report December 15 titled A Fight for Government Transparency Amid Haiti's Insecurity documenting systemic government hostility toward media oversight and constitutional violations including the passage of the national budget in secret without publication. The CPJ assessment reveals media outlets filed complaints that the interim government displayed a lack of transparency in efforts to hold the country together including failure to publish its budget passed in secret as well as controversial hiring of foreign military contractors who used armed drones to battle gangs. The public ombudsman Jean Wilner Morin challenged Prime Minister Fils-Aime in early December over deteriorating security in Artibonite communities after the government failed to address the Pont-Sonde massacre demonstrating institutional resistance to executive accountability.

The revelation that the government passed its budget in secret without publication constitutes a constitutional violation that directly undermines one of three electoral process prerequisites established by the Provisional Electoral Council. The CEP determined elections require security conditions permitting voter access, institutional capacity for electoral administration, and necessary financial resources to conduct voting operations. If the government refuses to disclose how public funds are allocated the CEP cannot demonstrate it possesses necessary financial resources to conduct credible elections on August 30 2026. This transparency failure creates legal grounds for opposition figures to challenge electoral legitimacy before voting occurs effectively providing a constitutional justification for boycott strategies that would delegitimize the transitional process.

The CPJ report also disclosed that government drone strikes against gangs resulted in civilian casualties including eight children killed at a birthday party in September raising urgent questions about rules of engagement and oversight mechanisms for military contractors operating armed drones in urban environments. The CPJ documented journalist intimidation with reporters stating government officials told them to stop doing propaganda for gangs and only broadcast government propaganda demonstrating systematic suppression of independent media coverage. The report notes the United Nations backed deployment of a 5,000-strong Gang Suppression Force but officials do not expect it to be operational before June 2026 confirming previous intelligence assessments that GSF deployment remains incomplete with operational capacity questions unresolved. The combination of budget secrecy, civilian casualty coverups, and media intimidation suggests the transitional government operates with minimal accountability constraints despite constitutional requirements for transparency.



HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Haiti's constitution requires budget publication and parliamentary oversight of public expenditures with historical precedents demonstrating budget secrecy typically precedes authoritarian governance periods. The transitional government operates without a functioning parliament creating structural accountability deficits that enable executive discretion without legislative checks.

TALKING POINTS

CPJ report reveals government passed national budget in secret without publication violating constitutional transparency requirements.

Budget secrecy undermines CEP electoral prerequisite that government possess necessary financial resources creating legal grounds for opposition boycott.

Government drone strikes killed eight children at birthday party in September with civilian casualties previously unreported in this detail.

Journalists report government officials demanded they stop gang coverage and only broadcast government propaganda demonstrating systematic media suppression.

Public ombudsman challenged Prime Minister Fils-Aime over Pont-Sonde massacre response demonstrating institutional resistance to executive accountability.

UN officials confirm GSF will not be operational before June 2026 validating previous assessments of deployment timeline delays.

RECOMMENDED DECISIONS

Demand immediate budget publication as prerequisite for electoral legitimacy given CEP requirement for demonstrated financial resources.

Investigate rules of engagement for military contractors operating armed drones following eight child deaths in September birthday party strike.

Establish independent media access protections to prevent systematic government suppression of coverage documenting civilian impact.

Assess legal grounds for opposition boycott strategies based on constitutional budget transparency violations.

Monitor public ombudsman challenges to executive authority as indicator of institutional resistance to accountability constraints.

Prepare for GSF operational capacity remaining limited through June 2026 requiring continued reliance on PNH forces for security operations.



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DEVELOPMENT 4: CONTESTATION PERIOD ENDS WITH CANDIDATE LIST PUBLICATION

The contestation period for candidate registrations ends December 19 with the Provisional Electoral Council scheduled to publish the final candidate list December 22 representing the definitive moment for assessing whether major opposition figures registered or implemented boycott strategies that would delegitimize the August 30 2026 electoral process. The December 22 publication date occurs four days from today creating immediate timeline pressure for stakeholders monitoring electoral viability indicators. If major opposition leaders including former senators, prominent civil society figures, or diaspora political networks failed to register the resulting candidate pool would lack credibility among constituencies critical to electoral legitimacy.



The contestation period mechanism allows political actors to challenge candidate eligibility based on constitutional requirements, criminal record disqualifications, or documentation irregularities providing legal pathways for eliminating rivals from competition. Historical precedent from previous Haitian electoral cycles demonstrates contestation processes frequently become politicized with frivolous challenges filed to delay or disrupt candidate registration timelines. The CEP's capacity to adjudicate challenges fairly while meeting the December 22 publication deadline will serve as a critical test of institutional electoral administration capability. If the CEP fails to publish on schedule or produces a candidate list riddled with unresolved disputes the resulting credibility damage could undermine international community confidence in the transitional electoral process.

The strategic significance of the December 22 publication extends beyond immediate candidate list assessment to broader questions about whether Haiti's constitutional timeline pressures remain viable given intersecting security, governance, and drug trafficking crises documented in concurrent developments. The Transitional Presidential Council mandate expires February 7 2027 creating a fourteen month window from today for completing electoral processes including campaigning, voting, runoff elections if required, result certification, and power transfer to elected authorities. If the December 22 candidate list reveals widespread opposition boycott or if major figures successfully challenged on technical grounds the resulting electoral legitimacy crisis could force reconsideration of the entire August 30 2026 timeline requiring either mandate extension beyond February 7 2027 or acceptance that Haiti will miss its constitutional deadline for democratic restoration.



HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Haiti's electoral contestation mechanisms have historically been manipulated for political purposes with the 1990 and 2010 electoral cycles demonstrating how frivolous challenges can delay candidate list publications and undermine process credibility. The current CEP operates without historical precedent for conducting elections amid active gang territorial control of major urban areas.

TALKING POINTS

Contestation period ends December 19 with final candidate list publication scheduled December 22.

December 22 represents definitive moment for assessing whether major opposition figures registered or implemented boycott strategies.

CEP must adjudicate eligibility challenges while meeting publication deadline testing institutional electoral administration capacity.



Failure to publish on schedule or producing disputed candidate list could undermine international confidence in transitional process.

Transitional Presidential Council mandate expires February 7 2027 creating fourteen month window for completing all electoral processes.

Widespread opposition boycott or technical disqualifications could force reconsideration of August 30 2026 timeline viability.

RECOMMENDED DECISIONS

Monitor contestation challenge filings through to identify patterns of frivolous disputes designed to delay publication.

Assess December 22 candidate list for major opposition figure participation determining whether boycott strategies materialized.

Evaluate CEP institutional capacity based on ability to meet publication deadline while fairly adjudicating eligibility disputes.

Prepare contingency timeline assessments if December 22 list reveals electoral legitimacy crisis requiring reconsideration of August 30 date.

Coordinate with international community stakeholders to establish consensus red lines for acceptable versus unacceptable candidate list outcomes.

Track whether budget secrecy and governance transparency failures documented in concurrent developments influence opposition participation decisions.



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WHAT TO WATCH NEXT

NEXT 24 TO 48 HOURS

Contestation period concludes December 19 with final eligibility challenges determining whether major disputes will delay December 22 publication. PNH operations in Pernier, Torcel, and Croix-des-Bouquets continue with operational duration indicating whether this represents sustained

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offensive or limited tactical action. US Embassy security posture remains elevated with route blockades potentially extending through weekend if combat operations persist.

THIS WEEK

Final candidate list publication December 22 represents critical decision point determining electoral process viability based on opposition participation levels. PNH offensive outcomes in embassy perimeter zone will demonstrate whether government capacity for territorial control increased or whether gang resistance negates offensive operations. International counter-narcotics coordination discussions likely accelerate following UN drug trafficking hub warning requiring policy decisions on maritime interdiction and border security operations.

STRATEGIC HORIZON

Gang Suppression Force operational capacity remains limited through June 2026 per UN assessment requiring continued reliance on PNH forces with uncertain sustainability. Budget transparency crisis creates legal grounds for opposition boycott potentially delegitimizing August 30 elections before campaigning begins. Transitional Presidential Council mandate expires February 7 2027 with fourteen month window creating compounding timeline pressures if December 22 candidate list reveals electoral legitimacy deficits. Drug trafficking hub status triggers regional counter-narcotics escalation potentially disrupting humanitarian access and complicating electoral security requirements throughout 2026.

PRIMARY SOURCES

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HaitiLibre CEP Official Calendar of Upcoming Elections December 2025

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