

The Fateful Geological Prize Called Haiti

By [F. William Engdahl](#)

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President becomes UN Special Envoy to earthquake-stricken Haiti.

A born-again neo-conservative US business wheeler-dealer preacher claims Haitians are condemned for making a literal 'pact with the Devil.'

Venezuelan, Nicaraguan, Bolivian, French and Swiss rescue organizations accuse the US military of refusing landing rights to planes bearing necessary medicines and urgently needed potable water to the millions of Haitians stricken, injured and homeless.

Behind the smoke, rubble and unending drama of human tragedy in the hapless Caribbean country, a drama is in full play for control of what geophysicists believe may be one of the world's richest zones for hydrocarbons-oil and gas outside the Middle East, possibly orders of magnitude greater than that of nearby Venezuela.

Haiti, and the larger island of Hispaniola of which it is a part, has the geological fate that it straddles one of the world's most active geological zones, where the deepwater plates of three huge structures relentlessly rub against one another—the intersection of the North American, South American and Caribbean tectonic plates. Below the ocean and the waters of the Caribbean, these plates consist of an oceanic crust some 3 to 6 miles thick, floating atop an adjacent mantle. Haiti also lies at the edge of the region known as the Bermuda Triangle, a vast area in the Caribbean subject to bizarre and unexplained disturbances.

This vast mass of underwater plates are in constant motion, rubbing against each other along lines analogous to cracks in a broken porcelain vase that has been reglued. The earth's tectonic plates typically move at a rate 50 to 100 mm annually in relation to one another, and are the origin of earthquakes and of volcanoes. The regions of convergence of such plates are also areas where vast volumes of oil and gas can be pushed upwards from the Earth's mantle. The geophysics surrounding the convergence of the three plates that run more or less directly beneath Port-au-Prince make the region prone to earthquakes such as the one that struck Haiti with devastating ferocity on January 12.

A relevant Texas geological project

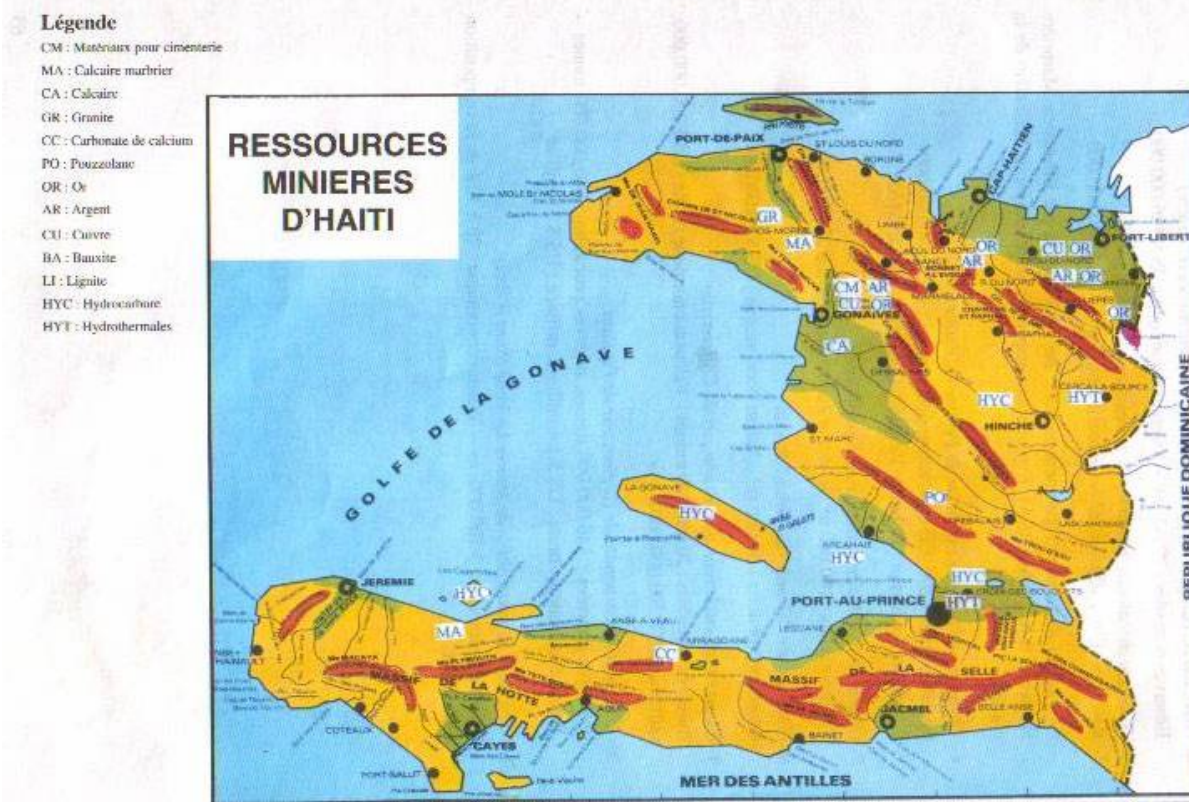
Leaving aside the relevant question of how well in advance the Pentagon and US scientists knew the quake was about to occur, and what Pentagon plans were being laid before January 12, another issue emerges around the events in Haiti that might help explain the bizarre behavior to date of the major 'rescue' players—the United States, France and Canada. Aside from being prone to violent earthquakes, Haiti also happens to lie in a zone that, due to the unusual geographical intersection of its three tectonic plates, might well be straddling one of the world's largest unexplored zones of oil and gas, as well as of valuable

rare strategic minerals.

The vast oil reserves of the Persian Gulf and of the region from the Red Sea into the Gulf of Aden are at a similar convergence zone of large tectonic plates, as are such oil-rich zones as Indonesia and the waters off the coast of California. In short, in terms of the physics of the earth, precisely such intersections of tectonic masses as run directly beneath Haiti have a remarkable tendency to be the sites of vast treasures of minerals, as well as oil and gas, throughout the world.

Notably, in 2005, a year after the Bush-Cheney Administration de facto deposed the democratically elected President of Haiti, Jean-Baptiste Aristide, a team of geologists from the Institute for Geophysics at the University of Texas began an ambitious and thorough two-phase mapping of all geological data of the Caribbean Basins. The project is due to be completed in 2011. Directed by Dr. Paul Mann, it is called “Caribbean Basins, Tectonics and Hydrocarbons.” It is all about determining as precisely as possible the relation between tectonic plates in the Caribbean and the potential for hydrocarbons—oil and gas.

Notably, the sponsors of the multi-million dollar research project under Mann are the world's largest oil companies, including Chevron, ExxonMobil, the Anglo-Dutch Shell and BHP Billiton.[1] Curiously enough, the project is the first comprehensive geological mapping of a region that, one would have thought, would have been a priority decades ago for the US oil majors. Given the immense, existing oil production off Mexico, Louisiana, and the entire Caribbean, as well as its proximity to the United States – not to mention the US focus on its own energy security – it is surprising that the region had not been mapped earlier. Now it emerges that major oil companies were at least generally aware of the huge oil potential of the region long ago, but apparently decided to keep it quiet.



Cuba's Super-giant find

Evidence that the US Administration may well have more in mind for Haiti than the improvement of the lot of the devastated Haitian people can be found in nearby waters off Cuba, directly across from Port-au-Prince. In October 2008 a consortium of oil companies led by Spain's Repsol, together with Cuba's state oil company, Cubapetroleo, announced discovery of one of the world's largest oilfields in the deep water off Cuba. It is what oil geologists call a 'Super-giant' field. Estimates are that the Cuban field contains as much as 20 billion barrels of oil, making it the twelfth Super-giant oilfield discovered since 1996. The discovery also likely makes Cuba a new high-priority target for Pentagon destabilization and other nasty operations.

No doubt to the dismay of Washington, Russian President Dmitry Medvedev flew to Havana one month after the Cuban giant oil find to sign an agreement with acting-President Raul Castro for Russian oil companies to explore and develop Cuban oil.[2]

Medvedev's Russia-Cuba oil agreements came only a week after the visit of Chinese President Hu Jintao to meet the recuperating Fidel Castro and his brother Raul. The Chinese President signed an agreement to modernize Cuban ports and discussed Chinese purchase of Cuban raw materials. No doubt the mammoth new Cuban oil discovery was high on the Chinese agenda with Cuba.[3] On November 5, 2008, just prior to the Chinese President's trip to Cuba and other Latin American countries, the Chinese government issued their first ever policy paper on the future of China's relations with Latin America and Caribbean nations, elevating these bilateral relations to a new level of strategic importance. [4]

The Cuba Super-giant oil find also leaves the advocates of 'Peak Oil' theory with more egg on the face. Shortly before the Bush-Blair decision to invade and occupy Iraq, a theory made the rounds of cyberspace, that sometime after 2010, the world would reach an absolute "peak" in world oil production, initiating a period of decline with drastic social and economic implications. Its prominent spokesmen, including retired oil geologist Colin Campbell and Texas oil banker Matt Simmons, claimed that there had not been a single new Super-giant oil discovery since 1976, or thereabouts, and that new fields found over the past two decades had been "tiny" compared with the earlier giant discoveries in Saudi Arabia, Prudhoe Bay, Daqing in China and elsewhere. [5]

It is critical to note that, more than half a century ago, a group of Russian and Ukrainian geophysicists, working in state secrecy, confirmed that hydrocarbons originated deep in the earth's mantle under conditions similar to a giant burning cauldron at extreme temperature and pressure. They demonstrated that, contrary to US and accepted Western 'mainstream' geology, hydrocarbons were not the result of dead dinosaur detritus concentrated and compressed and somehow transformed into oil and gas millions of years ago, nor of algae or other biological material.[6]

The Russian and Ukrainian geophysicists then proved that the oil or gas produced in the earth's mantle was pushed upwards along faults or cracks in the earth as close to the surface as pressures permitted. The process was analogous to the production of molten lava in volcanoes. It means that the ability to find oil is limited, relatively speaking, only by the ability to identify deep fissures and complex geological activity conducive to bringing the oil out from deep in the earth. It seems that the waters of the Caribbean, especially those off Cuba and its neighbor Haiti, are just such a region of concentrated hydrocarbons (oil and gas) that have found their way upwards close to the surface, perhaps in a magnitude comparable to a new Saudi Arabia.[7]

Haiti, a new Saudi Arabia?

The remarkable geography of Haiti and Cuba and the discovery of world-class oil reserves in the waters off Cuba lend credence to anecdotal accounts of major oil discoveries in several parts of Haitian territory. It also could explain why two Bush Presidents and now special UN Haiti Envoy Bill Clinton have made Haiti such a priority. As well, it could explain why Washington and its NGOs moved so quickly to remove– twice– the democratically elected President Aristide, whose economic program for Haiti included, among other items, proposals for developing Haitian natural resources for the benefit of the Haitian people.

In March 2004, some months before the University of Texas and American Big Oil launched their ambitious mapping of the hydrocarbon potentials of the Caribbean, a Haitian writer, Dr. Georges Michel, published online an article titled ‘Oil in Haiti.’ In it, Michel wrote,

... [I]t has been no secret that deep in the earthy bowels of the two states that share the island of Haiti and the surrounding waters that there are significant, still untapped deposits of oil. One knows not why they are still untapped. Since the early twentieth century, the physical and political map of the island of Haiti, erected in 1908 by Messrs. Alexander Poujol and Henry Thomasset, reported a major oil reservoir in Haiti near the source of the Rio Todo El Mondo, Tributary Right Artibonite River, better known today as the River Thomonde. [8]

According to a June 2008 article by Roberson Alphonse in the Haitian paper, *Le Nouvelliste en Haiti*, “The signs, (indicators), justifying the explorations of oil (black gold) in Haiti are encouraging. In the middle of the oil shock, some 4 companies want official licenses from the Haitian State to drill for oil.”

At the time, oil prices were climbing above \$140 a barrel — on manipulations by various Wall Street banks. Alphonse’s article quoted Dieusiel Anglade, the Haitian State Director of the Office of Mining and Energy, telling the Haitian press: “We’ve received four requests for oil exploration permits...We have had encouraging indicators to justify the pursuit of the exploration of black gold (oil), which had stopped in 1979.”[9]

Alphonse reported the findings from a 1979 geological study in Haiti of 11 exploratory oil wells drilled at the Plaine du Cul-de-sac on the Plateau Central and at L’île de La Gonaive: “Surface (tentative) indicators for oil were found at the Southern peninsula and on the North coast, explained the engineer Anglade, who strongly believes in the immediate commercial viability of these explorations.”[10]

Journalist Alphonse cites an August 16, 1979 memo by Haitian attorney Francois Lamothe, in which he noted that “five big wells were drilled” down to depths of 9000 feet and that a sample that “underwent a physical-chemical analysis in Munich, Germany” had “revealed tracks of oil.” [11]

Despite the promising 1979 results in Haiti, Dr. Georges Michel reported that, “the big multinational oil companies operating in Haiti pushed for the discovered deposits not to be exploited.” [12] Oil exploration in and offshore Haiti ground to a sudden halt as a result.

Similar if less precise reports claiming that Haitian oil reserves could be vastly larger than those of Venezuela have appeared in Haitian websites. [13] Then in 2010 the financial news

site Bloomberg News carried the following:

The Jan. 12 earthquake was on a fault line that passes near potential gas reserves, said Stephen Pierce, a geologist who worked in the region for 30 years for companies that included the former Mobil Corp. The quake may have cracked rock formations along the fault, allowing gas or oil to temporarily seep toward the surface, he said Monday in a telephone interview. 'A geologist, callous as it may seem, tracing that fault zone from Port-au-Prince to the border looking for gas and oil seeps, may find a structure that hasn't been drilled,' said Pierce, exploration manager at Zion Oil & Gas Inc., a Dallas-based company that's drilling in Israel. [14]

In an interview with a Santo Domingo online paper, Leopoldo Espaillat Nanita, former head of the Dominican Petroleum Refinery (REFIDOMSA) stated, "there is a multinational conspiracy to illegally take the mineral resources of the Haitian people." [15] Haiti's minerals include gold, the valuable strategic metal iridium and oil, apparently lots of it.

Aristide's development plans

Marguerite Laurent ('Ezili Dantò'), president of the Haitian Lawyers' Leadership Network (HLLN) who served as attorney for the deposed Aristide, notes that when Aristide was President — up until his US-backed ouster during the Bush era in 2004 — he had developed and published in book form his national development plans. These plans included, for the first time, a detailed list of known sites where the resources of Haiti were located. The publication of the plan sparked a national debate over Haitian radio and in the media about the future of the country. Aristide's plan was to implement a public-private partnership to ensure that the development of Haiti's oil, gold and other valuable resources would benefit the national economy and the broader population, and not merely the five Haitian oligarchic families and their US backers, the so-called Chimeres or gangsters. [16]

Since the ouster of Aristide in 2004, Haiti has been an occupied country, with a dubiously-elected President, Rene Preval, a controversial follower of IMF privatization mandates and reportedly tied to the Chimeres or Haitian oligarchs who backed the removal of Aristide. Notably, the US State Department refuses to permit the return of Aristide from South African exile.

Now, in the wake of the devastating earthquake of January 12, the United States military has taken control of Haiti's four airports and presently has some 20,000 troops in the country. Journalists and international aid organizations have accused the US military of being more concerned with imposing military control, which it prefers to call "security," than with bringing urgently needed water, food and medicine from the airport sites to the population.

A US military occupation of Haiti under the guise of earthquake disaster 'relief' would give Washington and private business interests tied to it a geopolitical prize of the first order. Prior to the January 12 quake, the US Embassy in Port-au-Prince was the fifth largest US embassy in the world, comparable to its embassies in such geopolitically strategic places as Berlin and Beijing.[17] With huge new oil finds off Cuba being exploited by Russian companies, with clear indications that Haiti contains similar vast untapped oil as well as gold, copper, uranium and iridium, with Hugo Chavez' Venezuela as a neighbor to the south of Haiti, a return of Aristide or any popular leader committed to developing the resources for the people of Haiti, — the poorest nation in the Americas — would constitute a devastating

blow to the world's sole Superpower. The fact that in the aftermath of the earthquake, UN Haiti Special Envoy Bill Clinton joined forces with Aristide foe George W. Bush to create something called the Clinton-Bush Haiti Fund ought to give everyone pause.

According to Marguerite Laurent ('Ezili Dantò') of the Haitian Lawyers' Leadership Network, under the guise of emergency relief work, the US, France and Canada are engaged in a balkanization of the island for future mineral control. She reports rumors that Canada wants the North of Haiti where Canadian mining interests are already present. The US wants Port-au-Prince and the island of La Gonaive just offshore – an area identified in Aristide's development book as having vast oil resources, and which is bitterly contested by France. She further states that China, with UN veto power over the de facto UN-occupied country, may have something to say against such a US-France-Canada carve up of the vast wealth of the nation. [18]

Notes:

1 Paul Mann, Caribbean Basins, Tectonic Plates & Hydrocarbons, Institute for Geophysics, The University of Texas at Austin, accessed in www.ig.utexas.edu/research/projects/cbth/.../ProposalCaribbean.pdf .

2 Rory Carroll, Medvedev and Castro meet to rebuild Russia-Cuba relations, London Guardian, November 28, 2008 accessed in <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2008/nov/28/cuba-russia>.

3 Julian Gavaghan, Comrades in arms: When China's President Hu met a frail Fidel Castro, London Daily Mail, November 19, 2008, accessed in <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1087485/Comrades-arms-When-Chinas-President-Hu-met-frail-Fidel-Castro.html>.

4 Peoples' Daily Online, China issues first policy paper on Latin America, Caribbean region, November 5, 2008, accessed in <http://english.people.com.cn/90001/90776/90883/6527888.html> .

5 Matthew R. Simmons, The World's Giant Oilfields, Simmons & Co. International, Houston, accessed in <http://www.simmonsco-intl.com/files/giantoilfields.pdf> .

6 Anton Kolesnikov, et al, Methane-derived hydrocarbons produced under upper-mantle conditions, Nature Geoscience, July 26, 2009.

7 F. William Engdahl, War and Peak Oil—Confessions of an 'ex' Peak Oil believer, Global Research, September 26, 2007, accessed in <http://www.globalresearch.ca/index.php?context=va&aid=6880> .

8 Dr. Georges Michel, Oil in Haiti, English translation from French, Pétrole en Haiti, March 27, 2004, accessed in http://www.margueritelaurent.com/pressclips/oil_sites.html#oil_GeorgesMichelEnglish .

9 Roberson Alphonse, Drill, and then pump the oil of Haiti! 4 oil companies request oil drilling permits, translated from the original French, June 27, 2008, accessed in <http://www.bnvillage.co.uk/caribbean-news-village-beta/99691-drill-then-pump-oil-haiti-4-oil-companies-request-oil-drilling-permits.html>

10 Ibid.

11 Ibid. The full text indicated that, “five big wells were drilled at Porto Suel (Maissade) of a depth of 9000 feet, at Bebernal, 9000 feet, at Bois-Carradeux (Ouest), at Dumornay, on the road Route Frare and close to the Chemin de Fer of Saint-Marc. A sample, a ‘carrot’ (oil reservoir) drilled up from the well of Saint-Marc in the Artibonite underwent a physical-chemical analysis in Munich, Germany, at the request of Mr. Broth. ‘The result of the analysis was returned on October 11, 1979 and revealed tracks of oil,’ confided the engineer, Willy Clemens, who had gone to Germany.”

12 Dr. Georges Michel, op. cit.

13 Marguerite Laurent, Haiti is full of oil, say Ginette and Daniel Mathurin, Radio Metropole, Jan 28, 2008, accessed in http://www.margueritelarent.com/pressclips/oil_sites.html#full_of_oil.

14 Jim Polson, Haiti earthquake may have exposed gas, aiding economy, Bloomberg News, January 26, 2010.

15 Espaillat Nanita revela en Haiti existen grandes recursos de oro y otros minerales, Espacinsular.org, 17 November, 2009, accessed in <http://www.espacinsular.org/spip.php?article8942> .

16 The Aristide development plan was contained in the book published in Haiti in 2000, Investir dans l’Human. Livre Blanc de Fanmi Lavalas sous la Direction de Jean-Bertrand Aristide, Port-au-Prince, Imprimerie Henri Deschamps, 2000. It contained detailed maps, tables, graphics, and a national development plan for 2004 “covering agriculture, environment, commerce and industry, the financial sector, infrastructure, education, culture, health, women’s issues, and issues in the public sector.” In 2004, using NGOs and the UN and a vicious propaganda campaign to vilify Aristide, the Bush administration got rid of the elected President.

17 Cynthia McKinney, Haiti: An Unwelcome Katrina Redux, Global Research, January 19, 2010, accessed in <http://www.globalresearch.ca/index.php?context=va&aid=17063>.

18 Marguerite Laurent (Ezili Danto), Did mining and oil drilling trigger the Haiti earthquake?, OpEd News.com, January 23, 2010, accessed in <http://www.opednews.com/articles/1/Did-mining-and-oil-drillin-by-Ezili-Danto-100123-329.html>.

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