

## Bill Clinton to be special UN envoy to Haiti



AP – Former U.S. President Bill Clinton delivers a speech during the opening of the 17th annual Life Ball ...



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By JONATHAN M. KATZ, Associated Press Writer Jonathan M. Katz, Associated Press Writer – Tue May 19, 2:15 am ET

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti – The U.N. is turning to Bill Clinton as its emissary to chronically unstable Haiti, where the former president is popular but not the peacekeepers who have provided the nation's only real security for years.

United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon is expected to formally name Clinton on Tuesday as its special envoy to Haiti, the ex-president's spokesman Matt McKenna said.

U.N. peacekeepers have patrolled Haiti since 2004 and are in the process of training the country's under-equipped national police to retake control — but some here consider the blue helmets an occupation force and have called for them to leave now.

Having Clinton as the U.N.'s public face in Haiti could temper such sentiment.

Clinton is still well-regarded here for using the threat of U.S. military force to oust a dictatorship in 1994, then sending Army troops and Marines to pave the way for the return of elected President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, who had been deposed in a coup.

Many poor Haitians — Aristide's power base — still long for their leader's return from exile after he was toppled a second time by a rebellion in 2004.

In March, Clinton toured the Haitian capital of Port-au-Prince with the U.N. chief to encourage investment after a year that saw a food crisis, destabilizing riots and four devastating tropical storms.

The following month, he attended a donors conference in Washington that resulted in pledges of \$324 million for the struggling country. Haiti is the hemisphere's poorest nation and has been mired for decades in political and social turmoil.

Because of his marriage to U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, State Department lawyers must approve and review some of Clinton's international activities under an agreement between the U.S. Senate and the Clinton Foundation, which works in Haiti on a number of issues including health care, AIDS, the environment and economic development.

Officials said Monday that the State Department is aware of the appointment but could not immediately say if its lawyers have signed off on it. U.N. officials did not immediately comment. Haiti does not currently have a special U.N. envoy, and it is not clear what Clinton's duties will be. The Miami Herald, which first reported the appointment, said he will be expected to visit the Caribbean country — a two-hour flight from Miami — at least four times a year.

Clinton visited Haiti as president in 1995 and again in 2003. Hillary Rodham Clinton has also visited several times, most recently for an April meeting with President Rene Preval en route to the Summit of the Americas in Trinidad.

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Associated Press writer Matthew Lee contributed from Washington.