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## Discreet US military aid

Fearful of competition from France, the United States has ended its eight-year old embargo on military aid to the Duvalier dictatorship in Haiti, and is training and equipping the Haitian armed forces under the cloak of a Florida-based firm which specialises in such work.

This became evident when Haiti's newly formed "anti-Communist, anti-subversion" guerrilla force, the Leopards, made their first public appearance at the annual Army Day parade in Port-au-Prince — along with their American instructor, a Marine veteran of Vietnam and Korea, employed by the firm of Aerotrade, of Miami.

The new "defenders of the revolution" marched across the lawns

of the presidential palace, watched by President Jean Claude Duvalier and his chief civil and military aides — all of them, including the President, kitted out in the all-American camouflage uniform of the Leopards. Also watching were the American Ambassador, Mr Clinton Knox, and the vice-president of Aerotrade, who had flown in for the occasion.

Neither the Government nor the US Embassy has admitted that the military aid cut off by President Kennedy in 1963 at the height of the late President Francois "Papa Doc" Duvalier's reign of terror, has been resumed. But the US position in Haiti, especially with the relatively weak Government which Papa Doc left behind him, is such that no US firm would

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## for Haiti

by Greg Chamberlain

be able to do business there if Washington did not approve: much less sell arms without official sanction to a country only a few dozen miles from Cuba.

Aerotrade is already reported to have supplied M-16 rifles, lorries, and jeeps—all from US surplus stock—to Haiti's 5,000-man army, and half a dozen instructors to train pilots to fly and maintain the tiny 250-man Haitian air force's handful of doubtful Second World War vintage planes.

The resumed military aid has been partly prompted by a desire to neutralise the French Government's recent offer, which Haiti has accepted, of making training scholarships for Haitian officers available in the French armed forces. There are also plans for

French officials to supervise the re-organisation of the police and trade unions.

Ever since the US Congress banned the sale of new weaponry to Latin America six years ago, a dismayed White House has watched France do a roaring trade selling new tanks and Mirage jets to half a dozen South American countries.

Mr Nixon is free to sell surplus and used material, however. It is expected that Presidential adviser Mr Robert Finch, and the Assistant Defence Secretary for International Security Affairs, Mr Warren Nutter—each now making separate tours of Latin America—will try to push sales of these in an effort to counter France's bid, in Haiti as elsewhere in the hemi-

sphere, to cut into the US military sphere of influence.

But Washington cannot easily sell even this kind of materiel openly to Haiti at the moment because the Duvalier family dictatorship, in the eyes of most Latin Americans, still bears the terrible stigma of Papa Doc's excesses.

Nevertheless, since the United States already has a firm control over the armed forces of the neighbouring, and equally strategic and politically fragile, Dominican Republic, it is Pentagon logic to reassert its commanding influence in Haiti as best it can, in order to secure the basic US defence perimeter in the Caribbean to face the Soviet military position in Cuba—in this case, through good old American private enterprise.