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Haiti: Government Slashes Salaries Of President, Cabinet, Top-level Public Employees

by John Neagle
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According to an Information Ministry communique published Oct. 3 in the government daily newspaper L’Union, Lt.Gen. Prosper Avril’s $10,000 per month salary has been cut to $5,000. Cabinet ministers' monthly salaries of $3,500 were reduced 33%. Next, a 20% salary cut was applied to top public employees earning $1,500 per month, while employees receiving $1,000 per month lost 10%. The communique said the salary cuts, effective for six months beginning Oct. 1, "are part of a strategy which aims at lessening the ills of the present economic crisis." The average annual income in Haiti is less than $300. The public deficit totals $60 million. The foreign debt is $800 million, three times the annual budget. Government salaries account for 75% of the budget, according to L’Union. The unprecedented salary cutbacks were announced a week after a 24-hour general strike that shut down Haitian businesses and transport. The strike was called to protest austerity measures imposed by the government to obtain a $26.5 million loan from the International Monetary Fund. The day after the strike, Avril said he recognized the justice of the strikers' demands, but that he had no choice but to negotiate with the Fund because "we had a knife to our throat." (Basic data from AP, 10/03/89)

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