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STATUS ON ALBANIA

COMMUNICATION

FROM

THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES

TRANSMITTING

A LETTER NOTIFYING CONGRESS THAT ON MARCH 13, 1997, U.S. MILITARY PERSONNEL WERE DEPLOYED TO PROVIDE ENHANCED SECURITY FOR THE AMERICAN EMBASSY IN TIRANA, ALBANIA AND TO CONDUCT THE EVACUATION OF CERTAIN U.S. GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES AND PRIVATE U.S. CITIZENS



MARCH 17, 1997.—Referred to the Committee on International Relations
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THE WHITE HOUSE,
Washington, DC, March 15, 1997.

Hon. NEWT GINGRICH,
Speaker of the House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. SPEAKER: In February 1997, civil unrest broke out in Albania after a nationwide pyramid investment scheme destroyed the life savings of tens of thousands of investors unaware of the fraudulent nature of those investments. Protesters took to the streets and later joined political opponents of President Sali Berisha in demanding his removal. By March 13, much of Albania, including the capital city of Tirana, had fallen into widespread disorder. Looting and gunfire was reported throughout the country as sympathetic police and military officials refused to enforce the law. While there was no evidence that Americans were being directly targeted, the disorder and violence sweeping the country subjected American citizens and property to risks ranging from criminal acts to random violence.

On March 13, due to the rapidly deteriorating security situation and the potential threat to American citizens and the American Embassy, U.S. military personnel were deployed to provide enhanced security for the American Embassy in Tirana and to conduct the evacuation of certain U.S. Government employees and private U.S. citizens. Approximately 25 U.S. Marines entered the capital city on March 13 and immediately took up positions in and around the American Embassy compound. Evacuation operations began concurrently as U.S. CH-46 helicopters operating from the U.S.S. *Nassau* amphibious ready group transported approximately 50 U.S. citizens to U.S. Navy ships at sea. Evacuation efforts resumed on March 14 and are expected to continue for several days. The rescue helicopters are escorted by AH-1W Cobra helicopters, which came under fire but were not damaged during separate, sporadic incidents on March 14. In addition, a 150-member Marine rifle company has also been inserted near the American Embassy to provide additional security for the evacuation.

The Marines involved in this operation are from the Marine Expeditionary Unit currently operating in the Adriatic Sea. Although U.S. forces are equipped for combat, the evacuation is being undertaken solely for the purpose of protecting American citizens and property. United States forces will redeploy as soon as evacuation operations are complete and enhanced security at the American Embassy is no longer required.

I have taken this action pursuant to my constitutional authority to conduct U.S. foreign relations and as Commander in Chief and Chief Executive.

I am providing this report as part of my efforts to keep the Congress fully informed, consistent with the War Powers Resolution. I

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appreciate the support of the Congress in this action to protect
American citizens and the American Embassy in Tirana.

Sincerely,

WILLIAM J. CLINTON.

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