

105th Congress, 1st Session - - - - - House Document 105-93

STATUS ON SIERRA LEONE

COMMUNICATION

FROM

THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES

TRANSMITTING

A LETTER NOTIFYING CONGRESS THAT ON MAY 29 AND MAY 30, DUE TO THE UNCERTAIN SECURITY SITUATION AND THE POSSIBLE THREAT TO AMERICAN CITIZENS AND THE AMERICAN EMBASSY IN SIERRA LEONE, APPROXIMATELY 200 U.S. MILITARY PERSONNEL, INCLUDING AN 11-MEMBER SPECIAL FORCES DETACHMENT, WERE POSITIONED IN FREETOWN TO PREPARE FOR THE EVACUATION OF CERTAIN U.S. GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES AND PRIVATE U.S. CITIZENS



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THE WHITE HOUSE,
Washington, DC, May 30, 1997.

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

DEAR MR. SPEAKER: On May 25, soldiers from the Republic of Sierra Leone Military Forces (RSLMF) mutinied against the country's democratically elected President, Ahmed Tejan Kabbah. Battles between the mutineers and the President's Nigerian security guard resulted in several rocket propelled grenade rounds hitting the U.S. Embassy. In addition, the RSLMF soldiers have engaged in looting, rape, armed robbery, and carjackings throughout the city. Sporadic gunfire and looting diminished with the arrival of additional Nigerian military forces that attempted to restore order. However, the security situation is deteriorating as tensions rise between Nigerian troops on the one hand and the mutineers and their supporters on the other hand. While there is no evidence that Americans are being directly targeted, the disorder and violence in Freetown subjects American citizens to continued risks ranging from criminal acts to random violence.

On May 29 and May 30, due to the uncertain security situation and the possible threat to American citizens and the American Embassy in Sierra Leone, approximately 200 U.S. military personnel, including an 11-member special forces detachment, were positioned in Freetown to prepare for the evacuation of certain U.S. Government employees and private U.S. citizens. Evacuation operations began on May 30, as U.S. military helicopters transported U.S. citizens and designated third-country nationals to immediate safety aboard the U.S.S. *Kearsarge* from where they will be taken to Conakry, Guinea, for further transportation. In addition to those evacuated by helicopter, 18 U.S. citizens departed Sierra Leone on May 29 via a British charter airline flight.

The Marines involved in this operation are from the Marine Expeditionary Unit currently embarked aboard U.S.S. *Kearsarge*, operating off the west coast of Africa. Special forces personnel are from the U.S. Army Third Special Forces Group, Fort Bragg, North Carolina. Although U.S. forces are equipped for combat, the evacuation has been 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 locations in and around Freetown is no longer required.

I have taken this action pursuant to my constitutional authority to conduct the foreign relations of the United States 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 appreciate the support of the Congress in this action to protect

American citizens and the American Embassy in Freetown, Sierra Leone.

Sincerely,

WILLIAM J. CLINTON.

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