

105th Congress, 2d Session - - - - - House Document 105-318

THE SECURITY AND SITUATION OF  
THE U.S. EMBASSY IN MONROVIA, LIBERIA

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COMMUNICATION

FROM

**THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES**

TRANSMITTING

A REPORT ON THE SITUATION IN MONROVIA, LIBERIA AND THE  
INCREASED SECURITY AT THE U.S. EMBASSY THERE



OCTOBER 5, 1998.—Referred to the Committee on International Relations  
and ordered to be printed

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U.S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE

69-011

WASHINGTON : 1998

THE WHITE HOUSE,  
Washington, September 29, 1998.

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

DEAR MR. SPEAKER: Liberia is just emerging from a 7-year civil war. Since democratic elections were held in July 1997 there have been moments of instability in that country. In the past 10 days, conflict erupted between Liberian security forces and supporters of another former faction leader, Roosevelt Johnson.

On the morning of September 19, Liberian government security forces fired on a small group of Liberians led by former Ulimo Krahn faction leader Roosevelt Johnson, who was speaking with U.S. Embassy officials outside the Embassy compound, after Johnson and his group were initially refused refuge. When Liberian government security forces opened fire on the group, the Embassy officials fled into the U.S. Embassy, and in the chaos were joined by the Johnson party. Two Americans were wounded in the melee and four members of the Johnson party were killed. The U.S. personnel injured in the gunfire were a government contractor and an Embassy staff member.

Responding to a U.S. request for enhanced security, forces of the Economic Community of West Africa Observer Group (ECOMOG) subsequently positioned themselves in a defensive perimeter around the Embassy. Later, a group of 23 supporters of Mr. Johnson was discovered hiding on the Embassy grounds. After extensive negotiations between President Taylor and representatives of the U.S. Government and western African states, permission was obtained to airlift Mr. Johnson and his party to Freetown, Sierra Leone. This was accomplished without incident on September 25, 1998.

The situation in Monrovia continues to be uncertain and could deteriorate. Although ECOMOG forces remain in the vicinity of the Embassy compound, their numbers have been reduced. Our Embassy believes that security could deteriorate rapidly during President Taylor's absence for an official visit to France. The Embassy does, however, project that, barring further incidents, security should significantly improve over the course of the next several weeks as factional tensions ease in the wake of Mr. Johnson's departure. There are approximately 230 nonofficial American citizens in Liberia and 29 official Americans at the Embassy.

On September 27, 1998, due to the tenuous security situation and the potential threat to American citizens and the Embassy in Monrovia, a stand-by response and evacuation force of approximately 30 U.S. military personnel from the U.S. European Command deployed to Freetown, Sierra Leone. About half of this unit has moved onto the Navy's coastal patrol craft, USS CHINOOK

(PC-9), which is operating in the waters off Monrovia. The U.S. military personnel are prepared, if needed, to augment the Embassy's security unit in Monrovia and to conduct an evacuation of American citizens, if required. Although the U.S. military personnel are equipped for combat, this action is being undertaken solely for the purpose of preparing to protect American citizens and property. The U.S. forces will redeploy as soon as it is determined that the threat to the Embassy compound has ended or, if an evacuation is necessary, it is completed.

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 appreciate the support of the Congress in this action to assist in Embassy security and the security of American citizens overseas.

Sincerely,

WILLIAM J. CLINTON.

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