

STATUS REPORT ON LIBERIA

COMMUNICATION

FROM

THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES

TRANSMITTING

AN UPDATED REPORT ON THE CONTINUED DEPLOYMENT OF U.S. FORCES, INCLUDING THE RESPONSE BY THOSE FORCES TO SEVERAL ISOLATED ATTACKS ON THE AMERICAN EMBASSY COMPLEX ON APRIL 30, 1996, AND MAY 6, 1996



MAY 21, 1996.—Referred to the Committee on International Relations and ordered to be printed

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THE WHITE HOUSE,
Washington, May 20, 1996.

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

DEAR MR. SPEAKER: On April 11, 1996, I reported that U.S. military forces equipped for combat had entered Monrovia, Liberia, for the purpose of evacuating American citizens and certain third-country nationals from that strife-torn city. This letter is provided, consistent with the War Powers Resolution, to update the Congress on the continued deployment of U.S. forces, including the response by those forces to several isolated attacks on the American Embassy complex on April 30, 1996, and May 6, 1996.

As of this date, U.S. forces have evacuated over 2,300 persons from Monrovia, including over 470 American citizens. The U.S. Special Operations and U.S. Army Europe forces that conducted the initial evacuations have been replaced by U.S. Marines assigned to a Marine Amphibious Ready Group offshore in the immediate vicinity of Monrovia. Approximately 280 Marines and other U.S. military personnel from the total U.S. force of 2,500 are currently ashore at the American Embassy complex. In addition to protecting American lives and property at the Embassy complex, the mission of these forces is to maintain the capability to conduct further evacuations if circumstances warrant.

On April 30, 1996, three separate attacks occurred against the American Embassy complex reportedly involving fighters from several factions. In the first encounter, a U.S. Marine was grazed by a round fired by one of the attackers. The Marines did not return fire, and the injured Marine was able to return to duty on the same day. In the second attack, a Marine was struck by plywood splinters dislodged by an incoming round. During this attack, the Marines returned fire, killing two or more attackers. During the final encounter, approximately 40 to 50 attackers, while apparently engaged in a pursuit of fighters from another faction, fired on the Marines. After the Marines returned fire, one of the attackers fired again. The Marines again returned fire, this time killing two or more attackers.

Separately, on May 6, 1996, unknown factional forces fired upon the Embassy complex. The Marines returned fire with machine guns and automatic weapons, driving off the attackers. No U.S. forces were killed or injured in this encounter. One member of the attacking force may have been wounded.

Finally, on May 11, 1996, a U.S. Marine walking on the Embassy compound was struck by a stray round. The Marine was slightly injured. He was treated and returned to full duty. This incident was the result of stray fire between warring factions and appears not to have been directed at the Marines or the Embassy.

The Marine commander reported that during these attacks, U.S. forces opened fire only upon persons who fired upon the Embassy complex. In the judgment of U.S. military commanders, these attacks are sporadic incidents and do not represent an intent to mount a concerted or deliberate attack against the American Embassy or the Marines. We do not intend that U.S. Armed Forces deployed to Liberia become involved in hostilities. Nonetheless, our forces are equipped and prepared to defend American lives and property if necessary.

Our goal is to redeploy U.S. forces once there is no longer a need for enhanced security at the Embassy and a requirement to maintain an on-scene evacuation capability.

I have directed the continued deployment of U.S. forces to Liberia 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 concerning this important deployment of U.S. forces. I appreciate the support of the Congress in this action to protect American citizens and our Embassy complex in Monrovia.

Sincerely,

WILLIAM J. CLINTON.

