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Letter to Congressional Leaders Reporting on the Situation in Guinea-Bissau and the Deployment of United States Forces
June 12, 1998

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

On June 6, 1998, elements of Guinea-Bissau's army mutinied and attacked the government of President Vieira. Government forces mounted a counterattack, but have been unable to quell the revolt. Rebel forces, who occupy a military camp very near the U.S. Embassy compound in Bissau, came under attack from government and foreign forces on June 10, placing the Embassy and U.S. Government employees at risk.

As a result of the deteriorating situation in Bissau and the threat to American lives and property, a standby evacuation force of U.S. military personnel from the U.S. European Command was deployed to Dakar, Senegal, on June 10 to be prepared to evacuate American private citizens and government employees, as well as selected third country nationals in Bissau. Currently, both the airfield in Bissau and the main road to the airport are closed due to the fighting between government and rebel forces. Forty-four Americans have already been evacuated by a Portuguese vessel and a Senegalese ship from the city of Bissau, leaving our Ambassador and a staff of four in the U.S. Embassy there. Efforts are underway to coordinate the evacuation of 17 Peace Corps volunteers in upcountry areas.

The forces currently in Dakar, Senegal, include enabling forces, a Joint Task Force Headquarters, fixed-wing aircraft and associated support personnel, and a U.S. special forces company. Although U.S forces are equipped for combat, this action is being undertaken solely for the purpose of protecting American citizens and property. United States forces will redeploy as soon as it is determined that the evacuation 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 protect American citizens in Guinea-Bissau.

Sincerely,

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to Newt Gingrich, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Albert Gore, Jr., President of the Senate. This letter was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on June 13.

The President's Radio Address
June 13, 1998

Good morning. Later today I will meet with families in Springfield, Oregon, families whose lives just a few weeks ago were irreparably changed by a 15-year-old boy with semiautomatic weapons.

We will speak, no doubt, of pain and loss and of the tragic, senseless nature of such acts. I'm sure we'll reflect, as Americans often have in recent months, on similar shocking incidents in Jonesboro, Arkansas; Paducah, Kentucky; Pearl, Mississippi; Edinboro, Pennsylvania. This litany of loss is familiar to every American and has tragically grown longer. Now we must think as a nation long and hard about what we can do to stop this violence and save more of our children.

Around our kitchen tables, on our public airwaves, in our private thoughts, we all are asking ourselves, what are the root causes of such youth violence? This is an important and healthy discussion, but it must lead us to take action and take the responsibility that belongs to us all.

We're long past the question of whether culture makes an impact. Of course, it does. School shootings don't occur in a vacuum; they are, in part, symptoms of a culture that too