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CRS Issue Brief

Liberia: Issues for the United States

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Liberia: Issues for the United States

SUMMARY

The Liberian civil war that eventually toppled President Samuel K. Doe has caused over half of Liberia's 2.5 million people to become refugees or displaced within their own country and has resulted in an estimated 150,000 deaths. Widespread malnutrition existed in 1990 as the civil war drastically reduced food production in the rural areas and cut off international trade. It was not until the West African peacekeeping force known as the Economic Community Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) occupied the capital city of Monrovia in August that foreign humanitarian assistance was able to reach the population.

The United States, a longtime provider of assistance to Liberia and leading trade partner, has supplied the major portion of international humanitarian assistance in response to the food and refugee situation. An estimated \$38.9 million was provided in humanitarian assistance during FY1994. Other forms of assistance had been cut off in 1990 because of the Doe government's failure to pay its debts to the United States. The large amount of U.S. aid that was provided in the early years of President Doe's rule was gradually reduced after 1985 because of widespread human rights violations and mismanagement of the Liberian government's revenues. Although the U.S. Government refused to intervene militarily in the civil war or provide a peacekeeping role in cease-fire arrangements, it did support the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in its mediation efforts. After several attempts, ECOWAS was able to mediate a cease-fire between the guerrilla factions that continued to fight after President Doe's death in September 1990. The organization also promoted a peace agreement that would lead to elections for a permanent government. ECOWAS was heavily involved because it

sought to prevent the Liberian hostilities from expanding into a regional conflict.

Since mid-1991 two governments have existed in Liberia. One is an interim government headed by interim President Amos Sawyer who first was appointed by ECOWAS and then elected by most of the delegates to an All-Liberian Conference in March 1990. The second is the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) government, with its self-appointed president, Charles Taylor, the guerrilla organization's leader. Between July and October 1991 several agreements were reached between the interim government and the NPFL that were signed at Yamoussoukro, Cote d'Ivoire. Although agreement was reached on a timetable leading to elections, there was great difficulty implementing it. ECOMOG forces began their peacekeeping duties in April 1992, but became caught up in the fighting after the NPFL attacked Monrovia in October. Late in 1992 the U.N. Security Council imposed an arms embargo against all warring parties except ECOMOG, and ECOWAS imposed economic sanctions against the NPFL. These sanctions put enough pressure on the NPFL that Charles Taylor was willing to negotiate once again at Geneva in July 1993. The negotiations concluded with the signing of the Cotonou Agreement on July 25 which provided for a cease-fire, an agreement on a coalition interim government, and free elections seven months after the cease-fire went into effect. Although the cease-fire took effect on August 1, U.N. monitors and additional ECOMOG troops did not arrive until early 1994, and disarmament did not begin until March 7.

Several bills have been introduced in Congress to ensure that adequate humanitarian assistance continues to reach Liberia and Liberian refugees.

MOST RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

The civil war in Liberia continued into 1994 despite the signing of the Cotonou Agreement in July 1993 and a cease-fire in August. Difficulty in implementation of the agreement was caused in part by the fact that 368 U.N. observers and additional ECOMOG troops were not in the country until early 1994. By March the coalition transitional government was established, the disarmament process had begun, and elections were scheduled for September 7. By late June factional fighting had nearly halted the disarmament process, so that out of a total of 60,000 fighters, only about 3,192 had been disarmed. The U.N. Security Council on July 13 asked Liberia's transitional government to call a meeting of all factions involved in the fighting to discuss an agreement that would resume disarmament and to set a target date for its completion.

BACKGROUND AND ANALYSIS

Liberia in Brief

Population: 2.7 million
 Size: 43,000 sq. mi. Slightly larger than Tennessee
 Religion: 70% traditional, 20% Muslim, 10% Christian
 Literacy: 35%
 Per capita income: \$395 (1988)
 GNP: \$988 million (1988)



Liberia

Introduction

The state of Liberia was founded in 1822 when a group of freed slaves from the United States settled in the coastal areas, particularly around what became the capital city of Monrovia. The settlers were financed by the U.S. Government under President James Monroe and were assisted by that Administration in negotiating with Liberian chiefs for land. The country became independent in 1847 with a constitution modeled after the U.S. Constitution and, for 133 years, as Africa fell under European colonialism and subsequently the throes of the liberation struggle, Liberia remained independent and stable.

Over the years, the population became polarized between Americo-Liberians and indigenous ethnic groups, and this polarization continues today. The Americo-Liberians live in the urban areas and hold jobs in the modern economy, while about 80% of the population live in the rural areas, are engaged in subsistence agriculture, and have a lower standard of living than people in the urban areas. The Americo-Liberians

controlled the government until 1980 when Master Sergeant Samuel K. Doe ousted President William R. Tolbert in a violent coup. President Tolbert was killed, and the new Doe regime suspended the constitution, established martial law, publicly executed 13 officials of the former Tolbert government, and established an authoritarian government similar to that of his predecessor. The country was returned to civilian rule in 1985 when Master Sergeant Doe was elected President in elections that were widely regarded as rigged. Under Doe the country was ruled by indigenous Liberians, but the Krahn people, the small ethnic group to which President Doe belonged, were the greatest beneficiaries. The Doe government, which was notorious for human rights abuses, mistreated non-Krahn indigenous ethnic groups along with the Americo-Liberians.

These ethnic hostilities increased with the onset of the civil war. Two guerrilla groups have fought with the soldiers of former President Samuel Doe. The National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) led by Charles Taylor crossed Liberia's border with Cote d'Ivoire into Nimba county in December 1989. The second group is the Independent National Patriotic Front of Liberia (INPFL) led by Prince Johnson. After guerrillas invaded Nimba County, Doe's soldiers, who were mostly Krahn, committed atrocities against the Gio and Mano people living there who the government believed were assisting the rebels. These ethnic differences appear to have greatly contributed to the support given by the Liberian people to the guerrilla effort to topple the Doe government. Failure of the Doe government to economically develop the country and raise the standard of living for average Liberians and the guerrilla leaders' pursuit of personal power are other factors that ended the Doe government.

Humanitarian Situation

Refugees and Displaced Persons

Liberia's civil war has caused 711,000 Liberians to flee to neighboring countries as refugees. In April 1994, 415,000 Liberians were refugees in Guinea, 250,000 in Cote d'Ivoire, 17,000 in Sierra Leone, 25,000 in Ghana, and 4,000 in Nigeria. An additional 500,000 people were displaced inside Liberia, according to AID's Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA). Total U.S. humanitarian assistance provided to Liberia is \$321.4 million, and \$57.7 million is committed for FY1994.

Most of the U.S. Government aid was contributed as food and the remainder was in cash contributions. Food supplies were distributed mostly by the Catholic Relief Services (CRS) and Medecins Sans Frontieres/Belgium (MSF/Belgium). The United States has also funded the reactivation of Monrovia's municipal water system, and the International Red Cross has pledged to continue its operation. MSF/Belgium has reactivated health clinics in Monrovia with U.S. funding and medicines donated by U.S. pharmaceutical companies. United Nations programs emphasize recovery in the rural areas. The United States is contributing to the U.N. program in Monrovia, but, according to AID, rural recovery can only occur when the country is at peace.

Because of the invasion of Sierra Leone by Charles Taylor's guerrillas in March 1991 and rebel fighting in southern and eastern Sierra Leone, 161,000 Sierra Leoneans have fled into Guinea and 130,000 to Liberia. Inside Sierra Leone 554,000 people have been displaced. Relief operations have been terminated in the border area that was invaded, and relief agencies have been forced to set up a refugee camp outside the capital city of Freetown. As a result of the invasion some host countries (Sierra Leone,

Guinea, and Cote d'Ivoire) now perceive Liberian refugees as a threat to their own security and, consequently, their generosity toward the refugees has been reduced.

Neighboring countries have been generous in helping the Liberian refugees, and without this aid many Liberians could not have survived. Nevertheless, the host countries have reaped numerous benefits in return. In Guinea, for example, roads and health services have been improved. Host villages in Guinea have received additional school supplies to compensate for the presence of refugees in their classrooms. In some cases, food rations received by refugees have been shared with their local hosts, and some refugees have helped their hosts work the fields.

Food Situation

One of the most devastating effects of Liberia's civil war has been widespread famine. In Monrovia at the end of 1990, 50 to 60 people a day were dying of starvation and disease, and between 55% and 80% of the population was severely malnourished. By July 1991 malnutrition in Monrovia had been reduced to less than 4%, while in the rural areas it was 3%. This dramatic development was the result of assistance from foreign donors, with the United States being the largest. International food relief efforts in Monrovia made use of a local Liberian organization called Special Emergency Life Food (SELF). SELF began distributing U.S. and U.N. food supplies in October 1990. It was widely agreed that this food distribution was made possible by ECOMOG's presence in Monrovia.

The United States not only provided food supplies generally but also provided funds to aid orphans and farmers. The Liberian civil war severely cut food production in the rural areas, and 70% of Liberian farmers reportedly lost both their crops and seeds. Most of the farmers missed a part of the 1989 harvest season and the 1990 planting season. An ongoing "Seed for Rice Program" uses U.S. and U.N. funds to trade edible rice to local farmers who had a good harvest in exchange for seed rice. The seed rice is then distributed to farmers in areas of need. Distribution is made by CRS and MSF/Belgium. In the last planting season in Liberia 56% of the farmers had rice seed to plant because of these efforts. The United States hoped to raise that level in 1991 through new grants to provide seeds and tools.

In mid-1993 after the cease-fire was signed, thousands of displaced people in NPFL-held territory reportedly were starving, and large numbers of children were thought to be in danger of dying from malnutrition. Food relief transportation had been cut off in April when ECOMOG planes attacked food convoys, according to news reports. Reuters said in early September that food aid had resumed after the July 25, 1993 Cotonou peace accord. It reported that most aid was going by road and train from Monrovia and the port of Buchanan, but that the route from Cote d'Ivoire was still the easiest for transporting food into the northern part of the country. On September 2 the first food shipments using this route were made since the April cutoff. News reports in December, however, said the food deliveries were stalled because of delays in the implementation of the Cotonou peace agreement. As a result, nine aid organizations believed 300,000 people in the NPFL-held territory were at risk of starvation and death, especially children.

Food relief as of mid-February 1994 was difficult because of the deteriorating security situation. Food convoys continued to be susceptible to looting due to the fighting. Some observers reported in February that malnutrition among children age five and younger could be as high as 60%. Reports in March said that the nutritional

status of vulnerable groups in the rural areas had improved because more food aid was getting to the intended destinations.

Human Rights Violations

During the civil war thousands of civilians have been killed and abused, both by soldiers of the former Doe government and by guerrillas of both factions. Some civilians were killed because they were regarded as collaborators with the other side, but many were killed because of ethnic hostilities. The Liberian military under President Doe, controlled by the Krahn, killed, detained, beat, and tortured many opposition leaders. An attempted coup in 1985 led by Thomas Quiwonkpa, a Gio, caused Doe's soldiers to seek retribution against Gio and the related Mano peoples, as well as other ethnic groups. All these groups were from Nimba County, the area from which Taylor's supporters are drawn. These ethnic tensions, which already existed during Doe's period of rule, were exacerbated by the civil war. The total number of civilians killed is estimated by AID to be between 10,000 and 13,000, although some estimates appearing in the press are considerably higher. The most widely publicized example of civilian abuse in 1990 was the killing by Doe's soldiers of at least 200 to 300 civilian refugees in a church in Monrovia in July 1990. There were also unverified reports of Taylor's rebels killing 200 civilians in August of the same year. Some have attributed the civilian killings to the poor training and lack of discipline both of soldiers of the Doe government and of the guerrillas. In June 1993 Taylor's forces allegedly slaughtered 300 civilians and wounded over 700 at a refugee camp located at Harbel, near Monrovia. Survivors said the refugees were killed in a particularly brutal manner, and the killings occurred after guerrillas had taken food from the Harbel camp. Most of the victims were women and children. A report on the results of a U.N. investigation of the June massacre was delivered to the U.N. Security Council in September. The report found that the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL) were responsible for the killings at the Harbel refugee camp.

Torture and execution of captured combatants was widespread. Doe's government tortured and systematically executed suspected sympathizers with Taylor's NPFL, while both guerrilla factions beat and tortured prisoners to extract information. President Doe himself became a victim of such treatment in September when Prince Johnson's INPFL captured, tortured, and killed him. Charles Taylor reportedly executed two leaders in Nimba County who were competing with him for leadership. Although he denies the charge, he has failed to produce either man alive, according to reports.

According to a May 9, 1994, statement by the Department of State, human rights abuses were occurring amid continued fighting between the NPFL and a new group, the Liberian Peace Council (LPC), and between the Krahn and Mandingo factions of ULIMO. The LPC was reported to have committed serious human rights violations against civilians, including murder, rape, mutilation, and torture. ULIMO factions were reportedly executing civilians based on their ethnic background.

Events of the Civil War

The guerrillas opposing President Samuel Doe's government entered the northern county of Nimba in late December 1989. The invading guerrillas, led by Charles Taylor, are known as the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL). Taylor reportedly gives no ideological rationale for seeking leadership of Liberia and according to many observers simply wants power and money. As a former official of Doe's government he

was blamed for financial mismanagement. He was specifically charged with embezzling between \$900,000 and \$1 million of government funds. Later, one of Taylor's deputies, Prince Johnson, broke away to form a separate faction, the Independent National Patriotic Front of Liberia (INPFL). The Doe government's response to the December invasion was a scorched earth policy that included the killing of hundreds of civilians and the burning and looting of villages in Nimba County. The government's measures caused many formerly uncommitted citizens to support the guerrillas against President Doe. As the civil war continued it degenerated into ethnic killings, and atrocities were committed by both Doe's army and the rebel factions. Doe's soldiers killed not only guerrillas but their civilian supporters as well, most of whom belonged to the Gio and Mano ethnic groups. INPFL rebels in turn killed not only Doe's soldiers who belonged to the Krahn and Mandingo, but also civilians from those ethnic groups. The hostilities eventually forced half the population to flee to neighboring countries or be displaced within Liberia's borders. As of November 1993 the civil war had resulted in an estimated 150,000 deaths.

As the two guerrilla forces moved closer to the capital city of Monrovia in May 1990, the United States ordered nonessential personnel and dependents to leave Liberia and strongly advised private U.S. citizens to depart because of deteriorating conditions. U.S. Marines evacuated over 1,000 Americans and other foreign nationals in June and early August. The United States offered to evacuate President Doe, but he refused and remained in the country.

The first peace talks attempted were between the Doe government and the guerrillas and were facilitated by the United States in June. The rebel factions, however, were not interested in peace at that point. Instead they began offensives against Doe's forces in Monrovia in early July and later in the month killed 200 to 300 refugees who had taken refuge in a church in the city. West African countries, fearing for the safety of their nationals in Liberia, called a meeting of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in Banjul, the Gambia, in early August. At the meeting ECOWAS drafted a peace plan and agreed to send a joint military force, the Economic Community Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), to implement it. ECOMOG was sent into Liberia in late August specifically to impose a cease-fire, to help Liberians establish an interim government until elections could be held, to stop the killing of innocent civilians, and to ensure the safe evacuation of foreign nationals. Some ECOWAS members, however, did not support the West African peacekeeping force. Mostly Francophone countries, these members saw Nigeria's military dominance within ECOMOG as a means of extending Nigerian influence in the West African region. The two guerrilla factions also were divided on support of ECOMOG with Johnson's INPFL cooperating with the West African force and Taylor's NPFL refusing cooperation.

To the embarrassment of ECOMOG officials, Prince Johnson's rebels captured President Doe while he was visiting ECOMOG headquarters in September. Johnson's troops tortured and killed President Doe. Despite his death, Doe's soldiers continued to defend Monrovia against the guerrillas, but eventually sided with ECOMOG and Johnson against a takeover of the capital city by Charles Taylor's forces. For weeks the city was in turmoil with widespread killings, destruction of basic facilities such as the electric power plant and water system, and an extremely malnourished population. ECOMOG helped install an interim Liberian government in Monrovia in November 1990, and appointed a Liberian intellectual, Dr. Amos Sawyer as interim President.

Because Taylor's group continually violated agreements, two cease-fires were signed by the hostile guerrilla factions and the remains of Doe's army: one at Bamako,

Mali, in November 1990, and another in February 1991 at Lome, Togo. An All-Liberia Conference was held in March and April of 1991 that failed in its objective to persuade all parties to agree on a peace plan. Taylor's representatives walked out of the conference, but the remaining delegations elected Amos Sawyer as the interim President. Sawyer, a political scientist and former university dean, helped draft Liberia's constitution under Doe, but he was imprisoned in 1984 for criticizing Doe's policies and for establishing an opposition party. As interim President, Sawyer has the responsibility of running Liberia's government until elections are held and supervising those elections. A date was not set, but it was hoped that elections would be held by October, if Charles Taylor could be persuaded to participate.

The danger of the Liberian civil war becoming a regional conflict became evident in late March 1991 when Taylor's forces attacked villages in Sierra Leone and clashed with Sierra Leonean troops. Taylor's forces are thought to include many non-Liberians (Sierra Leoneans, Gambians, Ghanaians, Togolese, and others). These supporters reportedly expect Taylor's help in overthrowing their own governments. Charles Taylor's motivation for such invasions is thought to be destabilization of those countries that support ECOMOG, which he regards as being responsible for preventing him from taking military control of Monrovia. When its territory was invaded, the government of Sierra Leone appealed for outside help in repelling the guerrillas. Nigeria and Guinea reportedly sent forces, but the United States so far has supplied only humanitarian assistance.

Several agreements at Yamoussoukro, Cote d'Ivoire, were made in 1991 between Charles Taylor's NPFL, the interim government of Amos Sawyer, and the ECOWAS countries. Under an agreement made in June a committee was appointed to work out details for peace and free and fair elections to be held in January 1992. Former President Carter's International Negotiation Network was invited to help monitor the elections, and continues to meet with Taylor and Sawyer to help reconcile the two parties. Under an accord made in September all factions agree to disarm and encamp their forces under ECOMOG's supervision. They also agreed to change the composition of ECOMOG by reducing the number of Nigerians and adding Senegalese forces. This was done to create a peacekeeping force perceived by Charles Taylor's NPFL as more neutral. In addition, the second accord set up an electoral commission to organize and supervise elections and established an ad hoc supreme court to settle disputes relating to the electoral process. The weakness of the September accord was that no timetables were set for the disarming and encampment of military forces or for the opening of roads so that Liberians could return home and an election campaign could get underway. A third accord was agreed to in late October in which Charles Taylor's NPFL agreed to disarm its forces within 60 days from November 15 and encamp them at ECOMOG-supervised camps. The accord also called for elections within 6 months and an expanded role for ECOMOG. ECOMOG would occupy seaports and airports, create a buffer zone between Liberia and Sierra Leone, and occupy checkpoints throughout the country to ensure free travel for returning Liberians. Although Taylor's NPFL stalled for two months on opening roads, the roads were finally opened on Jan. 10, 1992.

Implementation of the accord remained difficult in 1992. Fighting which had begun in September 1991 between Taylor's NPFL and the United Liberation Movement of Liberia for Democracy (ULIMO) continued. ULIMO forces consist partly of soldiers who had supported former President Doe and partly of refugees who belonged to Doe's ethnic group, the Krahn. The fighting between these two groups caused Taylor to refuse to disarm and encamp his forces on January 15 as required by the accord.

Nevertheless, the NPFL and the Interim Government did establish a joint electoral commission in January as had been agreed, and established an ad hoc Supreme Court. On May 2, the Commission indicated that elections could be held within 6 months, if it was provided with sufficient resources.

Taylor has sent mixed signals on his willingness to comply with the Yamoussoukro Accords. An ECOWAS mini-summit was held in Geneva, April 6-7. Taylor and Sawyer both signed agreements reaffirming the Yamoussoukro Accords, yet Taylor repudiated them shortly after returning to Liberia. According to OFDA, ECOMOG troops began deploying throughout Liberia on April 30, with Senegalese units along the Sierra Leonean border to maintain a buffer zone between the two countries.

Despite the deployment of ECOMOG forces into Taylor-held territory, fighting resumed by mid-July between ULIMO and Charles Taylor's NPFL. ECOMOG troops began withdrawing from Taylor-held territory during September as the fighting approached Monrovia, and they became involved in the fighting after Taylor's forces launched an attack on Monrovia on October 15. Numerous threats were made by ECOWAS leaders that sanctions would be imposed against the NPFL if ECOMOG was not allowed to disarm and encamp the warring factions. Economic sanctions were imposed in early November. Five American nuns were killed during the fight for Monrovia, and the United States recalled its ambassador to Burkina Faso, charging that the country was supplying weapons to Taylor's NPFL and this was undermining peace efforts. These events culminated in U.N. Security Council Resolution 788 (adopted November 19), which imposed an arms embargo on Liberia, excluding ECOMOG forces, and called on the Secretary General to send a special envoy to Liberia to evaluate the situation and report back to the Security Council. In early December the special envoy visited both Interim Government President Amos Sawyer and NPFL leader Charles Taylor. Nevertheless, the fighting over Monrovia between Taylor's forces and other factions continued into late December, as did ECOMOG's increasing involvement in the fighting.

ECOMOG in 1993 continued its strategy of attempting to defeat Taylor's NPFL militarily since Taylor refused to disarm and encamp his forces. As part of this strategy ECOMOG drove the NPFL from the towns around Monrovia, including Harbel, the site of the Firestone Rubber Plantation Co. It also enforced the U.N. arms embargo and ECOWAS-imposed economic sanctions by capturing the port of Buchanan, by air strikes against ports and towns through which the NPFL receives arms and supplies, and by sinking ships that reportedly attempted to deliver supplies to the NPFL. There was some criticism of ECOMOG air strikes, however, as several aircraft allegedly bombed hospitals and relief convoys.

The United Nations continued its partnership with ECOMOG in its peacekeeping activities. The Secretary-General on March 12 released his report resulting from the visits of his special representative with the contending parties. The report accepted the Yamoussoukro Accord as the most realistic basis on which to construct peace in Liberia and made several recommendations. These included expansion of the mandatory arms embargo, changing the composition of the ECOMOG forces, sending U.N. observers to monitor an eventual electoral process, repatriation of refugees, and involvement of community groups in a national reconciliation conference that should be convened to find solutions to ethnic differences among Liberians. The U.N. Security Council on March 26 adopted Resolution 813 which determined that the deterioration of the Liberian situation constituted a threat to international peace and security, particularly to the West African region, it condemned attacks against ECOMOG, and demanded that

all parties cooperate with the implementation of the Yamoussoukro Accord. In April the U.N. special envoy in Liberia, Trevor Gordon-Somers held talks with Charles Taylor. By July the warring parties in the conflict again were holding negotiations in Geneva, Switzerland, and on July 25 they signed an agreement at Cotonou, Benin that provided for a cease-fire, a coalition interim government, and free elections seven months after the cease-fire went into effect. The negotiations were held under the auspices of the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity. Although the cease-fire went into effect on August 1, the other two provisions were not implemented on schedule. The interim government and the free elections could not take place until the disarmament process began.

The disarmament process had great difficulty getting off the ground. It was to have begun in August, but was postponed until all U.N. monitors and ECOMOG troops could be deployed. The U.N. Observer Mission in Liberia (UNOMIL) was not established until September 22 (U.N. Security Council Resolution 866), and it was not until early 1994 when the full compliment of U.N. observers and new ECOMOG troops arrived in the country. UNOMIL was composed of 368 observers, and Nigerian-dominated ECOMOG was enlarged by the addition of 4,000 troops from other African countries. The function of the new ECOMOG was the disarmament of the warring parties, and UNOMIL was to supervise the demobilization of combatants after they have turned in their weapons and to monitor the cease-fire.

Early 1994 saw a continuation of the civil war, despite the Cotonou Agreement of July 1993. Fighting between the NPFL and a new faction known as the Liberian Peace Council caused over 2,000 people to flee to the port city of Buchanan in February, and by early March the number increased to at least 6,000 bringing the total of displaced people receiving relief in Buchanan to over 12,000. Foreign frustration with the inability of the contending parties to stop fighting was registered in January when the United Nations warned that international support would not continue unless the Cotonou Agreement was implemented. By February representatives of the parties agreed that on March 7 they would install the new transitional government, known as the Council of State, and on the same day the disarmament process would begin. They also scheduled multiparty elections for September 7, 1994. When March 7 arrived the Council of State was established, but only one faction, the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL), actually turned over their weapons to ECOMOG. Nevertheless, some NPFL and ULIMO fighters later began to turn in their arms.

On April 21, U.N. Security Council Resolution 911 extended UNOMIL's presence for another 6 months. The resolution warned, however, that more progress in implementing the Cotonou Agreement should be made, namely disarmament and demobilization of all combatants, full implementation of a transitional government including agreement on cabinet ministers, and the holding of scheduled elections. The resolution provided for two Security Council reviews of the situation, one in May and the other in June. If the Security Council was not satisfied by the end of June that implementation was proceeding quickly enough UNOMIL could be withdrawn earlier than its extended mandate ending on October 22. Progress reports were made on May 18 and June 24. The June report expressed satisfaction that the transitional government was proceeding well but noted that continued fighting among the factions had nearly brought disarmament to a halt. Fighting was between the NPFL and the Liberian Peace Council (LPC) as well as between factions of ULIMO. Leaders of the ULIMO factions had agreed to a cease-fire in May and attempted to negotiate their differences. Nevertheless, as of late July these factions were still fighting. The conflict between the NPFL and the LPC also continued.

According to the U.N. Security Council, by late June about 3,192 fighters had been disarmed and demobilized out of a total estimated at 60,000. Although the disarmament process had stopped, the Council reported that the disarmament and demobilization centers operated by ECOMOG and UNOMIL remained open, and an average of ten individuals a day were being disarmed. Child soldiers were being reunited with their families, and 1,200 disarmed fighters were participating in a food-for-work program.

The U.N. Security Council on July 13, asked Liberia's transitional government to convene a meeting of all factions participating in the continuing violence in order to discuss a plan to resume disarmament and to set a date for its completion. The Council requested that the Secretary-General report by September 2 on the progress of the meeting.

U.S. Policy Issues

U.S. Interests

In the past, the United States had important strategic, diplomatic, and economic interests in Liberia. It was the only country in sub-Saharan Africa that granted landing and refueling rights for U.S. military aircraft and ships on 24-hour notice, and it was the location of several telecommunications facilities. One such facility was the Omega navigational station that emits signals for guiding ships and aircraft sailing the Atlantic Ocean. This installation also served as a backup guidance system for American nuclear submarines. Other facilities were communications relay stations that transmitted Voice of America radio programs and diplomatic and intelligence messages in sub-Saharan Africa. These facilities were ransacked after the United States evacuated its personnel in 1990, and U.S. officials do not know when their operation will resume.

Former President Doe's government provided diplomatic support for U.S. interests in Africa. For example, Doe eliminated the Libyan presence in Monrovia and he gradually decreased Liberia's relationship with the Soviet Union until he broke relations with the Soviets in 1985.

The United States has been Liberia's largest investor and trading partner, importing \$106.9 million worth of rubber and diamonds from the country in 1989. Before the civil war more than 5,000 Americans lived and worked there, and Firestone operates the world's largest rubber plantation in Liberia. Firestone's interests were sold in 1988 to the Japanese company, Bridgestone. Liberia was a market for U.S. goods, such as aircraft, rice, and a wide array of other U.S. products.

Some believe because of the historically close American relationship with Liberia, the United States has a special responsibility to provide for Liberia's humanitarian needs. According to this view, Americans should not only provide relief when it is needed, but should also promote a democratic system there, and should work to stop human right abuses. Another view is that Liberia is not of major significance to the United States and that the United States has no special responsibility to get involved there.

U.S. Involvement

The United States declined to become militarily involved in Liberia's civil war, and preferred that ECOWAS provide the monitoring forces that most observers agreed were needed to stabilize the situation. Early in the negotiation process the United States attempted to get the United Nations involved, but when that proved unsuccessful the United States supported the attempts of ECOWAS to mediate a peace agreement leading to a ceasefire, an interim government, and democratic elections. U.S. officials have believed since the beginning of the civil war that Charles Taylor wants to be the next leader of Liberia at almost any cost. Taylor frequently violated ceasefire agreements and found reasons not to disarm his forces.

The Bush Administration's Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Herman Cohen said in July 1991 congressional hearings that elections cannot be free and fair until Taylor's forces are disarmed. He called on all factions to disarm and confine their fighters to camps so that Liberians can participate in the electoral campaign without fear or intimidation. He specifically called on Charles Taylor to open the highways and borders of the areas occupied by his forces so that Liberians may return to their homes. Cohen also warned that Liberia's continued civil war threatened the regional security of West Africa, citing Taylor's invasion of Sierra Leone in March.

Some criticized the U.S. response to the Liberian conflict as inadequate, and they pointed to the United States intervention in the Middle East on behalf of Kuwait by comparison. They worried that sending marines into Liberia just to rescue Americans and other foreign nationals conveyed an unfortunate image. Others, however, believed U.S. interests in Africa were peripheral; therefore, it should not get involved in the internal matters of Liberia. Others noted the difficulties of outside powers intervening in civil wars.

The United States continued to support the negotiations process from the Yamoussoukro agreements of 1991 to the Cotonou Accord of July 1993. The United States provided both diplomatic and financial support for the implementation of the Cotonou Accord working in cooperation with the U.N. and ECOMOG. When implementation faltered in early 1994 U.S. officials, along with U.N. and ECOWAS officials, held talks with the factions and persuaded them to establish on March 7 the new coalition transitional government and to begin disarmament. In May 1994, the Clinton Administration's Assistant Secretary for African Affairs, George Moose, outlined U.S. policy toward Liberia at a hearing before the House Subcommittee on Africa. He said that the United States supports a negotiated settlement of the conflict that includes "disarmament of all Liberian warring factions, the return home of...Liberian refugees and displaced persons, credible democratic elections, and the establishment of a unified government based on respect for human rights, democratic principles, and economic accountability." Assistant Secretary Moose also testified that the United States is ready to consider assistance with the electoral process, repatriation of refugees and resettlement of displaced persons, and development assistance to support post-war recovery. He warned, however, that such assistance will be considered only if Liberians settle their differences, resume disarmament, and begin preparing for elections.

U.S. Assistance

Between 1980 and 1985 Liberia received \$402.3 million in economic and military assistance from the United States. After 1985 the United States began reducing

assistance to Liberia because of irregularities in the election that returned Doe to office. By 1987 human rights abuses and financial mismanagement caused Congress to reduce aid even further, and to condition continued aid on the Doe government's acceptance of an American team of experts to help the government manage its finances. The team of Operational Experts (OPEX) arrived in late 1987 for a 2-year stay, but left in 1988 because it could not limit the Doe government's spending or the disappearance of revenues from Liberia's public corporations. By 1990, the year U.S. aid was ended, Liberia had received \$579.2 million in economic and military assistance. U.S. aid was suspended in 1990 because of the Brooke amendment, which requires a cutoff of aid when a country does not pay its debt to the United States. Security assistance was ended in May 1990, and development assistance about September. Only humanitarian aid continued during the remainder of 1990 and in 1991.

Congress took action in 1992 to allow the U.S. government to provide Liberia with humanitarian assistance. On Apr. 16, 1992, President Bush signed into law S.J. Res. 271 (P.L. 102-270) supporting the peace process in Liberia and permitting reprogramming of existing foreign aid appropriations for limited assistance. The resolution waives the Brooke amendment, and limits assistance to support for nonpartisan elections and democracy-building activities, refugee resettlement, troop demobilization and retraining, and other activities to help implement the Yamoussoukro peace accord. Assistance for FY1992 and FY1993 may be provided only if Liberia makes progress toward reconciliation and it holds free and fair elections that are monitored by international observers. The appropriations for foreign operations act for FY1994 (P.L. 103-87, H.R. 2295) prohibited provision of foreign military financing to Liberia (Title III) and no other appropriated funds could be provided to Liberia except under special notification requirements (Title V, Sec. 520). Peacekeeping assistance such as support for ECOMOG and election-related activities have been provided in recent years under such notification requirements. In FY1993 and FY1994 \$30.83 million in peacekeeping funds have been committed to Liberia. Out of an Administration request for FY1995 of \$10 million for all of Africa, Liberia is expected to receive some portion of this amount.

Prospects for the Future

Political System

At the ECOWAS conference held in Banjul, the Gambia, in August 1990 an interim legislative assembly and cabinet were appointed to administer Liberia until elections could be held. This unofficial interim government operated out of Banjul. After President Samuel Doe's death in September 1990 and the demise of his government, the interim government was officially installed in Monrovia during November with the support of ECOMOG. At his swearing-in ceremony interim President Amos Sawyer, who was appointed by ECOWAS, said that his mandate was to end the civil war, to resettle displaced Liberians, to work toward national reconciliation, and to hold free and fair elections. Sawyer was then elected to the interim President's position by Liberian representatives to the All-Liberia Conference that ended in April 1991. As interim President Sawyer was prohibited from running for President in the campaign that was planned to culminate in elections in October. Charles Taylor and his NPFL supporters, however, do not recognize Sawyer's legitimacy. Taylor feels his rightful place as leader of the new Liberia has been usurped by the West African countries, whom he regards as invaders because of ECOMOG's occupation of Monrovia. He believes he deserves to be the next President of Liberia because he initiated the guerrilla movement that

eventually ousted Doe and because he controls all of the country except the capital city of Monrovia. He set up a parallel government at his guerrilla headquarters in Gbargna, and his followers refer to him as President Taylor. In effect, then, Liberia has two interim governments and two interim Presidents, and neither recognizes the other.

Many Liberian organizations other than Taylor's NPFL, however, had worked to free Liberia from Doe's oppression, and the leaders of these groups did not want to see the next leader of Liberia take power by force. They wanted a multiparty system and a new President who was freely and fairly elected. Apparently African leaders of the Organization of African States (OAU) agreed because they seated Sawyer at the summit meeting held in early June 1991 at Abuja, Nigeria. At the summit Sawyer told the African leaders that his interim government had restored basic services, had begun reopening schools, had repaired damaged facilities, and restored central government functions. Regarding Charles Taylor, Sawyer said that the guerrilla leader had the right to compete for the presidency in elections, but he did not have the right to replace the repressive Doe regime with a repressive government of his own. He hinted that, if Taylor did not agree to negotiate, a military solution to the current situation may be necessary; some Liberians were already calling for a new Liberian army. Should the Yamoussoukro agreement between Sawyer and Taylor to work toward the elections be implemented, then a military collision between the two would-be governments will be avoided.

Little is mentioned in reports on the Liberian situation about the writing of a constitution. Nevertheless, many observers agree that to prevent a recurrence of past political and human rights abuses, Liberia under a new government needs to have checks and balances on presidential power and possibly a decentralization of the government. Most observers and many Liberians further agree that Liberia needs to find ways to resolve its ethnic divisions if there is to be permanent peace and stability.

Economic Reconstruction

Liberia's economy is one of subsistence agriculture, and 80% of the labor force makes a living from agriculture. Before the civil war the modern sector of the economy was based primarily on the export of iron ore, rubber, and timber. Other exports were coffee, cocoa, gold, and diamonds. The rubber industry was the largest employer in the country, and Firestone -- which introduced rubber production in 1926 -- managed the largest rubber plantation in the world in Liberia. For many years the United States has been Liberia's major trading partner and foreign investor. U.S. direct investments in 1989 were \$149 million.

Despite years of foreign assistance from the United States and other donors such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, the economy has been declining since the days of the Tolbert government. The decline began in the recession of the 1970s due to falling demand for Liberia's exports and the rising cost of oil. Although President Doe inherited \$686 million in debt from the Tolbert regime, his government also received unprecedented amounts of foreign aid. Nevertheless, the Doe government failed to reduce the foreign debt or to economically develop the country. In fact, government revenues continued to decrease and the debt continued to increase because of government mismanagement and corruption. In 1989, just before the onset of the civil war, the foreign debt was \$1.7 billion, more than double the 1980 level. In 1991 the debt was \$1.8 billion. Because of the Doe government's failure to pay its debt, the World Bank suspended its disbursements in 1986; the same year the IMF declared

Liberia ineligible for further funds and in 1990 declared it a "non-cooperating country"; and in 1990 the United States ended all but humanitarian aid.

Although most economic activity was halted in 1990 as a result of the civil war, after ECOMOG established a presence in Monrovia some export/import activity resumed. In May 1991 the banks began to open, and the interim government started preparations to get the economy functioning, including drafting a plan for the IMF. Although officials working for Sawyer's government were receiving no pay, they planned a future government payroll reduced from the levels under Doe. They also reportedly planned to end certain tax breaks and increase accountability, and recognized that the government can no longer afford subsidies for rice and fuel. Regulations were changed to encourage the flow of food and manufactured goods through Liberian ports. Monrovia remains highly dependent on spending of ECOMOG troops, as well as U.N. and other foreign workers in the city. Economic activity has resumed in the areas controlled by Taylor, who reportedly exports timber, rubber, iron ore and other raw materials in order to finance his administration. In some areas of Liberia, people were able to plant crops in 1991 and have been able to harvest limited quantities of food.

Assuming that elections take place and some semblance of stability is reached, Liberia's economic future holds much potential. Former investors, such as Firestone and others, are ready to return to Liberia. New multinational investors want to build a railroad from iron ore fields in Guinea across Liberia to its port of Buchanan. Preparations for this project were interrupted by the civil war. There are possibilities for developing gold and fishing resources, and timber will be commercially exportable through the late 1990s that could replace the decline in Liberia's iron ore exports. Investors, however, need skilled labor, and 80% to 90% of Liberia's skilled population have left the country. Many are living in the United States. Others have been displaced in the civil war. For the economy to grow, conditions must be created within Liberia that will persuade these people to return, according to observers. Even if the economy manages to achieve growth, development does not necessarily follow, as demonstrated by Liberia's past pattern of growth without government services or education and the Doe government's failure to raise the standard of living for the majority of the population. Some observers believe that, to accomplish economic development and reduce its ethnic problems, the future government must privatize its 30 public corporations. Others suggest that, for Liberia to attract both foreign investment and foreign assistance necessary for development, the future government must spend less, eliminate subsidies, and adopt a democratic form of government. Most agree, whatever their proposed solutions for economic problems of the country, that economic policy cannot be made until a political settlement is achieved.