

OFDA
**Disaster
Case Reports**

The Gambia Civil Strife
August 1981

**Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance
Agency for International Development
Washington, D.C. 20523**

THE GAMBIA - Civil Strife

Data

Date: August 1981 (FY 81)

Location: Banjul, Kombo St. Mary's

No. Dead: 300-500 reported

No. Affected: 120,000-300,000

Damage: Stores and many office buildings and apartment residences were looted and burned. The country's principal broadcasting station, Radio Gambia, was taken over and its studio destroyed. Food distribution to some 120,000 people was disrupted. Total damage expected to exceed \$27 million.

The Disaster

On July 30, 1981, members of the Socialist Revolutionary Party and the Field Forces of the Republic of The Gambia attempted to overthrow the government of Gambian President Jawara while the president was out of the country. The leaders of the coup attempt took over the studio of Radio Gambia, the country's most powerful broadcasting station, and destroyed the transmitter at Bonto. They held President Jawara's wife and children hostage and freed prisoners from the federal prison outside Banjul. The prisoners roamed the streets of the capital looting stores and threatening citizens. On August 2, the Senegalese army, at the request of President Jawara, landed troops in The Gambia, regained control of the airport outside Banjul, and, after several days, gained control of Radio Gambia studios where the coup leaders were headquartered. During the attempted coup and the fighting that followed, between 300 and 500 people were reported killed, an undetermined number of the Government of The Gambia's (GOTG) fleet of trucks were damaged, stolen, or destroyed, several buildings were burned, and the city's normal commercial and governmental activities were severely disrupted. The damage and destruction of trucks reportedly crippled the GOTG's ability to deliver food to the urban population as well as the drought-stricken rural population. The large number of wounded strained Banjul's Royal Victoria Hospital's resources and depleted the country's store of medical supplies.

Action Taken by the Government of The Gambia (GOTG)

Upon learning of the coup attempt, President Jawara requested that Senegalese troops enter The Gambia to assist members of Gambia's paramilitary Field Forces who remained loyal to Jawara's government. (The Gambia has no formal army.) By August 5, Jawara's government was again in control and

THE GAMBIA - Civil Strife

emergency relief was initiated. The GOTG established an Emergency Coordinating Commission in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to handle external aid. The Commission identified affected populations and stated that emergency food relief would be required for approximately 300,000 people for 90 days in the areas of Banjul, Serrekunda, Bakau, Brikama and Western Division. The GOTG initiated a free food distribution program in these areas. The Gambia Produce Marketing Board immediately began to release rice from its stocks to meet the emergency need, and the GOTG issued an appeal to the international community for assistance in the form of food and medical supplies. The Commission worked with a UN assessment mission of representatives from the World Health Organization, the Food and Agriculture Organization, the U.N. Disaster Relief Office, the U.N. Center for Human Settlements, UNICEF, and the U.N. Development Program to identify the affected population and needs. The mission determined that 120,000 people were in need of emergency relief and feeding. Local contributions to the relief effort totalling \$37,800 were received from private sources.

Assistance Provided by the United States Government (USG)

On August 5, the U.S. Ambassador to The Gambia made a determination that a disaster of sufficient magnitude to warrant USG assistance existed in The Gambia and authorized the expenditure of up to \$25,000 for the purchase and transport of medical supplies. These supplies were purchased in Dakar and sent to Banjul.....\$25,000

The USG also arranged for the immediate loan of 500 MT of PL 480, Title II rice from stocks in Senegal valued at \$227,000, and 1030 MT of sorghum from Upper Volta valued at \$142,000 for distribution by the U.N. World Food Program in urban and rural areas respectively.....\$369,000

TOTAL \$394,000

Assistance Provided by U.S. Voluntary Agencies *

Catholic Relief Services - donated 200 MT of rice and 200 MT of milk, and \$10,000 for medical supplies.

World Council of Churches - contribution of \$5,000 for the local purchase of relief items.

TOTAL \$15,000

THE GAMBIA - Civil Strife

Assistance Provided by the International Community *

International Organizations

FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization) - contributed 6 vehicles, plus spares for use by the Ministry of Agriculture, valued at \$105,000.

ICRC (International Committee of the Red Cross) - sent one doctor and one relief officer to assist in Banjul relief operations, medical supplies and two emergency sets, value not reported.

UNDRO (UN Disaster Relief Office) - locally purchased 83 tons of rice valued at \$30,000.

UNICEF - contributed two ambulances, plus spares, all valued at \$20,000.

WFP/FAO (World Food Program) - donated 2,431 MT of sorghum to assist 70,000 persons for three months, valued at \$862,000, and distributed and paid transportation costs of U.S. food donation.

World Health Organization (WHO) - Medical and surgical supplies, valued at \$25,000, plus the services of a surgeon for two weeks.

Governments

Australia - cash contribution of \$11,525 for relief supplies.

China, People's Republic - cash donation of \$69,120.

Caritas Germany - cash donation of \$8,140.

European Economic Community (EEC) - contributed 1000 MT of rice, replacing scheduled 1981 contribution of maize.

France - 25 tons of medicines plus 1000 MT of wheat or equivalent in flour, value not reported.

Germany, Federal Republic - 610 MT of flour and 500 MT of cooking oil, plus 10 mechanics, one auto-electrician, and support staff to repair 70 trucks, total value \$203,500.

Iraq - medicines valued at \$500,000.

Islamic Solidarity Fund - 800 MT of rice, valued at \$250,000.

THE GAMBIA - Civil Strife

Morocco - 5.5 tons of tins of sardines, 80 MT of rice, 60 MT of dried vegetables, 30 MT of preserved fish, and 20 MT of tomato paste, value not reported.

Nigeria - cash contribution of \$30,786 for medicines.

Red Cross Nigeria - 3 tons of medical supplies, value not reported.

Saudi Arabia - cash donation of \$10 million for general relief aid.

South Korea - cash donation of \$90,000 for medicines.

United Kingdom - 700 MT of rice, medical relief supplies, an engineer to assess damage to Radio Gambia and agricultural research station at Sapu, spares for trucks and landrovers, port handling equipment, light and heavy cranes, and pallets, value not reported.

TOTAL \$12,205,071

* Please note: the figures for total U.S. voluntary agency and international assistance are an approximation. In many cases the cash value of in kind aid is unavailable.

This publication does not require CRB approval.

