



Legislation Text

File #: Res 0982-2003, **Version:** *

Res. No. 982

Resolution calling upon the United States to support the peaceful resolution of conflict and war in Liberia through the involvement of the United Nations and African Union; and further calling upon the United Nations to deploy a peacekeeping force to put an end to the current conflict, help the country conduct democratic elections and ensure that humanitarian aid reaches the approximately one million people who are facing an acute shortage of food, water and medicines.

By Council Members Barron, Clarke, Comrie, Fidler, Foster, Koppell, Lopez, McMahon, Recchia, Rivera, Seabrook, Stewart, Vann and Gennaro

Whereas, Liberia, Africa's oldest republic, gained independence on July 26, 1847, twenty-six years after it was founded in 1821 when officials of the American Colonization Society were granted possession of Cape Mesurado by local Dey and Bassa chiefs for the settlement of freed African-American slaves; and

Whereas, Liberia enjoyed relative stability until 1980 when President William R. Tolbert was assassinated and the government was overthrown in a military coup led by Army Master Sergeant Samuel K. Doe after the country experienced food riots when the government tried to raise the price of rice; and

Whereas, Master Sergeant Doe's coup heralded a period of political and economic instability that culminated in a civil war that started in 1989 when dissidents of Charles Taylor's National Patriotic Front of Liberia overran much of the countryside, and intensified in 1990 when members of a splinter group of rebels led by Prince Yormie Johnson of the Independent National Patriotic Front of Liberia captured and executed Master Sergeant Doe; and

Whereas, The civil war in Liberia, which lasted between 1989 and 1997, had a disastrous effect on the country's economy, cost the lives of approximately 200,000 people and caused hundreds of thousands of refugees to flee the country; and

Whereas, In 1995, the 16 member Economic Community of West African States brokered a peace treaty between Liberia's warring factions that eventually led to the end of the civil war in 1997 and to multiparty presidential and legislative elections that resulted in the election of Charles Taylor as the country's president; and

Whereas, According to the Bureau of Consular Affairs at the United States Department of State, although an elected government has been in place in Liberia since August of 1997, the government has made little progress towards the resettlement of refugees and displaced persons, the reintegration of former combatants, the reconstruction of the country's infrastructure, respect for human rights and the rule of law and a stable environment for economic development and the elimination of corruption; and

Whereas, In 1999, Liberian President Charles Taylor was accused of supporting and arming rebels in neighboring Sierra Leone's civil war, causing the United Nations to impose sanctions against Liberia in 2001 and eventually leading a United Nations-backed war crimes tribunal in Sierra Leone to indict President Taylor in June 2003 for his alleged support of the Sierra Leone rebels; and

Whereas, In 2000, Liberian government forces began battling Anti-Taylor rebels in the northern Town of Voinjama, a conflict that intensified by mid-2002 and eventually spread to other parts of the country, including the Capital of Monrovia; and

Whereas, The latest conflict has resulted in more than 1,000 civilians deaths over the past several months, left an estimated one million Liberians facing a humanitarian crisis and caused the Capital of Monrovia to become home to approximately 250,000 displaced people living in deplorable conditions without food, water and medicine; and

Whereas, According to an August 7, 2003 Washington Post article, entitled "U.N. Maps Goals in Liberia," the United Nations is currently drawing up plans to help rebuild Liberia's infrastructure and government, and to create a 15,000 strong peacekeeping force to help disarm the warring factions, plans that the newspaper claims have raised concerns in the United States due to its size and cost; and

Whereas, According to numerous reports, the United States has not yet fully determined how many American military troops it will commit to Liberia, although three U.S. Navy warships belonging to the USS Iwo Jima amphibious group carrying approximately 2300 Marines are chartered off the country's coast; and

Whereas, Recently, the United States authorized seven members of a United States Marine Task Force to go ashore in Liberia to work as liaisons between the United States and the Nigerian peacekeeping battalion that is part of a West African peacekeeping force that will eventually be comprised of 3,250 soldiers from several West African nations; and

Whereas, According to an August 7, 2003 article written by reporters Somini Sengupta and Thom Shanker of The New York Times, entitled "African Peace Force Gets Warm Welcome in Liberia Streets," United States President George W. Bush has indicated that one of the primary conditions for a broader deployment of American troops into Liberia is the resignation and departure of current President Charles Taylor; and

Whereas, On August 11, 2003, Liberian President Charles Taylor resigned and surrendered his executive powers to Vice President Moses Blah, and then headed into exile in Nigeria; and

Whereas, It is incumbent upon the international community to pave the way for peace, stability and democracy in Liberia; now, therefore, be it Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York calls upon the United States to support the peaceful resolution of conflict and war in Liberia through the involvement of the United Nations and African Union; and, be it further

Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York calls upon the United Nations to deploy a peacekeeping force to put an end to the current conflict, help the country conduct democratic elections and ensure that humanitarian aid reaches the approximately one million people who are facing an acute shortage of food, water and medicines.

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