



Directorate of  
Intelligence

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**Africa Review**



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**14 September 1990**

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14 September 1990

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**Africa Review** [Redacted]

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**Articles**

**Liberia: Four-Way Military Face-off** [Redacted]

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The battle for Monrovia is likely to continue until one of the three rival Liberian military forces is able to gain a decisive upperhand or the West African regional peacekeeping force asserts itself to impose order [Redacted]

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**Africa Review** [Redacted]

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**Articles**

**Liberia: Four-Way Military Face-off** [Redacted]

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The battle for Monrovia is likely to continue until one of the three rival Liberian military forces is able to gain a decisive upperhand or the West African regional peacekeeping force asserts itself to impose order. The volatile Prince Johnson has moved quickly against government troops demoralized by President Doe's death, but he must still contend with rebel foe Charles Taylor, who also has "declared war" on the peacekeepers [Redacted]

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**Military Maneuvering**

Johnson's faction, the smallest and least well-armed of the three Liberian forces, is the most aggressive. Operating freely within the peacekeeping force's area of nominal control on Bushrod Island and in small pockets of downtown Monrovia, the group has been effectively shielded from Taylor's assaults. Buoyed by their shoot-out that led to Doe's death, Johnson's troops are easily occupying government-held positions, including the Defense Ministry, and are attacking Doe's Army remnants holding out at the Executive Mansion and the Barclay Training Center. [Redacted]

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Unity among dwindling government troops is quickly collapsing as soldiers caught outside the Mansion have gone into hiding to escape retribution. Infighting also has increased as Doe's fellow Krahns have executed non-Krahn officers accused of facilitating his demise. The several hundred well-armed Krahn soldiers at the Mansion, fearful of their fate, probably are willing to fight to the death. [Redacted]

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Meanwhile, Taylor's group, the largest and best-armed Liberian force, has suffered from eroding cohesion and public credibility since arriving in Monrovia's suburbs two months ago. Although his troops are pressing the Army at the Mansion, Taylor has failed to make good on threats to take the capital—including repeated claims that he would soon—and is unable to control his young

troops, some of whom have already surrendered. Moreover, his political advisers are divided over whether to pursue talks or to fight. Although Taylor demonstrated his ability to attack the peacekeeping force and keep it off balance, he has yet to prove capable of prevailing against a well-armed, disciplined opponent. [Redacted]

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Taylor probably will attack Army units at Spriggs Payne Airfield—and may overrun it unless elements of the regional force located there resist him. Despite continued arms resupply from Burkina, however, Taylor's troops lack the discipline or capability to launch a threatened final offensive to "level Monrovia" and drive out the peacekeeping force. Taylor is still a force to be reckoned with outside the capital. His forces occupy the Firestone Plantation, the port city of Buchanan, and the economically important Nimba County, where his assent and assistance are needed for relief efforts. [Redacted]

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The roughly 3,000-strong regional peacekeeping force, with its manpower, armor, and transport advantages over the competing Liberian factions, has the military capability to assert control in Monrovia, but whether it has the political mandate to do so remains unclear. Moreover, the uneven performance of the group so far does not auger well for its ability to impose a cease-fire. Although it repelled Taylor's attacks last weekend, it failed to intervene during the gun battle at its headquarters between Johnson and Doe. [Redacted]

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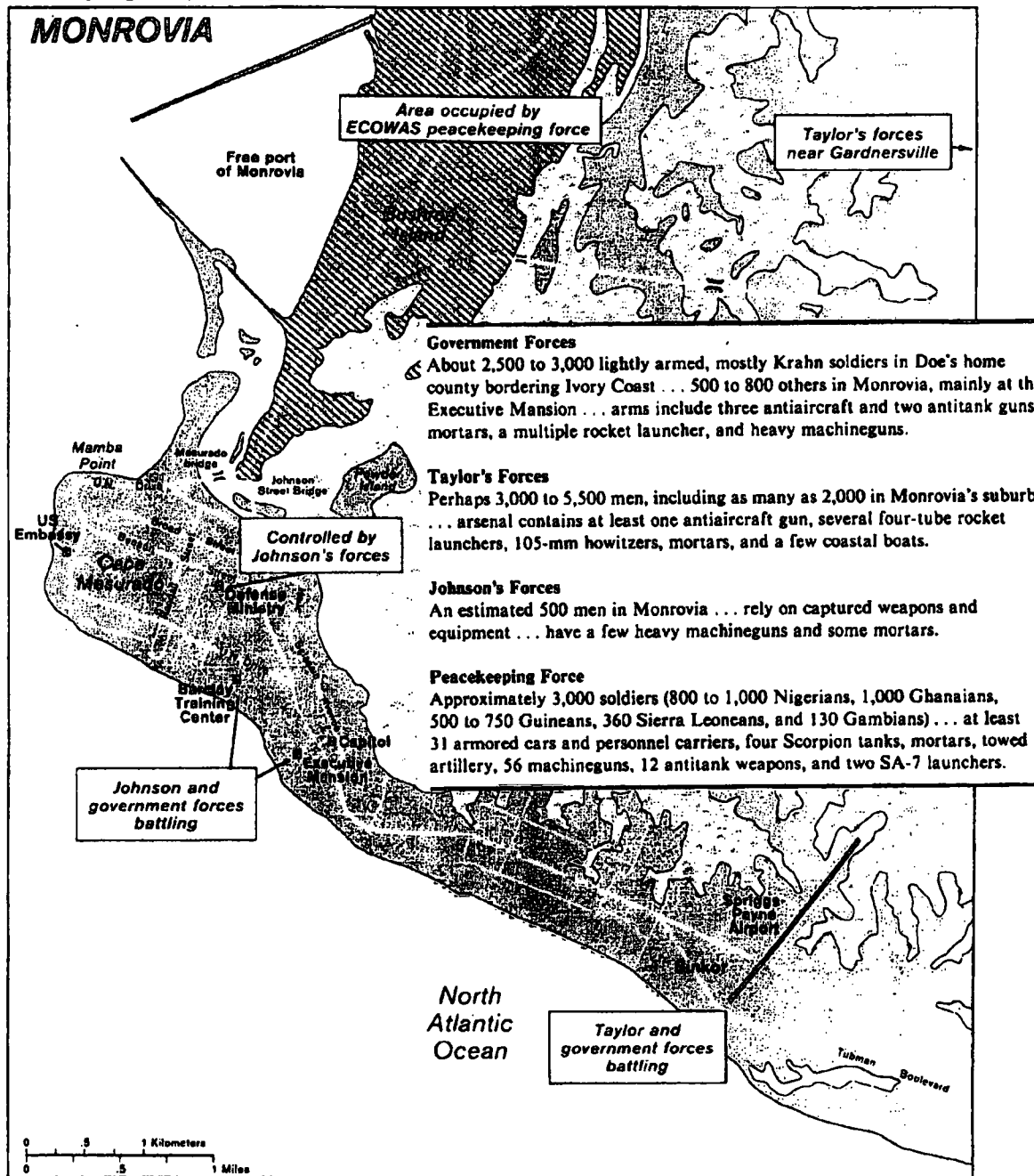
The peacekeeping command has been shaken by the circumstances of Doe's death and the aggressive independence displayed by Johnson's forces. Intraforce tensions and morale problems also confront the peacekeepers. Force Commander Quainoo reportedly is

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**MONROVIA**



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dismayed at the lack of political support for the peacekeeping effort—several ECOWAS members, including pro-Taylor Burkina and Ivory Coast, refuse to recognize the legitimacy of the peacekeeping effort—and Ghana is reassessing its continued participation in the force. [redacted]

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**Uncertain Political Future**

Both Johnson and the Army remnants have requested the interim government to come to Monrovia as soon as possible, although Johnson's willingness to yield authority is suspect. The fluid military situation in the capital makes it unlikely that any of the armed groups, including the peacekeepers, can guarantee security anytime soon. To establish itself in Monrovia, the

interim regime would be dependent on the regional peacekeepers for protection and, without Taylor's cooperation, would be confined to the capital. [redacted]

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Believing he has been cheated of victory, Taylor probably will continue military operations as long as his regional backers do not press him to enter talks or make political concessions. His main backer, Burkina, probably will not suspend material support until Taylor has obtained adequate political spoils for his hard-fought insurgency. [redacted]

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