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Senior Executive Intelligence Brief

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The SEIB must be returned to CIA within 5 working days



Thursday, 3 July 2003

National Security Information

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Regional Notes

TERRORISM

Palestinians:

US Officials Targeted in Gaza Attack

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The roadside bombing took place as vehicles were leaving a joint US-PSO facility.

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The list of suspects is long. Several Palestinian terrorist groups have used roadside charges during the Intifadah.

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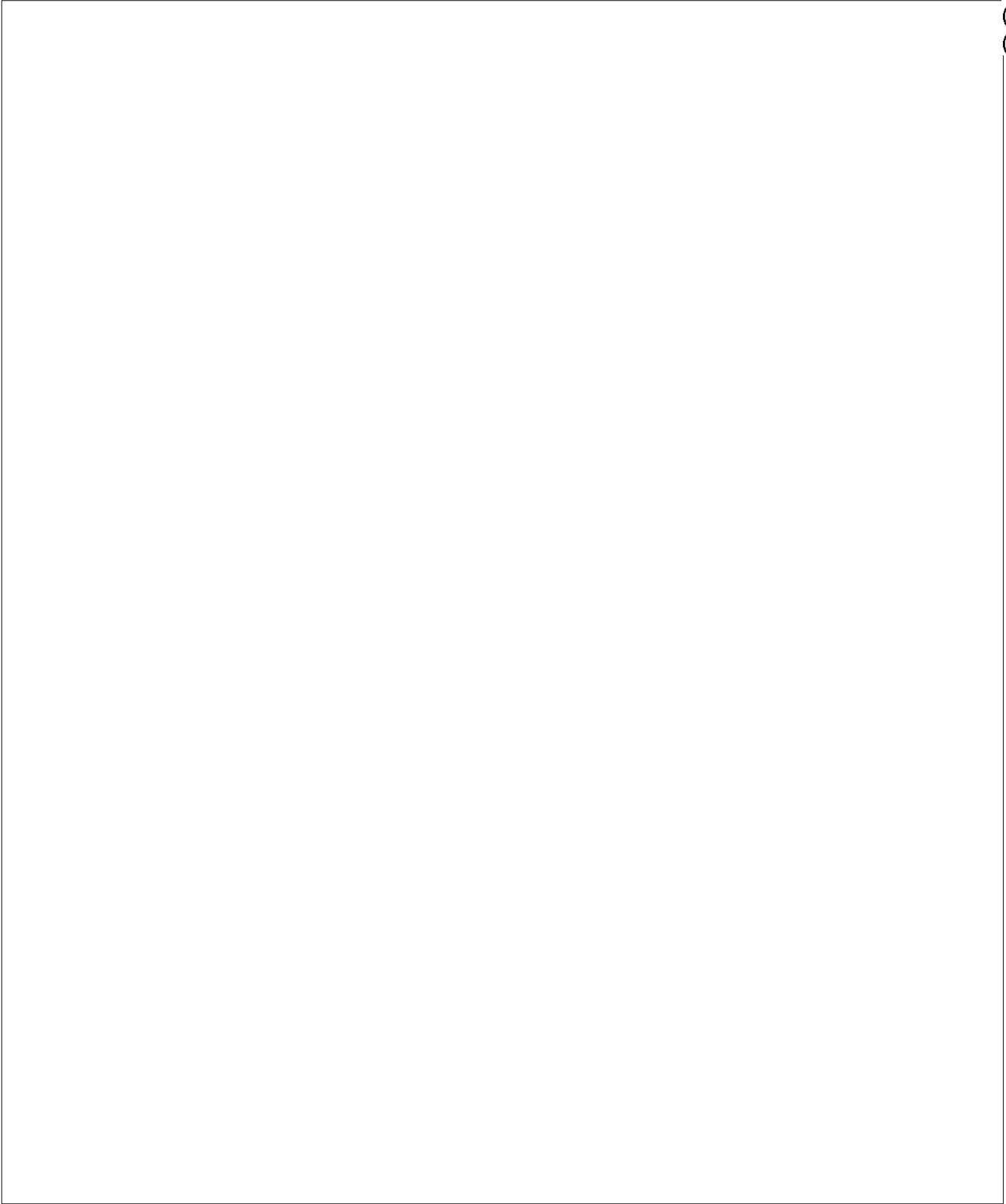
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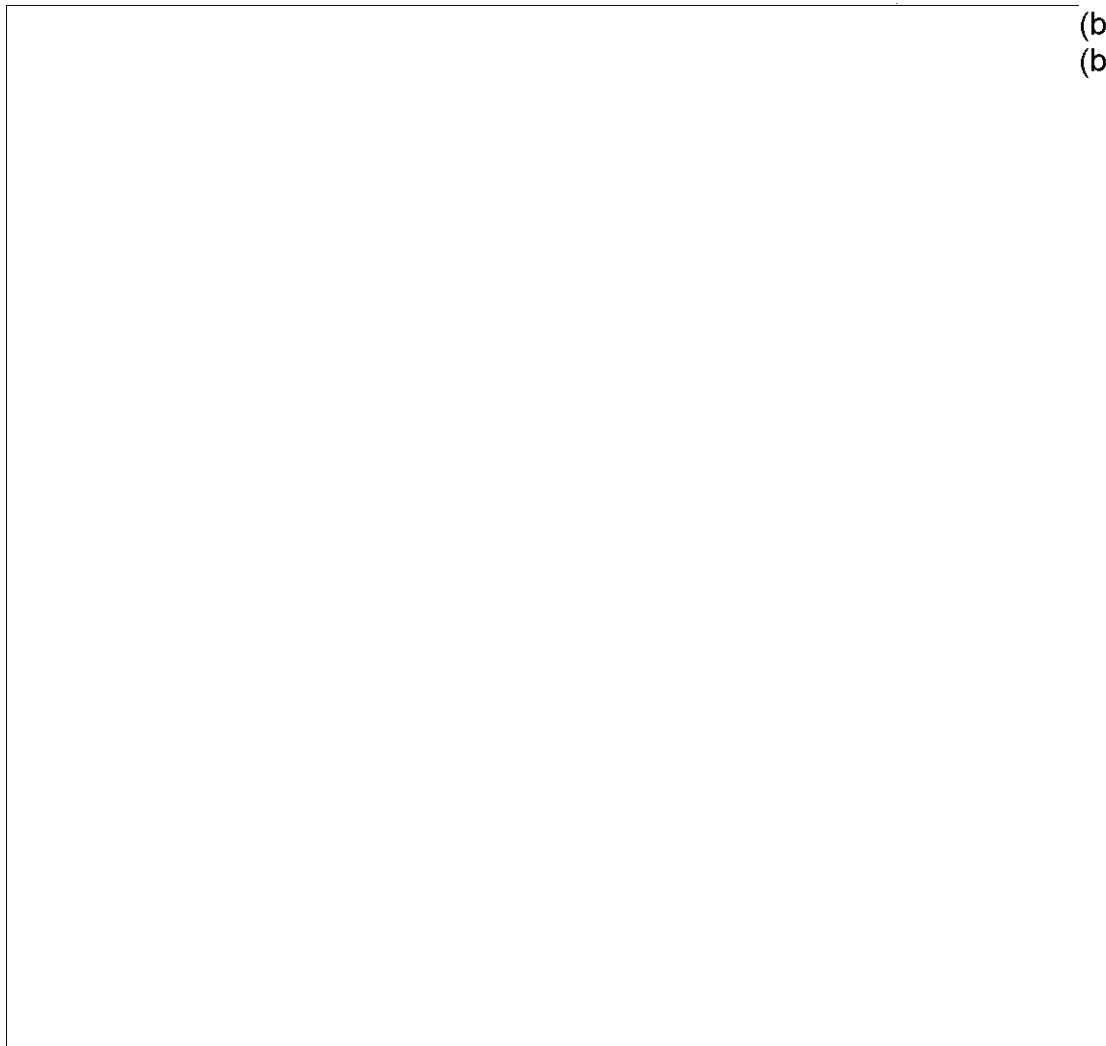
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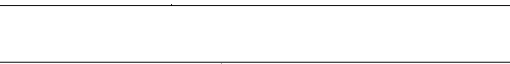
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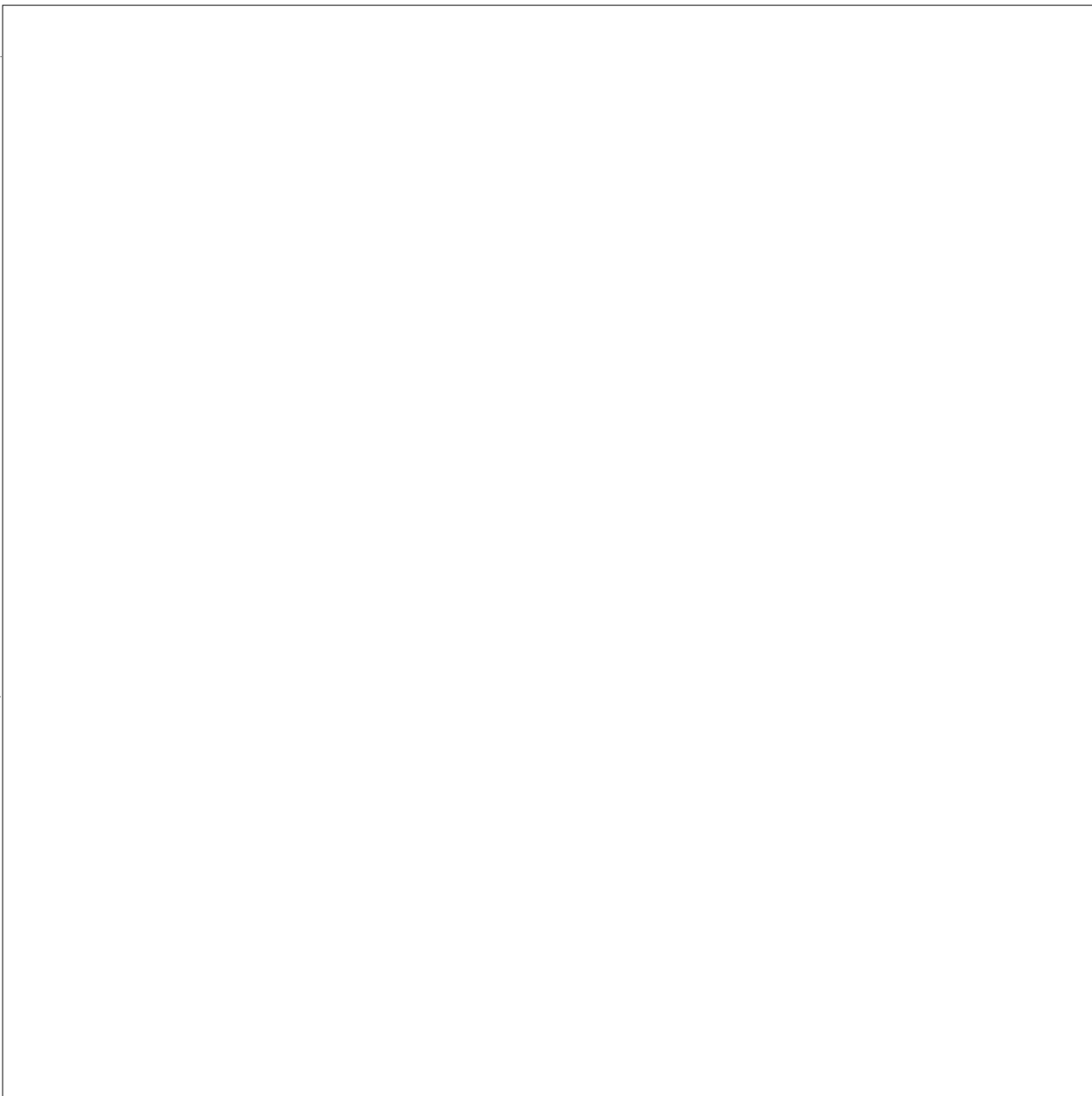
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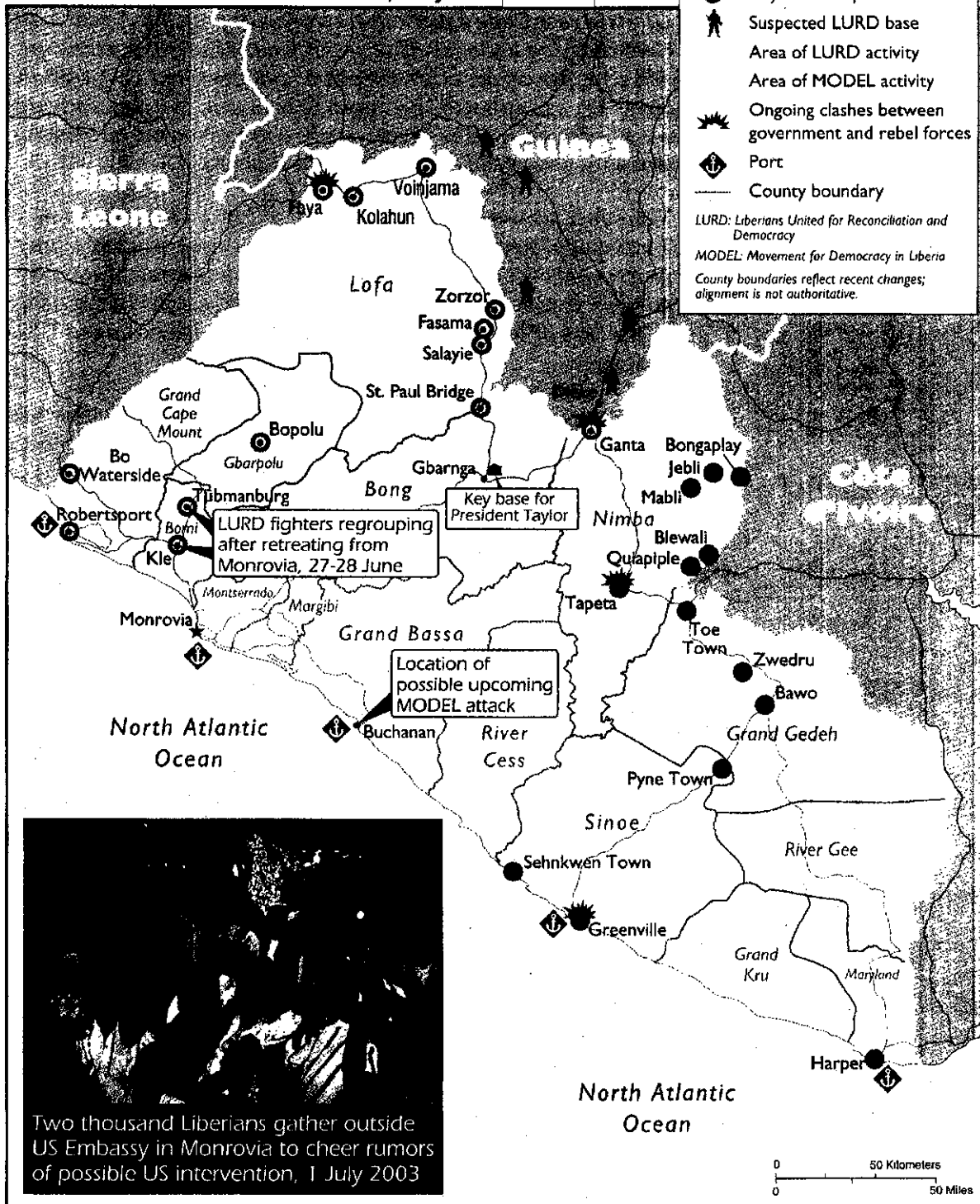
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Liberia: Combatants Vie for Power, July 2003



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AFRICA**Liberia:****Believing US Help Is Coming** [REDACTED]

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Liberians believe the US is committing forces to lead a peacekeeping effort and to "save the country." About 2,000 Liberians on Tuesday chanted pro-US slogans—including "Hey George Bush, we love you. No more war, we want peace"—outside the US Embassy, 20 minutes after a statement was broadcast over the radio indicating the US was considering intervention in Liberia.

— On the same day, the Ghanaian Foreign Minister told the US Ambassador in Accra that all sides in Liberia support US involvement and noted "Americans will be welcomed with open arms." [REDACTED]

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President Taylor and rebel spokesmen are publicly supporting a US deployment, so each side probably has concluded that a peacekeeping force would give it an advantage. Rebel leaders probably assess Washington will ensure Taylor adheres to peace agreements and eventually will force him to step down. Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) officials have been asking for several days that the US lead or at least provide significant forces for a proposed Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) peacekeeping mission, [REDACTED]

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— On Monday, the President said publicly that the US has "a moral obligation to intervene in Liberia." Taylor probably judges that a US peacekeeping deployment would limit the threat of additional rebel attacks and give him time to strike a deal to stay in power until his term expires in January.

— *Even apart from the issue of a US deployment, Taylor may have concluded that international intervention is inevitable and he has a better chance of staying in power with a force invited into the country than with one that had to fight its way in.* [REDACTED]

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Fighting is likely to continue, particularly in the countryside, until the peacekeeping force arrives. As part of the peace negotiations and as a first step to deploying an ECOWAS peacekeeping force, a verification team—tasked with mapping out the conflict's frontlines and identifying possible monitoring sites—departed yesterday from Accra for Monrovia. The Ghanaian Foreign Minister, however, told the US Ambassador a full ECOWAS peacekeeping deployment could take four to six weeks, or less if the US provided transport and logistic support.

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— *The LURD probably would have little regard for an ECOWAS-only deployment, but the imminent arrival of US forces in Monrovia could delay rebel attacks on the capital.*

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[Redacted] LURD

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rebels are fighting government forces for control of towns near the Guinean border.

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Nigeria:

Strike Growing More Violent [redacted]

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A three-day-old general strike, which the Nigerian Labor Congress called in response to the government's announcement on 20 June of a 54-percent fuel price increase, is becoming increasingly violent and crippling economic activity throughout the country. Riot police in Abuja on Wednesday fired tear gas and bullets at demonstrators outside a government office complex and in the main market, leaving scores injured. [redacted]

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[redacted] They also opened fire on protesters in Lagos and the southern oil city of Port Harcourt.

— Eight people have been killed and more than 80 people have been arrested since Monday [redacted]

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— The strike has closed many of the country's ports, banks, airports, shops, and gasoline stations. Protesters in Lagos sealed off the university and set fire to barricades. [redacted]

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President Obasanjo has indicated a willingness to scale back the price hike and is holding talks with labor leaders, but the unrest is likely to escalate and hurt oil exports if the two sides fail to reach an agreement soon. The oil workers union has threatened to shut down petroleum production if the strike is not resolved by Sunday.

— Oil company officials say the protests have not affected production thus far but warn that they have no control over the staff at loading terminals.

— *US diplomats say Obasanjo's political rivals—in the wake of the controversial presidential election in April—are eager to exploit the unrest to undermine his administration.* [redacted]

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Sudan:

Breakthrough Unlikely at Peace Talks [redacted]

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Several complex and divisive issues are unresolved, including the degree of rebel representation in an interim government and the division of oil revenue, suggesting a comprehensive agreement will be difficult to achieve at talks that resume on Sunday in Kenya. President Bashir in May said he would accept Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) leader Garang as Vice President of the interim government and allow him to retain his southern army. The prospect of a negotiated settlement with Garang is angering powerful northern Islamists, who would lose power in the transition.

— Vice President Taha has endorsed Bashir's proposal to avoid being labeled by the US as anti-peace, [redacted] but his close ties to hardline Islamists, [redacted] and desire to become President suggest he is a threat to grab power if Bashir stumbles.

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— Oil minister al-Jaz, a Taha ally, whose position would go to a southerner as part of a peace deal, [redacted] wants to resume oil exploration in the south, knowing the rebels previously threatened to respond to such moves by ending the cease-fire. [redacted]

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Garang has eroded trust by resurrecting issues that have angered Bashir and Islamists. Last month he publicly reopened a demand that Islamic law be rescinded in the capital, forcing Bashir to increase anti-SPLM rhetoric to appease Islamists in Khartoum.

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EUROPE

Italy: Seeking an EU Presidency of Reconciliation [redacted]

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Prime Minister Berlusconi plans to focus on healing transatlantic and internal EU splits caused by the war in Iraq during Italy's presidency, which runs through yearend. [redacted]

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Rome will try to boost EU solidarity by playing up areas of internal EU agreement on key international issues, with particular attention to Iraq issues on which the EU is prepared to be constructive.

— Italian officials want to focus on immediate humanitarian and reconstruction issues in Iraq, on which a broad EU consensus exists, and sidestep such sensitive issues as moves to establish political institutions. [redacted] the Italians are trying to set an example by contributing 3,000 soldiers and civilians for humanitarian and peacekeeping duties and have deployed a field hospital in Baghdad.

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— Berlusconi will promote his vision of a "Marshall Plan" for the Middle East. [redacted] and yesterday he announced that Italy will sponsor an international peace conference later this year.

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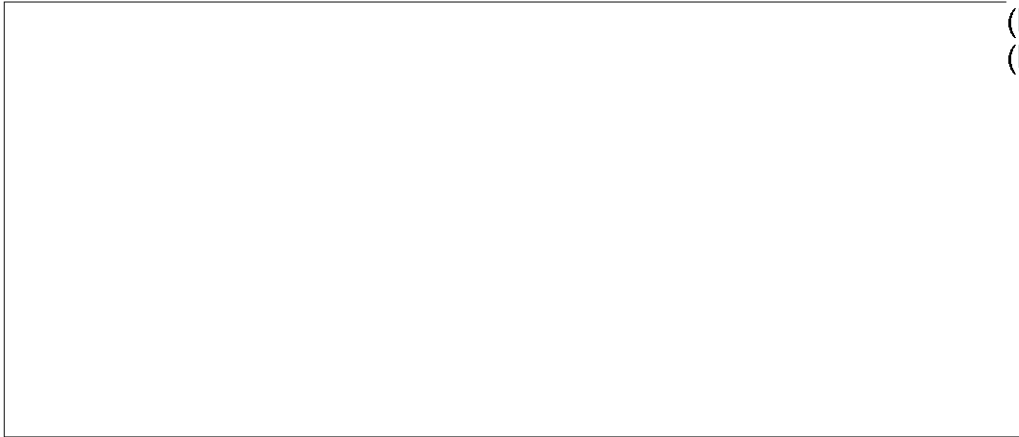
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EURASIA

Russia: Looking for Some Progress on WTO Accession [redacted]

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Russia's chief WTO negotiator Medvedkov will try to inject a sense of movement at the Working Party meeting next week in Geneva by completing bilateral negotiations on industrial goods with several smaller WTO members. Most of the work has been done, with agreement reached on market access for 70 to 80 percent of those products [redacted]

[redacted]

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— *Moscow also may try to portray as progress Working Party Chairman Bryn's proposal to put aside sections of the largely completed portions of the draft report on Russia's trade regime, such as export duties and government procurement, to focus attention on topics requiring clarification or a change in policy.*

— Russia has not yet responded to requests for information on several topics, including customs regulations and the foreign exchange and payments system, [redacted]

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— By showing progress on WTO accession, Moscow would demonstrate in the run up to Duma elections this December and the presidential election next spring that Russia is taking steps to become integrated into the world trading system, one of President Putin's major goals for the economy. [redacted]

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Even if Russia makes the deals with small countries and clarifies questions about its trade regime, it still has a way to go before it is ready to join the WTO. Bilateral market access negotiations on many agriculture goods and services are only now moving beyond preliminary stages.

— Public comments by senior Russian officials suggest that Moscow is unlikely to show flexibility on WTO member demands that Russia lower the ceiling on agricultural subsidies and that it deregulate energy prices, the two toughest policy issues in the draft report.

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