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APPROVED FOR RELEASE   
DATE: 09-02-2009

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DIRECTOR 179688

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2. LIBERIA: FIGHTING ESCALATES

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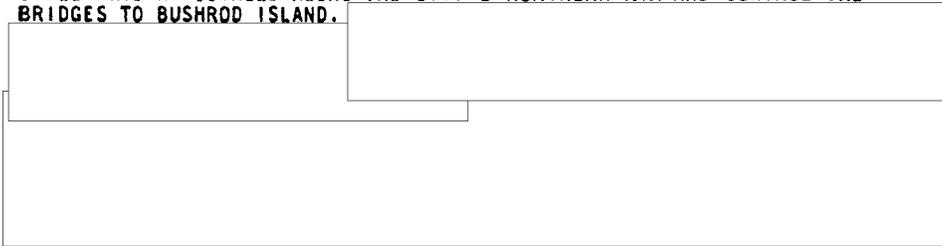
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2. LIBERIA: FIGHTING ESCALATES [REDACTED]

FIGHTING HEATED UP YESTERDAY AS GOVERNMENT TROOPS PUSHED BACK PRINCE JOHNSON'S FORCES IN MONROVIA AS ELEMENTS LOYAL TO CHARLES TAYLOR APPROACHED FROM BEHIND. [REDACTED]

THE ARMY CONTINUED ITS COUNTERATTACK AGAINST JOHNSON'S INSURGENT TROOPS, PUSHING THEM OUT OF DOWNTOWN MONROVIA. THE REBELS STILL HAVE A Foothold ALONG THE CITY'S NORTHERN RIM AND CONTROL THE BRIDGES TO BUSHROD ISLAND. [REDACTED]



THE ARMY CONTINUED TO HARASS CENTERS FOR DISPLACED PEOPLE. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] ALTHOUGH NO CASUALTIES WERE REPORTED, HUNDREDS OF PEOPLE FLED THE CENTERS SEEKING SAFETY BEHIND REBEL LINES. SOLDIERS THREATENED THOSE SEEKING REFUGE [REDACTED]



A SPOKESMAN FOR TAYLOR'S REBELS TOLD REPORTERS THE US MUST HAVE BROUGHT JOHNSON INTO DOWNTOWN MONROVIA VIA HELICOPTER OR SOME OTHER ROUTE US PERSONNEL HAD WORKED OUT. HE SPECULATED THAT THE US, PRESIDENT DOE, AND JOHNSON MAY SOON ARRIVE AT A DEAL TO REPLACE DOE WITH JOHNSON IN THE EXECUTIVE MANSION. [REDACTED]

COMMENT: JOHNSON'S FORCES ARE LIKELY TO CONTINUE HAVING DIFFICULTY MAINTAINING THE OFFENSIVE IN DOWNTOWN MONROVIA. TAYLOR APPEARS TO BE CONTENT TO LET THE ARMY AND JOHNSON'S TROOPS WEAR EACH OTHER DOWN WHILE HIS MEN SLOWLY TIGHTEN THE NOOSE AROUND THE CAPITAL. HIS VICTORY AGAINST THE ARMY AT TUBMANBURG REMOVES THE POSSIBILITY OF BEING ATTACKED FROM THE REAR. TAYLOR'S FORCES ARE NOW FREE TO DEAL WITH JOHNSON, FORCING THE BREAKAWAY REBEL LEADER TO WAGE A TWO-FRONT WAR. TAYLOR IS LIKELY TO TRY TO DEFEAT JOHNSON BEFORE MOVING ON THE EXECUTIVE MANSION. [REDACTED]

US CITIZENS ARE AT GREATER RISK AS GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS--AND NOW TAYLOR'S REBELS--INCREASINGLY DOUBT US CLAIMS OF NEUTRALITY. FIGHTING IN THE VICINITY OF THE EMBASSY COMPOUND IS LIKELY TO ESCALATE AS BOTH SIDES BATTLE FOR CONTROL THERE. SOLDIERS ALMOST CERTAINLY WILL GROW EVEN LESS RETICENT ABOUT DAMAGING US FACILITIES AS THE WAR GRINDS ON. [REDACTED]



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