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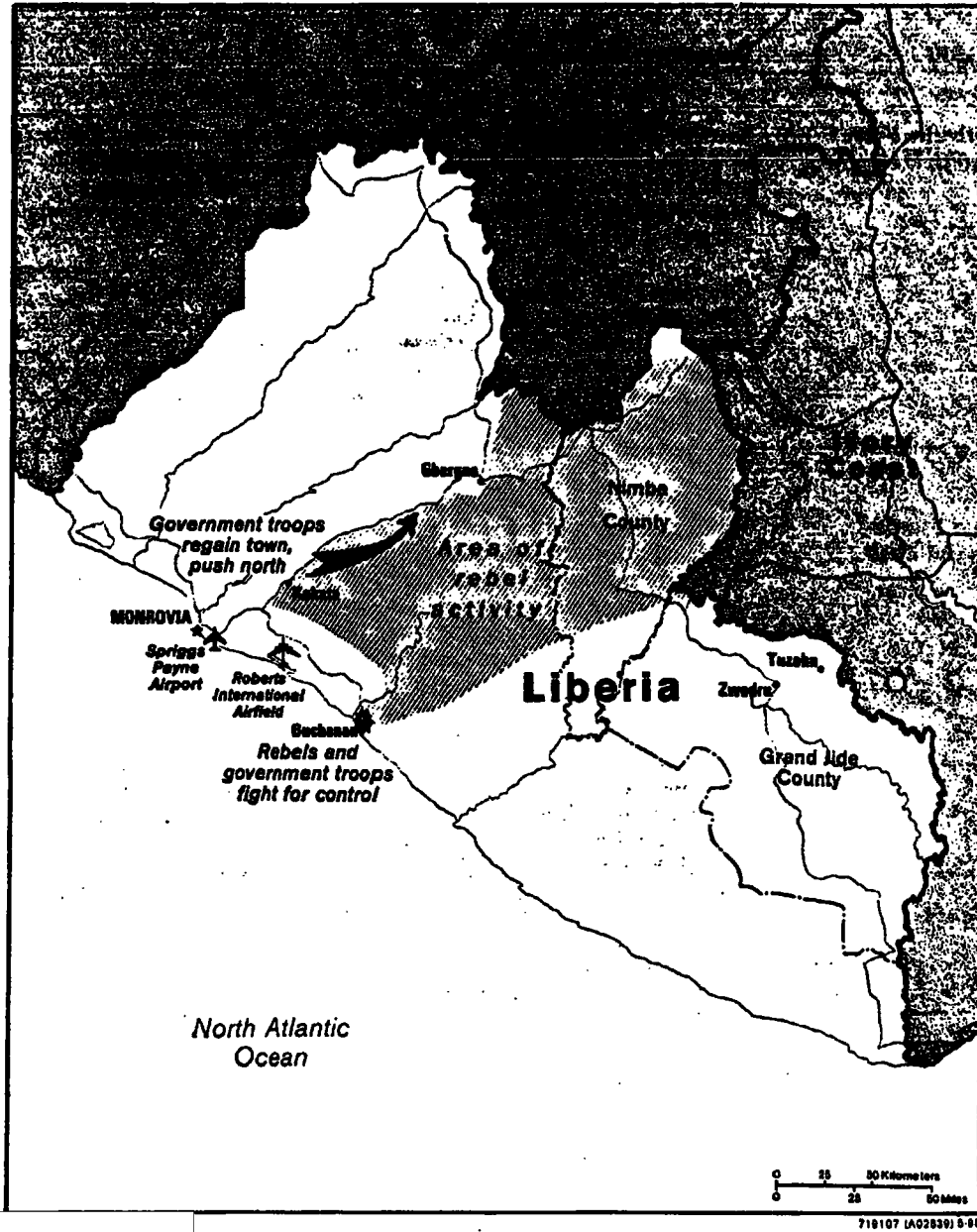
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Military Situation, 29 May 1990



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LIBERIA:**Growing Alarm in Capital**

Recent rebel press claims that the final offensive has begun, despite apparent rebel setbacks as army resistance has stiffened for the moment, are fueling panic in Monrovia.

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A spokesman for the rebels announced on Monday that they had launched attacks on Roberts International Airfield and that a march on the capital was imminent. He also asserted the rebels already had taken the town of Kakata and controlled both Buchanan and Gbarnga.

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Roberts Airfield is operating normally. The army has regained control of Kakata, is pushing north toward Gbarnga, and currently is fighting the rebels for control of Buchanan. Still, many government officials and others in the capital have become alarmed by the rebel pronouncements and by the proximity of the recent fighting. According to press reports, 2,000 Liberians gathered outside the UN building in Monrovia demanding international protection. Rumors are rampant that Roberts Airfield has been attacked by rebels. Massive lines form daily outside the Foreign Ministry as Liberians seek passports to leave the country.

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Although President Doe still intends to stay in Liberia and fight, a variety of reporting indicates that he—and many of his fellow Krahn cohorts and soldiers—may try to return to his tribal homeland in Grand Jide. Doe has said that, if the situation in Monrovia deteriorates further, he would return to his home rather than seek exile outside the country. Close to 1,000 Krahn soldiers have deployed to Zwedru and Doe's hometown of Tuzohn. even though the rebels are unlikely to risk venturing into Krahn territory. The local airport in Monrovia was jammed yesterday with Krahn's going to Grand Jide.

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Comment: The rebels' public optimism may be kindled by the ease of their past victories and by a growing belief that foreign backers, such as Ivory Coast, will increase their assistance once the rebels appear to be closing in on the capital.

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Continued rebel bravado almost certainly will heighten tensions further in Monrovia. Moreover, recent army resistance is likely to do little more than temporarily slow rebel progress.

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