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CPAS...NID 90-173JX...



Director of Central Intelligence

NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE DAILY

Thursday, 26 July 1990



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26 July 1990

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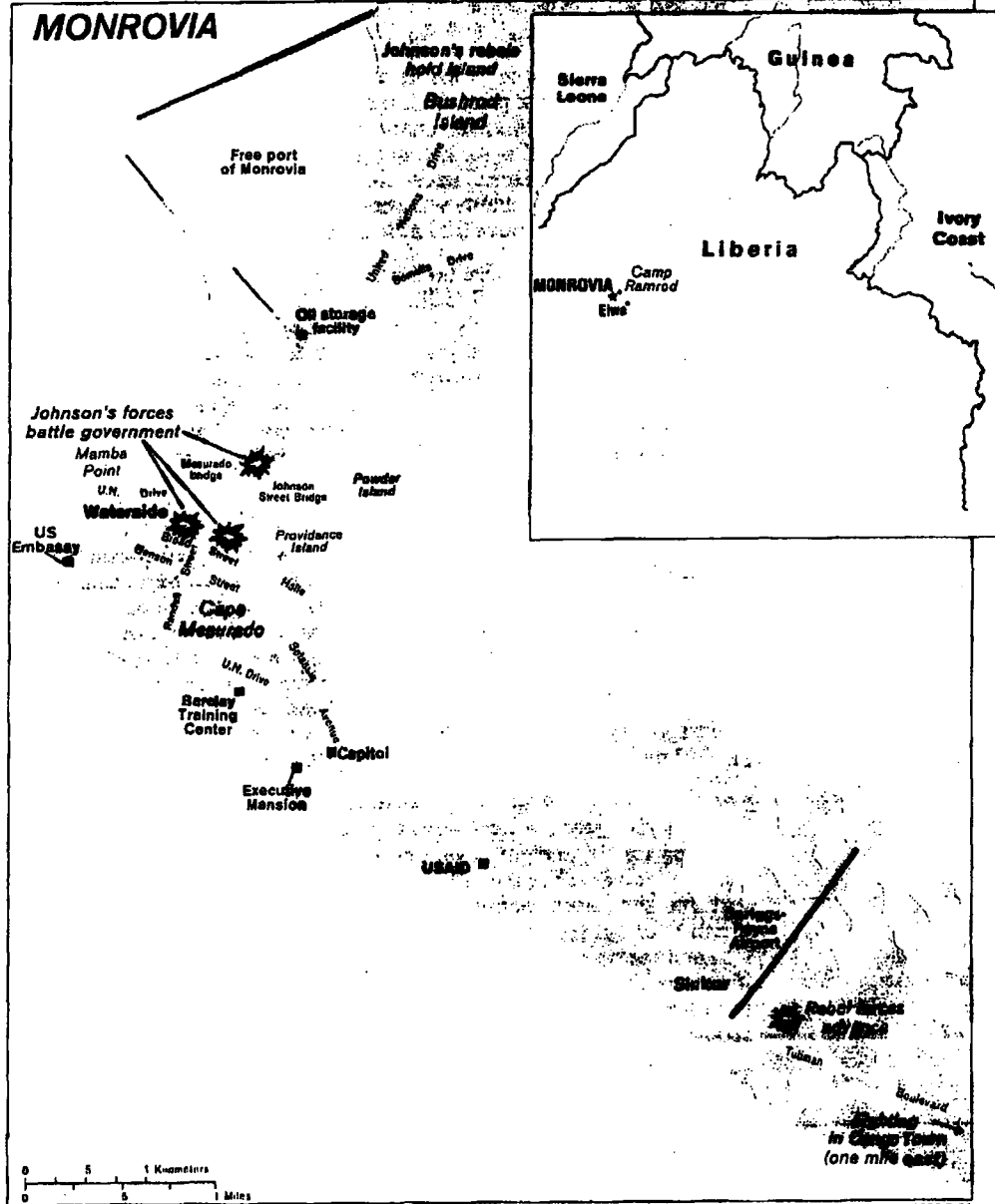
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Military Situation, Late July 1990



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LIBERIA:**Heavy Fighting Resumes**

Fighting broke out in several sections of Monrovia yesterday as rival rebel groups engaged Doe's army from opposite ends of the capital.

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Heavy firing occurred yesterday morning between the army and Prince Johnson's forces at the two bridges leading from Bushrod Island into the city, in Waterside, and parts of downtown Monrovia. Fighting was also reported in Sinkor and Congo Town, probably between Charles Taylor's troops and government soldiers. Although the fighting downtown abated by afternoon, skirmishes continued throughout the day in the southern Congo Town suburb. Shooting also was heard at Spriggs-Payne Airport, and some [redacted] claim Taylor's troops have captured the airfield.

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[redacted] the army was preparing to attack the mission compound at Elwa and warned people to leave. After their departure, loud explosions and heavy firing began.

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The army remains suspicious of US intentions and of those seeking refuge at area churches, schools, and hospitals. A government communique charged that US officials, including the former Ambassador, had been involved in helping the rebels. Soldiers yesterday entered a local hospital and school and chased people out. [redacted] soldiers have killed some of the refugees. Some 7,000 displaced Monrovia residents are at the US-leased compound across from the Embassy.

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[redacted] Johnson's forces have gained a number of recruits since arriving on Bushrod Island last week. Johnson reportedly has set up headquarters there and is passing out free rice and rallying the residents. He claims he plans to "get" Doe, then deal with Taylor.

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Comment: The vise on Monrovia may tighten again today. Johnson's forces seem to be continuing their strategy of hit-and-run attacks downtown, followed by a return to Bushrod toward the end of the day to regroup. Taylor's troops apparently have decided to abandon their more cautious tactics and bypass Camp Ramrod, risk a rear assault, and enter the capital along back roads. As the army becomes penned in on both sides, the behavior of government soldiers toward those suspected of sympathizing with the insurgents—including displaced persons and foreign diplomats—is likely to grow more erratic and unpredictable.

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