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Thugs roam streets in war-torn Liberia

MONROVIA, Liberia (AP) — Bands of armed thugs roamed the streets of Monrovia looting homes and shops and smashing cars and windows Wednesday while hundreds of people lined up outside the U.S. Embassy in hopes of being evacuated.

Many Americans are among the more than 300 foreigners who have been airlifted out of the capital, where the stench of bodies fills the streets after the worst outbreak of violence in three years in Monrovia.

Navy Cmdr. Bob Anderson, a spokesman for the U.S. European Command who is in Freetown, said about half of those evacuated late Tuesday and Wednesday were Americans. An Egyptian official said only one-fourth of the evacuees were Americans.

About 470 Americans live in Liberia, mostly in Monrovia, including 48 employed at the U.S. Embassy. American officials say nobody has been ordered to leave but a team of 18 Navy SEAL commandos was flown to Liberia to reinforce security at the U.S. Embassy.

Although the violence in Monrovia was not directed at U.S. citizens, the military nevertheless dispatched two AC-130 gunships to Sierra Leone.

Liberia's only international airport has been destroyed, the control tower bombed, and U.N.-donated helicopters and a commercial jet lie gutted on the tarmac.

Exactly how many people have been killed since fighting broke out Saturday is not clear.

One Red Cross worker, James Jallah, said he counted 16 bodies when he went outside for the first time in five days.

The U.N. envoy to Liberia, Anthony Nyakyi, said a cease-fire was reached between government troops and rebels who have been holding hundreds of Liberians, Lebanese and other foreign civilians hostage at a military base in the capital.

Frank Akinola, a spokesman for the 12,000-member African peacekeeping force in the country, said some of their troops were released Wednesday along with some civilians. But he

"This is the rebels' livelihood: to loot and kill."

PETER BARBAR

Lebanese businessman

said the cease-fire was holding only in western parts of the city.

Paul Koulen, an official with the U.N. Development Program, said that tanks from the peacekeeping forces had moved into the Mamba Point neighborhood, where foreign embassies and U.N. offices are located, but that troops were doing little to protect people or property.


He said dozens of peacekeepers in front of the U.N. offices just sat by and watched as young men stripped and destroyed a half-dozen aid vehicles.

"This is the rebels' livelihood: to loot and kill," said a Lebanese businessman, Peter Barbar.

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Clinton leads mourners as Brown laid to rest

WASHINGTON (AP) — Ron Brown was laid to rest Wednesday after President Clinton celebrated his "truly American life" in a funeral that reflected the commerce secretary's upbeat style. "He would have loved this deal today," the president said.

The funeral produced an outpouring of respect unusual even in pomp-loving Washington. High-ranking bureaucrats and government clerks shared pews in the stately National Cathedral, crowded to capacity. Thousands filed by his coffin overnight in the Commerce Department lobby.

"Ron Brown's incredible life force brought us all joy in the morning," the president said. "No dark night could ever defeat him. ... This man loved life and all the things in it."

Brown, the first black commerce secretary, was killed along with 34 others a week ago in a plane crash while on a trade mission to Croatia. His son, Michael, began by thanking the Croatians who climbed the hillside to bring down the bodies.

The son smiled during his tribute to a father so close that they still kissed on the lips until last week. He brought on laughter when he told of hearing him described as smooth as a swan, and graceful under pressure.

"And then I said, 'Wait a minute, these people have never played golf with him before,'" Michael said. "He

has problems with about 2 1/2-foot putts, and grace under pressure I would not call that."

The 54-year-old Brown qualified for interment in the cemetery of heroes because he was a Cabinet official who had an honorable military background. He served in the Army from 1963-67, including tours in Germany and Korea, and attained the rank of captain.

As chairman of the Democratic National Committee in 1992, Brown was a sparkplug in Clinton's campaign for the presidency.

"Ron Brown enjoyed a lot of success," the president said. "He proved you could do well and do good and have a good time. ... He lived his life for America, and when the time came, he was found laying down his life for America."

"I want to say to my friend, just one last time, thank you," Clinton said, glancing down at the coffin. "If it weren't for you, I wouldn't be here."

But it was not merely the dignitaries who were moved by Brown's untimely death.

"This is probably one of the saddest moments in American history for all of us," said Velton Lewis, 43, a labor relations assistant at Commerce, who stood along the funeral procession route. "Ron Brown was a unique individual."

U.S. expels Sudanese diplomat

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — The United States has expelled a Sudanese diplomat suspected of aiding terrorists who plotted to blow up the United Nations and assassinate Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak.

The expulsion order was issued Tuesday against Ahmed Yousif Mohamed, a second secretary at the Sudanese mission to the United Nations.

U.S. Mission spokesman James Rubin said Wednesday that Mohamed was given 48 hours to leave because he had "been identified as being involved in terrorist and espionage activities, including involvement in connection with the plot to bomb the United Nations."

A U.S. official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said Mohamed and a second Sudanese diplomat, Siraj Yousif, were suspected of giving information to terrorist groups in 1993. Yousif has already left New York.

Sudanese officials dismissed the U.S. claims, but said Mohamed has left the country.

Clinton vetoes abortion bill

WASHINGTON (AP) — Guaranteeing a fierce election-year debate over abortion, President Clinton vetoed a bill Wednesday that would outlaw a rarely used technique to end pregnancies in their late stages.

Clinton struck down the bill in an emotional ceremony where five women who have undergone such abortions spoke tearfully about the experience and the fetal disorders that led to their decisions.

Clinton said the procedure is a "po-

tentially lifesaving, certainly health-saving" measure for "a small but extremely vulnerable group of women and families in this country, just a few hundred a year."

"This is not about the pro-choice, pro-life debate," Clinton said. "This is not a bill that should have ever been injected into that."

Abortion opponents said the procedure, dubbed a "partial birth" abortion, is particularly gruesome, sometimes carried out after the fetus is pulled by the legs from the birth canal.

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