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ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301

17 AUG 1982

In reply refer to:
I-13227/82

INTERNATIONAL
SECURITY AFFAIRS

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AUG 18 1982

MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

SUBJECT: Your Meeting with Chairman Samuel K. Doe of Liberia (U) -
INFORMATION MEMORANDUM

(U) Time and Place. 11:30 A.M. - 12:00 P.M., Wednesday, August 18 in your
office.

(U) Participants

U.S.

Liberia (Official Party)

Secretary Weinberger
Assistant Secretary of Defense, ISA,
Francis J. West, Jr.
Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense
for Africa, Noel C. Koch
Director ISA/Africa, James L. Woods
Acting Director, DSAA,
Walter B. Ligon
Ambassador William Swing
R. R. Dentel (notetaker), ISA/Africa

Chairman Samuel K. Doe
Joseph Guannu, Ambassador
to U.S.
Col. Abraham Kollie, Sec.
Gen., PRC
LTC Alfred Zeh, Member PRC
LTC Jacob Swen, Member PRC
Major Robert Zuo, Member PRC
H. Boima Fahnbullah Jr.,
Minister of Foreign Affairs
G. Alvin Jones, Minister of
Finance

Setting

In April 1980, then Master Sergeant Doe and 17 other enlisted men
overthrew the government of Liberian President William Tolbert, killing the
President along with 27 officials and security guards. The key motivation
for ousting the small but dominant minority of Americo-Liberians was a
perception within the military and the population in general that only the
ruling elite was reaping any economic benefits.

Since the coup Doe has gradually released all political prisoners,
encouraged Liberian exiles to return home, moved strongly against
corruption and harassment of private citizens by military and government
personnel, and committed himself to a return to democracy by 1985. A con-
stitutional drafting commission is at work preparing for this goal.
Additionally, the Doe Government's recent record in complying with an IMF
stabilization program is unmatched in Africa.

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(U) This is Chairman Doe's first visit to the U.S. This visit follows his successful late spring tour of the People's Republic of China, South Korea, Hong Kong, Saudi Arabia and Algeria.

(C) Doe is young (30) and impressionable. His attitude toward the U.S. will be greatly influenced by his reception here. Although inexperienced and unsophisticated, Doe has shown himself a capable, popular leader. His acceptance by other West African heads of state and his recent trip to Asia have bolstered his confidence.

(C) Lately Chairman Doe has distanced himself from some of his former colleagues on the Peoples Redemption Council. Previous to this spring, these individuals had complete access to Doe on both a personal and professional level. Most PRC members are now largely supernumeraries and are becoming increasingly resentful of their status. This situation may be exacerbated since Doe has publicly announced plans to return Liberia to civilian rule by 1985. In some Liberian military quarters, this will be regarded as a threat to military prestige and power.

(C) Doe will probably express appreciation for the increase of overall US assistance (US aid in FY 82 will total approximately 75 million dollars, up from six million dollars in 1978). Nevertheless, because of the long-standing historical relationship between the US and Liberia, Liberians tend to overestimate their importance to the US. They see the US as having a moral obligation to help Liberia develop, similar to France's assistance to the Ivory Coast and Senegal. Doe is therefore also likely to ask for a further increase in both economic and military assistance.

Themes

(U) - Proposed themes are:

(U) -- We highly value our long and close association with Liberia, and look forward to strengthening further the excellent relations we now enjoy.

(C) -- We have acknowledged strategic and commercial interests in Liberia

- (1) the Omega satellite tracking station (one of 7 in the world)
- (2) a VOA radio transmitter station which beams VOA broadcasts throughout Africa
- (3) a telecommunications station which relays diplomatic cables from all US embassies in Africa to the US State Department in Washington
- (4) half a billion dollars of US private investment in Liberia

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(S) FYI: The Marxist-oriented Liberian Foreign Minister — H. Boima Fahbullah — has attempted, so far without success, to use the foregoing as leverage to obtain major additional development assistance, such as the proposed construction of a dam on the St. Paul River that would cost between \$700 and 800 million. Doe realizes this request is out of proportion. End FYI.

(U) We look forward to continuing our program of assistance to Liberia's Armed Forces.

(S) FYI: Doe will probably stress the need to:

- (1) continue to work with the Liberian army to complete the military housing construction project
- (2) complete the Roberts International Airfield upgrade
- (3) provide more training assistance
- (4) increase the size of his Armed Forces by 1000 men
- (5) possibly buy transport helicopters from the U.S.

(S) Hopefully, through the intervention of Ambassador Swing, Doe now realizes that the latter two actions would be unsuitable given the economic problems that must be addressed in Liberia. If so, he may limit his request to more basic military equipment such as ammunition, M-16A1 rifles, rocket launchers, communications equipment, cargo and transport trucks, uniforms, and field gear. This equipment would realistically meet Liberia's military needs. End FYI.

(U) Proposed talking points are appended.

Office of the Secretary of Defense 50.2.C. 3552
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FRANCIS J. WEST, JR.
ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
(INTERNATIONAL SECURITY AFFAIRS)

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