

INTERNATIONAL

Clinton decries Zimbabwe violence

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Clinton on Monday decried as "quite sad" the political violence in Zimbabwe that has left several white farmers dead. "I hope it can be worked out in a lawful manner," Clinton said.

Clinton said U.N. ambassador Richard Holbrooke is currently in Africa trying to address "a lot of the troubles" there, including violence in Zimbabwe, where squatters

have been occupying white-owned farms.

After meeting with organizers of an upcoming anti-gun violence march, Clinton told reporters he hopes the violence in Zimbabwe will soon ease before it threatens South Africa and other nearby countries.

"I think it is quite sad what is going on because (Zimbabwe) is an important country," Clinton said. "I hope we

can do something that will encourage them to return to a progressive and stable path. We'll work it out."

At least 18 people have died violently since February, when the opposition Movement for Democratic Change helped defeat a referendum on a revised constitution. Many of the victims have had ties to the opposition.

Shortly after the vote,

mobs and ruling party militants staked claims to white-owned farms, sometimes violently. More than 1,000 farms are now occupied, at least three white farmers have been killed and at least a half-dozen have been severely beaten.

President Robert Mugabe has said the occupations are justified in this former British colony, where one-third of the fertile land is still owned by about 4,000 whites.

United States may help UN in Sierra Leone

WASHINGTON (AP) — Secretary of State Madeleine Albright said Monday the United States was looking at the possibility of providing logistical support to assist the embattled United Nations peacekeeping mission there.

She said the administration is doing everything it can to secure the release of the hundreds of U.N. peacekeepers who have been kidnapped in Sierra Leone by rebels from the Revolutionary United Front.

In separate comments, President Clinton said the administration was working on ways to enable the U.N. mission to carry out its duties.

"It's very important. I spent a lot of time on it the last four or five days and we're working on it," he said.

Albright spoke to reporters during a joint news conference with German Foreign Minister Joschka Fisher. She did not specify what type of logistical support was being contemplated but in previous African crises, the United States has

provided communications equipment and airlift capability.

Albright said she discussed with issue with British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook. "We'll do whatever we can to be helpful," she said.

On Sunday, the administration warned Americans against traveling to Sierra Leone and ordered nonessential personnel out of the embassy.

In addition, it began a helicopter airlift for Americans who want to leave the West African country.

The State Department said the international airport in Freetown "is subject to suspension of operations without warning."

About 170 American civilians, many working with international charities, and 10 embassy staff live in Sierra Leone, a U.S. official said.

The first two helicopter flights carried people to the U.S. Embassy in Conakry, capital of neighboring Guinea.

Mugabe: White farm occupations won't end

HARARE, Zimbabwe (AP) — Occupations of white-owned farms by black squatters won't end until much of the land is available for resettlement, President Robert Mugabe said last week in a fiery speech launching his party's selection campaign.

The 76-year-old Mugabe slammed former colonial ruler Britain, told other countries to butt out of Zimbabwe's affairs and warned that the land takeovers that began in February could escalate if there is "resistance."

Hundreds of Mugabe supporters cheered and danced as he arrived at a downtown Harare hotel to help launch his ruling ZANU-PF party's campaign promising economic growth, social justice through wealth redistribution, democracy, peace, stability, the rule of law and national autonomy in domestic and foreign affairs.

Neither Mugabe nor a 62-page platform booklet offered details on how those goals would be achieved. Mugabe, Zimbabwe's only ruler since the former colony of Rhodesia won independence in 1980, has not yet called a date for parliamentary elections, expected to be held in coming months.

Instead of focusing on his party's platform, Mugabe spoke glowingly of the take-

overs of more than 1,000 white-owned farms by squatters purportedly led by veterans of Zimbabwe's independence war. One-third of Zimbabwe's fertile land is owned by 4,000 whites.

Mugabe said 841 farms must be made available for resettlement before the squatters leave any of the seized farms. That number was a reference to the 841 white farmers who went to court to oppose his November 1997 order for some 1,500 white farmers to give up their farms. The 841 won their court cases and kept the farms.

He also said the country needs half of the 30 million acres of white-owned land to resettle half a million landless families. Land takeovers would be carried out in a just and humanitarian way, Mugabe said, with white farmers allowed to keep a certain amount.

"If there is going to be resistance, then we might go much further," he said. "We just want our land and will take it in whatever way is feasible."

Mugabe called Britain — which has criticized the government's handling of the land takeovers — "an enemy." No nation should involve itself in Zimbabwe's affairs, he said.

"We won't allow them to determine our destiny. We

determine it ourselves," he said. "We have fought for it. We can still fight for it."

Mugabe accused the opposition Movement for Democratic Change of inciting violence. At least 17 people — including white farmers and MDC supporters — have died in political violence in recent weeks. There have been no reports of Mugabe supporters being killed.

Elias Pfvebe, a member of the MDC national executive, said Wednesday that his brother, Matthew, 50, was killed in an attack by ruling party militants Monday evening. Four villagers, three of them opposition supporters, were still missing after the attack, said Pfvebe, a candidate for Parliament.

The independent newspaper The Daily News reported Wednesday that ruling party supporters killed three other MDC members in separate incidents in recent days in

Mvurwi, 50 miles north of Harare.

The ZANU-PF platform said a resettlement program would place about 500,000 families on 12.4 million acres of land, which would increase national employment by 30 percent in the agriculture sector and by 18 percent in related sectors. Previous election platforms have been similar, but few of the goals have been realized.

Foreign Minister Stan Mudenge, meanwhile, rejected criticism from the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group on Zimbabwe's handling of the land takeovers. Mudenge said the crisis was caused by "Britain's refusal to honor its colonial obligation to have a fair land redistribution."

Britain has offered millions of dollars for redistribution if the occupations are ended, the rule of law restored and free and fair elections are held.

WORLD BRIEFS

ETHIOPIA ACCUSES ERITREA OF UNDERMINING PEACE TALKS

ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA (PANA) — Ethiopia accused Eritrea of trying to slow progress at the ongoing peace talks in Algiers aimed at resolving the two-year border conflict between both countries. In a statement published in the state-owned Ethiopian Herald, the foreign ministry charged Asmara of claiming that the talks were on "shaky ground", and of placing new conditions to the OAU peace process, thus making resolution of the crisis "even dimmer." The proximity talks, with Bouteflika's special envoy, justice minister Ahmed Ouyahia, shuttling between Ethiopian foreign minister Seyoum Mesfin and his Eritrean counterpart, Haile Woldensae, are aimed at bringing the two sides to a common understanding on the technical arrangements for implementing the OAU peace process.

TOGO HOSTS REGIONAL MEETING ON CHILDREN, WOMEN'S RIGHTS

LOME, TOGO (PANA) — Representatives of regional NGOs and UN agencies led by UNICEF opened a meeting Tuesday in Lome on strategies to speed up the implementation of international and regional conventions for the promotion of children and women's rights. Opened by Togolese Prime Minister Eugene Koffi Adoboli, the meeting is to identify opportunities for integrating children and women's rights issues into national policy. It will also help in the preparation for the global women's conference to be held in June in New York, as well as contribute to the global movement for children. The meeting comes at a time when there is greater awareness, at all levels, of the importance of human rights as a pre-condition for human development.

IRON EXPLORATION TO RESUME IN HUILA

LUBANGO, ANGOLA (PANA) — Angola's regional board of geology and mining intends to resume iron exploration later in the year under the Kassinga project, initiated in the Jamba municipality, in the southern province of Huila. A board official, Pedro Sunda, said the mining research program could only resume if the security conditions were favorable. He told reporters that the Mining Company of Angola is seeking 1.4 billion US dollars to implement the project, which also includes exploration for gold and other minerals in an area of 2,681 sq. km. According to Sunda, the Kassinga project should enable annual exports of about 10 million tons of ore valued at 320 million dollars, of which 50 million dollars would go to the Angolan state. The Kassinga mining complex operated without interruption from 1967 to 1975, bringing into the country 5.5 million dollars a year, from average exports of 40 million tons.

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