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## **Bush, in Africa, Promises Aid but Offers No Troops for Liberia**

By RICHARD W. STEVENSON

DAKAR, Senegal, July 8 — President Bush opened his tour of Africa today with a pledge to work more closely with African nations to help them build a prosperous and peaceful future. But he still would not commit to sending American troops as part of a peacekeeping operation in war-ravaged Liberia.

"We're in the process of determining what is necessary to maintain the cease-fire and to allow for a peaceful transfer of power," Mr. Bush said after consulting about Liberia with President John Kufuor of Ghana, the leader of the Economic Community of West African States, a regional group. "I assured him we'll participate in the process," Mr. Bush said. "And we're now in the process of determining what that means."

Mr. Bush repeated his demand that President Charles Taylor of Liberia step aside to help resolve the conflict and pave the way for new elections. He said the United Nations as well as the West African governments would be involved in the effort to end the long-running conflict, which has killed thousands of people, displaced as many as one million Liberians and threatened to destabilize neighboring nations.

A senior administration official said later that Mr. Bush would decide whether to send United States forces to Liberia only after he receives a report from a Pentagon team that arrived in Monrovia on Monday to assess the need for assistance. Ari Fleischer, the White House spokesman, said it would be "some time" before the president received the Pentagon team's report.

After a meeting with West African leaders and his host for the day, President Abdoulaye Wade of Senegal, Mr. Bush rode Mr. Wade's presidential yacht across Dakar harbor to Gorée Island, the westernmost point in Africa and the point of departure centuries ago for at least a million slaves sent across the ocean.

"At this place, liberty and life were stolen and sold," the president said, standing against the backdrop of a blue sky and brightly painted buildings that belied the island's dark history. "One of the largest migrations of history was also one of the greatest crimes of history."

Mr. Bush did not apologize for the role of the United States in slavery, but he condemned it in unflinching and strikingly religious terms that seemed to be aimed as much at an audience at home as to the small crowd that listened to him under the blazing sun. "For 250 years the captives endured an assault on their culture and their dignity," Mr. Bush said. "The spirit of Africans in America did not break. Yet the spirit of their captors was corrupted."

"Small men took on the powers and airs of tyrants and masters," Mr. Bush continued. "Years of unpunished brutality and bullying and rape produced a dullness and hardness of conscience. Christian men and women became blind to the clearest commands of their faith and added hypocrisy to injustice. A republic founded on equality for all became a prison for millions."

Mr. Bush's six-hour stay today in Senegal was the first stop on a five-day trip that will also take him to South Africa, Botswana, Uganda and Nigeria. It is his first trip as president to sub-Saharan Africa, and White House officials said Mr. Bush intended to focus on promoting democracy, fighting AIDS and increasing trade.

Mr. Bush has also injected himself into one of the continent's many conflicts, the long-running civil strife in Liberia, by calling repeatedly for the departure of Mr. Taylor, who has pledged to leave but shown few signs of actually doing so. Mr. Bush has also signaled that he would like to see a change of government in Zimbabwe, which is suffering under the increasingly autocratic rule of its leader, President Robert Mugabe.

As a candidate, Mr. Bush evinced little interest in Africa and suggested that he would be reluctant to commit American troops here. He won less than 10 percent of the black vote, and some of his policies, including his decision to go to war with Iraq, have brought harsh criticism from some African leaders, including Nelson Mandela.

But he has surprised many groups that advocate doing more to help Africa by proposing large spending increases to fight AIDS and promote antipoverty programs. In opening the door to sending peacekeepers into Liberia, he is considering putting American troops directly in harm's way in Africa for the first time since 18 American soldiers died in Somalia in 1993.

To some degree, Mr. Bush's interest in Africa has been driven by national security considerations. Concerned that many African nations could be breeding grounds or safe harbors for Islamic terrorists, Mr. Bush has sought to increase the American military presence in friendly nations and address the poverty that can give rise to anti-American feelings. With the United States accused by some nations of having adopted a unilateral, militaristic approach to foreign policy, Mr. Bush has sought to soften that reputation.

He was accompanied here by two of the highest-ranking African-Americans to serve in the United States government, Secretary of State Colin L. Powell and Condoleezza Rice, the national security adviser. Mr. Powell and Dr. Rice, both of whom have pressed for more engagement with Africa, were with Mr. Bush this morning on Gorée Island as he toured the Slave House, which was built by the Dutch in 1776. As many as 200 men, women and children would be crammed into the house's tiny cells at any time, shackled around the arms and neck.

At the end of one corridor is a door that was marked "the point of no return," through which the slaves would be herded as they were loaded onto ships carrying them to the Americas.

In his five days in Africa, Mr. Bush will have few opportunities to see firsthand much of the poverty and despair bred by centuries of oppression, war and disease. The relatively brief duration of his trip and his decision not to meet with more African leaders has also led many

advocates of increased help for Africa to question whether Mr. Bush's visit is more than a photo opportunity.

They said Mr. Bush appeared less interested in aggressively addressing Africa's needs than in putting a kinder face on American foreign policy in the aftermath of the Iraq war and in reminding voters at home of his self-description as a "compassionate conservative."

In a letter sent to the White House, a group of advocacy organizations that is often critical of the United States for not doing more to help Africa said Mr. Bush's proposals for increased spending on AIDS and antipoverty programs were a start but not enough.

On Gorée Island, Mr. Bush said slavery had helped the United States learn that it had a critical responsibility to Africa and to the world.

"In the struggle of the centuries, America learned that freedom is not the possession of one race," Mr. Bush said. "With the power and the resources given to us, the United States seeks to bring peace where there is conflict, hope where there is suffering, and liberty where there is tyranny."

#### U.N. Chief Names Envoy to Liberia

UNITED NATIONS, July 8 (AP) — Secretary General Kofi Annan today appointed a senior American diplomat, Jacques Paul Klein, as his top envoy to Liberia and dispatched United Nations officials to Monrovia to promote a political transition and a speedy return of evacuated aid workers.

In a letter to the Security Council, Mr. Annan appointed Mr. Klein, who headed the United Nations mission in Bosnia until Dec. 31, as his special representative to lead and coordinate United Nations activities in Liberia.

Mr. Klein has also served as political adviser to the commander in chief of the United States European Command in Stuttgart, Germany, and as a senior adviser to the secretary of the Air Force with the rank of deputy assistant secretary of defense.

Mr. Annan also ordered Abou Moussa, the current United Nations representative for Liberia, and the United Nations resident coordinator, Marc de Bernis, who were recently evacuated, "to return immediately to Monrovia and assist in the preparations for the return to Liberia of United Nations and associated personnel."