Beat: Miscellaneous

U.S. troops deployed to aid Central African Republic evacuation

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USPA News - U.S. President Barack Obama on Saturday informed congressional leaders that he authorized the deployment of approximately 50 U.S. troops to the African country of Chad to assist in the evacuation of U.S. citizens and embassy personnel from the Central African Republic. Obama said a stand-by response and evacuation force of approximately 50 U.S. military personnel from U.S. Africa Command was deployed at approximately 5:30 p.m.

EST on Thursday. The deployment of the armed force was not made public until Saturday when Obama informed congressional leaders through a letter. "Although equipped for combat, this stand-by security force was deployed solely for the purpose of protecting U.S. citizens and property, if necessary, until the U.S. embassy personnel and private U.S. citizens have been safely evacuated from the Central African Republic," Obama said. On Thursday, U.S. State Department spokesman Patrick Ventrell confirmed Ambassador Laurence D. Wohlers and his diplomatic team had left Bangui, the capital of the Central African Republic, along with several private U.S. citizens. The evacuation and closure of the U.S. embassy in Bangui came after rebels seized parts of the impoverished but resource-rich nation, raising fears that the capital could fall within days. "This action has been directed consistent with my responsibility to protect U.S. citizens both at home and abroad, and in furtherance of U.S. national security and foreign policy interests, pursuant to my constitutional authority to conduct U.S. foreign relations and as Command in Chief and Chief Executive," Obama said in Saturday`s letter. Known as Seleka rebels, fighters from three rebel groups have worked together in recent weeks to seize large parts of the country. Government troops and rebel fighters clashed in the central town of Bambari on Friday, and rebels continued their advance on Saturday by seizing the city of Sibut. Earlier this week, the government of Central African Republic President Francois Bozize agreed to hold talks in the capital of neighboring Gabon next week. Officials from CEEAC said the talks had been agreed to without pre-conditions, but a peaceful solution to the rebellion appeared unlikely. The U.S. government has warned U.S. citizens to avoid all travel to the Central African Republic at this time. "U.S. citizens who have decided to stay in CAR should review their personal security situation and seriously consider departing, taking advantage of commercial flights," the U.S. State Department said in a travel warning which was issued on Thursday.

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