

Beat: News

Obama says may take further action to aid Americans in S. Sudan

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USPA News - U.S. President Barack Obama on Sunday informed members of Congress that he may take further military action to protect American citizens in South Sudan, where a sudden outbreak of violence has pushed the world's youngest nation to the brink of all-out civil war. In a letter to Congress, the president said a failed military operation earlier this weekend may lead to further action to protect American citizens in South Sudan.

"As I monitor the situation in South Sudan, I may take further action to support the security of U.S. citizens, personnel, and property, including our Embassy, in South Sudan," Obama wrote. The failed operation took place on Saturday when 46 U.S. troops were flown to the South Sudanese city of Bor to evacuate U.S. citizens and personnel. The operation was curtailed after three military aircraft were fired on, injuring four U.S. soldiers, and causing the planes to depart without completing the evacuation. "The purpose of this operation was to protect U.S. citizens, personnel, and property," Obama said in Sunday's notice under the War Powers Resolution, which requires the president to notify Congress after committing armed forces to military action. "This action has been directed consistent with my responsibility to protect U.S. citizens both at home and abroad." Saturday's operation followed the deployment of 45 U.S. troops earlier in the week to reinforce the U.S. Embassy in Juba, the capital of South Sudan. Obama released a statement on late Thursday in which he said the African country's future is at risk, urging its leaders to end the violence by resolving tensions peacefully and democratically. The current crisis began on the evening of December 15 when gunfire erupted at the end of a meeting of the ruling Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) party, followed by an attack on the army headquarters near Juba University. Heavy gunfire and artillery fire in Juba and its suburbs continued the next day, prompting hundreds of terrified civilians to seek shelter at United Nations (UN) compounds. President Salva Kiir, dressed in military uniform and accompanied by senior officials, addressed the nation on December 16 and attributed the violence to a "failed coup attempt" by soldiers loyal to former Vice President Riek Machar Teny. Machar, along with the country's entire cabinet, was sacked in July in Kiir's apparent struggle to maintain control of the SPLM, but the ousted politician has denied any role in the coup attempt. Fighting intensified on December 17 and spread to other parts of the country which is prone to ethnic instability. Rebelling soldiers seized the town of Bor on Thursday, the same day approximately 2,000 ethnic Lou Nuer youth attacked a UN base in Akobo, killing 2 Indian peacekeepers and killing up to 30 civilians who had sought refuge inside. It is believed as many as 530 people have been killed since the outbreak of violence. South Sudan became the world's newest country when it broke away from Sudan on July 9, 2011, as a culmination of a six-year peace process which began in January 2005 with the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) between the Government of Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM).

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