

DIOUF 2 AUG SPEECH TO NATION ON GAMBIA SITUATION

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[Speech to the nation by Senegalese President Abdou Diouf concerning the present situation in Gambia--live]

[Text] Citizens of Senegal: In a statement published on Friday, 31 July 1981, the Senegalese Government informed you about the events that took place in Gambia on Wednesday night, 29 July and Thursday morning, 30 July. In their development, foreseeable consequences and origin, these events constitute a serious threat to the security of our country. A state worthy of the name always respects its commitments. At the request of Gambia's legitimate authorities and by virtue of the agreements duly negotiated, signed and ratified in accordance with the constitutions of the Republics of Senegal and Gambia, the Senegalese Armed Forces intervened in that country in order to reestablish law and order to ensure the security of our own people as well as to respect our international obligations.

The government's statement which has published on Friday, 31 July, clearly demonstrated that the action undertaken by our brave army is in conformity with the mutual assistance accord between Senegal and Gambia. Moreover, it so happens that, in this matter, the security of our country is also involved. Therefore, as far as I, the head of state of Senegal am concerned, no dilly-dallying was possible since the path of honor and duty was clear to our country. By adopting this attitude which is in conformity with the Senegalese virtues of courage, dignity, honor and loyalty to our promise, the Senegalese Government assumed its responsibilities in a situation which demanded a rapid, lucid and organized action. We assumed it without any hesitation after having very carefully assessed the situation that has occurred in Gambia as well as its direct implications. The Senegalese Armed Forces, whose bravery and fighting spirit must be emphasized, have successfully accomplished the mission entrusted to them. In the name of the whole nation, I solemnly pay them the tribute they deserve.

Among the directives given the armed forces in the execution of this mission, I would like emphasize the one aimed at safeguarding the lives of the civilians, especially of women and children, and to avoid all material destruction which could later compromise Gambia's development efforts even if they are compelled by opponents armed, organized and led by foreigners. These directives were particularly respected. I piously bow down in memory of our soldiers who have fallen on the field of honor and whose sacrifices will not be in vain because they were defending a sacred cause.

Had the situation been different, that is, if we were not anxious to do everything to save the hostages and safeguard and protect the lives of innocent persons [words indistinct], the intervention of our armed forces would have lasted only a few hours. Calm has now been restored throughout the Gambian national territory and President Dawda Kairab Jawara returned to Banjul this very day.

Citizens of Senegal, neither I, the head of state and guardian of the constitution and of our republican institutions nor the government of the republic will ever allow our country's sovereignty and security to be threatened in a disguised manner and in the very heart of our territory. I know that a certain opposition party--where immediate pre-occupations hinder it from appreciating the short- and long-term dangers which can threaten or which threaten our country--immediately issued communiques and statements condemning the action which enabled the return of peace, stability and democracy to Gambia, and which also constitute Senegal's peace and stability. In such a serious situation, I would have hoped that certain opposition parties would understand where the path of honor and duty lies. The demons of partisan politics having won, they are seriously engaged in demagogy and irresponsibility and consequently seriously endangering democracy.

In the name of our nation, we have accomplished our duty in conformity with our agreements and in close cooperation with the legitimate rulers and brotherly people of Gambia as well as in conformity with the enlightened interests of our country. The Senegalese action undertaken in Gambia is therefore legitimate and it was necessary. Several neighboring or friendly countries in our continent as well as in other continents have for 3 days now, been demonstrating their moral and political support for us because they fully understand our preoccupations as well as the significance and scope of a duty which Senegal's security and that of its people imposed on us.

Citizens of Senegal, in this particular situation as in past ones, when the honor, dignity and future of our country are involved, I will spare no effort or retreat from any danger to safeguard Senegal's vital interests which include its security and stability. This is in conformity with the oath I took before the Supreme Court and the duties of my position. Citizens of Senegal, good evening.