Beat: News

U.S. evacuates embassy in Central African Republic amidst rebellion

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USPA News - The United States on Thursday evacuated its embassy in the Central African Republic after Seleka rebels seized parts of the impoverished but resource-rich nation, raising fears that the capital Bangui could fall within days. Patrick Ventrell, a spokesman for the U.S. State Department, said Ambassador Laurence D. Wohlers and his diplomatic team left Bangui on Thursday along with several private U.S. citizens.

"As a result of this suspension of operations, the embassy will not be able to provide routine consular services to American citizens in the Central African Republic until further notice," he said. Ventrell reiterated that the decision to evacuate the embassy is solely due to security concerns and has no impact on relations between the U.S. government and the Central African Republic. "We have not suspended diplomatic relations with the Central African Republic," he said in a statement. 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 the rapid gains by Seleka rebels have raised fears that Bangui could fall within days. "The United States encourages all parties in the Central African Republic to participate in the dialogue to be held under the auspices of the Economic Community of Central African States (CEEAC) to develop a comprehensive agreement that will offer a new vision of peace and security for the country," Ventrell said. The U.S. government has also 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. News of the embassy evacuation came as 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.

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