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SUBCOMMITTEE ON WORKFORCE PROTECTIONS

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July 22, 2004

Hon. Colin Powell  
Secretary of State  
Department of State  
Washington, D.C.

Dear Secretary Powell:

I am writing to express my concern over the construction of a United States embassy in Conakry, Guinea. The exact location selected for the new embassy is situated within Kaporo Rails, an area of past bloodshed and destruction. Since the United States government would certainly not build an embassy in a politically-sensitive location such as Tiennemen Square, we seek your explanation as to why the State Department has chosen to do so within Kaporo Rails, Conakry.

In order to appreciate the importance of Kaporo Rails, we must recall what took place upon its grounds. In 1998, the government of Guinea under President Conte massacred the citizens of Kaporo Rails in order to crush political opposition to the regime's autocratic rule. According to Amnesty International and the International Federation for Human Rights in Paris, the government bulldozed up to 10,000 homes and imprisoned, tortured and executed innumerable residents. One of these residents included the father of Malik Jorno, a mentally disabled teenager who has been seeking asylum as a refugee in the United States. Over seventy members of Congress have intervened on Malik's behalf to urge that Malik be granted asylum. We are awaiting a response from the Department of Homeland Security.

Given the volatile nature and far-reaching repercussions of this incident, we respectfully request a copy of any and all memoranda pertaining to this decision in order to clarify the political considerations and reasoning involved. Finally, I wish to know what actions the United States government will undertake to restore the relationship between the United States and the outraged citizens in Guinea who remember Kaporo Rails as a site of tragedy and warfare. Since the United States cannot afford to lose more support from global citizens, we should strengthen our credibility with local populations and take the steps necessary to improve our foreign policy in the name of democracy and human rights.

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I thank you for your thoughtful consideration of this important issue and look forward to your prompt response.

Sincerely,

Donald M. Payne