

Rebels threaten to kill hostages

BEIRUT, Lebanon (AP) — Eritrean rebels threatened today to kill four Americans taken prisoner in northern Ethiopia unless the United States stops supplying arms to the Ethiopian government.

Two of the Americans were kidnaped Saturday along with six Ethiopians when raiders attacked the U.S. Kagnew communications facility near Asmara, the capital of Eritrea province. The Pentagon said the Americans were Navy Electronic Tech. 3.C. Thomas C. Bowidowicz of Jersey City, N.J., and Army Spec. 5 David Strickland of Orlando, Fla.

Two other Americans, Steve Campbell of San Leandro, Calif., and Jim Harrell of Milwaukee, Wis., were kidnaped from Kagnew in July. Both were civilian technicians and were reported seen by a Syrian photographer last month in the hands of the rebels. A spokesman for the Eritrean Liberation Front in Beirut said the ELF transmitted four demands to Washington through "a U.S. embassy in the Middle East."

In addition to the arms ban the demands included:

—Dismantling the Kagnew base and an Ethiopian naval base under construction at Massawa, Ethiopia's chief port on the Eritrean coast.

—Compensation for areas of Eritrea that suffered heavy damage in attacks by the U.S.-equipped Ethiopian air force during fighting between the rebels and the Ethiopian government last February.

—U.S. government pressure on Ethiopia's military government to free all Eritrean rebels it holds.

"We demand a public U.S. government statement on these demands. Otherwise we shall not be responsible for what will happen to the four American captives," the ELF spokesman said.

He said the four captives were being treated

well and fed well. He said they were being held "somewhere in northern Eritrea" but would not be more specific.

Harrell's mother, Mrs. William Harrell, said Sunday the State Department has advised her that negotiations for his release have broken down.

"They can't get anybody to negotiate with them," she said an official told her.

A State Department spokesman in Washington would not comment today on the status of the negotiations.

The Ethiopian government said nine "civilians" were killed and 23 were injured in the raid Saturday. The information ministry statement did not elaborate but informed sources said the term civilians could be taken to include rebels.

The United States is pulling out of the Kagnew base, which was built in the 1950s at a cost of more than \$60 million and was once manned by 4,500 Americans. Most of the facilities have been turned over to the Ethiopian government and earlier this year only 29 Americans were reported still there.

The base has been used to track spacecraft, monitor broadcasts throughout Africa and the Middle East, and relay messages as part of the Washington-Moscow hotline.

Brig. Gen. Teferi Bante, chairman of the provisional military government in Addis Ababa, told newsmen that security forces were trying to locate the missing men. He said the situation required "utmost caution" and that U.S. officials were being kept informed.

Teferi said although his forces have been unable to stamp out rebel activities in Eritrea the situation there is "under reasonable control" and the rebels have "no more than nuisance capability."

He said his government is ready to establish contacts with the rebels to negotiate an end to the bloody guerrilla warfare.

Seek Yanks release

ADDIS ABABA, Ethiopia (AP) — Intensive, discreet diplomacy is believed going on in Middle East capitals in an effort to obtain the release of four Americans held by Eritrean rebels in northern Ethiopia.

The American Embassy in Addis Ababa said nothing had been heard of the men since a spokesman for the Eritrean Liberation Front said two weeks ago that they were captives of the ELF.

The ELF demanded U.S. withdrawal from the Kagnew communications base outside Asmara, the capital of Eritrea province; cessation of U.S. arms supplies to Ethiopia and compensation for damage done to Eritrea and the Eritreans by U.S. weapons used by the Ethiopian government.

The U.S. Embassy said in view of the U.S. government's policy of refusing to negotiate with guerrillas, it was unlikely that the ELF would try to make approaches to the Embassy in Addis Ababa or the small U.S. consulate in Asmara.

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