

SPECIAL COURT FOR SIERRA LEONE
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24/05/2004

The "Supreme" Special court of Sierra Leone

Will it succeed?

By Sylvester Suaray

The Special Court of Sierra Leone²(SCSL) is now the highest and the most powerful court in the country today. In fact it is superior over the Supreme Court of Sierra Leone.

This seems to be an abuse to the country's constitution, which states that the Supreme Court Sierra Leone is the highest legal entity. It was not amended before the war crime tribunal was established.

History

The court was established after the 11-year civil war in the country that left over fifty thousand people dead. Foday Saybana Sankoh³ imported the war to Sierra Leone from neighboring Liberia in March 1991. He led an organized armed group known as the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) supported by Charles Taylor who was also a rebel leader and later President of the Republic of Liberia.

The Civil Defence Forces (CDF), a group of local hunters, was formed in 1994 in response to attacks on the civilian population by both RUF and the military. In June 1997, after the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) led by Major Johnny Paul Koroma⁴ overthrew President Ahmed Tejan Kabbah, the RUF joined the AFRC junta. The CDF declared war on RUF/AFRC to restore the democratically elected government. Fighting continued throughout the country after Nigerian forces of the Economic Community of West Africa States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) ousted the AFRC in February 1998. www.crisisweb.org *modified*.

The two groups again attacked the capital city Freetown 6th January 1999. The city was being defended by ECOMOG and CDF. Thousands of people were killed, maimed and burnt alive. The president then requested for the establishment of a court that would try those who bear the greatest responsibility for the crimes committed during the war.

Concurrent jurisdiction

Article 8 of the special Court Statute deals with Concurrent jurisdictions.

It clearly states, "The Special Court and the national courts of Sierra Leone shall have concurrent jurisdiction. The Special Court shall have primacy over the national courts of Sierra Leone. At any stage of the procedure, the Special Court may formally request a national court to defer to its competence in accordance with the present Statute and the Rules of Procedure and Evidence" www.sc-sl.org

Superb power

The court is not in anyway unassuming about its authority and powers. It has, on many occasions, exploited the slightest opportunity to display its powers and authority without due regards for the rights of individuals and the sentiments of Sierra Leoneans.

It manifested this supremacy when it failed to allow some indictees especially Sam Hinga Norman and Issa Sesay to testify at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Sierra Leone (TRC), which has made it difficult for the commission to prepare a coherent and fully documented historical perspective of the war.

The court was established alongside the TRC due to the wide reawakening in the country especially with the dictum that there can never be peace without justice. But their establishment and operation at the same time proved to be a mistake when they clashed last year due to witnesses.

Public opinion was that Chief Norman would have made utterances that might implicate the president. Though his legal counsels did not mind him giving testimony before the commission, the court's version was that it might prejudice his case. The whole country waited in vain to hear the testimony of Hinga Norman at the commission.

The Director of Public Prosecution was also denied access to two of the war crime indictees to give evidence at a treason trial, which had nothing to do with the evidence at the Special court.

According to evidences adduced at the trial, these two indictees Issa Sesay and Morris Kallon were asked by the treason accused persons to help in overthrowing the government and thereby forestall the establishment of the Special Court. Morris and Issa refused and reported the coup plan to the then head of the UN mission in Sierra Leone. They were later arrested for war crimes.

Will it succeed?

The TRC unlike the Special Court is not a court of law but rather, it was meant to create an impartial record of the crisis and provide an avenue wherein both perpetrators could meet and reconcile. But will these two organs succeed to the satisfaction of the people on whose behalf they were set up?

The Special Court is indeed a court of law that came in to being by virtue of an agreement between the government of Sierra Leone and the United Nations. But unfortunately, most Sierra Leoneans now look at the court as "not a serious affair."

This is due to the fact that the major proponents of the war, RUF former warlords Foday Sankoh and Sam Mosquito Bockarie will not be facing the court, as they have been pronounced dead. As if this is not enough, another indicted person, former Liberia leader Charles Taylor is now enjoying the sweet and comfort of freedom in Nigeria. Johnny Paul Koroma, another war crime accused, who led the military junta that killed thousands of Sierra Leoneans, is also at large.

Where does this leave us? Simply put, for most Sierra Leoneans, the court will no longer achieve what it was set up for, as these key figures will never answer for their deeds. The Civil Defense Forces (CDF) members that are now incarcerated are those that stood in the thick and thin of restoring the democracy, which the country is now enjoying.

"The UN Security Council has called for indicted war criminals Karadzic and Kabuga to be surrendered to the International tribunals for the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda, but has remained silent about Charles Taylor. This reluctance to press Nigeria to hand over Taylor fosters a double standard that betrays the people of Sierra Leone. It is time to break the silence." Said Richard Dicker, director of the International Justice program. www.oneworld.net (Human Rights Watch)

Is it what we need now?

Is the court really what the people of Sierra Leone need at this point in time? The answer is absolutely no. What the country needs now is good quality education for the children, good health care and a better standard of living.

At the end of the day Sierra Leoneans are not going to appreciate the work of the international community for setting up the court or putting behind bars those who they claim to bare the greatest responsibility while the country continues to live in abject poverty.

Why use millions of dollars to run the court when it could have been used to improve the standard of living for every Sierra Leone who in one way or the other is a victim of the war? I challenge the international community to carry out a survey in Sierra Leone and ask the people to choose between the Special Court and the improvement of standard of living in relation to funds to be used in the three-year period of the court. International criminal justice would be useless if countries where these atrocities are committed continue to live in poverty after the crimes are committed.

Sympathy

Moiijueh kaikai, a member of the Sierra Leone Peoples Party (the ruling party in Sierra Leone) who is based here in London referred to their government as ungrateful. " How can you abandon people like Samuel Hinga Norman⁵ who fought hard for that country to have peace? It was the responsibility of our government to protect him from prosecution since he was fighting on our behalf. The Sierra Leone army and the West African intervention force that committed worse crimes are excluded from the trial. Why not then the CDF? Who only stood up to defend our people when the army failed us."

Moiijueh invited me to his home to watch a video of Government officials visiting a Civil Defense Force military base. The fighters were supplied with arms and ammunition, which were displayed and the then minister of Marine Recourses Prince Harding gave them a message purportedly from President Kabba. He gave his approval and support to the fighters.

"This is the reason why the president of Sierra Leone and not Hinga Norman should be arrested for war crimes. He played the same role as the former president of Liberia." Harold Saffa another Sierra Leone in the UK said, Norman is our hero. He stood up to defend our people when everybody abandoned them. We will do our best to assist him in his trial.

He, together with some of his colleagues in the UK and Ireland branch of their party have set up a special fund to give assistance to Norman's defense team. A reasonable amount in British pounds was recently cabled to Freetown for the accused war criminal when the fund raising committee learnt that the court has frozen his account.

The question for the indictment of the president of Sierra Leone Ahmed Tejan Kabba was once put to the Chief prosecutor of the court David Crane. His reply was "investigations are open and whoever these investigations lead to will be indicted."

The presence of Sam Hinga Norman a former Deputy Defense Minister and Minister of Internal affairs has somehow made the court unpopular to many Sierra Leoneans.

Members of Parliament in the country voted unanimously in favor of the establishment of the court with vengeance against the RUF in mind. They regretted the act after their own brothers who fought to reinstate their government was indicted.

There is no way it could be reversed until the law takes its course.

Selective Justice

Most Sierra Leoneans believe the court in collaboration with the United Nations is trying to hide the evidences against the ECOMOG forces. Sierra Leonean journalist Sorious Samura showed part of the evidence on the documentary 'Cry Freetown'. It shows how Nigerian soldiers openly killed innocent civilians.

Most of us know the story of a Nigerian officer known as 'Evil Spirit'. He was indeed an evil spirit because he carried out summary execution of innocent Sierra Leoneans who were falsely accused as rebels. How would the Special Court succeed if those responsible for these crimes were not brought to book?

There is also the question of sub commanders who directly oversaw the perpetration of the crimes. Sheikh Rahman Kamara a British/ Sierra Leonean student at the Middlesex University said, " I wonder if the victims of the war will be satisfied with the trial of just the heads of the factions and letting the perpetrators go free."

Showing its powers

While it is wrong for a local court to detain accused persons for a particular period 72 hours without trial, a UN established Special has detained its indictees for over a year now and trials are yet to start.

The voice of the people

The success of the court is in the hands of Sierra Leoneans. They will be the people to say whether it succeeded or not. The International Community must know that the Special Court will not succeed unless it brings Charles Taylor and Johnny Paul Koroma to book. These two will at least bring some satisfaction as a replacement for Sam Bockarie and Foday Sankoh.

END

¹*Sylvester Suaray* is a Sierra Leonean journalist presently in The United Kingdom. He is a student of the London School of Journalism and has written many articles on the Special court of Sierra featured in the Awoko Newspaper (one of the leading local newspaper in Sierra Leone) and the Daily News Inquirer (an on line newspaper) published in the United States. He is presently doing an internship, working at the Oury Clarks Solicitors, London after a course in reporting at the Thomson Foundation in Cardiff, Wales.

²*The Special Court for Sierra Leone* was set up jointly by the Government of Sierra Leone and the United Nations. It is mandated to try those who bear the greatest responsibility for serious violations of international humanitarian law and Sierra Leonean law committed in the territory of Sierra Leone since 30 November 1996. www.scsl.org

³ **Foday Saybana Sankoh** was the leader of the Revolutionary United Front, which became known as the most brutal armed faction in the West African sub region. Sankoh was a former army corporal. He was held in the central prison in Freetown while standing trial for crime of multiple murders after several people were killed at his house in May 8th 2000. Sankoh was indicted on 7th March 2003 with 17 counts of crimes against humanity,

violations of Article 3 common to the Geneva Conventions and of Additional Protocol II, and other serious violations of international humanitarian law. He was handed over to the court by the government. He died in custody on 29th July 2003 and his indictment was withdrawn on 8th December 2003.

⁴ **Major Johnny Paul Koroma**, former leader of the AFRC, a military junta that ruled Sierra Leone from May 1997 to February 1998. In May 2002, he was elected to the Sierra Leone Parliament as a member of the Peace and Liberation Party. He disappeared four days after the apparent coup attempt on 13 January 2003 in which he was alleged to be involved. He is charged with 17 counts of crimes against humanity, violations of Article 3 common to the Geneva Conventions and of Additional Protocol II, and other serious violations of international humanitarian law. His where about is presently unknown.

⁵ **Samuel Hinga Norman** was the National Coordinator of the Civil Defence Forces, a local militia group that fought in support of the government in Sierra Leone. He served in the Armed Force, the of the Republic of Sierra Leone from about 1959 to 1972 rising to the rank of Captain. In 1966 he graduated from the Mons Officer Cadet School in Aldershot, United Kingdom. He was the Deputy Minister of Defence and latter Minister of Internal Affairs for Sierra Leone. He was indicted on 7 March 2003 on 8 counts of crimes against humanity, violations of Article 3 common to the Geneva Conventions and of Additional Protocol II, and other serious violations of international humanitarian law. He is currently awaiting trial at the Special Court's detention.

Sam 'Mosquito' Bockarie. Former Battle Field Commander of the RUF who later fell out with the group and fled to neighboring Liberia. Bockarie was killed in Liberia in early May 2003. He was indicted on 7 March 2003 on 17 counts crimes against humanity, violations of Article 3 common to the Geneva Conventions and of Additional Protocol II (commonly known as war crimes), and other serious violations of international humanitarian law. Bockarie was killed in Liberia in early May 2003. On 8 December 2003 the prosecutor formally withdrew the indictment against him.hhh

Issa Sesay. Former interim leader of the RUF. He took over the movement after the government arrested Foday Sankoh. Issa Sesay succeeded in convincing RUF fighters to disarm to the UN peacekeeping force and bring the war to an end. He is charged with 17 counts similar to that of Sam Bockarie.

Morris Kallon was an RUF Senior Commander and member of the AFRC/RUF

junta regime (1997-1998). In early 2000, when Issa Sesay was promoted to battlefield commander, Kallon became battle group commander. By June 2001, he had become the RUF battlefield commander and had sided with Issa Sesay in bringing the war to an end. His has similar indictment with Issa Sesay.

Other Special Court indictees are,

Alex Tamba Brima, 31, also known as "Gullit", was a Sergeant in the Sierra Leone Army and among the soldiers who staged the 25 May 1997 coup. He became the Public Liaison Officer of the AFRC. He was known to be among those who led the attack on Freetown on 6 January 1999. The Sierra Leone authorities provisionally detained him in January 2003 in connection with an apparent coup attempt.

Moinina Fofana, 53, was Director of War Operations for the Kamajors. The charges against Fofana are identical to those brought against Allieu Kondewa discussed below. They are listed as co-accused on the same indictment. He was detained, along with Kondewa, on 27 May 2003 and indicted on 26 June, pleading not guilty at his hearing on 1 July.

Allieu Kondewa was working as a farmer and herbalist before his arrest. He is described as the High Priest and Chief Initiator of the CDF, a sobriquet he acquired via his reputation as a healer who created a pre-battle anointment and initiation ceremony for CDF fighters that was reputed to give them mystical powers. He is charged with 8 counts of war crimes, crimes against humanity, violations of Article 3 common to the Geneva Conventions and of Additional Protocol II, and other serious violations of international humanitarian law. He was detained on 27 May 2003 and indicted on 26 June.

Augustine Gbao, 54, was held as a suspect by the Special Court a week after "Operation Justice" started. He was formally indicted on 16 April 2003. A former police officer, "Colonel" Gbao became RUF's head of Internal Security. Augustine Gbao was indicted on 17 counts similar to that of Morris Kallon.

Ibrahim Kamara, 35, also known as "Bazzy", joined the Sierra

Leone Army on 20 May 1991 and rose to the rank of Staff Sergeant. He was the main architect of the May 1997 coup that overthrew the Kabbah government, then in power for only a year, and established the Armed Forces

Revolutionary Council (AFRC), led by Johnny Paul Koroma. Kamara is accused of being one of the AFRC commanders involved in the 6 January 1999 attack on Freetown. He is also charged with involvement in the hostage taking of UN peacekeepers, ECOWAS troops, journalists, and humanitarian aid workers. Kamara later became head of the West Side Boys, a faction that broke away from the AFRC-RUF coalition.

Charles Ghankay Taylor, 55, has been president of Liberia since 19 July 1991, prior to which he was head of the National Patriotic Front for Liberia (NPFL) rebel group from 1989 to 1997. He is the first indictee of the SCSL. According to the indictment, Taylor provided financial support, military training, personnel, arms, ammunition and other aids to the RUF in order to obtain access to resources in Sierra Leone, particularly diamonds.

When the RUF joined with the AFRC following the 25 May 1997 coup, Taylor is alleged to have supported and encouraged that alliance. He is further accused of widespread attacks on and abduction of UNAMSIL peacekeepers between 15 April and 15 September 2000. *Credit*

The Special Court for Sierra Leone: Promises and Pitfalls of a "New Model"

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Santigie Kanu was a senior member of the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council. Kanu was indicted on 16 September 2003 on a 17-count indictment for crimes against humanity, violations of Article 3 Common to the Geneva Conventions and of Additional Protocol II (commonly known as war crimes), and other serious violations of international humanitarian law. Kanu was transferred from the custody of the Sierra Leonean authorities, where he was standing trial for an alleged coup plot. He is presently detained at the SCSL detention center.

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21/5/2004

Liberia: 1 Dead In Unrest, UN Quells Rioting With Teargas

One person was killed and four others injured when a protest by Liberian ex-combatants seeking payment under a United Nations disarmament plan degenerated into a riot and looting this week in the capital Monrovia. UN forces responded with teargas to restore order.

The rioting began when some ex-combatants, the majority of whom had been paid \$75 for part of the disarmament and reintegration programme (DDRR) in the war-torn West African country, requested to complete DDRR and receive the balance of their money, senior UN officials told UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) Radio.

Noting that the generals responsible for the ex-combatants insisted that their men were told to go home and the people rioting in the streets at the Red Light area of Monrovia were not part of the units going through DDRR, UN Police Commissioner Mark Kroeker said a street mob appeared to be responsible.

"But the result was the riot and now it's under control," he told UNMIL Radio. "Quite a few canisters of teargas were used to disperse crowds at several locations and the unfortunate reality is that one person has lost his life and order has been restored."

He said the dead man was assaulted by a group of people. UN military and police forces were still in the area and the situation was reported to be quiet now. "But it is volatile and so we are going to maintain a substantial presence in the area to make sure that if anything happens, we can be there very quickly to keep anything from escalating unnecessarily," Commissioner Kroeker said.

DDRR is a major component of the UN Mission set up last year to bring peace to Liberia after a ceasefire between the government and two major rebel groups ended nearly 12 years of fierce fighting that claimed hundreds of thousands of victims among dead, injured, refugees and internally displaced people.

During DDRR, combatants report to designated pick-up points with their weapons and ammunition and are transported to cantonment areas for demobilization. After a minimum seven-day stay, they are discharged and provided with an initial payment and transport assistance to support their return to their communities of choice. After three months, they each get another stipend to help them start new lives. By then, they should be participating in specific reintegration projects.

In a separate incident, hundreds of Liberian refugees in Nigeria who were organising their own repatriation by boat were stranded at sea on the Donna Elvira. Hungry and fed up they were sighted last Tuesday and emergency aid sent to them by another vessel.

UNHCR is not actively promoting repatriation of the 350,000 Liberian refugees in the region until October because the West African country is not considered totally secure. It estimates, however, that more than 17,000 Liberian refugees have returned home on their own since the departure of former President Charles Taylor to Nigeria last August ended the fierce 14-year civil war.

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West African Leaders Pledge To Increase Cross-Border Security

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Heads of state of the Mano River Union — Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone — ended a summit yesterday in Guinea's capital, Conakry, pledging to increase cross-border security and trade and help promote peace in Ivory Coast. The leaders of Ivory Coast and Mali also attended the summit. According to Guinea's Foreign Ministry, they were invited in hopes that "these two countries might become part of this sub-regional economic community."

Acknowledging the problems posed by arms trafficking and cross-border crime in the region, the leaders said they would have their security and intelligence services "establish efficient consultation and control mechanisms to deal with this plague."

All the countries in attendance at the meeting other than Mali have suffered the ill effects of civil war or cross-border insurgency at various points in the last 14 years.

A closing statement issued by the leaders expressed "deep concern" about developments in Ivory Coast, where tensions remain high despite a delicate cease-fire that has held since last year, now monitored by a U.N. peacekeeping force. The leaders "reaffirmed their solidarity with the Ivorian president and his government in efforts to safeguard the territorial integrity of Ivory Coast" (Mouctar Bah, Agence France-Presse, May 21).

U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan sent a message to the summit, calling on the leaders "to cut off the flow of small arms and light weapons, to curtail the use of child soldiers, to stop the smuggling of goods and the trafficking of drugs and people, and to address, decisively, the culture of impunity."

Annan said the Mano River Union could become the engine of growth for West Africa if the leaders exercise the necessary political will to accelerate development of their countries ([U.N. release](#), May 20).

Five U.N. Missions In West Africa Meet To Discuss Conflicts

The heads of the five U.N. missions in West Africa — in [Ivory Coast](#), [Liberia](#), [Sierra Leone](#), [Guinea Bissau](#) and the [U.N. Office for West Africa](#) in Senegal — are meeting today in the Senegalese capital of Dakar to discuss cross-border issues, including the conflicts in northern Ivory Coast and the Guinean province of Guinea-

Forestiere.

UNOWA head Ahmedou Ould-Abdullah chairs the fifth meeting of the special representatives of the secretary general, while his deputy, Ahmed Rhazaoui, chairs a parallel meeting to discuss the regional disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programs and policies ([U.N. release](#), May 18).

The U.N. disarmament program in Liberia faced trouble again this week when hundreds of Liberian militiamen loyal to former President Charles Taylor rioted in the capital, Monrovia, after learning they would not be paid immediately for handing over their weapons. One man was killed and several people were injured in the unrest. Nine people were killed in December in similar disarmament-related unrest ([U.N. Wire](#), May 18).

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Restructuring Ecowas Security

Kofi Akosah-Sarpong argues that while West Africans agree that there is the need for new security architecture the core of this should come from within West African culture because of the region's experiences and history

West Africa is the most unstable area in Africa. Why? Because 32 out of 37 successful military coups, not counting the unsuccessful attempted ones, in Africa have occurred in West Africa. It is in this context that Dr. Daniel Tetteh Osabu-Kle, a former squadron officer in the Ghana Air Force and currently a political scientist at Carleton University in Ottawa, has reflected that all military officers involved in coups are not good officers. Nigeria's Defence minister, Rabi'u Kwankwaso, in this joins the on-going debate about the need for security restructuring of West Africa. Sensing the continuing security fragility of the sub-region especially his own Nigeria says there is an urgent need for security reorganization in the sub-region. Why? Because the challenges of security sector governance in Africa, especially West Africa, calls for reforms that are realistic in reach since security in West Africa continued to change and expand, driven more by poverty and cultural factors such as juju-marabou and other spiritual mediums.

Kwankwaso tapped into the need to look at West Africa's security holistically by arguing that security now comprised both the classical concepts (that's the European imposed structures) of state security as well as societal and human security. Kwankwaso said that the intrinsic (that's internal) relationship between security and development had made it crucial for reforms to stabilize the sub-region and that an improved performance of security apparatuses would secure political, social and economic space that would facilitate faster and greater economic progress and development. Naming worst affected regional states to include Liberia, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Guinea Bissau and Cote d'Ivoire. Kwankwaso grieved that West African state security apparatuses had been variously converted into instruments of oppression and suppression since independence to now.

What is missing in Kwankwaso's contribution to West Africa's security debate is the region's culture - one of the most inhibiting in Africa in terms of witchcraft, juju-marabou, witch doctors and other similar 'dark' crafts that have disturbed West Africa's security. Juju, marabou and other native spiritual mediums have contributed to the security crisis in West Africa, as have been other factors such as globalization, social and economic decline. Most of these spiritual crafts are more prominent in West Africa than other parts of Africa. Hear this: the Accra-based Chronicle reported that a delegation of repenting fetish priests from the local voodoo Anyigbaton Hunorgah fetish shrine of Klikor in Ghana's Volta Region was shown making a pilgrimage to Lome, Togo "begging President Eyadema to free them from a demonic curse. The curse was believed to have been imposed on them after a spiritual ritual they claimed they had indulged in to kill President Eyadema, allegedly backfired." The challenge to Kwankwaso and his associates is how do you miss this important cultural value juju in your security policy?

As much as Nigeria of all countries in the sub-region demonstrates how almost all coup plotters or armed robbers work with juju-marabou mediums to insecure the sub-region in one way or another, Kwankwaso should know by now how juju-marabou mediums aides the disastrous regime of Gen. Sani Abacha and the long long-running military regimes in the sub-region that has resulted in insecurities. From rebel leaders and their cohorts to armed robbers to coup makers, all have been inspired by juju-marabou mediums. Kwankwaso, like other African sector ministers, should challenge his advisors and bureaucrats to think holistically through the security situation or the current security doctrine/policy of the sub-region by considering all factors including how West Africa's culture of juju-marabou aids instabilities. This demands the surveillances of potential prominent juju-marabou mediums, spiritualists, and shrines known to have helped coup plotters, rebel groups, and armed robbers. Perhaps drawing from the South African Police Force (which has an occult unit), the Ghana Police Service now includes spiritualists and juju-marabou mediums mentioned by criminals as criminal facilitators, a situation unknown some 40 years ago.

The dawn of rebel movements have compounded the complex security problems of the region, resulting in the proliferation of small arms in the region and the alarming rate of armed robberies. A recent report says that 550 million arms were in circulation globally. Other factors are the daily increase in the number of child soldiers and armed gangs, the increasing rate of deaths resulting from crime and general violence, as well as political assassinations, a situation more pronounced in West Africa, especially Nigeria. Kwankwaso observed that internal factors like poverty, limited economic opportunities, ethnic animosities and a history of political abuse and corruption had also combined to fuel insecurities in the sub-region. This is West Africa's own making and not any outside forces. The problem of blaming outside forces for our troubles emanates from the West African culture where the average person blames witchcraft and other unseen forces for his/her problems instead of pointing his/her hands at himself/herself for problems or challenges. While Kwankwaso did not elaborate he said that West Africa's security sector would be better off with a modern security reform to deal with the challenges of democracy and development as the region is emerging from a long period of dictatorship, a situation that calls for emphasizing the need for a regional re-orientation that would make professional security men appreciate being subservient to political leaders. This situation is lacking because of long-running one-party and military regimes in the region, and how this has impacted on the region. The said modern security reforms should encompass elements of the West African culture such as juju-marabou that contribute to the region's insecurities.

Part of the reasons for such a situation is that civic virtues are weak in the region, thus weakening law and order, and hence making professional men not being subservient to political leaders. Dr. Sunday Ochoche, Director-General of Nigeria's Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution (IPCR), is quoted as saying that peace and security are "equal and opposite partners" and that "there cannot be peace in an unsecured environment, just as the lack of peace engenders insecurity for democracy and good governance to thrive." Liberia comes to mind where its security is so rotten that the UN is trying to create a new police service. Dr. Ochoche's remark reveals that West Africa's security is still fragile almost 50 years after independence from colonial rule, as the on-going Cote d'Ivoire fragile security situation shows more because of poverty, which has fuelled the rush for 'dark' cultural practices. If West Africa's security troubles are anything to go by then its security must involve access to resources and the basic necessities of life, "as well as the right to participate

in the process of governance and enjoying the protection of human rights," Kwankwaso said. How do you achieve this in a region known as the poorest areas in the world, where civic virtues are weak and the proliferation of small arms has resulted in the ceaseless crises and juju-marabou mediums are ready to help criminals? Where is the policy to address this? This is the task Kwankwaso and his associates should contemplate and come out with realistic solutions for the peace of a region that for the past 500 years has not known peace.

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LENGTH: 1065 words

HEADLINE: Warriors in **West Africa** Need **Jobs** As Well as **Peace Treaties**

BYLINE: By SOMINI SENGUPTA; Konate Siratigui contributed to this article from Bouake.

DATELINE: BOUAKE, Ivory Coast

BODY:

HERE in Ivory Coast, the road between this rebel-held town in the north and the government-held Abidjan in the south is awash with economic opportunities for a wartime entrepreneur.

In rebel territory, skinny young men, toting Kalashnikov rifles and wearing lucky charms around their necks, lean into car windows, blow smoke and demand tolls. They do so from every car, every minivan crammed with commuters and every cargo truck ferrying goods from the interior to the port in Abidjan. Some are in fatigues; one is wearing a Che Guevara shirt. A bottle of water, a couple of cigarettes make them happy.

On the government-held side, Ivoirian soldiers inspect papers and luggage and demand tolls set entirely by whim -- the equivalent of \$3 at one checkpoint, nearly \$30 at another. One soldier posted on the road in the midday sun simply tells a carload of foreign journalists, "Everyone's tired." In response, a few dirty bills are pressed into his palm and the checkpoint opens.

For at least a generation in this part of the world, an aging Kalashnikov has been a meal ticket. A **gun** has given tens of thousands of bored and hungry young men -- and, increasingly, young women -- license to pillage homes, extort money, rape, kill and sow havoc across **West Africa**. They have been the foot soldiers in the conflicts that have plagued the region for the last 15 years. Youth militias have also been the ones blamed for the latest Christian-Muslim carnage in Nigeria.

Today, with war officially over and nearly 24,000 United Nations peacekeepers assigned to Sierra Leone, Liberia and Ivory Coast, the challenge facing these fragile states and the international agencies helping them is how to bring the fighters back into the civilian fold.

It is a crucial moment. The United Nations peacekeeping mission in Liberia is in the midst of disarming what it estimates could be up to 50,000 people, offering, as disarmament

programs generally do, cash incentives to ex-gunmen and access to education and **job** training. Another United Nations mission, in Sierra Leone, has just wrapped up its aid programs for 55,000 former fighters. In Ivory Coast, a third mission is trying to coax government and rebel leaders to turn over their arms -- so far, in vain.

The enterprise has been riddled with difficulties. According to the United Nations Development Program, donors to the Liberian effort have given barely a third of the \$12 million to \$20 million needed for the initial phase of the project.

Gunmen have rushed in for their cash handouts, but brought with them far fewer **guns** than were expected. (The United Nations permits them to collect cash either in exchange for a weapon or if they come in as part of a fighting unit with a collective weapon.) In the northern Liberian city of Gbranga, the disarmament effort produced one weapon for every three self-described ex-fighters. There is widespread speculation that the remaining **guns** are buried in the bush.

Moreover, what to do with young women who joined the combat has emerged as a new, thorny problem, since the disarmament programs were designed with men in mind. Also, the programs across this porous region are offering such widely varying cash handouts -- from \$300 in Liberia to three times that much in Ivory Coast -- that there is potential for resentment and squabbling.

And what happens after the cash handouts run out, **West Africa** analysts ask? If young West Africans cannot make a decent living without their **guns** once the peacekeepers leave, disarmament will fail, predicted James Fennell, a regional conflict specialist with the British government's development arm.

"That there are a large number of young people who have no opportunities but high aspirations is a problem from Nigeria to Senegal," Mr. Fennell said. "That problem underscores conflict in the region as a whole."

In Sierra Leone, where a decade-long war ended two years ago, United Nations peacekeepers are expected to pull out by the end of the year. And yet, regional analysts say, some of the very grievances that led to war remain, chief among them a lack of **jobs** for young people and widespread frustration about alleged government corruption.

No one even knows how many of the 55,000 disarmed ex-gunmen have found other ways of making a living. Late last year, one child soldier from Sierra Leone recalled how he took the \$150 in cash and was trained as a carpenter, only to find himself jobless and hungry a few months later. He wound up seduced by a warlord's cash, picking up a Kalashnikov and going to fight again, next door in Liberia.

That same choice will sooner or later confront the thousands of young people being demobilized in Liberia now. The challenge for the United Nations is to engender a stable and prosperous **peace**, and not just a breather between wars, aid workers and analysts say.

"Disarming the fighters must be done properly this time round if it's to stand any chance of changing the culture of violence that has devastated Liberia and her neighbors for decades," warned Liz Hughes, senior humanitarian manager in Liberia for Oxfam, the development group.

Until recently, **peace** was being contemplated in Ivory Coast. Its rebel faction had promised to demobilize its troops and to help reunify the country. But just as disarmament was to begin, the rebels changed their minds. They accused the government of stockpiling weapons and stalling on a **peace** accord. Then, in late March, came a bloody crackdown on an opposition demonstration in Abidjan.

To disarm now would be tantamount to "killing ourselves," the rebel leader, Guillaume Soro, declared. In a recent interview here in Bouake, which serves as his group's headquarters, he said, "We are ready for any eventuality."

Bouake is no longer in the grip of drugged-out teenage soldiers, as it was just a year ago. Only a few checkpoints remain: elaborate sculptures made of hollowed-out refrigerators, tire rims, stones, wood carvings. The bars are no longer bristling with **guns**, at least not visibly.

But the gunmen are still around, retired to a camp in the woods, a short drive from town. On a Sunday morning, when a rebel commander comes to visit, hundreds of them scramble out of the bush, a motley crew in T-shirts and soccer jerseys, black loafers and plastic flip-flops. They have no **guns** (they won't say where they've stashed them) and, apparently, nothing to do.

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GRAPHIC: Photo: **Peace** in Ivory Coast could leave this rebel at loose ends. (Photo by Ben Curtis/Associated Press)

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24/05/2004

...and from the mother country, disgruntled and unimpressed voters show apathy in SLPP strongholds as APC makes big showing
Reports reaching the Sierra Herald on Sunday May 23, 2004 speak of the APC, the party that has been blamed for sinking the country into deprivation and poverty, a party that institutionalised corruption, nepotism and violence, making a surprisingly strong showing in local council elections. The ruling SLPP while claiming seats in many an area is reported to have harvested the disenchantment of the electorate with low voter turnout in their own strongholds in the East and South of the country. One report speaks of voters boycotting the polls where the SLPP refused or intimidated candidates who wanted to stand on Independent tickets. A senior local journalist said that the general low voter turn-out is a result of the lack of trust by electorates in both the APC and SLPP. "The message that is being sent out is this - time for a third political force that could be trusted, a force that is sincere and has the interests of the majority, the poor and disadvantaged in Sierra Leone. Sierra Leoneans are just tired of corrupt and dishonest politicians", he added.