

SPECIAL COURT FOR SIERRA LEONE
PRESS AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE

PRESS CLIPPINGS

Enclosed are clippings of the latest local and international press on the Special Court and related issues obtained by the Press and Public Affairs Office as of:

Wednesday, September 01, 2004

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Charles Taylor's daughter arrested in Kenema

By Nimalty Kamara

Tewah Taylor, claiming to be the stepdaughter of erstwhile Liberian President, Charles Taylor was among 61 suspected armed robbers arrested at the 'How for do' Lorry Park in Kenema. Acting

Local Unit Commander, 'L' Division Francis Songu intimated Concord Times last week.

Songu said that there has been an increase in armed robbery in Kenema recently, which prompted robust police patrols in areas believed to be dens of

armed robbers.

"Robbers are not even spearing market women as they are robbed in broad daylight," Songu said and added that robbery is becoming a menace in Kenema.

According to him, the suspected robbers were

arrested with the help of civilians who gave them useful information to effect the arrests.

The Police, he went on, also raided the Revelation Hillside, which is a notorious sanctuary for robbers operating in the town.



Charles Taylor...

Concord Times

Wednesday 15th Sept. 2004

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channelnewsasia.com

Title : Milosevic says war crimes charges are lies, blames West for Balkans wars
By :
Date : 01 September 2004 0026 hrs (SST)
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THE HAGUE : Former Yugoslav president Slobodan Milosevic blasted war crimes charges against him as "unscrupulous lies" and blamed Western powers for the bloody break-up of Yugoslavia as he launched his defence before a UN court.

Milosevic had initially been given four hours to present the outline of his defence case, but after his repeatedly appeals the judges announced he would have another hour and a half on Wednesday to finish his opening statement.

The former Yugoslav president, whose ill health has already caused months of delays in the mammoth trial, was in fighting form Tuesday.

Milosevic, who is acting as his own lawyer, angrily attacked the "illegal UN tribunal" and rejected prosecution allegations that he masterminded the 1990s wars which tore the Balkans apart.

"The accusations against me are unscrupulous lies and a tireless distortion of history," he said.

The international community was the "main force for the destruction of Yugoslavia", he added.

Milosevic faces more than 60 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity for his alleged role in the 1991-95 war in Croatia, the 1992-95 war in Bosnia and the Serb crackdown on Kosovo in 1998-99.

He has also been charged with genocide and complicity in genocide, the gravest of war crimes, for the war in Bosnia, which left 200,000 people dead.

He faces a life sentence if convicted.

In his opening statement Milosevic focussed on the historical backdrop of the break-up of Yugoslavia without addressing the specific charges against him.

He rattled off lists of alleged atrocities committed against Serbs in Croatia and Bosnia and said "external forces" worked with "ustasha extremists (Croat nationalists), Islamic fundamentalists and Albanian terrorists whose role was to be the detonator of the conflict".

"This is a recasting of history aimed at ensuring his place in the hearts and minds of the people in Serbia," Richard Dicker of Human Rights Watch said.

"I don't think he is trying to put on a competent defence, but rather a political offence."

Milosevic's legal advisor Dragoslav Ognjanovic told AFP after the hearing that the former president plans to present a political defence.

"The case is purely political so that will be the strategy," the Belgrade lawyer said.

But legal experts warned that by arguing that he fought just wars to ward off secession by former Yugoslav republics, Milosevic was failing to address very serious charges against him.

"He is not on trial for the wars as such but for the violating the internationally enshrined humanitarian laws and laws for the rules and customs of war," legal expert Heikelina Verrijn Stuart explained.

On Wednesday after Milosevic finishes his presentation the judges will call a procedural hearing to discuss his health problems.

The former president suffers from a high blood pressure and is said to be at risk of a heart attack,

especially during periods of stress. Since it started in February 2002 the trial has already been interrupted 14 times after Milosevic fell ill.

The judges are expected to order Milosevic to take on additional legal assistance to reduce the strain of presenting and preparing his defence case.

The former Yugoslav leader has repeatedly said he will not accept any court-appointed defence lawyer but may have no choice if medical reports show he is not fit to represent himself.

The first witness in Milosevic's defence will testify on September 7 to give the court time to deal with procedural matters.

Ognjanovic would not give any details about who would be testifying, only revealing that the first witness would be "an important expert" and "a number of foreign witnesses" would take the stand in September.

Milosevic has repeatedly said he would call Western leaders such as British Prime Minister Tony Blair, German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder and former US president Bill Clinton to the stand.

- AFP

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Analysis: International tribunals on trial

By William Horsley
BBC European affairs correspondent

The trial of Slobodan Milosevic is the most important test yet of the work of the International War Crimes Tribunal in The Hague.

The implications are great for the system of United Nations-sponsored courts, since Mr Milosevic is seeking to turn the tables on his accusers and deny the legitimacy of the tribunal itself.

The Hague tribunal has struggled to live up to its goals because of long delays and the failure to arrest other high-profile suspects such as the former Bosnian Serb leader Radavan Karadzic.

But the tribunal has passed judgement in more than 50 cases.

The Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia represents an important example for the two other main international war crimes courts.

One is the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, which was set up by the UN and is located in Arusha, Tanzania.

It has faced many obstructions and has completed only nine trials, leaving still a huge task to prosecute those most responsible for the mass killings and atrocities in Rwanda 10 years ago.

The Sierra Leone court, set up two years ago with UN backing, has so far indicted just 13 people, and the most wanted indictee, the former Liberian president Charles Taylor, has escaped trial by finding refuge in Nigeria.

It is vital for the credibility of the embryonic system of international justice for war crimes that these special tribunals are seen to be both effective and fair.

Ironically, the prospects for the newly-born International Criminal Court, whose task is to prosecute war crimes committed after its establishment in 2002, is uncertain because the world's most powerful country, the United States, is unwilling to cooperate with it.

The Milosevic trial and the record of the other tribunals will matter all the more in the eyes of international public opinion, as in due course the trial is expected to take place in Iraq, with support from international lawyers, of the former Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein.

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Dogs of war? These men in shackles have been whipped into submission

By Raymond Whitaker in Malabo

01 September 2004

Their wrists and feet shackled, the accused half-crawled, half-fell out of the high four-wheel-drives that had delivered them to a garish conference centre-turned courtroom in Equatorial Guinea's capital.

The flashing lights, blaring sirens and escort of camouflage-clad troops merely made the gaunt, grey crocodile of men, shuffling silently through the rain in their T-shirts, shorts and rubber sandals, seem more pathetic. If these were dogs of war, they had been whipped into submission long ago.

Since their arrest on 8 March on charges of attempting to overthrow President Teodoro Obiang Nguema, eight former members of South Africa's apartheid-era special forces, six Armenian air crew and five local men have been kept chained 24 hours a day in Malabo's notorious Black Beach prison.

Although their leader, Nick du Toit, faces a possible death sentence, even he must have welcomed the start of their trial last week as an escape from the uncertainty. But, yesterday, Mr du Toit and his 18 co-accused were thrust back into limbo.

Diplomats and lawyers gathering at the conference centre were expecting yesterday's hearing to be the last, with the defence team making their final pleas before the three judges retired to consider their verdict, possibly as early as Friday. But after a delay lasting well over an hour, Equatorial Guinea's Attorney General, Jose Olo Obono, began by asking for the case to be suspended indefinitely. All the proceedings were conducted in Spanish, the language of the country's former colonial rulers, but in the midst of the unfamiliar legalese, the name "Mark Thatcher" could clearly be understood.

The defence objected that it would be inhumane to keep the alleged mercenaries locked up in harsh conditions with no knowledge of when they might be freed, but after an adjournment lasting only a couple of minutes, the judges granted the suspension. Their spokesman, Judge Salvador Ondo Ncumu, said the case had acquired an "international dimension", and it should not continue until investigations elsewhere had been completed.

The misfortune for Mr du Toit and his colleagues is that two days after their trial began last week, it was upstaged by the arrest in Cape Town of Baroness Thatcher's son. Even though the Equatorial Guinea arrests coincided six months ago with the seizure of a planeload of private soldiers in Zimbabwe, led by Simon Mann, an Old Etonian former SAS officer, the affair generated only moderate international interest until South Africa's elite Scorpions crime-busters turned up at Sir Mark's mansion in Cape Town.

President Obiang's regime, which wants to demonstrate the conspiracy against him went to the highest levels, suddenly found it might be able to land a much bigger fish. With Mr Thatcher under house arrest in South Africa and Mr Mann on trial in Zimbabwe - he was convicted of illegally attempting to buy arms,

though the rest of the 90 arrested with him were acquitted or found guilty of minor offences - the Malabo case risked becoming a sideshow.

Equatorial Guinea wants Mr Thatcher and Mr Mann to be extradited but it has received little encouragement from the South Africans or the Zimbabweans.

Like Britain, South Africa refuses to send suspects to countries that retain the death penalty, although it may allow lawyers from Equatorial Guinea to question Sir Mark in Cape Town. But the whole affair has already drawn more attention to this tropical dictatorship, which consists of a few lush volcanic islands and a jungle-covered strip of the African mainland, than it has enjoyed since the Spanish loosened their grip in the 1960s.

President Obiang appears to be revelling in it. Yesterday he summoned the foreign press for what turned out to be little more than an opportunity for him to be photographed giving them an audience. The men on trial, he told us, were "individuals without morals who attempted a crime against our country which would have resulted in blood being spilt".

But since he deposed and executed his despotic uncle in 1979, the President has been accused of spilling plenty of blood on his own account, and even of eating the testicles of his murdered enemies to imbibe their masculinity.

The accused were not in the courtroom to hear the debate that will prolong their uncertainty. But a door to their holding room was ajar as they were told the news, and one could see the looks of defeat as they shuffled back out to the prison vehicles, a young soldier clapping his hands to speed them up.

Mr Mico, their defence lawyer, said: "All the accused apart from Mr du Toit have told me they were tortured." Belinda du Toit, who says her drawn, grey-bearded husband was once the same, ample shape as her, looked on wondering when she would see him again.

Also in Africa

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August 31, 2004

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HEADLINE: FORMER **MINISTERS** SAYS LIBERIAN **CONFLICT HAS BRED MERCENARIES**

BODY:

Accra, Ghana (PANA) - Former Liberian Foreign **minister** Monie Captan warned Tuesday that the prolonged Liberian **conflict** had created a pool of experienced combatants actively engaged in **mercenary** activities in the West African sub-region.

He said the recruitment and participation of West Africans in various Liberian armed insurgency groups had led to the emergence of a very active **mercenary** force and pool of experienced combatants in the sub-region.

Speaking at a forum organised by the African Security Dialogue and Research (ASDR) in Accra, Captan said **mercenaries** and insurgents freely roaming about as citizens of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) would remain an integral factor in civil **conflicts** in the sub-region.

Organisers see the Accra forum as a platform for academics, politicians, security experts and other professionals to deliberate on a broad spectrum of topics.

Captan said the activities of **mercenaries** and insurgents could not be controlled through the effort of any single state in the sub-region, but through the collective effort and commitment of ECOWAS through a common policy.

The former Foreign **Minister** under exiled leader Charles Taylor said that during the various phases of the Liberian civil war, Sierra Leoneans, Ivoirians, Burkinabes, Ghanaians, Gambians, Senegalese, Guineans, among other nationalities fought for at least one faction.

Similarly, Liberians fought in other **conflicts** in the sub-region, including Sierra Leone, Guinea Bissau, Guinea and Cote d'Ivoire.

Captan decried the international community's legitimisation of armed insurgents through various mediation processes, thus transforming them into major power brokers in the sub-region.

"It is now common practice and expectation to obtain a government ministerial post by simply being an influential member of an armed insurgency," he observed, warning that the logic of the exchange of arms for political power was a dangerous precedent.

"Such logic leads to the belief that civil society does not deserve to participate in governance because it

has no guns to give up and therefore is not a major factor and contributor to the peace process," Captan reasoned.

He also observed that the donor community had shied away from supporting robust peacekeeping operations because of the huge cost, preferring to encourage a policy of appeasement, which required far less donor input.

"Simply put, it's the cheap way out, regardless of the long-term implication for regional stability," he noted.

Captan urged ECOWAS to invest in the stability of the region by building a reasonably sized, but well trained and well-equipped rapid response force.

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It's not like it was in the past, old chaps

By Raymond Whitaker and Paul Lashmar

"Things have changed in Africa," said a friend of Simon Mann, the old Etonian now awaiting sentence in Zimbabwe for attempting to buy arms illegally. "The days are gone when you could recruit a bunch of moustaches, load up some ammunition and take over a country - especially if you are a white man."

Mann says the weapons were for a mine security operation in the Democratic Republic of Congo; the Zimbabweans and others say they were for a coup in the oil-rich state of Equatorial Guinea. But his friend's words ring true as the 51-year-old former SAS officer sits in Chikurubi prison near Harare, facing a heavy sentence at his next hearing on 10 September.

In Malabo, the capital of Equatorial Guinea, Nick du Toit, Mann's associate, is on trial for his life. And under house arrest behind heavy iron gates in Constantia, Sir Mark Thatcher, also 51, is contemplating his future.

There is nothing his mother, Baroness Thatcher, can do to extricate him

There is nothing his mother, Baroness Thatcher, can do to extricate him from charges under South Africa's Foreign Military Assistance Act. He faces up to 15 years in jail. Although he is unlikely to be extradited to Equatorial Guinea, legal officers from there may be allowed to question him in Cape Town.

According to legal statements by Mann and Du Toit, a force of mercenaries recruited in South Africa were to fly to Zimbabwe, pick up arms and ammunition and fly on to

Equatorial Guinea.

In return for £1 million and lucrative contracts, they would help to depose President Teodoro Obiang Nguema and replace him with Severo Moto, an exiled opposition politician based in Madrid. If he was not killed, Obiang was to have been flown to Spain.

But how could the politics of a small African state have entangled such a varied cast of characters? These include not only Lady Thatcher's son but some of her closest former aides, such as Lord Archer, whose friend, the Lebanese-born British-based oil trader Ely Calil, is named by Mann as the chief sponsor of the coup. (Both Archer and Calil have denied any prior knowledge or involvement.)

Add in ex-special forces operatives from Britain and South Africa, not to mention two African dictators - President Obiang and Zimbabwe's Robert Mugabe - and the story begins to resemble a Frederick Forsyth thriller, a post-modernist Dogs of War in which the "natives" actually win.

Began by selling supposedly hack-proof computer software

And that is exactly the point. Not only does the affair resurrect the era when white mercenaries attempted to overturn regimes across Africa, it brings back half-forgotten figures from the 1980s in Britain, when a class of deal-makers and influence-peddlers operated in the shadow of the Iron Lady, seeking to turn her grip on the British electorate to profit.

When his mother took power, Mark Thatcher was 26, with

an undistinguished career at school and in business. There was little reason to expect that 25 years later he would be worth an estimated £60m, with mansions in South Africa and Texas and a network of business contacts around the world.

Like others, Sir Mark (who inherited a baronetcy when his father, Sir Denis, died last year) did well out of his mother's name. But the questions and controversies arising from his use of the Thatcher name drove him first to the US and then to South Africa. There he made friends with Mann, who owns a luxury home in Hout Bay, Du Toit and other former military men using their expertise to cash in on Africa's instability.

Mann appears to be the only person who really knows where all the pieces of this jigsaw fit, who was really behind the coup plot and who is on the mythical "wonga list" of investors. But the whole affair would never have acquired such international notoriety if it were not for the letter he smuggled out of prison.

"Please!" read the intercepted note to his advisers. "It is essential that we get properly organised."

It urges them to make maximum efforts to contact "Smelly" - taken to refer to Calil - and "Scratcher", a nickname for Sir Mark. It also names David Hart, the businessman who is presumed to have helped Lady Thatcher break the 1984-85 miners' strike.

Mann writes: "What will get us out is MAJOR CLOUT... once we get into a real trial scenario we are f...d." On a page torn from a magazine, he tells his team to chase up expected "project funds" from investors including "Scratcher" who has the figure "200" in brackets.

This has been interpreted as meaning that Sir Mark had promised a sum of \$200 000, but gives no indication that it was intended for any illegal activity and indeed implies that no money was ever actually handed over.

Among the four people to whom the note was addressed are Nigel Morgan, like Mann a former Guards officer, and James Kershaw, a 24-year-old who has worked for both men. Kershaw, who is said to have handled money transfers for Mann's company, Logo, is expected to testify against Sir Mark, according to the Scorpions.

His evidence may be crucial: despite voluminous paperwork connected with the coup attempt, there have been no reports of any document that carries Sir Mark's name.

But whatever their past friendship, "Scratcher" must be ruing the day he ever met Mann. The former secret soldier is a throwback to the days of empire, a British public schoolboy adventurer prepared to interfere in Third World countries.

"He is very English, a romantic, tremendously good company," said the film director Paul Greengrass. In his first and only role as a professional actor, Mann played the part of Colonel Derek Wilford, commander of the paratroopers in Londonderry in Greengrass's gritty television reconstruction of Bloody Sunday.

After Eton and Sandhurst, the 19-year-old Mann joined the Scots Guards in 1972, but his daredevil instincts soon drew him to the SAS. A troop commander in 22 SAS, specialising in intelligence and counter-terrorism, he served in Cyprus, Germany, Norway, Canada, central America and Northern Ireland before leaving the Army in 1985.

Although he began by selling supposedly hack-proof computer software, like many SAS veterans he also operated in the security business, reportedly providing bodyguards to wealthy Arabs. He remained part of 23 SAS, the Territorial Army section, and briefly returned to the colours on the staff of General Sir Peter de la Billiere during the first Gulf War in 1991.

Security consulting in the Gulf followed, but his connection with Africa

predominated. He was hired by Eben Barlow, a South African, to help run Executive Outcomes, the first of the many private military companies now operating around the globe.

Both men rapidly became rich, most notably from a series of security deals in Angola, where Executive Outcomes not only protected oil and diamond fields, but trained Angolan troops and fought Unita rebels. The company also helped the Sierra Leone government quash rebels in the '90s.

All this gained Mann not only a mansion in Cape Town but Inchmery, a 8 hectare riverside estate in Hampshire that once belonged to the Rothschilds.

Mann, now a dual citizen of Britain and South Africa, bought the estate through a company registered in the offshore tax haven of Guernsey.

But why should a man past 50, who had earned enough to live in style without ever working again, have become involved in such a hair-raising caper as the Equatorial Guinea plot?

According to his friends, it was the drug of adventure. One said he had been warned by the British as well as the South African authorities that he should "hang up his boots", but the ex-SAS man seems to have ignored the advice.

What is perhaps most surprising about the attempted coup is its incompetence. A planeload of obvious mercenaries leaves South Africa, no longer a country which encourages such activity, then lands in Zimbabwe. If the receiving officials were supposed to have been bribed, it had not been done effectively, but in any case the Zimbabweans appeared to have been warned in advance.

It took little time after that to arrest the alleged advance guard in Equatorial Guinea, where Du Toit is on trial with seven other South Africans, six Armenians and four local citizens.

But the greatest folly was the lack of security. Mann's 66 fellow defendants in Zimbabwe, including the 64 men who were travelling on South African passports when their plane was seized, were acquitted on the arms charge, with the magistrate accepting their plea that they did not know where they were going. But it seemed that half of South Africa did. Rumours of the coup attempt were circulating in Cape Town, Johannesburg and London well in advance.

The paper trail linked to the plot was so extensive that some observers at first believed that they had been faked to make a case.

But Mann, it seems, wanted contracts signed for every part of this dubious scheme.

Du Toit was even required to sign a company-to-company contract to perform his part of the coup. Why the former SAS officer might have wanted such a document is a mystery: it could hardly have been produced in court in the event of a dispute.

That the plot fell apart so damagingly is hardly surprising, given how wide knowledge of it went in Britain as well as South Africa.

"What Simon Mann appears not to have realised is that there is much greater co-ordination among African countries, including intelligence co-operation, to put a stop to coups," said one source. "Nigeria, the regional power, stepped in recently to reverse a coup in Sao Tome, and was ready to do the same in Equatorial Guinea. The fact that the operation was penetrated by South African intelligence prevented a lot of bloodshed."

Britain and South Africa have changed, but Mann and his friends seemed oblivious to that. Gone are the days when operators such as Sir James Goldsmith and John Aspinall, both now dead, sought to convince a Conservative government that Britain's interests as well as their own would be served by backing such Africans as Angola's Jonas Savimbi, now dead, and South Africa's Chief Mangosuthu

Buthelezi.

The two African leaders were promoted as the Christian, anti-Communist alternative to the likes of Nelson Mandela, whom Lady Thatcher once described as a terrorist. But the Conservatives are no longer in power, and Mandela has been welcomed in Britain on a state visit as president of a free, democratic South Africa.

The hapless Du Toit, a former South African special officer and member of Executive Outcomes, stands to come off worst. He confessed to his role within a day of arrest in Malabo, and has continued to help identify other plotters since.

Despite President Obiang's claim that he is not seeking the death penalty, the prosecutor in the Malabo court has called for the execution of those found guilty. The verdicts are expected by the end of this week.

Unless Zimbabwe goes back on its decision not to extradite him to Equatorial Guinea, Mann will fare better, even if he receives the maximum sentence of 10 years. He could well be extradited back to South Africa to face further charges, but some believe that with his rich and influential friends, he could receive a discreet pardon in a year or two, once the dust has settled.

As for Mark Thatcher, his circle is claiming that much disinformation has been spread to implicate him and distract attention from the real culprits. But his past is troubled, and the proceedings against him will be protracted and messy.

Clearing his name could require every ounce of his much-touted influence. - The London Independent

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Africa takes tough stand on coups

The arrest of Margaret Thatcher's son last week is the latest example of a crackdown on overthrows.

By Nicole Itano | Correspondent of The Christian Science Monitor

JOHANNESBURG, SOUTH AFRICA - The cast list of the alleged coup plot in Equatorial Guinea reads as if straight out of a cold-war thriller: An aging mercenary determined to organize his last big job, the corrupt leader of a tiny oil-rich nation, and the playboy son of the former leader of a world power.

The titillating story, which first came to light with the detention of 70 men on the runway of a Zimbabwean airport on March 7, hit international headlines again last week with the arrest by South African police of Mark Thatcher, son of former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher. He is accused of partially financing the overthrow of Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo, the strongman of Equatorial Guinea, a small country on Africa's west coast. The plot allegedly planned the takeover of the continent's third-largest oil producer.

To many observers, the tale is another example of Africa's political instability. But African security experts say that the foiling of the plot, which required intelligence cooperation among three different African nations, actually points to an end of a tolerance of the African coup.

"We've entered a new era," says John Strelau, head of the international relations department at the University of Witwatersrand here. "Around the region over the last few years, you've seen an increased willingness to be more assertive in the face of this kind of action."

Postcolonial Africa has been hobbled by illegitimate political takeovers. According to research by Patrick McGowan, a professor of political science at Arizona State University in Tempe, in sub-Saharan Africa between 1956 and 2001 there were 80 successful coups, 108 failed coup attempts, and 139 reported coup plots. There have been 11 attempted or successful coups since then.

Professor Strelau and others say that there has been a marked change in the way Africa responds to unconstitutional changes in government.

"With the new activity we've seen from the African Union and other organizations, it's going to be increasingly difficult to topple a government and take its place," says Angela McIntyre, a senior researcher at the Institute for Security Studies, a South African think tank.

She points to several recent instances where the African community has intervened after attempted coups or other military takeovers. African mediators stepped in to negotiate a peace settlement in Ivory Coast after an armed rebellion divided the country in 2002. And when a small band of disgruntled soldiers overthrew the president of Sao Tome last year, pressure from the AU and neighboring countries like Nigeria convinced the plotters to hand back power to the president in return for their grievances being addressed.

Of course, not all coups have been condemned with the same force. When a military junta overthrew the president of Guinea Bissau last September, regional mediators were content to allow the coup plotters to hand power to an interim government instead of the deposed president, who was widely considered incompetent and despotic.

Nevertheless, Mr. Stremlau says there has been a genuine change in heart, led by South Africa. In particular, Stremlau says he is gratified to see that the old Organization of African Unity (OAU), long seen as a club for despots and dictators, did more than change its name when it became the AU. The OAU usually made little noise when its members were overthrown and simply welcomed new military leaders into its fold. Idi Amin of Uganda and Colonel Mengistu Haile Mariam of Ethiopia, both of whom took power in coups, hosted OAU summits.

Still, the Equatorial Guinea plot shows that South Africa has much work to do to clean up the remnants of its old security forces, which remain a threat to African security.

With the end of apartheid, South Africa's surplus of out-of-work security forces became a major source of guns for hire. Most famously, the now defunct Executive Outcomes - two of whose founders, 61-year-old British Special Forces operative Simon Mann and Nick du Toit, who is on trial for his life in Equatorial Guinea - guarded installations and fought rebels in the civil wars in Angola and Sierra Leone. Additionally, hundreds of South Africans are now working for private security firms in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Although in 1998, South Africa implemented strict legislation cracking down on mercenary activity, there have been few significant prosecutions so far under the law, called the Foreign Military Assistance Act. One problem, says Ms. McIntyre, is that much of the law, which is currently under review by the government, fails to draw an adequate line between legitimate security work and illegal mercenary activity. There was talk earlier this year, for example, about whether South Africans working in Iraq could be prosecuted under the act.

The Equatorial Guinea plot promises to be a major test case for the law and South Africa's commitment to cleaning up its former security sector. Many of the 89 men facing trial in Zimbabwe and Equatorial Guinea could face charges in South Africa even if acquitted in their current trials. And it's the latest questionable chapter in the life of Mr. Thatcher, who has been dogged for years by allegations of shady deals and capitalizing on his famous name.

But as South African police spokesman Siphon Ngwema told media after Thatcher's arrest: "We refuse [to let] South Africa be a springboard for coups in Africa and elsewhere."

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Police are making frantic effort to unearth the deal between four middle-east airlines and the ministry of trans-

Al-Qaida uses S/Leone's t/port officials



Harding transport ministrer

that there is a need to investigate the link between the airline owners, the mujahiden in Afghanistan, Hizbollah in Lebanon, Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and Jamaat Al-Islmia in Algeria. The four airlines, Star Air, Air Universal, Heavy-Lift Cargo and Air Leone have been suspected of involving in drugs, money laundering, drug trafficking and terrorism. Our source says the groups owning the air-

lines have agents in Sierra Leone dealing in diamonds. The groups are reported to be connected with highly placed officials in the

government who helped them acquire the certificates of registration. Diplomatic sources say the airlines are used to raise funds for certain

groups in Europe. "The transport ministry from the highest placed man should also be shaken-up", says one source.

port and communication shuttling to Jordan and other Middle-East countries. Reports from abroad say the four airlines are now

One source overseas intimates *The Independent*