

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:

Tuesday, November 16, 2004

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STANDARD TIMES

Tuesday November 16, 2004

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SPECIAL COURT...

Kabbah and Berewa named in Kamajor brutality

BY THEOPHILUS GBENDA

As the ongoing CDF trial at the Special Court for Sierra Leone proceeds, more and more facts are beginning to emerge as to the depth of involvement of top personalities currently hiding behind the shield of state authority and immunity.

The latest of such revelations has to do with claims that H.E. The President, Albaji Dr. Ahmad Tejan Kabbah and the vice President Solomon Berewa endorsed acts of brutality perpetrated by Kamajors against civilians particularly in Bonthe district.

Testifying behind shield, prosecution witness TE2-071, aged 45, recalled how following the occupation of Bonthe by Kamajors in February 1998 after the junta pulled out, the Kamajors made civilians their target.

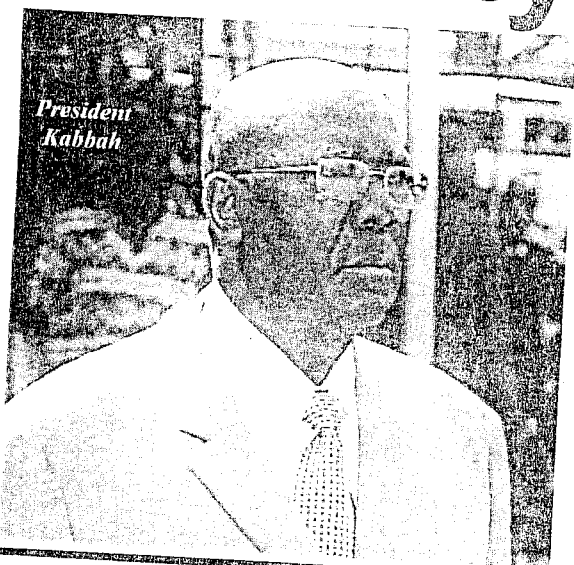
According to the witness, the citizens originally believed the Kamajors were God's sent redeemers especially after suffering what

they considered serious human rights abuses at the hands of the junta during their occupation.

This view however soon turned out far-fetched as civilians were not only targeted as collaborators,

and stripped of their possessions and humiliated, but also sometimes murdered by the presumed liberators, the witness said.

Nearly all government offices in



Kabbah and Berewa named in Kamajor

FROM PAGE 1

the town, according to the witness, were effectively looted by the Kamajors, who went to the extent of even humiliating local authorities including paramount chiefs.

The Kamajors, the witness maintained were justifying their unprecedented acts against the civilians by accusing them of collaboration with the junta.

Because of this conduct by the Kamajor, many civilians had to seek refuge in the outlying villages where they soon ran short of basic foodstuff.

The situation was nearing its peak when concerned Bonthe inhabitants including Rev. Fr. John Garric and himself lodged a complaint to H.E. The President and the then Attorney General Solomon Berewa, now vice President.

The outcome of the complaints to the respective authorities, by all indications was nothing to write about, as rather than a positive action, the authorities continued to show unflinching support for their oppressors.

The President offered 100 bags of rice to the delegation that lodged the com-

plaint about the Kamajors, for onward transmission to the very Kamajors in the town.

As for the then Attorney General, Solomon Berewa, he was very angry at the delegation as demonstrated in his words, "anyone complaining against the Kamajors would be considered an enemy of the SLPP government," the witness recalled.

This show of support for the Kamajors by the two authorities, according to the witness, was tantamount to endorsing the brutal acts of the Kamajors against the civilians.

Tuesday November 16th, 2004

SALONE TIMES

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'CATHOLIC PRIEST SAVED 14 FROM CDF BRUTALITY'

By Mohamed Mansaray

The 22nd Special Court prosecution witness in the trial of CDF indictes, TF2-116 has disclosed that it was a Catholic priest, Rev. Fr. John Garrick who prevented the killing of 14 people by Kamajors in Bonthe sometime in 1998.

He told the court that the Kamajors entered the town one day after the AFRC forces pulled out on February 14, 1998. Led in evidence by a prosecution lawyer, Raimund Sauter at Court Room No. 1, New England in Freetown, the witness testified that all the people were members of the Bonthe Working Committee which was set up in the town after the overthrow of President Kabbah's government in 1997.

Describing himself as a businessman, the witness told the court that he immediately went into hiding when he learnt that Kamajors were looking out for him because of the role he played in the junta.

He testified that Kamajors summoned a meeting at the Catholic Parish compound in the town and identified Fr. Garrick as the head of the Roman Catholic Parish in Bonthe. He further informed the court that when a Kamajor commander Julius Squire (whom the witness described as a native of Bonthe), realised that he (the witness), was not in attendance, the commander became angry and threatened community elders who were at the meeting, that he would send his men to search for him if he did not come out of hiding. According to the witness, when Fr. Garrick learnt about his hiding place, he took excuse from the

Kamajors and used the hospital ambulance (which the Kamajors had earlier commandeered) and visited him. He said he was placed in a circle of Kamajors and subjected to much questioning about the role he played in the AFRC junta through the Bonthe Working Committee. The witness also told the court that Kamajors imposed Le100,000 fine on the 14 members of the committee in order to stop the killing in the town and to set them free. "Fr. Garrick stood for us as surety and he also paid the money," he said, and added that they were entrusted to the care of the priest until the following morning.

In his examination-in-chief earlier, the witness told the court that he saw the corpse of a boy, Abu Samuka at a junction in the town on their way to the venue of the meeting in the ambulance.

He also named another commander, CO Conteh alias Rambo as the one who killed another boy, Kondo Battiamma, whom they accused of being a junta collaborator. They also murdered a tailor, Mr. Conteh in the town, he said. He went on to tell the court that Kamajors also murdered Kpana Masso who was one of those who initially went to receive Kamajors when they entered Bonthe. He testified that the main responsibility of the Bonthe Working Committee was to ensure the cleaning of Bonthe's immediate vicinity during that period. The witness was born in Bonthe district and he testified in English from the witness protection box. He was cross-examined by defence lawyers. The trials continue.

GUEST WRITER*By Wilfred Cole*

Did I hear him right? Am I dreaming? Am I having a date with Dr Edward Nahim? Of course not for based on his consistent inconsistencies, it is only true and unfortunate to learn that H.E himself has told the whole wide world that he has constantly been lethargic to talk sense into Baba O (Obasanjo) for Sierra Leone's most wanted Charles Taylor to come and watch DSTV with his colleague indicted at the Special Court while Norman, Kondewa and Moinina Fofanah who fought to see him back to State Lodge continue to slave and suffer in jail even without a much desired conjugal visit. If I got him right, these were his words that fateful Sunday morning: "Nigeria acted properly by keeping Charles Taylor, and that's why I have not been pressing for Charles Taylor to come and face the special court."

Taylor would only have fled into the bush and keep fighting if Nigeria had not managed to sideline him." He did not only halt his brake there, he continued: "for me to press President Obasanjo to go back on his word would have been very unfair."

Can you imagine this gross colossal error of judgment (apologies Kerry) coming from no less a person but the man who personally jumped on his computer, put fingers to keyboard and write to the United States

requesting for the setting up of a Special Court to try war crimes? I wonder how our American brothers would react to these outburst particularly when they have placed a sum of \$2 million on Taylor's head not to talk of thousands of our brothers and who have suffered in the hands of the marauding gangsters that Taylor was alleged to have supported. I now see reason why Kabbah was as silent as Ascension Cemetery on the day the Special Court unsealed Taylor's indictment while he was drinking and eating Kenke with his colleague heads of state in Ghana. I am sure Kabbah might have even given Taylor a pat on the back and whispered to his ears that, "don't worry, we are not going to send you to that whiteman called Crane)" For all I know, Taylor is an indicted war crimes suspect and he should willingly surrender himself to the court to prove his guilt or innocence but if he so far failed to do so and somebody in his Ivory Tower is giving the Calabar-locked former President what could best be described as words of encouragement, then that person is as guilty as Taylor himself for if you are against us then you are for the war crimes indicted and if you are encouraged to be on the prowl, then it is a clear as 2 + 1 that you are against those thousands and thousands of Sierra Leonean who were dehumanized by Taylor's cohorts. The President is quoted as

When the president dines with Taylor

saying, "Taylor would only have fled into the bush and keep fighting if Nigeria had not managed to sideline him." Is that a plausible enough reason? I honestly cannot deduce a sound

Taylor has no reason to be out there enjoying amala or eba in Calabar While his friends, Issah Sesay and Morris Kallon continue to eat cassada leaf here.

premise for H.E to have come out with that 'logical' conclusion- logical conclusion indeed. Let us assume for one split second that Alhaji was correct but why did he not use his wise judgment not to have sent demonstrators to Foday Sankoh's house when he knew that De Lion was as dangerous as the Lion itself? Why didn't he

also put a halt to the Special Court's continued manhunt to track down the dead and alive Johnny Paul Koroma?

Let us move the argument away from home? Does the kidnapping and beheading of non Iraqis like Ken Bigley and others stopped the Americans and Brits from tracking down the terrorists and killing them in Iraq or Afghanistan? Indeed, it has not and an age old proverb says the fear of drowning has never stopped people swimming.

Taylor was a threat but I believe he is still more of a threat than he was and the only remedy is to snuff him out of his borehole to face the court. Damn that argument that he was a sitting head of state.

Where is Yugoslavia's former president, Slobodan Milosevic? Of course he is in some cell in The Hague. So, what is so special about our Taylor the tailor? Mr. President, you must be decisive in your actions for this is not the time for flip-flopping. As a learned lawyer, I am sure you are definitively aware and believe in the maxim that, "justice delayed is justice denied." And as a Commander-in-Chief, you should have the strength of a camel and the

agility of a monkey to put into motion a very strong security mechanism that will suffice to defend every inch of our territory or is it that sad memories of your failure to defend us during the events of the 1997 military interregnum are now coming to past? Well, I can understand that Unamsil have long begun packing their bags and baggage and I am now quite sure that you can reply on Acha Kamara and Sam Mboma or don't you?

Taylor has no reason to be out there enjoying amala or eba in Calabar While his friends, Issah Sesay and Morris Kallon continue to eat cassada leaf here.

H.E you have barely three years to go before you handover power to your chosen one, Berewa (i.e. if kinny Charles allows that and after you have completely dismembered Ngor Proff, to the point of no recognition) and you must do everything in your power to see reason and be very man enough to call for Taylor's extradition. That and only that can save your face in this matter? Please try that.

SLPP ON HIGH ALERT, AS HINGA NORMAN PLANS TO MUDDY THE WATERS



Saturday November 13, 2004

A political insider communicating from Freetown has told COCORIOKO that the ruling Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP) is on high alert as incarcerated former Kamajor Chief, Sam Hinga Norman accelerate plans to muddy the waters .

According to the insider, Norman has lost patience both with the ruling party, which he once served as both Defence and Interior Minister, and the Sierra Leonean people whom he is accusing of being passive about his plight in captivity. Norman feels that the SLPP and Sierra Leoneans should have stood behind him in his war crimes trials before the UN -supported Special Court, which is trying to bring to justice leaders of the various armed groups that fought each other to a standstill during the bloody Civil War.

Norman , the insider went on, had first decided to play it clean and see the legal process through to its conclusion. However, the Chief, the insider continued, has had a change of mind, believing that he was betrayed by those he fought for and has therefore decided to muddy the waters so that the world would know that other members of the party played an even bigger hand in the war.

Last week, Norman allegedly released yet another explosive letter from jail in which he directly accused President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah of hatching the plot to have him and other Kamajor members incarcerated by the Special Court.

In the letter, published by the DEMOCRAT newspaper of Freetown, Norman pointedly attacked the President : "Your Excellency's machinations in transforming reconciliation into persecution in Sierra Leone of men who laid down their lives for your Excellency , government and the nation will surely be remembered. Your Excellency's betrayal of the CDF/SL and the Mende/Kamajors and the bitter ungratefulness will surely be rewarded even abundantly by the good Lord. "

The insider said that the two letters the Chief has allegedly written so far, are mere preambles to stunning revelations he is planning to make which will change many people's minds about the real culprits behind the Sierra Leone war.

"If Hinga Norman really talks," the insider concluded, "he will embarrass and implicate many big people within the SLPP and give cause to calls by the public for more people to be indicted by the Special Court."

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Source: UN Mission in Sierra Leone

Date: 11 Nov 2004

SRSG addresses members of Parliament

Ref No UNAMSIL/PIO/PR/ 199/2004

Freetown, Sierra Leone – The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Sierra Leone (SRSG), Ambassador Daudi Ngelautwa Mwakawago yesterday addressed an informal session of the national Parliament on the drawdown plan of UNAMSIL (the United Nations Mission in the country).

The SRSG said since the Members of Parliament were part of and solution to the problem in the country, they had to be involved in future efforts, hence his decision to address them. Ambassador Mwakawago further stated that the Mission was not drawing down without due attention being paid to the security systems of the country and other sectors. There were ongoing training programmes for the Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces (RSLAF) which was being reduced from 14,500 to 10,500 and the Sierra Leone Police (SLP) being increased from its current 8,000 strength to its pre-war level of 9,500.

UNAMSIL's troop strength currently stood at 6,400 which would be further reduced to 5,000 by December and down to 3,250 by February up until the end of the current mandate of June 2005. The residual number of peacekeepers would be strategically deployed in the Western Area, the eastern Kenema district and a Rapid Reaction Force in the southern Bo district. He said they would possess the necessary firepower should the need arise for such use.

Unlike other UN follow -on peace building missions which had their names changed, UNAMSIL would retain its name and live up to its present status as "insurers" of security as it had been an effective "guarantor". In that light, he appealed to the parliamentarians to help assuage fears of their constituents regarding the eventual withdrawal of the Mission.

On the capacity of the RSLAF, Ambassador Mwakawago said while the security forces had received adequate training, the same could not be said of equipment, training gear and barracks. In this regard, the Government of the United Kingdom was providing 5.1 million pounds sterling within a three-year period, the first portion of which would be paid this year. The Swiss Government had agreed to provide 260 vehicles with half the number being 3-ton trucks and the others, light vehicles. Furthermore, he was negotiating with some donors to provide the US\$ 400,000 needed to freight them and had already made contacts with the Indian, Italian and US Governments to elicit assistance for the provision of equipment for the national armed forces.

Furthermore, the SRSG said the conflicts in the sub-region were inter-related, therefore regional cooperation was necessary to find a solution. "We at UNAMSIL are at your disposal," he assured. Acting Speaker of Parliament, Mrs Elizabeth Alpha-Lavallie said the SRSG had alleviated concerns that members had about UNAMSIL's departure. She requested UN assistance to facilitate related interparliamentary networking sessions.

Questions and observations from parliamentarians ranged from the need to fill middle and top levels of the security forces, and problems of small arms in the region, economic development, and leadership.

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Help stop the crisis in

SLPP Scribe Recruits Kamajors to Attack Bonthe

Concord Times (Freetown)

NEWS

November 12, 2004

Posted to the web November 12, 2004

By Abdul Karim Koroma
Freetown

Special Court witness, TF2-071, Thursday told the court how erstwhile Sierra Leone Peoples Party (SLPP) Secretary General Victor Caulker recruited Kamajors to attack Bonthe and inflicted a generation of atrocities on the residents.

The 35-year-old witness who was lead in evidence by prosecution counsel, Raimund Sauter, says after the May 25, 1997 coup the militia outfit retreated into the surrounding villages in the district whilst the Sierra Leone Army Naval Wing took control of the town.

"Victory Caulker recruited lots of young men into the Kamanjor militia," the witness narrated and added that the Kamajors made several attempts to invade the town.

He explained that the Bonthe community raised money and sent it to Kamajor High Priest, Allieu Kondowai to plead with him not to allow the Kamajors attack the town.


But he says Kamajors defiantly attacked Bonthe from all crossing points on September 15.

"They attacked the military base and the battle lasted for two hours. And I counted 24 corpses," he said, adding, " the dead bodies I saw were those used as human shield by the Kamajors." He said it was during the attack that Caulker sustained an injury on his leg.

"They captured him at his mother's house and killed him," he stated.

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Special UN adviser on genocide warns of ethnic hate messages in Côte d'Ivoire

15 November 2004 – Voicing distress over reports of xenophobic hate speech in Côte d'Ivoire and ensuing action by armed groups, the United Nations adviser on the prevention of genocide called today for an end to impunity and warned that the situation could be referred to the International Criminal Court (ICC).

"The current crisis has deepened sentiments of xenophobia and could exacerbate already worrisome and widespread violations of human rights, which in the recent past have included extrajudicial killings, torture, arbitrary detention, disappearances and sexual violence," Juan E. Mendez said in a statement recommending possibly increasing the number of UN peacekeepers in Côte d'Ivoire to protect civilians.

Mr. Mendez, Secretary-General Kofi Annan's Special Adviser, said he had written to the UN chief to express his concern at the situation in the West African country, which has been engulfed by escalating violence since government forces attacked northern rebels earlier this month in violation of a nearly two-year-old ceasefire agreement.

At least 10,000 Ivoirians are estimated to have fled into neighbouring Liberia and thousands of expatriates have been evacuated, some with UN help, from Abidjan, the country's largest city, as anti-French rioting erupted after French troops destroyed the Government's air force in retaliation for the deadly bombing of French peacekeepers in the UN-patrolled Zone of Confidence (ZOC) separating the combatants.

UN officials have repeatedly condemned the hate messages broadcast on television and radio, most recently last Thursday when Mr. Annan himself warned that they could lead to "the devastating resurgence of ethnic conflict."

Mr. Mendez said today Ivorian authorities had an obligation to end impunity and curb public expressions of racial or religious hatred, warning that in the absence of effective action such incitement can be referred to the [ICC](#).

He recommended that national authorities put an immediate end to the propagation of hate speech and media-induced violence through official outlets, aggressively prosecute all acts of violence and incitement, and recommit themselves to the ceasefire accords that ended the fighting two years ago between the government in the south and rebels in the north.

"If the xenophobic expressions persist and they cause further evacuation of essential humanitarian relief workers, the Special Adviser recommends that the UN and Licorne (French) troops already in the field should be expanded and instructed to deploy so as to afford direct protection to civilian population at risk of attack because of their ethnic, religious or citizenship status," the statement concluded.

UN officials are concerned that the unrest in Côte d'Ivoire could spill over into neighbouring Liberia and Sierra Leone, both recovering from protracted civil wars, and Guinea where there has also been unrest.

Source: News & Business > News > \$ News, Most Recent 90 Days (English, Full Text) 

Terms: **he new york times, november 15, 2004 monday, late edition - final, section a; column 1; foreign desk; pg. 9, 1175 words, turmoil in ivory coast: once ...** ([Edit Search](#))

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The New York Times November 15, 2004 Monday

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The **New York Times**

November 15, 2004 Monday
Late Edition - Final

SECTION: Section A; Column 1; Foreign Desk; Pg. 9

LENGTH: **1175** words

HEADLINE: **Turmoil** in **Ivory** Coast: Once Again, Things **Fall Apart**

BYLINE: By **SOMINI SENGUPTA**

BODY:

Long after the precolonial gold city of Timbuktu faded from glory and Dakar's status as the capital of French West Africa expired, even after Monrovia's cosmopolitanism crumbled and the lights went out of Lome's once thriving nightlife, there was Abidjan.

Ivory Coast's largest city and commercial center, Abidjan was a port and a destination for millions of West African strivers. For more than 30 years after independence, **Ivory** Coast's autocratic founding president, Felix Houphou<3>t-Boigny, kept the doors wide open to French business interests and turned the country into the world's largest cocoa exporter. The towering Hotel Ivoire, overlooking the steamy lagoons that course through the city, was a symbol of the aspirations of a modern West African republic.

Today, just over a week after clashes erupted between pro-government protesters and French troops, French citizens continue to leave Abidjan by the thousands, at a cost of more than \$5.9 million to their government, according to Paris. Incinerated remains of shops and houses dot the city. A jailbreak in the city's main prison let loose as many as 4,000 hardened criminals. The failure of a peace accord reached last year has left the door open to a new round of war between the government of President Laurent Gbagbo and the rebels who control the country's northern half.

Perhaps most worrying of all, ethnic tensions between the peoples of north and south make the country's reunification a daunting challenge.

More and more, Abidjan looks as though it is going the way of Kinshasa, Congo's onetime boomtown, whose tree-lined boulevards and hulking skyscrapers have lately surrendered to the tropical mold.

Indeed, scenes from Abidjan over the past week looked uncomfortably familiar to Herve Ludovic de Lys, a native of Mali who was working for an American-financed aid project in Kinshasa in 1991, when an army-led pillage of that city prompted evacuations of foreigners.

"In a matter of weeks, Kinshasa was emptied of all its expatriate community," said Mr. de Lys, now the Dakar-based West Africa regional chief of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. "It's never fully recovered."

The fires that engulf Abidjan today threaten not just **Ivory** Coast. In a region of porous borders, contested natural resources and a surplus of guns and **gunmen**, no conflicts are **self-contained**. **Virtually** all **Ivory** Coast's neighbors are vulnerable.

After more than a decade of **bloodshed, Liberia and Sierra Leone have settled** into a hard-won peace but still **struggle** with the problem that **fueled** conflict in the **first place**, namely a generation of frustrated young men to whom war signals economic opportunity. To the north, Guinea simmers with political and ethnic tensions. Former **fighters in Liberia interviewed** by Human Rights Watch said they had been solicited to fight in Guinea both for and against the repressive government of President Lansana Conte.

It would surprise no one in the region if Liberian and Sierra Leonean veterans were lured now into **Ivory Coast's conflict**. Despite millions **invested** to demobilize child soldiers in **Sierra Leone and Liberia**, economic **prospects** remain dim for young men across the region.

The fighting in **Ivory Coast** "could really pull in these roving combatants who, despite significant efforts to incorporate them back into society in **Liberia and Sierra Leone**, still feel there would be economic gain," said Corinne Dufka, the West Africa researcher for Human Rights Watch. "They are lured by the short-term promise of whatever benefits they can get from looting."

Last week, on the **Liberia-Ivory Coast** border, a new act opened in the long-running drama of West Africa's refugee crisis. The United Nations refugee agency reported that 6,000 to 10,000 Ivoirians, many of them women and children, had begun piling into flimsy fishing boats and crossing a narrow river into **Liberia**. Veterans of the region's unending conflict, they told United Nations workers that they did not want to wait until full-scale fighting broke out and the river became impassable.

The danger of **Ivory Coast's** conflict to the region was not lost on West Africa's leaders, as they gathered yesterday for an emergency meeting in the Nigerian capital, Abuja. The United Nations called for an arms embargo on the rebels and the government of **Ivory Coast**, Reuters reported from Abuja.

Analysts are skeptical of any swift resolution. President Gbagbo has promised political reforms but has failed to follow through. The rebels have said they are not interested in peace talks with Mr. Gbagbo. **Ivory Coast** "has reached the bottom," Mr. de Lys said. "It will depend on how fast **Ivory Coast** finds a political solution to this crisis. The odds are quite low, actually."

Hopes for an end to the civil war that erupted in September 2002 were crushed on Nov. 4, when Mr. Gbagbo's government, in clear violation of a cease-fire agreement reached the previous year, began bombing rebel-held towns. Two days later, a government airstrike against a French military base in the rebel-held north killed nine French soldiers and an American civilian. The French retaliated by destroying most of **Ivory Coast's** military aircraft, an act that unleashed days of anti-French violence in Abidjan. In a radio address on Sunday, President Gbagbo vowed to rebuild the air force.

With the arrival of reinforcements during the past week, France now has roughly 5,000 troops in **Ivory Coast**. President Jacques Chirac said yesterday that France had no intention of withdrawing its peacekeepers, news agencies reported.

Mr. Gbagbo, who had avoided foreign reporters for the past two years, has hosted a parade of Western journalists in recent days. He blamed French troops for attacks on Ivoirians and promised an investigation into the airstrikes that killed the French peacekeepers. In a radio address broadcast yesterday, he also said the exodus of French civilians was only temporary. "They will come back," Agence-France Presse quoted him as saying from Abidjan.

Regardless of the fate of the French in **Ivory Coast**, the latest crisis there does not bode well for West Africa. Mali and Burkina Faso have already felt the economic pinch. Trade has slowed, access to the port of Abidjan has become harder, migrants who once sent home money have returned home.

The political dangers are even more worrisome. For more than a decade, a cycle of violence and want has plagued the region. West Africa's government and rebel leaders have instigated fights in one another's backyards.


On Friday, Ahmedou Ould-Abdallah, the United Nations special representative for West Africa, blamed **Ivory Coast's** leaders for inflicting "incalculable damage" on the region as well as on their own country. "How can we hope to attract foreign investment, essential for creating the jobs that so many millions of

West African youths desperately need," he asked, "if some of our leaders continue to pursue the logic of war and vendetta year after year?"

URL: <http://www.nytimes.com>

GRAPHIC: Photo: Anti-French protesters confronted leaders arriving in Abuja, Nigeria, for talks on the crisis in **Ivory** Coast. (Photo by George Osodi/Associated Press)

LOAD-DATE: November 15, **2004**

Source: [News & Business](#) > [News](#) > **\$ News, Most Recent 90 Days (English, Full Text)** 

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Mandatory Terms: **date from 11/10/2004**

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Ivory Coast denounces France as exodus continues

Reuters, Agence France-Presse
Tuesday, November 16, 2004

ABIDJAN, Ivory Coast France and Ivory Coast traded accusations Monday over last week's rioting as expatriates continued their exodus.

In the rebel-held north of the major cocoa-producing country in the world, power and water were cut for the second time since government airstrikes on key towns in the north began on Nov. 4 in violation of an 18-month-old cease-fire.

More than 5,000 foreign nationals have been evacuated from the country since Wednesday, after a week of anti-French violence and vandalism.

Even Ivory Coast citizens who hold dual citizenship have boarded aircraft over the past six days, anxious to put behind them the turmoil that has convulsed the country, once a regional powerhouse, for the past two years.

Concern that all-out war in Ivory Coast could suck in its West African neighbors has prompted a flurry of talks among African leaders seeking to stop a onetime model of post-independence prosperity from sliding into anarchy.

African leaders agreed on Sunday to support an immediate arms embargo against Ivory Coast. France was pushing the UN Security Council to approve the sanction.

The leader of the Young Patriots movement, Charles Blé Goudé, on Monday accused the French military of a "coup bid" against President Laurent Gbagbo and said the "barbaric army" should withdraw from Ivory Coast.

Blé Goudé alleged that clashes in Abidjan on Nov. 9 between "demonstrators with empty hands" and French troops had left "64 dead and more than 1,400 wounded" among the Young Patriots, who support Gbagbo.

"Relations between France and Ivory Coast are old and deep," he said. "If today there's a rift, this raises a question: Who's taking the French people hostage, the Ivorians or the French president to justify the presence of his troops."

Attempting to draw a distinction between President Jacques Chirac of France and the French people, the former student leader urged his own people to be "aware that not all the French approve of France's policies."

More than 6,000 Ivorians have fled the country on foot, mostly to northeastern Liberia, where there is little food, water or shelter due to impassable roads and Liberia's own struggle for peace after 14 years of war.

Tens of thousands of Gbagbo supporters flooded Abidjan last Saturday in an angry reaction to France's destruction of almost all of Ivory Coast's tiny air force in retaliation for an airstrike that left nine French troops and an American civilian dead.

Skeptical of claims that there were any French casualties, Gbagbo has been making the rounds of the international media to defuse some of the criticism that he was responsible for the unrest that claimed between 22 and 64 lives, according to competing tolls released by his government.

France has stopped short of blaming Gbagbo outright for the strikes, but Chirac said Ivory Coast's president was at the head of a "questionable regime" and Defense Minister Michèle Alliot-Marie on Monday called on Gbagbo's aides to stop making "racist and xenophobic declarations."

Gbagbo accused France of backing the rebels and said the deployment of French soldiers in Abidjan after the riots was akin to the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968.

IHT

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Financial Times

West African leaders back embargo in Ivory Coast

By Michael Peel in Lagos and John Thornhill in Paris

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Western African leaders on Sunday night backed a proposed United Nations arms embargo to prevent full-scale war in Ivory Coast, after President Laurent Gbagbo promoted the commander responsible for air raids that killed nine French peacekeepers.

President Jacques Chirac of France, the former colonial power whose citizens and troops in Ivory Coast were the target of mass loyalist protests last week, came close to suggesting that Paris would look to remove Mr Gbagbo from power if the situation continued to deteriorate.

Many foreigners and northerners in Ivory Coast see Mr Gbagbo's militant supporters as violently xenophobic and fear that they are determined to launch a bloody ethnic war.

"We do not want to let a system develop that could lead to anarchy or to a regime of a fascist nature," Mr Chirac said.

Leaders from six west African countries at a meeting convened in Nigeria by President Olusegun Obasanjo, African Union chairman, said they supported a motion drawn up by France that is due to be voted on by the UN Security Council on Monday.

Mr Obasanjo said he and the other leaders from Ghana, Senegal, Gabon, Togo and Burkina Faso supported "in particular" the arms embargo on all parties proposed by the motion, which also calls for travel bans and asset freezes on those deemed to be undermining the peace process.

Mr Obasanjo said he was "alarmed" to hear the electricity supply to Ivory Coast's rebel-held north had again been cut, adding to concerns that Mr Gbagbo's regime might be planning further attacks.

On Saturday, Ivory Coast announced that General Mathias Doue would be replaced as head of the military by Colonel Philippe Mangou, who oversaw three days of air raids on the north this month that killed the French peacekeepers and led Paris to retaliate by destroying government aircraft.

The air raids broke a ceasefire and were the latest blow to a French-brokered peace deal agreed last year which called for disarmament and for constitutional changes demanded by the rebels after a failed 2002 coup attempt.

About 4,000 European expatriates have left Ivory Coast since last week's looting and burning of French businesses and schools in the main city of Abidjan.