

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:

Friday, March 04, 2005

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Investigator Throws Light On Statement By Special Court Witness

By Mohamed Mansaray

Gender Crimes Investigator attached to the Special Court for Sierra Leone, Zimbabwean-born Virginia Chitanda, now labelled as a Court Witness (CW1), testified on Wednesday that it was she who obtained statement from the 19th Prosecution witness TF-2021 between September 2003 and February 2004.

TF2-021 had testified at Court Room No. 1, New England in Freetown on November 2, 2004 about Kamajor activities in the eastern region when the third CDF trial resumed.

Defence counsel for the 3rd CDF accused Allieu Kondewa, Yada

Statement-Taker Testifies

Williams, accused TF2-021 of telling lies in court with respect to his oral testimony which counsel claimed was at variance with his written statement obtained by the Office of the Prosecution.

But TF2-921 replied that he does not know how to tell lies. Consequently, the Presiding Judge, Benjamin Itoe ordered that the statement taken be brought before the court to clarify the issues raised by the defence.

CW1 Virginia Chilanda was cross-examined by Charles Margai on behalf of the CDF defence team, after being led in evidence by a prosecution counsel, Kevin Travener at Court Room No. 1 New England in Freetown.

CW1 testified under cross-examination, that she obtained statement from TF2-021 in Krio, through an interpreter, as she is not fluent in Krio language.

Asked by Mr. Margai as to who supplied the interpreter, CW1 said that the interpreter was provided by the Child Protection Agency. "I obtained statement from TF2-021 and I agree with its contents entirely," she told the court, adding that the statement was read back to the witness before he affixed his thumb print on it. CW1 further told the court that the witness was sixteen years old at the time she obtained statement from him. She testified that she mistakingly forgot to record the name of the interpreter on the cover of the statement.

However, during cross-examination by Yada Williams in November 2004, TF2-021 had denied telling the prosecution that he was trained by RUF rebels at Ngiehun in the Kailahun district when they captured him between 1995 and 1997.

TF2-021 also denied telling the Prosecution that CO Mohamed ever gave him a gun after his training.

TF2-021 went on to deny telling the Prosecution that Commander Savage shot and killed an old woman at an undisclosed location in the area, despite orders given by his boss SAJ Musa for him not to do so. "That is not my statement," he testified earlier. The witness admitted making statements to the Prosecution on three occasions.

The trials continue.

Salone Times, Friday March 04, 2005.

"Charles Taylor is an international terrorist"- *Civil Society Rep.*

A Civil Society Representative- Rev. Morie Kabo has described Charles Taylor- former Liberian President as "...an international terrorist." He explained that

people like Charles Taylor are capable of unleashing September 11 terrorist attack on any country. "We see no reason why Nigeria should be embarrassed in bringing Charles Taylor to

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Charles Taylor is an international terrorist

From Front Page
justice in Sierra Leone: knowing the amount of Nigerians that died during the war in Sierra Leone," he stressed. Rev. Kabo made this statement at a two-day conference on war victims' commemoration at the Miatta Conference Auditorium. The Civil Society Representative stated that the Civil Society is of the view that Charles Taylor must be brought to justice through the Sierra Leone Special Court; adding, "the Civil Society in Sierra Leone shares the vision of the Government of Sierra Leone in its effort to bring about justice."

Rev. Kabo also maintained that they strongly believe in accountability and explained, "if justice is to prevail in Sierra Leone, we need to have an affordable justice system for all Sierra Leoneans." He further said that mechanisms should be put in place in order to monitor, advocate and ensure that Sierra Leoneans have access to affordable justice. He however noted that Ground Commanders who were seen committing atrocities during Sierra Leone's ten-year mayhem should be brought to justice. In his remarks, the Special Court Registrar- Robin Vincent said that it would

indeed be a tragedy if Charles Taylor is not brought to the Special Court. He disclosed that the European Parliament has also called for Charles Taylor to be surrendered. He went on, "I will welcome a National Petition for Taylor to be brought to justice." An activist of the Sam Hinga Norman Help-line, Joseph Sylvester noted that traditional rulers failed to comment on the issue of Ground Commanders being indicted. He said that they should bear in mind that Sierra Leone's 149 Chiefs were also Commanders of their various Chiefdoms during the war. "What would you do when it's your turn," the Norman activist questioned.

Awoko, Friday March 04, 2005



War Crimes Prosecutor: Former Liberian President Taylor Still a Threat

By Gabi Menezes
Abidjan
03 March 2005

Menezes report (Real Audio) - Download 328k

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Charles Taylor
(file photo)

The outgoing lead prosecutor for Sierra Leone's war crimes tribunal says former Liberian President Charles Taylor remains a threat to the stability of West Africa.

Prosecutor David Crane wants Charles Taylor, who was indicted two years ago on 17 counts of crimes against humanity, to be brought before the war crimes tribunal in Sierra Leone as soon as possible.

"Charles Taylor hangs like a dark cloud over Liberia, and he needs to be turned over to the special court for Sierra Leone. He continues to meddle, not only in Liberia, but other countries within the region," he said.

Human rights groups have called on Nigeria, where Charles Taylor now lives, to hand him to the special court. But Nigeria has said that it will not do so, unless Liberia makes the request.

Mr. Crane says the former Liberian president is in contact with the current Liberian government, and, if Liberia holds elections, there is a danger that Mr. Taylor's party could win.

Charles Taylor is accused of backing rebel movements in Sierra Leone's 11-year civil war, which left 50,000 dead.

Critics of Sierra Leone's special court say that its authority has been undermined by its failure to try the former Liberian president. Mr. Crane, who will be leaving his post in July, says that he is proud of the accomplishments of the special court, where he has served for three years. He says Nigeria's decision to give asylum to Charles Taylor in 2003, when rebels besieged the Liberian capital, must be seen in context.


"This was a political arrangement to get Charles Taylor out of Liberia, to ensure that peace could start," he said. "That is something I called for during my press conference, when I unsealed the indictment against him. And again, this is all part of a process. The peace has begun in Liberia, but now it's time for justice."

A researcher for the Washington-based monitoring group, Human Rights Watch, Corinne Dufka, says it should have been made clear from the start that Mr. Taylor's Nigerian asylum was temporary.

However, Ms. Dufka commends the general success of the war crimes tribunal, which she says has renewed Sierra Leoneans' faith in justice. She says that, for the first time, with the special court, you have people who are government ministers and people who have wielded a tremendous amount of power who are being brought to justice for their crimes.

Human rights groups want the United Nations to put more pressure on West African countries to

hand over Mr. Taylor to the court. Thousands of rebels and militia fighters have been disarmed in Sierra Leone, which has become one of the United Nations' biggest peacekeeping successes in Africa.

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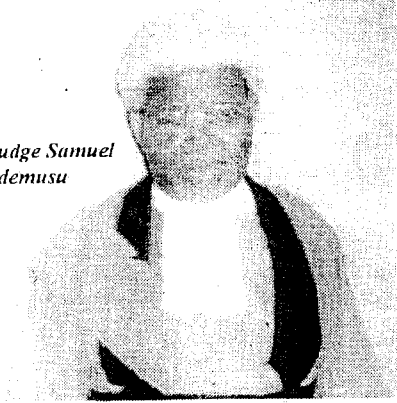
 Print Version

No bail for Halloran

By Kelvin Lewis

Trial Judge Samuel Ademusu has dismissed convicted Australian Police officer Peter Halloran's application for bail pending the hearing of his appeal. Halloran's lawyer Browne-Marke had earlier presented a passionate case to the Judge, giving assurances that the Australian government has agreed they will not issue

Trial Judge Samuel Ademusu



Halloran with a new passport if he is given bail, just to make sure that he remains in the country until his appeal is determined. Defence lawyer Browne-Marke also presented a medical

report given by the Prison doctor M.L. Contor Coker in which he stated that Halloran
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No bail for Halloran

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was now suffering from Bronchial Asthma, Severe Hypertension and Pulmonary Embolism." Acting Prosecutor W.K.A. Barber argued then that though the medical report could only be properly challenged by another medical doctor, yet he wondered how Halloran could have held the position he held in the Special Court. He maintained that "the medical certificate is either not reliable or that it is ex-post-facto the condition of the applicant as at the time

of his conviction." In his ruling, Justice Ademusu said that he was satisfied that "there is an overwhelming documentary evidence" that "the Australian government is interested in the case, he added that at least through formal channels" the Australian government will "put pressure on the Sierra Leone government to ensure that the appeal is heard and determined without any undue delay." With regards to the assurances given by the Australian High

Commission. Justice Ademusu said "I see them wrapped in a diplomatic bag and as such no weight can be attached to them." On the issue of the medical report, the Judge said "I do not see anything alarming in both medical reports," adding "neither shows any strange ailment." He maintained further that "bronchial asthma and hypertension are common ailments in this country", noting that the medical report "does not indicate that the ailments diagnosed cannot be maintained by the senior medical officer in charge of

the prison hospital." The learned Judge stated that since Halloran's "home government has shown so much concern about his health (he) believes no

harm or danger will be allowed to befall him." He concluded saying that he is unable to say that Halloran's appeal "has shown exceptional circumstances to

justify granting bail" It is not clear yet what the next step will be, but Halloran's lawyer has already filed an appeal against his "conviction and sentence, on the grounds of mixed fact and law."

Awoko, Friday March 04, 2005



ABC Online

AM - Peter Halloran refused bail

[This is the print version of story <http://www.abc.net.au/am/content/2005/s1315754.htm>]

AM - Friday, 4 March , 2005 08:20:00

Reporter: Zoe Daniel

TONY EASTLEY: Jailed Australian police officer Peter Halloran remains in a West African prison this morning after his bail application was refused.

The former head of the Victorian Homicide Squad and UN special court investigator was convicted of sex offences last week and sent to the notorious prison in the capital Freetown for 18 months.

Overnight the same judge that jailed Halloran ruled that there were no exceptional circumstances to warrant releasing him while his appeal was being heard.

Africa Correspondent Zoe Daniel reports.

ZOE DANIEL: Peter Halloran's health and wellbeing in the dangerous confines of Pademba Road prison were key reasons to get him out when his lawyer argued in favour of bail last week.

But Judge Samuel Ademusu disagreed. In his written reasons for rejecting the bail application, obtained by the ABC, he says:

"Bronchial asthma and hypertension are common ailments in this country. If the appellant is suffering from them then I would say it is just unfortunate for which I sympathise with him."

Peter Halloran is a white, former investigator at Sierra Leone's UN special court, convicted of indecent assault of a 13-year-old black girl. However the Judge doesn't believe he'll be harmed in the predominantly black jail, which also houses some of those he's helped put there.

The Judge believes the level of Australian Government interest in the case will help keep him safe.

"... bearing in mind that the appellant's home government has shown so much concern about his health, I believe no harm or danger will be allowed to befall him."

Nevertheless Peter Halloran's lawyer, Nicholas Browne-Marke, will immediately lodge a further bail application with the Court of Appeal which will be heard next week.

NICHOLAS BROWNE-MARKE: I am getting papers together now as you're speaking to me.

ZOE DANIEL: Peter Halloran was not in court, but his lawyer says he's in reasonable spirits despite the conditions in which he is living.

NICHOLAS BROWNE-MARKE: Oh, he's going to cope as best as he could, as he can, in the

circumstances. It's as difficult for him as in the case of any other person convicted and sent to prison. It's an extremely difficult way of life, I mean, the conditions are very, very severe.

ZOE DANIEL: The Australian High Commission had made a series of guarantees to the court, promising that it wouldn't allow Halloran a second passport to allow him to leave the country and pointing out that a highly decorated Australian police officer was not likely to jump bail, but the judge said:

"As for the assurances being expressed, I see them wrapped in this case in a diplomatic bag and as such no weight can be attached to them."

Lawyer Nicholas Browne-Marke says the judge suggested the Australian Government spend more time trying to speed up Halloran's appeal than trying to get him out of jail.

NICHOLAS BROWNE-MARKE: (inaudible) the Australian Government and they're expressing concern about the bail they should be expressing concern about the matter being (inaudible).

ZOE DANIEL: The court of Appeal is expected to hear the bail application next Tuesday.

This is Zoe Daniel reporting for *AM*.

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Alerting Humanitarians to Emergencies

CRISIS PROFILE: W. Africa teeters between war and peace

03 Mar 2005

Source: AlertNet

By Katherine Arie



A man pulls a trolley in Ivory Coast's main city of Abidjan in early February 2005.

Photo by LUC GNAGO

Ivory Coast, Liberia and Sierra Leone are all struggling to build peace after years of brutal conflict.

These were wars in which instability, rebels and floods of refugees all spilled across frontiers. Child soldiers were recruited in huge numbers and forced to commit atrocities. Cross-border political meddling prolonged the bloodshed.

Now that the three countries have settled the conflicts within their own borders, each has different prospects for peace and recovery. But all remain vulnerable to new violence and state failure, which threaten the stability of the entire region.

IVORY COAST ON THE BRINK

Of the three countries, analysts say Ivory Coast is the most likely to see its peace process crumble.

A stalemate over the terms of a peace agreement brokered by France in 2003 came to an abrupt end in late February 2005 when government forces attacked a rebel outpost, sparking international concern that war could again engulf this once-prosperous and peaceful West African country.

The attack by forces loyal to President Laurent Gbagbo on Logouale, located in rebel-held territory in the northwestern part of the country, was the first outbreak of violence since the government broke an 18-month ceasefire and bombed rebel strongholds the previous November.

It all but shattered the flagging peace process.

Civil conflict in Ivory Coast had effectively split the country of 16 million between the government-controlled south and the rebel-held north.

France now has 4,000 troops in the Ivory Coast supporting a 6,000-

strong U.N. peacekeeping force, which holds the line and guards the buffer zone between the north and the south.

The peace process provided for the disarmament of rebels and paved the way for general elections in October 2005. But rebels had refused to disarm before political concessions were made. Meanwhile, President Gbado had refused to grant concessions before the rebels disarmed.

The U.N. mission in Ivory Coast said it had restored order in Logouale, but the rebels vowed to fight back.

The rebel movement, called the New Forces, said in a statement the attack was the government's "umpteenth violation of the ceasefire".

"By these acts of war, Mr. Laurent Gbagbo has just buried for good the mediation efforts of South Africa and the international community," the statement said.

The government has denied responsibility for the attack on Logouale and blamed pro-government militia for independently starting an uprising against the rebels.

Fresh violence in Ivory Coast has revived concern that turmoil could destabilise the region as a whole.

Violations of the ceasefire in November 2004 prompted African leaders to call an emergency crisis meeting of the African Union's Peace and Security Council in Abuja, Nigeria, late in the year.

The Council said restoration of peace was paramount since neighbouring Liberia and Sierra Leone are both post-conflict states that are seen as particularly fragile.

Guinea, which borders Ivory Coast, Liberia and Sierra Leone, is also in a precarious position, having supported thousands of refugees from its neighbours as well as Liberian rebels.

According to Crisis Group, a Belgian-based think tank, Guinea's Forest Region, which borders Liberia and Ivory Coast, is supporting some 100,000 displaced Guineans who had sought economic opportunities in Ivory Coast and then fled when major violence erupted there in 2002.

LIBERIA TRIES TO FORGIVE AND FORGET

Two years after the end of Liberia's 14-years civil war, the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) said 14 of Liberia's 15 counties were finally safe for the return of refugees.

UNHCR, which has repatriated some 7,500 Liberians from neighbouring countries since October, said close to 100,000 Liberians had returned home on their own in 2004. Though many refugees are wary about security in Liberia, UNHCR expects another 340,000 to return home by the end of 2007.

Liberia, under the control of a transitional government headed by Chairman Gyude Bryant, is stable, though it has come under fire

recently from the World Bank for failing to crack down on rampant corruption.

As a result of that corruption charge, the United Nations has maintained an embargo on valuable exports of diamonds and timber, put in place originally to prevent then President Charles Taylor from buying arms.

Liberia is set to hold general elections in October 2005, and there is new hope for reconciliation between former rebels and government officials, including ousted President Taylor, who was forced to flee the country amid fighting in the capital of Monrovia in August 2003.

In February 2005, Sekou Conneh, the leader of the biggest former rebel group, Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD), called for a general amnesty for everyone who fought in the war, including his old foe, Taylor, now living in Nigeria. Conneh even suggested that Taylor be allowed to return home.

Taylor is wanted by a special war crimes court in Sierra Leone, where he is accused of fomenting brutal rebellions. Human rights groups support setting up a similar court in Liberia, one modelled on South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

But Conneh has said it was best to forgive and forget.

"Instead of people calling for people to appear before the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the tribunal in Sierra Leone, it is good to just forgive in the interest of peace," Conneh told Reuters.

In the meantime, rebuilding has begun in earnest in areas devastated by the war, particularly the former rebel base of Lofa County in the northwest corner of the country.

According to the United Nations, one-third of all the refugees who fled the country came from Lofa. The county also accounts for almost one-fifth of the 500,000 internally displaced people inside Liberia.

Lofa County is one of the country's most inaccessible, especially during the rainy season between April and October, when dirt roads turn to mud and become impenetrable.

But hope abounds. Before his resignation in late February 2005, then UNHCR High Commissioner Ruud Lubbers opened the first - and only - school in Lofa. Thousands of refugees and internally displaced people are returning to the war-torn area to rebuild their lives.

Even so, experts agree that Liberia has a long way to go before stability is certain.

According to Crisis Group, the international community needs to make long-term commitments - on the order of 25 years - to enable new political forces and necessary institutions to develop.

The think tank says quick fixes of the judicial and law enforcement systems, and even the military forces, are not sufficient and would

leave Liberia vulnerable to crime, corruption and renewed violence.

SIERRA LEONE ON PATH TO PEACE

Best known in the Western press for brutality against civilians in its 11-year civil war and for introducing the world to so-called conflict diamonds, Sierra Leone is on a steady path to peace.

Sierra Leone's war, which killed 20,000 people and displaced half the country's population of 5 million, officially ended in 2002. National elections were held later that year.

A U.N.-mandated Special Court for Sierra Leone has indicted 11 people for war crimes and is seeking to extradite Liberia's former president, Charles Taylor, with support from international human rights groups.

Disarmament of the rebel Revolutionary United Front has been completed. In September 2004, the U.N. peacekeeping force, which at one point was 17,000 strong, handed over control of the capital, Freetown, to local forces in a symbolic but crucial step toward Sierra Leone's self sufficiency and peace.

But the country isn't out of the woods yet. Millions of dollars worth of diamonds are still smuggled out of Sierra Leone every year. Corruption is rife, and thousands of decommissioned soldiers are out of work and looking for something to do.

Sierra Leone is still coming to terms with atrocities committed during the war, many of them against children. Communities are also grappling with severe poverty.

Significant political reform ensuring good governance and accountability has yet to take hold, and the victims of the war, along with thousands of decommissioned soldiers, need funding for more education and training programmes.

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The China Business Summit
London, Mar 10th 2005

Economist.com

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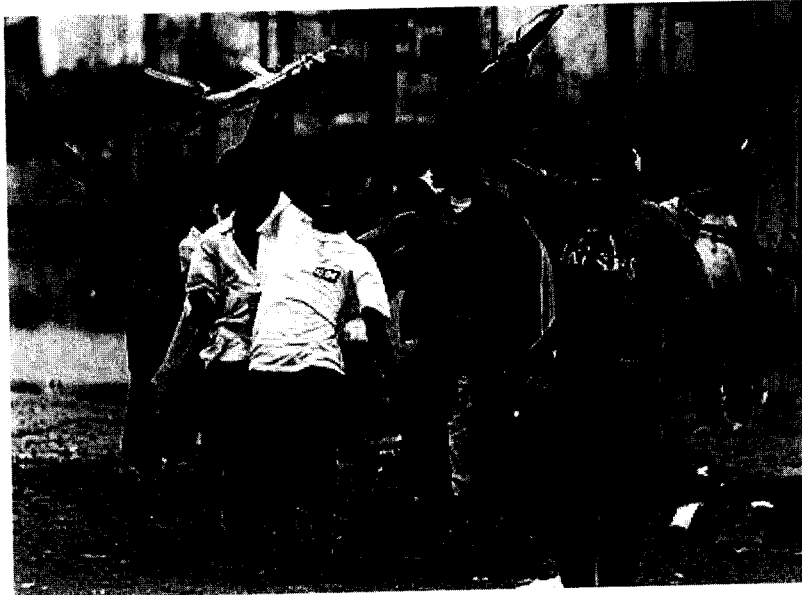
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Rebuilding failed states

From chaos, order

Mar 2nd 2005 | FREETOWN AND MONROVIA
from The Economist's print edition

Reuters



What can the world do about state failure? Surprisingly, quite a lot

[Get article background](#)

ONE and a half years ago, Liberia was a failed state. Two separate groups of drug-emboldened teenage rebels controlled most of the country. A gangsterish president, Charles Taylor, was losing control even over Monrovia, the capital, where all sides were firing heavy artillery into office blocks and looting strategic spots such as the brewery. In August 2003 (see [article](#)), *The Economist* reported from that unhappy city that "famished townfolk have already eaten their neighbours' dogs and are reduced to scrounging for snails."

Today, thanks to the world's largest UN peacekeeping force, Liberia is calm. Some 15,000 blue helmets are keeping the streets more or less safe. There are still road blocks, but not the old sort, where militiamen stretched human intestines across the road as a signal to motorists to stop and be robbed. The UN road blocks are typically manned by disciplined Bangladeshis, of whom the locals vocally approve.

"They are very nice," says Richard Dorbor, an office assistant in Buchanan, Liberia's main port. During the civil war, rebels looted the town clean: Mr Dorbor points to the dark patch on the wall where the kitchen sink used to be. But then the Bangladeshis came, overawed them and disarmed them, without

a single casualty.

"In any group, there are good boys and bad boys," says Colonel Anis Zaman, the Bangladeshi commander in Buchanan, relaxing in cricket whites on a Sunday. "With the bad boys, you have to be firm. You say: 'If you want to be funny, look at our APCs [armoured personnel carriers] and machineguns. We can be funny, too. So let's just put down the guns and talk.'"

Scholars cannot agree how to define a failed state, but most concur that state failure is one of the world's gravest challenges. The World Bank frets about 30 "low-income countries under stress" (LICUS). Britain's Department for International Development (DFID) worries about 46 "fragile" states.

This article is concerned with the toughest cases: states that have lost control over most of their territory and stopped providing even the most basic services to their people. Only Somalia unambiguously fits this definition. A larger group of countries, mostly in Africa, are close to failure (see chart). Some, such as Zimbabwe, are cantering towards a cliff-edge. Others, having recently failed, appear to be recovering, if fitfully: Afghanistan, Haiti, Sierra Leone and Liberia all fall into this category.

Candidates for failure				
Selected "Low-income countries under stress", as defined by the World Bank				
	Population m	GDP per person 2002, \$	Average annual GDP, % change, per person, 1990-2002	Conflict since 1990
Afghanistan	29	*	*	✓
Angola	14	710	-0.1	✓
Burundi	7	100	-3.9	✓
Cambodia	13	300	4.1	✓
Central African Republic	4	250	-0.2	✓
Congo, Democratic Republic	53	100	*	✓
Congo-Brazzaville	4	610	-1.6	✓
Guinea-Bissau	2	130	-2.2	✓
Haiti	8	440	-3.0	✓
Laos	6	310	3.8	X
Liberia	3	140	*	✓
Myanmar	49	*	5.7	✓
Nigeria	136	300	-0.3	✓
Papua New Guinea	6	530	0.5	X
Somalia	10	*	*	✓
Sudan	34	370	3.1	✓
Tajikistan	6	180	-8.1	✓
Togo	5	270	-0.7	X
Uzbekistan	26	310	-0.9	X
Zimbabwe	13	480	-0.8	X

Source: World Bank

*Data not available

States can fail because of external shocks, or they can decay from within, or both. Afghanistan and Angola collapsed when their colonial overlords suddenly withdrew. In Sierra Leone and Congo, the state was looted into putrescence, thus inviting rebellion and ultimately, collapse.

It is tough to mend a failed state, but the fact that some formerly failed states are now doing quite well—eg, Mozambique and East Timor—shows that it is not impossible. And although treatment is costly—the UN mission in Liberia costs \$800m a year—the cost of doing nothing is often higher. When governments collapse, it is not only bad for citizens who thereby lose the law's protection. It can also

cause regional or even global repercussions.

Lawlessness, it is often argued, creates space for terrorists to operate. This is sometimes true: there are almost certainly al-Qaeda operatives lurking in Somalia and the wilder parts of Pakistan. But the most-cited example, Afghanistan, does not really support this argument. Osama bin Laden used Afghanistan as a base not because it was a failed state, but because its government invited him to.

The chief reason why the world should worry about state failure is that it is contagious. Liberia's civil war, for example, infected all three of its neighbours, thus destabilising a broad slice of West Africa. Congo's did the same for Central Africa.

State failure is contagious

Lisa Chauvet and Paul Collier of Oxford University have tried to measure the cost of a typical poor country becoming a LICUS, ie, as unstable as Nigeria or Indonesia, but nowhere near as bad as Liberia. They added together an estimate of growth forgone because of instability and an estimate of the spillover effect on neighbouring countries, and arrived at the startling figure of \$82 billion.

Since this is more than the world's entire annual aid budget, it suggests that even costly interventions, if they help to stabilise a failing state, are likely to be worthwhile. Looking only at war-torn states, Mr Collier and Anke Hoeffler, also of Oxford, found that three types of intervention were highly cost-effective, even before one considers the value of saving lives.

One good idea is to try to restrict the sales of commodities that fuel war. Extractable minerals often provide both the means to fight and an incentive to do so: rebels in Sierra Leone, for example, dug diamonds to pay for arms, and fought to seize power so they could grab all the mines. A global embargo on "conflict diamonds" has reduced the flow of cash to similar rebel groups, thereby probably foreshortening a war or two at minimal cost.

Another worthwhile tactic is to offer generous aid to war-flattened countries, once they have stabilised a bit, so that they can rebuild their buildings and institutions. Mr Collier and Ms Hoeffler estimated that increasing aid to post-conflict countries by the equivalent of 2% of GDP per year for five years, starting half a decade after the war ended, would cost \$13 billion but yield \$31.5 billion in benefits.

By far the most cost-effective way of stabilising a failed state, however, is to send peacekeepers. Mr Collier and Ms Hoeffler calculated that \$4.8 billion of peacekeeping yields nearly \$400 billion in benefits. This figure should be treated with caution, since it is extrapolated from one successful example. In 2000, a small contingent of British troops smashed a vicious rebel army in Sierra Leone, secured the capital and rescued a UN peacekeeping mission from disaster.

The most cost-effective way to stabilise a failed state is to send peacekeepers

Not all interventions go so well. But a study by the RAND Corporation, a think-tank, suggests that the UN, despite its well-publicised blunders, is quite good at peacekeeping. Of the eight UN-led missions it examined, seven brought sustained peace (Namibia, El Salvador, Cambodia, Mozambique, Eastern Slavonia, Sierra Leone and East Timor), while one (in Congo) did not. An earlier RAND study had looked at eight American-led missions and found that only four of the nations involved (Germany, Japan, Bosnia and Kosovo), were now at peace, while the other four (Somalia, Haiti, Afghanistan and Iraq) were not, or at any rate, not yet.

The comparison is not entirely fair. The Americans took on tougher targets: Iraq has more suicide-bombers than East Timor. On the other hand, the UN had punier forces and budgets at its disposal. The annual cost of all 11 UN peacekeeping operations today is less than America spends in a month in Iraq.

A cautionary but hopeful tale

Liberia illustrates some of the opportunities and pitfalls for peacemakers. The country was founded by freed American slaves in the 19th century, who at times enslaved the indigenous population, but also brought laws, roads and industry to Liberia. By the 1960s, the country was one of the most prosperous in Africa.

Its descent into mayhem began in 1980, when a semi-literate master-sergeant named Samuel Doe disembowelled the president in his bed and seized power. As violent as he was corrupt, Doe scared most of the middle class into emigrating, causing the average Liberian income to plummet by three-quarters in ten years.

Charles Taylor, an opportunist who had trained as a guerrilla in Libya, started a revolt against Doe in 1989. Doe was caught and filmed being tortured to death in 1990, but the civil war continued, on and off, for another 13 years. Mr Taylor emerged as the most fearsome warlord, and was elected president during a ceasefire in 1997, after promising voters that if they spurned him, he would go back to war. His campaign slogan was: "He killed my ma; he killed my pa; I'll vote for him."

Once in the executive mansion, he ruled like a mafia boss, grabbing a slice of every sizeable business and wasting his rivals as if they were money. He did not even pretend to provide the services that normal governments do. Asked whether he would restore electricity to Monrovia, he advised people to buy generators. His misrule provoked a fresh civil war, and he used obscene tactics to defend his turf.

"I've never seen things like this before," says Daniel Lomboy, a Filipino policeman hired by the UN to investigate Liberian war crimes. "In one mass grave, we found [the remains of] a pregnant woman whose fetus's bones were outside her stomach but inside her dress." Mr Taylor's men sometimes took bets as to the sex of an unborn child, he explains, and then had a look.

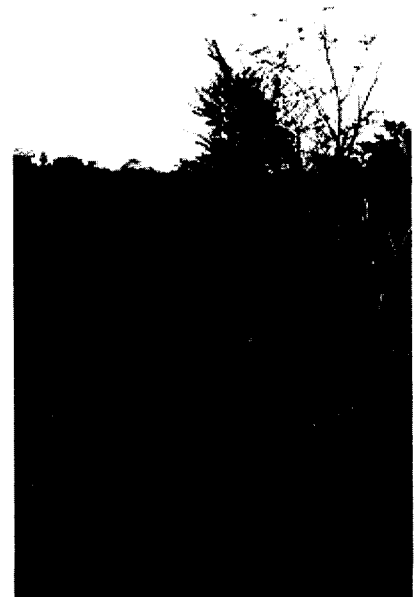
Eventually, Mr Taylor made too many enemies. In return for a share of the loot, he armed rebels in all three neighbouring countries. Guinea and Côte d'Ivoire retaliated by backing Liberian rebel groups. In June 2003, George Bush said it was time for Mr Taylor to go, a suggestion he underlined by parking warships off Monrovia. Nigeria offered Mr Taylor sanctuary if he came quietly and ceased to meddle in Liberian politics. He flew into exile, where he remains, still plotting.

A peace deal brought the two anti-Taylor rebel groups into a power-sharing transitional government with some of Mr Taylor's former lieutenants. The United States, the UN and Nigeria insisted that those with the most blood on their hands should not be ministers. So the government now consists of personable but weak ministers with scary deputies. Elections are scheduled for October. In the meantime, the UN is trying to make the country safe for rough-and-ready democracy.

The UN secretary-general's "special representative" in Liberia, a forceful American called Jacques Klein, is the most powerful man in the country. He may lack an "executive mandate", including the power to arrest people, such as the UN had in East Timor, but his budget is roughly ten times larger than the Liberian government's. A UN embargo on Liberia's main exports (timber and diamonds) remains in force, pending proof that the money is not falling into the wrong pockets.

Mr Klein put 48 Liberian "generals" (with noms de guerre such as "General Peanut Butter" and "General Fuck-Me-Quick") on the UN payroll, so that they would help him disarm their men (and boys and girls). The ex-fighters were offered incentives to surrender their guns: \$300 and help with school fees or vocational training. About 100,000 handed in weapons or ammunition, which is encouraging. But not everyone is happy.

Solomon Dennis, for example, was abducted from a scripture class when he was 13 and press-ganged into Charles Taylor's army. Now 18, he wants to resume his studies, but he complains that the school fees



the UN promised him have not been paid, so he can't. Like most former fighters, who have typically learned the joys of consumerism by looting the towns they passed through, Mr Dennis is not content to go back to his village and be a peasant. In a country with almost no jobs, such desires can be dangerous.

Liberia's main railway needs a bit of work

Those who did not fight, meanwhile, think it unfair that the killers are rewarded. "They only help the bad people, not the good ones," fumes Thomas Mambo, a former book-keeper who lost his home and job during the war and now squats with 75 other people in a blackened and gutted building that used to belong to Liberia's old ruling party, the True Whigs. "If the UN doesn't help us, we'll take up arms, too."

Liberia is small (with a population of only 3m), accessible from the sea and blessedly free of citizens who imagine they have a sacred duty to kill peacekeepers. This may be why it has proven simpler to pacify than, for example, the vast and nearly landlocked Democratic Republic of Congo, where nine blue helmets from Bangladesh were killed last week.

But pacification is only the first step. To ensure that a recovering failed state does not fail again, it needs a government that is legitimate and competent enough not to invite another rebellion. And nation-building is the hardest task of all.

Pacification is only the first step

For an illustration of how utterly the Liberian state has decayed, consider the once-busy port at Buchanan. The railway that once brought iron ore there from an inland mine has been swallowed by the bush. The iron-ore processing depot on the quayside has been stripped to its girders, as have most other buildings. A single ship sits at an odd angle in the harbour, with a tree growing out of its deck. Four swaggering youths in flip-flops accost your correspondent and demand to know what he is doing. They introduce themselves as three majors and a colonel from the Liberian security forces.

Practically nothing works in Liberia. There is no piped water, no functioning justice system and the closest approximation to a middle class is 60,000 civil servants who have hardly been paid in 14 years. There are 450,000 prosperous and well-educated Liberians, but they live in America and show no sign of returning. Liberia is not even ranked on the UNDP's annual "human development index", for lack of data. "We're fighting to get to the bottom of the list," says the UN's Mr Klein.

The only large organisation that functions adequately in Liberia is the UN. Besides keeping the peace, it helps refugees return home, inoculates babies, feeds a fifth of the population and trains local teachers, policemen, judges, army officers and so forth. This is helpful, but it is hard to support such a weak government without supplanting it. Because the UN offers the best salaries in town, and actually pays them, it often ends up poaching the most able public servants.

The transitional government is better than its predecessor, in that it is less murderous. But it is not noticeably less corrupt. A senior UN official accuses it of making "no effort at all" to deliver social services.

The only large organisation that functions adequately in Liberia is the UN

The hope is that this will change after elections in October. There are dozens of possible candidates for the presidency, many of whom have no agenda beyond securing the top job, but there is at least a chance that someone honest will be elected. George Weah, a retired soccer star, is uniformly popular and far too rich to need to steal, but he has no political experience. The worst fear is that Charles Taylor or another warlord might sponsor a successful candidate and then pull the strings.

"Good governance has never crossed the doors of this country in 150 years," admits Thomas Nimley, the foreign minister, "But now we are willing to learn." Jerome Verdier, a human-rights lawyer in Monrovia, is less sanguine. "If the next government is as corrupt as the current one," he says, "we'll have another war."

If the UN were suddenly to pull out, Liberia would collapse again. But it won't pull out suddenly or soon. Sierra Leone, Liberia's neighbour, which collapsed just as bloodily in the late 1990s, offers a

heartening example. Three years ago, it was in roughly the same situation as Liberia is today, held together only by 17,000 blue helmets. The peacekeepers have pulled out gradually, as the Sierra Leonean army has grown stronger with British training. After the last peacekeepers leave, Sierra Leone's elected government will still be shielded by a British promise to send back its troops if rebels attack it. The country is still poor and ill-governed, but it is no longer a charnel house, so it has a chance.

An important reason for optimism is that with the UN's help, Sierra Leone is holding to account those most responsible for despoiling it. A UN-backed special court indicted the 13 worst alleged war criminals. Two or three have since died, but David Crane, the chief prosecutor, argues that putting the others on trial strikes a blow against the culture of impunity that plagues Africa. Sierra Leoneans will see justice done on men who used to be untouchable. That could be the first step towards establishing the rule of law in a country that has never known it.

One indictee flagrantly evades arrest: Charles Taylor, whom the court is applying to have extradited from Nigeria. The Nigerians are not keen, having given him their word. But Mr Crane argues that Mr Taylor has violated the terms of his sanctuary agreement by continuing to meddle in Liberian politics, and predicts that he will soon be handed over.

Ultimately, fixing failed states is a job for the people who live in them. Outsiders can topple despots or crush rebels, and sometimes should. They can also offer cash and advice to help locals rebuild shattered institutions. But unless the fashion for colonialism returns, which it probably won't, they will not accept responsibility for governing the world's worst trouble spots. There will be no rest any time soon for the peacekeepers.

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