

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, July 06, 2005

The press clips are produced Monday to Friday.
If you are aware of omissions or have any comments or suggestions please contact
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**UNMIL Public Information Office Media Summary 5 July 2005**

[The media summaries and press clips do not necessarily represent the views of UNMIL.]

International Clips on Liberia

THISDAY Newspaper

Nigeria May Take Taylor's Case to AU, ECOWAS

By Frank Kintum with agency reports, 07.05.2005

Nigeria may be forced to report to ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African States) and African Union (AU) if western nations continue to mount pressure that former Liberian leader Charles Taylor, is released for trial at a UN-backed war crimes tribunal, President Olusegun Obasanjo has said.

Local Media – Newspapers**There's No Evidence of Taylor Interfering in Liberia's Politics, UN Envoy Says**
(The Inquirer)

- UNMIL Officer-in-Charge Abou Moussa told UN Radio in New York recently that UNMIL had no evidence of exiled former President Charles Taylor interfering in Liberian politics though there were widespread reports.

Nigerian Parliament Issues Ultimatum for Taylor's Release to War Crimes Court

(The New Broom)

- As Nigeria comes under increasing international pressure to extradite former Liberian President Charles Taylor to face trial for war crimes in Sierra Leone, the Nigerian parliament has reportedly issued a 90-day ultimatum to the government to take the decision.

Local Media – Radio Veritas

(News monitored yesterday at 18:45 and 21:30)

Nigeria is Blackmailed for Asylum Offer to Taylor Says Leader

- Nigerian President Olushegun Obasanjo has told fellow leaders at the ongoing African Union summit in Libya that his country is being blackmailed for granting asylum to former Liberian President Charles Taylor.

Complete versions of the UNMIL International Press Clips, UNMIL Daily Liberian Radio Summary and UNMIL Liberian Newspapers Summary are posted each day on the UNMIL Bulletin Board. If you are unable to access the UNMIL Bulletin Board and would like further information on the content of the summaries, please contact Ms. Kadiatu Konteh at kontehk@un.org.



Nigeria May Take Taylor's Case to AU, Ecowas

This Day (Lagos)

NEWS

July 5, 2005

Posted to the web July 5, 2005

By Frank Kintum With Agency Reports
Lagos

Nigeria may be forced to report to ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African States) and African Union (AU) if western nations continue to mount pressure that former Liberian leader Charles Taylor, is released for trial at a UN-backed war crimes tribunal, President Olusegun Obasanjo has said.

A special Sierra Leone court, set up to try suspected war criminals from a civil war that killed 50,000 people in the impoverished nation of 5.4 million people, has asked the United Nations Security Council to help bring Taylor, on asylum in Nigeria, to justice.

The Security Council of the United Nations has blamed Taylor for fueling war across West Africa, including Liberia and Sierra Leone, where rebels hacked off limbs, burned civilians to death and forced drugged children into battle.

"At this stage, I am not reporting, so far, we are managing the process and we are talking to those we need to talk to," Obasanjo told the 5th AU Summit in Sirte, Libya yesterday.

He, however, said that "nothing should be done advertently or inadvertently that will create credibility problem in conducting our affairs in the continent or elsewhere".

He said: "if the pressures and harrassment abate and if considered necessary, we will formally place the matter before the AU and ECOWAS for decisions."

"We should never do anything to destabilise the smooth transition process going on in Liberia and thereby once again destabilize West Africa," he said.

Obasanjo said that Nigeria did not unilaterally take Taylor into exile on its territory and therefore must not be harrassed unnecessarily for doing so.

He said Taylor was taken into exile in Nigeria to stop the bloodbath in his country.

"I received him (Taylor) for and on behlf of the AU. We were applauded then for finding a unique peaceful African solution to a potentially dangerous and bloody situation," he said.

Obasanjo said that at the time Taylor was granted asylum, the UN Secretary General, security council and all its permanent members individually endorsed and supported the action.

He said at that time, " the now branded indictments of Charles Taylor had been mentioned in Sierra-Leone."

"Without substantiated new allegations against Charles Taylor for wrongdoings in his country or in another country since he came to Nigeria, we are being pressured, harassed, blackmailed and intimidated.

"We are even threatened to hand over Charles Taylor to them contrary to the terms of his voluntary departure from his country," he said.

Obasanjo had earlier warned in August 2003 when the Liberian leader was being brought to Nigeria for exile that "Nigeria will not be harassed for taking Taylor,"

He said there were conditions for accepting him, adding that Taylor was brought into Nigeria on agreed terms.

In May, the United States House of Representatives passed a non binding resolution urging Nigeria to turn over Taylor to the special court in Sierra Leone that indicted him in March 2003 on 17 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Taylor was a major topic in a meeting held early May, between Obasanjo and United States' President George Bush.

Turning to the summit, the AU chairman said Africa would be the focus at both the meeting of the G-8 in the UK during the week and the UN summit in September.

He said that focus would be on Africa's slow pace of development, increasing level of poverty and the rising rate of unemployment in the continent.

"These are no doubt unimpressive indicators, which can only be redressed through a genuine commitment by the international community to help Africa out of its doldrums," he said.

He said for the continent to achieve the millennium development goals, it would require not only debt forgiveness, "for which we have been vigorously campaigning.

"It will also require a massive inflow of finance through repatriation of corruption-tainted funds in foreign banks."

Obasanjo said the continent should receive the fulfilments of commitments made by its development partners, new funds through investments and Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) and its own collective will to uplift itself.

He reviewed the security situation on the continent and expressed satisfaction in particular with the situation in Cote d'Ivoire.

He said all the contending parties in Cote d'Ivoire had renewed their commitments to peace in their country.

He also prayed that the forthcoming elections in Liberia on Oct 1, 2005 would be a success.

At least 40 African leaders are attending the fifth ordinary summit of the AU, with three flash points of Cote

d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Sudan expected to be the main issues to be discussed.

The summit will also finalise decision on Africa's representation on the proposed UN reforms, on which the council has endorsed two permanent seats and five non-permanent seats for the continent.

Nigeria, Egypt and South Africa are top contenders for the two slots for Africa. Nigeria has since set up a Presidential committee headed by former military leader, Abdulsalami Abubakar for the sensitization of its citizenry for Nigeria's quest for the UN seat.

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Nigerian President Aggrieved By Harassment Over Taylor

BuaNews (Tshwane)

NEWS

July 5, 2005

Posted to the web July 5, 2005

By Richard Mantu

Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo has decried what he calls "constant harassment, intimidation and blackmail" meted against his country for refusing to hand over Liberia's former President Charles Taylor to the International Criminal Court.

Speaking at the African Union (AU) Heads of State and Government Summit here, President Obasanjo said while the international community applauded when he agreed to host Taylor on behalf of the AU, he now faced harassment.

"We are being pressured, harassed, blackmailed and even intimidated and eventhreatened to hand over Charles Taylor contrary to the terms of his voluntary departure from his country," the AU chairperson told his peers at the assembly.

He said if the pressure continued he would inform the AU and the Economic Community of West Africa (ECOWAS).

"We should never do anything to destabilise the seemingly smooth transition process going on in Liberia and thereby once gain destabilise West Africa," President Obasanjo cautioned.

The Special Court of Sierra Leone and the International Criminal Court have indicted Mr Taylor to face allegations of a "rule of torture, rape, persecutions, crimes against humanity, and war crimes".

He left for Nigeria under the auspices of the AU, which requested President Obasanjo to host him. This came after the AU convinced Mr Taylor to voluntarily give up power for the sake of peace in the West African country and the region.

South African President Thabo Mbeki and former Mozambican President Joaquim Chissano accompanied Mr Taylor to Nigeria after he agreed to step down and leave the country.

However, President Obasanjo said he was now shocked at the backlash the country received from human rights groups who are "baying for Mr Taylor's blood".

Observers at the Summit, said the "blackmail" Mr Obasanjo referred to came from some quarters in the

international community which were using the Taylor issue as a pre-requisite for Nigeria to get its massive debt cancelled.

Mr Taylor, a former rebel leader who was later democratically elected President in 1996, left for Nigeria in October 2003, as part of an intervention by the African Union's western regional block of nations to rescue Liberia from sliding into a tit-for-tat civil bloodshed.

Mr Taylor had been facing pressure from rebel forces who wanted to oust him.

Regarding the situation in Darfur, Mr Obasanjo warned Sudanese warring parties that the conflict in the country would be prolonged if they continued to dishonour terms of peace agreements.

The Nigerian President hosted the Inter-Sudanese Peace talks in June in Abuja, which brought leaders of the Sudanese government together with rebel groups Sudan Liberation Movement and Justice Equality Movement.

"Let me once again appeal to the Sudanese Parties that the conflict in Darfur will only be prolonged if they continue to maintain the hard-line posture they have exhibited during the Inter Sudanese Peace Talks in Abuja, or their continued refusal to honour the terms of agreements they have entered into," he said

The crisis in Darfur started in February 2003, when Khartoum was said to have unleashed a militia group named the Janjaweed to quell a rebel uprising against the government.

The African population in Darfur has accused the Arab militia of systematically carrying out an ethnic cleansing campaign against them.

But the Khartoum authorities have denied involvement in the campaign. -

NW Health launches its security policy

Mafikeng - For the first time ever the North West Department of Health has its own security policy and is launching it today.

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that North West Health safeguards the lives of its staff, clients and stakeholders, security of its assets, property and information.

According to the department, the policy will also enlighten all affected parties on the definition of access control, confidentiality, communication security, and public records.

North West MEC for Health Mandlenkosi Mayisela said there was a need for the department to sensitise and popularise the policy within the department and to various stakeholders with interest to security matters.

"Our challenge as the department is to encourage and make sure that it becomes the responsibility of every departmental employee to always adhere to this policy and any security measures thereof," said Mr Mayisela.

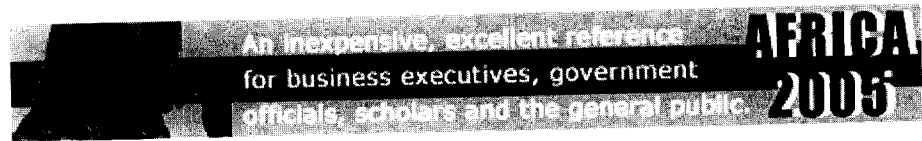
He added that its significance lies in that it is a guidance policy that does not discriminate. It is for departmental employees and stakeholders across the board.

The department's acting director of communication; Tebogo Lekgethwane said that before coming up with this policy, the department followed the Minimum Information Security Standards (MISS) and the Provincial Security Policy.

This new policy, he said, was richer, combined the two policies the department used and was unique to the department.

Representatives from National Intelligence Agency, South African Police Services, managers from different security companies, departmental employees and representative from the National Department of Health are attending the launch.

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Vice President Campaigns in London

The Independent (Freetown)

NEWS

July 5, 2005

Posted to the web July 5, 2005

By Abu Whyte Fofanah
Freetown

Vice President Solomon Berewa who aims to become president in 2007, is lobbying for support in the Sierra Leone Peoples Party UK and Ireland branch and has declared that it was President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah who gave him the green light to succeed him.

He has addressed them at a meeting attended by a cross section of members of the SLPP UK & Ireland Branch that was held at a five star Ascott Hotel in Mayfair. The Minister for mines and mineral resources Mohamed Swaray Deen, the Sierra Leone High Commissioner to the UK Tejan Jalloh and his deputy James Allie were among those who attended the meeting.

According to Moijueh Kaikai, a party stalwart in UK, the idea of the meeting came about from an earlier meeting on Sunday, June 27 between the Chairman of the branch Mr Tamba Lamina, and the Secretary General of the Branch Harold Saffa, the High Commissioner and VP Berewa himself. Apparently, Tamba Lamina advised the VP Berewa to meet with the SLPP UK & Ireland branch general membership to present and explain himself.

Berewa is reported to have highlighted the following points. Referring to President Kabbah, VP Berewa said, "God loves us (Sierra Leonean's) so much that he gave us President Kabbah". Referring again to President Kabbah as a war time leader and himself as a would be peacetime leader (President), the VP said, "Each generation has it's own type of president". VP Berewa stated that because President Kabbah loves Sierra Leone so much, and because he (Kabbah) would like to see his plans and efforts sustained, continued and implemented, Kabbah made a deliberate decision to choose him (Berewa) as a successor to carry out unfinished policies and plans. VP Berewa described the current leadership as "a leadership with a succession plan, "The President said I should succeed him" the VP is reported to have said. Berewa stated that he was more or less the 'heir apparent'.

With regard to Charles Margai, the VP said Margai was allowed back into the party with certain conditions. VP Berewa never stated what the conditions were. "I will ensure no ill to fall on Sierra Leone again. To make sure that people who have not had the opportunity to practice the act of states craft do not handle the mantle of power" As Attorney General, I (Berewa) brokered the peace for Sierra Leone" .I was not responsible for Hinga Norman ". . Hinga Norman is one of those presently tried by the Special Court for war crimes in Sierra Leone . He was the coordinator of the pro-government Civil Defense Force militia during the war

Is Berewa fit to be a president? He said, " I am the most qualified to be president because I am VP, have acted on numerous occasions as President and represented the President overseas".

VP Berewa then asked, "Are you going to put the country in the hands of people who cannot perform"? Look at their record . We should try to put Sierra Leone up through the leadership,". Obviously referring to Charles Margai again, VP Berewa said, "I don't want to be president because my dad was Prime Minister. If they can't do the job, let them not do it. Give them something else to do. Look at their track record". On his track record, he said. "I studied in London and my track record is good, very good".

VP Berewa also went on to say, "I have been the longest party member out of all the contestants. I joined the SLPP in 1961 and have been in the front line since then. You can not want to be educated and then just jump to form five, you have to start from form one", he said in apparent reference to other Presidential aspirants.

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Charles Taylor -- meddling from afar?

ZWEDRU, 30 Jun 2005 (IRIN) - It's Sunday afternoon and the ramshackle cinema is packed to the rafters for the matinee showing -- 'The Rise and Fall of Charles Taylor'.

A cheer goes up from the Liberians watching the film in this onetime rebel stronghold as the former president boards the plane that will take him out of the country and bring the 14-year civil war to an end. "Bye Bye," one woman yells, frenetically waving her hand at the screen.

Sporting his trademark white suit, Taylor went into exile in Nigeria in August 2003, casting himself as a "sacrificial lamb" and shrugging off international accusations that he fomented civil wars across West Africa.

But nearly two years later as Liberia prepares for presidential and parliamentary elections and a return to democracy, the former warlord still looms large in the nation's psyche and diplomats and international researchers say he continues to pull political strings from abroad.

In Zwedru, the former headquarters of the Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL) rebel group, hundreds of men, women and children crammed onto the creaking wooden benches of the shack-cum-cinema to watch Taylor's life story unfold with fuzzy images and broken sound.

After training as a guerrilla fighter in Libya, Taylor launched a bush war on Christmas Day 1989. His faction gained the upper hand and he was finally elected president in 1997 but it was to be another six years before the war finally ended.

Most people in this eastern town, which lies just 30km from the Ivorian border, were glad to see Taylor go, but some worry that his departing words "God willing, I will be back" may prove prophetic.

"We are happy that he's not here. He's a terror," said Zwedru resident Sam Nuah. "He ensured there was no future for young people. Kids that should have been in school were out fighting."

Even in Gbargna, in the middle of Taylor's former heartland, it is not difficult to find people who agree. Many admit to fighting alongside him and calling him "Pappy", but say they have now turned against him after experiencing two years of peace.

"I do not want to see that man again. If he came back, so would the fighting. He's a bad person but he's good at fooling people," said 27-year-old Mustapha Konneh.

Power to mobilise

Zwedru residents expressed similar worries about the power that this teacher-turned-warlord could exert from abroad.

"Taylor has charisma, he's able to mobilise people. Just talking on the radio, he can move people in Liberia," said Ernest Freeman.

These preoccupations are shared by some of the biggest names on the diplomatic stage.

"Concerns about former President Charles Taylor's continued interference in the political process in Liberia have increased," UN Secretary General Kofi Annan said in his latest briefing to the Security Council two weeks ago.

The Liberian elections are due to be held on 11 October

Any such interference would flout the terms of Taylor's exile deal -- an agreement which is currently protecting him from standing trial in Freetown on 17 charges of crimes against humanity committed during Sierra Leone's decade-long civil war.

The main charges laid against Taylor in the UN-backed Special Court in Sierra Leone are that he supported the brutal rebellion waged by the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) from 1991 to 2002, supplying its leaders with guns and ammunition in return for smuggled diamonds. He is also widely believed to have supported an abortive invasion of Guinea in 2000.

But prosecutors say Taylor has continued to play his destabilising games since going into exile in the remote town of Calabar in the Niger Delta.

They allege the former president wired US \$160,000 to his supporters in the Liberian capital Monrovia last October to help start riots that killed 16 people and injured hundreds of others, and that despite Nigerian government assurances that he cannot leave his heavily-guarded and luxurious compound in Calabar, Taylor moves freely around West Africa,

Meanwhile, a report this month by the London-based research group Global Witness accuses Taylor of controlling or helping to finance as many as nine of the 30 or so political parties that have thrown their hat into the ring for Liberia's elections on 11 October.

"He seems to be trying to ensure he has control over Liberia in the future," Natalie Ashworth of Global Witness told IRIN on Thursday. "It would obviously be extremely worrying if someone backed by Taylor ended up winning the elections. It is critical that his influence on the upcoming polls is curtailed."

Continued meddling?

Taylor's party, the National Patriotic Party, has chosen Roland Massaquoi to be its presidential candidate. Some party members have said that Taylor, who picked Massaquoi to be the Agriculture Minister in one of his cabinets, made telephone calls during the nomination process to influence the voting.

Taylor is also accused of continuing to meddle in affairs beyond Liberia's borders. The Special Court publicly named him as being involved in a January 2005 assassination attempt on ailing Guinean President Lansana Conte, and warned he would probably try to topple his long-standing rival again.

Diplomats and aid workers say Conte provided arms and rear support bases for the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) rebel movement which swept into Monrovia in 2003 and hastened Taylor's departure.

In spite of all the allegations, Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo has so far refused to expel Taylor until he has concrete proof that the terms of his asylum agreement have been violated. But the pressure on him is mounting.

A coalition of some 300 African and international groups, including Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, is the latest to bang the drum. It issued a statement on Thursday calling on the African Union, of which Obasanjo is currently president, to take action.

"Taking a stand will not only bring justice to the countless victims of Charles Taylor and their families but also show that the AU is serious about combating the disastrous cycle of impunity in West Africa," the statement said.

A UN Security Council resolution last week stopped short of asking for Taylor to be handed over to Sierra Leone's Special Court, but Britain's UN ambassador told reporters that there were sensitive discussions taking place in Africa on the subject.

"Taylor cannot avoid coming to justice and at some stage his impunity will have to end. The only question is how do we do it. We didn't believe this (resolution) was the vehicle to achieve that," Emyr Jones Parry said, declining to elaborate further.

Where should justice be done?

Liberians seem divided about whether Taylor should stand trial before the UN-backed Special Court in Freetown, a war crimes tribunal which has a mixed panel of international and Sierra Leonean judges.

"For the time being he should not go to Sierra Leone because I do not think he would get a fair trial in Freetown. Maybe he should be tried at the Hague," said one resident in Zwedru, who would only give his name as Charles.

Other Liberians want him to face justice on home soil, where his worst crimes were committed. Several hundreds of thousands of people died in Liberia's civil war, which began when Taylor launched a rebellion against the then president Samuel Doe.

"Come and see the former Liberian president" says the cinema poster "He should be brought here and judged here," said 23-year-old Tuboy Mulbah, who lives opposite the burnt-out shell of Taylor's old residence in the central town of Gbargna. "But it's not just him. If he faces justice then a whole lot of other people have to face justice too."

The 2003 peace agreement which ended Liberia's civil war, provided for the creation of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission to shed light on past atrocities, but said nothing about establishing a war crimes tribunal to try those responsible for committing them.

Obasanjo has promised to send Taylor back to Monrovia to stand trial, should a future elected government in Liberia ever decide to press charges against him and demand his extradition.

With just a little over three months before the crucial elections, there is no chance of Taylor disappearing off the agenda.

Oliver Jellu, the cinema manager in Zwedru, says he screened the Taylor documentary to educate voters in his own small way.

"We'll soon be having elections in Liberia and it's a reminder of what happens when there's a bad person in power," the 25-year-old told IRIN. "This time we have to be careful not to choose another warlord."

Taylor won a landslide victory in Liberia's last presidential election. The unofficial slogan accompanying his 1997 campaign was "You killed my ma; you killed my pa; I'll vote for you".

Although many people voted for Taylor out of fear he would restart the war if he lost the election, the war continued after he won. Taylor's government failed to invest in national reconstruction and idle and impoverished ex-combatants were sucked back into fighting and looting.

"Of course we are worried about things repeating themselves," said Stephen Musa, the head of one of the camps for internally displaced people that are still home to about 140,000 Liberians. "But we are hoping that a truly new government will make a difference, and will think about the whole country from head to toe."