

**SPECIAL COURT FOR SIERRA LEONE
PRESS AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE**



PRESS CLIPPINGS

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

as at:

Friday, 17 August 2007

Press clips are produced Monday through Friday.
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Radio France International

Thursday, 16 August 2007

LEAD-IN: The Defence lawyer for former Liberian President Charles Taylor have said that sanctions against the former leader are hindering his ability to defend himself against war crimes charges. Speaking on Wednesday, Courtenay Griffiths said that the sanctions imposed by the United Nations are having a negative effect as witnesses sympathetic to Taylor are afraid to come forward in case they too are targeted. In June, Taylor's lawyers asked the UN-backed Special Court for Sierra Leone to lift the sanctions. Taylor's accused of arming, training and controlling the Revolutionary United Front rebels of Sierra Leone in exchange for diamonds used to fund the conflict.

[Transcribed by the Press and Public Affairs Office]

The Analyst (Monrovia)

Thursday, 16 August 2007

Taylor's New Lawyer Visits

By Jonathan Browne

The Lead Counsel of the new defense team appointed by the Special Court for Sierra Leone to represent ex-Liberian President Charles Taylor in The Hague, Courtenay Griffiths, (Queen Counsel), has called on the Liberian government to sponsor a trial monitoring group to witness the proceedings.

"When the US has a team in court every day following the trial, why is the Liberian government not showing any interest in what happens to Mr. Taylor?" asked Mr. Griffiths as he reminded Liberians that the trial is for them as "Taylor is still a Liberian citizen".

Mr. Griffiths, who is visiting Liberia for the first time following his appointment in July, made the call on Wednesday in Monrovia at a press conference held at the Mamba Point Hotel.

"The eyes of the world will be on Liberia during this trial; this trial must be accessible to all Liberians", he stressed.

"The Liberian government should make sure the average man or woman on the street can follow the proceedings by means of provided television coverage in public spaces in the capital".

Members of his delegation to Monrovia include Mr. Morris Anyah and Mr. Roger Sathotha, and former Liberian Justice Minister, Cllr. Laveli Supuwood. The delegation is expected to visit Sierra Leone before returning to The Hague.

It remains to be seen what the Liberian government's response to the defense team leader of former President Taylor. The former president is said to still have a lot of followers in Liberia besides ordinary Liberians, who may be interested in following the trial.

It can be recalled that the last appearance in court in The Hague by Mr. Taylor in June was widely discussed at various quarters in Monrovia including university and school campuses, markets and work places as well as by ordinary people.

Mr. Taylor, who is currently in detention in the Hagues, has already pleaded "not guilty" before the Special Court on all counts of an 11-count indictment including war crimes and crimes against humanity for allegedly amongst those bearing the greater responsibility for atrocities committed in the neighboring country of Sierra Leone.

It is further alleged that Taylor supported through the provision of ammunitions and other technical supports to the key rebel group commonly referred to as the Revolutionary United Front (RUF).

The trial had been scheduled for 20 August, but the prosecution sustained a motion for postponement filed by the defense counsel to allow them ample time for preparation. Mr. Taylor's lawyers recently requested the court to extend the trial to 7 January, 2008.

To the proposed action forwarded to the Special Court, the prosecution flatly rejected the motion on grounds that the duration of the delay is a matter solely within the discretion of the trial chamber, with due regard to the detainee's rights to a fair trial.

The prosecution has supported a call by the defense for the rearrangement of a new date in September to commence the trial.

The lead counsel further raised concerns that the UN travel ban coupled with international pressure on the Government to implement assets freeze as requested by the Security Council, is having a "chilling effect" on witnesses in Liberia, who purposefully want to talk to the defense team.

"There is a climate of fear where those sympathetic to Mr. Taylor are afraid to speak out as a precautionary move to safeguard themselves from sanctions", he noted.

However, the United Nations has guaranteed that it would relax the travel ban of any former official who may wish to testify before the court to enable that person to go to The Hague and do so.

Other members of the new defense team, headed by Mr. Griffiths, a Jamaican-born British trained lawyer, include Co-Counsel Andrew Cayley and Terry Munyard, both of whom are also educated in Britain.

The Presiding Judge of the Special Court, Ugandan lawyer Julia Sebutinde, appointed the Defense Counsel after Mr. Taylor sacked his first lawyer, Karim Kahn in June this year, saying he will defend himself.

The lead counsel, Griffiths, is a graduate of the London School of Economics with lot of experience in criminal law.

United Nations  Nations Unies

United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL)

UNMIL Public Information Office Media Summary 16 August 2007

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

International Clips on Liberia

Taylor lawyer wants travel ban on Liberians lifted

By Alphonso Toweh

MONROVIA, Aug 16 (Reuters) - Former Liberian President Charles Taylor's defence lawyer has called for the lifting of a U.N. travel ban on Taylor's former associates so they could serve as witnesses in his war crimes trial. Once one of Africa's most feared warlords, Taylor is on trial by a U.N.-backed court in The Hague accused of instigating murder, rape and mutilation by backing rebels during a decade of civil war in neighbouring Sierra Leone. The United Nations imposed travel bans in 2003 against members of his administration to prevent them from undermining a transition to democracy in Liberia after he fled the country at the end of its own, parallel civil war.

International Clips on West Africa

Sierra Leone's vote sparks battle of the airwaves

By Susan Njanji

FREETOWN, Aug 16, 2007 (AFP) - Sierra Leone's elections, the second vote since the west African country emerged from one of the most brutal wars in modern history, has sparked a new battle for the airwaves. Days after accusing the main opposition All People's Congress (APC) of broadcasting post-election hate messages on its Rising Sun Radio, the ruling Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP) on Tuesday night conducted a test transmission for its own radio station.

VOA 16 August 2007

Sierra Leone's Election Leader Asks Supporters for Patience

By James Butty, Washington, D.C.

Sierra Leone's Independent Electoral Commission released new results Wednesday from last Saturday's presidential and parliamentary elections. Ernest Koroma of the opposition All Peoples' Congress (APC) party remains in first place, followed by incumbent Vice President Solomon Berewa of the ruling Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP). Charles Margai of the People's Movement for Democratic Change (PMDC) party continues in third place.

Local Media – Newspaper

Taylor’s Lawyer Outlines Obstacles in War Crimes Case

(The Analyst, Heritage, New Democrat, The News, Daily Observer, The Informer, Liberian Express, The Monitor and National Chronicle)

- Addressing a news conference at a local hotel in Monrovia on Wednesday, the Lead Council of former Liberian President Charles Taylor said that there were hurdles in gathering defense witnesses due to the UN Security Council’s travel ban against potential witnesses.
- Courtenay Griffiths claimed that the sanctions imposed by the United Nations Security Council are having a "chilling effect" as witnesses sympathetic to Taylor are afraid to testify on his behalf for fear that they might be subjected to travel ban and assets freeze.
- However, the claim by Mr. Griffiths contradicts an earlier resolution by the Security Council that it would relax travel restrictions for those willing to testify at the trial.
- Griffiths, who was appointed as Taylor's new lawyer last month, has meanwhile urged the court in The Hague to again delay proceedings which have already been repeatedly postponed.

UNMIL Announces Systematic Drawdown Plan

(The News, The Inquirer, The Informer, The Analyst and The Monitor)

- The Special Representative of the Secretary-General Mr. Alan Doss told announced at a news conference Wednesday that the UN Mission in Liberia would commence a drawdown of its troops beginning next year.
- The Monitor newspaper in an article catalogued a number of challenges to national security when UNMIL leaves the country although the SRSG has repeatedly reminded the population UNMIL will not pull out of the country in a hasty faction.

Local Media – Radio Veritas *(News monitored yesterday at 6:45 pm)*

SRSB Announces Specifics of Drawdown Plan for UNMIL

(Also reported on ELBS and Star Radio)

Taylor’s Lead Counsel Says UN Travel Ban on Potential Witnesses is Hampering

(Also reported on ELBS and Star Radio)

President Announces New Appointments in Government

- A release from the Presidency said that President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf announced the appointment in Government of Kehlebu Gongloe as Assistant Labour Minister for Statistics and Research and Cole Bangalu, Assistant Labour Minister for Trade Union Affairs. Others are Rufus Kaine as Deputy Gender and Development Minister for Planning and Administration, Annette Kiawu, Deputy Gender and Development Minister for Research and Technical Services, Jerelimick Piah, Assistant Gender and Development Minister for Planning and Administration, Patricia Kamara, Assistant Gender and Development Minister for Research and Technical Services as well as Peter Korvah, Deputy Agriculture Minister for Technical Services and Borka Sheriff, Deputy Agriculture Minister for Administration.

(Also reported on ELBS and Star Radio)

Attorney-General and Bar Differ on Need for Fast Track Court on Rape

- Correspondents said that the National Bar Association opposed to a fast track court to try rape cases with the Association’s Secretary-General, Counsellor Jallah Barbu adding that fast track courts would fail like the quick impact projects of UNMIL and other groups.

(Also reported on ELBS and Star Radio)

Telecom Regulator Chief Linked to Bribe-Taking to Assign Frequency

- Correspondents said that the Chief Administrative Officer of the West Africa Telecommunications, Dr. Peter Coleman refuted claims that the Company fraudulently acquired its frequency instead, he said that it went through all the processes to acquire its frequency of 21Mh in the 3.5 Band assigned by technicians on orders of the Liberia Telecommunications Authority Head, Dr. Saah Abdullai Vandi.
- Dr. Coleman alleged that Dr. Vandi withheld the official validation of the frequency because he wanted "due diligence" of US\$300,000 and a plane ticket, which the Company refused to give.

(Also reported on ELBS and Star Radio)

Deported Liberians Call on Compatriots not to discriminate against them

- A spokesman of the 22 Liberians deported from the United States on criminal charges, Mr. Sumogba Kollie requested his compatriots not to pre-judge them on the basis of the charges leveled against them by the American Government, stressing that their deportation was relevant because sometime in life, one must return home. Mr. Kollie said that there were many immigrants including Liberians in the US whose rights were been abused and unjustly charged.

(Also reported on ELBS and Star Radio)

Press Release, 16 August 2007
UNMIL/PIO/PR/92

Secretary-General's report calls for mandate of UN Liberia Mission to be renewed

Monrovia, Liberia – Liberia has made some “remarkable achievements for a country that is emerging from a situation of complete lawlessness and whose State institutions and infrastructure had crumbled”, states Secretary-General Ban Ki Moon’s fifteenth progress report on the UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL).

Meanwhile, describing the remaining challenges as “formidable”, the Secretary-General has recommended that the Mission be renewed. According to the report, this would facilitate the ongoing process of “consolidating peace and rebuilding State institutions [that is] still in its formative stage”.

The report outlines the stages of UNMIL’s consolidation and drawdown plan, and identifies key requirements that must be met by the Government of Liberia before the Mission closes its operations there. “Until the army and police can stand on their own and the justice system is rehabilitated and accessible to all Liberians, the country will remain vulnerable to the risk of a return to lawlessness,” it emphasizes. Furthermore it states, “providing alternative livelihoods for ex-combatants and deactivated security sector personnel, creating employment opportunities, ensuring genuine national reconciliation, addressing the needs of the victims of the conflict, alleviating poverty and delivering basic social services to the population, are critical tasks that must be accomplished to ensure durable stability in Liberia.”

During a press conference at UNMIL headquarters today, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Alan Doss gave the assurance that “UNMIL will work with the Government to ensure that peace in Liberia is not put at risk”. Describing the proposed drawdown as “gradual and calibrated”, Mr. Doss added that “the people of Liberia have invested too much in securing peace. UNMIL is not about to leave”.

Since the Mission’s establishment in 2003, the Liberian Government has achieved progress in a number of areas, including restructuring of the security sector, implementing measures to lift diamond and timber sanctions, fighting corruption, improving the national human rights situation, increasing school enrollment by 40 per cent, implementing an interim poverty reduction strategy, and restoring the electricity and water supply to some parts of the capital, Monrovia, among others.

However, the report noted that a lot of work remains to be done to ensure that the national security forces – military and police – are fully functional and ready to take over from UNMIL. Also, the “uncertain situation in Côte d’Ivoire and Guinea poses additional challenges to stability in Liberia”.

Therefore, the report is recommending a measured drawdown plan that would culminate with about 9,750 peacekeeping troops and UN police still on the ground in Liberia at the end of 2010.

One of the core benchmarks for the drawdown is the establishment a 500-strong Liberian quick reaction force in the Liberia National Police, which should be in place by July 2009. Action has already begun on key elements, such as the selection and training of the force’s leadership.

UNMIL was established to support the peace process in Liberia following a fourteen-year civil war in the country. Currently, the Mission has a total strength of 14,140 military troops and 1,180 police personnel.

Press Release, 16 August 2007
UNMIL/PIO/PR/93

UN Envoy meets US congressional delegation to discuss future of UNMIL

Monrovia, Liberia – The Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Alan Doss, today met visiting United States congressmen and women at the Monrovia headquarters of the UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL).

The congressional delegation was led by Nita Lowey of New York included Maurice Hinchey also of New York; Jessie Jackson, Jr. of Illinois; Barbara Lee and Susan Davis of California; Brad Miller of North Carolina; and Gwen Moore of Wisconsin. The members of Congress were accompanied by the US Ambassador to Liberia, Donald Booth. The delegation exchanged views with Mr. Doss on the progress made in Liberia since the end of the war, the challenges ahead and the plans for the next phase of UNMIL's operations.



UNMIL senior officials (l) and US members of Congress at UNMIL headquarters in Monrovia

In outlining the mandate of the UN Mission in Liberia, Mr. Doss said, "UNMIL will continue to support President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and her Government to prepare and strengthen Liberia's security services so that they can take over from UNMIL." At the same time, he cautioned that Liberia was faced with many serious problems, which meant that UNMIL would need to retain a strong posture for sometime to come to ensure that the current stability was not put at risk. He also thanked the United States for its efforts in helping to rebuild Liberia's infrastructure, education and health services and for its excellent collaboration with UNMIL.



Congresswoman Lowey greets US policemen serving with UNMIL while SRSG Doss (extreme right) looks on

The delegation is in Liberia to explore the provision of further assistance for the country's reconstruction. They also met with President Johnson Sirleaf and members of the Cabinet, among others.

Congresswoman Lowey congratulated UNMIL for its role in helping to restore and maintain peace in Liberia and pledged to brief her colleagues in the Congress on the need for the Mission to continue its work. The United States is one of the key partners in aiding Liberia to recover from a fourteen-year civil war that ended in 2003 and it recently cancelled more than US\$390 million of Liberia's debt.

UNMIL was established in 2003 to support the peace process in Liberia. Currently, the Mission has a total strength of 14,140 military troops and 1,180 police personnel.

Associated Press

Friday, 17 August 2007

Dutch government close to agreeing to host Hariri tribunal

THE HAGUE, Netherlands: The Dutch government is setting conditions before agreeing to host the trial of suspects in the assassination of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri, the Foreign Ministry said Thursday.

A key condition is that another country volunteer in advance to imprison anyone convicted in the suicide truck bombing that killed Hariri in February 2005, said spokesman Bart Rijs.

Foreign Minister Maxime Verhagen told Dutch radio he expects the government to agree to a request by U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon last month that the Netherlands host the court.

But Verhagen "expects some practical matters to be arranged first," Rijs said. "We insist that people ... convicted by the tribunal would not be detained after their conviction in the Netherlands but in another country."

Dutch authorities set the same condition when they agreed to stage the trial of former Liberian President Charles Taylor for war crimes in Sierra Leone. Arrangements were delayed for months until Britain agreed to find a cell for Taylor if he is convicted by the Special Court for Sierra Leone.

The Taylor trial is being held in a courtroom at the International Criminal Court on the outskirts of The Hague.

A second question concerned the financing of the Hariri tribunal, which could operate for years and cost millions, including security and salaries for staff and a panel of international judges.

"Of course, the tribunal does not need to be paid (for) by the Dutch government, it is paid for by Lebanon and the member states of the United Nations," Rijs said.

Negotiations are under way to satisfy the Dutch conditions, he said.

The exact venue in the Netherlands of the Hariri tribunal has not been chosen.

As well as the Charles Taylor trial, The Hague already hosts the U.N.'s highest judicial organ, the International Court of Justice, the International Criminal Court and Yugoslav war crimes tribunal. The country also staged the trial of two Libyans accused of the Lockerbie bombing.

The first U.N. chief investigator, Detlev Mehlis, said the complexity of the assassination suggested Syrian and Lebanese intelligence services played a role in the bombing, which killed Hariri and 22 others. Four pro-Syrian Lebanese generals have been under arrest for 20 months in the case.

Syria has denied any involvement.

Wrangling over the tribunal has fueled a political crisis between Lebanon's Western-backed government and the Syrian-backed opposition led by Hezbollah. The tensions have erupted into street battles in recent months, killing 11 people.

Business Daily (Nairobi)

Thursday, 16 August 2007

Global Court Grapples With Teething Problems

ANALYSIS

By Muriuki Albert

Nine years ago, a conference of 160 states, including Kenya, converged on Rome and adopted the Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC) leading to the creation of the first ever permanent international criminal court in the world.

Last month, the ICC celebrated its fifth year of existence amid raising interest in its activities, particularly among African states, especially so since Africa has been the only region to have cases at the court. The President of the ICC, Philippe Kirsch, a Canadian of Belgian origin, was a happy man as the ICC celebrated its fifth anniversary. But while appreciating its work, he acknowledged that ICC faces several challenges. "The Rome Statute reflects the international community's high aims for the court: to put an end to impunity, to contribute to the prevention of the most serious international crimes and to guarantee lasting respect for and enforcement of international justice," said Mr Kirsch in an email sent to all staff of the ICC on the anniversary celebrations on 17 July.

The celebrations also came with good tidings for the court, the second largest economy in the world, Japan, joined its board, leading many to believe that the largest economy - USA - would soon stop its obstinate resistance to the ICC and join it too. On 1 October, when the Statute will enter into force for Japan, the total number of state parties to the Rome Statute will be 105. The entry of Japan, which will become its biggest donor, contributing 19 per cent of the Sh7.9billion annual budget, also shows the court's changing fortunes, not only on the global arena but also in America's attitude: America has moved from outright hostility to some cautious if not friendly signals, evidence that the scepticism and fear it regarded the ICC with is waning.

During this year's American Independence Day celebrations, Mr Kirsch was invited to attend the fete at the American embassy at The Hague. That was telling. A few years back, an ICC official told me that when the body came into being, staff at the American Embassy in The Netherlands were banned from having any contact with the body, "they even feared having drinks with us," he said. Japan's entry also shows the continuing isolation of the US on the international scene and the continuing erosion of its image among world states after its Iraq war debacle. A day after Japan joined the ICC, America's biggest ally, the United Kingdom, welcomed the move and called on other states to join. "Japan's accession is a further step towards our goal of consolidating the ICC as a truly global court," British Minister for Africa, Asia and the United Nations Mark Malloch-Brown said. "Having Japan on board is important in itself, but should also encourage more states to join the ICC," he said, adding that Britain looked forward to working closely with Japan in pursuit of their "shared objectives as state parties." Such a statement, coming from a high ranking UK government official, speaks volumes of the prevailing mood in the international arena regarding the ICC and America's absence. But like all things legal, political and economic, Japan is trying to have a bigger say and stake in the running of affairs at the ICC.

A week before joining the ICC, Japan endorsed Fumiko Saiga, its special envoy on human rights issues, to run for one of the three vacant positions for a judge at the ICC. Chances that Fumiko will clinch a post are high. Although Kenya continued in its disappointing trend of not going for such high level international jobs, neighbouring Uganda has nominated Prof Daniel David

Ntanda, a professor of Law at the University of Botswana, for the post. Hopefully, in the spirit of East African cooperation, Kenya will support his candidature. Currently, the court is investigating crimes in four countries: Uganda, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Sudan (Darfur) and the Central African Republic, and has issued seven arrest warrants.

The ICC still has much to do. Many argue that its mandate is too restrictive and should be enhanced to include giving it powers to prosecute corporate entities implicated in violations of human rights. As evidence has shown in Africa, most, if not all, the conflicts on the continent are fuelled and financed by large western corporations who want to exploit the continent's vast natural resources. Conflicts in the DRC and Sierra Leone attest to this. Even in Darfur, many argue that the slow pace of bringing suspects to book is because of vested interests of corporations from countries sitting on the United Nations Security Council slowing down justice for the sake of the country's large oil resources. In the past, allegations have been made against De Beers for buying diamonds in Sierra Leone, through collaboration with a rebel group, helping it rise up to Sh8.1billion and thus fuelling the war that claimed thousands of lives.

Oil companies such as Exxon Mobil and British Petroleum (BP) have been accused of funding the forcible transfer of individuals from their land in countries such as Angola, while timber companies have been accused of dealing with deposed Liberian leader Charles Taylor.

Commit atrocities

Ms Desislava Stoitchkova, a law lecturer at the University of Utrecht in The Netherlands, has confronted the issue of the ICC dealing with corporate bodies violating human rights.

Ms Stoitchkova explains that during preliminary meetings in Rome, many non-governmental organisations and scholars had hoped that the ICC would have jurisdiction over corporations. She explains that prosecuting corporations could have been beneficial since it would act as a deterrent to their getting involved in governments and groups that commit atrocities. The way forward, according to Ms. Stoitchkova, would be to hold corporations accountable under the ICC Statute by giving the body power of jurisdiction over them. Although global politics dictates that Africa will be a testing ground for many of ICC's ventures, African states should ensure that the institution helps them and rebut any meddling that may prove to be against the economic and social well-being of its people.

Muriuki, a Business Daily reporter and an Advocate of the High Court of Kenya, was recently on internship at the ICC.