

**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:

Wednesday, 6 February 2008

Press clips are produced Monday through Friday.
Any omission, comment or suggestion, please contact
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Awoko

Wednesday, 6 February 2008

Prison officers recognised by Special Court

By Betty Milton

Ten members of the Sierra Leone Prison Service were awarded certificates on Monday after completing training in "Control and Restraint Techniques".

The Registrar of the Court, Herman Von Hebel in his statement, said the skills learned by these men increase the professionalism in the country's national authority after the graduate would have returned to the prisons service.

The Registrar maintained that, "part of legacy of the Special Court will be the strengthening of Sierra Leone's justice institutions and this special training is a significant step in that process."

The ten graduates were chosen from 55 prison officers seconded to the Special Court who underwent a four-month course aimed at teaching

prison officers how to use a minimum amount of force in dealing with uncooperative or violent detainees.

Raymond Cardinal, the Special Court's Chief of Detention, noted that most times, the presence of a uniformed officer was sufficient to deal with most situations.

Stressing that, "other times, a prison officer may be called upon to use a

minimal amount of force to prevent injury to both the staff member and the detainee.

"The action is done in a professional manner using both verbal and physical contact," Mr. Cardinal said. "The force used is just enough to meet the threat and control the incident. At all times, the use of minimum force must be justified and within the rules of detention and the rule of law," he added

BBC World Service Trust

Tuesday, 4 February 2008

By Joseph Cheeseman at The Hague.

CHEESEMAN: The tenth witness on the stand of the Special Court has testified to some gruesome atrocities allegedly committed in Sierra Leone by the RUF with the support of Charles Taylor.

Perry Kamara, a former radio operator of the RUF, told the Special Court captured women were forced into marriage. He also said children abducted were taken to some of the bases for training. Looting and pillaging of Sierra Leone's diamonds, sexual slavery, forced labour and recruitment of child soldiers are some of the counts against Charles Taylor.

Speaking confidently in his seat positioned directly opposite the three regular Judges and the alternate, Perry explained to the Court how civilians in the RUF territory were treated during a special operation.

KAMARA: Whatever village we got to or towns, the commander should pass an order that the village should be burnt down. So when we got to Nimikoro, civilians died there. We amputated them, burned down the town. We were based there for some time. We sent the fighters in the surrounding. When they went there and returned they said they burnt down most of the villages and amputated and killed civilians according to the instruction given.

CHEESEMAN: He testified that after the fall of the AFRC and RUF Government in Freetown in 1998, the forces of both AFRC and RUF retreated to Makeni. On direct examination Perry said the leadership of the two groups did not have the resources to sustain the fighters. He said Sam Bockarie therefore instructed the fighters to feed themselves and make their surrounding fearful.

KAMARA: But before Issa left, he said we were guerrillas, and anywhere a guerrilla was, you should make the area fearsome. In the RUF, when we talk about making the area fearsome, it is a word that carries different meanings. It means we should burn down houses, destroy other properties, killing, and construct [road] blockades and destroy bridges. That would help in making the area fearsome. That was the instruction he gave.

CHEESEMAN: The Prosecution insider witness also testified to the destruction of a local bank in Sierra Leone to enable the RUF (to) get money to purchase arms and ammunitions. Perry alleged U.S. dollars, Sierra Leonean currency, British pounds, and a cup filled with diamonds were collected from the bank and taken to Mr. Taylor in Liberia.

KAMARA: Later, Mosquito sent a message and said that he was going on a trip. And where he was going on this trip was Liberia to see Mr. Taylor. He said he was going to arrange for arms, ammunition and food. So when he left with the money, he returned with arms and ammunition from Mr. Taylor.

CHEESEMAN: One thing that is legally feasible under the statute of the Special Court, is that these testimonies of the prosecution tenth witness will not go untested. The defence team of Charles Taylor will later be given the opportunity to test the truthfulness of the RUF Former Radio Operator, Perry Kamara.

This is Joseph Cheeseman reporting for the BBC World Service Trust and Search for Common Ground, from The Hague.

United Nations  Nations Unies

United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL)

**UNMIL Public Information Office Complete Media Summaries
5 February 2008**

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

Newspaper Summary

Criminal Court "A" Orders Retrial in Coup Plot Case

(The Analyst, Heritage, The News, The Inquirer, National Chronicle, Daily Observer, New Vision and New Democrat)

- Criminal Court "A" Judge Charles Williams on Monday ordered the re-trial of a former army commander and a soldier accused of plotting a coup after he dismissed the guilty verdict reached by a jury last week.
- "During the proceedings the prosecutors were not able to produce evidence of the accusations levied against the defendants. Therefore, the verdict rendered by the jurors is nullified," Judge Williams ruled.
- He opted for a second trial on the grounds that the evidence backing the jury's guilty verdict was inadequate. But state prosecutors took exception to Judge Williams' ruling that the case should be retried. The State has an option to seek an opinion at the Supreme Court in order to prevent a retrial.

Liberia's Petroleum Company Says There's No Shortage of Gasoline

(New Democrat, The Inquirer and Daily Observer)

- In a statement issued in Monrovia Monday, the Liberia Petroleum and Refinery Company (LPRC) dispelled speculations that there is a shortage of petroleum products, particularly gasoline on the Liberian market.
- The LPRC says there has been no official increase in the price of gasoline on the market. The company blamed the hike on retailers whom it claims were hoarding the product to create artificial shortage, a claim Daily Observer said some retailers denied.
- Speculations of a shortage of gasoline, which began circulating late Sunday, prompted retailers to arbitrarily increase the pump price of the product far above government approved price to the disadvantage of commuters.

Media Group Says IDPs Facing Humanitarian Disaster

(Heritage)

- [sic:] The Faith-based media group, Christian Media Center says the Government and the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) have abandoned thousands of Internally Displaced Liberians and Sierra Leonean refugees in camp outside Monrovia. A release from the media group classified as dehumanizing the condition at the camps for IDPs and refugees. Christian Media Center in the release furthered that condition at the various camps are very appalling with a rise in death from preventable and curable diseases especially among children.

Press Union of Liberia Alarms over Threat on Journalist's Life

(The Inquirer, Daily Observer, The News, National Chronicle, New Democrat)

- The Press Union of Liberia (PUL) says its is alarmed over reports of an attempt on the life of the Managing Editor of The Independent newspaper, Sam O. Dean and described those

behind such madness as uncivilized. Police are currently investigation two men in connection with the plot.

Radio Summary

Criminal Court "A" Orders Retrial in Treason Case

(Also reported on Star Radio, Truth F.M. and ELBC)

Former Speaker Snowe First to Take Stand in Bribery Probe

- Speaking following a meeting with civil society institutions invited to witness the probe, the Chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, Representative Armah Sarnoh named former Speaker Edwin Snowe as the first lawmaker who will take the stand in the long awaited bribery probe.
- Representative Sarnoh said Mr. Snowe is the principal accuser and must be the first to take the stand on Wednesday.
- He however fell short of naming the other two lawmakers expected to also take the stand.
- Earlier, House Spokesman, Isaac Redd said three lawmakers were expected to be named to face the probe.

(Also reported on Star Radio, Truth F.M. and ELBC)

Eight-Member Committee Constituted to Review Price Mark Up

- An eight-member task force has been constituted to study, review and recommend a new price mark up of commodities on the Liberian market.
- The task force was set up at the end of a one-day consultative meeting and has been tasked to report its findings within two weeks.
- The committee is chaired by the Liberia Chamber of Commerce which comprises the Liberian Business Association (LIBA), The Lebanese, Indian and Fula Business Associations along with the Liberian Women Chamber of Commerce.
- The current price mark up was constituted in 1988.
- Meanwhile, participants have identified major obstacles to a conducive business environment in the country. They said high taxes; difficulty in trans-shipment of goods across borders, land issue, the Liberianization Act and dual currency are among challenges facing the business environment in the Liberia.

Star Radio *(News culled today from website at 8:35 am)*

Justice Ja'neh Admits Weakness in Judiciary

- Speaking at the first quarterly meeting of the National Trial Judges Association in Gbarnga, Bong County, Associate Justice Kabineh Ja'neh says there are grave weaknesses in the Judiciary.
- Justice Ja'neh said the lack of qualified personnel to man judiciary offices is a major weakness that is hampering strides being made to improve the court system and said a pilot survey the judiciary conducted showed that 56 percent of judicial workers in Montserrado County are high school graduates.
- Corruption, the slow pace of trials and big trial errors have been named as other key faults of the Judiciary.
- Justice Ja'neh said public demands for improvement in the Judiciary are just, especially in the face of the huge support it is receiving and urged judicial workers to conduct themselves in a way that would promote public confidence.

Star Radio (Liberia)

Wednesday, 6 February 2008

Former Rep critical of truth commission

Written by Sorbor George

A former Member of Parliament has proposed the nearly one million U.S. dollars given to truth commission by the Americans be diverted to a government's welfare programs for poor families.

Mr. Joseph Cornomia told Star Radio the Truth and Reconciliation Commission is a waste of effort, resources and time.

Mr. Cornomia believes no international laws would pardon the perpetrators because crimes they allegedly committed during the country's war years are international.

He also argued the Liberian truth commission cannot be compared with that of South Africa because the victims in South Africa benefited.

Mr. Cornomia said it was not possible for the Liberian victims to benefit when results from the TRC would be announced after twenty years.

The Analyst (Liberia)

Friday, 1 February 2008

Prince Johnson warns TRC to stop bothering him

Predicts war between G/Gedeh & Nimba if he appears

Stakeholders from political parties, civil society groups, religious, women and youth organizations converged in Accra in 2003 to find a way forward to Liberia's troubling problems as war ravaged every sector of society.

During that time, with the counsel of international partners, Liberians agreed to establish a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) to document the nation's past and reveal the truth of the heinous crimes committed from 1979 to 2003.

Now, the TRC after a protracted preparation has begun the long-awaited process of public hearing. Victims and perpetrators have told their stories, but one former warlord, now Senator for Nimba County, Prince Yormie Johnson is warning the TRC to stop inviting him.



- Sen. Prince Johnson

Our Legislative reporter reports that the former warlord says he would only appear before TRC only if Samuel K. Doe who killed Tolbert appears.

"I never told anybody that I will not appear before the TRC," Senator Prince Yormie Johnson told score of the legislative reporters yesterday in reaction to media reports that he has vowed not to appear to testify of his activities during the 14-year war.

Prince Johnson was the leader of the Independent National Patriotic Front of Liberia (INPFL), a break away faction of the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL). His faction captured and assassinated President Samuel Kanyon Doe on September 9, 1990.

The late Doe had gone to confer with the former Force Commander of the West Africa Peace Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), Gen. Anold Quinoo when he (Doe) was captured and murdered in cold blood by INPFL rebels under the command of Prince Johnson.

But nearly 18 years now Liberians by and through the TRC are inviting the former rebel leader to appear before the forum that is responsible to document Liberia's terrible past starting from 1979, but Senator Johnson said the TRC should first cite those who murdered President William R. Tolbert including Samuel K. Doe to testify before the commission.

"President Tolbert was a sitting Head of State when he was murdered in cold blood by Doe and his People Redemption Council. Some of those who killed President Tolbert are still alive, as well as those who killed the 13 government officials of the True Whig Party led administration".

"If the TRC is interested in the killers of sitting Liberian president, Doe, then his group should first appear before the TRC," he angrily responded to reporters' question.

The Nimba County Senior Senator expressed more opposition to the ongoing hearings at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and termed the Commission's invitation to him to testify as "witch-hunting".

“I will never appear before the body to explain circumstances in connection with the death of President Samuel Doe, unless the Doe’s families indict me,” the former rebel general bragged.

Prince Johnson presently chairs the Senate Standing Committee on National Defense and Security apparently due to his vast knowledge in warfare, as a former soldier of the Armed Forces of Liberia and former guerrilla fighter who allegedly participated in the Nimba Raid in 1983, the abortive evasion in November 1985 and the NPFL bush war in 1990.

Now a self-proclaim preacher of the Gospel of Jesus, Sen. Johnson speaking in his office at the Capitol Building claimed that the TRC is not doing its work effectively for which it was constituted.

Prince Johnson seems to have problem with being invited to the TRC by some commissioners, and has openly accused the Director of Information of the TRC, Richmond Anderson of insulting and castigating him during a press conference.

Mr. Anderson is yet to respond to Mr. Johnson’s allegation and several attempts to contact Mr. Anderson via phone failed as his phone was off.

“I never told any body that I will not appear before the TRC. If the body was a court of law, I won’t appear before it because the body has already found me guilty in the absence of due process” the senator indicated.

When asked whether he committed any atrocities during the war, he denied killing anybody, but several citizens who resided on the Bushrod Island during the 1990 fighting are confiding that they saw Prince Johnson kill many people, including the late AFL Col. Larry Borteh, former Youth and Sports Minister Fred Blay, musician Tecumseh Roberts, special forces commando Moses Varnie, and reportedly threw the children of several market women in the St. Paul River, in addition to shooting his fighters to death under the guise of discipline.

“I will be prepared to appear before the full bench of the TRC to explain how Samuel Doe was killed unless the Doe family indicts me,” Sen. Johnson noted.

He said as far as he concerned, he has reconciled with the relatives and family members of Samuel Doe and there is no reason why anybody should ask him to testify about the murder of Doe.

“My people, the Nimba people, will resist any attempt by the TRC to forcibly have me appeared before it (TRC) to explain circumstances in connection with Doe’s death,” adding that by explaining what his group did to Samuel Doe could ignite another war between the people of Nimba and Grand Gedeh counties.

“We don’t want to dig old wounds,” Prince Johnson asserted, and noted that citizens of the two counties have already smoked peace pipe and therefore it would be a contravention of the reconciliation drive to explain how Doe was murdered.

Ironically, Sen. Johnson cart-wheeled and said that if any victims during the 14 years old crisis accuse him of committing atrocities and heinous crimes at the TRC hearings, he would appear to openly apologize to them and the Liberian people on behalf of his group, the notorious INPFL, if the allegations against him are true.

As if killing a sitting president was any laurel-winning event, Prince Johnson boasted, “I am not the only Liberian who has ever killed a sitting head of state.”

He pointed fingers at others before him, referring to the late Samuel Doe, his kinsman Thomas Quiwonkpa, Thomas Wehsehn, J. Nicolas Podier, etc, as those who killed President William R. Tolbert and some thirteen government officials.

Besides killing Tolbert, he said Samuel Doe suffered people of Nimba County, making specific references to the killing of Nimbaians who were seeking refuge in the Lutheran Church in Sinkor, outside Monrovia.

He also mentioned the Nimba raid as one of the deadly handiwork of Doe, but observers disclosed that Thomas Quiwonkpa and his followers killed a fellow Nimbaian General Robert Saye during the Nimba raid.

But Johnson claimed, "I only came in the picture to redeem my people from captivity as they were been slaughtered in cold blood by the Doe's regime. The TRC and some Liberians should not look at me as the only wicked man from 1979 to 2003."

The Nimba lawmaker admitted that he captured and killed Doe, but claimed that other prominent Liberians, including Dr. Amos Sawyer, ailing Catholic Archbishop Michael K. Francis and some western powers were involved in the killing of Samuel Doe.

"The death of Doe was a planned amongst some powerful western countries and our politicians. To prove this, Doe was still a sitting president when Dr. Amos Sawyer, Bishop Michael Francis, Roland Diggs and several others with the support of those western countries formed the Interim Government of National Unity (IGNU), aimed at indirectly over throwing Doe's government.

As if in agreement with Prince Johnson, the brother of the slain Samuel Doe, now Transport Minister in the Unity Party-led government, Jackson E. Doe, has also said that he would appear before the TRC to testify anything about his brother's murder.

Mr. Jackson Doe told journalists recently that he is not interested in testifying before the TRC, stressing that "the Doe's family had since forgiven Prince Johnson in Lagos, and even back here in Liberia".

He noted that the TRC will re-awaken bitter feelings of the war, especially citizens of Nimba and Grand Gedeh counties. It is not known how the TRC intends to treat Sen. Johnson's reluctance to appear and testify, but the Act creating TRC gives the Commission subpoena power to make him to appear.

The Act also gives the Commission the authority to recommend criminal proceedings against anybody who becomes arrogant. There is no public testimony so far in which Prince Johnson is accused of committing heinous crimes, but observers say it may be likely that some victims who chose testifying in camera may have accused the former warlord.

Meanwhile, two ex-warlords, Alhaji Kromah and George Boley have expressed their willingness to appear before the TRC to give account of their activities during the period 1979 and 2003 in the best way possible.

Mr. Kromah led the United Liberation Movement for Democracy (ULIMO) which later split into ULIMO-K under his command and ULIMO-J under the leadership of his former General Frontline Commander, the late D. Roosevelt Johnson.

He told The Analyst recently that he would appear if invited by the TRC to testify to activities of his group, but he cannot remember committing any atrocities during the wars.

George Boley who led the Liberia Peace Council (LPC) has also said he is prepared to appear before the TRC and testify. He also claimed he committed no atrocities as commander of the LPC.