

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



The Sierra Leone Law School, on Lamina Sankoh Street

PRESS CLIPPINGS

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

as at:

Wednesday, 9 April 2008

Press clips are produced Monday through Friday.
Any omission, comment or suggestion, please contact
Martin Royston-Wright
Ext 7217

Local News

Fambol Tok Is Not Special Court / *Standard Times* Page 3

International News

23rd Witness (Protected Witness TF1-516 / *BBC World Service Trust* Pages 4-5

Taylor Trial: Blah Subpoenaed, Comments on Bokarie's Death / *Star Radio* Page 6

Liberia: Blah's Testimony Hinges On Doctor's Report / *The News* Page 7

Liberia is Amputee Football Champ / *The News* Page 8

UNMIL Public Information Office Complete Media Summaries / *UNMIL* Pages 9-11

Testimony...Hearing on the Child Soldier Accountability Act / *HRW* Pages 12-16

Standard Times
Wednesday, 9 April 2008

Fambol Tok is not Special Court

...Kailahun Chief reveals

BY MOHAMED KONNEH

The Town Chief of Kailahun Maada Alpha Ndoleh has said in Kailahun that Fambol Tok project in the district is not like the Special Court or the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC).

He said it is a reconciliation project geared towards cementing the peace in the country. Reconciliation he noted is very difficult as atrocities caused during the eleven year civil war are difficult to reconcile.

Fambol Tok Chief Ndoleh is different from the TRC and the Special Court as it is not in the country to prosecute or punish anyone.

Chief Alpha Ndoleh who was speaking at a one day district focal person executive meeting in Kailahun stated that the process is a real reconciliation process geared towards uniting families, friends and old time enemies.

Since the inception of Fambol Tok in the district a good number of people have been reconciled with one another he said.

The project managed by Forum of Conscience is having a positive impact on the people in the district with continuous sensitization at local level.

Speaking further Chief Ndoleh said that in the next one to two months they will be launching the programme in other chiefdoms within the Kailahun district.

He thanked the coordinators and the sponsors for such a wonderful initiative adding that Fambol Tok is healing the wounds left behind by the eleven year civil unrest.

The Executive Director of Forum of Conscience and Coordinator of Fambol Tok Mr. John Caulker in his opening address stated that he is happy that the people are enthusiastic about the programme.

Fambol Tok needs more of sen-

sitization and admonished the people to focus on that aspect.

Mr Caulker further stated that reconciliation is a process and that he is happy to state that the people are working towards that direction.

He advised the executive not to lose sight of the youths as they are very important in every aspect of develop-

ment. Youth he said were at the forefront during the rebel war.

In his brief statement the chief administrator Kailahun District Council Mr. Bokarie Boannie said that the sectional approach to Fambol Tok is good but there is need to involve the districts' executive. He noted that Kailahun

district suffered a lot during the war and mass graves can be seen in several areas. This is what makes Fambol Tok unique because reconciliation has been brought to the lower level he said.

We have to move forward he said and that only reconciliation will allow this motion to progress.

BBC World Service Trust

Tuesday, 8 April 2008

23rd Witness (Protected Witness TF1-516)

By Adolphus Williams, at The Hague

Charles Taylor's war crimes trial enters its second week Monday since its Easter break, with Prosecution 23rd witness taking the stand. Prosecution protected witness TF1-516 testified he and other civilians taken captive were forced to work for RUF rebel fighters.

Adolphus Williams report from the Hague.

Witness TF1-516, a Sierra Leonean said he and two of his brothers were captured by a RUF fighter called Rambo and taken to a storehouse where they were commanded to carry loads for RUF fighters. He said he managed to escape but was captured again, this time by another RUF fighter called Junior Dolo.

TF1-516 said both Rambo and Junior Dolo were Liberians fighting for the RUF.

TF1-516: The man who captured us was a Liberian. His name was called Rambo.

COUNSEL: Was he alone when you captured him?

TF1-516: There were some other armed men around him. He told us we should not move, otherwise they were going to fire. We were taken to a store. That store was for the refugees, and we were commanded to transport foodstuffs to a section of Kailahun called [unclear]. I managed to escape back to my village together with my [nine] brothers. And I was again captured by one RUF soldier who told me his name was Junior Dolo.

COUNSEL: You say you escaped and went to your village. Where was the village?

TF1-516: [Dudu Kotema]

WILLIAMS: He explained that civilians caught attempting to escape from rebel territory were instantly executed.

TF1-516: Nobody was authorised to move, otherwise you would be killed.

COUNSEL: Did you see this happen at all during your stay in the base?

TF1-516: Yes, it happened at the time we were transferred to the National Secondary School campus training base. Our colleagues, recruits escaping from the training base. At one time the instructor said "we have learned that a good number of you people are escaping. And you have been initiated in our society. So if any one of you is caught, I will deal with you accordingly." And a colleague called Jusu, I can still remember, was caught on the bypass trying to escape. And he was arrested and taken to the field. One of the instructors called Rambo told us in the muster parade that, "See what we are going to do to your colleague, because we made this announcement but it appears that you do not want to heed to it. He was shot on his leg and later on his head was cut off. He said "this will serve to you as an incentive not to escape."

WILLIAMS: The witness said civilians were instructed to raid farms and shops in search of food for rebel fighters.

On day two of his direct examination, led by Prosecution lawyer Mohammed Bangura, Witness TF1-516 said some 5,000 civilians including himself, conscripted by the rebels, were grouped in categories of fighters and simultaneously undergoing military training in different parts of Kailahun Town, in Sierra Leone.

TF1-516: On the training base, we had different groups. One, we had the SBU – that is ranging from one to twenty years – that's boys. And we had the adult group. We had the SGU, girls ranging from one to twenty years. And we had WACS – that is, Woman Army Commando Soldiers. Those were women above twenty years.

WILLIAMS: Earlier Monday, Defence lawyers ended their cross examination of Prosecution witness Isaac Monger.

This is Adolphus Williams for the BBC World Service Trust, Search for Common Ground, Talking Drum Studio, in The Hague.

Star Radio (Liberia)

Monday, 7 April 2008

Taylor trial: Blah subpoenaed, comments on Bokarie's death

The United Nations backed Special Court for Sierra Leone sitting in Hague has subpoenaed former President Moses Blah.

The court in the subpoena requested Mr. Blah to appear before it on April 14 this year to testify in the case involving former President Charles Taylor.

According to the court, willful failure on the terms of the subpoena by Mr. Blah would constitute contempt.

The court said if convicted for contempt, Mr. Blah would be imprisoned for seven years and fined two million leons, the national currency of Sierra Leone.

Mr. Blah told journalists Sunday he has already informed the court that he will not comply with the term of the subpoena for a number of reasons.

He named the reasons as poor health and on-going consultations with his lawyer and family members regarding his appearance before the court.

Mr. Blah said he would not be a tractor or a betrayer when he appears but rather say what he knows to be the truth.

Meanwhile, former President Moses Blah said he saw Sierra Leone's rebel leader Sam Bokarie in the company of Benjamin Yeaten the night before Bokarie was killed.

Mr. Blah explained Yeaten, Bokarie and other security personnel stopped in his village in Nimba County.

According to Mr. Blah, Yeaten told him that they were going to patrol the Liberian-Ivorian border.

The former President recalled he offered Yeaten and his group food and they left.

Mr. Blah said he could not actually say who killed Bokarie but was sure he saw the Sierra Leonean rebel leader in the company of Yeaten before his death.

The News (Liberia)

Tuesday, 8 April 2008

Liberia: Blah's Testimony Hinges On Doctor's Report

Monrovia

The testimony of former Liberian President Moses Blah at the International Criminal Court in The Hague, Netherlands, hinges on a medical report from his doctor who will qualify him fit to testify before the Special Court.

An aide to Mr. Blah told this paper on telephone Monday that the doctor's report is essential and would determine whether the former President will honor the subpoena or not.

The aide said up to Monday the doctor has not told the former President anything concerning his health.

On Sunday, Mr. Blah informed journalists at a press conference that he was suffering from heart problem which needs regular attention.

He did not say how long the heart problem has been bothering him.

Asked whether he would say the truth if he faces his former chief, Mr. Blah said, "I swear on the Bible I will say the truth and nothing but the truth. I will not be there to testify for or against, but answer whatever questions truthfully."

Mr. Blah has been subpoenaed by the Prosecutor of the Special Court for Sierra Leone (SCSL) to appear before it as a "fact witness" in the trial against his former chief, Charles Taylor currently taking place at Trial Chamber II of the International Criminal Court in The Hague, Netherlands.

In a Subpoena Testificandum dated March 7, 2008 with reference number (Ref/REG/155/2008/VM), Mr. Blah, a one time Inspector General of the defunct National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL), has been ordered to appear voluntarily before the SCSL next Monday, April 14, 2008, at 9:30 a.m. or show good cause why he cannot comply with this subpoena.

The subpoena placed in the hands of Mr. Blah said any willful failure on the part of the former President constitutes contempt of the Special Court pursuant to Rule 77 of the rules.

The subpoena: "Should you fail to comply, the Trial Chamber may deal with the matter summarily itself, refer the matter to the appropriate authorities of Sierra Leone or, if there are sufficient grounds to proceed against you for contempt, issue an order in lieu of an indictment and direct independent counsel to prosecute the matter," the subpoena states; adding, "If you are convicted for contempt of the Special Court you may be imprisoned for up to seven (7) years or fined up to two (2) million leones, or both."

Mr. Blah became Vice President following the death of Enoch Dogolea in 1998. He served the NPFL as Adjutant General, Inspector General and later became Ambassador to Libya, Vice President and President of Liberia when Taylor was booted into exile in Nigeria.

The News (Liberia)

Tuesday, 8 April 2008

Liberia: Liberia is Amputee Football Champ

Monrovia

The 2008 edition of the Amputee African Cup of Nations has been won by the host Liberia.

The Liberian amputees narrowly conquered their Sierra Leonean counterparts 1-0 in the grand final on Sunday, April 6, 2008.

Angola, making debut in the competition, took third place by outclassing Nigeria 5-4 on penalties.

On the way to the final, Liberia eliminated Nigeria 3-4 on penalties, whereas Sierra Leone 5-4, also on post-match penalty shootouts.

Liberia on Thursday, April 3, 2008, dragged Angola 2-0 in the final match of the first phase of the competition. The host got one goal in each half.

Nigeria defeated Angola 2-0 on Wednesday, April 2, 2008. The previous day saw Sierra Leone shocking Nigeria's Special Eagles 3-1.

The defending champions Ghana failed to show up in Monrovia, so, there were only Liberia, Angola, Sierra Leone and Nigeria that took part in the second edition of the competition.

During the opening day on Sunday, March 30, at the Antoinette Tubman Stadium (ATS), Liberia whipped Sierra Leone 2-0.

The Amputee Nations Cup continued on Monday, March 31, 2008 as Angola and Sierra Leone ended the day's first match 2-2. Sierra Leone missed a penalty in the dying minutes.

Later, Liberia was struck 1-0 in the second half by Nigeria. The Liberians could have drawn the match, but the host team hit an awarded penalty on the goal post.

The Amputee African Cup of Nations was first held in Sierra Leone, where Liberia finished in second place in 2006. Liberia also took part in the Amputee World Cup in Turkey last year.

UNMIL Public Information Office Complete Media Summaries 8 April 2008

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

Newspaper Summary

British PM Praises Liberia on Progress as President Sirleaf ends weekend visit to London

(Daily Observer, The Informer, Heritage, The News)

- President Sirleaf ended her weekend visit to London with bilateral talks with British Prime Minister Gordon Brown at which time the Liberian leader lauded the British for their support to Liberia's post-war recovery. According to reports, Prime Minister Brown also praised President Sirleaf for the progress being made in tackling the challenges facing the country and assured his government's support in enhancing Liberia's development agenda.

Treason Re-trial Goes To Ivory Coast

(The News)

- [sic:]The treason re-trial involving two former army officers, Charles Julu and Andrew Dorbor versus the Government of Liberia has been taken to neighboring Ivory Coast where two state witnesses are expected to testify against the defendants, under a procedure known as deposition.
- Deposition is a legal process where a statement or testimony is taken from a witness outside the bailiwick of a court.
- The two state witnesses, Col. Delafosse Oluai and General Tiape Kassarate, both Ivorian security officers are forbidden to testify in another court outside their country.
- According to state prosecutors, the two security officers need to testify because Col. Delafosse Oluai is a Deputy prefect of Toulepleu, a town close to Liberia and with whom co-defendant Dorbor allegedly met upon his arrival in the Ivory Coast to begin the negotiation for the purchase of arms and military uniforms to allegedly subvert the Liberian government.
- General Tiape Kassarate, a commander of the Ivorian Gendarmerie, was said to have arrested co-defendant Dorbor in Ivory Coast and escorted him to Liberia.
- A two-man delegation led by Montserrado County Attorney Samuel Jacobs and defendants lawyer Attorney Sei Luoyea Lofan Keneah, Jr., left the country Sunday on board a SN Brussels flight for the Ivory Coast to effect the deposition there Monday.

Blah's Testimony before War Crimes Tribunal Hinges on Doctor's Report

(The New Vision, The Independent, New Democrat, The News, Plain Truth, The Parrot)

- The testimony of former Liberian President Moses Blah at the International Criminal Court in The Hague, Netherlands, hinges on a medical report from his doctor who will qualify him fit to testify before the Special Court.
- An aide to Mr. Blah told this paper on telephone Monday that the doctor's report is essential and would determine whether the former President will honor the subpoena or not.
- The aide said up to Monday the doctor has not told the former President anything concerning his health.
- On Sunday, Mr. Blah informed journalists at a press conference that he was suffering from heart problem which needs regular attention. He did not say how long the heart problem has been bothering him.
- Asked whether he would say the truth if he faces his former chief, Mr. Blah said, "I swear on the Bible I will say the truth and nothing but the truth. I will not be there to testify for or against, but answer whatever questions truthfully."

Government Declares Nine Persons Wanted for Arson Attacks in Bong

(The Inquirer, National Chronicle, The News)

- The Liberian Government has declared nine persons wanted for their alleged involvement in arson attacks on three villages in Bong County.
- The Ministry of Justice wants the nine individuals to report to the Liberia National Police within 24 hours to assist with investigation into the recent incident that led to the burning down of several villages and towns. According to a Justice Ministry statement Monday, the towns include Diakpansu, Vuku Town and Kolu Town. Those declared wanted by the government are Joseph Noah, Morris Kpagai, Prince Vuku, Ralph, Black Coffee and Ernest Dennis. Others are Aaron Jarmuyah, Kerkulah Gbonkai and Charles Vuku.

Man Kills Brother following a Dispute over Grasshopper Soup

(Daily Observer)

- Early last week, a 32-year old man in an hour's dispute with his wife allegedly hit and instantly killed his younger brother, Massaboi Kokulo, in Voinjama, Lofa County. Massayan Kokulo killed his brother when the deceased attempted to intervene in a dispute the accused had with his wife over a grasshopper soup.

Radio Summary

Local Media – Star Radio (News culled today from website at 11:00 am)

'Nigerian Oil deal was not formally signed' - LPRC boss admits

- The Managing Director of the Liberia Petroleum Refining Company (LPRC) Harry Greaves has admitted that the controversial Nigerian oil deal has not been formally signed by Nigeria.
- Mr. Greaves said only Liberia through the LPRC signed the contract, which was attested by Professor Dew Mason.
- However he said the oil contract was fully executed after LPRC signed an agreement with Addax Limited to lift the oil. Mr. Greaves said the controversial oil contract was a verbal deal, as Nigeria has not signed the official document of the oil contract.
- He spoke Monday when he appeared before the Senate committee on Natural Resources. Mr. Greaves told the Senators that Liberia benefited from the equivalent amount of two hundred fifty thousand US dollars oil contract.
- The Senate Committee questioned the transparency of the Nigerian oil contract, saying Mr. Greaves unilaterally signed it. But Mr. Greaves rejected the Senate natural Resources committee's statement, describing it as a premeditated political talk.

(Also reported on Radio Veritas, Truth FM, and ELBC)

WHO Donates Drugs and Health Kits to Liberian Government

- The World Health Organization has donated a consignment of assorted drugs and health kits worth over one hundred thousand US dollars to Government.
- The donation includes mental health drugs and laboratory reagents. WHO Country Representative Dr. Eugene Nyarko told reporters the donation is in fulfillment of a promise made by WHO Regional Director.
- Dr. Luis Sambo made the pledge in 2006, when he assessed the JFK and redemption Hospitals as well other clinics in Monrovia and its environs.
- Health Minister Dr. Walter Gwenigale thanked the WHO for the donation and assured that it would be used to improve health care across the Country.

(Also reported on ELBC)

Climate Change Affects Liberia

- The Forestry Development Authority says climate change has had enormous effect on Liberia.
- The Manager of Geographic Information Systems and Remote Sensing at the FDA said the situation has led to a reduction in land in the Country.
- Mr. Augustine Johnson said climate change has caused five million hectares of Liberia's land to be degraded thus leaving the country with the land area of 37-thousand five hundred square miles.

- Liberia earlier had a total land area of 43- thousand square miles. Mr. Johnson also warned that ten years from now islands below sea levels could be destroyed if nothing is done to mitigate the level of climate change.
- Mr. Johnson however said the FDA has in place reforestation programmes to address the situation. He said a team is currently in south-eastern Liberia taking an inventory of the forest as a first step to reforestation.
- He said government has put aside thirty percent of forest for reservation and warned against the cutting of trees randomly. He pledged the FDA support to work with the Health Ministry and other partners to fight climate change.

Radio Veritas(News monitored today at 1: 30)

President Sirleaf Convenes Emergency Security Meeting

- President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf today convened an emergency national security meeting following widespread media coverage of armed robberies and mob violence across the country. Fresh reports of armed robberies and incidents of mob violence have reawakened a continuing public debate calling for the rearming of the Police to fight crime.
- It is perceived that suspected armed robbers turned over to the Police are most often never prosecuted but released back into the communities where they were arrested. Many people think that this alleged attitude on the part of the Police serves as an incentive for these criminals to continue terrorizing the communities. It also appears that the continuing practice of mob violence is also fuelled by the fact that most perpetrators of mob violence have gone unpunished, except for a recent case in which a youth leader in Nimba County is being held in connection with such act.

* * * *



Testimony of Tom Malinowski
Washington Advocacy Director, Human Rights Watch

Hearing on the Child Soldier Accountability Act
House Judiciary Subcommittee on
Crime, Terrorism and Homeland Security
April 8, 2008

Thank you, Mr. Chairman and members of the subcommittee, for the opportunity to testify before you today. Your attention to the exploitation of children as soldiers around the world is both important and welcome.

Human Rights Watch has investigated the recruitment and use of children as soldiers in over a dozen countries since 1994. We have documented the recruitment of children as young as eight into both paramilitary and guerilla forces in Colombia, the kidnapping of children by the Lord's Resistance Army in Northern Uganda, including the use of girls as sex slaves, and abduction of children by both the Tamil Tigers and government-linked armed groups in Sri Lanka's escalating civil war. Human Rights Watch has conducted other investigations on the use of child soldiers in Angola, Burma, Burundi, Chad, Cote d'Ivoire, D.R. Congo, Lebanon, Liberia, Rwanda, Somalia, and Sudan. Our research has found that this is a global problem, affecting girls and boys on nearly every continent. The perpetrators include government armies, armed opposition groups, and paramilitaries and militias linked to government forces. No one knows the exact number of child soldiers, but the United Nations estimates there may be as many as 250,000 worldwide.

While many children are recruited by force, others join armed groups out of desperation. As communities break down during war, children are often separated from their families, driven from their homes, and left with no opportunity to go to school. In situations of extreme insecurity, many believe that joining an armed group is their best chance of protection or survival.

Regardless of how children are recruited, the military commanders that exploit them as soldiers put them at extreme risk. Many child soldiers participate directly in hostilities, and even those serving in support roles can be legitimate targets of attack, and may be subject to injury, disability, and death. Child soldiers are often exposed to extreme levels of violence that result in life-long emotional and psychological scars.

One of the reasons why child recruitment has persisted as an awful aspect of contemporary warfare is the impunity enjoyed by individual recruiters. While many governments and even non-state armed groups have policies on paper stating that their minimum age of recruitment is 18, recruiters who violate these policies are rarely held accountable. As a consequence, recruiters continue to prey upon children, as these are often the most vulnerable recruits, and the most susceptible to threats and coercion.

Human Rights Watch firmly supports the Child Soldiers Accountability Act. It is an important tool for addressing the impunity that child recruiters too often enjoy, and for holding perpetrators accountable for their crimes. It sends a strong and important message to military commanders worldwide that they cannot recruit children into their forces and then seek safe haven in the United States.

In the last decade, progress has been made in establishing criminal responsibility for the recruitment and use of child soldiers. The recruitment and participation in hostilities of children under the age of 15 was first prohibited by the 1977 Additional Protocols to the Geneva Conventions. In 1998, governments negotiating the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court recognized that this prohibition had achieved the status of customary international law. They agreed that the conscription, enlistment, or use in hostilities of children under the age of 15 should be considered a war crime under the Court's jurisdiction, whether carried out by members of national armed forces or non-state armed groups. Significantly, delegates drafting the treaty agreed that the Statute's definition would apply not only to the use of children for direct participation in combat, but also their active participation in military activities linked to combat such as scouting, spying, sabotage, their use as decoys, couriers, or at military checkpoints, and direct support functions such as carrying supplies to the front line.

In May 2004, international jurisprudence on this issue advanced further when the Appeals Chamber of the Special Court for Sierra Leone ruled that the prohibition on the recruitment and use of children below age 15 had crystallized as customary international law prior to

1996, and found that the individuals responsible bear criminal responsibility for their acts. In its decision, the Court stated that:

The practice of child recruitment bears the most atrocious consequences for the children. Serious violations of fundamental guarantees lead to individual criminal responsibility. Therefore the recruitment of children was already a crime by the time of the adoption of the 1998 Rome Statute for the International Criminal Court, which codified and ensured the effective implementation of an existing customary norm relating to child recruitment rather than forming a new one.

With these developments, individual commanders now have begun to be prosecuted for the crime of recruiting and using child soldiers. The most active pursuit of child recruitment cases has come through the Special Court for Sierra Leone, a court which benefits from major support by the United States. The use of child soldiers was included in the indictments against each of the nine defendants tried by the court, including leaders of the Civil Defense Forces, the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council, and the Revolutionary United Front, and former Liberian President Charles Taylor. Last year, four defendants were convicted of this crime, and are now serving up to 50 years in prison. These were the very first convictions by an international judicial body for the crime of using child soldiers.

The International Criminal Court recently initiated prosecution against Thomas Lubanga of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), paving the way for its first-ever trial of war crimes. Lubanga is charged with enlisting and conscripting children as soldiers and using them to participate actively in the conflict in Ituri, in the eastern DRC. He is currently in custody in The Hague, awaiting trial.

As trials proceed, convictions are handed down, and these cases become known, Human Rights Watch hopes that these prosecutions will send a clear message that child recruiters bear criminal responsibility for their actions, and that the consequences could entail a lengthy jail sentence. Only when individuals are held accountable through the rule of law will we establish a successful deterrent to the recruitment and use of child soldiers.

However, international tribunals or hybrid courts such as the Special Court for Sierra Leone can try only a very small number of perpetrators, and have limited jurisdictions. Yet, so far, national courts have barely played a role in prosecuting these crimes. The only known

example of criminal prosecution at the national level is from the DRC, where in March 2006 Jean Pierre Biyoyo, a leader with an armed group known as Mudundu 40, was sentenced to five years in prison for child recruitment and illegal detention of children in South Kivu in April 2004. However, he later escaped from prison and remains at large.

A limitation to the current state of the law is that very few countries have criminalized the recruitment or use of child soldiers under their national criminal code. Here in the United States, the Federal Criminal Code currently does not address the issue of child recruitment, nor does it allow prosecution of an individual who has recruited or used child soldiers in another country and then attempts to take safe haven in this country.

The Child Soldier Accountability Act would address this gap. It would make it a federal crime to recruit or use child soldiers under the age of 15, and allow the prosecution of individuals for this crime, whether committed here or abroad by either US citizens or non-citizens present in the United States. The bill imposes penalties of up to 20 years to life in prison, and also allows the US to deport or deny entry to individuals who have recruited children as soldiers. The adoption of this legislation would provide an important avenue to hold these perpetrators accountable.

The Child Soldiers Accountability Act would enable the United States to prosecute military commanders who exploit children as soldiers abroad, and then seek refuge in this country. It would also enable the United States to prosecute individuals who may attempt to recruit children from the United States to fight in foreign conflicts. Such recruitment from Western countries is not unknown: in the late 1990s, for example, the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) recruited children from schools in Sweden to serve in PKK forces in southeast Turkey.

Precedent for this type of legislation already exists in federal law. For example, Chapter 113c of Title 18, the Crimes and Criminal Procedure of the US Code makes it a crime for torture to be committed abroad irrespective of the nationality of the victim or alleged offender where the alleged offender is present in the US. The provision imposes severe criminal penalties on "whoever outside the United States commits or attempts to commit torture." Jurisdiction over this crime applies whether the alleged offender is a national of the United States, or is present in the United States, irrespective of the nationality of the victim or alleged offender. (Sec. 2340A.) The first person to be charged under this law, Charles "Chuckie" Taylor, Jr., son of former Liberian president Charles Taylor, was indicted in December 2006 and is currently facing trial in Miami.

Another precedent, Mr. Chairman, is the Genocide Accountability Act, which was signed into law on December 21, 2007. This act, which Human Rights Watch supported, amends the Genocide Convention Implementation Act to allow prosecution of non-US nationals who are in the US for acts of genocide committed outside the United States.

Mr. Chairman, we were very encouraged to see the Child Soldier Accountability Act adopted unanimously by the US Senate in December 2007. We believe this demonstrates the broad, bi-partisan concern regarding the global scourge of child recruitment, and the desire by members of both parties to effectively address this terrible exploitation of children. We hope to see the subcommittee act favorably on the Child Soldier Accountability Act, so that it can quickly become law.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.