

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



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:

Tuesday, 19 June 2008

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

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BBC World Service Trust

Thursday, 19 June 2008

Prosecution witness Alice Payne is still in the witness seat as she recollects what happened during the civil war in Sierra Leone where she served as a radio operator for the RUF rebels.

On Thursday, she spoke to the heart of the prosecution case against the former Liberian President Charles Taylor which is the sale of diamonds and supply of arms.

BBCWST/SFCG Producer, Alphonsus Zeon reports

ZEON: Alice said RUF commander Issa Sesay took diamonds from Sierra Leone to Charles Taylor in Liberia to take back arms in return.

PYNE: What I learned in Buedu from Major [Sillay] and [Sebatu] who were in the Buedu station, told me that Issa Sesay went with those diamonds to Charles Taylor so that he would bring arms and ammunition. I learnt that when he went to Liberia he was lodged at a hotel, according to his explanation. It was at that hotel that he lost the diamonds.

Aside Sesay, she also told the Court, RUF battle group commander, Sam Bockarie brought weapons from Liberia and distributed them to junior commanders, including Superman.

The witness said Taylor`s support to the rebels went beyond arms and ammunition, alleging the former Liberian President also sent seven persons believed to possess magical power to protect rebel fighters in their attempt to retake the diamond rich Kono.

PYNE: Sam Bockarie took us to a [Zoh] Bush which was outside Buedu where there were some herbalists and juju men who said they will make somebody bullet-proof. Why they came to Buedu was for them to perform the same juju practice for the RUF so when they will go to the war front bullets will not pierce their bodies and they will be brave enough to do whatever they had gone to do.

UNMIL Public Information Office Complete Media Summaries 18 June 2008

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

Newspaper Summary

Liberian Senator, 13 others charged with Murder in deadly land dispute – Justice Minister Assures ‘Maximum Punishment’

(The Inquirer, Public Agenda, New Democrat, Daily Observer, The News, National Chronicle, Plain Truth)

- Liberia’s Solicitor General Tiawon Gongloe has corroborated that 14 people including a senator have been charged with murder following a deadly land dispute which left at least 19 people dead in Timour, a town along the border with Margibi and Grand Bassa Counties.
- The Inquirer newspaper said Senator Roland Kaine who represents Margibi County and his suspected collaborators last Tuesday appeared before the Margibi Magisterial Court where they will be prosecuted.
- Counselor Gongloe said preliminary investigation conducted by the Police shows that Senator Kaine and others were linked to the death of those Liberians who were hired by Charles Bennie to work on his farmland.
- "The police identified 14 perpetrators including Senator Kaine. They bear full responsibility for what happened in the area," Cllr. Gongloe said. He said Bennie is still under probe and has been released to his family and asked to appear at the police headquarters on a daily basis.
- "Bennie is not charged. Taking someone on your farm to work is not a crime. If you have a problem, you should revert to the judicial process. The act of the perpetrators is inexcusable," Cllr. Gongloe indicated.
- He implored the families of the victims to remain calm as government is doing everything to ensure that justice prevails in the matter.
- Nearly two weeks ago, 36 persons were hired by Charles Bennie, a Ministry of Commerce official, to work on his farmland between Margibi and Grand Bassa Counties, but 19 of the men were found dead in the Farmington River with at least three survivors. The survivors explained that they were attacked with AK-47 rifles, single barrel guns and machetes.
- Bennie accused Kaine's security men of leading the attackers, but the senator denied the allegations. Bennie said he and Kaine had been in dispute over the land for some time now and that a court has already ruled the farmland belongs to him [Bennie] but the senator continues to claim it as his ancestral land.
- The dispute between Bennie, a former spokesman for the LURD rebels, and the senator over farmland is the most deadly land dispute of recent years. Last month, another land dispute in the south-east of the country saw two people killed after the inhabitants of two towns attacked each other with machetes.
- Meanwhile, Justice Minister Philip Banks, according to the Plain Truth newspaper, said death penalty or life imprisonment is the highest sentence or penalty any criminal defendant can get for the commission of a capital offense under Liberian law. However, the paper said the Minister Banks seems to prefer death penalty in this case.

Armed Robbers Strike SKD Boulevard

(The News)

- [sic] Several persons were Tuesday morning injured when a gang of armed men dressed in black clothes stormed their residences in the Swamkan-more Community on the SKD Boulevard in Congo Town.
- The unidentified armed robbers also made away with numerous valuables including mobile phones and an unspecified amount of Liberian and US dollars.

- Georgia Blamo, a victim of the robbery said the armed robbers burst open their apartment door around 2:00 am and took away three mobile phones and other items.
- She said the robbers threatened to kill her and her younger sister if they raised alarm.
- Madam Blamo disclosed that the armed robbers were all wearing black clothes with touch lights on their heads to hide their identities.
- Another victim, Headi Jadeh, was chopped with a cutlass on her right hand. She said four of the men were armed with cutlasses, axes and other sharp instruments.

Government Launches Campaign against Hunger Thursday

(The Inquirer, The Analyst, The Informer)

- The Government will on Thursday launch 'Operation Eliminate Hunger' back to the soil campaign at the Samuel Kanyon Doe Sports Complex.
- The move is part of the overall plan by the Government of Liberia to increase food production and lessen the dependency on the importation of food stuffs that can be produced on the Liberian soil. The government believes that the ultimate solution to the continuous food shortage in the country was for Liberians to grow their own food.
- Agriculture Minister Dr. Chris Toe told newsmen that the government was prepared to create an enabling environment to encourage potential farmers to engage in large scale farming that will assure the nation of food security.
- To this extent, the government has made available an amount of US\$250,000 to the Food and Agriculture Organization to purchase and distribute seed rice to farmers across the country. In addition, the government has removed tariff and import duties on agriculture equipment and supplies.
- He said President Sirleaf has made numerous efforts aimed at reaching out to the international community to assist towards ensuring food security in the country.
- "The World Food Programme (WFP) has already committed 25 million dollars while the German Government is providing 15 million Euro to consolidate Government's effort." This Dr. Toe said when added to the \$10 million announced by the World Bank will greatly help towards boosting the agriculture programme in the country.
- He intimated that as part of the concrete steps taken by the government to actualize its vision of growing what it consumes, the government has earmarked \$3 million for purchasing agriculture seeds, with \$3 million allocated for a "cash for work," while \$44 million will go into the various activities of the World Food Programme.
- "It is against this background that we are urging our citizens to embrace and support the government's plans towards reinvigorating the agricultural sector and make our nation proud."

Radio Summary

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

Rock Town citizens fear reprisal attacks over land dispute

- A group of citizens from Rock Town in Maryland County says the conflict between them and Wetchoken is far from over.
- A spokesman of the group said attacks are still being carried out against his people despite the visit of a government delegation to the area.
- According to Mr. Stanley Bedell, a village within the Rock Town territory was burnt down by unknown persons over the weekend.
- Mr. Bedell said inhabitants of N'makliwein fled the village and are now seeking refuge in central Rock Town. He said people of Rock town no longer visit their farms for fear of being attacked.
- Mr. Bedell said a nine man delegation from Rock Town has gone to Harper to file an official complaint to local authorities over the burning of the village.
- He maintained that the disputed land belongs to Rock Town and that People of Wetchoken started the violence.

Senator declares vote of no confidence in Pro-Temp

- A Senator of Bomi County has declared what he called a vote of no confidence in the President Pro-Tempore of the Senate Isaac Nyenabo.
- Senator Lahai Lassana declared his lack of trust in Pro-Temp Nyenabo in a communication to the Senate's Plenary.
- Senator Lassana accused Pro Temp Nyenabo of violating a decision reached by Plenary. The Bomi lawmaker said the Senate Pro-Temp single-handedly decided to separate the Senate's Committee on Defense and Veteran Affairs.
- Senator Lassana's letter was not read in detail during the session of the Senate Tuesday due to contentions by some lawmakers.
- The lawmakers argued that the Senate adopts a proposal to discuss internal matters of the body outside regular session days.
- Meanwhile Senate Pro-Temp Isaac Nyenaboe says the letter from Senator Lassana has been dealt with in an executive session of the body. Senator Nyenabo failed to elaborate on how the letter was handled.

(Also reported on Truth FM, Sky FM, ELBC)

National Human Rights Centre concerned about secret killings

- The National Human Rights Centre of Liberia says its attention has been drawn to the wave of brutal killings in the country. In a statement issued in Monrovia the Centre expressed fear that these killings are being carried out by people yet to be identified.
- The Statement signed by the Centre's Coordinator Alfred Quayjandii said body parts have been extracted from some of the dead bodies found.
- According to the statement, the intestines, kidneys, penis and vagina were in some instances extracted from the bodies.
- The Centre also expressed concern over the brutal killing of farm workers in Timor between Margibi and Grand Bassa Counties.
- The group called on government to ensure that the killers are arrested and brought to justice.
- The National Human Rights Center of Liberia is a consortium of local rights and pro-democracy groups.

(Also reported on Truth FM, Sky FM, ELBC)

Former Transitional Chairman risks arrest again

- Former transitional chairman Gyude Bryant and four others risk arrest Wednesday, if they fail to prove that their surety is potent to cover their 1.9 million United States Dollars bond.
- State lawyers challenged their bond on grounds that they did not show that the insurance company that posted it has assets to cover the bond. State lawyers also claimed the 1.9 million US Dollars bond is insufficient.
- Criminal Court C after an argument of the bail bond gave the men two weeks to prove that the surety is potent.
- Mr. Bryant, former speaker Edwin Snowe, Senator Richard Divine, Siaka Sheriff and Andy Quamie were indicted for allegedly stealing nearly a million US Dollars from the LPRC.

Black Star News

Wednesday, 18 June 2008

Peace In Uganda: A Rejoinder

Re: "Support Dr. Machar For Uganda Peace," blackstarnews.com by Milton Allimadi, June 17, 2008.

You are right on-spot in your analysis of the peace process in northern Uganda mediated by Dr. Riek Machar.

The mediator deserves nomination for the Noble Peace Prize. Further than that, he should win the Prize. He really committed himself unselfishly to usher peace in northern Uganda and Southern Sudan; certainly, his efforts are not in vain.

I concur with you in many of your thoughts about the peace process, and the way-forward, but I differ on the Special Division of the High Court; i.e. the domestic court proposed to handle grave crimes committed by LRA. I am certain that you are aware that the ICC indictment has been a crucial area of discussion and debate during the Juba Peace Talks right from the inception, and according to the Rome Statute, Elements of Crimes and Rules of Procedures of the ICC, ICC can withdraw/or drop the arrest warrants when the two (2) Pre-trial Chambers (I & II) are convinced and assured that a set-up domestic court is competent and capable of handling war crimes such as genocide, crime against humanity, war aggression, and also respecting the complementarity aspect clearly stipulated in the Rome Statute of the ICC.

It was on this basis, that the LRA and the Government of Uganda (GoU) Peace Team had to agree to the proposed set-up of the domestic court in Uganda. It's important to note that, Kony and his top commanders out-rightly rejected the idea of being tried and prosecuted in The Hague. In fact, in any case, they opted to be tried in Uganda.

I strongly believe the GoU accepted the creation of the Special Division of the High Court on the basis of demonstrating to the ICC that the government's judicial system can be in position to try and prosecute grave international crimes committed by perpetrators. Furthermore, the proposed creation of the domestic court was suggested and agreed upon by both the LRA and GoU Peace Teams.

As for the Special UN War Crimes Court for Uganda based in South Africa or in any other African state leaves a lot to be desired. Let us not fall in the trap of the other special courts in the world, notably, the Yugoslavian Special Court in The Hague, The Rwandan Tribunal in Arusha, and the Sierra Leonean Special Court in Sierra Leone and in The Hague.

It's essential to point out that the special courts were set-up before the establishment of the ICC in 2002, and it was on the basis of the various special courts set-up for targeted individuals like

Charles Taylor and henchmen, Slobodan Milosevic, and the Rwanda perpetrators of genocide. But when the Rome Statute was explicitly discussed, debated and ratified by member states to establish the ICC/World Court, it gave it a universal outlook to investigate and prosecute perpetrators of grave international crimes around the world regardless of the geographical specification.

Further still, it shall replace the hybrid 'special courts', in other-words, special courts shall soon cease to exist, and besides, it was recognized that special courts were expensive to maintain, and therefore, it was thought prudent to have a unified International Court to investigate and prosecute violators of grave crimes.

To conclude, special courts have timeframes/expiry periods which make it difficult to shift from one case to another or from one country to another. Soon, many of the Special Courts shall be closed and all eyes shall be directed to the ICC in The Hague, Netherlands.

Needless to say, I concur with you that all parties involved in the perpetration of graves crimes must be held accountable regardless of the power they wield.

The writer is Senior Advisor, Northern Uganda,
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