

**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:**

Thursday, 30 October 2008

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

Thursday, 30 October 2008

Why Kabbah Never Recruited for Charles Taylor

Commentary

One of the heart-throbbing revelations at the UN-backed Special Court trials of Charles Taylor at the Hague in the Netherlands recently that continues to make news headlines is the implication of ex-President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah in the recruitment of Liberian rebels to fight for Charles Taylor.

This allegation from Taylor's defense lawyer Morris Anyah comes as a complete surprise, considering the role played by Kabbah's regime in the formation of the UN-Backed Special Court for Sierra Leone to prosecute those who bear the greatest responsibility for the rebel war in Sierra Leone. How then could Kabbah played double standards!

Indeed it would be nothing short of a fabrication to assume that Ex-President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah rendered support to Charles Taylor's war efforts by recruiting Liberians residing in Sierra Leone, who fought alongside Taylor's rebel forces as narrated by one of the defense lawyers in the trial of Taylor Mr. Morris Anyah, citing from testimonies made by Kabbah before the Sierra Leone Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) several years ago.

What Lawyer Anyah may have been alluding to is probably events that occurred at the heat of the rebel war, during the reign of the late President Joseph Saidu Momoh.

In the first place upon the request of Liberian political party leaders and interest groups, ECOWAS leaders including Pres. Joseph Saidu Momoh of Sierra Leone, Sir Dauda Jawara of the Gambia and General Ibrahim Babangida of Nigeria, considered the option of mobilizing and deploying ECOWAS troops known as ECOMOG to Liberia, with Sierra Leone being the assembly

point. It was this development that angered Charles Taylor decide on invading Sierra Leone as a reprisal action against the APC Government at the time. Apart from the ECOMOG deployment to Liberia in August 1990 under the command of General Arnold Quainoo of Ghana, Pres Momoh's APC regime encouraged the recruitment of defected Liberian soldiers loyal to Pres Samuel Doe, and incorporated into the Sierra Leone Army and security apparatus to fight against the invading combined forces of the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) led by Charles Taylor, and the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) of the late Ex-Corporal Foday Saybana Sankoh. It was also during these trying times that the United Liberation Movement (ULIMO) was organized in Freetown with former Liberian banker Raleigh Seekie as its first leader. But after well observers consider an internal power struggle between the Mandingo and Krahn ethnic within ULIMO, the Ulimo High Command split into two with the Mandingo faction led by Mr Alhaji G.V. Kromah under ULIMO-K and the Krahn faction sidelining Raleigh Seekie to form the ULIMO-J faction led by General Roosevelt Johnson.

Regretably the ULIMO momentum was calmed down when the Interim Government of national unity headed by a neutral personality was organized by Liberian interest groups under the supervision of ECOWAS peace-brokers with Charles Taylor

Alhaji Kromah and others as Vice Presidents was inaugurated in Monrovia in 1994; to pave the way for a democratically elected Government. The elections that were organized to unify the country that divided under the control of the various rebel factions was won by Charles Taylor's National Patriotic Party (NPP), with the Unity Party (UP) of Mrs. Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf clinching the second place.

Unfortunately although Charles Taylor achieved his objective of becoming President of Liberia through the ballot box, the rebel war in Sierra Leone showed no sign of abating. By this time Pres. Momoh's APC regime had been kicked out of power by the NPRC Military junta, which adopted a policy of peaceful negotiation to the conflict at the international conference table. The olive branch that Brigadier Maada Bio extended to RUF leader Foday Sankoh did not however bear fruitful results in view of the RUF leader's frequent consultations with Charles Taylor before implementing decisions. This was the situation until the 1996 elections that catapulted the SLPP of Tejan Kabbah to power.

Initially Kabbah's SLPP regime sought to continue the ECOWAS sponsored peace initiatives and agreements with the RUF left on course by the NPRC that culminated into a fragile ceasefire. There were the historic Abidjan and Lome Peace accords that were signed by Kabbah and Foday Sankoh. But despite such accords there was no end in sight for the rebel war in Sierra Leone, which made Kabbah's Government to request for the deployment of UNAMSIL troops.

Essentially it may be recalled that following Taylor's NF forces attacking two border villages in Guinean territory near Macenta, from the Lofa Region of Liberia, the Guinean Government of President Lansana Conte as a reprisal, supported the organization of another anti-Taylor dissident group based in Guinea, that was known as Liberians United for Reconstruction and Development (LURD), led by Sekou Diabou Corneh with the mandate to intensify the armed struggle with Liberia, until Charles Taylor's regime was deposed. This time around, although it coincided with Pres Kabbah's rule in Sierra Leone, the recruitment of dissident Liberians was mostly done in Guinea and not Sierra Leone as it was the case of ULIMO during Pres. Momoh's era in the early 1990s.

The LURD rebel movement against Charles Taylor was organized at a time of UNAMSIL's presence in Sierra Leone. This faction was highly disciplined and armed to the teeth, through the ULIMO of Mr. Raleigh Seekie, Alhaji Kromah and Roosevelt Johnson, whose existence coincided with the era of the APC Regime of the late President Momoh, with the full deployment of ECOMOG forces in Liberia and with the era of the NPRC military junta. It will therefore be a surprise and a rubbish to hear from Charles Taylor's defense lawyer Morris Anyah that ex-President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah played a role in recruiting rebels to fight for Charles Taylor.

[Note: New Vision supports the Sierra Leone Peoples Party]

The Analyst (Monrovia)

Wednesday, 29 October 2008

Court flies 10 witnesses to Europe, Says Taylor can testify in person

It's more than a year since Charles Taylor was bundled up and sent to The Hague to face the 11-count indictment for war crimes and crimes against humanity brought against him by the Special Hybrid Court for Sierra Leone.



The case had been in out of court docket on legal technicalities raised by both prosecution and defense counsels. One point of contention was whether Taylor can face the court and defend himself.

indications that both sides are read. With UN help, Liberian police stopped and searched a car suspected of carrying drugs to decide

The Analyst Staff Writer has been looking at journalist Joseph Cheeseman's interview with the Chief

The Chief Prosecutor of the Sierra Leone's hybrid Special Court, Stephen Rapp, said Charles Taylor can

The Chief prosecutor, who claimed that there is three times more evidence to convict Mr. Taylor than in debacle.

According to him, the requirement for Mr. Taylor to testify first as "first witness" prior to appearing in which he said the defense was well versed.

"This is a Rule that the Court has. It's a Rule that actually is the same as that in the English system in story depending on what others have said in his Defence case. He has to put it on himself first.

But it's the Rule, we follow the Rules, and we're looking forward to seeing Mr. Taylor in the box if that's his decision," Prosecutor Rapp reportedly told special court reporter Joseph Cheeseman in the interview.

lor, Mr. Rapp confirmed defense counsels' allegation that the Special Court has been spending a fortune to ferry witnesses to The Hague.

alleged the prosecution spent for the transportation and welfare of the witnesses.

le are injured and have serious health problems and sometimes have to have a family escort with them.

Europe, so we do it on a cost-efficient basis. And there is a safe house where there are beds and staffing and everything else.

But it certainly costs money to the Court to present this kind of testimony,” the Special Court chief prosecutor said.

He said the court had to resort to presenting witnesses physically in court after the defense opposed to the presentation of witness testimony through video link.

“So we’re doing it because we have to, and it’s our obligation, it’s the mandate, it’s my sworn duty to prove this case with the best evidence that I can and prove it according to the Rules,” he said.

The defense, though, was not satisfied with the prosecution’s justification for the use of such huge amount on witnesses, arguing that the money used to ferry the witnesses and lodge them could have been better used as reparation to the poor people of Sierra Leone.

“Well we care a lot about reparation, and we’re looking for ways that we hope to be able to pursue Mr. Taylor’s assets to provide reparation to victims.

“The money that the Court has used is money that has been obtained from justice funds from countries that want to see international justice succeed.

These aren’t funds that go to development projects; indeed there are wide development projects in Sierra Leone that deal with victims.

Recently the UN peace building Commission donated three million dollars to the Victim Reparation Fund. Not enough has been done in that area, but it’s our position always that it’s important that justice be done,” Rapp said.

On the defense counsel’s description of the prosecution’s so-called “compelling evidence” as “rubbish”, the chief prosecutor said the language used by the defense was “hard to respond to”.

“This evidence of these human beings and what they went through, and the evidence that we presented from one end to the other of the link between Charles Taylor and the war in Sierra Leone is the absolute opposite of rubbish,” he said.

He said while there may be inconsistencies amongst testimonies due to the circumstances under which witnesses survived, the testimonies, by and large, corroborated in substantial ways.

“Now Mr. Griffiths may be familiar with cases in London where police come in with a neatly-typed report and everything is detailed and on closed-circuit cameras, and there’s a certain quality of evidence sometimes in those cases, but you get into a situation that I’ve dealt with in Sierra Leone, and before in Rwanda, in situations where thousands of people are murdered, where millions of people are displaced, where whole communities and institutions are torn apart, in societies that already suffer from underdevelopment, where witnesses don’t wear watches, they don’t tell time by calendars, and obviously there’s going to be some inconsistencies in their testimony.

“That’s maybe what he’s talking about – that sometimes a person says it was three men and other they say it’s four men.

But essentially their evidence, as we have said, is extremely compelling, and when you add it all up and look at all the ways in which it’s corroborated and the network and the pattern that exists here, this is certainly in my experience at the international level, the most compelling case that I’ve ever seen – at least three times stronger than cases that I’ve seen presented in other international tribunals.

“But obviously it’s going to be up to the Judges in terms of guilt or innocence and that’ll follow the presentation of Mr. Taylor’s own defence,” he said.

BBC World Service Trust

Thursday, 30 October 2008

Taylor trial: Prosecutor fires back at defence

The defence team for the former Liberian president, Charles Taylor early this month accused the Prosecution of the Special Court for Sierra Leone of misusing the court's money by bringing witnesses from Africa to testify for just ten minutes or less in the trial of Mr. Taylor. Lead Defence counsel, Courtney Griffiths QC described the transportation of the crime based witnesses to The Hague as waste of resources. Well now the Prosecutor of the Special Court, Stephen Rapp has reacted to Mr. Griffith's criticism. In The Hague, Mariama Khai Fornah asked Mr. Rapp (photo) to explain the reasons behind the manner in which the prosecution are presenting their witnesses.



RAPP: Well the reason that these witnesses are having to come was because the Defence has demanded their presence. We had proposed at one time to bring as many as 72 witnesses' testimony to Court in the form of writing. Many of them have given sworn statements to the horrible experiences of them being victims of rape and amputation and sexual slavery and forced labour and having been child soldiers, and our rules would allow that testimony to come in, in writing through a sworn statement. Many of them had actually testified in Freetown in the RUF or AFRC cases. The Defence, however, objected to that. They said "no, we're not going to let that testimony in, unless they come to The Hague and unless we have an opportunity to cross-examine them." And the Judges said yes indeed, they do have the right, if they wish, to demand that these people be present. Now understand the reason we were doing them in writing was, one, to save them the hardship of having to travel here and relive these kinds of experiences, and two, the Rules allow it because they're not testifying to seeing Charles Taylor. They're testifying to seeing a rebel, to seeing a person that committed this crime against them and our Rules say because their testimony doesn't go directly to his acts and conduct, we can do that in writing.

FORNAH: Mr. Griffiths also mentioned that if the Prosecution should have met the Defence team and presented concise or strictly relevant witnesses, that these are the witnesses we want to present to the Charles Taylor case, that they should have agreed. But now you are saying they refused.

RAPP: Well indeed, they did refuse. I mean we asked early on, we put forth a stipulation of facts in terms of the crimes being committed in these various districts. It was very clear and specific and didn't have any extraneous language in it. But they refused to go along with that. They would barely stipulate to anything

- perhaps the dates of Mr. Taylor's tenure in office, the dates of the war in Sierra Leone, the political leadership, a few other issues like that. But beyond that, they wouldn't stipulate that these crimes were committed in Sierra Leone and certainly wouldn't stipulate to them having been committed by RUF forces or AFRC forces. So, we had to present evidence. Then we went to work and got these people's prior statements, struck out all the irrelevant matter, sent it all in, in many cases absolutely no mention of anybody even speaking Liberian English in the presence of these witnesses, so no direct connection to Taylor, and they still demanded that these witnesses come. They're saying in public one thing and in Court they're doing another.

FORNAH: Mr. Rapp, the Prosecution has prepared a lot of witnesses, but yet the Defence is saying some of these witnesses are not relevant and that they have no [indistinct] in what Mr. Taylor is being accused of. How can you respond?

RAPP: Keep in mind, we have to do two things here. We have to prove that Mr. Taylor was connected to the people that committed these crimes, but then we have to prove that those people did commit the crimes. We could present the linkage testimony, the Moses Blah, the Zigzah Marzah's, the Varmuyan Sheriff's - all those kind of witnesses. We could show a link but we still have to show that the crime was actually committed. We have to prove that murder and rape and sexual slavery and pillage and the use of child soldiers and amputation and acts of terror and collective punishment were committed in each of these districts of Sierra Leone. If we don't, we lose our case. I mean, I'm not going in there to lose a case. I have to present my evidence. Obviously Mr. Griffiths cares less whether we win our case. I mean, he doesn't want us to win our case. So we have to present our evidence and we have to meet our burden of proof, and we propose to do that with, initially, 144 witnesses - 72 in writing, 72 in person. We've now, because it looks like there will be no in-writing witnesses, we've cut the list both in the linkage and in the crime base end to the bare minimum that we think that we reasonably need here, and that's going to be about 96 live.

FORNAH: Let me just come in here. The Defence team for Mr. Taylor has said that this is not a TRC commission. The case of Mr. Taylor is a criminal case and you are saying you want the people to come and testify so you prove your case.

RAPP: Well, we have to prove that these crimes took place. We of course allege that these crimes have occurred in places like Freetown, the Western Area, in Kono, in Kenema, in other districts of Sierra Leone. And we specifically alleged that. And if we fail to prove that that crime occurred in that place, the Defence, when they file this "no case" motion which they're promising to file as soon as we conclude our

evidence, would be able to go in there and say “the crime of rape in Kono, that needs to be stricken” - and they’d succeed because we wouldn’t have proved the evidence. We don’t have to bring in 15 people to prove that rape happened in Kono. We have to bring in one good witness, but we’ve got to do it in each district. And then of course we’ve got to be aware of the fact that the Defence will cross-examine these people, and sometimes that does require some corroboration because we have to be on the safe side. It’s a tough burden that the Prosecution have to meet, beyond a reasonable doubt. And many people’s recollection of these events, because of the trauma they experience, may not be perfect. So we have to make sure that we’ve proven this case. And that’s what we’re doing - we’re meeting our obligation. The commitment, the mandate that I was given and those of us that work in the Office of the Prosecutor were all given, to make sure that the truth of this victimisation, of these horrendous crimes, is presented and the truth of the connection between these crimes and Mr. Taylor is also presented.

FORNAH: As far as (indistinct) you, the Prosecution side, all of your witnesses are relevant.

RAPP: Yes, absolutely. If we’ve charged Charles Taylor with rape in Kono, we have to prove that the rebels raped a person in Kono, and then we have to prove that Taylor had some control or he aided and assisted those rebels knowing that they were committing rapes and that the kind of assistance that he was giving was causing those kind of atrocities to be continued in Sierra Leone.

FORNAH: With all those witnesses you are coming with in the Court, the Defence is still grumbling that it’s a waste of resources because most of the witnesses are just spending ten minutes in Court to testify. How can you respond to this?

RAPP: That’s because the Defence demanded that they be here. We’ve tried to cut down the amount of time that they’re going to have to be on the stand. Some of the crime base witnesses we’re bringing in - and we think it’s fair that they be allowed to tell their story and actually repeat their story on direct examination. In other situations they’ve given their full testimony previously in trial. They described it very clearly. We can present that evidence to the Judges in writing. But we can’t do that unless the witness is physically present because the Defence is demanding. Then it’s up to the Defence to cross-examine. If the Defence, having demanded that this person come, then don’t even ask any questions, if they’ve only got ten minutes of questions, that’s an outrage. They shouldn’t have demanded that they come. They are the ones that demanded that these people be here. We were ready to put them in writing. These people have given sworn statements, they’ve given prior testimony in many cases. That should have been sufficient.

BBC World Service Trust

Wednesday, 29 October 2008

Report from The Hague

Another dramatic event over the inaccuracy of evidence took place today between Charles Taylor's Defence team and Mr. Gibril Sesay, amputee witness who started his testimonies on Tuesday. A video recording of an interview held with Mr. Sesay after his amputation in 1998 revealed something contrary to his testimonies in Court. Joseph Cheeseman reports.

CHEESEMAN: Mr. Sesay testified in court on Tuesday that eight rebels raped his wife and later stabbed her to death in the presence of himself and his children. Mr. Sesay also told the Judges on Tuesday that after his amputation he dropped and was helped by his children.

But the video recording shown in Court today Wednesday by the Defence team revealed a different story about Mr. Sesay's wife and children. Here are excerpts of an interpretation of the video recording interview held with Mr. Sesay.

CLIP

INTERVIEWER: Please, I want you to tell me your name.

SESAY: My name is Gibril Sesay.

INTERVIEWER: Okay Gibril, tell me exactly what happened to you that you have been amputated.

SESAY: When the rebels attacked Koidu town, [Koyia] in Kono District on Saturday, in a very thick forest in a village called [Wonedu] in the forest – that is where we were camped. So we got an information there that the ECOMOG have come and based at Koquima. Myself, my children and my wife, we all came out and we took our loads and we went. But when we got to a village called [Penduma] we decided to rest there. I decided to return, and I said I was going to collect my own children to take them to the ECOMOG base for us to go and stay there. When I got back I did not see my children. I met all the loads on the veranda. So I managed to go and meet the ECOMOG. They treated me and took me to Makeni.

INTERVIEWER: Where is your wife and your children? Did you see them again?

SESAY: No, it is only my younger brother who is with me here.

END CLIP

CHEESEMAN: After the playing of the video recording in Court, Defence lawyer Courtenay Griffiths QC asked Mr. Sesay why there was a difference between his testimonies in Court and his previous interview in the video recording.

SESAY: I was not sensible enough at that time. I was not in a right frame of mind. It was only because we were being counselled, that was when I was able to give a clear explanation of what had obtained.

GRIFFITHS: Mr. Sesay, we have now seen that video. The fact of the matter is you were perfectly lucid and understood the questions you were being asked, weren't you?

SESAY: But I told you that I was not in a right frame of mind. In that state I was feeling serious pain and I was even sleeping, I was woken up from my sleep. I have told you this.

GRIFFITHS: We can see the video, and I'm going to suggest to you that you were wide awake and you understood fully what you were being asked. Isn't that the truth?

SESAY: I told you I was not in a right frame of mind.

CHEESEMAN: Despite the witness's persistent claim that he was not in his right frame of mind when he had the interview at the Connaught Hospital, Mr. Griffiths said Mr. Sesay had not told any truth in the three appearances he had made in the trials of the RUF, AFRC and now Charles Taylor.

A 39-year old Sierra Leonean woman who encountered the rebels in Tombodu took the stand when Gibril Sesay concluded his testimonies. Madam Kumba Bindi told the Judges the rebels that entered her village spoke Liberian English by saying "My Man, Let's go."

Another witness, Abubakarr Mansaray who was only presented to the Defence for cross-examination, took the stand later. Mr. Mansaray said he could not remember most of the evidence he gave in the AFRC trial in 2005 in Freetown. The witness said he thought he had come to Holland to testify against the AFRC again. Mr. Mansaray could not recognize in court the Prosecution lawyer that met with him when he arrived in Holland.

The war crimes trial of former Liberian President Charles Taylor is expected to continue on Thursday.

United Nations  Nations Unies

United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL)

**UNMIL Public Information Office Complete Media Summaries
29 October 2008**

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

Newspaper Summary

Liberian President Celebrates 70th Birth Anniversary

(The Liberian Express, The Monitor, The Analyst, The Informer, The Inquirer, and Daily Observer)

- Key dailies highlighted the personal achievements of President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf as she celebrates her 70th birth anniversary today, Wednesday. Amongst the highlights were significant gains made by the President during her long-time struggle for social justice in Liberia, particularly successes scored in restoring the gloomy image of the country internationally resulting to debt relief. The Analyst newspaper devoted a large portion of today's edition to the President's birthday; lavishing praises on President Sirleaf for her commitment to change the country from its backward past to a prosperous future. However, critics, according to the Liberian Express newspaper, suggested that ordinary Liberians are living in harsh economic conditions because of the government's poor domestic policies.

Taylor Defense Says Kabbah Recruited Liberian Rebels

(The News)

- The defense in the trial of the former Liberian president Charles Taylor says former Sierra Leonean President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah and his government recruited Liberians who fought alongside his forces.
- Defense lawyer Morris Anyah claimed Mr. Kabbah admitted to the recruitment of the Liberian mercenaries.
- Mr. Anyah read out in court what he said were testimonies Mr. Kabbah made before his country's Truth and Reconciliation Commission, admitting to the recruitment of Liberians into the Sierra Leone security apparatus.
- The document quoted Mr. Kabbah as saying that fighters loyal to the Liberian dissident group, ULIMO, under the command of one Brigadier David Livingstone Bropleh were incorporated into the Sierra Leone security forces and renamed Special Task Force.

Tuition Free School Beggars for Assistance

(The News)

- The Administration of the D. Moses Wantu Institute (DMWI), a tuition free elementary school located in the Darquee Town community along the Gardnersville highway has called on government, UNICEF, CREDO and Christian Aid Ministry and other humanitarian organization to assist the school with chairs, instructional materials and other logistical support to the institution.
- According to the Principal, Collins S. Collins, the institute was finding it difficult to accommodate the growing number of students as a result of its tuition freed program in the community.
- Collins said the Board of Directors of the school has decided to make the institute tuition free because many parents in the area were finding it difficult sending their children to school due to high cost of tuition of the nearby private schools, and the unavailability of public elementary school in the community.

Miami Herald

Thursday, 30 October 2008

Jury deliberating fate of ex-Liberian leader's son

A Miami federal jury will resume deliberations Thursday in the trial of an ex-Liberian president's son charged with leading a campaign of torture against people opposed to his father's rule.

Charles "Chuckie" Taylor Jr., who was raised in Orlando, was tapped by his father to command an anti-terrorist unit called the "Demon Forces" that beat, burned and beheaded Liberian civilians from 1999 to 2003, prosecutors said Tuesday in closing arguments.

The Miami criminal case -- taking place at the same time father Charles Taylor faces a war crimes tribunal in the Netherlands -- marks the first U.S. prosecution of torture committed in a foreign country.

The 12-member jury began deciding the fate of Taylor, a 31-year-old U.S. citizen born in Boston, on Wednesday. If convicted, he faces up to life in prison on charges of conspiracy, torture and carrying a firearm during a violent crime.

Star Radio

Wednesday, 29 October 2008

Journalists give horrible accounts of civil war

Written by Julius Kanubah

The second batch of Liberian journalists has given horrible accounts of how media practitioners were maltreated during the war.

The journalists spoke of the arrest, intimidation and even killing of media personnel by suppressive regimes and rebel forces.

Journalists Fanny Cole-Weefur, Stanton Peabody, Kenneth Best, Gabriel Williams and Robert Lormia said newsmen suffered the brunt of the war.

They spoke Tuesday at the ongoing thematic media hearing of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

During the hearing, Journalist Gabriel Williams broke down in tears as he recounted an attempt by a rebel to kill him.

The Deputy Information Minister said his life was spare by his partner who spoke the local Kpelle vernacular to the rebel commander.

Other journalists who also appeared before the TRC include Elizabeth Hoff, Aaron Kollie and Sheriff Adams.