

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



Staff members at the Registrar's farewell yesterday

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, 21 May 2009

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

International News

US Envoy To UN Urges Maintaining Sanctions On Liberia Ex President / <i>AFP</i>	Page 3
UNMIL Public Information Office Media Summary / <i>UNMIL</i>	Pages 4-7
Vincent Lauds Lebanon's Quick Response to Release 4 Generals / <i>Naharnet.Com (Lebanon)</i>	Page 8
Ban Briefed by Had of UN Rights Probe into Gaza Conflict / <i>UN News</i>	Page 9
Sri Lanka War Crimes / <i>Lankaweb</i>	Page 10

Agence France Presse

Wednesday, 20 May 2009

US Envoy To UN Urges Maintaining Sanctions On Liberia Ex President

MONROVIA (AFP)--U.N. Security Council diplomats visiting Liberia on Wednesday stressed that U.N. sanctions including travel bans and a freeze on the assets of allies of ex-president Charles Taylor should remain in place.

Speaking at a press conference following a one-day visit to the war-torn West African country Susan Rice, the U.S. ambassador to the U.N., defended the Security Council sanctions.

"The United Nations Security Council maintains sanctions on certain individuals who the council continues to believe pose a threat to Liberia and to regional peace through their actions," she said.

The travel ban and assets freeze would "remain in effect," she added.

Taylor has been on trial in The Hague before the Special Court for Sierra Leone on charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity stemming from his support of Revolutionary United Front guerrillas in neighbouring Sierra Leone's 1991-2001 civil war.

Former officials in his regime have been trying to get the restrictions on them lifted.

The U.N. delegation, made up of 15 diplomats from the member states currently sitting on the Security Council, arrived in Liberia Tuesday. The visit was the last stop on their African tour which also took them to Ethiopia, Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

While in Liberia the U.N. diplomats also discussed the future of the U.N. peacekeeping force in Liberia, or UNMIL, which saw its mandate extended by one year in September 2008.

The U.N. sent 15,000 troops into Liberia in 2003 after the end of 14 years of civil war that claimed roughly 270,000 lives.

Rice concluded that despite a recent rise in crime overall Liberia was relatively secure but the situation remained fragile.

"From what we have heard and what we have seen, there is general degree of relative security despite significant instances of violence and crime.

"The message we have received is that the current calm is highly fragile and could be disrupted at any point. Our conclusion is that this is a security environment that needs close attention and care," she said.

Rice wouldn't comment on a possible withdrawal of UNMIL in September 2009 as the extension of the mandate expires.

UNMIL Public Information Office Media Summary 20 May 2009

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

International Clips on Liberia

ArcelorMittal Says it's delaying Liberia's iron ore mine

MONROVIA, May 20 (Reuters) - The world's biggest steelmaker ArcelorMittal has delayed the launch of a planned \$1.5 billion iron ore mine in Liberia as a result of falling demand for the commodity, the firm said on Wednesday.

'If we cannot sell the iron ore it becomes difficult for us to continue on the pace that we thought we would be on by now,' company spokesman Arthur Massaquoi said on a conference call with journalists travelling with a United Nations Security Council delegation to the West African country.

'As a consequence of the global crisis ... after reviewing all of our operations we thought it would be necessary at this moment to slow down our operations,' he said.

ArcelorMittal has said it will cut steel production this year in order to support prices. Earlier this year chairman and chief executive Lakshmi Mittal said he expected prices for iron ore, the main steelmaking raw material, to fall substantially in 2009.

'We earlier envisaged July of this year, then later on we thought it would not be feasible and we thought it will be next year,' Massaquoi said when asked when the firm originally planned to start shipping ore from Liberia.

Liberia Commends Salone's Customs

Freetown, May 20, 2009 (Concord Times/All Africa Global Media via COMTEX) -- Commissioner for Lofa County in Liberia has disclosed that his country and Sierra Leone stand to benefit a lot from each other, with specific reference to the running of the customs posts in both countries.

Commissioner Hon William Kamba Sr told a visiting team of national revenue authority, NRA officials from Freetown that was there to cement relationship between the two countries ahead of the commissioning of the Koindu Customs Posts, eastern Sierra Leone. He commended officials from the Sierra Leone Customs Posts for collaborating with them in Liberia especially in information sharing.

International Clips on West Africa

Media body warns of witch hunt against Sierra Leone journalists

DAKAR, May 20, 2009 (AFP) - Media rights watchdog Reporters Without Borders (RSF) on Wednesday urged the Sierra Leone government to call off what it called a "witch hunt" against two journalists who allegedly libelled the president.

One journalist, Sylvia Blyden, had been forced into hiding after receiving death threats, while the other, Umaru Sitta Turay, suffered a knife attack, said RSF in a statement.

"Both journalists were targeted for attack because they had allegedly libelled Sierra Leone's president," RSF said.

Local Media – Newspaper

Local Dailies Give Mixed Reaction to visit of Security Council Delegation - Several Want Travel Restriction lifted

(The Monitor, Liberia Journal, New Democrat, Daily Observer, The Inquirer, Plain Truth and the National Chronicle)

- Public views and news articles as well as the editorial direction of the print media concentrated on the visit to Liberia of a UN Security Council delegation which is on the last stop of its four-nation visit to Africa to assess peacekeeping missions. The editorial views of seven out of 12 newspapers which published today - The Monitor, Liberia Journal, New Democrat, Daily Observer, The Inquirer, Plain Truth and the National Chronicle – converged on the visit with most dailies unanimously encouraging the UN Security Council to provide a forum where those Liberians affected by the travel ban can be heard, the ‘continual’ absence of which they claimed is ‘injustice.’
- In an opinion piece, the Liberian Journal newspaper lauded the UN’s role in bringing peace to Liberia but feels somehow upset about the travel restriction placed on some Liberians. “We feel bitter about the trend the UN has taken in addressing the issue of travel restriction on some of our citizens, whom the World Body felt had strong ties with former President Charles Taylor and therefore should be penalized for alleged wrongdoings. Enough is enough, send the victims to court or lift the ban,” the Liberian Journal newspaper asserts in its Wednesday editorial.
- Similarly, the Monitor newspaper wants the travel restriction lifted, saying “keeping sanctions over one group of Liberians is, in essence, keeping sanctions over all Liberians.”
- Being apparently led by partisan sentiments, the Plain Truth newspaper in its opinion believes that “certain politicians are using the United Nations to imprison and silence political voices for their own selfish interest.” The paper therefore recommends a revision of the entire travel restriction to ensure whether it serves any useful purpose to the ongoing reconciliation process of Liberia.
- While other newspapers focused on the travel ban, the Daily Observer newspaper in its editorial implored the visiting Security Council delegation to assess actions taken by the government regarding illicit diamond activities which the paper claims are taking place in certain parts of the country allegedly by aliens. The paper’s request is on the basis that illicit diamonds played a key role in fueling the conflict in the country. “The Council’s delegation, on the other must assess the role of UNMIL to determine how well it is doing its job....”
- The New Democrat equally wants the delegation inquire why the Liberian laws are antagonistic to the Council’s mandate regarding freezing the properties of targeted officials of former President Charles Taylor.
- One of the reasons the Security Council imposed the travel ban and assets freeze was to prevent former Taylor officials and family members from using alleged misappropriated funds to interfere with the restoration of peace and stability in Liberia.

UN Electoral Assessment Team Visits Liberia

(Heritage, The Informer)

- two-man need assessment mission from the Electoral Assistance Division of the United Nations (UN) is in the country to assess the needs of the National Elections Commission (NEC) as the clock ticks towards the conduct of the 2011 Presidential and General Elections.
- According to a NEC release, the visit of the mission to the country is based on a request made by the Commission to the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) to provide material as well as human capacity building assistance to help strengthen the Commission ahead of the 2011 polls.
- The release said, the team which arrived in the country on May 17, 2009 met with the Board of Commissioners on May 18, 2009 at the Sinkor office of the NEC and was briefed by the NEC Chairman, Hon. James M. Fromayan on activities and program of the NEC.
- Briefing the team, Chairman Fromayan gave an update of the current electoral activities that the NEC is undertaking including the capacity building of NEC staff and the nationwide Civic /Voter regional consultation that is ongoing.
- Chairman Fromayan also informed the mission that at the moment, there are key electoral bills that are stalled in the corridor of the National Legislature including the Threshold bills. He

emphasized that the passage of the bills was necessary to set the legal framework for the successful conduct of the 2011 elections, the release indicated.

- The UN Assessment mission comprised of Tatiana Monney, Associate Electoral/ Political Affairs Officer at the Electoral Assistance Division, Department of Political Affairs of the UN and Matthew Blakley, a UNDP Consultant. Other members of the mission are expected in the country during the course of the week, according to the NEC release.

House finally Passes Electoral Bill

(New Democrat, The Analyst, Daily Observer, Liberian Express, The News, Public Agenda, Liberia Journal, The Monitor, Heritage, the Informer and The Inquirer)

- After intense pressure from international and national partners, the House of Representatives on Tuesday passed the controversial Population Threshold Bill by slashing the number of people per legislative constituency from the proposed 45,000 to 40,000 in an attempt to appease less populated Counties.
- Based on new census figures putting the population at 3.47 million, there will be 87 elected members in the House of Representatives in the next Legislature, an increase of 23 (64 currently). This also entails severe economic implications since members of the Legislature have been fattening their financial bills and expenses in recent times.
- With this new threshold several less populated Counties, mostly those in the country's southeastern region, will have fewer Representatives, while those with large population will have an increment in representation in the House.
- Grand Kru, the country's least populated County with a population in the neighborhood of 50,000 will have a single electoral constituency with a corresponding one Representative. Populated Counties like Montserrado, Nimba, Bong and Lofa will have 29, 12, eight and seven Representatives respectively.
- The new threshold is being established based on a constitutional requirement which mandates the legislature to set a constituency threshold following the conduct of census in every ten years.
- However, the House's approved figure will become law should the Senate endorse it and the President approves it.

Central Bank Suspends Three Top Officials over Transfer of US\$1M

(New Democrat, The Analyst, Daily Observer, Liberian Express, The News, Public Agenda, Liberia Journal, The Monitor, Heritage, the Informer and The Inquirer)

- The Central Bank of Liberia has announced the suspension of three senior staff in connection with a US\$1 million dollar transfer.
- Addressing a news conference yesterday in Monrovia, CBL Governor Mills Jones said those suspended are the Officer-in-Charge of the Banking Department, Mr. Joseph Kollie; the Officer-in-Charge of Domestic Banking, Mr. Jesse Koiboi, and an Accountant/Back Office Operations, Mr. Alfred Kowbeidu.
- He said the alleged involvement of the three staff members was "unacceptable" and it compromises the standards of professional banking.
- He said Deputy Governor, Ethel Davies is being forwarded to the Board of Governors for not acting properly in the approval of the money transferred.

UN Police Chief Says Fiji Police Upholding UN Core Values

(The Informer)

- The UN Police Commissioner in Liberia - Mr. Henrik Stiernblad, has assured Liberians of the continued support of UN Mission in Liberia - UNMIL - in strengthening the country's security forces, particularly the Liberia National Police, to cope with post-conflict challenges such as combating violent crimes and unrests. Mr. Stiernblad made these remarks when he awarded UN peacekeeping medals to 28 Fiji UN Police Officers for their services to UNMIL.
- Commissioner Stiernblad reiterated the support of UNMIL and its partners in the UN system in enabling the country to regain its place in the community of nations, stating that: "Liberians will have to work hard to sustain the peace it has that we supported over the years. The job is not over; we have laid the foundation, but Liberia will have to solidify the peace to prevent a slide back into conflict". He added that this will ensure that Liberian security forces are strengthened to deal with both internal and external security threats as the country moves towards recovery, rehabilitation and development.

- The UNPOL Commissioner praised the Fiji Police Contingent on their significant contribution to international peacekeeping, coupled with their commitment in upholding the UN Police core values of compassion, integrity, respect, excellence and courage. "Fiji Police advisers have played key roles in the implementation of the Liberia National Police Strategic Plan that provides a road map to develop the LNP organization; and involvement in joint capacity building initiatives, which have greatly helped in supporting the LNP achieve its strategic objectives", Commissioner Stiernblad told the Fiji Police officers.

LNP Punishes 15 officers for Ethical Breach

(The Informer)

- The Liberia National Police says it has punished 15 of its officers for what it called ethical breach and misconduct.
- According to a Police statement, the actions followed an investigation which found one of the officers guilty of illegal possession and discharge of firearms.
- The release said the rest of the fourteen officers were suspended for periods ranging from two weeks to time indefinite.
- The fourteen affected officers were suspended on charges of criminal facilitation, police brutality, aggravated assault and desertion of post.
- The LNP said it would not hesitate to dismiss or suspend officers found guilty of police brutality and unethical behaviour against peaceful citizens.

Local Media – Star Radio *(News monitored today at 09:00 am)*

House Passes Electoral Threshold Bill

(Also reported on Sky F.M., and ELBC)

Several Suspended over alleged link to US\$1M Scam at Central Bank

(Also reported on Sky F.M., and ELBC)

Ethical Breach, Misconduct Land 15 Police Officers on Hard Rock

(Also reported on Sky F.M., and ELBC)

LD\$22 Million Fraud Uncovered at Finance Ministry

- The Finance Ministry has announced the illegal encashment and disappearance of over 9,000 civil servants checks
- Addressing a news conference in Monrovia, Finance Minister Augustine Ngafuan put the valued of the checks at a little over LD\$22 million.
- Minister Ngafuan said the fraud occurred after a stop order was placed on the printing of checks in August 2008 based on a Presidential proclamation.
- The Minister said a team set up to investigate the missing check found five senior employees of the Ministry culpable.
- He named those responsible for the missing checks as Jenkins Yornlay, Director of Electronic Data Processing; Mrs. Tresa Kerkulah, Check Stamping Supervisor; Mr. James A. Booker, Comptroller General, Mrs. Aletha Browne, Assistant Minister for Expenditure and Mrs. Cecelia Roberts.
- Meanwhile, President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf has suspended the Comptroller-General of the Ministry of Finance, James Booker for his complicity in the checks scandal.

(Also reported on Sky F.M., and ELBC)

Naharnet.Com (Lebanon)

Wednesday, 20 May 2009

Vincent Lauds Lebanon's Quick Response to Release 4 Generals



The registrar of the Special Tribunal for Lebanon Robin Vincent thanked the Lebanese government for quickly responding to the demand of the pre-trial judge to release the four generals.

The generals are former head of the presidential guard, Mustafa Hamdan, security services director Jamil Sayyed, security chief Ali Hagg, and military intelligence chief Raymond Azar. They were released April 29.

Vincent also said in his letter sent to judicial authorities that the Lebanese government showed professionalism during the STL team's visit to Beirut April 27-30 and helped it accomplish its mission.

He thanked judicial authorities for their help and guidance and the security services provided to the team.

Vincent, a British judge, resigned as the tribunal's registrar last month and accepted to continue his duties till June until his follower takes over.

United Nations News

Wednesday, 20 MAY 2009

Ban briefed by head of UN rights probe into Gaza conflict



Damage caused by aerial bombardment to Gaza

20 May 2009 – Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon was briefed today by the head of the independent team of investigators tasked by the United Nations Human Rights Council with examining alleged rights abuses and violations of international law during the recent Gaza conflict.

Mr. Ban’s meeting with Justice Richard Goldstone of South Africa took place in Geneva, where the Human Rights Council is based and where the Secretary-General today wrapped up a five-day trip that also took him to Bahrain.

During the meeting, which was also attended by members of Justice Goldstone’s team and High Commissioner for Human Rights Navi Pillay, Mr. Ban reiterated his support to the work of the mission.

The Secretary-General said he hoped the mission’s work would proceed smoothly with cooperation by the concerned parties and send a positive message to the international community about accountability, according to his spokesperson.

Speaking to reporters today, Justice Goldstone said he was “disappointed” that he had not received any positive response from the Israeli Government.

He said his wish was to visit southern Israel, go into Gaza “through the front door,” and also go to the West Bank, which is to be included in his mission.

The former prosecutor for International Criminal Tribunals for the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda added that the mission was still in the planning stage, and that he would be holding a number of public hearings – hopefully in the region, but if that was not possible, then in Geneva.

Field work had to be completed by the end of June, he noted, and the team’s report will be handed over on 4 August.

Lankaweb

Friday, 15 May 2009

<http://www.lankaweb.com/news>

Sri Lanka War crimes

The Editor (Letters) THE OTTAWA CITIZEN

Sir:

When Sri Lanka's President Mahinda Rajapaksa said (May 15) that all civilians held by the Tamil Tigers as a human shield in the Northeast of Sri Lanka will be rescued within the next 48 hours, and he has managed to rescue over 200,000 innocent Tamil civilians during the past month, the International voices like that of the British are playing the game of "We gotch ya, Sri Lanka". According to your report, "The British government's pledge to support an early investigation into allegations that Sri Lanka Forces committed war crimes..." This statement is so transparent that they still want to halt the final offensive against the Tamil Tiger terrorists, the most ruthless in the world, to keep them alive to fight another day and kill innocent civilians in the hundreds.

If war crimes in Sri Lanka are their real concern, let's hear them say that they will be looking into war crimes of the leader of the Tamil Tigers, Velupuillai Prabhakaran, for abducting and recruiting over 6,300 children (UNICEF stats.) under the age of 14 as child soldiers. After all former Liberian President Charles Taylor was charged by the International Criminal Court for the very same reason, for forcing children under the age of 15 to take up arms against their own people in the course of their 11-year civil war.

Western hypocrisy seems to be the rule of the day when it comes to Sri Lanka's Tamil separatist war, trying to save the main culprit in this war, the Tamil Tigers because of the pressures of their voting Tamil constituents who are in scores of thousands around the world.