

**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

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

Charles Taylor's Request for a Cease Fire Was.../ *Premier News* Page 3

International News

Pat Robertson, Friend of Warlords / *Jeffrey Goldberg* Page 4

UNMIL Public Information Office Media Summary / *UNMIL* Pages 5-7

War Crime Charges May Await George Boley / *Daily Observer* Pages 8-9

UNMIL Situation Report Criticizes Liberian Children's Plight / *Star Radio* Page 10

Ex-Rwandan Army Officer Jailed 15 Years for Genocide / *Africa news* Page 11

Khmer Rouge Minister Pleads for Release / *Agence France Presse* Page 12

A PROJECT OF THE OPEN SOCIETY JUSTICE INITIATIVE

THE TRIAL OF
CHARLES TAYLOR
defendant



Charles Taylor Request For A Cease Fire Was Aimed At Helping Sierra Leonean Rebel Forces To Establish More Control In The Country, Prosecutors Say

mostly concerned about the lives of the hostages.”

When former Liberian president Charles Taylor helped secure the release of United Nations peacekeepers held hostage by Sierra Leonean rebels ten years ago, he was really trying to help the rebels gain more control over his neighboring country, prosecutors alleged today. Mr. Taylor disagreed: the safety of the hostages was forefront on his mind, he said.

Prosecutors further questioned Mr. Taylor's motives in calling for a ceasefire during the hostage crisis, arguing that it would have helped the rebels consolidate control over a key town, Masiaka. Such a ceasefire, prosecutors argued, would have placed the rebels closer to the capital, Freetown, and also provided a bigger buffer zone between the rebel-held diamond mining fields and government-controlled areas. Mr. Taylor denied being motivated by the enlargement of rebel control in Sierra Leone.

“I don't know the different positions in Sierra Leone where they (the Revolutionary United Front) were,” Mr. Taylor said during his cross-examination at the Special Court for Sierra Leone.

Lead prosecution counsel, Brenda Hollis, today focused her questioning of Mr. Taylor on the May 2000 hostage-taking by RUF rebels, who captured hundreds of UN peacekeepers in Sierra Leone an action that provoked international outrage. Mr. Taylor, who was sitting president of Liberia at the time, negotiated with the RUF rebels and secured the release of the UN peacekeepers. Prosecutors have long alleged that Mr. Taylor was able to secure the release of the UN hostages because he had some special control over the RUF rebel commanders. Mr. Taylor has denied these suggestions, saying that his involvement in the release of the peacekeepers was done mainly because he was asked by the international community to intervene and get the rebels to release the hostages, which he did.

During today's testimony, the court heard that when the RUF rebels released the first set of 139 UN peacekeepers, Mr. Taylor told the Special Representative of the UN Secretary General (SRSG) in Sierra Leone at the time, Ambassador Oluyemi Adeniji, that he wanted an “immediate cessation of hostilities” in Sierra Leone in order to facilitate the release of the remaining hostages.

In doing so, he was concerned that “the lives of the remaining hostages would be at risk if the pro-government forces continued pushing the rebels out of the areas that they had taken,” according to Mr. Taylor.

Ms. Hollis noted that at the time of the release of the UN hostages, the RUF rebels had occupied the town of Masiaka, a strategic position that was in proximity to both the country's capital Freetown and the diamond mining areas.

“And also Mr. Taylor, had the RUF been left in place in Masiaka, that would have put them much closer to the capital of Freetown, wouldn't it?” Ms. Hollis asked Mr. Taylor.

“I disagree with your proposition,” Mr. Taylor responded.

“And it would have given a larger buffer zone between the diamond areas and the government held-territories. Isn't that correct, Mr. Taylor?” Ms. Hollis enquired further.

In his response, the former president said that “your proposition, maybe you could very well be correct, but I disagree that that was foremost on my mind. I was

In response to Ms. Hollis's suggestion that while requesting an immediate ceasefire he had actually mentioned the town Masiaka to the SRSG, Mr. Taylor said that “I could have based on his statements to me and the issue was we have people in captivity, there is no point attacking, you could even kill them. And if I mentioned it at that time, it was based on maybe his explanation. My answer to you is that I don't know the geography of Sierra Leone to determine as to whether it was an important junction.”

Also in his cross-examination today, Mr. Taylor agreed with Ms. Hollis that he paid about 1.8 million United States dollars to US firms to do public relations work for his government, which aimed at improving the image of Liberia to the international community. Asked by Ms. Hollis whether that money was not too much of tax-payers' money of a war-ravaged country to be spent on public relations work, Mr. Taylor said that “it's subjective. For me, that was not enough because I know other governments that pay up to five million US dollars to firms in Washington DC, so that was not enough for me.”

Mr. Taylor maintained that he was justified to spend such amount of money because “most little governments, if you don't lobby in Washington, you really get smashed.”

Mr. Taylor again today dismissed prosecution suggestions that the Liberian government under his presidency did not respect fundamental human rights. When Ms. Hollis pointed out reports of police brutality in Liberia under his presidency, Mr. Taylor maintained that he was not informed of such actions by the Liberian police force.

Jeffrey Goldberg

Thursday, 11 February 2010

Pat Robertson, Friend of Warlords

Via Little Green Footballs, this astonishing report, that Pat Robertson was giving aid and comfort to the Liberian war criminal Charles Taylor:

Under cross-examination, Taylor said that Robertson had volunteered to make Liberia's case before U.S. administration officials, and had spoken directly to President Bush about Taylor. He also confirmed that Robertson's company, Freedom Gold Limited, signed an agreement to exploit gold in south-eastern Liberia, but that it never generated any profit.

You should pardon the expression, but, Christ. Charles Taylor is an evil man, more evil than my own personal Liberian warlord, George Boley. I suppose I shouldn't be surprised by Pat Robertson, but this is fairly unbelievable.

United Nations  **Nations Unies**

United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL)

UNMIL Public Information Office Media Summary
11 February 2010

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

International Clips on Liberia

Liberian boys appear in court hearings for 2009 rape charges

http://www.azcentral.com/arizonarepublic/local/articles/2010/02/11/20100211liberia_n0211.html

Two of the four Liberian refugee boys accused in the July rape of an 8-year-old girl appeared in court hearings Wednesday as judges consider whether the youths are competent to stand trial. The boys are accused of luring the victim, a fellow Liberian refugee, to a storage closet at a west Phoenix apartment complex where she was raped. The boys are charged with sexual assault, kidnapping and sexual conduct with a minor. Steven Tuopeh, 15, will return to Maricopa County Superior Court on Feb. 24 as a judge continues to review his competency to stand trial as an adult. Meanwhile, a county Juvenile Court judge on Wednesday ordered additional review of the restoration process in the case of a 10-year-old whom doctors determined "not competent," although early reports suggested the boy could be educated to a point where he could stand trial. His restoration hearing was reset for April 2. A 13-year-old involved in the case is under house arrest. A 9-year-old was acquitted. The younger boys' names are being withheld by The Arizona Republic because of their ages. The girl is still in foster care.

International Clips on West Africa

Sierra Leone

Sierra Leone's Hydro-Power Dam Lighting Up Freetown

- VOA

Sierra Leone's first hydro-power dam, almost 40 years in the making, was switched on in November 2009. It now produces 50 megawatts of electricity, sending regular power to most parts of the capital, Freetown. But transmission networks damaged during the country's civil war are so dilapidated that the capital can only absorb half of the dam's energy. Nestled in the Sula Mountains in central Sierra Leone, the Bumbuna dam holds back 428 million cubic meters of water. Pressure from the dammed Seli river powers two massive turbines that provide a regular supply of electricity for the first time in the country's history. Bockarie Vandi is one of the first Sierra Leonean mechanical engineers to work on the dam project. He says the dam at full capacity can actually produce twice the amount of electricity that Freetown's dilapidated networks can currently handle. Much of Freetown's electricity infrastructure was destroyed during the country's decade-long civil war. Old distribution networks have not been maintained. The National Power Authority says it is working to restore power to areas where old networks have failed and extend the grid to the rapidly expanding neighborhoods to the east of Freetown.

Ivory Coast

Ivory Coast suspends registration of voters

ABIJDAN, Feb 11 (Reuters) - Ivory Coast suspended its voter registration process indefinitely on Thursday because of rising tensions, the government said, casting doubt on when the long delayed presidential election would take place. "The prime minister informs all the structures and all the services of the state implicated in this operation that the (voter list) contestation period ... is suspended until further notice," Government Secretary General Felix Tyeoulou said in a statement. This was "following consultations concerning the tensions created by the process of validating the provisional voter list," he said. The elections are badly needed to end years of instability and stalemate following a 2002-3 war that cut the world's top cocoa grower in two, leaving the north in the hands of rebels. They have been repeatedly postponed since 2005 but had been scheduled for the end of this month or early next, a deadline that has seemed impossible since a spat erupted between President Laurent Gbagbo and the electoral commission over names on the electoral register. The process of registering voters has been tortuous and fraught with disputes over Ivorian nationality and who is eligible to vote -- explosive issues in a country that went to war over them. Rioters burned down a government building in rebel-held western Ivory Coast on Tuesday.

Local Media – Newspaper

No newspaper appeared on the newsstand today due to a national holiday (Armed Forces Day)

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

President Sirleaf Vetoes Threshold Bill Again

- President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf has again vetoed the controversial population threshold bill passed by the National Legislature.
- President Sirleaf vetoed the threshold bill in line with Article 35 of the Constitution.
- In a six-page letter to the Speaker of the House, the President cited the grave financial implications of the 40,000 threshold set by the Legislature.
- According to her, to add 23 more Legislators to the already 64-member House would increase the budget expenditure of the Legislature.
- In the letter, President Sirleaf also submitted a new threshold bill in case the Legislature does not get the required two-thirds vote to override her veto.
- The President suggested in the new bill that the threshold be set at 48,000 per electoral constituency.
- Meanwhile, Bong County Representative George Mulbah says President Sirleaf's new veto of the threshold is an attempt to introduce a new political crisis in the Country, which would lead to an arrangement where the Executive would interfere with the passage of the bill.

UNMIL Situation Report Criticizes Liberian Children's Plight

- The United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) has released its 2009 human rights situation report on Liberia painting a gloomy picture of Liberian children.
- The report said the situation of children in many orphanages is still terrible due to poor quality of care and living conditions.
- It pointed out that extreme levels of poverty, high illiteracy rates and limited economic conditions have exposed Liberian children to all forms of exploitation.
- The UNMIL situation report called for the provision of substantial resources to key institutions in the criminal justice system.
- The report, produced by UNMIL Human Rights and Protection Section was launched Wednesday by Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary General for Rule of Law Henrietta Mensa-Bonsu.
- The report, which covered the period January to June 2009, however named some positive developments including reforms in the justice, law enforcement and correction sectors, health and education among others.

Liberian Lawmaker Seeks Clarification On Hillary Clinton's Declaration

- Grand Bassa County Representative Gabriel Smith is seeking clarification from the US State Department over a statement by Secretary of State Hillary Clinton.
- Representative Smith said the US State Department must clarify Secretary Clinton's remarks over President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf's second term bid.
- According to him, the clarification should either be made through the US Embassy in Monrovia to know the exact nature and meaning of Secretary Clinton's remarks.

- The Grand Bassa lawmaker said declaration by the Executive Mansion that Secretary Clinton endorsed the candidacy of President Sirleaf for a second term was troubling.
- He said it will also help erase suspicion that the US government through USAID is supporting the National Elections Commission with an ulterior motive.
- The opposition Liberty Party lawmaker said the clarification would further show whether the US government was supporting a candidate indicted by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission report.

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

Liberian Lawyer Wants TRC Recommendations Fully Implemented

- The Chairman of the Coalition of Human Rights Defenders, Cllr. Dempster Brown says the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) recommendations are in line with provisions of the Constitution and must be implemented.
- Cllr. Brown said the Act that created the TRC grants it full power to indict individuals found blameworthy.
- He said Article 7 of the TRC Act under the column: Functions and Powers, gives the TRC its indicting power.
- In order to legitimize the TRC recommendations, he said all indicted persons must go to court and clear their names.
- Cllr. Brown said he has already submitted a bill to the Legislature for the establishment of a Special Court to prosecute all war crimes indictees.
- According to him, the bill targets individuals who bear the greatest responsibility for the Liberian war including financiers, and those who arranged for training among others.

Former LTA Boss Disappears?

- Reports say the whereabouts of the former boss of the Liberia Telecommunications Authority (LTA) Albert Bropleh are unknown.
- Mr. Bropleh was accused of embezzling state funds from the LTA and was subsequently sacked by President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf.
- Justice Minister Christiana Tah said Government indicted Mr. Bropleh few days ago but is yet to be served his indictment.
- The reports further say the former LTA Boss is evading the indictment as state security officers are yet to establish his whereabouts.

Human Rights Centre wants INHRC Re-vetting Process Accelerated

- The head of the National Human Rights Centre of Liberia says the human rights community is becoming increasingly concerned about delays in the reconstitution of the Independent National Human Rights Commission (INHRC).
- Mr. Alfred Quajandie said while his group welcomes the re-vetting of nominees by the Senate, it wants the process accelerated.
- Mr. Quajandie said the INHRC remains a key deliverable of the 2003 Accra Peace agreement.
- He observed the reconstitution of the Commission is long overdue and that government is spending resources on a commission that is not operational.

Radio Veritas *(News monitored today at 09:45 am)*

Liberians Observe Armed Forces Day Today

- Today February 11 is Armed Forces Day and is being celebrated as a national holiday.
- The Day is celebrated each year as a national holiday in recognition of the many sacrifices soldiers render the nation in general.
- At a special programme today, the President of ECOWAS, Dr. Mohammed Ibn Chambas served as keynote speaker.

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

Daily Observer (Liberia)

Thursday, 11 February 2010

War Crime Charges May Await George Boley

By: Observer Staff



Dr. George Boley, former head of warring faction, Liberian Peace Council (LPC)

NEW YORK – A foreign journalist who covered the Liberian civil war in the mid-90s, Jeffrey Goldberg, has reported in his blog that former warlord, George Boley, was arrested January 15th by U.S. Immigration and Customs and is now sitting in a jail cell in upstate Batavia.

So far, according to Goldberg, Boley is being c

harged administratively with lying in order to gain entry into the U.S., and with committing extra-judicial killings while in another country.

Other branches of government such as the Department of Homeland Security are looking at charging Boley with actual war crimes.

When the *Daily Observer* contacted the Liberian Consulate in New York on January 29, more than two weeks after Boley's arrest, officials said they had not been informed by local authorities as protocol would dictate. Liberian Ambassador to the United States, M. Nathaniel Barnes, said he had not been contacted by authorities either, but said that the Boley's family had reached out to him.

Goldberg, in his online publication, said he first met Boley in the 90s while covering the civil war in Liberia.

"I've been involved with Boley's case for a little while. I was subpoenaed by a human rights group in Minnesota, the Advocates for Human Rights, to testify against Boley in a defamation lawsuit that he himself filed against the group... I eventually provided a sworn affidavit in the case, in which I detailed what I knew of Boley's activities in the civil war..."

"I knew, from firsthand observation, that his organization, the grossly misnamed 'Liberian Peace Council', recruited and armed child soldiers, fed them drugs and ordered them to rape and kill for starters. The lawsuit, unsurprisingly, was dismissed earlier this month," Goldberg writes.

Boley, who holds a Ph.D. from the University of Akron, received his undergraduate degree at the State University of New York (SUNY) in Brockport and kept his family in upstate New York for the duration of the civil war.

“I’ve been speaking to him on and off now for a year,” Goldberg notes, “and his excuse-making had become increasingly ridiculous. The last time we spoke, he told me that there had been two organizations in Liberia during the civil war named the Liberian Peace Council – his, which was “peaceful”, and someone else’s which was a fighting faction. This was an absurd line of argument, especially to someone like me, who had seen him actually in command of child soldiers in the war zone.”

A Liberian web publication, Bushchicken.com, observes that “With this latest arrest, warlords and other perpetrators of the Liberian civil war will seriously contemplate their travels from the comfort of Liberia. [Charles] Taylor and George Boley are two of the many that have been arrested by the long arm of the US criminal system.”

Star Radio (Liberia)

Thursday, 11 February 2010

UNMIL situation report criticizes Liberian children's plight

Written by Moses Wenyoun

The United Nations Mission in Liberia, UNMIL has released its 2009 human rights situation report on Liberia painting a gloomy picture of Liberian children.

The report said the situation of children in many orphanages is still terrible due to poor quality of care and living conditions.

It pointed out that extreme levels of poverty, high illiteracy rates and limited economic conditions have exposed Liberian children to all forms of exploitation.

On the issue of gender-based violence, the report said 267 cases of rape were recorded and stressed that out of court settlement remains a major concern.

The report said slow disposal of cases resulting to huge backlogs and prolonged pre-trial detention remains a major challenge facing the justice system in Liberia.

According to the report, there were a total of twenty reported allegations of serious police misconduct ranging from brutality to theft or extortion.

The report said of the twenty cases against LNP officers, only two were seriously followed up and actions taken while the rest were delayed due to different reasons.

The UNMIL situation report called for the provision of substantial resources to key institutions in the criminal justice system.

The report, produced by the UNMIL Human rights and protection section was launched Wednesday by UNMIL Chief for rule of law Henrietta Mensa Bonsu.

It covers the period January to June 2009.

The UNMIL report however named some positive developments including reforms in the justice, law enforcement and correction sectors, health and education among others.

Africa news

Thursday, 11 February 2010

Ex-Rwandan army officer jailed 15 years for genocide

The International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) has sentenced to 15 years imprisonment Tharcisse Muvunyi, a former Lieutenant Colonel in the Rwandan army, for direct and public incitement to commit genocide in 1994.

Presiding Judge Dennis C.M. Byron, assisted by judges Gberdao Gustave Kam and Vagn Joensen, Thursday also ordered 57-year-old Muvunyi to remain in the custody of the Tribunal pending his transfer to a country where he will serve the sentence.

A statement issued by the ICTR said Muvunyi would receive credit for the time he served since his arrest in the UK 5 February 2000. He was transferred to the United Nations Detention Facility in Arusha, Tanzania, 30 October 2000.

The accused was convicted by the same court 12 September 2006 for several acts of genocide, direct and public incitement to commit genocide, and other inhumane acts and sentenced to 25 years imprisonment.

But, on 29 August 2008, the ICTR Appeals Chamber set aside all convictions and the sentence, and ordered a retrial of one allegation of direct and public incitement to commit genocide.

The charge related to Muvunyi's speech at Gikore Centre in Nyaruhengeri commune of Butare préfecture in May 1994. His retrial started 17 June 2009 and the prosecution closed its case 22 June 2009, after calling six witnesses and tendering 21 exhibits.

Muvunyi's defence commenced 24 August and closed 17 September 2009 after calling seven witnesses and tendering 11 exhibits.

Muvunyi was born 19 August 1953 in Mukarange commune, Byumba préfecture.

In 1994 he was stationed at the cole des Sous-Officiers in Butare préfecture as a Lieutenant Colonel in the Rwandan army.

Agence France Presse

Thursday, 11 February 2010

Khmer Rouge minister pleads for release

By International Justice Desk (ECCC)



*Phnom Penh,
Cambodia*

Former
Khmer Rouge
foreign
minister Ieng
Sary appealed
for bail as he

appeared before Cambodia's UN-backed court Thursday, seemingly in frail health.

Ieng Sary, 84, is one of five top regime figures detained at the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC) in connection with the Khmer Rouge's bloody rule over Cambodia from 1975-79, when up to two million people died from starvation, overwork or execution.

He has been held since being arrested with his wife Ieng Thirith in November 2007.

The hearing was adjourned twice during the morning so the former leader could go to the toilet. Ieng Sary excused himself from afternoon proceedings, waiving his right to be present in court so he could rest.

Defence lawyers, who have said that jail is harming Ieng Sary's health and could kill him, argued that he should be released, either to his home or hospital, until his trial, which is expected next year.

"Mr Ieng Sary is 84 years of age. He turns 85 this year. He has serious health problems which greatly limit his mobility. He can hardly walk, let alone flee," defence lawyer Ang Udom told judges.

Ieng Sary has been hospitalised several times for a heart condition and blood in his urine since his detention began.

A decision on the bail plea is expected within a couple of months.

The three other defendants due to be tried with him are also in their 70s and 80s and worries for their health have cast a cloud over proceedings as critics worry they could die before the process is complete.

Khmer Rouge leader Pol Pot died in 1998. Final arguments in the court's first trial, of former prison chief Kaing Guek Eav, alias Duch, ended in November and a verdict is expected after April this year.

Besides Ieng Sary and his wife, former social affairs minister Ieng Thirith, the other ex-leaders in jail awaiting trial for genocide are "Brother Number Two" Nuon Chea and former head of state Khieu Samphan.