

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



A villager at Talia Yawbeko.

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:

Monday, 29 March 2010

Press clips are produced Monday through Friday.
Any omission, comment or suggestion, please contact
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CDF wives arrive in Rwanda

We are pleased to report that the wives of Moinina Fofana, Alieu Musa Kondewa of the CDF and Issa Hassan Sesay of the RUF all arrived safely yesterday at Mpage



Prisons in Southern Rwanda for a two-week visit with their husbands. Fofana and Kondewa are both serving prison sentences of 15 and 20 years, respectively, imposed by the Special Court for Sierra Leone for alleged war crimes and crimes against humanity. **Cont Page 2**

CDF wives arrive in Rwanda

From page 1

Fofana and Kondewa along with former CDF National Coordinator, Lata Chief Sam Hinga Norman, were indicted for twice taking up arms to establish constitutional government in Sierra Leone after Revolutionary United Front (RUF) and soldiers of the Sierra Leone Army rebelled against the government and plunged the country into an eleven-year civil war. Largely as a result of these indictments and the subsequent death in de-

struction of Chief Hinga Norman, political power in Sierra Leone dramatically shifted from the South-East to the North-West following the 2007 general and presidential elections which brought to power Norman's friend and ally, Ernest Bai Koroma, of the All People's Congress (APC). As it is written, "The stone which the builders rejected have become the chief cornerstone." We regret to inform, however, that the infant son of Mr. Kondewa died late last month from a brief illness. An-

other son also passed away in January under similar conditions. We are extremely grateful to the Arabella Foray Peace Foundation and representatives of the Bo, Kailahun and Kenema District Branches of the All People's Congress party for their financial and moral support to the Kondewa families during their loss as well as the Hinga Norman family during the third anniversary of the death of Mr. Norman. As always, a friend in need is a friend indeed. We are also sadly informed by Mr. Fofana

that his family has been given a short notice of eviction from their rented property on Gerehun Road in Bo.

With respect to the Norman family, we are pleased to report that the gold mining accident in Mbawomahun, Valunia Chiefdom which would have involved several members of the family was false in its entirety. Both government and family sources from Mongere, ten miles from the mines, conclude that no loss of life was occurred there as recently reported by Richard Margao of the BBC Focus on Africa. BBC has subsequently retracted the story

and Mr. Margao and some members of KISS-FM station in Bo have reportedly been invited to the CID for their role in filing this bogus and alarming report.

On a partly personal note, I am pleased to report that I have returned safely to my base in Kenema following a one day working visit to Talia, Yawbeko Chiefdom, Bonthe District with the Outreach Branch of the Special Court for Sierra

Leone. The delegation which included the entire hierarchy of the court including the Registrar, Defender, Prosecutor and Public Affairs was in Ywabeko at the invitation of the youths of the chiefdom to erect a memorial to the war dead. Talia, Ywabeko was the home of the most famous operational base of the war, Base Zero, home of the Kamajors. Although the delegation was politely received, I was their strictly as an observer and representative of the CDF families.

Thursday, 25 March 2010

John Kollie

NEWS ITEM

Former Liberian President, Charles Taylor is accused of organizing the Sierra Leone Rebel Group, RUF in Liberia. The Prosecution had said with the help of Mr. Taylor, Former RUF Leader, Foday Sankoh launched a civil war that claimed thousands of lives in Sierra Leone. The Seventh Defence Witness, John Vincent said he was recruited and trained in Liberia. The witness denied the use of child soldiers in combat. Mr. Vincent is testifying in Liberian English so he's being interpreted. John Kollie transcribes reports from the Hague on the trial of former Liberian president Charles Taylor...

Mr. Vincent said they were about 328 recruits of the RUF trained at the Camp Naama Military Barracks in Bong County in 1990. He told the court that Former RUF Leader, Foday Sankoh and others gave them military training at a section of Camp Naama called Crab Hole.

He denied that any collaboration existed between Charles Taylor's National Patriotic Front, the NPFL and the RUF during their training at Camp Naama. But Defence Lawyer, Morris Anyah pressed Mr. Vincent on the allegation that Mr. Taylor and Sankoh collaborated in the organization of the RUF.

Mr. Vincent told the court that after the invasion of Sierra Leone he was appointed Training Commandant for the entire RUF. The recruitment of child soldiers is one of the counts the Prosecution has brought against Former Liberian President, Charles Taylor.

Defence Witness, Charles Vincent said children under 17 years were recruited and trained at the Camp Naama Military Barracks along with the RUF. Mr. Vincent however told the court the children were not trained for combat.

The Defence Witness also said it was the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council, the AFRC headed by Johnny Paul Koroma that introduced amputation in the Sierra Leone civil war.

Mr. Vincent said a woman popularly known in Sierra Leone to date as Adama Cut-hand from the AFRC started the amputation of civilians.

Mr. Vincent denied that the RUF amputated any civilian.

Charlestaylortrial.org (The Hague)

Wednesday, 24 March 2010

Liberia: On Request By Prosecutors, Court Suspends The Cross-Examination of Defense Witness

By Alpha Sesay

Based on a request by prosecutors, the Special Court for Sierra Leone judges today suspended the cross-examination of Charles Taylor's defense witness whose direct-examination was concluded this morning by defense lawyers for the former Liberian president.

Charles Ngebeh, a Sierra Leonean witness and former arms repairer for Sierra Leone's Revolutionary United Front (RUF), has been testifying for Mr. Taylor, who is on trial for allegedly providing support to RUF rebels while as leader of the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) rebel group and as president of Liberia. Mr. Taylor has denied the allegations against him.

As Terry Munyard, defense counsel for Mr. Taylor concluded the direct-examination of Mr. Ngebeh today, prosecution counsel, Ms. Brenda Hollis, requested that the cross-examination of the witness be suspended because certain things to which Mr. Ngebeh testified had not been contained in his statement disclosed to prosecutors. She told the judges that the information provided by defense lawyers was insufficient for the cross-examination of the witness.

"Prosecution therefore is unable at this time to cross-examine this witness because of the inadequacy of the summary. We are unable to achieve the purpose of cross-examination, which is to test the evidence for the benefit of the fact-finders, that is, for the benefit of your honors. That's why cross-examination is allowed and that's why it's so important," Ms. Hollis told the judges.

Ms. Hollis further added that there were inconsistencies in the witness's oral testimony in court and his written statement made to defense investigators.

Defense counsel for Mr. Taylor, Mr. Munyard, objected to the prosecution's request for the suspension of the witness's cross-examination, telling the judges that the prosecution had not given enough reasons to delay the cross-examination of the witness.

According to Mr. Munyard, "the test for the court to determine is whether the prosecution has demonstrated such undue prejudice that it is in the interest of justice to disclose the statement. In other words, what the prosecution is saying is, without the statement, we can't reasonably proceed to cross-examination. In our submission, of course they can reasonably proceed to cross-examination."

After hearing arguments on both sides and conferring with her colleagues, presiding judge, Justice Julia Sebutinde, issued a ruling that while agreeing with the prosecution that the witness's cross-examination should be suspended, his written statement disclosed by defense lawyers did not necessarily contradict his testimony in court.

Relevant Links

"The Trial Chamber is of the view that although the summary is inadequate, what little there is of it is not necessarily inconsistent with the witness's testimony given in chief. The Trial Chamber therefore finds that the proper remedy for the prosecution complaints is to allow the prosecution some time to prepare its cross-examination of the witness in respect of those parts of his testimony that were not contained in his summary," Justice Sebutinde said.

This is the second time that prosecutors have requested the suspension of the cross-examination of a defense witness. As Mr. Ngebeh was led out of court today, another defense witness, John Vincent, a Liberian from Bomi County in Liberia, took the witness stand. As defense lawyers commenced the direct-examination of the witness, the court adjourned for the day.

Charlestaylortrial.org (The Hague)

Friday, 26 March 2010

Prosecution Witness's Testimony Was Untrue, Charles Taylor Did Not Help Plan The Invasion Of Sierra Leone in 1991, Defense Witness Says

By Alpha Sesay

A defense witness for Charles Taylor has told Special Court for Sierra Leone judges in The Hague that a prosecution witness lied in his 2008 evidence when he testified that the former Liberian president helped Sierra Leonean rebels to invade Sierra Leone in 1991, a war that lasted in the West African country for 11 years.

John Vincent, a former Training Commandant for the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), a rebel group that Mr. Taylor is on trial for allegedly providing support for, testified that former RUF commander and prosecution witness Isaac Mongor's testimony against Mr. Taylor that the former Liberian president helped RUF leader Foday Sankoh to invade Sierra Leone in March 1991, is untrue. Mr. Mongor, in his 2008 testimony told the judges that shortly before the invasion of Sierra Leone in March 1991, Mr. Taylor and Mr. Sankoh met in the Liberian town of Voinjama, near the country's border with Sierra Leone. In his testimony yesterday, Mr. Vincent told the judges that he was part of the RUF fighters trained in Liberia, who invaded Sierra Leone in 1991. As he continued his testimony today, in his response to questions from defense counsel for Mr. Taylor, Morris Anyah, Mr. Vincent said that the former Liberian president did not play any role in the invasion of Sierra Leone.

"In the period when you were making your way to Sierra Leone in particular the days between the 22nd and 23rd of March, did you ever hear anyone say that Charles Taylor was in the vicinity of Voinjama?" Mr. Anyah asked the witness.

"Not at all. Had Mr. Taylor being in Voinjama and when Mr. Sankoh went for us, the last group, he would have told us. And when we got there, if at all he was there, I was going to see him too, but that did not happen," the witness responded.

Mr. Vincent also disputed Mr. Mongor's 2008 testimony that Special Forces from Mr. Taylor's National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) rebel group moved from the NPFL base in Gbarnga, Bong County in Liberia to assist the RUF in invading Sierra Leone. According to Mr. Mongor, the NPFL fighters took with them a truck load of arms and ammunition for the invasion of Sierra Leone. Today, Mr. Anyah sought to verify these accounts and to ascertain Mr. Mongor's position as a training instructor for the RUF as stated in his (Mongor) testimony.

"Did you see any NPFL Special Forces that were there to provide support to the RUF?" Mr. Anyah asked the witness.

In his response, the witness said "no, not to my knowledge."

"Did you see any trucks containing arms and ammunition that was supplied by the NPFL to facilitate the RUF invasion of Sierra Leone?"

The witness responded with a resounding "NO."

"Whether at Crab Hole or at Camp Nama, to your knowledge, did Isaac Mongor train any men when your were there?" Mr. Anyah asked the witness again.

"Isaac Mongor did not train anybody. I continue to say that Isaac Mongor was a demonstrator," the witness said.

In leading their witnesses, Mr. Taylor's defense lawyers are making frantic efforts to discredit the evidence of prosecution witnesses. That is what Mr. Anyah and Mr. Vincent sought to do today with Mr. Mongor's testimony for the prosecution. Mr. Vincent is the seventh witness that has testified for Mr. Taylor.

Mr. Vincent's testimony continues on Tuesday. The courtroom will be used for other trials on Monday and therefore, Mr. Taylor's trial will only resume on Tuesday.

Charlestaylortrial.org

Saturday, 27 March 2010

Charles Taylor Did Not Supply Arms To The RUF, Did Not Assist In Training Them And He Did Not Help Them Plan The Invasion Of Sierra Leone, Defense Witnesses Testify

By Alpha Sesay

Defense witnesses for Charles Taylor this week told Special Court for Sierra Leone judges that the former Liberian president did not supply arms and ammunition to Sierra Leonean rebels, did not provide assistance in training the rebels in Liberia, and he did not help them plan the invasion of Sierra Leone in 1991.

Mr. Taylor, who is responding to charges that he supported the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) rebel group in Sierra Leone, has had witnesses from both Liberia and Sierra Leone testify on his behalf. Mr. Taylor's witnesses have been refuting prosecution evidence against him, telling judges that the former president did not provide assistance to RUF rebels as alleged by prosecutors. This week, two former members of the RUF, one from Sierra Leone and a second from Liberia, testified on Mr. Taylor's behalf.

On Monday, a Sierra Leonean who served as an arms repairer for the RUF, Charles Ngebeh, told the judges that the former Liberian president provided support to Sierra Leonean rebel forces but that such support ceased in 1991 when Mr. Taylor withdrew his Liberian fighters from Sierra Leone. Mr. Ngebeh testified that at the initial stages of the war in Sierra Leone, Mr. Taylor did provide support to RUF rebels through the supply of manpower and materials, such as food, medicine, arms, and ammunition. The witness said that such support, however, ceased when RUF rebels and Mr. Taylor's Liberian fighters in Sierra Leone clashed in what has been called "Top 20, Top 40 and Top Final."

Prosecution witnesses testified during the presentation of the prosecution case that in 1991, members of Mr. Taylor's National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL), who were fighting alongside rebel forces in Sierra Leone, had a conflict with their RUF counterparts that led to the Liberian fighters leaving Sierra Leone and returning to Liberia. In Mr. Taylor's testimony as a witness in his own defense, the former president addressed the same issue, telling the judges that he did have Liberian fighters helping RUF rebels along the Liberia-Sierra Leone border but that such fighters were withdrawn when they had clashes with the RUF. Mr. Taylor also said that within this period, he did help the RUF with arms and ammunition because they were fighting a common enemy in the United Liberian Movement of Liberia for Democracy (ULIMO), who were attacking the NPFL with support from the Government of Sierra Leone.

Mr. Ngebeh on Monday corroborated Mr. Taylor's account when he said that "at the initial stage of the war in 1991, RUF used to have assistance from Mr. Taylor. After that infighting, Mr. Taylor withdrew all his men and the weapons they had."

The witness explained that the two sources of ammunition for the RUF at that time were supplied from Mr. Taylor and those obtained after attacking enemy forces.

"There are only two sources that we used to get ammunition from: Mr. Taylor and attacking our enemies," he said.

He explained that after Mr. Taylor withdrew his support from the RUF in 1991, RUF leader Foday Sankoh returned from Liberia and said "he'll never step his foot on Gbangha [NPFL headquarters at that time] because Taylor had sent an order to arrest him."

"Minus Taylor, plus Taylor, I will fight my war," the witness quoted Mr. Sankoh as having said at that time.

On Tuesday, Mr. Ngebeh reiterated his position that Mr. Taylor did not supply arms and ammunition to the RUF, telling the judges that ULIMO, a rival group to Mr. Taylor's NPFL, supplied the RUF with arms and ammunition. He explained that sometime in 1996, the RUF Battle Front Commander Sam Bockarie established a relationship with ULIMO that led to the Liberian rebel group supplying arms and ammunition to the RUF. He added that the RUF also bought arms and ammunition from Guinean soldiers.

The witness also affirmed on Tuesday that RUF rebels forced civilians to get involved in mining activities and that those who refused were either beaten or killed. Prosecutors have alleged that RUF rebels committed crimes of forced labor by forcing civilians to mine diamonds for them. These diamonds, prosecutors say, were transported to Mr. Taylor in Liberia in return for arms and ammunition. In his testimony on Tuesday, the witness explained how the rebel forces engaged in forced labor.

“It was the soldiers who would go to look out for the civilians. The AFRC and the RUF, they would go and search for the civilians,” the witness said.

Asked what would be done to the civilians if they did not do what the rebels wanted, the witness explained that “if you are unlucky, they will kill you. If you are lucky, they’ll beat you up. That’s the advice. They’ll take you by force. That was the options that they gave.”

As defense lawyers concluded the direct-examination of Mr. Ngebeh on Wednesday, prosecution counsel, Ms. Brenda Hollis, requested that the cross-examination of the witness be suspended because certain things to which Mr. Ngebeh testified had not been contained in his statement disclosed to prosecutors. She told the judges that the information provided by defense lawyers was insufficient for the cross-examination of the witness. Ms. Hollis further added that there were inconsistencies in the witness’s oral testimony in court and his written statement made to defense investigators. Mr. Taylor defense lawyer Terry Munyard objected to the prosecution’s request for the suspension of the witness’s cross-examination, telling the judges that the prosecution had not given enough reasons to delay the cross-examination of the witness.

After hearing arguments on both sides and conferring with her colleagues, presiding judge, Justice Julia Sebutinde, issued a ruling that while agreeing with the prosecution that the witness’s cross-examination should be suspended, his written statement disclosed by defense lawyers did not necessarily contradict his testimony in court.

“The Trial Chamber is of the view that although the summary is inadequate, what little there is of it is not necessarily inconsistent with the witness’s testimony given in chief. The Trial Chamber therefore finds that the proper remedy for the prosecution complaints is to allow the prosecution some time to prepare its cross-examination of the witness in respect of those parts of his testimony that were not contained in his summary,” Justice Sebutinde said.

On Thursday, Mr. Taylor’s seventh witness, a Liberian national who was a member of the RUF, John Vincent, told the court in his direct-examination that RUF rebels were trained in Liberia but not with assistance from Mr. Taylor. Mr. Vincent testified that he was part of the original fighters trained as members of the RUF in Liberia before the group attacked Sierra Leone in March 1991. Prosecutors have alleged that RUF rebels were trained at Camp Nama military training base in Liberia, with assistance from Mr. Taylor, whose NPFL rebel group had already waged a war in Liberia in 1989. Witnesses have testified to RUF fighters undergoing training at Camp Nama under instructions from commanders belonging to Mr. Taylor’s NPFL. The former president has denied helping in training RUF rebels in Liberia, telling the judges during his testimony as a witness in his own defense that he had no knowledge of RUF rebels being trained at Camp Nama.

On Thursday, Mr. Vincent, testifying in defense of Mr. Taylor told the court that he was part of the RUF fighters who underwent training at Camp Nama but that such training was not done with assistance from Mr. Taylor. He told the court that RUF leader Mr. Sankoh and some other people gave them military training at a particular section in Camp Nama called “Crab Hole.” The witness said that during the entire period of his training at Camp Nama, he never saw Mr. Taylor there.

In response to a question as to whether he ever heard “the name Charles Taylor mentioned” at Camp Nama, the witness said that “at the time Bong Mines was captured, that was the first time I started hearing about the name Charles Taylor, and throughout Liberia at that time now, we used to hear the name, but there was nothing that was made mention of about Charles Taylor at Crab Hole, no,”

The witness said when the RUF invaded Sierra Leone, he was appointed as the Training Commandant for the entire rebel group.

Also in his testimony on Thursday, the witness refuted claims by prosecutors that the RUF recruited and used children for combat purposes during Sierra Leone's civil conflict. Witnesses have testified to the use of child soldiers in both the RUF and the NPFL, and prosecutors have asserted that Mr. Taylor encouraged the use of children for combat purposes in both rebel groups. One of the charges in the indictment against Mr. Taylor is the recruitment and use of child soldiers in the RUF. In his testimony on Thursday, while maintaining that the NPFL had no relationship with the RUF, the witness, Mr. Vincent, told the court that the RUF did indeed train children under the age of 17 years but added that such training was not for the purpose of being used for combat.

"What I mean here is that if I am here alone, maybe one of my family members has escaped and am going for training and I have my younger brother, I can't leave him behind, he will be with me, we'll train, and when am going for my assignment, he'll stay at home. That was why those young ones were trained, for their own safety as well so in case of any danger, they'll be able to get to their people but we were not using them as fighters," the witness explained.

On Friday, Mr. Vincent testified that former RUF commander and prosecution witness Isaac Mongor's testimony against Mr. Taylor that the former Liberian president helped the RUF to invade Sierra Leone in March 1991, is untrue. Mr. Mongor, in his 2008 testimony told the judges that shortly before the invasion of Sierra Leone in March 1991, Mr. Taylor and RUF leader Mr. Sankoh met in the Liberian town of Voinjama, near the country's border with Sierra Leone. Mr. Vincent on Friday told the judges that this account by Mr. Mongor is untrue.

"Had Mr. Taylor being in Voinjama and when Mr. Sankoh went for us, the last group, he would have told us. And when we got there, if at all he was there, I was going to see him too, but that did not happen," the witness said.

Mr. Vincent also disputed Mr. Mongor's 2008 testimony that Special Forces from the NPFL moved from the NPFL base in Gbarnga, Bong County in Liberia to assist the RUF in invading Sierra Leone. According to Mr. Mongor, the NPFL fighters took with them a truck load of arms and ammunition for the invasion of Sierra Leone.

Asked whether he saw NPFL fighters providing assistance to the RUF or transporting arms and ammunition for the invasion of Sierra Leone, the witness said "no, not to my knowledge."

The witness further refuted claims by Mr. Mongor that he (Mongor) was a training instructor for the RUF while they were preparing to invade Sierra Leone in 1991.

"Isaac Mongor did not train anybody. I continue to say that Isaac Mongor was a demonstrator," the witness said.

Mr. Vincent will continue his direct-examination next week, after which, he will be cross-examined by prosecutors.

Mr. Taylor's trial resumes on Tuesday.

New African

April edition

No joy for Taylor's prosecutors

Special Feature on Liberia

After two years of trial, the prosecution in the Charles Taylor case are still struggling to nail him down conclusively with the 11-count indictment announced to the world amidst great fanfare in 2004. Lans Gberie went to The Hague in February to watch the prosecution at work; he found them clutching at straws and apparently bereft of new ideas.

Charles Taylor was transferred to The Hague from Sierra Leone in 2006 to fulfill a promise made to Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, the new Liberian president, who feared that trying Taylor so close to her fragile country could be destabilising. The Special Court had probably anticipated this: Article 9 of the Court's founding Act states that: "The Special Court shall have its seat in Sierra Leone. The Court may meet away from its seat if it considers it necessary for the efficient exercise of its functions, and may be relocated outside Sierra Leone, if circumstances so require."

The prosecution concluded the cross-examination of Taylor in early February 2010, telling the judges to convict him for the following offences: that he persecuted human rights activists and suppressed press freedom in Liberia; that he executed politicians and rebel commanders who he saw as threats to his quest for political power; that he had ulterior motives when he negotiated the release of UN peacekeepers held hostage by Sierra Leonean rebel forces; and that through his support for rebel forces in Sierra Leone, he brought untold suffering to the people of Sierra Leone. Taylor, of course, vigorously denied these charges, and his combative lead counsel – a very experienced British criminal lawyer of Jamaican descent named Courtenay Griffiths – tried hard to play it all down, insisting that the whole trial was a Western conspiracy to humiliate and convict an awkward African leader.

On 8 February, the judges granted Griffiths' request for a one-week adjournment in order for him and his client to reflect on a few issues that came out of the cross-examination. At the same time, the acting prosecutor, the Sierra Leonean Joseph Kamara, announced that the trial would be concluded by the end of this year. This is, of course, doubtful: the judges have over \$2m to use up in salary, and ditto the prosecutors. Taylor's defence team, too, is paid \$100,000 a month by the Court (the former president pledged he was indigent) – so obviously no one is in a hurry to wrap this whole thing up. I saw this for myself when I visited the Court on 29 February.

**UNMIL Public Information Office Media Summary
26 March 2010**

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

International Clips on Liberia

Liberia teen rapist to get therapy

[http://www.news24.com/Content/Africa/News/965/c9830f522948486182dcb1ec97aced8a/26-03-2010-11-26/Liberia teen rapist to get therapy](http://www.news24.com/Content/Africa/News/965/c9830f522948486182dcb1ec97aced8a/26-03-2010-11-26/Liberia%20teen%20rapist%20to%20get%20therapy)

Phoenix - A teenage Liberian refugee charged in the gang-rape of an 8-year-old girl will be sent to the juvenile system for therapy and released in less than three years, rather than face more than 25 years in prison if convicted as an adult, a Phoenix judge ruled on Thursday. The teen, who cannot be named because of his age, had been the only one of four boys charged as an adult in the July attack. The teen, now 15, was 14 at the time. All the children involved are refugees from the war-torn West African nation of Liberia. Maricopa County Superior Court Judge Michael Kemp decided to send the teen's case to juvenile court on Thursday, meaning he will undergo treatment and be released when he turns 18, possibly sooner. "I thank God," said the teen's mother after falling to the floor in relief. "God did a great work for me. I'm almost in heaven." The teen had pleaded not guilty in adult court to one count each of kidnapping, sexual assault and attempted sexual conduct with a minor, and five counts of sexual conduct with a minor. He would have faced at least 26 years in prison if convicted of every count as an adult.

International Clips on West Africa
Guinea

Hyperdynamics Relinquishes 70% of Guinea Oil-Concession Claim

March 26 (Bloomberg) -- Hyperdynamics Corp., a Texas-based oil and natural-gas exploration company, said it agreed to relinquish about 70 percent of its claim to an area off the coast of Guinea, after amending a production-sharing agreement. In 2006, Hyperdynamics was awarded a permit to explore for oil in an 84,000 square-kilometer (32,433 square-mile) area. Under terms of the amended accord, the company will retain a contract area of about 24,000 square kilometers, Chief Executive Officer Ray Leonard told reporters yesterday in the capital, Conakry. The original contract "was not made to the advantage of Guinea," Leonard said. "It was unacceptable." The company said in a separate statement on its Web site that a government decree under which a 23 percent interest in the concession will be assigned to Dana Petroleum Plc will be issued "in the near future." Dana Petroleum, a Scottish oil and gas explorer, said in December it agreed to buy the 23 percent interest in the concession. Hyperdynamics expects to identify potential well locations for drilling in late 2011, Leonard said. "We believe that successful exploration and production will be a substantial contributor to the **Guinean** economy," he said.

Ivory Coast

Ivorians want to resolve the disarmament – election dilemma, says UNOCI Force Commander

<http://appablog.wordpress.com/2010/03/26/cote-d%e2%80%99ivoire-ivorians-want-to-resolve-the-disarmament-election-dilemma-says-unoci-force-commander/>

The recent consultations between the parties are a sign of the collective good faith of **Ivorians** to find a solution to the disarmament – election dilemma, said the Force Commander of the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI) General Fernand Marcel Amoussou on Thursday, in Abidjan. Speaking during UNOCI's weekly press conference, General Amoussou, who is ending his mission after four years in the country, added that the Ouagadougou Political Agreement had already addressed the issue. In this context, he said, UNOCI would continue to commit the parties to the complete and total implementation of the agreements. General Amoussou took the opportunity to give a brief outline of the Ivorian peace process. In this regard, he noted that even if the crisis in Côte d'Ivoire had not completely finished, the country had made great progress towards resolving it. "We can clearly see the work which has been done since 2003 to date," he said. However, the Force Commander said, it was evident that the disagreements between the parties would continue as long as the crisis has not been completely resolved. "I believe in Ivorians' capacity to use dialogue and commitment to help the country regain peace," he said.

Sierra Leone

Health workers strike in Sierra Leone leads to deaths

FREETOWN (AFP) - Sierra Leone President Ernest Koroma said a health workers strike, entering its ninth day Friday, had led to "some deaths", after a meeting where doctors and nurses refused an offer to double their pay. The three-hour meeting ended in deadlock Thursday night, despite pleas by Koroma for the disgruntled health workers to resume their work at the capital's two main hospitals - currently being manned by army and police doctors. The president of the poor west African country, which is still emerging from a decade of devastating conflict, said there had been "some deaths directly related to the strike" but did not give figures. "Let me appeal to you that your concerns are justifiable. The only unfortunate thing is that not all of them can be afforded now. But meanwhile, go back to work," Koroma said. "We will give our bottom line and will continue with the engagement process. We know that the conditions under which you are working need a drastic improvement but we are limited by the financial availability." Addressing the meeting, Koroma offered strikers a 100 percent salary increase. Current salaries for doctors are pegged at between 90 to 100 dollars (67 to 75 euros) monthly for doctors and 35 dollars for nurses.

Local Media – Newspaper

Bribes, Deals - Audit Reveals At NOCAL

[New Democrat]

- An audit of the National Oil Company (NOCAL) has featured some top officials in alleged bribe deals, amongst them Mr. Clemenceau Urey, chair of the entity's board, and Rep. Alomiza Ennos Bah.
- The audit report from the General Auditing Commission presented to the President and to officials of the company, on the financial activities of the company linked top officials to bribery and other financial malpractices coupled with tax invasion.
- The audit established that legislators were bribed to ratify two multinational oil contracts involving Oranto Petroleum Ltd and Broadway PLC.
- Prime actors and masterminds of the bribery scheme include Congress for Democratic Change and Montserrado Representative Alomiza Ennos Bah, Chief Clerk, Attorney James R. Kaba and NACOL Board Chair Clemenceau Urey.
- The audit indicates that NACOL's Board Chair Urey unilaterally approved the disbursement of US\$118,400 as lobbying fees to Legislators and that Representative Bah and Chief Clerk Kaba signed for US\$40,000 and US\$1,500 of the said amount respectively, while the rest could not be accounted for.

Rebels Wrap Guinea In Arms Deals At Trial

[New Democrat]

- A Liberian/Sierra Leone rebel testifying for Mr. Charles Taylor has claimed that the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) rebels purchased weapons from Guinean soldiers during their war and not from Mr. Taylor as prosecutors have contended, according to reports from the Court.
- The protected witness said Sierra Leonean rebel forces captured arms and ammunition from enemy forces and also purchased some from Guinean soldiers, a defense witness for Charles Taylor told Special Court for Sierra Leone judges today in The Hague.
- The witness also denied prosecution allegations that Mr. Taylor supplied Sierra Leonean rebels with weapons during the country's brutal 11-year conflict.
- Prosecutors have alleged that Mr. Taylor provided arms and ammunition to RUF rebels in Sierra Leone, which were used to launch attacks and commit atrocities against civilians.

Ritualistic Killing Again In Maryland...Former Minister, Others Linked

[The Inquirer, Daily Observer, Heritage, New Democrat]

- Latest reports from Harper, Maryland County say police have arrested 10 out of 18 persons among them a former Minister of Internal Affairs in connection to alleged ritualistic activities in the county.
- Former Internal Affairs Minister Dan Morias, the former County Attorney Fulton Yancy, the County City Inspector, the Youth President of the county, and Mr. Henry Cole, Chief of Protocol of the local county office, were among those arrested and are currently being held by the police for investigation.
- According to the reports, one of the alleged suspects, in person of the Attorney Yancy, was arrested at his residence, where reports said ten jars of human blood were confiscated by the police.
- Police is on a massive hunt for the remaining suspects.
- The arrest of the alleged suspects comes in the wake of mounting pressure by a group calling itself the "Maryland Development Association," which has been in the vanguard of pressing forward for the arrest and prosecution of individuals alleged to be linked to ritualistic killings.

President Sirleaf Arrives In Spain

[Heritage, New Vision, The Analyst, The Inquirer, The News, In Profile Daily, Liberian Express]

- President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and delegation are in Barcelona, Spain at the start of a three-day visit.
- The President of the regional government of Catalonia in Barcelona, Jose Montilla, welcoming President Sirleaf and delegation, commended her for the remarkable progress Liberia is making under her leadership.
- Mr. Montilla described the Liberian leader as a true symbol of women emancipation beyond Liberia.
- He spoke of the need for private sector involvement in the national reconstruction of Liberia and noted Catalonia would be willing to deepen bilateral relations between his region and Liberia to help promote the collaboration.
- In response, President Sirleaf recalled the long standing relations between Spain and Liberia and promised her government's commitment in helping to foster stronger ties between the two countries.

House Postpones Passage Of Draft Investment Act

[Heritage, In Profile Daily]

- The House of Representatives has deferred the passage of the draft Investment Act of 2009 following a heated debate marred by confusion.
- The decision followed strong opposition to some provisions of the bill which some lawmakers believe were ambiguous and controversial.
- In its vote Thursday, the House resolved to finalize the passage of the proposed Investment Act to next Tuesday, March 30.
- The House said contentions raised on some provisions of the bill would be harmonized and submitted to the plenary for approval.

Postal Affairs Releases Policy On Broadband Connectivity

[The Inquirer]

- The Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications has issued a policy statement designating broadband connectivity [transmission covering a wide range of frequencies using electromagnetic frequencies].
- The Ministry believes the measure is an essential platform for the enhancement of smooth growth of the ICT and telecommunications sector in Liberia.
- The statement says Government recognizes the tremendous opportunities Liberia will accrue with broadband connectivity through the Africa Coast to Europe submarine fiber optic project.
- According to the Ministry, the project will provide alternative international gateway connectivity.
- The statement mandated the Liberia Telecommunications Authority, in keeping with its regulatory function, to spearhead national consultations with stakeholders intended to facilitate the formation of a consortium for providing broadband connectivity for Liberia.

State Prosecutors May Set Nine Ghanaians Free

[The Inquirer, The News]

- Government has dismissed the US\$500 million cocaine case against nine Ghanaian nationals.
- Prosecution dropped the case Thursday, claiming it cannot find its prime witness, the captain of the French Naval Vessel.
- Solicitor General Wilkins Wright said every effort the state made at getting the French officer has failed.
- Cllr. Wright told Criminal Court 'C' proceeding, government will re-institute the case when contact is made with the French Navy Captain.
- Government in 2008 won the cocaine case against the Ghanaians but the Supreme Court reminded it on grounds the state's evidence was based on hearsay.

US Embassy Announces Change In Non-immigrant Visa

[Daily Observer, Heritage, The Informer, The Inquirer, The Analyst, The News]

- The Consular Section of the US Embassy in Monrovia has announced a change in its non-immigrant visa application form.
- The new US non-immigrant visa form which takes effect April 1 this year recommends that visa application be done electronically.
- The Embassy has also announced that in order to call and book an appointment for interview a card will now have to be purchased.
- The US Embassy clarified the new procedure does not apply to the K-1 and fiancée visas and all fees for application remain the same.

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

UNMIL Boss On Peace-building In West Africa

- The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary General in Liberia, Ms. Ellen Margrethe Løj has told West African leaders that peace keeping cannot be sustained without peace building in the Sub-region.
- Ms. Løj said the process of military intervention in crisis cannot be guaranteed as the sole solution to the problem.
- The head of the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) said the human resource and infrastructural development are vital to promoting security sector reform.
- Ms. Løj who served as moderator at the ongoing ECOWAS conference believes regional interaction could also contribute to peace building in the Sub-region.
- She identified UNMIL's quick Impact projects as some of the components contributing to peace keeping and peace building in Liberia.

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

UN Security Expert Explains Why Liberia Went To War In 1999

- The head of the Security Sector Reform at the United Nations, Dr. Adedeji Ebo says the second phase of the Liberian conflict in 1999 was due to lack of security reform.
- Dr. Ebo said the early departure of ECOMOG led to the breach of the security sector reform policy under then President Charles Taylor.
- Dr. Ebo who delivered papers on the Security Sector Reform in Post-Conflict States; the UN and Regional Economic Communities, said security sector reform is intended to provide operational efficiency and help offer oversight of security institutions.
- He called on ECOWAS to build its own capacity in order to handle issues of security sector reform in post conflict nations.

(Also reported Radio Veritas, Sky FM, and ELBC)

Presidential Emissary Arrested In Maryland

- Liberia's Ambassador-at-large Dan Morias has been arrested in Harper, Maryland County.
- State security in Harper picked up Ambassador Morias in connection with the discovery of human parts in the home of state prosecutor Fulton Yancy.
- Ambassador Marias was arrested at his business centre in Harper Thursday morning.
- Maryland County Inspector Hodo Clarke is the latest high-profile official arrested Thursday in connection with ritualistic activity in the county.
- Several other high-profile personalities in Maryland County are said to be on the police suspect list and could be invited.
- At the same time, a delegation of Marylanders in Monrovia headed by Senator John Ballout has arrived in the county to intervene in the situation.

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

House Postpones Passage Of Draft Investment Act

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

State Prosecutors may set nine Ghanaians free

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

US Embassy Announces Change In Non-immigrant Visa

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Former Information Minister Seeks Separate Trial

- Criminal Court "C" has heard a motion for separate trial filed by former Information Minister Laurence Bropleh.
- Dr. Bropleh, in the four-count motion, said trying him jointly with the other defendants could prejudice his case.
- The former minister claimed Josiah Gwagee and Joseph Nyamunue could implicate him more if they were tried together.
- Government resisted the plea saying trying Dr. Bropleh separately could operate against the state, since they acted together to commit the crime, noting that Dr. Bropleh was the brain behind the scam and asked the court to dismiss the motion.
- A ruling on the motion is expected next week.

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

President Sirleaf Arrives In Spain

Radio Netherlands Worldwide

Wednesday, 24 March 2010

Truth vs. justice in Liberia

By Bram Posthumus (IJT)



War ended in Liberia almost seven years ago. It has left scars in the land and the people. The country is slowly recovering and questions regarding justice and impunity are being addressed – but not to everyone’s satisfaction.

Harper, the capital of the Liberian county of Maryland, was a charming little town. Until 1990, when rebel troops entered. They killed, they raped, they looted and lived off the proceeds of the war whose central motto was: “Pay Yourself.” The gang called itself the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL). It was led by Charles Taylor who is currently on trial before the Special Court for Sierra Leone (SCSL), facing 11 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity allegedly committed in that country.

A few years later, another group entered Harper. They were the Liberian Peace Council (LPC), enemies of the NPFL. They burned the houses that had been looted. The LPC leader was a man called Geoge Boley. He currently resides in a United States jail, awaiting trial for atrocities he allegedly committed in Liberia.

Harper changed hands a few times between these two groups until Taylor became president in 1997. The modern and elegant little capital had been reduced to a ghost town, its people scattered. But it was not over: in 2003, yet another band of looters, killers and rapists came to Harper - the Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL). The leader of this faction was Thomas Nimely, who went on to become Minister for Foreign Affairs in Liberia’s interim government.

Truth and Reconciliation Commission

There is a fairly clear picture of what these gangs have done, thanks to the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Liberia, the body that was created in 2005 to help the country come to terms with its violent past. The TRC was based on the South African model; it conducted hearings throughout Liberia in 2007-2008, and took in written statements about what happened in the cities, towns and villages throughout the country. Even the tersest of testimonies made for grim reading and listening.

The picture appears fairly clear-cut: you have perpetrators and victims, all get a hearing; if possible they reconcile and if necessary there is punishment. At least, there will be some kind of closure. But in Liberia, things are never clear-cut. First off, let’s take a look at these perpetrators.

Victor is 22 and sits slumped in his chair like an overgrown teenager. In fact, he spent his adolescence in the service of MODEL. He does not really like talking, let alone about the time he was recruited, at age 13. His hands are never still, he plucks at his trousers and gives the shortest possible answers to any questions. Yes, he was forced, had no choice. And yes, he is back in the house where he grew up. Victor only perks up when the talk turns to school. He really likes it there and especially maths and science, his two favourite subjects. He wants to be an engineer.

Losers

“They are the losers,” asserts Groba Leo Williams, who had to flee the war several times and lost two brothers. “They are the ones who are hanging about in the streets, sell water for a small amount, pick pockets – and some of them are even waiting for another war. When the massacre took place in Guinea on September 28th last year, I personally know that some of them were rejoicing, saying “we’re going to Guinea to loot and kill.” Their leaders benefited from the war; they did not.”

Coming to terms

Opinions differ about how Liberia can come to terms with the past: forgiveness and justice. Both exist side by side; it is possible even to find someone holding both views at the same time. This may seem difficult to comprehend until you realise two essential things about Liberia: first, it is so tightly knit as a society that victims and perpetrators often are connected by family ties; and second, it is a deeply religious society.

Melita Gardner lost her house, had to flee Liberia and leave three of her children behind. She only managed to reunite them all months later in neighbouring Ivory Coast. During the last war, she brought relief to refugees across the front lines between the various fighting factions. When asked about forgiveness her response is immediate: “Yes, it is possible to forgive.” The source for her bravery during the wars and her capacity to forgive is the same: her faith. This is how she put it, while walking away from the spot where her house used to stand: “God says: “Vengeance is mine”. He will repay. So whenever someone does something to hurt my feelings, I just give it to God. I should never be the one to hurt another person because they might not forgive me so easily. Forgiveness can be hard – but we must practice it.” Harper is fortunate to have her working for its local government today.

Another source of forgiveness is the traditional African notion of justice: rather than punishing a perpetrator, you re-create balance in the community. This was evident during the long and often heart-rending TRC hearings. During one of those hearings, a village woman told a tale that rang depressingly familiar: family members killed, surviving women raped, the little they owned stolen. “But I have forgiven them,” is how she concluded her testimony. “Those who did this are our children.” Once again, the family ties come to the surface.

Justice

But increasingly, there are other voices too. The younger generation wants to see justice. Williams is one of them. He does not believe the TRC has been able to serve its intended purposes: hear the victims, reconcile communities and recommend the legal prosecution of some individuals. “We need a war crimes tribunal in this country. If you organise such a tribunal, people will pay for their crimes. You cannot discuss reconciliation without discussing justice. People are still hurt. When you bring those who are responsible for that hurt to justice, you are trying to break the system of impunity. This is why I have never supported the TRC.”

Williams makes it clear that he is not after the little victors of this family war. The targets are those educated men responsible for organising this violence. Taylor and Boley are where they belong, even though Taylor is not even standing trial for crimes committed in Liberia. Nimely should follow, as should all the others that have been at the helm of the marauding gangs that reduced Liberia to rubble and set back the country’s development by at least half a century. It is an insult, Williams believes, to see these people holding respectable positions in society. This is not the way to break the system of impunity.

The inhabitants of Harper, meanwhile, go about the business of living among the ghostly buildings that remind one of a prettier past. Some inhabit the ruins; others have constructed makeshift dwellings next door. They have not forgotten what happened in the past but their preoccupations are more immediate: how to feed a family on half a dollar a day, how to find jobs, a decent education for their children, health care...

End note: the fate of Charles Taylor, the man who initiated the cycle of war, is not uppermost in the minds of most people because they are too busy trying to survive. For some, however, it grates that he is standing trial in The Hague not for crimes committed in Liberia itself but for atrocities that occurred in Sierra Leone. Taylor’s legal defence is formidable and if he walks, he could once again become a huge political presence in Liberia and beyond. Any gains made by the current government in terms of governance, development and accountability will then be in mortal danger. The man responsible for this legal monstrosity is the former prosecutor for the SCSL, David Crane. Crane now works as a consultant in Washington and has co-authored a report, which largely absolved the military junta of Captain Moussa Dadis Camara of responsibility for the massacre that took place in the Guinean capital of Conakry on September 28th, 2009.

Radio Netherlands Worldwide

Thursday, 25 March 2010

Solomons TRC starts public hearings

By International Justice Tribune (IJT)



Honiara, Solomon Islands

The Solomon Islands Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) started public hearings into ethnic conflict that took place between 1998 and 2003. 100

people were killed and more than 20,000 had to flee their homes after violence broke out between rival ethnic groups from the islands of Guadalcanal and Malaita.

19 witnesses testified during the initial two-day hearing earlier this month, including Pretty Rose Proctor from Choiseul Island. She described how she lost her husband, brother and niece to the violence. Maria Odilia from Guadalcanal said she was attacked by militants because she married a man from Malaita.

“The aim of this public hearing is to put an end to the silence,” said TRC chairman Father Samuel Ata.

So far, the TRC has only heard from victims but there have been repeated calls for perpetrators to also come forward and tell their story.

“We will definitely invite them to testify,” said Ata. “It is very important, because the perpetrators also need healing.”

The TRC is an independent body, made up of 3 national and 2 international commissioners. It was opened last April and aims to promote reconciliation between the country’s different ethnic communities.

The TRC has come under fire for its policy of ‘limited amnesty’, meaning that it will not use any evidence or testimony it gathers to pursue prosecutions.

Former militants who have been prosecuted and sentenced say that it’s unfair to let others go unpunished.

Amnesty International argues that the limitation “is at odds with the mandate of the TRC” to address impunity and “those who committed human rights abuses should not be protected in any way but rather face full criminal charges.”

Agence France Presse

Thursday, 25 March 2010

Bangladesh sets up 1971 war crimes court

DHAKA — Bangladesh set up a special tribunal on Thursday to try people accused of committing war crimes during the country's bloody 1971 liberation struggle against Pakistan.

Investigation and prosecution teams were also named to prosecute people who sided with Pakistan and committed murder, rape and arson during the war, law minister Shafiq Ahmed told AFP.

"The tribunal will hold trials of those suspected of committing crimes against humanity and genocide," he said.

Bangladesh was part of Pakistan until the independence campaign led by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the country's founding leader. The government says the war left three million people dead.

Rahman, the father of the current prime minister Sheikh Hasina, had planned to put the alleged war criminals on trial before his assassination in a coup in 1975 -- which Hasina says was masterminded by war criminals.

At least 11,000 war crime suspects were set free by the post-coup government, and Bangladesh has since struggled to come to terms with its bloody birth and the break-up of the subcontinent's Muslim homeland.

A private group that has investigated the conflict has identified 1,775 people, including Pakistani generals and local Islamists allied with Pakistan, as complicit in the atrocities.

Law minister Ahmed said Pakistani generals and army officers won't be tried by the tribunal.

"Only the Bangladeshis who formed auxiliary forces to aid the Pakistani army and committed crimes against humanity will be put on trial," he said.

A date for the court's first hearing has not yet been scheduled.

Ahead of formation of the tribunal, Bangladesh became the first south Asian country to ratify the founding Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, the ICC said on Wednesday.

The ICC is the world's only independent, permanent court with the jurisdiction to try genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes.

The Daily Star (Lebanon)

Monday, 29 March 2010

Hizbullah chief vows to address allegations of STL interrogation

By Patrick Galey

BEIRUT: Hizbullah Secretary-General Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah vowed to respond to allegations that Special Tribunal for Lebanon (STL) prosecutors had begun questioning Hizbullah members about involvement in the killing of former Premier Rafik Hariri.

“I will most probably speak in the few coming days about the reports and circulations concerning the international investigation and questioning of Hizbullah members as well as the path of the investigations and all things related to this issue,” Nasrallah was quoted as saying by the Al-Manar news website.

“I will say what I think is appropriate to say at this stage so that people understand the issue,” Nasrallah added.

It is expected that Nasrallah will give a statement to Al-Manar television on Wednesday.

Also over the weekend, Tawheed Movement leader Wi'am Wahhab attacked on Sunday the United Nations' probe into Hariri's assassination, warning that the tribunal was at risk of becoming politicized.

Following a meeting with Spanish Ambassador to Lebanon Juan Carlos Gafo at his residence in Jahlieh, Wahhab expressed his skepticism over the motives of the STL.

“We don't trust the STL or its work and we have expressed that over the years,” he said.

“Ever since the four former security chiefs were released, there has been a necessity for the STL not to be politicized because it will lead to the destruction of Lebanon,” he added in reference to the Lebanese intelligence officers who were held for four years before their release under prosecutor's orders when the STL began operations in March 2009.

Wahhab suggested last week that the tribunal was seeking to speak with 20 party members and even suggested investigations were exploring the possibility that former Hizbullah military commander Imad Mughniyeh – himself killed in Damascus in 2008 – was involved in the assassination.

According to UN Security Council Resolution 1757, the STL can compel Beirut to hand over Lebanese citizens for questioning by prosecutors, although media reports have suggested that Hizbullah's cooperation with investigators would be unlikely.

The spokesperson for the Office of the Prosecutor Daniel Bellemare was forced to release a statement as rumors swirled, condemning media hearsay as “unhelpful.”

“Anything reported by persons other than the Prosecutor or his Official Spokesperson are mere speculation and should be treated as such,” Bellemare's press office statement said.

Wahhab said on Sunday he and Gafo had discussed several elements of the STL's inquiry, “including the latest leaks.”

“We stress to the ambassador that Spain and other European states play a role in opposing the politicization of the STL and its decision,” he said. “This will turn Lebanon, UNIFIL and maybe other UN

institutions into a mailbox that the US can use to put pressure on Hizbullah and Iran after it has failed in pressuring Syria in the last couple of years.

“Therefore, this matter ought to be solved before it is too late and it is the duty of the international community to exert pressure so that the STL is not turned into a US tool.”

The STL has been plagued by accusations of politicization since its inception last year, with many commentators suggesting its progress has been stymied by a series of high-profile resignations by lawyers involved in the case.

It is tasked with finding the killers of Hariri, who was assassinated by a massive car bomb that struck his motorcade in Downtown Beirut on February 14, 2005.

Last week, STL investigators began filming a 3-D scene from the area in which Hariri was slain. Allegations of responsibility have been laid at Syria’s door but Damascus has repeatedly denied involvement.

Read more:

http://www.dailystar.com.lb/article.asp?edition_id=1&categ_id=2&article_id=113231#ixzz0jZ4VxPxP
(The Daily Star :: Lebanon News :: <http://www.dailystar.com.lb>)

Associated Press

Monday, 29 March 2010

Annan: ICC to decide on Kenya investigation soon

Former U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan says the International Criminal Court may come to a decision within five days on whether to launch investigations into the perpetrators of Kenya's postelection violence.

Annan spoke to reporters Friday. He mediated a power-sharing deal between President Mwai Kibaki and Prime Minister Raila Odinga that ended weeks of bloodletting in which more than 1,000 people were killed.

ICC chief prosecutor Luis Moreno Ocampo has asked the pretrial judges at the court for permission to investigate the violence. Moreno Ocampo has said there is a "reasonable basis to believe that crimes against humanity" were committed when clashes erupted after Kibaki was declared winner of Kenya's 2007 elections.

The New York Times

Sunday, 28 March 2010

The I.C.C. in Afghanistan

Regarding the article “Prosecuting Taliban war criminals” by Candace Rondeaux and Nick Grono (Views, March 24): Formalizing the International Criminal Court investigation of Afghanistan following the capture of the Taliban’s military chief in Pakistan, as the writers suggest, would be catastrophic. Taking the I.C.C.’s work in Afghanistan to the next level would ultimately harm both the development of that nation and the standing of the I.C.C.

The preliminary examination stage by the I.C.C. that we are in now is a critical moment for national actors of all stripes to capitalize on global attention and advocate for the strengthening of domestic justice systems.

Coordinated pressure in Afghanistan is critical for success. As part of their efforts to develop national judicial mechanisms, the international community, including the United Nations, should exert pressure on the Karzai government to repeal the amnesty for warlords law and to charge perpetrators domestically.

Within Afghanistan, a coalition of Afghan nongovernmental organizations should demand justice locally. This moment of preliminary I.C.C. intervention should be viewed as a springboard to developing domestic justice processes, and not viewed as an opportunity to launch an international tribunal in The Hague.

Equally important are the inevitable political ramifications of formally opening the Afghan case: The prosecutor would have to deal with both allegations against the Taliban and NATO troops. While the former yields no grief, the latter would surely cause a stir: A formal investigation would impeach international troops, including non-parties to the Rome Statute such as the United States.

The I.C.C. belongs in Afghanistan, but a formal indictment of the country will do more harm than good.

We must recognize the pragmatic limits of the I.C.C.’s reach and seek alternative routes that leverage the court’s attention without over-extending its resources — toward the ultimate goal of bringing those responsible for mass atrocities to justice.

Rahim Kanani, Cambridge, Massachusetts

The Daily Nation (Kenya)

Sunday, 28 March 2010

ICC warrant a pain in the neck for Bashir

By CHEGE MBITIRU

An interview German magazine, Der Spiegle, published a week today; President Bashir commended the International Criminal Court, ICC. The court last year issued a warrant for his arrest over the Darfur conflict. "My popularity in my home country has unexpectedly multiplied through this warrant." That's "a favour which I would never have dreamt of."

President Bashir remains popular in the North. It's a different matter in the South. Come next January, the region will hold a referendum on secession or unity with Sudan. Results would provide a better measure of the president's popularity. Meanwhile, elections for presidencies, national and the south, regional governors, and assemblies, take place next month. International observers irk Mr Bashir.

Miscreants include the US-funded Carter Centre. It suggested a postponement. If the observers intervene in Sudan's affairs, the president said, "We will cut off their fingers and crush them under our shoes," figurative language, but a real possibility in El Obeid. The Carter Centre cited logistical strains, delays and changes in polling procedures, and "abuse of state powers."

A week Sunday, human rights organisations accused the government of suppressing opponents of the ruling National Congress Party and tight control of the media as obstacles to credible election. Although the law guarantees opposition politicians access to state radio, the government bans 20 items as "inciting prejudices and hatred against the state." The items include referring to Bashir as a "head of state wanted internationally."

As a fugitive, Mr Bashir has quite a bit going for him. The African Union, the League of Arab States, and members of the Islamic Conference aren't cooperating with the ICC. Last Sunday, the Islamic Conference pledged \$850m for Darfur reconstruction, way below the \$2 billion goal, but a laurel on Mr Bashir's good guy image. There's also an invitation to Venezuela and a promised visit by South African President Jacob Zuma.

Then there's a peace deal with Darfur's largest rebel group, the Justice and Equality Movement. Well, the two parties have been on that road, and parted, before. All said and done though, the ICC warrant remains the Bashir albatross. In a year, he has missed seven events and will miss another in May. Two required the president's presence. Discussed were the Darfur conflict and the referendum.

A chance to present his case at the United Nations General Assembly flew with the wind. In the event Bashir wins the presidency, the world can only expect a president who would play god, sending emissaries. As religious organisations have shown, emissaries haven't always delivered similar message from gods.

Short of a judicial miracle, the ICC warrant will hound Bashir for the rest of his life whether he's guilty or not. The best he can do is deviate from boasts of dubious popularity and cutting fingers and crushing people. He might earn a dint of "He wasn't all that bad" laurel someday.