

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



Aerial view of a village in northern Sierra Leone.

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, 27 January 2011

Press clips are produced Monday through Friday.
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Local News

AFRC, RUF and Taylor, Who is Responsible? / <i>The Exclusive</i>	Page 3
Formal Justice System Inaccessible / <i>Premier News</i>	Page 4

International News

Charles Taylor Denied More Time to Wrap up Defence / <i>Voice Online</i>	Page 5
ECOWAS Delegation to Meet UN, US Leaders Over Ivory Coast / <i>Voice of America</i>	Page 6
Groups Condemn Sexual Violence, 'Reign of Terror' in Ivory Coast / <i>CNN</i>	Pages 7-8
Ngoga, UN Disagree On Post-ICTR 'Mechanism' / <i>The New Times</i>	Page 9
STL and the Dangerous Manipulation of Lebanon / <i>The Palestine Chronicle</i>	Pages 10-12
Crimes Against Humanity Initiative Releases Final Text... / <i>Washington University</i>	Pages 13-14
Staff Sergeant Brings Wealth of Experience to New Position / <i>Truro Daily Times</i>	Pages 15-16

The Exclusive
Thursday, 27 January 2011

AFRC, RUF and Taylor, Who Is Responsible?

By Ayodele Deen-Cole

There are still some controversies surrounding the January 6, 1999 attack on Freetown as Sierra Leoneans are yet to really know which of the fighting factions was responsible for that dreadful attack.

Whether it was the AFRC, RUF or the Former Liberian President Charles Taylor that orchestrated the said attack is yet to be ascertained until the Special Court for Sierra Leone delivers its final judgment in the ongoing trial of former Liberian President, Charles Taylor at The Hague.

Up till today Sierra Leoneans still believe that the January 6 attack was a combined one of both the AFRC and the RUF with support from Taylor. What is puzzling is the fact that judgment had been delivered by the same Special Court for Sierra Leone (SCSL) in 2007 and 2008 which states that AFRC alone carried out

the January 6th 1999 evasion with no support from the other group or person. Even the amputees cannot exactly explain which of the groups actually chopped off their arms and limbs.

The prosecution team in the current Taylor trial is trying very hard to produce more evidences to prove RUF's involvement in the said attack.

If the presiding Judges get swayed, they might also try to place some responsibilities on the RUF which will automatically link Taylor to the January 6, 1999 attack.

However, if there are no new evidences to support the claim, it is clear that the Judges may follow the judgment of 2007 and 2008 which may not be in favour of the prosecution. For now, Sierra Leoneans are patiently waiting to see the kind of judgment that will be delivered by the SCSL in The Hague.

Premier News
Thursday, 27 January 2011

Formal Justice System Inaccessible

The Resident Judge in the Southern Province, Justice Aiah Konoyima says formal justice system is inaccessible to approximately 70 percent of the population.

By Alusine Sesay

He said, because of the population cannot access the formal justice system they use local courts and customary law resolution mechanisms, most of which discriminate against women, youths and children.

The Resident Judge made this statement on Tuesday in Freetown while delivering his keynote address on the review of Timap for Justice Community Mediation Programme, which is supported by Justice Sector Development Programme (JSDP).

The review brought together paramount chiefs and other local authorities, civil society representatives, legal practitioners, the Police and Prison services, United Nations Agencies and members of various communities.

Konoyima said Timap for Justice Community Mediation Programme focuses on the resolution of disputes at the community level, through mediation.

"The goals of the mediation is not just to stop a problem but to achieve reconciliation through a process, which entails addressing the parties' interests and needs, and seeking settlement through mutual agreement," he said.

He said the mediation contributes to confidence building, quick access to justice, and prompt justice, which also contributes to better understanding of how conflicts escalate.

He said cases that will be mediated include family disputes, land matters, and trade problems among others. He thanked the British Government for their immense

investment in the justice sector, and appealed for more support so that the programme would be extended to other regions.

The Deputy Director of Timap for Justice, Nancy Sesay said inaccessibility of the greater population of formal justice system has been largely due to shortage of lawyers, distance, affordability of legal representation, and delay in the formal court system among others.

She said community mediation is available locally, immediately and free of charge, noting that community mediators are known to the community and are familiar with the local principles, cultural norms and values.

She added that the mediation work supports existing local dispute resolution mechanisms and empowers community members. Sesay said cases are handled in accordance with the human principles of equality, non discrimination, and access for everyone, and rights of individuals.

She said during the mediation process, the conflicting parties are asked to come up with their solution to the problem, and that cases that they should not handle are referred to the Police or the court.

Head of Mediation, John Bangura, said the project was piloted in four chiefdoms within the Northern and Southern Provinces, where they have trained a total of 300 community mediators.

He said since its inception, close to 2,000 cases have successfully been mediated.



Justice
Konoyima

Charles Taylor denied more time to wrap up defence

INTERNATIONAL WAR crimes judges have refused to grant former Liberian president Charles Taylor more time to file a written summary of his defense case, as his trial for allegedly orchestrating atrocities in Sierra Leone draws to a close.

Taylor's lawyer, Courtenay Griffiths, told judges at the Special Court for Sierra Leone that he cannot submit a summary of defense argument until the court rules on several outstanding motions, including one based on diplomatic cables released by WikiLeaks.

Griffiths had been told to file the summary by January 14, but said he could not because of the outstanding motions.

Among them is one calling into question the court's independence following a cable from the U.S. Embassy in the Liberian capital, Monrovia, released by WikiLeaks.

In the leaked cable, diplomats warn that if Taylor is acquitted and returns to Liberia it could destabilize the country's fragile peace.

"The best we can do for Liberia is to see to it that Taylor is put away for a long time," the cable, dated March 10, 2009, said. It also suggested that building a case against Taylor in the U.S. could be one way of ensuring he does not return to Liberia should he be acquitted by the Sierra Leone tribunal.

Griffiths said the cable showed the tribunal is not independent, "because the Americans are already putting in place contingency plans so if Mr Taylor is acquitted they will put him on trial again in the United States."

Judges have dismissed the motion, but Griffiths has asked for permission to appeal.

Voice of America

Thursday, 27 January 2011

ECOWAS Delegation to Meet UN, US Leaders Over Ivory Coast

Officials from the Economic Community of West African States are in the United States calling for international support to help resolve the current political stalemate in the Ivory Coast.

The delegation, which includes Sierra Leone President Ernest Bai Koroma, is scheduled to meet with members of the U.N. Security Council Thursday following a talks with U.S. President Barack Obama.

Sonny Ugoh, an official with the regional bloc, ECOWAS, told VOA that they will continue seeking new ways to resolve the crisis. He said the regional body wants to ensure that Alassane Ouattara, the internationally recognized winner of Ivory Coast's November presidential election, takes office despite the refusal of incumbent President Laurent Gbagbo to step down.

Mr. Ouattara is conducting his struggle to take office from a hotel in Abidjan, where he is surrounded by security forces and United Nations peacekeepers.

On Wednesday, Mr. Ouattara's prime minister, Guillaume Soro, said that a targeted military strike would be the best way to remove Mr. Gbagbo.

Earlier in the day, Mr. Gbagbo said he was seizing control of Ivorian branches of the West African central bank, in an attempt to retain control of state finances.

In a counter move, Mr. Ouattara has ordered Ivorian branches of the regional bank to be closed. He has vowed to prosecute anyone who follows Mr. Gbagbo's orders.

CNN

Thursday, 27 January 2011

Groups condemn sexual violence, 'reign of terror' in Ivory Coast

By the CNN Wire Staff



Incumbent Ivorian President Laurent Gbagbo has been urged to relinquish power.

(CNN) -- A United Nations representative has condemned sexual violence in the Ivory Coast as the White House met with leaders urging the nation's incumbent leader Laurent Gbagbo to give up power.

"Following reports of rapes in Cote d'Ivoire, I condemn in the strongest

possible terms the employment of sexual violence as a means to political ends," said Margot Wallstrom, a special U.N. representative on sexual violence in conflict.

"From preliminary information, it seems that the assaults follow carefully selected political targeting," she said in a statement Wednesday.

The United Nations and the international community have pressured Gbagbo to leave office, saying that Alassane Ouattara fairly won a contentious November election.

On Wednesday, the White House hosted leaders from the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to discuss the crisis in the country.

The West African delegation met with Tom Donilon, the national security adviser.

Strategy to remove Ivory Coast's Gbagbo

"Mr. Donilon expressed strong support for the efforts of ECOWAS to facilitate a peaceful transition of power in Cote D'Ivoire," the White House said in a statement.

"Mr. Donilon and the ECOWAS delegation reaffirmed their shared commitment to see that the winner of the recent elections, Alassane Ouattara, takes his rightful role as President of Cote d'Ivoire, and their shared resolve to see former President Laurent Gbagbo cede power," the statement said.

Cote d'Ivoire is the French name for Ivory Coast, a former French colony.

Human Rights Watch has accused Gbagbo of carrying out a "reign of terror" against his people.

"Security forces under the control of Laurent Gbagbo and militias that support him have, since late November 2010, committed extrajudicial killings, forced disappearances, torture and rape," the organization said in a news release.

"An in-depth investigation into violations in the commercial capital, Abidjan, revealed an often-organized campaign of violence targeting members of opposition political parties, ethnic groups from northern Cote d'Ivoire, Muslims and immigrants from neighboring West African countries," Human Rights Watch said.

Wallstrom urged investigations of sexual violence allegations and for perpetrators to be brought to justice.

"The security situation for women and girls unfortunately has deteriorated in the western parts of the country," since last year, she said.

"I call for urgent steps to be taken to avert the risk of increased sexual violence and to ensure the protection of civilians, especially women and girls," Wallstrom said. "I would also like to recall that the Security Council last December reiterated their readiness to consider patterns of sexual violence when imposing sanctions against parties."

The New Times (Kigali)

Tuesday, 25 January 2011

Ngoga, UN Disagree On Post-ICTR 'Mechanism'

James Karuhanga

Following the decision by the UN to establish a residual mechanism to carry on cases being handled by international criminal tribunals, Rwandan officials have disagreed with the decision, saying the mechanism is not necessary.

The residual mechanism, was established to take over cases from UN international tribunals, including the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR), whose mandate runs out at the end of next year.

According to the Prosecutor General, Martin Ngoga, there would not have been any need for the extension of international tribunals in the form of a mechanism.

"As far as Rwanda is concerned, we shall cooperate with the mechanism in the same way we have been cooperating with the ICTR," Ngoga said, Monday.

"The point is no longer whether the mechanism was a necessary option vis-a-vis other options, more particularly full closure of the international tribunals and handover to national jurisdictions, rather that the decision to establish the mechanism is already taken and we have to live with it."

Rwanda has for years been vying to take over - from the Tanzania-based tribunal - the cases that will remain after the tribunal closes down, but the efforts are yet to bear fruits.

"If national jurisdictions were to take over and be fully politically and logistically supported, there would not have been any need for the extension of international tribunals in the form of a mechanism."

The International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals (IRMCT), under UN resolution 1966 (2010), concerns the work of the ICTR, with effect from July 1, and on the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) which commences on July 1, 2013.

According to the statute establishing the mechanism, it will operate for the first four years which may be renewed for a two year period until all cases are dealt with.

The Palestine Chronicle

Tuesday, 25 January 2011

STL and the Dangerous Manipulation of Lebanon



Leadership requires vision and political acumen.

By Mohamed El Mokhtar

There is no doubt that the killing of the late Lebanese Premier Minister was an unwarranted criminal act. There is no doubt that it caused a great deal of unnecessary suffering and wanton destruction to the entire country and beyond. And there is no question that the people directly responsible of this type of cowardly act of violence should be brought to justice and held accountable for their criminal behavior. No country can ever freely thrive, prosper or promote democratic change, or establish a sound system of governance or justice, if it remains so often marred, as is the case of Lebanon, by a non-ending sporadic spade of unpunished criminal activities, extrajudicial assassinations and targeted political murders. It is nonsense. Such climate of unlawfulness and anarchy has to stop for the country to peacefully evolve and live with serenity.

Having said that one should ponder and ask the question of not of why justice now but instead: how justice can be best be done this time without undue damage or excessive harm? In light of the many shortcomings and setbacks of the last few years, it appears very clearly that the choice of the UN-mandated Special Tribunal for Lebanon was a real, and perhaps fatal, mistake from the beginning.

In fact, instead of heightening the credibility of the legal process and its independence as initially intended, it has, instead, generated a highly polarized political atmosphere flawed with petty miscalculations and desires to settle old personal scores. Therefore from the beginning the professionalism and impartiality of the international investigative team, and ultimately the court itself, were considerably questionable to say the least. To better apprehend the complexity of the issue, a careful examination of the process is needed because therein lie a number of (vitiating) flaws so often overlooked or not sufficiently weighted:

- The immediate and unilateral accusation of Syria following the assassination of El Hariri, without any sense of constraint or precaution, was obviously a hasty move and politically-driven maneuver motivated more by foreign manipulation and a desire for settling old scores than fact-based legal evidence. Hence it was altogether a clumpy move as repeatedly stated by Walid Jumblat and more and more reiterated now by Saad El Harir himself.

- The release last year of the four Generals, Jamil Sayyed, Moustapha Hamdane, Ali Hajj et Raymond Azar arrested in 2005 is a compelling example of the vicious nature of the whole process. It turns out, after four years of illegal detention, media bashing and unnecessary suffering that the four men were, in effect, wrongly detained and consequently innocent of the charges leveled against them. The preponderance of the evidence in this case was an overloaded assumption of guilt (beyond any reasonable doubt) flawed with bias and prejudice, in total contravention to the spirit and letter of the most basic rule of law, i.e., the presumption of innocence until the establishment- beyond any reasonable doubt-, of guilt.
- The disgraceful file of false expert witnesses, or Shouhoud Ezzour in Arabic, is another vitiating flaw.
- The over-reliance on the analysis of cell phone use patterns reveals another structural weakness, namely, the dependence on one single track for the search of tips or leads and one source of information for obtaining evidence. Such a wide-open loophole in the method of instigation sheds another cloud of doubt on the credibility of the process giving the infiltration of telephone companies by Israeli spies. The recent wave of arrests among employees of cell phone companies (Ogero, Alfa...) constitutes such an edifying example and a warning sign.
- Giving generally the penchant of the UN organization to bias (toward the Arabs in particular) and its predisposition to manipulation by Western powers as clearly shown in the past (e.g. the embargo against Iraq and the unscrupulous and unprofessional behavior of UNSCOM inspectors, Richard Butler in particular), it wasn't really such an intelligent decision for the Lebanese government to entirely refer the case to the Security Council. Placing the case under chapter VII by virtue of a (compelling) resolution of the UN Security Council constitutes not only a snub to Lebanon's sovereignty but it might well be the longtime sought-out instrument that will open, like a Pandora box, the country, once for all, to unwanted foreign intervention, i.e., harmful imperialist redesign, intractable internal divisions, more war and destruction etc.
- The enhancement of the existing potential of instability: The probability of a politically driven indictment, and therefore a tainted verdict, remains a real possibility due to the weight of outside influence and the existence of structural internal fragility.

In view of all these tangible elements, it would have been, by far, less risky for the country and a lot more appropriate for the Lebanese government of the time to launch its own investigation of the crimes committed and establish its own independent court to trial the culprit. In this respect the outside help could have been better utilized to ensure the technical proficiency of the legal process and its compliance with international norms and standards. The UN, the USA and the EU could have very well assisted the Lebanese government in its endeavor by providing the help needed for the investigation and the prosecution: financial support, legal experts, forensic analysts etc.

Moreover, the government would have, by doing so, strongly asserted its national sovereignty and independence and, more importantly, shielded the country from the potentially nefarious intermingling of foreign forces. Given the wider implications of certain internal dynamics (willing local proxies, inherent sectarian divisions, structural institutional vulnerability ...), a concerted national effort could have been critical in strengthening the spirit of national unity, in time of needs, and in diverting all energies toward a shared common goal: Justice. Without stocking up feelings of confessional divisions or ideological differences, such undertaking could have been, on the contrary, the linchpin toward a much bigger objective: The much-needed democratic transformation and institutional restructuring of the Lebanese state.

In reality, the current consensus-based confessional model is an outdated form of governance. Ultimately a modernization of the current political institutions and their adaptation to the new (demographic) realities of the country are inevitable. That if the Lebanese state wants to become a modern polity capable of satisfying the growing needs of its citizens and their desire for change. It's only within the framework of such institutional transformation that a complete disbandment of Hizbullah as a military militia, or Resistance movement, is worth taking. The dissolution of such military force should be done gradually and as part of the restructuring of the national army. In order to make the effort a more sustainable and a nationally beneficial one, a review of the strategic military doctrine of the state is necessary in this regard. It is very important while dissolving the remnants of the last militia to strengthen the Lebanese national army and reform it so as it can efficiently and effectively fulfill its original and main mission: The defense of the national territory.

Furthermore, for the sake of peace and stability, for the sake of Lebanon and its future, Mr. Saad EL Hariri needs to understand that those, in Washington or Paris or elsewhere, who unscrupulously push him to hold his grounds, against all odds to the point of total intransigence, don't necessarily have at heart what's best for Lebanon. As a matter of fact they can care less for El Hariri's death or Lebanon's future. Their motivations stem from an entirely different source: narrow self-interest; and their action aim at one objective: Geostrategic hegemony.

As politically abhorrent and morally repugnant as was the killing of the late Premier Minister Rafik El Hariri and 22 other persons, it was certainly far less poignant and humanely devastating than the gruesome and unforgettable massacres of Qana during Operation Wrath of Grapes in 1996, under the order of Shimon Perez, or more recently the bestial carnage of the UNRWA school in Gaza during Operation Cast Lead in 2008 under the command of Tzipi Livni and Ehud Barak.

In both cases there was a deliberate targeting of unarmed civilians with the intention of causing massive and indiscriminate casualties while spreading fear and terror. They both amount, giving the scale of killings and nature of targets, to imprescriptible War Crimes; not to mention the notorious death squads of Ehud Barak, and other Israeli leaders, targeting at random leftist intellectuals, PLO militants and politicians in Beyrouth and elsewhere.

Besides, there was not a genocidal undertaking, like that of Rwanda in 1994, or a breakup of the state as in Liberia and Sierra Leone during the civil wars, to warrant the establishment of an international tribunal. Lebanon is a weak state but it is not a failed one. Its judicial institutions can always be revamped and made more efficient and functional. The killing of El Hariri was a horrible political murder indeed but not an operation of ethnic cleansing or a crime against humanity. And unlike Darfur, there was no forced displacement of populations or large scale deportations. The difference is significant as regard legal categories governing international norms and standards.

In sum for the credibility of international institutions, and more importantly the sake of International Law, there should, in effect, be clearly established rules and norms for the institution of special tribunals. More to the point, there should be coherent and universally agreed upon definitions of such critical, and often hackneyed, terms such as War Crimes, Crimes against Humanity, Terrorism etc.

Last but not least: Rather than aspiring to become this carless dandy, or some mediocre Levantine version of Berlusconi, more enticed by the thirst of power or fame than the common good, Saad El Hariri should ponder his choices very carefully and be aware of the consequences of his actions and the malfeasance of certain alliances. Qatar and Turkey care certainly more for Lebanon than France or the US. And King Abdallah has undoubtedly done more for the Land of Cedars than will ever do Obama, Sarkozy or Hillary Clinton.

In conclusion, leadership requires vision and political acumen. Stubbornness and close mindedness are the whole mark of stupidity. The common good demands sometimes great personal sacrifice and painful concessions. Such concessions are not a sign of weakness if they are useful and help advance the general interest of the public and wellbeing of society. They are, on the contrary, clear demonstration of good will and great proof of leadership. They epitomize the quintessence of statesmanship; the embodiment of political maturity and moral wisdom. The quest of justice is indeed a noble endeavor but it is done better only when finding the right balance.

Any justice rendered in rush or tainted with prejudice will remain a moral disgrace, i.e., an insult to the founding pillar of human ethic: truth and fairness.

- *Mohamed El Mokhtar Sidi Haiba is a political analyst. He contributed this article to PalestineChronicle.com.*

Washington University, St. Louis

Wednesday, 26 January 2011

Crimes Against Humanity Initiative releases final text of proposed international treaty

Initiative to focus on gaining international support

By Jessica Martin

The Crimes Against Humanity Initiative at the Whitney R. Harris World Law Institute of Washington University in St. Louis School of Law recently released the text of a proposed multilateral treaty on the prevention and punishment of crimes against humanity.

Leila Nadya Sadat, JD, director of the initiative, says that this is the first time that such a convention has been drafted. "It represents a real opportunity for the international community to complete the Rome Statute system by imposing a clear obligation on states to prevent and punish crimes against humanity," says Sadat, also the Henry H. Oberschelp Professor of Law and Harris Institute director.

"Moreover, it offers mechanisms designed to help states cooperate with each other in the investigation and prosecution of such crimes," she says.

The text of the Proposed International Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Crimes Against Humanity can be found at <http://law.wustl.edu/harris/crimesagainsthumanity/> in English and French. It will also appear in the book *Forging a Convention on Crimes Against Humanity*, to be published by Cambridge University Press in spring 2011.

VIDEO NEWS RELEASE

Crimes Against Humanity Initiative releases text of proposed international treaty Leila Nadya Sadat, JD, professor of law at Washington University in St. Louis, discusses the Crimes Against Humanity Initiative and the recently released proposed multilateral treaty and punishment of crimes against humanity. The initiative is now working to gain international support for the treaty. According to Sadat, director for the initiative, "this is the first time that such a convention has been drafted, and it represents a real opportunity for the international community to complete the Rome Statute system by imposing a clear obligation on States to prevent and punish crimes against humanity." The text of the Proposed International Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Crimes Against Humanity can be found at law.wustl.edu/harris/crimesagainsthumanity/ in English and French.

In addition to the treaty, the book will contain a comprehensive history chronicling the drafting process of the Proposed Convention and essays from 15 distinguished experts in international criminal law. During the development of the Proposed Convention, the initiative convened multiple conferences and technical advisory sessions.

As part of this three-year process, nearly 250 experts from around the world gathered to discuss the problem of crimes against humanity and work on the draft convention.

Sadat chairs the initiative's seven-member steering committee.

Committee members are:

- M. Cherif Bassiouni, JD, the Distinguished Research Professor of Law at DePaul University College of Law and founder and president emeritus of the International Human Rights Law Institute;
- Hans Corell, former Under-Secretary-General for Legal Affairs and legal counsel of the United Nations;
- Richard J. Goldstone, former chief prosecutor of the International Criminal Tribunals for the Former Yugoslavia and for Rwanda;
- Juan E. Méndez, JD, visiting professor, Washington College of Law, American University, Washington, D.C.;
- William A. Schabas, LLD, director of the Irish Centre for Human Rights, National University of Ireland, Galway; and
- Christine Van den Wyngaert, PhD, judge for the International Criminal Court.

Focus on international support

This fall, the initiative is entering its fourth and final phase, which will focus on publicity, advocacy and educational activities to raise awareness of the pervasiveness of crimes against humanity, the plight of victims, the existing culture of impunity for perpetrators, and the great need for a specialized international convention to combat this problem.

The process of circulating the Proposed Convention is under way. It is currently being brought before governments, United Nations decision-makers, academics and non-governmental organizations for the purpose of promoting the work of the initiative and urging support for the adoption of a comprehensive international instrument on crimes against humanity.

Steering committee member Goldstone notes that while treaties exist to address genocide and war crimes — the Genocide Convention of 1948 and the Geneva Conventions of 1949 together with their Optional Protocols of 1977 — there is currently no treaty on “crimes against humanity.”

“This gap in the law was thrown into sharp relief in the recent decision of the International Court of Justice in the case between Bosnia and Serbia,” Goldstone says. “The Court was restricted to claims of genocide, and crimes against humanity fell between the cracks. The Crimes Against Humanity project is designed to fill this important gap in international humanitarian law.”

Steering Committee member Schabas agreed that the Crimes Against Humanity project addresses a significant gap in international law.

“Many obligations, such as the duty to cooperate in prosecution and extradition, and the responsibility to prevent the crime, are said to be enshrined in customary international law,” Schabas says. “However, it is important to take such vague commitments a step further, and incorporate them in a binding treaty.”

The next step will be for the initiative to convene and participate in regional meetings in Africa, the Middle East, Latin America and Asia to further its objectives and complete Phase IV of the project.

“It is hoped that by the end of this phase of the initiative, the international community will have a strong conviction that the elaboration of a comprehensive international instrument on crimes against humanity is both urgently required and eminently feasible,” Sadat says.

WUSTL alumnus Steven Cash Nickerson, United States Institute of Peace and Humanity United has generously supported the initiative.

Truro Daily Times

Wednesday, 26 January 2011

<http://www.voice-online.co.uk/content.php?show=18858#>

Staff sergeant brings wealth of experience to new position



Staff Sgt. John Berry is the new district commander for the Colchester County RCMP detachment. The detachment is responsible for the county except for the Town of Truro and the Millbrook First Nation. Jason Malloy - Truro Daily News

Berry directed war crimes investigations in West Africa, headed ground search and rescue for Swissair disaster

BIBLE HILL - A man who served as the investigations commander for a war crimes tribunal in West Africa is now the top Mountie in Colchester County.

Staff Sgt. John Berry, who took over this week as the RCMP's district commander for Colchester County, said he is looking forward to his new position.

"It's a real good challenge for me," he said. "This is a well-sought after office. It has a good group of people and their work is very good."

Berry, who is originally from Moncton, joined the RCMP in 1980. He served in Richmond, B.C., the Yukon and Kingston, N.S. before moving to Amherst in 1999.

It was while in the bordertown that he took two separate postings, lasting a total of four years, to Sierra Leone in West Africa.

"When I arrived they just finished 10 years of civil war where a number of factions had committed quite a few atrocities against the citizens there," Berry told the Truro Daily News this week.

"I directed what we were doing in those investigations to gather the evidence that the prosecution needed to take before the courts."

He led a group of 20 people from around the world who did a variety of tasks, including working with evidence, analysis, exhibit, witness and investigative units.

"It gave me a really broad knowledge base," Berry said. "It was a great learning experience."

At the end of the investigation, charges were brought against the three factions. "All subjects were found guilty and are serving their time in the jail in Rwanda at the moment," Berry said.

The former president of Liberia, Charles Taylor, was also indicted and his trial has just completed, but no decision has been made.

The Special Court for Sierra Leone was jointly set up by the Government of Sierra Leone and the United Nations to try those who bear the greatest responsibility for serious violations of international humanitarian law and Sierra Leonean law committed in the territory of Sierra Leone since Nov. 30, 1996.

The special court is the first international criminal tribunal to be funded entirely from voluntary contributions from governments.

Berry also served for three months as the incident commander for ground search and rescue following the Swissair tragedy near Peggy's Cove in 1998. There he was responsible for the 1,500 trained volunteers from across the province. The flight from New York to Switzerland went down near Peggy's Cove resulting in all 229 people dying.

While those are two large investigations to be involved in, Berry said it is impossible to pinpoint one event as the most rewarding experience during his career.

"In general, the satisfaction of policing comes from your everyday experiences dealing with people," he said.

Berry comes to Colchester after most recently serving as an interim district commander in Cumberland County. He is familiar with his new surroundings and looks forward to continuing the strong working relationship with its policing parts in Truro.

"We have a common goal," he said. "The criminal element that's out there doesn't distinguish between the Town of Truro and the County of Colchester. They drive over that line like it doesn't exist."

Berry said he also looks forward to meeting the residents and officials around Colchester County.

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