

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



Yesterday's security handover ceremony. Photo: Francess Ngaboh-Smart. See more photos from yesterday's ceremony in today's *'Special Court Supplement'*.

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:

Friday, 18 February 2011

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

Local News

UN Hands Over Special Court Security to Sierra Leone Police / *SCSL Press Release* Page 3

Local newspapers were not published today due to the Armed Forces Day holiday.

International News

Sierra Leone Eyes New Future as Last U.N. Troops Go / *Reuters* Pages 4-5

Charles Taylor's Right to a Fair Trial Should Remain a Priority / *Guardian* Pages 6-7

Charles Taylor Trial Extended / *International Justice Tribune* Pages 8-9

Khmer Rouge Leaders to Await Genocide Trial in Prison / *Radio Netherlands* Page 10

Special Court Supplement

Yesterday's Mongolian Guard Force Security Handover, in pictures Pages 11-13



Special Court for Sierra Leone

Outreach and Public Affairs Office

PRESS RELEASE

Freetown, Sierra Leone, 17 February 2011

UN Hands Over Special Court Security to Sierra Leone Police

United Nations peacekeepers of the Special Court's Mongolian Guard Force today formally handed over



responsibility for the Court's security to the Sierra Leone Police.

UN peacekeepers, working in cooperation with Special Court's Security Section and the Sierra Leone Police, have maintained security at the Special Court since its inception in 2002. In addition to securing the Court's premises in Freetown, they have provided security during the movement of detainees and prisoners within and outside of Sierra Leone.

The Mongolian peacekeepers, who serve as part of the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), took over the Special Court's security from Nigerian peacekeepers in January 2006. Since then, a total of 2,300 Mongolian peacekeepers have served at the Court.

At a colourful ceremony in front of the Special Court's courthouse, a Mongolian peacekeeper handed over the court flag to a member of Special Court Security (photo), who handed it to a Special Court Police officer.

Vice-President Alhaji Sahr Sam-Sumana represented the Government of Sierra Leone, and in his remarks highlighted the cooperation between the police and the peacekeepers, as well as the training received by police officers serving at the Special Court. The United Nations was represented by UNMIL Force Commander Major-General Mohammad Khalid, while Special Court President Justice Jon Kamanda and Registrar Binta Mansaray represented the Special Court for Sierra Leone.

"The fact that the Special Court was able to operate so smoothly since its inception is a great tribute to the security provided by Nigerian and Mongolian peacekeepers, supported from the very beginning by the Sierra Leone Police," Ms. Mansaray said.

Among those attending were senior government officials, heads of diplomatic missions, civil society representatives, journalists, and Special Court staff.

Today's handover marks a significant milestone as the Special Court is set to become the first international tribunal to complete its mandate and transition to a Residual Mechanism.

#END

Reuters

Thursday, 17 February 2011

Sierra Leone eyes new future as last U.N. troops go



A boy returning from exile in Sierra Leone travels on the back of a U.N. lorry to a transit centre in his native Liberia on World Refugee Day, June 20, 2006.

Credit: Reuters/STR New

By Simon Akam

FREETOWN | Thu Feb 17, 2011 12:14pm EST

FREETOWN (Reuters) - Twelve years after they arrived during the West

African country's devastating civil war, the last United Nations troops officially withdrew from Sierra Leone Thursday.

The main UN peacekeeping contingent -- once the largest such deployment per capita in the world -- departed in 2005. But a detachment of troops remained to guard the Special Court set up in 2002 to try those held responsible for the war's atrocities.

A contingent of Mongolian soldiers -- known to expatriates in Freetown as "the Mongol Horde" -- has guarded the court since 2006 under the aegis of the UN mission in neighboring Liberia.

"Gentlemen from Mongolia have provided security for this court," said the special court's president Justice Jon Kamanda at a ceremony in Sierra Leone's capital Freetown.

"By the efficient working of these gentlemen from far away we have been able to work in peace."

"Sierra Leoneans are grateful to the international community for the role played in bringing the war to an end," added Sierra Leone's vice-president Samuel Sam-Sumana.

Nine years after the end of hostilities in Sierra Leone, and two decades since the beginning of the diamond-fueled conflict, the country is considered a successful example of international intervention.

Multiparty elections in 2007 led to a peaceful transition of power from the Sierra Leone Peoples' Party to the All People's Congress.

Under current President Ernest Bai Koroma an increasing number of multinational firms are investing in Sierra Leone.

The situation was once very different. Before the deployment of British troops under separate command in 2000, UNAMSIL, the UN operation in Sierra Leone, was shambolic.

A small number of rebels of the Revolutionary United Front once took an entire armored column of Zambian peacekeepers hostage, and were in danger of overrunning UNAMSIL itself.

A joint undertaking between the UN and the government of Sierra Leone, the Special Court has operated at a substantially lower cost than other international justice mechanisms.

However, a number of its key targets -- notably former RUF leader Foday Sankoh -- died before verdicts were reached.

The handover of the court's security from UN troops to Sierra Leonean police comes as its final prosecution, the case against Charles Taylor, has reached its final stages.

For security reasons the Taylor case is being held in the Hague rather than Freetown. There the former Liberian president stands accused of war crimes and crimes against humanity committed in Sierra Leone.

In a dramatic turn of events last week -- as the court was due to hear the final arguments -- Taylor's lawyer stormed out of the courtroom. A verdict is still due later this year.

(Editing by Andrew Roche)

Guardian

Thursday, 17 February 2011

Charles Taylor's right to a fair trial should remain a priority

We've seen this kind of drama before, the special court for Sierra Leone shouldn't let the latest episode overshadow an otherwise smooth process

* Alpha Sesay for the Open Society Blog, part of the Guardian Legal Network

In an unexpected moment of symmetry last week, on Tuesday, February 8, the defence lawyer for former Liberian president Charles Taylor walked out of court. At a break, Taylor himself left the courtroom and did not return.

The gesture of dramatic defiance from the defence, the prosecution left to speak before an empty defendant's box - you would be forgiven for feeling you'd seen this before.

Almost four years ago, in June 2007, just as the trial was getting underway, Taylor's then lawyer, Karim Khan, disregarded a judges' order and walked out of the court, telling the judges he had Taylor's instructions to do so. He left then chief prosecutor, Stephen Rapp, to deliver his opening statement in the absence of Taylor and his defence team. An indefinite adjournment followed. It took another six months to get the case on track.

Similarly, the walk-out this time threatens to do more than offer a matching bookend to the highest profile case at the special court for Sierra Leone. The theatrics cast a pall of doubt over the proceedings against Taylor, who is on trial for his alleged responsibility for mass crimes during the bloody 11-year war in Sierra Leone, and raises crucial new questions about the future of the case.

The drama began with a decision by the judges on Monday, February 7, to reject the defence final trial brief. The reason given: the brief was filed 20 days after the January 14 due date. This was unfair, Taylor's team argued, because they were unable to finish their brief until the judges themselves had dealt with outstanding motions about different aspects of the trial—decisions that could impact their closing arguments. The judges were unmoved.

On Tuesday, when closing arguments were due to start, in front of a public gallery filled with international media, Taylor's defence lawyer, Courtenay Griffiths said to the judges,

"Our very presence in court is incompatible with representing Mr. Taylor's interest...and it is our intention at this point, both Mr. Taylor and I, to withdraw from the court at this point."

Despite being cautioned by the special court judges, Griffiths maintained, "I have made a decision, so has my client that we intend to leave."

Griffiths eventually left the court room. Taylor, who was prevented from leaving with Griffiths by two security guards, disappeared after a morning recess.

In the interim since the last time the defence boycotted proceedings in 2007, the trial has run smoothly, with 115 witnesses - 94 for the prosecution and 21 for the defence - testifying in court. During the trial, prosecutors have presented evidence that Taylor allegedly controlled and supported rebel forces in Sierra Leone, as they marauded through the country, hacking off the limbs of civilians, committing rape and murder, and laying waste to civilian property.

Taylor has denied the charges against him. During his initial appearance in April 2006, he told the court, "I did not and could not have committed these acts against the sister Republic of Sierra Leone...so most definitely I'm not guilty."

But the question of Taylor's guilt will have to wait. Last Friday, February 11, the day which had been set to hear rebuttal arguments from prosecution and defence lawyers, Taylor's lawyer, Griffiths, was instead ordered to turn up in court and apologise for his walk-out three days earlier.

Griffiths did appear, but he sat quietly and did not speak. He left the podium to his co-counsel, Terry Munyard, who argued that instead of being asked to apologise, Griffiths should be granted a special disciplinary hearing, where he would be represented by an "experienced counsel." This hearing was set for February 25. Griffiths will sit as a defendant rather than as defence counsel.

The defence also sought leave to appeal the decision to reject their final brief. The judges granted the defence request by majority, with Justice Richard Lussick dissenting. This paves the way for defence lawyers to file an appeal before a different panel of five appeals chamber judges.

The decision of the appeals chamber judges will be important in shaping the future steps in the case. If the appeals chamber judges uphold the decision of the trial chamber to reject the defence final brief, then it means proceedings will continue with the closure of the case and judgment delivered without the involvement of the defence.

As Griffiths put it in a press conference after Friday's hearings, "I see no role for us to play in the process after that."

Such a path risks criticisms of the trial as a whole, with questions raised about whether it is within Taylor's fair trial rights not to have been allowed to take part in the closing of his case. Indeed, this possibility was foreshadowed by one of the trial judges, Justice Julia Sebutinde, who, in her dissenting opinion on the rejection of the defence final brief, noted: "To ultimately strike out on a procedural basis his [Taylor's] final trial brief that essentially contains his defence to the charges in the indictment is to deny him his fundamental right to defend himself."

If, on the other hand, the appeals chamber overturns the trial chamber's decision and orders that the defence final brief be accepted, then it becomes a matter of whether a new date will be scheduled for defence lawyers to make their own closing arguments.

Whatever the decision from the appeals chamber, it means that the drama that overshadowed proceedings last week has prolonged the process.

Such a delay probably would have been avoided if last week's events had not been allowed in the first place. While it is very important for all parties to respect deadlines ordered by the judges, it must be noted that other options were open to the court to resolve this issue. Justice Sebutinde, for example, said in her dissenting opinion that a degree of discretion could be exercised by the judges in admitting briefs submitted late, and that such a practice was consistent with how judges have handled other trials at the Special Court and other international criminal tribunals.

It is certainly hoped that this trial is not faced with a situation where Taylor's defence team cannot submit a final brief and present their closing arguments to the court. To date, the defence rights have been priority for the court. Taylor's team has been given a higher level of payment than defence teams in other international tribunals, it has received the necessary resources as confirmed by Taylor's defence counsel, and has been given additional time when needed to prepare its case.

The trial has also run smoothly, by and large. It would be a shame if the positive story the court could tell about its respect for Taylor's rights was overshadowed at this late stage.

International Justice Tribune

Wednesday, 16 February 2011

Charles Taylor trial extended

His pen and notepad were already neatly packed, ready to leave the courtroom. But the judges ordered him to sit down, and two guards saw to it that the once-feared Charles Taylor witnessed the final stages of his trial for war crimes. But after the morning coffee break, the former Liberian president didn't show up and decided to stay away for the rest of the week.

By Thijs Bouwknecht, Leidschendam

It was not the final act that American prosecutor Brenda Hollis of the Special Court for Sierra Leone had been hoping for. After a trial lasting more than three years, the final oral pleadings had been planned for last week. But Tuesday morning immediately started off with a row.

The judges had decided on Monday to decline Charles Taylor's final brief because it was filed three weeks late. Taylor's lawyer Courtenay Griffiths declared that decision a disgrace, and announced that he would no longer participate in this "complete farce," after he angrily stormed out of the courtroom and announced that he was boycotting the rest of the oral pleadings.

The ever-calm Hollis was angry about the state of affairs and told the judges that Taylor was "not attending a social event. He may not RSVP at the last minute." The judges ruled that neither Taylor, nor Griffiths were "running the court," and let Hollis finish her plea. Taylor listened to her until the first break, but after coffee he let it be known that he wasn't coming back because he was "very upset and he needed some rest."

During the afternoon Hollis and her team went for the final time through the forgotten brutalities of the Sierra Leone civil war (1991-2002). She reminded the court of the drugged child soldiers of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), the amputated arms and legs, and the so-called blood diamonds.

But opposite her stood an empty dock. When he was in it, the former president never even looked at her; he wore sunglasses.

Wednesday morning Taylor and Griffiths did not appear in court. They would not cooperate with the trial, said Griffiths, "unless and until these judges are prepared to accept the defence final brief and so be in a position to consider our arguments." He filed a bid Wednesday to appeal against the ruling.

But the judges ordered Griffiths to be in court on Friday, expecting him to make an apology. He did come, but did not say a word. They did, however, allow Griffiths' request to ask the appeals chamber to allow his final brief.

Taylor (63) pleads not guilty to eleven counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity in the indictment. Griffiths, in his final brief, also repeated all the arguments to show that Taylor had nothing to do with the crimes in Sierra Leone. On the contrary, says the lawyer, Taylor has tried to build peace in the region under the watchful eye of the UN and a number of West African countries. Moreover, says Griffiths, the case against Taylor is far from solid because, he claims, most witnesses have been paid by the prosecution to testify against Taylor.

But above all, the top lawyer wants to prove that the trial is political. Griffiths had asked for a postponement of the submission of his closing statement, following some US official 'cables' recently released by Wikileaks. According to him, documents from the embassies in Liberia and the Netherlands suggested that the United States tried to influence the judicial process because they wanted Taylor to disappear behind bars forever.

At the end of last week's drama, the trial was adjourned until the appeals court in Freetown has ruled on Griffiths' appeal. Additionally, the court adjourned for two weeks to solve the separate issue of Taylor's

lawyer storming out of court last Tuesday.

Brenda Hollis now has to wait with her final request that Taylor spend the rest of his life out of the spotlight in a British jail. In fact, the trial itself has been played 'out of the spotlight', conducted by the cash-strapped Special Court for Sierra Leone in a courtroom borrowed from the Lebanon Tribunal near The Hague. After the first appearance of the prime suspect in court, the public lost interest in the sittings very quickly. Only once did the trial lead to a media circus when supermodel Naomi Campbell came to testify about a diamond she allegedly received from Taylor.

Radio Netherlands

Thursday, 17 February 2011

Khmer Rouge leaders to await genocide trial in prison

The Cambodia genocide tribunal on Wednesday ruled that three ageing former Khmer Rouge leaders must remain in custody ahead of their trial, which is expected to start later this year.

Judges at the Khmer Rouge court - dubbed the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC) - rejected requests by defence lawyers to release the former head of state, Khieu Samphan; the movement's chief ideologue Nuon Chea, known as Brother Number Two; and the former social affairs minister Ieng Thirith.

The ruling comes after the three appeared at a public hearing on 31 January asking to be released. Their lawyers had argued that their clients, who were arrested in 2007, should be freed since they had already been held for longer than permitted by the UN-backed court in the Cambodian capital Phnom Penh.

In its ruling, the tribunal's judges agreed that the delay in giving a reason had "resulted in a breach of the accused persons' rights" but added any remedy would have to wait until the trial ended. According to the ruling that was released on Thursday, the accused have to remain in jail to ensure their "presence at trial."

The trial chamber rejected the "risk" of them "exerting pressure on witnesses or victims" or "destroying evidence" or the interest of their "own security" and "public order" as reasons for continued detention.

Four former Khmer Rouge leaders are being held in pre-trial detention at the UN-backed court, the movement's foreign minister Ieng Sary did not file an appeal. They are accused of involvement in millions of deaths from execution, disease, starvation and overwork during the Khmer Rouge's 1975-79 Maoist regime.

The indictment in what is known as "case 002" includes charges of genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity and other crimes under Cambodian law. All four - aged 78 to 85 - deny the charges.

A trial management hearing is scheduled for the first week of April and the trial itself is expected to start in August this year. The Dutch lawyer for Nuon Chea, Michiel Pestman, says it will be a lengthy trial. The investigations already took three years, and he expects the proceedings to be even longer. "We might hear from up to 600 witnesses in this trial and all four the accused have the right to question them," he adds.

The ECCC - staffed by a mixture of Cambodian and international staff and judges - prosecutes senior Khmer Rouge leaders responsible for the deaths of up to 2 million Cambodians between 1975 and 1979.

Ever since the UN-backed court was set up in 2003, it has been dogged by allegations of political interference while Cambodian and international prosecutors openly disagree on whether the court should pursue more suspects. Pestman is concerned about corruption at the court. "It is a huge problem, and I am concerned if my client will get a fair trial."

Four cases, involving a total of ten accused persons, are currently pending before the tribunal in Phnom Penh. The court completed its first case in July, sentencing former Toul Sleng prison chief 'Duch' to 35 years in jail for overseeing the deaths of more than 12,000 people. The case, dubbed "case 001", is now under appeal.

Cases 003/004, involving five senior Khmer Rouge leaders whose names remain, are currently under investigation, but Cambodian leaders have repeatedly sought to block their progress.

Special Court Supplement
Mongolian Guard Force Security Handover
Thursday, 17 February 2011





