

SPECIAL COURT FOR SIERRA LEONE
OFFICE OF THE PROSECUTOR

PRESS RELEASE

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At Second Anniversary of the Unsealing of Taylor's Indictment, Prosecutor Crane Says, "Charles Taylor Holds a Sword Over the Future of West Africa"

Two years after unsealing the indictment against former Liberian President Charles Taylor, Prosecutor David M Crane says Charles Taylor remains a threat to peace in West Africa.

On 4 June 2003, Mr Crane announced to the world that Taylor had been indicted three months earlier. Two months later, on 11 August 2003, the international community prevailed upon Nigeria to accept Taylor in exchange for a promise to leave Liberia, and end all involvement in Liberian and regional affairs.

"Two years ago, it made sense to send Taylor to Nigeria in order to allow the Liberian peace process to begin. Given a chance to go quietly, Charles Taylor has done nothing but betray the agreement with the Nigerian President, the Economic Community of West African States, the African Union, the United Nations and the US and UK governments," said Mr Crane.

The Prosecutor explained, "The government of Nigeria has warned Taylor on at least three occasions that he has violated the terms of his exile agreement, but even after these warnings, Taylor has remained involved in Liberian affairs. Last October he wired \$160,000 to his supporters in Monrovia to spark riots that killed twelve and injured over 200 people. He is funding the campaigns of his supporters in Liberia ahead of elections this October, and has every intention to return to Liberia. Just this week, through his spokesman, Taylor announced his intention to hold a press conference during the Liberian election season, in what the government of Nigeria said would be a violation of the terms of his exile. It is absolutely clear that from Nigeria, Charles Taylor holds a sword over the future of West Africa. Charles Taylor had his chance. Nigeria and the world owe him absolutely nothing."

Mr Crane went on to say that it certainly appears that Taylor is meddling in the internal affairs of several West African states and working directly with terrorists.

Charles Taylor faces a 17-count indictment for war crimes and crimes against humanity committed during the conflict in Sierra Leone. The charges include terrorising the civilian population, unlawful killings, sexual violence, physical violence, forced conscription of child soldiers, abductions, forced labour, looting and burning, and attacks on UN peacekeeping personnel.

The Prosecutor indicted Charles Taylor on 3 March 2003, and unsealed the indictment on 4 June 2003. Official copies of the indictment and warrant of arrest were delivered to the Nigerian government by the Court's Registry on 27 November 2003, and the International Police Organisation (INTERPOL) issued a "Red Notice" for Charles Taylor on 3

December 2003. Just over one year ago, on 31 May 2004, the Appeals Chamber of the Special Court for Sierra Leone rejected a motion filed by attorneys for Taylor, who sought to have the charges against him thrown out on the grounds that Taylor was a sitting head of state at the time of the indictment.

The Special Court is an independent tribunal established jointly by the United Nations and the Government of Sierra Leone. It is mandated to bring to justice those who bear the greatest responsibility for atrocities committed in Sierra Leone after 30 November 1996. To date, the Prosecutor has indicted thirteen persons on various charges of war crimes, crimes against humanity, and other serious violations of international humanitarian law. Two indictments were withdrawn following the deaths of the accused. Nine indictees are currently in the custody of the Court.

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