

SPECIAL COURT FOR SIERRA LEONE
PRESS AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE

PRESS CLIPPINGS

Enclosed are clippings of the latest local and international press on the Special Court and related issues obtained by the Press and Public Affairs Office as of:

Friday, June 10, 2005

The press clips are produced Monday to Friday.
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BY GLOBAL WATCH
Introduction

Former Liberian President

Charles Taylor has been at the centre of West Africa's instability and conflict for the last 15 years, having brought civil war and despotic governance to Liberia and fuelled bloody rebel insurrections in Sierra Leone and Côte d'Ivoire. Taylor's actions have cost the residents of West Africa hundreds of thousands of lives, and the international community has spent billions of dollars through numerous peacekeeping missions and aid programmes in an attempt to return peace and stability to the region. The Special Court for Sierra Leone was established to help bring to justice those who bear the greatest responsibility for atrocities committed in Sierra Leone after 30 November 1996, and has indicted Charles Taylor on 17 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity, including unlawful killings, sexual violence, forced conscription of child soldiers, forced labour and attacks on UN peacekeeping personnel.

In August 2003, facing extreme pressure from both encroaching rebel forces and his own weakened war machine, Taylor left for exile in Calabar, Nigeria. Despite the terms of his exile and the UN asset freezes and travel bans against both him and his associates, Taylor maintains political, economic and military influence over current activities in West Africa and continues to pose a significant destabilising threat to the entire region. Various governments, including the Americans and British, possess evidence of such violations. However, for whatever political reasons they have not been forthcoming with this information to the Nigerian authorities, and as such are guilty of failing to help protect re-

gional security and must be held accountable for Charles Taylor's ongoing activities and any consequences thereof.

As part of his exile arrangements, Nigeria forbade Taylor from 'engaging in active communication with anyone engaged in political, illegal or governmental activities' in Liberia. But despite being admonished by Nigeria for previous violations, he has been able to bribe Nigerian state security forces and continues to meet in person and have telephone contact with various individuals related to his political and economic interests and former members of his military and political regime. Taylor has been directly accused by the Special Court of helping orchestrate an assassination attempt against Guinean President Lansana Conte on 19 January 2005, and diplomatic sources indicate his involvement. Moreover, by his own admission Taylor wants to return to Liberia, and Global Witness investigations indicate that semi-autonomous groups of Taylor loyalists are stationed throughout the sub-region, including Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana and Nigeria, with the ability to mobilise if necessary for strategic economic, political or military goals.

The current threat posed by Charles Taylor is real and credible, and is set against the background of the Special Court's limited timeframe, the impending drawdown of UN Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) peacekeeping forces, the potential for instability during the upcoming Liberian elections and the

increasingly tenuous stability in Guinea and Côte d'Ivoire. All countries in the sub-region have suffered the negative effects of Taylor's influence, whether through armed conflict, the destabilising influx of refugees, or the

allow him to face a fair trial.

There are essentially two options that the international community can take on the threat posed by Charles Taylor: maintain the status quo

"As part of his exile arrangements, Nigeria forbade Taylor from 'engaging in active communication with anyone engaged in political, illegal or governmental activities' in Liberia"

cross-border trafficking of weapons and mercenaries. Time is running out for the international community to safely transport and try Taylor at the Special Court and

or move forward with the sharing of intelligence and the immediate extradition of Taylor. Continuing with the status quo will lead to renewed conflict in West

"Now is the critical time for the international community-especially members of the African Union, ECOWAS and the UN Security Council-to show that it is serious about promoting international justice and safeguarding peace and security in West Africa"

Africa, as not moving Taylor to the Special Court now will leave him as a potent force in an unstable region with fewer UN troops and less international attention or capability to prevent or respond to any disturbances he and his associates may cause. The high numbers of un-integrated ex-combatants in the region, as well as continued access to stocks of weapons, present a volatile situation which Taylor has successfully exploited before and is currently working to do again.

Taylor's continued exile and his violation of its terms, despite the pleas of the Special Court and Liberian, Sierra Leonean and international civil society to bring Taylor to justice, will also jeopardise the possibility of Taylor ever facing a fair trial. There is a real possibility that Taylor may try to flee again to the bush of West Africa, and if returned to Liberia the justice system there is non-functioning, internal security systems are inadequate, and both will take years to rehabilitate. Moreover, with Taylor reportedly funding or even controlling nine of the parties contesting the elections, the likelihood of a pro-Taylor party winning control of the government is very real. Any subsequent trial of Taylor in Liberia, following a request to Nigeria for his return, is unlikely to be fair and indeed there is a very real possibility that Taylor would be freed following the collapse of the trial, possibly to reassume power.

Now is the critical time for the international community-especially members of the African Union, ECOWAS and

the UN Security Council-to show that it is serious about promoting international justice and safeguarding peace and security in West Africa.

Failing to hand over key evidence and hold to account the person most responsible for the war crimes committed in West Africa during the last decade would not only be a major security risk but also set an unacceptable precedent of letting the culture of impunity continue.

Given the limited timescale of the Special Court and regional security concerns, as well as larger issues of national and regional reconciliation, Global Witness also urges the Security Council to pass a new resolution detailing the constructive and positive role that the Government of Nigeria has played in maintaining peace and security in the region, and further calling on Taylor to be moved to the Special Court. The resolution should also grant the authority to UNMIL, UNAMSIL, and UNOCI peacekeeping missions to arrest Taylor should he return to Liberia, Sierra Leone or Côte d'Ivoire, respectively. The international community and its key actors should meanwhile take whatever other steps are necessary to ensure Taylor is removed quickly, safely, and with minimal impact on regional security. Such efforts would help ensure that a significant threat to regional security is further removed from operation and that the peace and stability the international community and the UN have been working toward are no longer left in jeopardy.

United Nations



Nations Unies

United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL)

UNMIL Public Information Office Media Summary 9 June 2005

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

International Clips on Liberia

The New York Times

EDITORIAL

Prosecuting Charles Taylor

Published: June 9, 2005

Charles Taylor has done for West Africa what Slobodan Milosevic did for the former Yugoslavia. Yet while Mr. Milosevic is on trial in The Hague on charges including genocide, Mr. Taylor, Liberia's former president, is enjoying the lush life in a Nigerian government guesthouse.

06/09/2005 11:44:38

Taylor Pumps \$160,000 into Liberia to Fund Violence

By Sahr Musa Yamba

Freetown, Jun 07, 2005 (Concord Times/All Africa Global Media via COMTEX) --Erstwhile Prosecutor of the United Nations backed Special Court, David Crane has alleged that last October exiled Liberian President, Charles Taylor wired \$160,000 to his supporters in Monrovia to spark riots that killed twelve and injured over 200 people.

International Clips on West Africa

Ivory Coast president condemns massacres in west

By PARFAIT KOUASSI

ABIDJAN, Ivory Coast (AP) _ President Laurent Gbagbo has said those responsible for massacres in his country's west were trying to sabotage elections some hope can heal war-divided Ivory Coast.



U.S., UK Endanger West Africa, Global Witness Charges

The Analyst (Monrovia)

NEWS

June 9, 2005

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Says They Conceal Incriminating Evidence

Had the United Kingdom (UK) and the United States of America (USA), in 2001, not linked the continued mayhem, murder, rape, child abuse and massive destruction of property inside Sierra Leone to diamond smuggling and gun-running by the regime next door in Liberia, there is little doubt that the entire West Africa subregion would by now have been in flames of guerrilla warfare.

Almost as day follows night, no sooner was diamond movement restricted, moratorium placed on importation of small arms, and key movers of the contraband identified and restricted from traveling, than the Sierra Leonean war dissipated and grounded naturally.

The action of the two influential members of the UN Security Council and their current actions in the Liberia peace process left many with no option but to dub them, "Peace and Security Messiahs of West Africa." But the international research and advocacy group, Global Witness, believes those actions however commendable, are superficial, and that there is another side of these countries that is working against peace in West Africa. "Could they be double dealing?"

But to what end?" are the questions the general public is asking. In search of opinions on the questions, The Analyst's Staff Writer puts the international research and advocacy group's allegations into perspective.

"Not doing everything possible to remove Taylor as a threat and bring him to justice is indefensible, and the renewed danger that countries like the United States and United Kingdom are placing West Africa's war-weary people in is unconscionable," Global Witness said in a statement released recently titled, "Time for Justice: Why the International Community, UN Security Council and Nigeria Should Help Facilitate Charles Taylor's Immediate Extradition to the Special Court for Sierra Leone." [pdf]

According the UK-based research and advocacy group, key governments that have evidence of Taylor's violations of his asylum terms were moving toward sharing such information with Nigeria in order to facilitate Taylor's extradition to the Special Court.

"For unknown reasons, however, that diplomatic momentum has recently evaporated; Nigeria continues to signal its willingness to hand Taylor over if given evidence by other governments of the violation of his exile, but that information has not been forthcoming," the group said.

Convinced that unless Taylor is contained the ECOWAS subregion would be engulfed in violent conflicts, the

group said it was necessary that the UN, UK, US, the Government of Nigeria, and ECOWAS take immediate steps, each within its capacity, to clip Taylor's wings.

It said the governments of the UK and US should make available evidence that demonstrates that Charles Taylor's violation of UN sanctions, international law and his exile agreement with Nigeria to the Nigeria government, Interpol, the UN Panel of Experts for Liberia, Special Court for Sierra Leone and all relevant law enforcement authorities.

Armed with that evidence, it said, Nigeria should then proceed to revoke Taylor's exile agreement and allow him to be extradited to the Special Court for Sierra Leone.

Until that is done, the group urged ECOWAS to "ensure that their members' border control and immigration authorities do not allow Taylor to enter or otherwise transit through their countries in order to seek asylum or assume fugitive status."

This it said should go hand in hand with the full weight of international covert and overt intelligence capacity to maintain heightened awareness of the activities and movement of Charles Taylor and his close associates.

"Grant Chapter 7 authority to the UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), UN Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) and the UN Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI) to arrest Charles Taylor should he return to Liberian, Sierra Leonean or Ivorian territory, respectively," the group told the UN Security Council.

In its opinion, the group identified two options that it said are available to the international community in response to the threat posed by Charles Taylor.

"Maintain the status quo or move forward with the sharing of intelligence and the immediate extradition of Taylor. Continuing with the status quo will lead to renewed conflict in West Africa, as not moving Taylor to the Special Court now will leave him as a potent force in an unstable region with fewer UN troops and less international attention or capability to prevent or respond to any disturbances he and his associates may cause," the group revealed.

It said the high numbers of un-reintegrated ex-combatants in the region, as well as continued access to stocks of weapons, presented a volatile situation which Taylor had successfully exploited before and is currently working to do again.

The Global Witness claimed that not only was Taylor meddling in politics, but that he was also planning a military comeback with more than three dozens groups reported to be operating in countries including Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana and Nigeria in addition to those Taylor supporters that maintain positions of influence in Liberia's economic and political scenes.

Despite claims that Taylor was bankrupt, the Global Witness revealed that besides receiving financial support from his contacts throughout the region, he holds at least two bank accounts with the Banque Internationale du Burkina (BIB) and the Central Bank of West African States (BCEAO) in Burkina Faso, established in the early 1990s to handle revenue from resource sales.

The accounts, the group revealed further, were being held under the alias of Jean Paul Somé1.

"Not including any new business interests, research by the Coalition for International Justice puts his estimated assets upon entering exile in August 2003 at \$150-210 million," it said.

It then went ahead to list four reasons why Taylor must be brought to trials as soon as possible, amongst them that Charles Taylor has been an active threat to security in West Africa for many years and violating UN arms embargoes and fuelling violent insurrections in neighboring states that have led to the deaths of thousands of innocent civilians.

"The Special Court has indicted Taylor on 17 counts of war crimes, and the importance of ending the culture of impunity and ensuring a fair trial for the war crimes of which he has been accused cannot be underestimated," the group noted.

It said the urgent case to bring Taylor to trial at the Special Court is further strengthened by significant security concerns to ensure adequate security for Sierra Leone, ensure Taylor receives a fair trial, acknowledge the Liberian people's desire to see Taylor tried before the Special Court, and to help ensure peace, security and free elections in Liberia.

The most urgent reasons amongst these, the advocacy group said is that, "Given the planned UNAMSIL troop withdrawal, instability in Côte d'Ivoire, upcoming Liberian elections and growing insecurity related to the inadequate Liberian DDDR process, extraditing Taylor to the Special Court soon would help remove him as a potent force of instability in a region that is already facing many challenges."

Moreover, it emphasized, by helping facilitate the extradition and trial of Charles Taylor before the Special Court, the international community would be taking a positive step toward ending the culture of impunity which has plagued West Africa, and more immediately fend off a serious security concern and help secure the progress made toward peace and reconciliation in the region, the group concluded.

Meanwhile observers say if alleged US and UK refusal to submit evidence it owes against Taylor are true, then the two governments are stabbing themselves in the legs at the disappointment the suffering masses of Liberians and several hundred West African human rights and pro-democracy institutions.

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