

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:

Wednesday, August 11, 2004

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One year on, Taylor's Nigerian exile growing uncomfortable

by Dave Clark and Ade Obisesan

LAGOS, Aug 10 (AFP) - One year after he fled Liberia to take up political asylum in Nigeria, former warlord and war crimes suspect Charles Taylor is an increasingly isolated and hated figure in his adoptive home.

Last August, Nigeria's President Olusegun Obasanjo offered the former Liberian president asylum as part of an internationally-backed plan to revive the west African country's stalled peace process and end its latest round of civil war.

With Taylor gone and United Nations peacekeepers in place, Liberian politicians have been able to set up a transitional government and to begin the process of disarming the rebel armies who challenged his rule.

Obasanjo's statesmanship was widely praised at the time, but Taylor's exile in a luxury villa in the southeastern city of Calabar has since become mired in controversy, with many calling for the former leader to face justice.

UN-backed prosecutors at the war crimes tribunal in Liberia's neighbour Sierra Leone want him to answer charges that he sponsored a brutal rebel movement there and shared responsibility for the atrocities it committed.

Obasanjo has refused to hand Taylor over, saying that only a future elected government in Liberia could demand his extradition, and insisting that his continued exile in Calabar is vital to the ongoing peace-process.

Pressure is now, however, building slowly from within and without Nigeria for Taylor to be handed over.

"Charles Taylor is accused of breathtaking crimes," John Campbell, the US ambassador to Nigeria, told reporters last week.

"Our view is that he must answer for those crimes and we have a continuing dialogue with the Nigerian government about how to create the context in which this can happen," he said.

The United States is grateful to Obasanjo for the role he and Nigeria's peacekeeping troops have played in Liberia and Washington has been careful not to be seen to be bullying its ally.

But many US lawmakers -- as well as numerous international human rights groups -- are determined to see Taylor stand trial, and Obasanjo now faces polite but firm pressure from abroad to hand him over.

"The arrangement by which Charles Taylor left Liberia and came to Nigeria was brought about through ECOWAS," the Economic Community of West African States, Campbell said. "It was an arrangement which we supported and it ended the bloodshed in Liberia."

However, the US diplomat stressed that Taylor should eventually be brought before the courts for his role in Sierra Leone.

"The principle is, in our view, a person must answer for his crimes. When and how that can occur, and in what manner, is something we have to continue to talk with our good friends about," he said.

Nigeria is also facing legal pressure to hand over the former leader. Many Nigerians are still angry over the deaths of their countrymen -- both peacekeepers and visitors to Liberia and Sierra Leone -- at the hands of Taylor's brutal guerrilla armies.

Two court challenges to his asylum have been launched, one by a pair of Nigerian businessmen whose hands were chopped off by Sierra Leonean rebels, the other by the Nigerian Union of Journalists.

"We hold the strong view that Nigeria acted against international law and convention to have granted asylum to Charles Taylor in the country," NUJ President Smart Adeyemi told AFP on Tuesday.

"This is a man who killed two Nigerian newspaper journalists -- Krees Imodibie and Tayo Awotunsin --- and hundreds of other Nigerians during the Liberian civil war," he said.

"We want him to go and face the music in Sierra Leone, to face the consequences of his actions when he was Liberian head of state."

The Abuja High Court will rule on the NUJ suit by the end of the month.

Meanwhile, with the legal and diplomatic pressure building, Taylor has reportedly been living in increasingly straightened circumstances.

Last year he arrived at his riverfront villa with some ceremony, accompanied by scores of relatives, bodyguards and hangers on. Now, however, his friends say his money is drying up and his entourage abandoning him.

UNMIL Daily Media Summary

Tuesday, 10 Aug 2004

Nigeria's President Frowns on Human Rights Advocates

(The Liberian Diaspora)

- Over the weekend, the Chairman of the African Union, Nigeria's President Olusegun Obasanjo, criticized human rights advocates who are soliciting funds from the West to encourage the extradition of former Liberian President Taylor.
- Speaking in an interview with the Voice of Nigeria, he promised to deal with any individual or group that wants to force Mr. Taylor out of Nigeria without the due process of law.

Liberia a year after Charles Taylor

By Jonathan Paye-Layleh
BBC correspondent in Monrovia

Calm has now returned to the capital, Monrovia, and most of Liberia, one year after Charles Taylor stepped down from the presidency and took exile in Nigeria.

Mr Taylor's departure has not only silenced the guns and ensured the free movement of people, it has also given confidence to Liberians either to return home or resume enterprises.

"We now see reason to restart our lives and put our money into business activities," said Boima Folley, who sells sports goods at a stall in central Monrovia.

Market stalls now sprawl across Monrovia and in places which until recently were no-go areas.

Mr Folley said his goods were looted and he had to flee for his life during attacks on Monrovia last year.

Charles Taylor left with everything but corruption
Monrovia resident James Clinton

"Police troops came and raided our businesses, sabotaging our activities. They looted everything," he said.

"With the peace we now enjoy, I have hustled to restart, but besides God, there is no support for me," he added.

The building of houses and hotels seems to be happening all over the capital, leaving the single cement-producing company in the country hard pushed to meet demand.

But whilst peace has returned to most of the war-torn nation after 14 years of bloodletting, the transitional government has still not been able to restore basic social services - like light and water - and the vices that prompted the war are still visible.

"Charles Taylor left with everything but corruption," said James Clinton, a Monrovia resident.

"Those who came to correct the ills are themselves far ahead in the practice of corruption, this is sad. It makes me to not want to hear about revolution anymore," he said.

Police

Meanwhile, the training by the United Nations of a post-conflict police force, to replace the heavily discredited war-time one, appears to be going well.

In a Monrovia suburb, the first batch of around 150 recruits are in training for 10 months, said UN police trainer Scott Anderson.

"It is an opportunity to bring people together to use the best police practices that we know from

many nations - to put together very competent, strong ethical components into the Liberian police service," he said.

The course is tough and the issue of discipline is not taken lightly.

But Liberians, who have suffered police brutalities in the past, are keen to see a new kind of force.

"We want a police force that we can run to and not run from," said James Teah, a schoolteacher.

One female recruit said they were out to be just that.

"Liberians can count on us undergoing the training - especially us ladies - because we are prepared to make the difference."

About 3,500 police troops are expected to be trained to take over Liberia once a new government is inaugurated in January 2006.

Peacekeepers

In the meantime, people are slowly returning to rebuild their lives in rural areas which were once under the control of rebels and are now under the protection of the world's largest UN peacekeeping force.

No Liberian provincial town changed hands between warring parties more often than Tubmanburg - some 60km north-west of Monrovia, and it was used as the base by Lurd rebels for their assaults on the capital last year.

Thousands of locals fled fighting there.

The scars of war are visible as one drives through the town; buildings are pock-marked and have lost their roofs.

But one year on, hundreds of residents are returning thanks to the deployment of Pakistani United Nations troops in the town.

"We can only tell God, thank you. We hope Tubmanburg will be like before," said Sia James, a middle-aged woman sitting beside her goods in a roadside makeshift selling stall.

"We want help from the government; we want to get our lives back together."

Former Lurd rebels, who controlled the town up to the start of disarmament in December last year, are still visible, which means frequent confrontations between the ex-combatants and locals, but things are improving.

South-west of the city centre 17 Pakistani doctors work at the Liberia Government Hospital - a 50-bed hospital - and the largest of about five health facilities that the Pakistani contingent run.

Since December last year, the soldiers have treated close to 48,000 locals who, until the troops deployed, were trapped in war affected places in the northwest.

It still treats hundreds of people a day and local residents are amazed at the quality of the treatment and availability of basic drugs.

Lieutenant-Colonel Khalid Asid urges other peacekeeping contingents serving in the country to "join us in helping the people of Liberia" in trying to rebuild their lives and their country's shattered infrastructure.

"We must compete with one another in doing good things," he said.

There is much still to do.

Send us your experiences. What is going well and badly in Liberia since Charles Taylor's departure? A selection of your emails will be published below.

The slow pace of the peacekeepers deployment in other parts of the country is worrismatic. Most parts of the country are still under rebel administration. The transitional government's presence is only in Monrovia and its environs. Like the Taylor regime, I'm of the view that the organisation of the government at the local level will not be completed before the election.

Kemo George Sheriff, Kamatahun, Liberia

Story from BBC NEWS:

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/africa/3552374.stm>

Published: 2004/08/11 07:19:16 GMT

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Minneapolis Star-Tribune

Jennifer Prestholdt: To help bring Taylor to justice

Jennifer Prestholdt

August 11, 2004

For the tens of thousands of West Africans who live in Minnesota, Aug. 11 marks the anniversary of impunity. One year ago today, President Charles Taylor left Liberia for temporary asylum in Nigeria in a deal brokered to end Liberia's brutal civil war.

For more than a decade, Taylor helped fuel bloody conflicts not only in Liberia, but also throughout West Africa.

The internal and cross-border atrocities that he sponsored in the 1990s have had a direct impact on Minnesota -- thousands of Liberian and Sierra Leonean refugees were forced to flee West Africa for safety here in Minnesota. The Organization of Liberians in Minnesota believes there are 25,000 Liberians in the state -- one of the largest Liberian communities in the world.

The international community -- including those of us in Minnesota -- has a responsibility to bring Taylor to justice.

Taylor has been indicted on 17 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity by the Special Court for Sierra Leone, a United Nations-sponsored war crimes tribunal that has strong support (including \$20 million appropriated by Congress) from the United States. The charges against him include the most serious human rights abuses: killings, torture, mutilation, rape and other forms of sexual violence, sexual slavery, conscription of children, abduction and forced labor perpetuated by Sierra Leonean rebel forces that Taylor actively supported.

Liberian civilians were subjected to many of the same human rights abuses. Yet, even though trials have begun at the Special Court for Sierra Leone, Taylor remains in Nigeria, immune from justice. Even worse, he appears to continue to meddle in affairs in Liberia. In May, I traveled with a team of Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights volunteers to Sierra Leone to monitor the efforts that are being made to bring justice and reconciliation to that shattered country.

Almost everyone we talked to expressed fear of a return to chaos and war in the region if Taylor does not stand trial.

One person explained, "We have a saying in West Africa. If you cut off the head of the snake, it is then only a rope. That's why Taylor must go."

Impunity for Taylor is an affront to the thousands of victims and their families who are our neighbors. Only when he is brought to justice will members of Minnesota's West African community be able to truly begin the difficult task of rebuilding their lives, confident in the knowledge that those who wrought destruction will not do so again.

As Minnesotans, we can all make a difference. For more information on Sierra Leone and a sample advocacy letter urging Taylor's extradition -- for your member of Congress, President Bush or Secretary of State Colin Powell -- please visit the Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights Web site at: <http://www.mnadvocates.org>

Jennifer Prestholdt is the deputy director of Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights, which works to promote and protect human rights locally and around the world.

**Build. Your business.**

Taylor Wanted for Terrorism

The Analyst (Monrovia)

NEWS

August 9, 2004

Posted to the web August 9, 2004

A recent legal wrangling in which the government of Nigeria again strongly opposed the extradition of former Liberian president, Charles G. Taylor, to Sierra Leone to face charges for atrocities allegedly committed against the people of that country may have led many to the conclusion that the issue had hit dead end.

But when it is considered that the Government of the United States of America and a recent United Nations report have adduced fresh evidence of Mr. Taylor's support and coordination of the activities of the terrorist movement of world class' notorious Osama bin Laden, then there are thin doubts that Taylor's luck has run out and it is only a matter of time before he is flown out of Nigeria to face his checkered past. The Analyst's Staff Writer has been looking at the new evidence and the implications.

Mr. Ahmed Khalfan Ghailani, a senior Al Qaeda operative who was captured in Pakistan last week, reports say, has divulged that he met with Mr. Taylor in the years before and after the September 11, 2001 terrorist attack on New York and Washington, respectively, a Nigerian publication, NIGERIA TODAY ONLINE, reported August 5.

The senior Al Qaeda operative was arrested on July 25, 2004 in eastern Pakistan, along with more than a dozen other Al Qaeda operatives and is being held in connection with the 1988 bombing of two U.S. embassies in Africa, the reports say.

The publication quoted U.S. intelligence officials and United Nations investigators as saying that Ghailani received refuge from the former U.S. ally (Taylor) while planning further terrorist operations.

It said the officials and investigators also painted a picture of Liberia under Taylor as a "haven for Al Qaeda," thereby raising fresh queries about why the United States waited so long to support Taylor's removal and continuous refrain from using its influence to bring him before the UN war crimes tribunal in Sierra Leone.

For at least three years beginning the late 1990s, the publication quoted US intelligence sources and the UN report as saying, Ghailani lived in an army camp and hotels run by Taylor's government in Liberia.

"In addition, Taylor's forces harbored other suspected Al Qaeda leaders, including the MIT-educated biologist Aafia Siddiqui," U.S. officials and UN investigators said.

Say UN war crimes documents released recently: "Al Qaeda allegedly paid Taylor for protection and then joined him in the African diamond trade, raising millions of dollars for terrorist activities." Taylor, who was deposed last year, is living in exile in Nigeria under a deal brokered by the United States.

The U.S. government has been under increasing pressure to help persuade Nigeria to turn Taylor over to the UN tribunal in Sierra Leone, which has indicted him in connection with atrocities in various West African nations.

"But the United States, which officials have said used Taylor as a CIA informant and backed his Revolutionary United Front in the mid-1990s, has so far refused," the publication noted.

A new confidential report by the UN Special Court for Sierra Leone which was written by UN investigators preparing the case against Taylor revealed: "It is clear the Al Qaeda had been in West Africa since September 1998 and maintained a continuous presence in the area through 2002." Based on the strength of the evidence adduced by the new report, according to the publication that runs a daily briefing on key political and economic events affecting Nigeria, the US government has been in close consultation with the Nigerian government to consider the possibility of repatriating Mr. Taylor. It however, did not say where.

"Let it be known that we (US) and the Nigerian government are in serious dialogue on when and how Taylor will be released to face the UN court," the new US Consul-General in Nigeria, Brian Browne, was quoted as divulging when he briefed newsman in Lagos recently.

Quoting Secretary of State Colin Powell on the Taylor issue, Browne said, "the US believes that there should be certain circumstances that should arise to bring Taylor to justice." And that circumstance may have just presented itself in Taylor's alleged links with terrorists, causing one US official to describe Taylor as a "fugitive and not someone Nigeria granted asylum." A US official who preferred anonymity further disclosed that the U.S. Defense Department approved a Special Forces raid to capture Al Qaeda leaders under Taylor's protection in 2001, but called it off and never reactivated the plan.

He did not elaborate, but indicated that senior leaders of Al Qaeda continued to receive Taylor's protection until last year when Taylor fell from grace and sought refuge in Nigeria.

Neither the United States nor Nigeria has commented on Liberia's alleged Al Qaeda links under Taylor.

Nevertheless, the UN investigation also found that Ghailani, who was sent to Liberia in 1999 to help coordinate Al Qaeda investments in the diamond trade, met with Taylor along with three Al Qaeda leaders, Fazul Abdullah Mohammed, Abdullah Ahmed Abdullah, and Sheik Ahmed Salim Swedan.

All three are wanted in the 1998 bombings of U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania and remain on the FBI's list of 22 most wanted terrorists.

"Ghailani and Mohammed arrived in Liberia in March 1999 from the Ivory Coast," according to the UN war crimes investigator's report, "and traveled to Monrovia as guests of Taylor and met with the Liberian dictator at his Congo Town residence. Both men remained in Liberia for several years, staying at a military camp near the border with Sierra Leone and in government-run hotels in Monrovia." The UN investigators outlined a series of alleged links between Al Qaeda leaders and Taylor's regime.

The publication revealed further: "Mohammed served as a driver in 2000 for General Sam Bockarie, a senior Taylor commander. Al Qaeda's then-military commander, Mohammed Atef, met in early 2000 with General Issa Sesay, another Taylor commander. Atef is believed to have been killed in the U.S.-led invasion of Afghanistan in 2001. Siddiqui, the MIT-trained microbiologist who is also on the FBI's most-wanted list, arrived in Monrovia in June 2001 as a guest of one of Taylor's top lieutenants." The UN investigators' reports noted that she traveled to Monrovia for a week to meet with Al Qaeda operatives to get a status report for her superiors in Pakistan on the terror group's diamonds and gem trade.

"The men told their families in letters recovered by the police that they intended to blow themselves up in attacks on unspecified targets," said Ansyad Mbai, the top anti-terror official at the Pakistani Security Ministry. I Didn't Plot Against Chairman Bryant -Speaker Dweh Denies; Says CPA Is Irreversible "I never

staged any coup d'etat against Chairman Bryant or do I have any intention to stage a coup d'etat against him," said NTLA Speaker Dweh in reaction to allegation levied against him by Gen. Oforie Diah, Mensiegar Karnga reports.

Gen. Diah, a LURD's high ranking military officer recently alleged that Speaker Dweh and other executives of the movement asked him to stage a coup to oust Chairman Charles Gyude Bryant. His allegation prompted public outcries and accusations against the Speaker Dweh. More importantly, the NTLA has constituted a committee to look into the allegation.

Addressing scores of legislative reporters at the Capitol Building, Speaker Dweh said that at no time did he and General Diah along with others plan to dethrone the NTGL government.

Said he: "I am not a coup plotter." "Why will I want to overthrow the government at this time when every Liberian is preaching peace as basis for growth and development," he opined, "Oforie Diah is a liar." He calls on General Diah and others to formulate programs that will free the Liberian people from bondage, and not lies that will create panic and make "our people defused." House Speaker Dweh indicated that the CPA is irreversible and every Liberian as well as actors of the CPA must make sure that peace takes it fundamental roots in the country.

He further said that there is no time for any Liberian to think about war, noting "for the past 14 years, we fought and killed each other for no reason. We have learnt our lessons the hard way. It is now time that we say goodbye to war and welcome peace as a new friend." What Liberians need do to forge ahead should mater instead of ousting the government. As such, he noted that Liberians should bury the bitter past regardless of "our differences and place national interest above personal interest and preach reconciliation as the best way forward." The NTLA Speaker said he has no intention to once again be part of any group that will hold "our people hostage for selfish reasons, let alone to dethrone Chairman Bryant." According to him, he is one of the architects of the Bryant-led transitional government, therefore it would be naïve were he to be of any plan to supplant the government.

"It is now time for warmongers to see reasons and send words of caution to their commanders and soldiers to make the DDRR a success," he noted.

He said the present confusions were hindering the positive progress of the county thereby creating fears for people of goodwill to invest in our society.

Touching on the leadership crisis within LURD, Speaker Dweh called on the movement not to create an avenue that will subject "our people to hardship and other forms of economic degradation." The speaker said factional loyalty should be a thing of the past as we are thinking about reunifying the people after its brutal civil conflict.

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Africa News August 9, 2004 Monday

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Africa News

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Africa News August 10, 2004 Tuesday

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Africa News

August 10, 2004 Tuesday

LENGTH: 1607 words

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Liberia: Peace At Last?

BYLINE: Concord Times

BODY:

There is a poignant moment in Howard French's excellent book, *A Continent for the Taking: the Tragedy and Hope of Africa* (2004) that, in its intensity and suspense, has the quality to stay forever in one's mind. French, a former New York Times West African Bureau chief, encounters the murderous Liberian warlord Charles Taylor in Monrovia. Amidst the general distress, Taylor, "impeccably coiffed, manicured and groomed," is "dressed in a finely tailored two-piece African-style suit," and exuded of "haughty self-contentment." He is seated "in a high-backed rattan chair reminiscent of the one of the famous pictures of Black Panther leader Huey Newton," and he is holding, for good measure, "an elaborately carved wooden scepter." It is a triumphant Taylor--this is after the 1996 Abuja Accord, which would finally pave his way to becoming President of Liberia---and, for all intents and purposes, the warlord must look presidential.

Taylor is holding a spress conference, and French takes his chance. "Isn't it outrageous," he asks Taylor, who had just described his predatory insurgency as 'God's war.' "Isn't it outrageous for someone who has drugged small boys, given them arms and trained them to kill to call this God's war? How dare you call the destruction of your country in this manner and the killing of two hundred thousand people God's war?" Ever wily and articulate, Taylor did not miss a beat. "I just believe in the destiny of man being controlled by God, and wars, whether man-made or what, are directed by a force," he said. "And so when I say it is God's war, God has his own way of restoring the land, and he will restore it after the war." This statement was made in 1996. A year later, after rigged elections, Taylor became President. Seven years later, however, God has still not restored much in Liberia. A visitor to the country is immediately struck by its decrepitude. The Roberts International Airport is a ramshackle outfit looking very much like a makeshift trading outpost. One of its terminal buildings was burnt down during the early phases of the war, in early 1990, and has not been rebuilt. And developments that should be hopeful are marred by the country's unique complications.

A large UN force, 15,000 strong, has now been deployed throughout the country, and is desperately trying to disarm the demented combatants who ravaged the country for over a decade. The disarmament should have been easy: many of the Liberian militias have gone through such a process before, some of them twice (ahead of the 1997 elections, and during **Sierra Leone** disarmament process, in which some of current Liberian fighters were active). But nearly a year after the UN mission in the country, UNMIL, deployed, officials still do not have an accurate estimate of combatants to be disarmed. Before the start of disarmament in December last year, UNMIL had a 'working figure' of 38,000 combatants to be disarmed. The

first attempted demobilization that month quickly turned into chaos, after the militias, desperate for the cash incentive to hand in their weapons (an initial \$150 per combatant to be followed by another \$150 several months later) before Christmas, stormed Monrovia, the capital. At least 8 people were killed in the ensuing violence. In the event, the UN paid 12,000 soldiers but received only 8,000 weapons.

Disarmament restarted in April this year, with the setting up of 4 cantonment sites where the various militias would hand in weapons. At that point, the UN estimated that 45,000 combatants would be disarmed. By mid-July, however, the UN had already taken weapons from 54,000, and there were more turning up each day.

A UN official I spoke to in Monrovia in July calmly explained how, after a 2-hour long meeting with "48 Generals", he was still unable to tell how many militias remained to be disarmed. Forty-eight Generals? 'Yes, they are rebel generals, bush generals, and they are jealous of their ranks!' He was not facetious, this bright, diligent bureaucrat; he was deadpan. And that, in a way, sums up the pathos of the Liberian situation: the corrosive audacity of its militias, the sense of entitlement, of a people steeped into neurosis.

At the start of the disarmament in April, I traveled with one of the UN teams to Gbarnga, once the headquarters of Taylor's National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) militias. Formerly a fairly prosperous town, with abandoned gas stations and bullet-riddled villas to show for it, Gbarnga is now, after years of fighting, a sullen outpost, its residents sucked into a brooding, almost hermetical mode. A very long line of militias had already been formed by 10:00 am, waiting at the cantonment site to hand in old AK 47 rifles and collect their money. At first glance, there was nothing in their stupefying, red-eyed vacancies to indicate the vicious murderers they have been. Things were proceeding smoothly until, suddenly, a scrawny militia with bandana around the head jumped ahead of the queue, raised his old rifle and started shouting abuses at the UN officers. 'Jacques Klein is a mother-fucker, you are all s t! Give us our money now or we'll go to **Sierra Leone**, to Guinea, to Ivory Coast, and start fighting all over again. We'll go ' Liberia is obviously a highly traumatized country, but outbursts like this still have the capacity to unsettle. Founded by ex-American slaves in the nineteenth century, and misused as a client state by successive US governments during the Cold War---only to brutally abandon it when the awful dictatorship they had been bankrolling imploded with disastrous humanitarian consequences---Liberia confronts the international community with undaunted challenges. The country's politics have always found expression either as brutal hysteria or bathos: anything that can go wrong will go wrong.

Fortunately, the UN mission in the country appears to be finally gaining traction. It began on a false footing. The American marines who landed as back-up to Nigerian troops on pre-UN deployment immediately after Charles Taylor was forced to relinquish power in September last year quietly melted away even before the mission would get underway. Their main gripe, it was reported, was that there were too many mosquitoes in the country (all of them were no doubt quickly sent to Iraq---the real reason for their Liberian withdrawal). The new head of the UN mission, Jacques Klein, is an abrasive ex-American soldier who distinguished himself in the Balkans as a UN official but who had little knowledge of West Africa, and even less, interest to learn. On arrival in Liberia, Klein is said to have suggested separating the Muslims from the Christians to avoid 'ethnic cleansing'---a Quizotic mindset from the Balkans. His relationship with the UN force commander, the highly respected Kenyan General Daniel Opende---who oversaw the disarmament process in **Sierra Leone**---was bad to the point of hostility. The two men simply were not on speaking terms. Morale among the UN staff, cowered by Klein's often boorish behavior, was very low. The Liberian press, ever vociferous and often more vocal than reasoning, was uniformly hostile to the mission.

Things have much improved now, and there is real hope that the country, Africa's first republic, will make the transition from interminable, low-level criminal warfare to real peace. A successful disarmament, of course, will be the key to this. This is why greater effort should

be made to vet ex-combatants submitting themselves to the process. But beyond a successful disarmament is the challenge of reintegrating the ex-combatants in a society impoverished and degraded by war. A promised American reintegration package, worth millions of dollars and said to be aimed at providing employment for 10,000 ex-combatants, has still not arrived. Inundating the country, on the other hand, are hundreds of North American Baptist missionaries holding conferences and seminars almost monthly. More churches have been rebuilt or renovated than schools, and there is still no electricity or running water in the country.

There is also the dismal fragmentation of the political class. General and presidential elections are set for October this year, and already 19 aspirants have emerged as possible presidential contestants---this in a nation of slightly more than 3 million people, more than half of them displaced by warfare. 'Liberian politics,' Graham Greene once wrote, 'were like a crap game played with loaded dice.' Greene was writing in the 1930s, and then the legendary corruption of Liberia's politics had set rules that were universally acknowledged. Today, that tidy, antique corruption has a quaintness that can only be imagined. The country's fiercely competitive diversity has foreclosed that. The stakes are much higher now. And judging by the occasional rowdiness of the ex-combatants, it is hard to say whether they, hired guns of one sociopathic entrepreneur or another in the past, will not make themselves available to some disgruntled politician-turn-warlord. And there is that wild card Charles Taylor, who should be turned over to the UN-mandated **Special Court for Sierra Leone** if only to make the atmosphere look less foggy.

The International Community, in short, needs to continue to actively engage in the region. Among the UN staff in Liberia today, the talk is that Guinea is the next flashpoint, and some opportunistic staffers are already learning French for a future posting to Guinea. Peacekeeping in West Africa, in other words, is becoming a growth industry. This should not be allowed to happen.

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More Bodies Lie in Korhogo Mass Graves - Diplomat

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Many more bodies lie in the mass graves discovered near the rebel-held city of Korhogo in northern Cote d'Ivoire than the 99 revealed by a UN human rights team earlier this week, according to a diplomat closely connected with the investigation.

The source told IRIN that the UN investigators counted a total of 99 complete bodies, which are thought to be the remains of people killed during clashes between rival factions of the rebel movement last month.

However, beneath these, lay the remains of other bodies in an advanced state of decomposition and it was impossible to say accurately how many bodies they represented, the source told IRIN.

And beneath this second layer of decomposed bodies, the UN investigation team discovered a third layer of corpses, he added, without giving further details.

The United Nations mission in Cote d'Ivoire, which is known by its French acronym ONUCI, said in a statement on Monday that "the commission of inquiry discovered and confirmed the existence of three mass graves containing at least 99 people. Some of these people were killed by bullets. According to several credible witnesses, others died from asphyxiation."

But the source said the figure of 99 represented just those bodies that the UN investigators "were able to count."

Asked about a report by the UN World Food Programme (WFP) last Friday that the UN investigators had actually found four mass graves containing about 150 bodies, he dismissed it.

Several residents in Korhogo, a city 650 km north of the commercial capital Abidjan, told IRIN that they believed up to 500 died in heavy fighting in the city between supporters of rebel leader Guillaume Soro and his exiled rival Ibrahim Coulibaly, who is widely known as "IB," and in a manhunt for suspected IB supporters afterwards.

The rebel New Forces movement said straight after the event that the clashes began with an assassination attempt on Soro, who was in Korhogo at the time, and that only 22 people died. It has reserved comment on the UN statement implying that casualties were much higher until the investigation team's full report is published.

Diplomats said the revelations about mass graves in Korhogo were likely to prove as embarrassing for the rebels as a UN investigation into the government's violent repression of an opposition demonstration in Abidjan in March, which revealed that at least 120 people had been killed by the security forces, many of them innocent civilians. The government said only

37 died.

RADDHO, a Dakar-based human rights organisations, reacted to news of the mass graves in Korhogo by calling for an international war crimes tribunal to be set up in Cote d'Ivoire, modelled on **Sierra Leone's Special Court**, which is presently trying those deemed to bear the greatest responsibility for atrocities committed during that country's 1991-2001 civil war.

Indeed, RADDHO suggested that the remit of the **Sierra Leone** court should simply be extended to include war crimes committed in Cote d'Ivoire since President Laurent Gbagbo came to power in 2000.

RADDHO (The African Assembly for the Defence of Human Rights) said: "The culture of massacre and barbarism is taking root in both the north and south of Cote d'Ivoire in a way that is similar to what took place in Rwanda."

Meanwhile, reports from France suggested that IB might soon be on his way back to Cote d'Ivoire to challenge Soro's leadership of the rebel movement in a more direct and personal manner.

IB, a former master sargent in the Ivorian army, who helped mastermind a successful coup in 1999, has been living in France for the past year. He and 11 other men were arrested by the French authorities on August 23 2003 on suspicion of planning to destabilise Cote d'Ivoire with the help of mercenaries.

IB and most of the others were released three weeks later, but the Ivorian rebel hero was banned from leaving France and returning to his home in Burkina Faso while investigations continued.

However, Radio France Internationale reported on Thursday that a Paris court had lifted the travel ban earlier this week.

Meanwhile, Ivorians are waiting for Gbagbo to take the first steps towards reconvening Cote d'Ivoire's broad-based government of national reconciliation for the first time in four months, following a West African summit in Accra last week aimed at putting the country's derailed peace process back on track.

In New York, UN Secretary General Kofi Annan said he expected the cabinet, which includes nine rebel ministers and representatives of the main parliamentary opposition parties, to meet with the president on Monday.

The rebel movement and the opposition parties withdrew their 26 ministers from the government in March in protest at Gbagbo's heavy-handed repression of the banned opposition demonstration on 25 March.

At the Accra summit, which was attended by Annan, the Ivorian factions agreed to resurrect the coalition government and legislate a series of political reforms to clear the way for the start of a long delayed disarmament programme on 15 October.

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