

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



Principal Defender Claire Carlton-Hanciles with convicts at Mpanga Prison, Rwanda.

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:

Wednesday, 11 November 2009

Press clips are produced Monday through Friday.
Any omission, comment or suggestion, please contact
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Taylor Accuses Washington Post

Taylor said at The Hague trial last week that the initial Washington Post article by Douglas Farah that he received 90 percent of the profit of the diamond loot in Sierra Leone as a deliberate lie to implicate him.

In the article, the Washington Post correspondent quoted a letter seized from the home of Foday Sankoh making reference to one Charles as a business partner of Sankoh in the diamond deal in Kono.

Taylor said the Charles being referenced in the letter was not him. He said the Farah Washington Post article triggered a barrage of accusations of his role in the war in Sierra Leone. One example, he said was a

letter former Sierra Leone President Tejan Kabbah wrote, accusing him of supplying weapons across the border into Sierra Leone.

Regarding Mark Doyle, Taylor said a report by Mark Doyle quoting Sierra Leonean police intelligence of his connections to the RUF rebels was just another fabrication.

Taylor and Defence Team Say Prosecution Political And Racist

Charles Taylor and his Defence team have repeated that the prosecution of the Former Liberian President is political and racist.

proves the political and racist nature of the Taylor trial. The Defence also said Mr. Taylor's honest efforts in the release of 500 UN peace

gressional sub-committee on Africa said the indictment was shown to United States officials two months before it was unveiled in June of 2003 in Accra, Ghana.

The government of President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf which requested the turn over of Mr. Taylor surrendered him to the Special Court 29 March 2006 following his arrest in Nigeria.

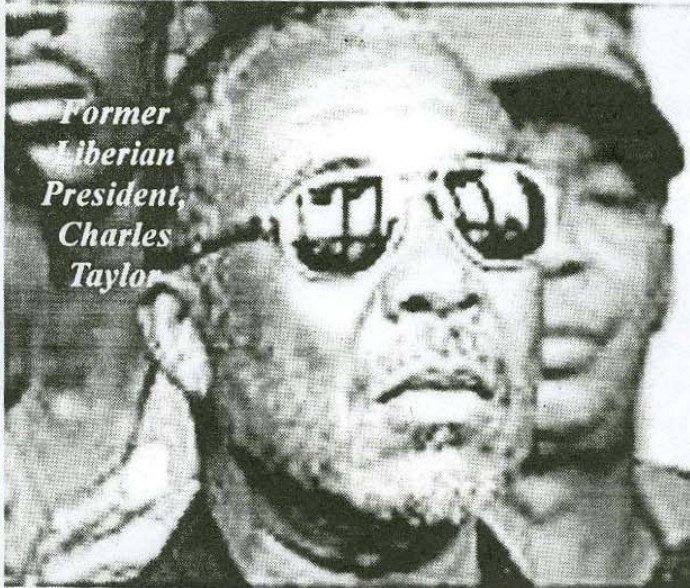
At the congressional committee hearings, Griffiths read from Crane's testimony as telling US lawmakers how to get the attention of a West African leader.

The circumstances surrounding the release of 500 UN peace keepers were another issue the defence took up. Griffiths read the outcome of the meeting be-

tween Mr. Taylor and US Envoy, The Reverend Jesse Jackson in Monrovia, pointing out that Mr. Taylor's honest efforts to release the 500 rebel held peace keepers were justified as Taylor's connection to the rebels.

As Charles Taylor's direct examination expectedly comes to an end Tuesday, the prosecution has given hint as to how it intends to take on the Former Liberian President in its cross examination.

Acting Chief Prosecutor, Joseph Kamara in an e-mail circulated by his Special Assistant, Jeremy Waiser said the prosecution will directly challenge Mr. Taylor on the accuracy, the truthfulness and the completeness of his testimony.



*Former
Liberian
President,
Charles
Taylor*

Lead Counsel Courtney Griffiths said the testimony of Former Chief Prosecutor, David Crane before the US congressional sub-committee on Africa

keepers seized by the RUF rebels were taken out of context.

Mr. Griffiths reading from the transcript of Former Chief Prosecutor, David Crane's testimony before the con-

Charles Taylor 'duped' by Nigeria

Former Liberian President Charles Taylor has said he was duped by Nigeria into being arrested there in 2006. Speaking at his war crimes trial in The Hague, he said Nigeria's then-leader had reneged on a promise to let him leave the country freely. He also claimed a plot involving the UK and the US led to his indictment.

Mr Taylor is accused of backing rebels, who committed widespread atrocities throughout the 1990s in Liberia's neighbour Sierra Leone. He was living in exile in Nigeria in 2006 when US pressure to put him on trial for alleged war crimes increased. Mr Taylor now says the president of Nigeria at the time, Olusegun Obasanjo - who is currently a United Nations peace

envoy - told him lies that caused him to be arrested.

Mysterious affair

The former Liberian leader told the Special Court for Sierra Leone on Tuesday that Mr Obasanjo had earlier assured him he could leave the country freely. "He lied to the world when he said I was escaping, and he knew nothing about it," he said.

"Why he lied? I don't know, but as a brother and a friend, I think he ought to speak and tell the truth about it."

TAYLOR TIMELINE

1989: Launches rebellion in Liberia
1991: RUF rebellion starts in Sierra Leone
1995: Peace deal signed
1997: Elected president
1999: Liberia's Lurd rebels start insurrection to oust Taylor

June 2003: Arrest warrant issued

August 2003: Steps down, goes into exile in Nigeria

March 2006: Arrested, sent to Sierra Leone

June 2007: Trial opens in The Hague

Preacher, warlord, president
Mr Taylor's arrest was a dramatic and mysterious affair.

After Mr Obasanjo said Liberia's new government was free to take Mr Taylor into custody, the former Liberian leader suddenly disappeared while Mr Obasanjo was on his way to Washington to meet his US counterpart, George W Bush.

Then, equally suddenly, the Nigerians announced that they had arrested Mr Taylor for trying to escape.

He was captured, allegedly with huge sacks of

cash, on the border with Cameroon - some 1,000km (600 miles) from the southern town of Calabar, where he had been living in exile. Mr Taylor had been given asylum in Nigeria as part of a deal to end Liberia's civil war, though human rights groups accused him of breaking the terms of the deal by continuing to interfere in Liberian politics.

On Tuesday, he said he hoped he would live to look Mr Obasanjo in the face one day and ask him to tell the truth about what happened.

The BBC's Geraldine Coughlan says Mr Taylor appeared defiant on what was the final day of his testimony in The Hague.

He claimed he was a victim of an intelligence plot involving the British



and US governments that supplied weapons to the region in an attempt to topple him - as part of a plan by Washington to gain control of West African oil reserves.

The US position was that "we cannot have anyone in Liberia that we don't think is going to dance to our tune", he said.

He also said he was a

peace broker and repeated denials that he had supplied arms to Sierra Leone rebels in exchange for blood diamonds.

The prosecution, which will now cross-examine Mr Taylor, says it will challenge the accuracy, truthfulness and completeness of his testimony.



From front page

Charles Taylor Blasts Journalists

respondent, Douglas Farah and the BBC World Affairs Correspondent, Mark Doyle are part of western ploy to destroy him. BBCWST Producer and reporter John Kollie transcribes reports from The Hague on the trial of former Liberian President Charles Taylor.

Mr. Taylor said the initial Washington Post article

written by Douglas Farah of receiving 90 percent from the profit of the diamond loots in Sierra Leone was a deliberate lie to implicate him.

In the article, the Washington Post Correspondent quoted a letter seized from the home of Foday Sankoh making reference to one Charles as a busi-

ness partner of Sankoh in the diamond deal in Kono. Mr. Taylor said the Charles being referenced in the letter was not him.

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President Tejan Kaba wrote, accusing him of supplying weapons across the border into Sierra Leone.

Regarding Mark Doyle, Mr. Taylor said a report by Mark Doyle quoting Sierra Leonean police intelligence of his connections to the RUF rebels was just another fabrication.

The Exclusive

Tuesday, 10 November 2009

Lies

- Says Taylor

Charles Taylor responded to series of international Press reports linking him to the RUF war in Sierra Leone.

He said the reports, like the ones written by Former Washington Post Correspondent, Douglas Farah and the BBC World Affairs Corre-

spondent, Mark Doyle are part of western ploy to destroy him. BBCWST Producer and reporter John Kollie tran-

Continued page 2



Lies

Also read this story on www.exclusivepress.net

From front page

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Also read this story on www.exclusivepress.net

Awoko

Wednesday, 11 November 2009

Special Court Detention Facilities to Be Handed over to Salone Government

By Betty Milton

The Public Affairs Chief of the Special Court Peter Andersen has disclosed that the detention facilities of the Court will be officially handed over to the government of Sierra Leone on Monday 16th November 2009

As the Special Court of Sierra Leone is coming to an end with just the trial of Charles Taylor presently going on in The Hague The Netherlands the Acting Prosecutor Joseph Kamara has disclosed that as part of the legacy of the Court they intend to use the detention facility of the Court be used for convicted women prisoner who are with children.

He said that they have looked and observed the function of the dentition facilities as they were clearly design for detention facilities, so this facility could be used for women and children.

He went on "if you go to Pademba Road today you know the state of the prison condition as there are women with children there so if we have this detention facility it will be air marked for such victims even though they maybe convicts but 'they are still entitle to some special treatment."

Mr. Kamara said that under the statute, of the court "this premise belong to the government of Sierra Leone and it shall return to the government of Sierra Leone, but the government has given us the indication that its seek our assistance in identifying option for which we can put this edifice into use."

He went that about few weeks ago they had an international conference in the premises were international donors were invited together with other management consultants, so that they can able to assist the government in telling them what to do. And that the donors were there to forge the way forward on how best they can utilize this facility and that the donors and consultant has also studied the acreage of the site. Joseph Kamara further disclosed that one of the options that were available for the use of the court is that it should be turned into

a judicial training center not only for Sierra Leone or the sub region by maybe even the ICC can also use it as an associate court. So that is one of the areas that have been explored "so we will tell the government that if you want this option as a judicial training center, this is what and what you will happen."

The prosecutor also disclosed that "there is also talk of premises be having a multi functional use. And it could be used as a peace museum, the security building at the entrance of the court has been identify as the peace museum so that we can memorialize the war positively for our people like in Rwanda and we have receive funding about \$200, 000. That work will definitely take off the ground soon and that will start before the end of the year."

He went on to state that they have been approach by the civil service thinking that part of the court may be used as an Advanced Institute for the Civil Service.

"We all know the state of the quality of the Civil Service in this country so if there is an advance cause for the civil college in this country and this facility could provide for it, we are also looking and examining that option" he said.

Speaking at the court building Joseph Kamara said "the edifice that is the court can be use for Supreme Court sittings even if it is used as Judicial Training Center they can have it for their sittings and the building can be made available to them when they have cases.

During the cocaine case, the difficulty of transport and everything, this would be very ideal so these are the options available but again the list is not exhaustively and we still need suggestions of our best we can use this court not only for ourselves but for our children to know the working of the court."

Local News

Taylor grilled at war crimes trial

Prosecutors at the U.N.-backed Special Court for Sierra Leone started cross-examining Charles Taylor on Tuesday, challenging the former Liberian president on his denials of weapons trading in exchange for "blood diamonds".

Taylor, 61, has denied all 11 charges of instigating murder, rape, mutilation, sexual slavery and conscripting child soldiers during the intertwined wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone in which more than 250,000 people were killed.

The first African ruler to stand trial for war crimes, Taylor ended his testimony yesterday after taking the stand in his own defense on July 14, arguing the case against him was full of

lies and that he tried to broker peace in the region.

"My government negotiated the peace in Sierra Leone," Taylor said under questioning from his defense counsel on Monday.

The former warlord has vehemently denied supplying arms to Sierra Leone rebels, saying the British and U.S. governments were involved in the supply of weapons to the region as both countries wanted him ousted from power in Liberia. According to him, he was the fall guy in an intelligence plot designed to lead to his destruction.

In 2001, the United Nations Security Council imposed a new arms embargo on Liberia, first introduced in 1992, after a U.N. report found that Liberia

smuggled arms to Sierra Leone in return for diamonds with Taylor's "permission and involvement."

Prosecutors say Taylor armed and directed Revolutionary United Front (RUF) rebels to win control of neighboring Sierra Leone's diamond mines and destabilize its government to boost his regional influence during the country's 1991-2002 civil war.

"We will directly challenge Mr. Taylor in three ways -- on the accuracy, the truthfulness and the completeness of his testimony," said acting prosecutor Joseph Kamara.

Prosecutors called 91 witnesses before wrapping up their case in February. In often disturbing detail, witnesses described amputations and murder of children.

"Racist Trial"

Taylor's trial, being held in The Hague for security reasons, is the last before the U.N.-backed Sierra Leone court after an appeals ruling last month confirmed jail terms of up to 52 years for three former rebel commanders.

Taylor has denied claims from a close aide he had a pregnant woman buried alive behind his mansion in Monrovia in a ceremony designed for him to keep power. He has also dismissed involvement in the cannibalism of a human heart.

"You have a leader eating people, burying pregnant women, and it's not racist? It is. This is beyond racism," he said in September.

But prosecution spokesman Jeremy Waiser rejected Taylor's claims of racism or that he was made to be a



scapegoat.

"If there were a playbook of standard procedures for those accused of the worst atrocities, chapter one would be to distract attention from the charges to claim the trial is some sort of plot

from other individuals and nations," Waiser said.

Once the cross-examination of Taylor is completed, the defense will call other witnesses. A ruling is expected in the first half of 2010.

Violations noted

Sierra Express Media

Monday, 9 November 2009

Quotes from Joseph Kamara, Acting Prosecutor Special Court for Sierra Leone

Author: SEM Contributor

In connection with the start of the Prosecution's cross-examination of Charles Taylor, below are some answers from the Acting Prosecutor in response to questions posed to him from the public.



On the Start of Cross-Examination

Kamara: "After 13 weeks of direct examination, we are very happy to be beginning our cross. We've been waiting patiently for our turn to test Mr. Taylor on his version of events. That version is very different from the evidence the Prosecution presented."

What to Expect From the Cross-Examination

The cross examination will be conducted by Brenda Hollis, Principal Trial Attorney for the Prosecution on the Taylor trial team.

Prosecution's purpose/approach:

Kamara: "We intend to test Mr. Taylor's version of events for the benefit of the judges. Our approach and strategy will become known as the cross-examination unfolds. What I can tell is that we will directly challenge Mr. Taylor in three ways – on the accuracy, the truthfulness and the completeness of his testimony."

Timing

Kamara: "We're going to try and be as efficient as we can, while still effectively challenging Mr. Taylor's version of events. And we hope not to go on as long as the Defence did on their direct examination. Timing can depend on a number of factors, including how direct or evasive the Accused chooses to be on the stand."

What Comes Next?

Background: After the end of cross-examination, the parties may choose to do a 're-direct' and put additional questions to the Accused. Then the Defence will seek to have documents tendered into evidence. Then the Defence will call its other witnesses. They have not yet revealed how many they intend to call, nor the identity of these witnesses.

Kamara: "We hope that once Mr. Taylor is off the stand we'll see a very focused and timely presentation by the Defence of their evidence."

Background information: What has the Prosecution accused Charles Taylor of?

The charges that the Prosecution made against Charles Taylor in its indictment concern crimes committed by rebel groups and others in Sierra Leone after November 1996, during that country's civil war. These crimes consist of War Crimes, Crimes Against Humanity and other serious violations of International Humanitarian Law.

The Prosecution accuses Mr. Taylor of planning and ordering the crimes, of directing, controlling, aiding and abetting those who carried out the crimes, and that he bears criminal responsibility for not preventing or punishing them.

The Prosecution presented its case over the course of 13 months, from January 2008 through February 2009. It presented documentary evidence and witness testimony.

Over 90 witnesses took the stand to give evidence of the charges against Mr. Taylor. These witnesses consisted of (i) Victims who told of the crimes they suffered directly or witnessed, including murder, crimes of sexual violence such as rape and sexual slavery, the use of child soldiers, amputations of limbs, and acts of terror; (ii) Insiders who testified to the linkages tying Mr. Taylor to the crimes; (iii) Experts.
Special Court for Sierra Leone

The Atomic

Wednesday, 11 November 2009

President Koroma Calls on Citizens to Patronize to Special Fund for War Victims

By Alpha Y. Kargbo

Sources within the office of the President has intimidated that due to the remarkable progress by the APC led government of Dr.

Ernest Bai Koroma, through Nacsa and in collaboration with the UN agencies on the implementation of the plan and strategies of the reparations programme of the war victims since

December last year. Despite of the facts that the war victims have started receiving material and other tangible benefits, it was the intensions of APC government in providing additional sup-

port to the victims in order to restore dignity and create more opportunities in rebuilding there lives, through the recommendation of the truth and Reconciliation commission (TRC) report of 2004.

President Koroma further disclosed that the nest step was the process of meeting the emerging needs of the victims by setting -up a special fund for war victims which will be officially launched by the President come December 5th 2009.

President Koroma also disclosed that the Trust fund will be a mechanism to encourage voluntary contributions from all works of lives for the sustainability of the program and the provision of benefits for the five categories of the war victims.

He also said that Nacsa has vehemently registered thirty thousand victims (30,000) within the period of December to June this year in all 149 chiefdoms including the western area, who have benefited in the areas of



surgeries, fistula surgeries for sexually violated women & micro grant etc.

As his government continues with its two pronged approach for effective peace and national reconciliation, reparation the President stated is the most singular important gesture by his government to close the sad chapter by addressing human right issues and rebuilding a new social solidarity. In his closing speech

called on Sierra Leoneans to stand-up, be proud and be counted as we empathize with our fellow brothers and sister who bore and are still bearing the brunt of the conflict. In doing nothing will be tantamount to deliberately compromising our feature, he there fore enjoin all Sierra Leoneans to show empathy for these war victims by contributing to the fund, which will ensure the restoration of their dignity, President Koroma stressed out.

Zain corporate gala: Special Court to face US Embassy

The Special Court for Sierra Leone will face the American Embassy on Saturday in the first semi-final encounter of the ongoing Zain-sponsored corporate gala.

The second semi-final clash will see Union Trust Bank (UTB) taking on the United Nations Integrated Office in Sierra Leone, UNIPSIL, at the St. Edwards secondary school playing field.

UNIPSIL booked their place to the semi-final after defeating the First International Bank, FIB, by a lone goal on Saturday, thanks to Alie Kallon's goal in the 35 minute.

Already, the UN boys are eyeing the final as they are confident they see off the US Embassy.

In the earlier kick-off on Saturday, Standard Bank thumped the British Embassy 4-0 even though both teams did not make it to the semi-final.

CharlesTaylorTrial.org (The Hague)

Tuesday, 10 November 2009

As Cross-Examination Of Charles Taylor Starts, Prosecution Tells Taylor He Has A Reason To Lie

Alpha Sesay

Prosecutors told Charles Taylor that he had "reason to lie" during his four months of testimony which he had spent rebutting charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity for his alleged role in crimes during Sierra Leone's brutal conflict — and that he needed to prepare to be "honest" in cross-examination, which started today in The Hague.

Lead prosecution counsel, Ms. Brenda Hollis, who is conducting Mr. Taylor's cross-examination told the former president he has not been "honest" in direct-examination and that she is ready to prove that Mr. Taylor has been telling lies.

Ms. Hollis, briefly taking Mr. Taylor through a few documents that he had discussed in direct-examination, pointed out the absence of certain key words used by the accused former president. In a letter written by Mr. Taylor to former United States president George Bush, Ms. Hollis asked Mr. Taylor to point out in the letter where he had said to Mr. Bush that he would step down as Liberian president, as claimed by the former president in his direct examination.

In his response, Mr. Taylor said that the portion of the letter which read that "I have considered recusing myself from the political process" indicated his intention to step down as Liberian president.

"That is my understanding counsel, that is how I understand it," Mr. Taylor said.

Ms. Hollis, referencing Mr. Taylor's May 2000 meeting with United States Special Envoy for Africa, Rev. Jesse Jackson, accused Mr. Taylor of not giving Rev. Jackson an honest answer when he did not admit that former Revolutionary United Front (RUF) commander Sam Bockarie and his fighters were being trained as mercenaries by Mr. Taylor in Liberia. Mr. Taylor "misled" the US envoy, as Ms. Hollis put it to the accused.

Mr. Taylor denied the allegation, insisting that he gave an honest answer to the US Special Envoy.

"I object to the fact of mercinerization. I did give an honest answer to Special Envoy Jackson. Your suggestion that I was dishonest is not true and you should not allude to that," Mr. Taylor said.

"I was not being misleading and if Special Envoy Jackson had asked me whether I was training those men and I said no, then I would have been misleading," he added.

Mr. Taylor insisted that if he had been training Sierra Leonean rebel fighters and supplying arms and ammunition to RUF rebels, he would have said so. He also denied ever receiving diamonds from RUF rebels in Sierra Leone.

"If I had been training or supplying arms to the RUF, there is no reason why I would have denied it. If I had done so, I would have said so," the former president said.

As he denied allegations of his alleged support to RUF rebels and receiving diamonds mined in Sierra Leone, Mr. Taylor accused the prosecution of building its case on "lies."

"To suggest that I will deny something like that, remember, this whole case is a lie—my activities as president, that I sent arms to Sierra Leone, that I received diamonds from Sierra Leone, there is no evidence and your failure accept it, it's all lies," he said.

Ms. Hollis put it to Mr. Taylor that he has more reason to lie about his actions compared to the numerous witnesses who have testified against him. Mr. Taylor responded that "I have told this court the truth, unless you bring evidence that I am lying."

"We will prove that," Ms. Hollis responded.

Earlier in the day, as Mr. Taylor concluded his direct-examination, he discredited newspaper articles and intelligence reports on his alleged involvement in the conflict in Sierra Leone. The former Liberian president also challenged the honesty of the UN's actions in authorizing the freezing of his assets as well as UN Security Council Resolution 1688 of 2006 authorizing his trial in The Hague.

"This whole issue and how it has been handled has been strange but that is the nature of this case," he said.

Meanwhile, in a message to the press, the acting Chief Prosecutor of the Special Court for Sierra Leone, Mr. Joseph Kamara, also outlined how the prosecution intends to cross-examine Mr. Taylor.

"We will directly challenge Mr. Taylor in three ways—on the accuracy, the truthfulness and the completeness of his testimony," Mr. Kamara said.

Mr. Taylor has been charged with 11 counts of war crimes, crimes against humanity and serious violations of international humanitarian law committed by rebel forces in Sierra Leone. He has denied all charges.

Mr. Taylor's cross-examination continues tomorrow.

Voice of America

Tuesday, 10 November 2009

Cross-Examination Begins in War Crimes Trial of Former Liberian President

By Scott Stearns
Dakar

Prosecutors at the U.N. Special Court for Sierra Leone have begun their cross-examination of former Liberian President Charles Taylor who is facing charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity.



AP Photo

Mr. Taylor is the first witness in his defense and has spent much of the last 13 weeks dismissing the prosecution case against him as a series of lies.

So Principal Trial Attorney Brenda Hollis opened her cross-examination by asking Mr. Taylor: Who is lying?

"Now Mr. Taylor, you have said to this bench throughout your direct examination that all of this evidence here before you, it's all lies. And you have talked about how perhaps, cunning is not the word you used. But Mr. Taylor, it's true isn't it that of all the people who have come before these judges, you are the one who has the most reason to lie," Hollis said.

Former Liberian President Charles Taylor in Hague court (file photo)

"Well, counsel, I would disagree with you except you can point to me why would I have the most reason to lie? I have been truthful before this court. Unless you can point to me. I have told this court the truth. And I suggest that you point to me and present the evidentiary fact before this court for to suggest, as you are, that I am lying," Taylor said.

"Well, we will do that over the course of the cross-examination, Mr. Taylor, but of all the people who have come before this court, you are the one facing these serious charges. Isn't that correct?" Hollis asked.

Well, that is correct counsel," Taylor responded.

The former president is pleading not guilty to an 11-count indictment that includes murder, rape, enslavement, and conscription of child soldiers.

Prosecutors say he led members of Sierra Leone's Revolutionary United Front across the border and acted as their effective leader for much of the country's 10-year civil war.

Mr. Taylor's lawyers maintain that any contact their client had with Sierra Leonean rebels ended before the jurisdiction of this court begins. They are also questioning the legality of Mr. Taylor being turned over to the court after he was granted political asylum in Nigeria.

Wrapping up his defense testimony, Mr. Taylor said he agreed to step down as Liberian president in 2003 in the interest of peace but was tricked by the international community.

"This was about regime change, and everything was put into place to accomplish that regime change," Taylor said.

While he says African leaders repeatedly assured him that his going to Nigeria meant he would not be turned over to the Special Court, he says Washington and London were determined to see him stand trial.

If I had the slightest, slightest knowledge that the United States and the United Kingdom were arranging such, I would have never left Liberia. We have an old saying: A gift from a wicked man is a trap. I would have never left Liberia," Taylor said.

He says then-Nigerian-President Olusegun Obasanjo approved of his traveling overland to Chad in 2006. But when Mr. Taylor reached the border, he was arrested for violating the terms of his asylum by trying to travel outside Nigeria without permission.

"I don't care what happens, I hope I am alive to really look into Obasanjo's face one day and ask him to tell the world the truth about what happened. With me I am Jewish. I do not hold any animosity. But I tell Obasanjo today, and I am sure he knows it, that he lied to the world when he said that I was escaping and he knew nothing about it. Why he lied I don't know," Taylor said.

This is the last case before the U.N. Special Court for Sierra Leone. The Freetown session of that court has convicted the last of the Sierra Leonean rebels indicted. Mr. Taylor's trial was moved to The Hague because of concerns that his supporters might disrupt proceedings held in West Africa.

CharlesTaylorTrial.org (The Hague)

Monday, 9 November 2009

Liberia: 'I Decided That I Will Leave Liberia For The Sake Of Peace,' Taylor Tells Special Court For Sierra Leone

Alpha Sesay

Charles Taylor decided to leave the Liberian presidency for asylum in Nigeria because he wanted peace in his West African homeland, he today told Special Court for Sierra Leone judges in The Hague.

"I decided that I will leave for the sake of peace," the accused former Liberian president said.

In August 2003, as rebel forces advanced on the Liberian capital Monrovia with an aim of unseating Mr. Taylor, the former president agreed to step-down as president. He left Liberia in August 2003 and relocated to Nigeria, where he lived until March 2006 when he was transferred to the custody of the Special Court for Sierra Leone. In his testimony today, Mr. Taylor explained the circumstances surrounding his departure from Liberia and the unsealing of the indictment against him by the Special Court's Chief Prosecutor.

His concern for the suffering of the Liberian people caused by rebel forces was the motivating factor in his decision to step down from power, Mr. Taylor said today, which he announced to other West African leaders during peace talks in Ghana in 2003.

"I told them that if I am the problem in Liberia, I'll go and tell the people that look, I will leave," he said.

After giving this assurance in the office of the Ghanaian president, an announcement was made that the then Chief Prosecutor of the Special Court for Sierra Leone, David Crane, had issued an indictment against him.

"Everybody was upset. The meeting almost came to an end," Mr. Taylor said.

The accused former president said that he still kept his word. "I promised them that I will still step down," he said.

West African leaders assured Mr. Taylor that they would inform the United Nations Security Council that the indictment was "unacceptable" and that it would be "quashed," he said.

"I was informed that the UN Security Council will meet and the indictment will not stand. It was based on that assurance that I got on the plane and returned to Liberia," Mr. Taylor explained.

"Following my return to Liberia, between June and August, there are series of negotiations going on. Obasanjo [Nigerian president] finally comes to Liberia and he assures me that he had spoken to the five permanent members of the UN Security Council and they had assured him that the indictment will be quashed," he said.

On the strength of this promise, Mr. Taylor said he left Liberia for Nigeria in August of 2003.

Mr. Taylor accused the United States of involvement in a covert plan with his former vice president Moses Blah to overthrow him while he was holding peace talks with West African leaders in Ghana. "My return to Monrovia that night destroyed the whole plan," he said.

Asked by his defense counsel about his impression of the indictment, Mr. Taylor said that "my own point is that the issue of regime change had been put in place."

In discussing the circumstances surrounding his indictment, Mr. Taylor reaffirmed a common position he has taken in the past: that his trial is "political" and "racist."

These themes reemerged when Mr. Taylor and his defense counsel, Courtenay Griffiths, discussed the 2006 statement delivered before the United States House of Congress sub-committee on Africa by Mr. Crane.

Mr. Crane was quoted as telling US officials that "unsealing of the indictment was a deliberate plan on my part to publicly strip this war lord of his power by my signature. My intent was to humble him and humiliate him before his peers." Testimony further centered on Mr. Crane's admission that he gave copies of Mr. Taylor's indictment to US government officials two months before unsealing it. (Both of these statements by Mr. Crane had also been raised by Mr. Griffiths as part of his opening statement back in July).

In his response to Mr. Crane's actions, Mr. Taylor today told the judges that "a decision had been taken for regime change in Liberia and this whole thing had been political, not legal. He was reporting to his bosses."

Also in his testimony today, Mr. Taylor denied prosecution allegations that he had secret bank accounts in which huge amounts of money had been kept. He challenged the prosecution to release details of the accounts.

Mr. Taylor also told the court that he played an honest-broker role in securing the release of over 500 peacekeepers who were held hostage by Revolutionary United Front (RUF) rebels in Sierra Leone in 2000.

Mr. Taylor is accused of providing support to RUF rebels who waged an 11-year war on the government and people of Sierra Leone. It is alleged, among other things, that Mr. Taylor occupied a position of control over RUF rebels and that he could have prevented or punished rebel forces crimes against the people of Sierra Leone — including crimes of sexual violence, murder and recruitment of child soldiers. Mr. Taylor has denied all 11 charges of war crimes, crimes against humanity and other serious violations of international humanitarian law against him.

Mr. Taylor has been testifying as a witness in his own defense since July 14, 2009. He is expected to finish his direct-examination on Tuesday, after which the prosecution will start his cross-examination. During cross-examination, the prosecution is expected to challenge Mr. Taylor on the "accuracy, truthfulness and completeness" of his testimony.

Mr. Taylor's testimony continues tomorrow.

Daily Trust (Liberia)

Wednesday, 11 November 2009

Liberia: How Obasanjo Duped Me, By Charles Taylor

Nigeria's President at the time Chief Olusegun Obasanjo told him lies and encouraged him to go on a mysterious journey that led to his arrest as he approached this country's border with Chad, former Liberian President Charles Taylor said at The Hague yesterday.

Taylor told the Special Court for Sierra Leone that Obasanjo had earlier assured him he could leave the country freely. "He lied to the world when he said I was escaping, and he knew nothing about it," Taylor said. "Why he lied? I don't know, but as a brother and a friend, I think he ought to speak and tell the truth about it."

The ex-warlord's journey to The Hague began in 2006 when Obasanjo announced that Liberia's new government was free to take their former president into custody, despite assurances of his personal safety given to Taylor when African leaders persuaded him to quit the Liberian presidency in 2003 in order to end a vicious civil war.

Soon after the announcement was made, Taylor suddenly disappeared from his exile abode at Calabar while Obasanjo was on his way to Washington to meet then US president George W Bush. The next day, the Nigerian government announced that Taylor was arrested near the Chad border while trying to escape. The government said he was in disguise and also that sacks of money were found on him.

Taylor said he hopes he would live to look Chief Obasanjo in the face one day and ask him to tell the truth about what happened. Charles Taylor also claimed yesterday that there was a plot involving the UK and the US that led to his indictment. He is accused of backing rebels, who committed widespread atrocities throughout the 1990s in Liberia's neighbour Sierra Leone. He was living in exile in Nigeria in 2006 when US pressure to put him on trial for alleged war crimes increased.

Taylor had been given asylum in Nigeria as part of a deal to end Liberia's civil war, though human rights groups accused him of breaking the terms of the deal by continuing to interfere in Liberian politics.

Yesterday was the final day of his testimony in The Hague. Taylor claimed he was a victim of an intelligence plot involving the British and US governments that supplied weapons to the region in an attempt to topple him - as part of a plan by Washington to gain control of West African oil reserves. The US position was that "we cannot have anyone in Liberia that we don't think is going to dance to our tune", he said.

He also said he was a peace broker and repeated denials that he had supplied arms to Sierra Leone rebels in exchange for blood diamonds.

The prosecution, which will now cross-examine Taylor, says it will challenge the accuracy, truthfulness and completeness of his testimony.

The Times (Nigeria)
Wednesday, 11 November 2009

Obasanjo Connived With U.S., UK To Dupe Me – Taylor

By Daily Independent



On Tuesday, former Liberian President, Charles Taylor, accused former President Olusegun Obasanjo of acting out the script handed him by the United States and Britain by letting him out of Nigeria, denying his whereabouts, and then sending police on his trail, despite an agreement to let him off the hook.

Back in 2006, most African leaders were opposed to turning Taylor over to the United Nations war tribunal controlled by Western powers.

Instead, they worked out an arrangement that saw him relinquish power in the then war-torn Liberia and take refuge in Nigeria, even with opposition by the civil rights community.

He was arrested just before crossing the border to Cameroon, hours after Nigeria announced his escape, amid rising tension that his return could enliven his support base

back home and jeopardise the peace and democratic process in his country.

Taylor now faces murder charges and crimes against humanity before the Special Court for Sierra Leone at The Hague, sponsored by the UN.

Taylor told the court on Tuesday that the 11 charges against him, including murder, sexual slavery, and the use of child soldiers, were based on lies and misinformation.

Prosecutors have accused him of arming and instructing rebels during 1991-2002 civil war in Sierra Leone in order to gain control of its rich diamond fields.

He, however, lamented in court that Obasanjo, whom he considered a longstanding friend, sold him out to the U.S. and Britain, both countries Taylor believes are behind his travails.

He once fingered the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) in the coup that brought him to power in what he called the Washington's attempt to stunt the rising profile of communism in Africa and grow liberal democracy and Western influence on the continent.



Under intense cross examination on Tuesday, Taylor said Obasanjo duped him to be arrested in 2006 after assuring him he could leave the country freely.

"He lied to the world when he said I was escaping, and he knew nothing about it," Taylor recounted.

"Why did he lie? I don't know, but as a brother and a friend, I think he ought to speak and tell the truth about it."

After Obasanjo said Liberia's new government was free to take him into custody, Taylor suddenly disappeared while Obasanjo was on his way to Washington to meet former President George W. Bush.

Then, equally suddenly, Abuja announced that it had arrested Taylor for trying to escape.

He was captured, allegedly with huge sacks of cash, on the Nigerian border with Cameroon – some 1,000 kilometres (600 miles) from Calabar, where he had been living in exile.

Taylor had been given asylum in Nigeria as part of a deal to end Liberia's civil war, though human rights groups accused him of breaking the terms of the deal by continuing to interfere in Liberian politics.

On Tuesday, he said he hoped he would live to look Obasanjo in the face one day and ask him to tell the truth about what happened.

The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) reported that Taylor appeared defiant on what was the final day of his testimony in The Hague.

He claimed he was a victim of an intelligence plot involving the U.S. and British governments that supplied weapons to the region in an attempt to topple him – as part of a plan by Washington to gain control of West African oil reserves.

The U.S. position was that "we cannot have anyone in Liberia that we don't think is going to dance to our tune," he stated.

He also said he is a peace broker and repeated denials that he supplied arms to Sierra Leonean rebels in exchange for blood diamonds.

The prosecution, which will now cross-examine Taylor, pledged to challenge the accuracy, truthfulness, and completeness of his testimony.

In September, Taylor told the court the case against him was built on lies and misinformation, and he denied he had commanded and armed rebel groups that killed and tortured tens of thousands of civilians.

Taylor is the first African leader to stand trial for war crimes.

An estimated 500,000 people were the victims of killings, systematic mutilation and other atrocities during the war, with some of the worst crimes carried out by child soldiers, who were drugged to desensitise them to the horror of their actions.

It is "very, very, very unfortunate that the prosecution – because of disinformation, misinformation, lies, and rumours – would

associate me with such titles or descriptions,” Taylor riposted when asked by his attorney what he thought of the charges.

“I am a father of 14 children, grandchildren. I have fought all my life to do what I thought was right in the interests of justice and fair play.

“I resent that characterisation of me. It is false, it is malicious.”

Wearing a grey double-breasted suit and dark glasses, Taylor spoke confidently as he introduced himself to the panel of three Judges as the 21st President of the Republic of Liberia.

It was his first time on the witness stand.

Prosecutors alleged that Taylor led and armed rebels to help him gain control of Sierra Leone and strip it of its vast mineral wealth, particularly so-called “blood diamonds” mined using slave labour.

Taylor countered that the case was aimed at removing him from power.

“This whole case has been about let’s get Taylor. Haven’t they had their pound of flesh yet? I am not guilty of all these charges,” he fired back.

Taylor’s case has been hailed as a groundbreaking sign that the international community will hold autocrats responsible for human rights violations that occurred under their watch.

However, getting such leaders to court is not easy.

The International Criminal Court (ICC) has issued an arrest warrant for Sudanese President, Omar al-Bashir, on charges of crimes against humanity in Darfur, but he refuses to recognise the court.

Most African leaders have supported al-Bashir in his defiance and refuse to arrest him.

Turkey invited him to the Conference of Islamic States summit which held on Monday and Tuesday in Istanbul, despite opposition by the European Union (EU).

Al-Bashir did not attend, however, hampered by the ICC warrant on him – even though Turkey is not a signatory to the ICC statute.

Recently, the African Union (AU) rose from a summit in Libya restating its opposition to the arrest warrant, and saying no member country would turn in Al-Bashir.

China and Russia, both members of the five-member UN Security Council, have also worked against the ICC’s categorisation of the killings and maiming in Darfur as genocide.

Anneke Galama of Fatal Transactions – a non-government group that lobbies for the fair distribution of profits from Africa’s natural resources – said the Taylor’s case also is a landmark in the fight against conflict diamonds.

“The Taylor process shows we don’t allow diamonds any more as a way to finance violence and human rights abuses,” she stressed.

Taylor’s testimony aims to persuade Judges that the 91 prosecution witnesses called since January 2008 are lying.

Some of those witnesses claimed Taylor shipped weapons to rebels in rice sacks, in contravention of an arms embargo, and in return got diamonds smuggled out of mines in Sierra Leone in mayonnaise jars.

Taylor flatly denied the charge.

“Never, ever did I receive – whether it is mayonnaise or coffee or whatever jar – any diamonds from the RUF (Revolutionary United Front),” he said, referring to the rebel group he allegedly supported. “It is a lie, a diabolical lie.”

Griffiths said on Monday that Taylor will testify about his “strenuous efforts to bring peace in Sierra Leone.”

Taylor completed an economics degree in the U.S. and military training in Libya before rising to power as a rebel warlord in Liberia and being elected President in 1997.

He is accused of supporting the RUF in Sierra Leone in its fight to depose President Joseph Momoh and his successors.

Prosecutors alleged that Taylor trained in Libya with the RUF leader, Foday Sankoh.

But he denied ever plotting with Sankoh to invade “that friendly country,” Sierra Leone.

He also denied ordering rebels to hack off the hands of their enemies – the signature atrocity of the Sierra Leonean conflict, of which two Nigerian journalists and activists are victims.

“It is wrong. It never happened in Liberia, I would never ever have accepted that in Liberia, and we would never have encouraged that in Sierra Leone,” Taylor insisted.

BBC

Tuesday, 10 November 2009

Charles Taylor Winding Down His Testimony

World News

LEAD-IN: The former President of Liberia, Charles Taylor, winding up his testimony at his war crimes trial in The Hague, has said that he was duped by Nigeria into being arrested. Mr. Taylor said that when he was living there in exile in 2006, that then-Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo told him that he was free to leave the country and subsequently had him arrested for trying to escape. From The Hague, Geraldine Coughlan reports.

COUGHLAN: Charles Taylor said he was a peace broker, and denied supplying arms to Sierra Leone rebels in exchange for “blood diamonds.” He claimed he was the victim of an intelligence plot involving the British and US governments which supplied weapons to the region in an attempt to topple him from power. The Prosecution will now cross-examine Charles Taylor, and says it will challenge the accuracy, truthfulness and completeness of his testimony.

Focus on Africa

LEAD-IN: The war crimes trial of the former Liberian leader Charles Taylor has stepped up a gear this afternoon the Prosecution beginning to cross-examine him for the first time. The one-time rebel leader who ignited war in Liberia in 1989 is charged with 11 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity for his alleged role in the war which subsequently engulfed Liberia’s neighbour Sierra Leone. Mr. Taylor denies the charges. Well, the UN-backed Special Court for Sierra Leone is sitting in The Hague. My colleague Josephine Hazeley is there, and earlier she talked us through the day’s proceedings.

HAZELEY: Leading the cross-examination is a rather quietly spoken American prosecutor called Miss Brenda Hollis, who has been following the case right through. She began by testing the accuracy and honesty of the evidence Mr. Taylor has provided – for example, the accuracy of the letter was brought to bear and they were questioned over it. The letter did spell out Mr. Taylor’s intention to actually step down. That letter was said to have been written to former American President George Bush.

Now earlier in the morning, the former Liberian president was still giving evidence. What was that about?

HAZELEY: Well, the evidence was based on a United States House of Reps. committee minutes. One of the people who spoke to that committee meeting was David Crane, a former chief prosecutor for the UN-backed Court for Sierra Leone. He [indistinct] that evidence had listed the ways in which he thought these things should go in order to bring justice to not only Sierra Leone, but also to Liberia. In the minutes, David Crane was quoted as saying that there should be a Truth and Reconciliation Commission in Liberia itself, and after that, they quoted him as saying, there should be a war crimes court that should try Mr. Taylor and some of those who are alleged to have responsibility for the war in Liberia. And to that suggestion, Mr. Taylor replied:

TAYLOR: You get your pick, if we miss him in the Sierra Leonean court, we’ll try to get him in Liberia. The whole point – the man is ready to shoot me. The whole point is to take Taylor out. This is it, that’s this whole construct. This is it.

And Josephine, I believe Charles Taylor also had some sharp things to say about the former Nigerian president, Olusegun Obasanjo.

HAZELEY: Yes, he did have some rather sharp things about former President Obasanjo. He said in fact that Mr. Obasanjo did know that he, Charles Taylor, was leaving in a convoy of cars to visit Chad. He said he knew about that, but unfortunately, he said, Mr. Obasanjo is saying that he was trying to escape and that is not true. And he said Mr. Obasanjo has been lying.

TAYLOR: He lied to the world when he said I was escaping and he knew that [indistinct]. Why he lied, I don't know. But as a brother and a friend, I think he ought to speak and tell the truth about it.

So how long will former President Taylor be on the stand now that the Prosecution has begun cross-examining him?

HAZELEY: Well according to the Defence, he may well be giving evidence until next year, early next year.

And will there be more witnesses being brought, or is it just Charles Taylor?

HAZELEY: The word from the Defence is that Mr. Taylor is the principal witness and he will have answered most of the questions. And if in fact other witnesses come out to corroborate Mr. Taylor's evidence they may well do so in camera or their identity will not be disclosed.

And that was Josephine Hazeley, speaking to me earlier from The Hague.

Radio Netherlands Worldwide

Wednesday, 11 November 2009

SCSL: Convicts serve time in Rwanda

By Thijs Bouwknecht



*Freetown,
Sierra Leone*

Eight persons convicted by the Special Court for Sierra Leone (SCSL) were transferred to Rwanda's Mpanga prison last month, where they will begin serving sentences ranging from 15 to 52 years.

Those transferred include three former leaders of Sierra Leone's Revolutionary United Front, whose sentences were upheld on appeal three weeks ago. Also transferred were three former leaders of Sierra Leone's Armed Forces Revolutionary Council and two former leaders of the Civil Defence Forces.

The SCSL's registrar, Binta Mansaray, says that while there are no prisons in Sierra Leone that meet international standards, Rwanda is able and willing to enforce the sentences: "They have excellent facilities as far as a prison is concerned."

Mpanga prison, an hour and a half outside Kigali, was built in 2004 to house up to 7,500 genocide suspects or convicts. One wing was designed to hold potential transfers from the UN International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR). Although the ICTR has not transferred any of its detainees, it brokered the agreement between Kigali and the SCSL.

Rwanda's justice minister Tharcisse Karugarama could not understand why the Tanzania court had not returned convicts when Rwanda's jails were deemed sufficient for those convicted by Sierra Leone's war crimes court. "We signed an agreement with the ICTR to transfer the convicts to serve out their sentence here. So far they have not done it. We don't know why," he said.

Living conditions are better for those transferred than for regular Rwandan prisoners. The UN-block at the prison can house 30 prisoners, in rooms measuring 32 square meters. By contrast, the average living space for Rwandan prisoners is estimated at 2 square meters.

UNMIL Public Information Office Media Summary 10 November 2009

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

International Clips on Liberia

Liberians Vote Tuesday in Crucial Senatorial By-Election

VOA --10 November 2009

There's a lot of anticipation in Liberia's capital, Monrovia where a by-election to fill a vacant senate seat is taking place Tuesday. The seat was made vacant by the death of Senator Hannah Brent of George Weah's Congress for Democratic Change party. Rodney Sieh, publisher of the online magazine FrontPage Africa said the by-election is a litmus test for Liberia's major political parties. "For example, the opposition Congress for Democratic Change, the George Weah party is being closely watched because if they lose this election, it would show that his education credential which were a problem in 2005 is still be a problem," he said. Sieh also said the senatorial by-election is especially seen as a referendum on incumbent President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf's government. "The incumbent, her legacy is on the line because a victory here would solidify her candidacy. But a defeat will definitely cause her to rethink her position," Sieh said. He said the Sirleaf administration is pulling all the stops to ensure a victory.

Liberia ex-president denies war crimes

THE HAGUE, Netherlands (THE ASSOCIATED PRESS) November 10, 2009— Former **Liberian** President Charles Taylor ended 13 weeks on the witness stand Monday by rejecting allegations that he commanded and controlled rebels who murdered and mutilated thousands of civilians during Sierra Leone's 1991-2002 civil war. Prosecutors say Taylor provided arms, ammunition and other support to Sierra Leone rebels in return for diamonds mined by slave laborers — in one case, smuggled out in a mayonnaise jar. "There are no diamonds running in and out (of Liberia) by the mayonnaise jarful," Taylor said on what was expected to be his last full day of testifying in his own defense at his war crimes trial. Taylor, 61, also rejected other claims included in an intelligence report compiled for an unnamed Western power. In the report were allegations that he had a secret Swiss bank account, an arms bunker underneath his presidential mansion in the Liberian capital, Monrovia that he took kickbacks in cash and weapons for timber concessions and even that he ran an escort agency.

Prosecutors to grill Taylor at war crimes trial

THE HAGUE (Reuters) November 10 - Prosecutors at the U.N.-backed Sierra Leone court will start cross-examining Charles Taylor on Tuesday, challenging the former Liberian president on his denials of weapons trading in exchange for "blood diamonds". Taylor, 61, has denied all 11 charges of instigating murder, rape, mutilation, sexual slavery and conscripting child soldiers during the intertwined wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone in which more than 250,000 people were killed. The first African ruler to stand trial for war crimes, Taylor will end his testimony on Tuesday after taking the stand in his own defence on July 14, arguing the case against him was full of lies and that he tried to broker peace in the region. "My government negotiated the peace in Sierra Leone," Taylor said under questioning from his defence counsel on Monday. Taylor has vehemently denied supplying arms to Sierra Leone rebels, saying the British and U.S. governments were involved in the supply of weapons

to the region as both countries wanted him ousted from power in Liberia. He says he was the fall guy in an intelligence plot designed

International Clips on West Africa **Sierra Leone**

Sierra Leone: Nigeria Disowns Nigerian Banks in Sierra Leone

Nov 09, 2009 (MENA News from Al-Bawaba via COMTEX) -- The Governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) has totally disowned all the Nigerian owned banks operating in Sierra Leone. Governor Sanusi Lamido Sanusi of the Central Bank of Nigeria on his visit to Sierra Leone on Wednesday 4th November 2009, informed a cross section of newsmen that it is good for all to note that the Nigerian Banks operating in Sierra Leone are Sierra Leonean banks and not Nigerian Banks as they are licensed by the Central Bank of Sierra Leone and not Nigeria. He said they are governed by the rules of Sierra Leone and supervised by the Central Bank of Sierra Leone. The Governor was addressing newsmen in the Bank of Sierra Leone Auditorium, Sam Bangura Building in Freetown. According to Governor Sanusi, all the said Nigerian Banks operating in Sierra Leone are regulated and monitored by the Central Bank of Sierra Leone and not by the Central Bank of Nigeria. He said these banks might be owned and managed by Nigerian nationals in and out of Sierra Leone and having their Headquarters in Nigeria, but that does not implies they are owned by Nigeria or referred to as Nigerian Banks. The Governor stressed that the Central Bank of Nigeria would not shoulder any pitfall by these banks.

Cote d'Ivoire

Ivorian poll not for Gbagbo to set, says rival

Source: Reuters – AlertNet 10 November 2009

KORHOGO, Ivory Coast) - Any new election date in Ivory Coast should be set by broad political agreement and not at the whim of incumbent President Laurent Gbagbo, opposition leader Henri Konan Bedie said. The election, intended to pull the West African nation out of political limbo following a 2002-2203 civil war that split the country along a north-south divide, has been repeatedly delayed since 2005 and is now set for Nov. 29. But while the election commission has yet to announce a new delay, virtually all sides recognise it is inevitable as the eligibility of over 1 million voters still needs to be checked. "If enough technical and not political reasons are put forward ... maybe we can come to an agreement on a delay of a few weeks," Bedie, a former president and one of two main rivals to Gbagbo, told Reuters late on Sunday. "But we cannot allow (Gbagbo's) Ivorian Popular Front (FPI) to lay down the law by itself," he said in the interview, conducted in the northern town of Korhogo while Bedie was campaigning.

Local Media – Newspaper

No newspaper appear on the newsstand today due to a public holiday (Montserrado County By-election)

Local Media – Star Radio (*culled from website today at 09:00 am*)

Polls Open in Montserrado County Senatorial By-election

- Voting has opened in the Montserrado County Senatorial by-election.
- Addressing a news conference yesterday, the Chairman of the National Elections Commission, James Fromoyan said all was set for the conduct of the Montserrado County Senatorial by-election today.
- According to NEC, the necessary preparations had been finalized to ensure a smooth and peaceful conduct of the polls.
- Chairman Fromoyan said polling materials had been transported to the necessary sites and polling staff had also been deployed.
- He said the polls which opened at eight in the morning will close at six in the evening and ballot counting will begin immediately.

- Meanwhile, NEC said some 600 international and local observers have been accredited and six hundred Liberian police officers in collaboration with UNMIL would secure the process.
- Provisional results of the election are expected to be announced on November 11 while the final results would be made known on November 13.

Over 23,000 Additional Names on Final Voters' List

- Serious controversy erupted yesterday over the final number of registered voters in the Montserrado County Senatorial By-Election.
- The argument followed the discovery of over 23,000 additional voters on the final voters' roster by the National Students Intellectual Council of Liberia and demanded an explanation from the National Elections Commission.
- The group said the total registered voters' listing of Montserrado was increased to over 496,000 and runs contrary to the original four hundred seventy three thousand, two hundred and seventy nine voters' listing in the 2005 elections.
- Responding to the group's observation, NEC Chairman James Fromoyan said the inflation was a miscalculation but had been rectified and would have no adverse effect on Tuesday's Senatorial by-election.
- He said the issue of the over twenty three thousand voters was caused by the registration of Internally Displaced Persons who did not vote in Montserrado.

(Also reported on Radio Veritas, Truth FM, Sky F.M., and ELBC)

Government gives US\$200,000 to National Transport NTA Buses

- Government has provided US\$200,000 for the purchase of spare parts for buses of the National Transit Authority.
- NTA Acting Managing Director Martin Kollie said the money has been transferred to a company overseas to purchase and ship the spare parts to Liberia.
- Mr. Kollie however said the money had to be sent abroad because it's difficult to find original spare parts for the buses in Liberia.
- Though a huge number of the entity's buses were down, the Acting Manager said the NTA was still commuting nearly three hundred thousand persons daily.

(Also reported on Radio Veritas, Truth FM, Sky F.M., and ELBC)

Six Persons Arrested for Murder in Bong County

- Police in Bong County have charged six persons with murder.
- The six persons including Flomo Gbaiwe, Anthony Nakplai, Yarkpawolo Flomo, Kerkulah Saturday, Junior Flomo and Kerkulah Tutu were charged Monday.
- They were charged in connection with the death of a twenty-two year old man.

China Development Bank to Provide Funding for Revitalization of Bong Mines

- President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf is seeking support for a partnership between the China Development Bank and China Union to revitalize the Bong Mines.
- China Union won the bid for the revitalization of Bong Mines but is unable to fulfill the terms of the contract.
- During bilateral talks with China's Prime Minister Wen Jiabao, President Sirleaf said government needed payment from the contract to support its budget.
- In response, Prime Minister Wen said the China Development Bank was already working on a plan to assist China Union implement the agreement.
- He told the President, the bank was sending a task force to Liberia to ensure early agreement on payment to the budget.
- Mr. Wen also announced that China would provide an additional fifty million Yuan to Liberia for mutually agreed projects.

Ministry of Education Launches Strategic Study

- The Education Ministry has launched a strategic study of the Educational system of Liberia.
- The strategic study will take a critical look at the education sector and recommend ways to improve it.
- A steering committee comprising Presidents of various universities is carrying out the study.
- Education Minister, Dr. Joseph Korto said the study will pave the way for Liberia to benefit a huge amount of money from the World Bank by April next year.

- Dr. Korto challenged the committee members to fast track the study to ensure, Liberia benefits from the World Bank funding.

Radio Veritas *(News monitored today at 09:45 am)*

Judge of Criminal Court "A" Challenges Justice Ministry

- The Presiding Judge of Criminal Court "A" William Ware has called on the Ministry of Justice to work along with the court for the speedy trial of cases.
- Speaking at the opening of the November term of court, Judge Ware said County Attorneys must always be prepared before going to court and urged the Ministry to be in contact with their witnesses for speedy trial of cases.
- The criminal court "A" judge reminded public defence lawyers that they are under obligation to visit prison centres and interview inmates whether they have not gone to court and free those inmates that have not been charged for any criminal act.
- In response, the Justice Ministry through Montserrado County Attorney Darku Mulbah assured the judges of the Ministry's continuous cooperation to work with the court on the concern raised to speedily trial cases.

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UNMIL Public Information Office Media Summary 09 November 2009

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

International Clips on Liberia

President Arrives At Sharm El Sheikh for Opening of 4th Ministerial Conference

Sharm El Sheikh, Nov 09, 2009 (Liberia Government/All Africa Global Media via COMTEX) -- President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf arrived in Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt, on Saturday, to participate in the opening ceremony of the 4th Ministerial Conference of China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC), taking place on 8-9 November. The President will address the Conference on Sunday, and hold bilateral talks with Egyptian President Hosny Mubarak, FOCAC Co-Chair and host of this year's Conference, before returning to Liberia. Also on Saturday, the President held bilateral talks with Chinese Prime Minister Wen Jiabao. She enumerated the many ways in which Liberia has benefited from its partnership with China since the 2006 Beijing Summit of FOCAC - in agriculture, health, education and infrastructure, all of which had made a big difference to Liberia's development agenda. Chinese companies were also making an important impact in the private sector, the President said, citing two that were involved in constructing road and bridges with World Bank financing.

Childhood hell, then revenge -- in her own words She killed, castrated her father and now looks ahead with hope of a new life

STATEN ISLAND, N.Y. -- Brigitte Harris never had a childhood. Abandoned by her mother in a Park Hill apartment at age 2, she was shuffled between homes and abusive relatives on Staten Island, Long Island, Rhode Island and Liberia. She was repeatedly molested, raped and beaten by a father who was supposed to protect her. She was betrayed by a family who likely knew what was happening, but neither said nor did anything to stop it. It wasn't until Ms. Harris killed her father two and a half years ago that she finally started to get the help she needed -- and the chance for a better future. Ms. Harris, who is now 29, lured her 55-year-old father, St. George resident Eric Goodridge, into her Far Rockaway apartment on June 28, 2007. After wrestling Goodridge to the ground, she handcuffed him, stuffed a towel in his mouth, and then severed his penis with a scalpel. During her murder trial in September, Ms. Harris told a jury she did not mean to kill him -- just "take away his weapon" so he could not use it again. They found her guilty of the lesser charge of second-degree manslaughter, and acquitted her of more serious charges of second-degree murder and first-degree manslaughter.

International Clips on West Africa

Sierra Leone

The Leader, Chairman of the AU and President " Ernest Koroma of Sierra Leone Wind up their talks at Noon Today

Nov 09, 2009 (MENA News from Al-Bawaba via COMTEX) -- Tripoli : 8. 11. 2009 - JANA The leader of the Revolution , Chairman of the AU , Head of Presidency Council of (Cen-Sad) Community and President," Ernest Koroma " of Sierra Leone, member of the Presidency Council of the Community, wound up their talks and consultations that they had started yesterday, Saturday on aspects of promoting the AU and (Cen-Sad) Community marches . The leader and president, " Koroma " completed in their meeting held at noon today their talks regarding several African issues of common

interest. The work of the Committee of ten that president, " Koroma " chairs and charged with reform of the United Nations , was also under discussion .Secretary of GPC for Agriculture Livestock and Marine Wealth , the delegation accompanying the president which includes Ministers of Finance , Economic Planning , Governor of the Central Bank and Assistant to Foreign Minister in Sierra Leone, and Secretary of Libyan People's Bureau in Sierra Leone and its Ambassador to Jamahiriya attended the meeting .

Guinea

Guinea will shrug off sanctions - junta aide

CONAKRY, Nov 9 (Reuters) - Guinea's mineral wealth will help it shrug off international sanctions imposed after a lethal crackdown on anti-government protesters, according to a top aide to junta leader Captain Moussa Dadis Camara. The West African state, the world's largest exporter of the aluminium ore bauxite, has faced isolation and punitive measures from African neighbours, the EU and ex-colonial power France since what witnesses said was the killing of over 150 protesters by security forces in the capital Conakry on Sept. 28. The sanctions include arms embargoes, travel bans on junta leaders and the freezing of their international bank accounts, but not trade measures. Camara is under pressure to step down and allow civilian rule -- something he has so far resisted. "Guinea has always run itself on its own funds," Idrissa Cherif, newly appointed special adviser to Camara, told Reuters in an interview in a hotel suite in Conakry.

Cote d'Ivoire

Glo Awarded Cote d'Ivoire License

Nigeria's national telecommunications operator, Globacom, has taken another major step towards its vision to be the biggest and best telecoms operator in Africa by obtaining an operating license in Cote d'Ivoire. The approval was conveyed to Globacom by the Agence des Telecommunications de Cote d'Ivoire, the telecommunications regulatory authorities of the Francophone country. The license will enable Globacom take advantage of its gigantic trans-Atlantic submarine cable, Glo 1, which branched off in Cote d'Ivoire. With this development, Ivorians have been positioned to be part of the telecommunications revolution, which Globacom is bringing to Africa. The Glo 1 cable will deliver transmission capacity that will radically transform Africa's economic landscape by providing unprecedented high speed internet and broad band services and make telecoms services much faster, more reliable and cheaper for consumers. Commenting on the new licence, Globacom's Group Executive Director, Mr. Paddy Adenuga, said it had given impetus to the network's desire to provide the needed opportunity for West African countries and the whole of Africa to leap forward economically through an excellent communication network and a cost-effective voice, data, video and e-commerce services.

Local Media – Newspaper

President Sirleaf Declares Holiday for Montserrado Senatorial By-Election

(The News, Public Agenda, Liberia Journal, The Monitor, The Independent, The News, Daily Observer, New Vision, New Democrat, National Chronicle, The Analyst, The Parrot and The Informer)

- President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf has declared tomorrow Tuesday November 10 Montserrado County Senatorial By-election Day as a holiday.
- A Foreign Ministry release said the declaration of the holiday followed a request by the National Elections Commission base on public demand. The by-election follows the death of Senator Hannah Brent in August this year.
- According to the National Elections Commission, over 45,000 registered voters are expected to go to the polls.
- The candidates in the Senatorial race include Wilson Tarpeh of the Alliance for Peace and Democracy, Geraldine Doe-Sheriff of the Opposition Congress for Democratic Change, Clemenceau Urey of the ruling Unity Party, and Darius Dillon of the Liberty Party and Jasper N'daborlor of the Free Democratic Party.

- The others are Grace Tee Kpaan, Daniel Johnson, Nathaniel Toe, Jackie Capehart and Alhaji Kromah all independent candidates.

Five Arrested in Connection With the Murder of PPCC Chairman

(Daily Observer, The Monitor, Liberia Journal, Heritage)

- [SIC]Reports say five persons have been arrested in connection with the brutal murder of Keith Jubah, Chairman of the Public Procurement Concessions Commission (PPCC).
- Security sources identified those suspected of involvement in the murder as Kerkula Juteh, Joe Harry, Joseph O. Kerkula, Tommy Cooper and Antu Pewu.
- According to the sources, the five men are currently undergoing police investigation and were cooperating with the probe.
- The sources however explained that some of them had admitted to their involvement in the act.

President Sirleaf Hails Sino-Africa Partnership

(Daily Observer, New Vision, The Informer, Public Agenda)

- President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf has commended the Government and People of China for their continuous support to Africa's social and micro-economic development describing China as a strategic partner to Africa and Liberia in particular.
- Addressing the opening session of the Forum for China-Africa Cooperation in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt President Sirleaf catalogued China's enormous contributions to Liberia.
- She named the expansion of the University of Liberia Fendall Campus, the establishment of an anti-malaria treatment center at the JFK Hospital, the construction of a modern hospital in Tappita, Nimba County, and the construction of primary schools, roads and streets across the country.
- The President also spoke of the investment by China in the Bong Mines US\$2.5 billion China Union mining concession in western Liberia.

Former President Taylor Denies Western Journalists Allegations Against Him

(The Monitor, New Democrat, Public Agenda)

- Former President Charles Taylor Thursday responded to series of international Press reports linking him to the rebel Revolutionary United Front (RUF) war in Sierra Leone.
- He said the reports, like the ones written by Former Washington Post Correspondent, Douglas Farah and the BBC World Affairs Correspondent, Mark Doyle are part of western ploy to destroy him.
- Meanwhile, although former President Taylor had previously referred to his former Vice President Moses Blah as a "liar", he told judges that a huge portion of Mr. Blah's testimony was true.

Local Media – Star Radio (*culled from website today at 09:00 am*)

GAC Ends Validation Awareness Workshop

- The General Auditing Commission (GAC) over the weekend ended its validation awareness workshop in Monrovia.
- The post audit workshop is intended to find out how far government's functionaries have gone in implementing the various GAC recommendations captured in the audit reports.
- The GAC has so far completed and published 25 audit reports and is at the completion point of releasing another batch of audit reports.
- The published audit reports comprised over 500 recommendations.

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Radio Veritas *(News monitored today at 09:45 am)*

NEC Deploys Electoral Materials

- National Elections Commission (NEC) Chairman James Fromayan says electoral materials are being deployed ahead of Tuesday's Montserrado County senatorial By-election.
- Chairman Fromayan said the deployment would be completed today to about 1,000 polling centers in Montserrado County.
- Over 496,000 registered voters would be voting in tomorrow's election.
- Meanwhile, the Montserrado Peace Committee has challenged the NEC to ensure the conduct of a free, fair and transparent senatorial by-election.

(Also reported on Truth FM, Sky F.M., and ELBC)

At Egypt Forum, President Sirleaf Lauds China Support to Liberia

Truth FM *(News monitored today at 10:00 am)*

Police Questions Man's Credibility

- The Liberia National Police has questioned the credibility of a man claiming to be the son of fallen PPCC Chairman Keith Jubah.
- Acting Police Director Gayflor Tarpeh said police preliminary investigation has established that the name Prince Jubah is not a relative of Keith Jubah.
- He noted that a team of investigators have been deployed in Kakata, Margibi County to conduct investigation into the killing.
- Mr. Tarpeh however assured that the police is doing all it can to bring the perpetrators to book.

The Hague Justice Portal

Monday, 9 November 2009

The trial of the former Rwandan Minister of Youth and Sports in the Interim Government has commenced at the ICTR.

On Monday 9 November 2009, the trial of Callixte Nzabonimana commenced at the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR). Nzabonimana is the former Minister of Youth and Sports in the Interim Government of 1994 that took control of the country following the death of President Habyarimana and effectively initiated the Genocide.



Arrested in Tanzania in February 2008, Nzabonimana is charged with six counts of genocide, conspiracy to commit genocide, complicity to genocide, direct and public incitement to commit genocide, as well as crimes against humanity and war crimes.

According to the Indictment of 21 November 2001, Nzabonimana is accused of conspiring with others including Théoneste Bagosora and Félicien Kabuga in a plan to exterminate the Tutsi population, conceived as early as 1990. The Prosecution alleges that as soon as the Interim Government was formed, prominent figures including Nzabonimana executed the plan to massacre the civilian Tutsi population. Nzabonimana is accused of personally travelling to various *préfectures* to monitor the progress of the Genocide.

Following the advance of the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) troops into Rwanda, Nzabonimana fled west into the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Reports from several NGOs suggest that whilst in eastern DRC Nzabonimana became a key collaborator with the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR) Hutu-Power rebel group consisting of many perpetrators of the Genocide, including the remnants of the Interahamwe militia.

Nzabonimana was one of several accused wanted by the ICTR to be subject of a \$US5 million reward offered as part of the United States' "Rewards for Justice" initiative. Two accused originally indicted alongside Nzabonimana and subject to rewards for information leading to their arrest, Augustin Bizimana and Félicien Kabuga, remain at large. Of the other accused originally indicted alongside Nzabonimana, three accused (Edouard Karemera, Mathieu Ndirumpatse and Joseph Nzirorera) are currently on trial, while Andre Rwamakuba was tried separately and acquitted.

The trial is the eighth new case to begin at the ICTR in 2009, and follows the commencement of the trial of Jean-Baptiste Gatete on 20 October 2009.

Hirondelle News Agency

Tuesday, 10 November 2009

Life sentence for former Rwandan Mayor

By International Justice Desk



Kigali, Rwanda

A Gacaca court for Appeal condemned Saturday the former Mayor of the Nyarugenge district of Kigali, Jean Bizimana, to life in jail for complicity in genocide.

He had been acquitted on first hearing earlier this year.

The appeal court found him guilty of planning, supervising and executing genocide, drawing lists of Tutsis to be killed, and distributing weapons, according to sources who attended the trial. He was also convicted for complicity in murders.

The gacaca courts, adapted from a form of Rwandan traditional justice, are tasked with trying suspected perpetrators of the 1994 Rwandan genocide which left some 800,000 people dead, according to the UN. These village courts, whose judges are elected from the community, can hand down sentences up to life imprisonment.

Source: Hirondelle news agency Arusha

The New Times

Wednesday, 11 November 2009

Rwanda: Ocampo to Attend Kigali Prosecutors' Colloquium

Eugene Mutara

Kigali — The Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC) based in The Hague, Netherland, Luis Moreno Ocampo, is expected to grace the 5th International Prosecutors' Colloquium that opens in Kigali today.

This was confirmed yesterday by Alphonse Hitiyaremye, the Deputy Prosecutor General, who said last evening that Ocampo was expected to arrive in Kigali this morning.

When contacted, Prosecutor General Martin Ngoga said that the high level forum of prosecutors from across the world would discuss international justice.

"This is a good forum for prosecutors to discuss the way forward for justice around the world," Ngoga said yesterday.

The three-day colloquium to be hosted in Rwanda was supposed to be held in Tanzania where the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) is headquartered.

But according to a source in the ICTR's Kigali liaison office, it was shifted to Rwanda on the request of the tribunal's Chief Prosecutor Hassan Bubacar Jallow.

The ICTR is a UN-backed court that was established to try key masterminds of the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi.

Organised by ICTR, the colloquium has attracted several high profile international prosecutors including Ocampo's deputy, Fatou Bensouda, and the co-prosecutor of Cambodia's Khmer Rouge Tribunal, Chea Leang and her two deputies.

Other senior prosecutors to attend include Jallow and the acting Prosecutor of the Special Court for Sierra Leone, Joseph Kamara.

The Prosecutor of the International Criminal Tribunal for Former Yugoslavia, United Nations Special Court for Lebanon and US diplomats for war crimes will also attend.

The colloquium which is an annual rotational meeting did not take place last year and the previous year had been held in Cambodia.

With this year's theme "International Criminal Justice; lessons from the past and reflection to the future" the colloquium aims at discussing challenges in justice.

The colloquium is held in countries where the international courts have been set.

Radio Netherlands Worldwide

Wednesday, 11 November 2009

ICC investigation finds Kenyan government a reluctant participant

By Johan van Slooten



Nairobi, Kenya

International Criminal Court Chief Prosecutor Luis Moreno-Ocampo claims he has a strong case to prosecute the key figures behind the 2007 post-election violence in Kenya. However, the Kenyan government is reluctant to assist the court in bringing to justice the individuals responsible for the violence, which led to the deaths of 1500 people.

Kenyan human rights activist Marceau Sivieude told Radio Netherlands Worldwide it's because high ranking politicians were allegedly behind the outbreak of the violence. "That's why the government has so far rejected any investigation".

Hurdle

Ocampo went to Kenya last week to speak to government officials, but he has been unsuccessful in securing an official referral from the government. "We have not reached that hurdle yet", Kenyan Prime Minister Raila Odinga told Kenyan newspaper The Daily Nation.

The disputed December 2007 presidential elections were marred by violence as president Mwai Kibaki was accused of having stolen the vote.

National unity

Fifteen hundred people were killed and 300,000 displaced in only a few weeks. Eventually, a government of national unity in which Mr Kibaki's rival Odinga took the post of Prime Minister, took office in February 2008.

Since then, there have been international calls for an independent investigation by the ICC into the violence. The Kenyan government has suggested a domestic tribunal instead, but that hasn't materialised yet.

Impartiality

"Some politicians are worried about the impartiality of such a national tribunal, and I think they have a point there", says Mr Sivieude, who works for the Kenyan branch of the International Federation for Human Rights. "These politicians are less reluctant towards an international independent body like the ICC, and I think they're right".

Mr Sivieude thinks it's vital that the trial goes ahead. "The state has a prime responsibility to fight the impunity of this violence, but it hasn't done anything so far".

Instability

If the outcome of the ICC trial proves that government officials were indeed (partly) responsible for any crimes during the post-election violence, it could bring further instability in the country, as it could bring an end to the power sharing government.

But Mr Sivieude also sees a bright side to such an outcome: "At the same time, it could also urge the political parties to solve some issues that need to be addressed, like the judicial reforms. It could put pressure on the parties to reach some stability and peace. I think the ICC's intervention will serve as paving the way to political reform rather than bring back instability".

International Justice Tribune

Thursday, 5 November 2009

Sri Lankan general returns without war crimes grilling

By International Justice Desk



Colombo, Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka's top military officer returned home Thursday after he was allowed to complete a US visit without being questioned over alleged war crimes against Tamil civilians.

General Sarath Fonseka arrived at Bandaranaike International Airport and was immediately driven away under tight security, an airport official said.

"He arrived this morning in a commercial flight and was escorted out of the airport by his security convoy," an official said.

The Foreign Ministry here said he ended his US visit without being quizzed by the Department of Homeland Security, which had asked to interview him about alleged war crimes during the final stages of fighting this year.

Fonseka, who holds US permanent residency, had travelled to Oklahoma to visit his two daughters.

Sri Lanka had feared the department would try to force Fonseka to provide evidence against Defence Secretary Gotabhaya Rajapakse, who holds US citizenship, over alleged human rights violations.

The defence secretary is the younger brother of President Mahinda Rajapakse.

Sri Lankan troops in May killed the leaders of the Tamil Tigers, ending one of Asia's longest-running and bloodiest insurgencies, which aimed to create a separate homeland for the island's Tamil minority.

A US State Department report presented to Congress last month charged that both the government and Tamil Tigers committed serious human rights violations in the final months of the conflict.

Fonseka was mentioned in the US report, which was initially dismissed by Colombo as "unsubstantiated," although the Sri Lankan government later promised to have the charges investigated.