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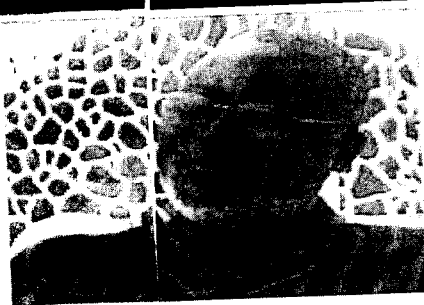
PRESS CLIPPINGS

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Tuesday, October 11, 2005

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SPECIAL FEATURE



SUMMARY

One important issue that arose in Hinga Norman's case in the period March-June 2005 was that of the admissibility of witness testimonies from Moyamba, an area in the South-West of the country. This article charts the history of the problems involved in the consolidated indictment against former government minister Hinga Norman which included reference to Moyamba, and questions the tactics used by the Prosecution in order to get such evidence admitted. It concludes by advocating for a more active approach to be taken by judges to escape the danger of getting lost in technicalities.

BACKGROUND TO THE CONSOLIDATED INDICTMENT

Back in February 2004, the Prosecution served a consolidated indictment referring to crimes committed in Moyamba. This was an area unmentioned in the first indictment against Hinga Norman, and as such should normally have been sought separately as an amendment. Worse still, according to Norman, the Prosecution failed to serve the new indictment on Norman himself, instead only serving it on his defence counsel, contrary to the Special Court Rules. Although no complaints were made for six months about either of these, in September 2004 Counsel for Norman brought a motion complaining about both.

In November 2004 the Trial Chamber Majority found that although there was indeed a procedural error in not serving the consolidated indictment personally, this did not unfairly prejudice Hinga Norman's right to a fair trial because he had been served with the initial indictment. However, Norman's rights were prejudiced by the inclusion of crimes in Moyamba, because these constituted materially different charges, and as such Norman should have been given the opportunity to lead again to those charges. The Majority decision ordered the Prosecution to decide whether to expunge the references to Moyamba, or to seek an amendment. In the meantime, the relevant sections would be stayed. Judge Itoe issued a strongly dissenting opinion complaining that the rules of procedure must be followed more strictly.

THE MOYAMBA CRIME BASE TESTIMONY

Both sides appealed to the Appeals Chamber, and by March 2005 both were still waiting to hear back. The Prosecution, apparently having expected a response by the first week of March from the Appeals Chamber, had prepared witnesses to testify as to the portion then under the stay. This may seem surprising given their full knowledge of the stay. However, counsel for Norman agreed to go ahead with the testimony, so as to avoid any delay caused by the Prosecution having to prepare fresh witness. Nevertheless, as such issues cannot simply be decided by an agreement between counsel, the Trial Chamber had to decide whether or not to hear the testimony.

The rules on admissibility of evidence at the Special

HINGA NORMAN:

Legality Of The Consolidated Indictment & Admissibility Of Evidence From Moyamba

Court are framed very widely, and judges are presumed, correctly or not, to be able to exclude things from their consideration if need be, so that it does not cloud their overall judgement. Accordingly, in the week of 4th March 2005, the Majority of the Trial Chamber decided that they would go ahead and hear the Moyamba crime base testimony, as this was in the interests of judicial economy and did not prejudice Norman's rights. If the Appeals Chamber decided the consolidated indictment was not proper, they would consider excluding the Moyamba evidence from their deliberations. However, the Chamber was split. Judge Itoe asserted that even if it were in the interests of justice and of judicial economy, that it would be premature and violate the rights of the Accused to go ahead and hear the stayed testimony before hearing back from the Appeals Chamber. This seems indeed to have been the correct approach procedurally. Nevertheless, the majority's decision prevailed, and over the following two weeks seven witnesses were heard describing events that took place in Moyamba, who testified as to looting, burning and killing by the Kamajors.

APPEALS CHAMBER DECISION ON CONSOLIDATED INDICTMENT

In May 2005, the Appeals Chamber got back to the parties in an animated decision which reflects Justice Robertson's long-standing concern for speeding up proceedings. It was surprisingly candid in its denunciation of all parties - Defence, Prosecution and even the Trial Chamber were all denigrated in some way. The decision noted that the Prosecution was 'unhelpful and complacent', and slated the Prosecutor for his 'failure to appreciate' the correct layout of an indictment; Judge Itoe's argument for abiding strictly by rules of procedure was labelled as 'hyperbolic', while Defence Counsel for Norman were lambasted for their unnecessarily complicated use of the English language and were told 'we hope not to have to read a gibberish like this again'. The Chamber held that the Trial Chamber's decision as to personal service on Norman was correct, because rule 5 of the Special Court Rules requires that any objection as to compliance with the Rules should be made at the earliest opportunity, and the defence had waited for six months before they made any complaint. In any case, the breach was only technical. The decision concluded that although the Prosecution additions in the consolidated indictments certainly amounted to new material, that the defence would not be prejudiced and the trial would not be delayed by these amendments. Hence the Chamber in some ways jumped the procedural hurdles in an effort to speed the trials along, in that it chose not to require the Prosecution to file leave to amend the consolidated indictment, which could have delayed proceedings by many months. Instead it went straight ahead and granted the amendment itself.

CONCLUSION

In consequence, testimony from Moyamba district can now be included in the Judges' considerations. The Prosecution's tactics are not surprising but are a little disappointing. The Prosecution, in knowledge of the stay, should perhaps not have gone ahead and prepared the Moyamba testimony, because in this way they themselves caused the danger of losing time. In this way they pressured the defence into accepting the court hearing the testimony, as Judge Itoe complained. Indeed, it was in part because of defence cooperation with the Prosecution that the Appeals Chamber decided Norman's rights would not be prejudiced by admission of the testimony. We are left with the feeling that

the Defence was slightly hard done by as a result of their goodwill. Nevertheless, the approach to the rules taken by the Appeal Chamber was sensible and proper, and the national courts should consider the benefits of such judicial activism. Although no-one would advocate for rules of procedure to be flouted, it is important to look to the substance rather than the form: if a rule has clearly been constructed for some purpose other than that for which a lawyer is using it, the bench should indeed, when discretion permits, not let procedural technicalities cause delay and injustice. It has been suggested that one problem currently seen before the national courts is that certain lawyers pick on minor technical irregularities in order to delay cases, sometimes even as a tactic aimed at wearing the other side down. Despite the general reluctance in common Law jurisdictions for judges to intervene and manage cases, at times it would seem to be justified. The SLCMP will do more research in to the approach taken by judges at the national courts, but at this stage we would support the more active approach taken by the Special Court Appeals Chamber on this occasion.

SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND THE CDF: A REPORT

The U.C. Berkeley War Crimes Studies Centre recently issued a Report on sexual violence in the case against the CDF Accused, suggesting that the Special Court judges in Trial Chamber I have effectively silenced many victims. The Trial Chamber has not allowed testimony about sexual violence to be considered in the case of the CDF Accused on the basis that the Prosecution failed to include it in the original indictment. The report strongly criticizes the narrow approach taken to amending indictments, especially because the Special Court has a low threshold for including new offences in an indictment. Moreover, it criticizes the Trial Chamber for denying the admission of such evidence under other counts, despite the fact that the Judges at the Special Court are endowed with a wide discretion by the Rules of Evidence which enable them to hear all relevant evidence. The Report also points out that the narrow approach taken on this issue is inconsistent with other rulings which have allowed for much greater flexibility. The Report argues that the victims should not be denied their right to have crimes prosecuted on the basis of the Prosecution's failings. The SLCMP concurs with the Report writers' opinion that such an approach by the bench is disappointing. While observing that the Prosecution should certainly not have delayed in seeking to amend in the way that it did, the SLCMP considers that the evidence of sexual violence has been heard under other counts. Sexual violence was one of the most prominent features of the conflict in Sierra Leone, and the statutes of the Special Court laid particular emphasis on the investigation and prosecution of such crimes. High hopes were held for the Special Court at its outset, that it would make efforts to remove the special status accorded to crimes of a sexual nature, to bring them into the mainstream of offences. As such, the SLCMP considers, the evidence should have been heard in the same way as other forms of violence.

The SLCMP is especially concerned by these developments because sexual violence against women is still today a widespread problem and a controversial issue in Sierra Leone. It was therefore particularly important that these women's testimony be heard in such a high profile area, rather than being silenced as is so common in this country. The fact that the Special Court has failed to bring such offences into the mainstream, means that the importance of the issue is deserved. The SLCMP will be paying particular attention to sexual violence cases before the national courts. For the full article, please see *Silencing Sexual Violence: Recent Development in the CDF Case at the Special Court for Sierra Leone* by Sara Kendall and Michelle Staggs, 28 June 2005, available on the U.C. Berkeley War Crimes Studies Centre website, at http://ist-socrates.berkeley.edu/warcrime/Silencing_Sexual_Violence.pdf.

Worse still, according to Norman, the Prosecution failed to serve the new indictment on Norman himself, instead only serving it on his defence counsel, contrary to the Special Court Rules

Independent Observer. Tuesday, 11th October 2005.

Special Court Runs Out Of Funds

UNAMSIL reported yesterday.

Already the Court had received US\$10 million in pledges at a ceremony at which the UN Deputy Secretary General Louise Frechette attended. Also in attendance was the Court's Chief Prosecutor, Desmond Da Silva.

Last Friday, Peter Andersen of the Special Court Public Affairs Section disclaimed report by the *Cocorioko* website that the USA and Italy were among the countries that made pledges at the conference.

Special Court for Sierra Leone will run out of cash by next year and unless it is able to find US\$25 million, it will see its operation coming to a close, Radio

For di People. Monday October 10th, 2005.

At The Special Court...

GIBRIL MASSAQUOI TESTIFIES

GIVING EVIDENCE at the UN Special Court, witness TF1-046 who gave his name as Gibril Massaquoi, told the court that he was a teacher during his captivity at "Camp Lion" but later transferred to "Camp Zogoda" by the leader of the RUF, late Cpl Foday

by *SU*
THORONKA

Saybana Sankoh.

Massaquoi said while he was in this camp, he also visited the RUF base called "Kangari Hills" in the Tonkolili District. As an intelligent officer in the RUF, he said he had five men under his supervision.

The witness told the court that he left "Kangari Hills" for "Malal Hill" together with one Alhaji Sawaneh. He said he was instructed by Foday Sankoh to join Zino who was advancing from Rutile to Freetown.

"In 1995, we moved on to a village called Makarankay in the Port Loko District but on our way to Freetown, our troop fell on a soldier-ambush. I was seriously wounded and because of this, I was instructed by Sankoh to go back to Rutile as government troops were advancing towards the area while Dennis Mingo alias Superman took command of the troops advancing to Freetown.

"From 'Kangari Hills', I was taken to Camp Zogoda from where I was later airlifted to the Ivory Coast for medication at a place called Kokodi. While in the Ivory Coast, I did some course in Peace and Conflict. Agnes Deen Jalloh and Philip Palmer were

present at the Peace Talks in Ivory Coast and Foday Sankoh and I traveled to Nigeria in 1977," Massaquoi revealed to the court.

About few meters after they had left the airport, Massaquoi said men in plain clothes who were members of a special security force searched and found four pistols with Foday Sankoh.

"We were taken to a nearby security post but later released through the intervention of a man called Tomy Yekini and taken to a hotel in Lagos. We were later moved from Lagos to Abuja on the instructions of General Sani Abacha.

"Steve Bio and Moinama were sent to Burkina Faso to secure a field radio. After the abortive coup to oust him, Sankoh promoted certain officers within the rank of the RUF. On 25 May 1997, Foday Sankoh received message from Omrie-Golley based in London that a coup had taken place in Freetown. My Golley explained to Sankoh that the coup was spearheaded by one Tamba Gborie, a member of the Sierra Leone Army," Massaquoi told the court.

One Steve Bio, he continued, later telephoned Foday Sankoh to confirm that indeed a coup had taken place in Freetown. He said a Paul Thomas then rang Sankoh asking his consent for the RUF to join forces with the Army, and to which he said Sankoh readily accepted.

Massaquoi said Johnny Paul Koroma also tele-

phoned the late RUF leader "in morning and evening" to seal the marriage between the RUF and the AFRC. He said Johnny Paul Koroma recorded the voice of Foday Sankoh, which was played on both the field radio for the rebels and our national radio.

A recorded cassette was played in court, and which the witness identified as the one that was played on national radio in May 1997. He said he left Abuja for Freetown towards the end of July 1997 and that he traveled through Ivory Coast, Guinea and finally arrived in Freetown in October of the same year.

Witness Massaquoi said he was given letters by Foday Sankoh to be distributed to Johnny Paul Koroma, Sam Bockarie (Maskita) and Daniel G Kallon (adviser to Sankoh). Three letters, he said, were in care of one Ibrahim Bah for the Vice President of Burkina Faso and the Libyan Ambassador to Burkina Faso. These letters, he added, were all geared towards seeking recognition for the regime in Freetown at the same time to expedite the transfer of arms and ammunition procured from Libya but transited in Burkina Faso to the RUF in Sierra Leone.

He said when he finally arrived in Freetown, he met with "Superman" who led him to Johnny Paul

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Special Court for Sierra Leone : Prosecution

Rape and terror under the military

Article length : 0.8 page

Kelvin Lewis, Freetown
09 Mai 2005

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In April, the trial of three ex-members of the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) - the ousted military junta that ruled Sierra Leone in 1997-1998 and returned to invade Freetown in 1999 - opened at the new chamber of the Special Court for Sierra Leone. The three recently arrived judges were faced with a number of new challenges in court, including the decision by all three defence counsel to stop defending their clients in protest at the suspension of one of their investigators (see inset).

During the hearings, several witnesses said that they had been victims of sexual abuse. One woman told the court that she had been captured in Freetown when the capital was invaded by rebels from the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) and rebel ARFC soldiers on 6 January 1999. She was raped and forced...

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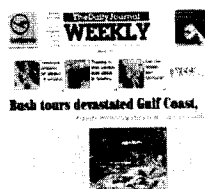
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The non-trial of Charles Taylor

Though exiled two years ago, Liberia's former President Charles Taylor still looms large in the country's first elections since the end of its brutal civil war. But, despite the advent of true democratic elections, Liberia and all of West Africa will be trapped in an unending cycle of violence unless Taylor is put in the dock for war crimes.

The presidential poll to be held today could help Liberia determine a new course. But Taylor has wielded a heavy hand in the campaign, his impunity making a mockery of international justice. Nigeria, which is giving Taylor sanctuary, is obliged to turn him over to the Special Court for Sierra Leone, created by the United Nations in 2003 to prosecute those responsible for the bloodletting in West Africa's in the 1990s. Indeed, Nigeria now holds the key to peace in the region.

But President Olosugun Obasanjo of Nigeria has, so far, turned a deaf ear to calls to surrender Taylor. Instead, Taylor is housed in a villa on the sandy beaches of Calabar on Nigeria's southeastern coast, as key international players – including France, the United Kingdom, and South Africa – remain silent.

The list of Taylor's crimes is long, and the evidence against him is overwhelming. As a rebel leader, he waged an eight-year uprising against Samuel Doe in Liberia – a conflict that left 300,000 people dead and displaced more than a million others in a population of just 3.3 million. As president, he launched a rebellion in 1991 against Sierra Leone's government with the forces of Foday Sankor, using machetes to mutilate women and children.

In 2000, Taylor used those same thugs to attack Guinea, in an assault that left hundreds dead and destroyed the city of Guekedou. In 2003, while Taylor was under rebel attack, he organized and supported an incursion into Côte d'Ivoire. Taylor's warmongering also paved the way for military coups in Sierra Leone and The Gambia. The women and children whose limbs Taylor ordered to be hacked off bear testimony to his brutality, and the countries left in turmoil make clear that there can be no durable peace in West Africa unless the man who unleashed these conflicts is stopped. Even if there were instant peace, the region will pay the price for Taylor's bloodlust for decades to come. So will the world.

Tiawan Saye Gongloe is a former fellow at the Carr Center for Human Rights Policy at Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government.


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Weah still fears taylor

By Sun News

Monday, October 10, 2005

Ex-Liberia president, Charles Taylor instils fear in his homeland, more than two years after fleeing Liberia into exile to end a conflict that left 250,000 dead. Candidates at elections for the job he vacated are unwilling even to say if the former warlord should face justice.



•Yakubu Aiyegbeni

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"I cannot turn Charles Taylor over because I have not accused Charles Taylor, my country has not accused Charles Taylor," leading candidate George Weah told Reuters.

Weah, a former football star, is one of the front-runners in the presidential race and is seen as untainted by links with former warlords because of his recent involvement in politics.

Taylor played a key role in Liberia's conflict, starting the war in 1989 and holding territory as a rebel leader before being elected president in 1997 and fighting another rebellion against his rule.

But he is also seen as the mastermind behind a web of other conflicts in West Africa and is wanted by a U.N.-backed court in Sierra Leone for his role in a brutal conflict there. He escaped prosecution by accepting an offer of exile from Nigeria in 2003 and his departure from power paved the way for an end to the war in his homeland.

Yet, as campaigning in Liberia enters its final phase ahead of tomorrow's presidential and parliamentary polls Taylor's name is conspicuously absent from public debate. From former allies to arch rivals, nobody wants to commit to bringing him to justice, and some candidates refused to speak on the record when referring to him.

"Taylor continues to command enormous resources. If we become

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one of his arch-enemies we put ourselves in danger. He is a ruthless man," said one of the 22 presidential hopefuls, asking not to be named.

Taylor, who stepped down as rebel forces entered the capital Monrovia, left with the words: "God willing, I will be back". But pressure on him has been building.

Sierra Leone's U.N.-backed war crimes court has indicted him for crimes against humanity, accusing him of supporting rebels there notorious for chopping off the limbs of civilians.

The United States this week renewed its plea to the U.N. Security Council to authorise peacekeepers to arrest Taylor and turn him over to the Sierra Leone tribunal if he returns home.

Despite this the leader of Liberia's main rebel group LURD, whose forces effectively drove Taylor from power, declined to say if his former arch-enemy should stand trial.

"Charles Taylor has his problem with the international community, not with me," said LURD chairman Sekou Conneh, dressed in a pin-striped suit and wearing a large gold ring.

Taylor left Liberia with assets of \$150-210 million built up after plundering its diamonds and timber, rights groups say, a fortune in a region where many survive on less than \$1 a day.

Nigeria says it will only turn Taylor over if asked by an elected Liberian government and would not transfer him to a third country.

A call for extradition looks unlikely to come from Liberia.

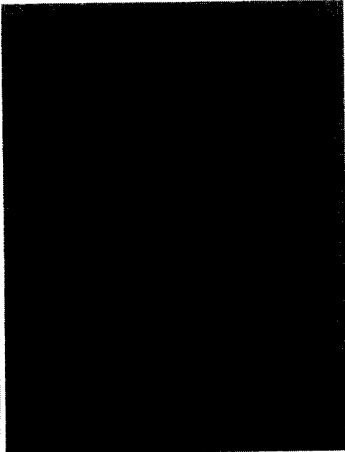
"Charles Taylor's persona and charisma has permeated this country for so long. Any attempt to move him (from Nigeria) would destabilise a very fragile process," said one vice-presidential candidate who asked not to be named.

With barely days away to the holding of elections, an eight-man delegation from the United States of America (USA) branch of the Congress for Democratic Change (CDC) has arrived in Monrovia primarily to beef up and consolidate efforts already put in place by other partisans to give the party the needed victory.

In an interview with reporters upon arrival recently, the head of the CDC-USA delegation, C. Harry Gbesi, along with the branch Assistant Secretary, Taiyee Nelson Quenneh said: "the million-man march" which is slated for the weekend is intended to create awareness and buttress the efforts of CDC's supporters and partisans who continue to demonstrate their loyalty and commitment.

The two officials indicated that the "one-million-march" which is expected to be conducted peacefully would be led by the Standard-bearer of the party, Amb. George Weah.

He said it will begin from the ELWA Junction and end at the party's headquarters in Sinkor at which time Amb. Weah would deliver a special statement.



According to him, the October 11 elections were very crucial to all Liberians and for the country's political rebirth. As such, he said to ensure a win for the CDC they were in the country to consolidate efforts which would bring about the kind of political leadership Liberians have long been yearning for over decades.

Meanwhile, the wife of the CDC standard bearer, Madam Clara Weah has arrived in Liberia.

Other members of the CDC- USA delegation include, Solomon Hedd- Williams, Bertraud Kane, Mr. Varfley Tuley, Mr. Walter Smith and Miatta Smith.

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A Warlord's Exile Divides His Hosts

Liberian Ex-President Charles Taylor Doing Business as Usual in Nigeria

By Craig Timberg
Washington Post Foreign Service
Sunday, October 9, 2005; A22

CALABAR, Nigeria -- From all appearances, Charles Taylor's life in this tourist town in southeastern Nigeria has been an extended holiday. The exiled Liberian president sleeps in a rambling, red-roofed mansion, travels in a pair of Land Rovers with tinted-glass windows and buys food and electronic gadgetry in such abundance that residents complain he has caused inflation.

But international war crimes prosecutors, human rights groups and U.S. officials say that in the more than two years since he resigned -- vowing, "God willing, I will be back" -- Taylor has done anything but sit back and relax.

They describe him as a restless leader who has never stopped interfering in the affairs of Liberia's neighbors, never stopped profiting from illicit business relationships and, thanks to his vast wealth and easy access to cell phones, never stopped dominating politics in his home country 1,100 miles away.

There may be no closer observer than Taylor of Tuesday's historic elections in Liberia, the first since he was forced into exile in August 2003. The former warlord is bankrolling several candidates, according to reports by international investigators, and the result could strengthen his distant but tenacious grip on power -- or entrench a new leader demanding that Taylor be returned to face justice.

Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo has resisted international calls for Taylor's arrest but said he would honor a request for his return by a legitimately elected Liberian government. Taylor faces 17 counts of crimes against humanity in neighboring Sierra Leone.

"It's within the ability of the Liberian people to seize their destiny," said Rep. Ed Royce (R-Calif.), a former chairman of the House subcommittee on Africa, speaking by phone from Fullerton, Calif. "Unless he's brought to the bar of justice, eventually all of West Africa will be in jeopardy. And Nigeria won't be immune."

The international intrigue surrounding Taylor has brought some unease to Calabar, a city whose nearby waterfalls, mountains and gorilla communities attract many visitors, and to Nigeria's elected government.

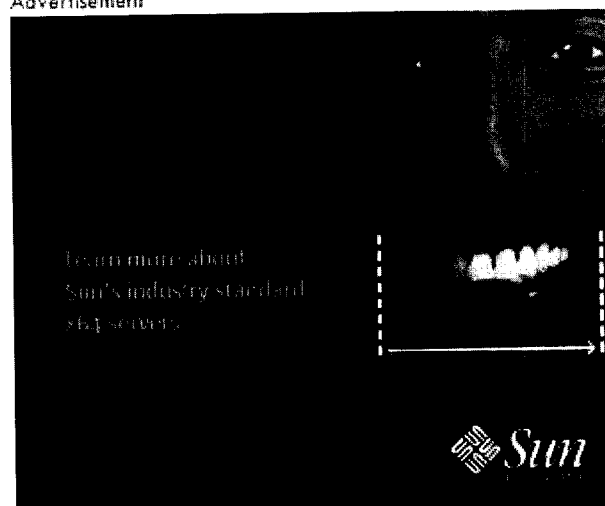
Obasanjo and other officials said Taylor had stayed put and kept to himself. He lives in a heavily guarded guesthouse amid a complex of government buildings overlooking the wide, brown Calabar River. Obasanjo said he had seen no credible evidence that Taylor had broken his promise to stay out of the region's political affairs.

Calabar's mayor, Wiley Etim Okokon, said in an interview that Taylor had been nothing but a good, quiet guest.

"I've not seen him," Okokon said. "No trouble."

But others in Calabar said they often saw Taylor and heard about his activities. He is rumored to have become involved in business affairs, including the purchase of at least two residential properties. And there

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are persistent whispers that Taylor put his Nigerian military guards on his payroll so he could come and go, sometimes by plane, as he pleases.

"Calabar is generally a very hospitable environment," said Offiong E. Offiong, a chemistry professor at the University of Calabar. But, he added, residents "who have been following events in Liberia and other parts of the world . . . are not so comfortable. Let him go back to Liberia and face justice."

Taylor's free-spending habits have been fueled by accounts that were worth as much as \$210 million when he left Liberia, according to the nonprofit Coalition for International Justice, based in Washington.

Yet Taylor's largess has also won him sympathy here.

Although Calabar is an old city and a former colonial capital, it has struggled as government operations have moved to Lagos and Abuja, the capital. Calabar also lacks the enormous oil wealth that has given Port Harcourt, a much larger city several hours' drive west, the deceptive lure of easy money.

Bassey Ekpo Bassey IV, a newspaper publisher who is also a traditional ruler in Calabar, said Taylor had been welcomed by many here.

"His family is quite evident," Bassey said. "They obviously have some money to spend, and they are impacting the economy of the place."

But few said they expected Taylor, 57, to spend the rest of his days in Calabar.

He has made clear his plans to return to power in Liberia. And if he doesn't return by choice, pressure is growing on Obasanjo to turn him over to the U.N.-backed war-crimes court in Sierra Leone. Rebels supported by Taylor were notorious for hacking off the hands and feet of civilians in that neighboring country during an especially vicious war.

The 17-count indictment in Sierra Leone, charging Taylor with mass murder, rape and the extensive use of child soldiers, was unsealed in June 2003, two months before he resigned from the presidency under pressure and moved to Calabar. Since then, investigators at the court have continued to build a dossier on Taylor that includes allegations that he remains heavily involved in Liberian politics -- in violation of his asylum conditions in Nigeria -- and has also meddled in the politics of neighboring countries.

Alan White, the court's former chief investigator, said Taylor was behind two attempts this year to assassinate his rival, Guinea's President Lansana Conte, and has backed rebels in Ivory Coast against another rival, President Laurent Gbagbo.

"Obasanjo has absolutely no control over this guy," said White, a former Defense Department official, speaking by phone from Washington. White said Taylor was still treated "like a head of state down there."

That, at least, is something people here can see for themselves, whatever they think of Taylor.

"He lives like a Big Man," said Charles Eko, a human rights activist in Calabar, using a term for autocratic African leaders. "He's not living like a man who's on asylum."

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Former Liberian leader still calling shots

Calabar, Nigeria | October 10, 2005 12:01:13 AM IST

The ousted former leader of Liberia, Charles Taylor, is living in a small town in Nigeria and reportedly still involved in African politics.

In August 2003, Taylor was forced from power in Liberia, fleeing to Calabar, Nigeria, where he was granted asylum with a caveat that he stay out of politics.

The Washington Post reports Taylor bankrolled several candidates in Tuesday's election in Liberia, and continues to increase his wealth through illegal business dealings.

Taylor is also accused of being involved in the affairs of other countries in western Africa.

Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo said he would not hand Taylor over to anyone except for a democratically elected Liberian government.

Sierra Leone alone is charging Taylor with 17 counts of crimes against humanity.

(UPI)



Historic vote begins in Liberia

Voters in the West African state of Liberia are queueing to cast their ballots in historic elections to choose a president and parliament.

Long lines of voters formed before sunrise and turnout is set to be huge.

More than 20 candidates are standing for president, including ex-football star George Weah and former United Nations official Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf.

Warring factions made peace two years ago and UN forces have helped Liberia return to a semblance of normality.

Speaking from a polling station in the capital, Monrovia, the BBC News Website's Joseph Winter says the start of voting was delayed, as ballot papers only arrived at 0810 local time (0910 GMT) - some 10 minutes after the polls should have opened.

Carnival

The elections will mark a new page in the country's brutal history, the BBC's world affairs correspondent, Mark Doyle, reports from Liberia.

There has been an almost carnival mood about campaigning in the past few days, he adds.

Different people are feeling different things; some are celebrating, others worried, afraid or confused
Massa Soni, Liberian villager

After two decades of on-off war, the people of Liberia have been relaxing in public and enjoying themselves freely at exuberant election rallies.

"We need a president who can provide for our needs," civil servant Joseph Parhmilnee, 42, told the Associated Press news agency before casting his vote.

"Look around: we have no electrical current, no clean drinking water, no health clinics. We need an uncorrupt president and no more war. We need development: airports, seaports, technology."

High stakes

The election logistics pose a challenge to Liberia, a country with only 200km (120 miles) of paved road.

LIBERIA ELECTIONS

22 presidential candidates
94 seats in two-tier parliament
1.3m registered to vote

Election officials have hired porters to deliver ballot boxes to the more than 3,000 polling places, and then return them.

Many experienced Liberian politicians are among the 20 other candidates standing.

Much of the credit for the peaceful campaigning goes to the UN, which has a big peacekeeping force in Liberia.

The stakes in the election are high.

For years Liberia was the epicentre of a war which spread across West Africa, our correspondent notes.

Cross-border conflict infected the neighbouring states of Sierra Leone, Guinea and Ivory Coast.

The fighting caused several million people to become destitute refugees.

If Liberia is to become a normal, peaceful country again, it will have to have transparent elections.

Then, just as importantly, the losers in the poll will have to accept the results, our correspondent says.

Story from BBC NEWS:
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/africa/4329038.stm>

Published: 2005/10/11 08:28:22 GMT

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SIERRA LEONE EVENING PRESS REVIEW

Monday 10 October 2005

HUMAN RIGHTS

President Alhaji Ahmad Tejan Kabbah has expressed willingness to consider repealing or reviewing the Criminal Libel Act of 1961. The Chairman of the Independent Media Commission (IMC), Mrs. Bernadette Cole told journalists last week that the President has written a letter to the commission in which he called for the rescinding of the criminal libel law.

In another development, Amnesty International (AI), has urged government to eradicate the death penalty from the country's law books as it was recommended by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

Workers of the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Forestry have resolved to embark on a nationwide strike this week if government does not pay their salary arrears amounting to Le 314,267,598. The strike comes at a time when the World Food Day will be celebrated on 17 October 2005.

HEALTH ISSUE

According to a report from the World Health Organization (WHO), to mark World Mental Health Day today, about 500,000 Sierra Leoneans need psychiatric care which was caused by the civil war, economic deprivation, migration and population explosion. The release acknowledged that mental health was an inseparable part of a number of medical problems, hence effective treatment was essential.

SPECIAL COURT

Prosecution Witness TF-046 Gibril Massaquoi, former Spokesman of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) has testified against indictees of the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) that Johnny Paul Koroma gave them the sum of US \$40,000 to purchase more arms in Burkina Fasso when the latter was Chairman of the AFRC. In his testimony, the witness said that few days after the May 25, 1997 coup d'etat, he arrived in Freetown from Burkina Fasso, and was taken to Johnny Paul Koroma at his residence where he gave them the money and a letter through General Ibrahim Bah to deliver to President Blaise Campoire in order to hand over to them RUF arms that were stored in Burkina Fasso.