

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



**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, 12 August 2009

Press clips are produced Monday through Friday.  
Any omission, comment or suggestion, please contact  
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### Local News

“I Have No Secrete Accounts” - Taylor / <i>Awoko</i>	Page 3
The Charles Taylor Trial Continues / <i>The Torchlight</i>	Page 4
Taylor Denies Control Over Liberian Fighter / <i>Concord Times</i>	Page 5
Nazi War Criminal Jailed for Life / <i>Concord Times</i>	Page 6

### International News

Charles Taylor Expelled RUF Collaborators From Liberia... / <i>Charlestaylortrial.org</i>	Pages 7-8
Report From The Hague / <i>BBC World Service Trust</i>	Pages 9-11
UNMIL Public Information Office Media Summary / <i>UNMIL</i>	Pages 12-14
TRC Report Hits International Hurdle / <i>The Analyst</i>	Pages 15-16
Misjudgement / <i>The Boston Globe</i>	Pages 17-18
Khmer Rouge Official Asks for Harsh Punishment / <i>Associated Press</i>	Pages 19-20
Kenya Drops Plans to Put Suspects of Mass Killing on Trial / <i>Frost Illustrated</i>	Page 21
Geneva Conventions 'Still Relevant but Better Compliance Needed' / <i>CNN</i>	Pages 22-24
Chained Together By a Dark History / <i>The National</i>	Pages 25-28

Awoko

Wednesday, 12 August 2009

# “I Have No Secret Bank

Accounts” – *Taylor*

Charles Taylor has denied stashing away huge amounts of money in secret bank accounts around the world allegedly earned through illicit diamond trading with Sierra Leonean rebels during the country’s 11-year conflict. He challenged his accusers to prove that any such accounts existed.

The denial comes on the heels of allegations by the Special Court for Sierra Leone’s prosecution team, which accused Taylor of having benefited from diamonds mined by Sierra Leonean rebels, the Revolutionary United Front (RUF).

A prosecutor has been working with the UN Sanctions Committee to recover any monies and assets, if at all they exist.

“I challenge the prosecutor to bring any evidence of a bank account that I have. They know it’s a lie but they keep repeating it,” Taylor said during his testimony at the Special Court for Sierra Leone on Monday.

## The Charles Taylor Trial Continues

August 10, 2009

*The Revolutionary United Front, RUF rebels and their allies, the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council, AFRC invaded the Sierra Leonean capital, Freetown on January 6, 1999, and killed hundreds of civilians, or amputated them. The international community led by the United States and Great Britain pointed accusing fingers at Indicted Former Liberian President, Charles Taylor. Well, Mr Taylor has said at his trial that the two nations have no evidence, and that his trial is a punishment. Mr Taylor agreed with the UN in 1999 that Liberia was a source of mercenaries. John Kollie transcribes The Hague Taylor Trial reports...*

After the infamous January 6 invasion of Freetown, the United States and Great Britain accused Charles Taylor of being the mastermind behind the invasion.

According to an article of the Washington Post Newspaper written in 1999, the two world powers accused Mr Taylor of supplying arms and fighting forces to the rebels. Great Britain and the United States also

alleged that Mr Taylor provided safe havens for the rebels in Liberia.

Mr Taylor said the Americans and British allegations were based on rumours and disinformation. The accused former Liberian Leader believes his trial is a punishment for standing up against the demands of the two Western Countries.

Mr Taylor on Monday confirmed a January 30, 1999 UN report that Liberia was a source of mercenaries at the end of the civil war. He told the court Liberia had a total of 60-thousand ex-combatants which his presidency could not control. He however clarified that the five to six thousand Liberian combatants that fought in Sierra Leone were not part of the 60-thousand combatants produced by the Liberian civil war.

The former Liberian leader continues his war crimes trial before the UN backed Special Court for Sierra Leone sitting at the International Criminal Court in the Netherlands capital, The Hague.

Concord Times  
Wednesday, 12 August 2009

## Taylor denies control over Liberian fighters in Salone ...Blames West for misinformation

Charles Taylor did not have any control or command over Liberians who traveled to Sierra Leone during its 11-year civil war and joined fighting forces there, he reconfirmed to judges today at his trial in The Hague.

Many former combatants from Liberia's own conflict, who had migrated to Sierra Leone after Mr. Taylor came to power in Liberia in 1997, joined either the group of Liberians known as the Special Task Force a group aiding the Sierra Leonean army while some joined the Sierra Leonean rebel group, the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), he said. Some, Mr. Taylor said, became prey for mercenaries due to their lack of food or jobs.

Mr. Taylor said that he, however, had no control or command over these fighters who had migrated to Sierra Leone and become part of fighting forces there, and could not have punished them for any crimes committed in Sierra Leone.

"How do you punish someone when he is not under your control?" Mr. Taylor asked the court. "You can only be responsible for people under your direct command."

"Nobody can say that Taylor ordered me to do X, Y or Z. I did not have contact with them and there was no control over them. I did not help them in anyway," Mr. Taylor told the judges.

Asked by his defense counsel Courtenay Griffiths what he did as

newly elected president of Liberia to control such situation, Mr. Taylor said that the "only thing I could have done was to get international support to build schools and train people or engage them in projects to become productive citizens." He said this was not possible because he did not have any international support.

Mr. Taylor has been accused of supporting RUF rebels in Sierra Leone by supplying them with arms and ammunition in exchange for Sierra Leone's diamonds. The prosecution further alleges that in addition to sending Liberian fighters to join the rebels forces in Sierra Leone, he also provided safe haven for RUF rebels in Liberia. Mr. Taylor has denied the allegations.

In his testimony today, Mr. Taylor accused the United States and Great Britain of making these allegations against him based on rumors and misinformation.

Mr. Taylor referenced a 1999 Washington Post publication after the rebel attacks on Sierra Leone's capital Freetown in January 1999. In the news article, Mr. Taylor said he was accused by the United States and Great Britain of supplying arms and fighters to rebel forces in Sierra Leone. Mr. Taylor said that his present trial, based on these allegations, is a form of punishment because he stood against the demands of these two countries.

"Firestone Rubber Company had been operating in Liberia since 1925.



That company in 1925 did an agreement with the Liberian government for 99 years, 99 months, 99 weeks, 99 days, 99 hours, 99 minutes and 99 seconds. I come to office and I say that this is 99 set of nonsense and we must renegotiate this agreement, and that in fact Firestone had really done nothing for Liberia." Mr. Taylor said. This, he said did not go down well with the two great powers, the United States and Great Britain and they decided to "go after him".

Mr. Taylor also confirmed a January 1999 United Nations report that Liberia had become a source for mercenaries. He explained that after the conflict in Liberia, the country had about 60,000 combatants from different fighting

factions and he did not have control over all of them.

"The 60,000 figure we use here, these were not all NPFL [Taylor's National Patriotic Front of Liberia rebel group]. These are the whole combatants from all sides. So to a great extent, we don't have control over a large amount of these people," he said.

Mr. Taylor told the court that more needs to be done to solve the problems of conflicts in the West African sub-region than putting him to trial.

"The trials in Sierra Leone or the trial of Taylor will not end the problems in that region. They can only be resolved if we go to the root causes of these conflicts," he said.

Mr. Taylor's testimony continues.

## Nazi war criminal jailed for life



*Josef Scheungraber in court in Munich*

A former German infantry commander has been jailed for life for his role in the killing of 14 civilians in an Italian village during World War II.

A Munich state court found 90-year-old Josef Scheungraber guilty of ordering the killings, in what was one of the last Nazi crimes trials in Germany.

Scheungraber had previously been sentenced in absentia by an Italian military court to life in prison.

The killings took place in Falzano di Cortona, in Tuscany, on 26 June 1944.

Scheungraber had always denied the

charges, saying he handed the victims to the military police and did not know what happened to them.

His legal team had called for his acquittal due to contradictions in the testimony of witnesses 65 years after the events.

Dressed in a traditional Bavarian jacket, Scheungraber appeared in good health as his sentence was handed down.

The court found that as a 25-year-old Wehrmacht lieutenant, he had ordered the brutal killings in revenge for an attack by Italian partisans that left two German soldiers dead.

Although he was charged with 14 counts

of murder and one of attempted murder, Scheungraber was actually convicted of 10 murders due to a lack of evidence.

German troops shot dead a 74-year-old woman and three men in the street before forcing 11 others into a farmhouse which they then blew up.

Only the youngest - a 15-year-old boy named Gino Massetti - survived, and he gave evidence during the trial in Munich.

Scheungraber, the former commander of a company of engineers, had lived for decades as a free man, and served on the town council in Ottobrunn, outside Munich.

He ran a furniture shop, attended German veterans' marches and recently received an award for municipal service.

Although he was sentenced to life in prison for the Tuscany killings by an Italian military tribunal in La Spezia in September 2006, Scheungraber did not attend that trial as Germany generally does not extradite its citizens without their consent.

## Charlestaylortrial.org (The Hague)

Tuesday, 11 August 2009

### **Liberia: Charles Taylor Expelled RUF Collaborators From Liberia, Gives A Chronology Of Steps He Took To Bring Peace To Sierra Leone**

Alpha Sesay

Charles Taylor today told Special Court for Sierra Leone judges that when he became president of Liberia, he arrested and expelled a British citizen and a Sierra Leonean diplomat who were secretly collaborated with rebel forces in Sierra Leone. Mr. Taylor also gave a chronology of steps that he took as president of Liberia to bring the conflict to Sierra Leone to a peaceful conclusion.

Mr. Taylor told the court that the British citizen and Sierra Leonean diplomat who collaborated with Revolutionary United Front (RUF) rebels in Sierra Leone did so through a company operating in Monrovia called Red Deer International. According to Mr. Taylor, when security forces raided the premises of the Red Deer International company, they discovered several items which, intelligence sources suggested, were for use by RUF rebels.

"We saw some suits of uniform, military uniform, the police seized hand-held walkie talkies, the Government of Sierra Leone was fully briefed about what was going on," Mr. Taylor said.

Mr. Taylor said the arrested persons were in touch with certain individuals who were connected to the RUF.

Mr. Taylor has been accused of providing support to RUF rebels in Sierra Leone through the supply of arms and ammunition. The prosecution has also alleged that he helped RUF rebels plan attacks on civilian populations in Sierra Leone. Mr. Taylor has denied these allegations.

In his testimony today, Mr. Taylor went through a list of steps he took to assure Sierra Leone and the international community that he was not supporting RUF rebels and that he wanted a peaceful end to the conflict in Sierra Leone.

On May 5 1998, Mr. Taylor said he wrote a letter to the United Nations Secretary General denying allegations by the Nigerian Ministry of Defense that he was involved in the conflict in Sierra Leone.

On June 24 1998, Mr. Taylor sent a delegation to meet with former Sierra Leonean president Ahmed Tejan Kabbah, a step Mr. Taylor called a "diplomatic move to assure your neighbor that these are just false allegations and there is no need to worry."

President Tejan Kabbah also attended Liberia's independence celebrations in Monrovia on July 26, 1998. Mr. Taylor said this move by President Kabbah proved that there was no animosity between the two leaders.

"If this conflict was so serious, Kabbah would not have visited me. Presidents at war with each other will not pay visits," Mr. Taylor said.

On December 28 1998, Mr. Taylor said he issued a statement asking for the establishment of a commission of inquiry to look into allegations of Liberian involvement in the conflict in Sierra Leone and he asked the government of Sierra Leone to be part of a joint patrol to monitor the Sierra Leone-Liberian border.

On January 6 1999, Mr. Taylor sent a letter to the United Nations Security Council saying that Liberia wanted normalcy in its relationship with Sierra Leone and asking for the deployment of United Nations personnel along the border between the two countries.

When the January 1999 rebel invasion of Sierra Leone's capital Freetown took place, Mr. Taylor declared a unilateral ceasefire on behalf of the RUF rebels. The prosecution has alleged that Mr. Taylor helped the RUF rebels to plan the January 1999 invasion of Freetown. Mr. Taylor has denied these allegations.

Asked by his defense counsel Courtenay Griffiths why he took the lead to declare a ceasefire on behalf of the RUF in January 1999, Mr. Taylor said that "Liberia, Cote D'Ivoire and Ghana are charged with the responsibility of engaging the RUF and the junta. I am the point guard, so to speak, on this effort, the contacts are being made by me. Why? This time Sam Bockarie has already been to Liberia for the first time, the second time, and has come through the third time. So it is obvious that these contacts are being made and the information shared with my colleagues."

Mr. Taylor said he was actively involved in efforts to get President Tejan Kabbah and RUF leader Foday Sankoh to the negotiating table which ended with the signing of a peace agreement between the Government of Sierra Leone and the RUF in the Togolese capital, Lome, in June 1999.

Mr. Taylor's testimony continues tomorrow.



# BBC World Service Trust

Tuesday, 11 August 2009

## NEWS ITEM

11/8/09

At the Taylor trial in The Hague, the former Liberian president talked about the action his administration took to help restore peace to war-torn Sierra Leone. He said he flung RUF collaborators out from Monrovia with the sole aim to talk to the rebels to accept a cease-fire agreement. Adolphus Williams has more on this.

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WILLIAMS: The former Liberian president said his administration arrested and threw out of Liberia a British National and a Sierra Leonean Diplomat in February 1999 for collaborating with the RUF. He said the two men secretly dealt with the RUF through a company called Red Deer International, which operated in Monrovia.

Mr. Taylor said state security found several items when they raided the Red Deer Company offices in Monrovia.

TAYLOR: We saw military uniforms, the The police seized I think hand-held walkie-talkies...the Government of Sierra Leone was fully briefed about what was going on. In fact, we accused the British national of working for I think MI5 or 6 because we could not understand how they were operating this so-called Red Deer company in such secrecy but were in touch with a few Sierra Leonean that were connected with the RUF.

WILLIAMS: He said, In January 1999, the RUF rebels announced a unilateral cease-fire after being defeated in Freetown by the West African Peacekeeping Force, ECOMOG. He said he made the announcement himself during his presidency.

Mr. Taylor explained why Liberia took the lead to make an announcement for the Sierra Leone rebels. TAYLOR: Liberia, Cote d'Ivoire, and Ghana are charged with the responsibility of engaging the RUF and the junta. I am the point guard, so to speak, on this effort. Contacts are being made by me. Why? At this time Sam Bockarie has already been to Liberia...the third time. So it is obvious that these contacts with are being made and the information shared with my colleagues.

WILLIAMS: After ECOMOG had chased the RUF and the Junta from Freetown, the United Nations reported a massive destruction of lives and properties. The report stated up to 5000 people were killed. 2000 children went missing and eventually ended up in the rebel army.

Answering to his lawyer, Courtenay Griffiths, Mr. Taylor explained about his knowledge of the 1999 Freetown invasion.

TAYLOR: I had no control over those who did this and could not have ordered them. I had no contact. I had no control. I had no association with them to have ordered such, or encouraged such. None whatsoever.

Monday, 10 August 10, 2009

John Kollie

*The Revolutionary United Front, RUF rebels and their allies, the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council, AFRC invaded the Sierra Leonean capital, Freetown on January 6, 1999, and killed hundreds of civilians, or amputated them. The international community led by the United States and Great Britain pointed accusing fingers at Indicted Former Liberian President, Charles Taylor. Well, Mr. Taylor has said at his trial that the two nations have no evidence, and that his trial is a punishment. Mr. Taylor agreed with the UN in 1999 that Liberia was a source of mercenaries. John Kollie transcribes The Hague Taylor Trial reports...*

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Mr. Taylor said the Americans and British allegations were based on rumours and disinformation. The accused Former Liberian Leader believes his trial is a punishment for standing up against the demands of the two Western Countries.

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He however clarified that the five to six thousand Liberian combatants that fought in Sierra Leone were not part of the 60-thousand combatants produced by the Liberian civil war. The former Liberian leader continues his war crimes trial before the UN backed Special Court for Sierra Leone sitting at the International Criminal Court in the Netherlands capital, The Hauge.

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Thursday, 6 August 2009

John Kollie

*On Tuesday, Charles Taylor's Lead Lawyer, Courtenay Griffiths was suddenly hit by an illness which kept him away from court for a day. Defence Lawyer, Morris Anyah termed Mr. Griffiths's illness as 'food poisoning.' Food poisoning as mentioned must have been misreported or misconstrued in Monrovia to mean that somebody had tried to kill Mr. Griffiths so on Thursday, Lead Defence Lawyer Courtney Griffiths took up time to talk about his illness. For the Accused Former Liberian President Charles Taylor he was out disprove allegations that his forces were in Sierra Leone he instead accused the West African Peace Keeping Force ECOMOG recruiting in 1998 a huge number of Liberian combatants that fought in Sierra Leone. John Kollie transcribes for the BBC World Service Trust reports from The Hague...*

First in Court on Thursday Charles Taylor's Lead Defence Lawyer sought to disprove rumour circulating in the Monrovia, the Liberian Capital that somebody tried to kill him through poison on Tuesday. Courtenay Griffiths said he was responsible for his own illness.

For Mr. Taylor he alleged that the West African Peace Keeping Force recruited over 1000 Liberian Combatants to fight in Sierra Leone.

The Former Liberian Chief Executive told the court that ECOMOG used two locations in Liberia for the recruitment and transportation Liberian Combatants to fight in Sierra Leone.

Mr. Taylor further accused ECOMOG of conspiring with the United States Embassy in Monrovia to assist former ethnic Krahn rebel faction, ULIMO-J leader, Roosevelt Johnson during the Camp Johnson Road fighting.

The Former Liberian Leader said ECOMOG's withdrawal from the vicinity of the Camp Johnson Road fighting had an evil intent for his government. But the ECOMOG High Command in a press release read in court Thursday denied airlifting Liberian Combatants to Sierra Leone.

ECOMOG said it rather airlifted twelve Sierra Leonean Refugees with the approval of the Taylor government. The African Peacekeeping Force also refuted allegation that it assisted Roosevelt Johnson during the September 18, 1998 Camp Johnson Road fighting.

ECOMOG in the release termed the Taylor Government allegation against its forces as false and unthinkable.

Mr. Taylor told the court a United Nations and United States investigation in 1998 vindicated Liberia of any involvement in Sierra Leone's war. Mr. Taylor also said the U.S Military and the UN investigated allegation of 3000 Liberians being trained at Camp Naama in 1998 to fight in Sierra Leone.

He testified that the U.S and UN investigation found that arms went across the Liberian border to Sierra Leone, but without the approval of his government. Taylor Trial continues.

## **UNMIL Public Information Office Media Summary 11 August 2009**

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

### **International Clips on Liberia**

#### **International Clips on West Africa**

### **Taylor Did Not Have Control Over Liberians Who Travelled To Sierra Leone, Blames West for Mis-Information**

Aug 11, 2009 (CharlesTaylorTrial.org/All Africa Global Media via COMTEX) -- Charles Taylor did not have any control or command over Liberians who traveled to Sierra Leone during its 11-year civil war and joined fighting forces there, he reconfirmed to judges today at his trial in The Hague. Many former combatants from Liberia's own conflict, who had migrated to Sierra Leone after Mr. Taylor came to power in Liberia in 1997, joined either the group of Liberians known as the Special Task Force a group aiding the Sierra Leonean army while some joined the Sierra Leonean rebel group, the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), he said. Some, Mr. Taylor said, became prey for mercenaries due to their lack of food or jobs. Mr. Taylor said that he, however, had no control or command over these fighters who had migrated to Sierra Leone and become part of fighting forces there, and could not have punished them for any crimes committed in Sierra Leone. "How do you punish someone when he is not under your control?" Mr. Taylor asked the court. "You can only be responsible for people under your direct command."

### **Funding crisis looms for S Leone war crimes court: official**

FREETOWN, Aug 11, 2009 (AFP) - The acting registrar of Sierra Leone's war crimes tribunal on Tuesday expressed hope of averting a crisis in court funding though "the financial situation is a problem". "The court's management committee is working hard on the issue and it is now likely we would have funds to avert any shortfall after August 14," the acting registrar of the UN Special Court on Sierra Leone, Binta Mansaray, told AFP. "The financial situation is a problem, but the court continues to believe in the goodwill of voluntary contributors, especially the major donors, the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada and the Netherlands." The court has been trying key warlord suspects in Sierra Leone's decade of brutal civil war from 1991 to January 2002, while neighbouring Liberia's former president Charles Taylor is separately on trial in The Hague for war crimes in an arms-for-diamonds deal with Sierra Leone rebels. Mansaray said that, in all, the court might need up to 30 million dollars to cover the costs of appeals by three final convicts in Sierra Leone and also in the event that Taylor is found guilty and that he appeals.

### **Local Media – Newspaper**

#### **Partnership not Patronage", Sirleaf, Others to U.S. Secretary of State**

(The Informer, The Inquirer)

- President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and three other African leaders have sent a message to U.S. Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton as she continues a tour of African Nations.
- The leaders including Paul Kagame of Rwanda, Seretse Khama Ian Khama of Botswana, and Abdoulaye Wade of Senegal said Africa seeks partners who will work with the continent not patrons to work for the continent.
- They believe the Obama administration can truly make a difference in Africa, if it comes as an equal partner to address low cost high impact priorities.
- The African leaders also called on partners from developed countries to curb corruption abroad.

- The leaders argued that efforts by African governments to strengthen democracy and governance are weakened if money stolen from the continent can be safe in secret accounts in the West.

### **University of Georgia Strengthens Partnership with Liberian Institutions**

(Heritage)

- President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf says the strong partnership between the University of Georgia and the University of Liberia will be vital to the rebuilding of Liberia, especially in the area of agriculture.
- Speaking Monday when a four-man delegation from Georgia University visited her, President Sirleaf said Government is now shifting from the mineral industry and expanding in agriculture production.
- The President of the Georgia University, Dr. Michael Adams assured the President that the University would undertake development initiatives in Liberia as the institution has done in other countries.
- Similar programmes have been undertaken in China and more than ten African countries.

### **Liberia to Receive US\$9M from U.S. as "Weapons Aid"**

(New Democrat)

- Liberia is to receive the biggest portion of President Barack Obama's administration weapons aid to Africa.
- The amount include US\$9 million [up from US\$1.5 million] for weapons and an additional US\$10 million and US\$525,000 for security training.
- The package is expected to be unveiled during the visit of U.S. Secretary of State, Hilary Clinton to Liberia this week.

### **Youths in Ganta Hold Finance Officials Hostage**

(Daily Observer)

- The Ganta border post in Nimba County was the scene of chaos over the weekend when a group of young people held some Finance Ministry officials hostage.
- The confusion started when the Director of Rural Ports, William Gehgeh tried to induct one Akoi Garlo as the new senior customs collector of Nimba County.
- Mr. Gehgeh was to replace Joe Margarie-Teh who had reportedly spent less than two months in the position since he was reinstated.
- According to correspondents, the young people under the banner of the Concerned Unity Party Youths opposed the decision claiming it violated the Ministry's guidelines.
- They argued the Ministry's guidelines call for customs collectors to be rotated only after six months and described the move as a witch-hunt.
- The angry youths have vowed to continue their action if another attempt is made to replace Mr. Tedd. Calm has since returned to the border.

### **New Solicitor General says Plans Underway to Clear Monrovia Central Prison**

(New Democrat)

- Solicitor General Wilkins Wright says plans are underway to clear the Monrovia Central Prison of what he called undue prejudice detainees if party litigants fail to follow up their cases.
- In an apparent reaction to concerns by Judges that over 800 inmates were detained at the correction facility with only ten percent of the cases disposed of, Counselor Wright said the Justice Ministry will evoke the constitutional provision of speedy trial by calling on party litigants, complainants and prosecutors to follow-up their cases.

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

### **Circuit Judges Frown on Late Assignment**

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

### **Partnership not Patronage", Sirleaf, Others to U.S. Secretary of State**

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

**COPE Wants More Incentive for the Police**

- The Centre for Peace Education and Democracy says the lack of motivation is responsible for police not adequately responding to crimes.
- The organization's Executive Director, Robert Miller believes if police officers are provided night patrol allowances and increment in salaries there would be a difference.
- Mr. Miller said it was necessary to prioritize the well being of police officers because their job involves a lot of risks.

**Radio Veritas** *(Monitored today at 9:45 am)***Liberia-Norway Partnership Programme Dedicates US\$16,000 Development Project in Bong County**

- The Liberia-Norway Partnership community development programme has dedicated a water and sanitation project worth US\$16,000 in Jorquelleh District, Bong County.
- The project is intended to provide safe drinking water for the community.

**Truth F.M.** *(Monitored today at 10:00 am)***University of Georgia Strengthens Partnership with Liberian Institutions**

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## The Analyst (Liberia)

Tuesday, 11 August 2009

### **Liberia: TRC Report Hits International Hurdle**

When the Truth & Reconciliation Commission (TRC) of Liberia was constituted, many had thought that it would pave the way to peace and recovery without stirring up the hornets' nest – without setting aside "villains" to be sacrificed for peace.

But they were wrong. The Commission took the high ground for polarization: it released an "unedited final report" in June this year in which it recommended a 30-year ban from engaging in active politics or holding public office for all politicians suspected of "supporting" the war. President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf is one of those liable to face the dishonorable discharge from politics and governance. But her friends, including the former head of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Bishop Desmond Tutu, are not taking the likelihood of such humiliation lying down, and they are up and about, drumming up support. The Analyst reports.

Several world-class rights advocates, freedom fighters, peace crusaders, and admirers of President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf are rallying international support to pre-empt the implementation of TRC's recommended 30-year ban for politicians suspected of supporting the Liberian civil war, The Analyst has discovered.

It is not clear whether the group is forming solely to give President Sirleaf moral support and prevent her forceful removal from the presidency, or whether it is dedicated to discouraging the idea of banning Liberia's political elites at the time when that class is expected to strap up Liberia's resources and land it's recovery on a soft pad.

But analysts say what seems clear is that the group is serious about ensuring that that aspect of the TRC's report does not receive international nod.

"The campaign is certainly gathering steam," said our reporter who has been gathering and sifting several cyber exchanges in the form of emails.

Amongst the crusaders who are currently beginning an intensive gathering of international opinion and support for the way forward are Arch-Bishop Desmond Tutu, who chaired the TRC Commission in South Africa and campaign leader Nadine B. Hack. Hack is the President and CEO of a leading New York-based "beCause Global Consulting" firm.

Also rallying to the defense and support of the Liberian leader is Billionaire Swanee Hunt and Abigail Disney, heiress to the World Disney Fortune.

The campaign to support the President and pre-empt the implementation of the TRC recommendation reportedly got underway few weeks ago when these staunch admirers and longtime friends of President Sirleaf received news of the TRC recommendations with "utter dismay".

The campaign, the email information reveals, is being led by the President and CEO of a leading New York-based "because Global Consulting" firm, Nadine B. Hack, who in a message to supporters of the President expressed outrage over the recommendation.

She writes: "Dearest Sis Ellen - Those of us, who know everything you've endured since we met you in the 1980s, supported your first 1997 campaign and continue to support the extraordinary work you now are doing as President with the same remarkable unbreakable spirit that is your trademark, always will stand by you.

"Please know you can count on us to mobilize whatever forces are needed to protect you and to help you fight this latest attack. I'm copying Peggy and Tammy as I know they both adore you as much as we do and also are ready for you to let us know what we can do. You have a powerful brigade of sister/support globally and we will not let you down ever. Love, - Nadine."

According to one exchange dated August 1, 2009, Hack told Billionaire Swanee that she had already sent "comparable emails to other Nobel Peace Laureates who I thought also might reach out to Ellen".

Those she reportedly reached out to include Wangari Maathai, Oscar Arias, Eli Wiesel, Muhammed Yunus, Shirin Ebadi, and John Hume.

She also told Swanee that she had reached out to several personalities whom she called "elders". These include former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, Gro Brundland, Graça Machel, and former US President Jimmy Carter

"But it made me think perhaps we ought to launch a more concerted campaign: like reaching out to human rights activists (e.g.: Ilene Khan, Mike Posner, Larry Cox, Ken Roth, Samantha Power, Bill Schulz, etc). Should we also be trying to mobilize support from Ellen Løj and UNMIL? We need a strategy of what to ask them to do if we are going to be effective," Hack said.

But she is not alone. Arch Bishop Desmond Tutu, who chaired the TRC Commission in South Africa and who recently received the US Presidential Medal of Freedom, is reported to have also added his voice in solidarity with the Liberian President.

"Your Excellency, I write to let you know we are praying for you and are distressed at the TRC finding and recommendation which would dump your country back into the fiery furnace just when you are leading her to revival. Hang in there. God bless you, Desmond Tutu," the note reportedly written to the President by Bishop Tutu concludes. The freedom fighter believes the dishonorable discharge of the Liberian leader from politics and probably from governance for three decades "would be tragic", given the criticality of Liberia's recovery. He did not elaborate.

Another campaigner, Billionaire Swanee, reportedly wrote to President Sirleaf: "Oh, my dear – I just heard about the Truth Commission report... I know you are level-headed and strong, but I wanted to add my voice to your hundreds of thousands of supporters, throughout the world, to say how much we appreciate your tireless effort on behalf of millions of others. Take care. Keep the faith."

In response to the spirited support that is gathering steam, according to the email exchanges, the Liberian President reportedly thanked the Bishop for the kind words in a note which reads: "My dear Bishop Tutu, Thank you so very much for your kind words of comfort and encouragement.

"I continue to rely on the grace of God and the support of the majority of the Liberian people and know that even this shall pass away."

Other messages of solidarity, the email exchanges reveal, came from billionaire Swanee Hunt and Abigail Disney, heiress to the World Disney Fortune, who, among other global women and civil society leaders, commended the President for her remarkable and unbeatable spirit, assuring the Liberian leader that they would help mobilize whatever forces are needed to support her.

"Oh, that you have to spend even one minute thinking about this is really a shame. I know you are level-headed and strong, but I want to add my voice to your hundreds of thousands of supporters, throughout the world, to say how much we appreciate your tireless effort on behalf of millions of others. Take care, Keep the faith," Swanee Hunt, says in her note to the Liberian leader.

Meanwhile the Executive Mansion would not confirm the email exchanges when our reporter contacted the President's office yesterday for authentication.

But a source close to the President's Office said while the President would be honored by such gathering of international support for the Liberian peace process, her administration was dedicated to upholding the decision of the Liberian people in matters regarding the TRC recommendations.

He said the Liberian leader believes that the Liberian people will be the ultimate judges as they had done so many times at many deciding moments including presidential and parliamentary elections.

"Our people are not naïve, they know better. They know when a course of action will undermine the Liberian peace process or help move it forward," he said.



# The Boston Globe

Sunday, 9 August 2009

## Misjudgment

By Joshua Kurlantzick

Sometimes, grand prosecutions of war crimes don't make sense



(AFP/Getty Images)

THIS PAST WINTER, in a makeshift courthouse on the dusty outskirts of Phnom Penh, the nation of Cambodia

began a long-awaited step toward reckoning with its horrifying past. With the help of the United Nations, the country is putting on trial senior leaders from the Khmer Rouge regime, whose reign of terror killed as much as one-quarter of the country's population between 1975 and 1979.

The process evokes the Nuremberg trials after World War II and other high-profile tribunals held since then: a way to bring past leaders to account for their crimes, to force the country to examine its terrible past, and - in theory - to bring some degree of justice and allow for healing.

The stakes for Cambodia are high. The Khmer Rouge era left a legacy of trauma and violence, and the country's culture and society remain in tatters. The tribunal will cost up to as much as \$200 million from international donors - a steep price when weighed against the needs of a desperately poor nation.

But there is good reason to believe the tribunal will fail in its aims. Held 30 years after the fall of the regime, the trial focuses on only five leaders - Khmer Rouge head Pol Pot died a decade ago - leaving thousands of former Khmer Rouge officials living undisturbed in Cambodian society. And though it may reveal important information about the country's past, virtually no one in Cambodia will have access to its findings. Although it is too soon to know how it will turn out, the troubles faced by the Khmer Rouge tribunal offer a chastening example of why Nuremberg-style tribunals - despite their successes elsewhere - may be wrong for many of the developing countries that most need to find a way to grapple with their pasts.

Finding a model for handling war crimes in the developing world will be critically important as more countries emerge from violence and grope toward stability. In Africa, Southeast Asia, and parts of the

Middle East, many nations remain trapped in brutal conflicts, or struggling with the legacy of war - a legacy that continues, in many places, to cause unrest well outside the country's borders. One promising approach may be small-scale, village-level reconciliation programs, which work within the country's social structures rather than creating an expensive Western-style process. They may lack the gravitas of a high-profile trial, but might do far more to move troubled countries out of the past - and to do it on their own terms.

In theory, a tribunal for war crimes or genocide can have a significant impact in a postwar society. After Nuremberg, the best-known model is South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission. From 1996-98, the commission held open hearings that, to some extent, resembled courtroom trials. Both victims and perpetrators of apartheid-era violence came forward and told their stories; the hearings were shown on national television. The commission opened the apartheid-era archives of political crime to the public, and made it easier for the country to move on: Afrikaaner hardliners could no longer argue that the apartheid era was a time of peace and prosperity; and justifiably angered black South Africans could be mollified by the public admission of violence. One comprehensive study of the commission, published in 2004 in the *Journal of Black Studies*, found that, overall, both whites and blacks saw the commissions as effective at revealing the truth.

## Associated Press

Wednesday, 12 August 2009

### **Khmer Rouge official asks for harsh punishment**



**ON TRIAL:** Kaing Guek Eav – better known as Comrade Duch - has asked for "the harshest punishment".

The chief of the Khmer Rouge's main torture centre, being tried by a UN-backed tribunal on genocide charges, asked the Cambodian people to give him "the harshest punishment."

The statement from Kaing Guek Eav, who headed the notorious S-21 prison in Phnom Penh, came as a widow wept before the court, demanding justice for the death of her husband and four children during the Khmer Rouge reign of terror.

"I accept the regret, the sorrow and the suffering of the million Cambodian people who lost their husbands and wives," the defendant told the tribunal – a joint UN-backed Cambodian-international court, officially called the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC), on which New Zealand judge Dame Silvia Cartwright is one of the five judges.

"I would like the Cambodian people to condemn me to the harshest punishment," said Kaing Guek Eav – better known as Comrade Duch.

He is being tried by the genocide tribunal for crimes against humanity, war crimes, murder and torture. Up to 16,000 people were tortured under Duch's command and later killed during the Khmer Rouge's 1975-1979 rule. Only a handful survived.

Duch's call for the harshest penalty to be inflicted on him came one day short of 31 years after New Zealand yachtsman Kerry Hamill – the older brother of rower Rob Hamill – was abducted, and sent to be tortured and killed at Duch's S-21 prison.

The yacht being sailed by the New Zealander strayed into Cambodian waters on August 13, 1978, and one crewman, Canadian Stuart Glass, was shot while Mr Hamill and Briton John Dewhirst were taken for interrogation and torture for two months before being killed.

Mr Hamill was forced to make confessions and he claimed to be a CIA spy.

His brother Rob was due to testify today, but his testimony has been put off until August 18.

"Duch says he is sorry and wants forgiveness, but I want to find out whether he truly understands the impact of what he did and the damage he caused," Hamill said before leaving New Zealand.

"I'm not sure that he does comprehend what he and the Khmer Rouge did to the people of Cambodia, let alone to the families of Kerry, John and Stuart."

Duch (pronounced DOIK) became an evangelical Christian and worked for international aid organisations after the ouster of the Khmer Rouge.

He is the first of five senior Khmer Rouge figures scheduled to face long-delayed trials and the only one to acknowledge responsibility for his actions. His trial, which started in March, is expected to finish by the end of the year.

During Wednesday's court session, Bou Thon, 64, said her husband was a driver at the Khmer Rouge's Industry Ministry when he was accused of being a traitor and sent to S-21. She was assigned as a cook.

Her husband and four children vanished, and Bou Thon said she believed all were killed at Choeung Ek, better known as the Killing Fields, outside Phnom Penh where S-21 prisoners were dispatched for execution.

With tears in her eyes, Bou Thon said she tried to forgive and forget but could not.

Duch, asked by the judge to speak about the Khmer Rouge killings, said they were "like the death of an elephant which no one can hide with only two tamarind tree leaves."

## Frost Illustrated

Tuesday, 11 August 2009

### **Kenya drops plans to put suspects of mass killing on trial**

(GIN)—After much heated debate, the Kenyan government closed the books on one of the worst cases of post-election violence in the country, without a trial of suspects as promised.

Politicians, businessmen and machete-wielding youths were said to have taken part in deadly post-election violence that left more than 1,300 people dead and forced 300,000 from their homes during weeks of fighting following the disputed December 2007 poll. Failing to agree on a trial of suspects, Kenya 's cabinet tossed out proposals for a special tribunal meeting international standards for trials on genocide, mass murder, crimes against humanity and other serious violations.

The cabinet also chose to set aside the agreement reached with International Criminal Court prosecutor Luis Moreno Ocampo and with former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan for an acceptable way to investigate and try key suspects. It was decided instead to treat the postvote bloodbath as a subject for reconciliation and forgiveness.

“Cabinet is confident that with proper healing and reconciliation, Kenya will not face the events of last year’s post-election violence,” cabinet officials said in a statement.

In a strongly-worded opinion, the U.S. embassy expressed displeasure with the decision and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton will urge “full implementation of the constitutional, judicial, police and land reform requirements that were part of the Kofi Annan agreement— especially those areas of the agreement that deal with impunity,” said Johnnie Carson, the assistant secretary of state for African Affairs, speaking to reporters traveling with Clinton.

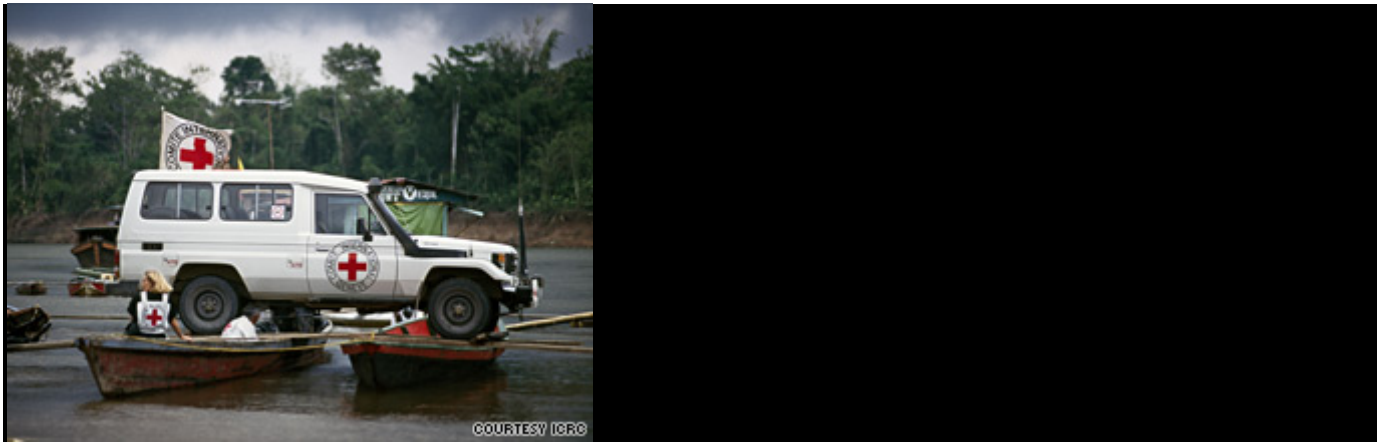
CNN

Wednesday, 12 August 2009

## Geneva Conventions 'still relevant but better compliance needed'

August 12 marks 60th anniversary of the signing of the 1949 Geneva Conventions  
 Conventions govern conduct of armed forces, protect non-combatants in war zones  
 Some question relevance of conventions for "asymmetric" 21st century warfare  
 Legal experts say conventions still relevant, but better compliance necessary

**LONDON, England (CNN)** -- As the defenders of a besieged Bosnian town prepared to retreat, the prisoners of war held captive in the local jail feared the worst.



An ICRC aid vehicle in Colombia in 1998. The ICRC says the conventions make its work in war zones possible.

"The prisoners were saying, 'If the town falls they will shoot us before they leave,'" recalls Charlotte Lindsey, a Red Cross field worker in the Balkans during the break-up of the former Yugoslavia. "We went to the prison authorities and we said, "Look, you cannot let this happen. You are responsible for these prisoners."

Forty-eight hours later, after the town had been captured, Lindsey and her Red Cross colleagues returned to find the prison empty. But the prisoners had all been found alive and liberated by the incoming army.

"We interviewed some of the prisoners and they said the director of the prison and his deputy had stood in front of them to protect them," says Lindsey, now deputy director of communication for the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). "They told us: 'They wanted to kill us but they wouldn't let it happen.'"

Even 15 years later, Lindsey is unable to reveal specific details about where the 1994 incident took place or the identities of the protagonists because of the ICRC's strict policy of confidentiality and neutrality.

But for her the story serves to illustrate the lasting impact of the Geneva Conventions -- the set of universally ratified "rules of war" governing the conduct of armed forces and protecting non-combatants -- even in the heat of one of the most brutal and ethnically charged conflicts of recent decades.

"On a daily basis, living in a war zone, you see examples of the conventions being applied. Every time a soldier is captured and moved to a prison, or a wounded soldier is collected by an ambulance, that is an application of the Geneva Conventions," Lindsey told CNN ahead of Wednesday's 60th anniversary of the signing of the conventions.

"People forget that they are rooted in the law because they seem such evident needs and evident rights that people have."

Shaped in the aftermath of World War II, the 1949 conventions were drafted in an effort to prevent a repeat of the mass destruction of the era of "total war" in which entire nations and civilian populations had become targets for indiscriminate slaughter.

## **Don't Miss**

Explainer: **What are the Geneva Conventions?**

In particular, the Fourth Convention established rules, adopted for the first time, protecting civilians in occupied territory. The conventions also formalized and enhanced the ICRC's role as a neutral presence in conflict zones, allowing the organization access to assess and monitor the treatment of captured and wounded combatants and civilians on both sides of front lines.

But in an age when conflicts are more likely to be sprawling, chaotic civil wars involving disparate armed groups -- not to mention nebulous and shifting terror networks such as al Qaeda -- some have questioned whether the 60-year old conventions still hold relevance.

## **Are the Geneva Conventions still relevant? Sound Off below**

In particular, the legal ambiguity of the conventions on the status of detainees captured and incarcerated at facilities such as Guantanamo Bay as part of the so-called "War on Terror" -- and allegations of their mistreatment -- has prompted legal wrangling between Pentagon officials and human rights groups in the U.S.

Philip Spoerri, the ICRC's Director of International Law, admits that international humanitarian law -- a legal field with the 1949 agreement at its core -- remains an "embryonic" endeavor and concedes that violations of the Geneva Conventions, such as the mass displacement or indiscriminate targeting of civilians, remain all too commonplace.

He adds that the rules governing the conduct and status of armed groups engaged in non-international conflicts could be honed and expanded to reflect the 21st century realities of warfare.

But he told CNN that the conventions, which have been ratified by 194 states, remained emphatically relevant -- and that enforcing compliance, rather than recodifying their core principles, was where progress was needed.

"Compliance, or better implementation, has always been the Achilles' heel of the conventions," Spoerri said. "Even with the rudimentary rules on non-international conflict that we have today, if you had a very effective implementing mechanism for them that would be a huge step."

Richard Goldstone, formerly the chief U.N. prosecutor for war crimes in Yugoslavia and Rwanda, agrees that greater international compliance with the conventions is key but argues that important progress has already been made through both those tribunals and the establishment in 2002 of the International Criminal Court.

"The tribunals for Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia recognized that all serious violations of the Geneva Conventions are criminal offences and that is a huge advance," Goldstone told CNN.

He added that the vast majority of provisions in the conventions had become customary international law -- and therefore binding on nations and non-state actors whether they had ratified the conventions or not.

"It's a question of implementing the law, not of any weakness of the law itself," said Goldstone. "It's the practical nitty-gritty things of getting arrests and getting the cooperation of governments, because without that neither the Geneva Conventions, the ICC nor any international tribunal can succeed."

In the meantime, Spoerri, like Lindsey, takes heart from concrete examples of how the conventions make the work of the ICRC possible in war zones which would otherwise be deprived of humanitarian aid.

He cites the efforts of the organization in persuading Taliban and other militant groups in Afghanistan's volatile south to allow U.N. aid workers to conduct a polio immunization throughout the region in 2007.

"If we did not have these conventions and also the principles embodied in them, our work would be a lot more difficult," Spoerri said. "They are the backbone of our operation."



The National (UAE)  
Wednesday, 11 August 2009

## Chained together by a dark history

Marten Youssef



This Soviet-era Ilyushin cargo aircraft, parked alongside the coastal motorway in Umm al Qaiwain, is part of the mythology that surrounds Victor Bout. Jeff Topping / The National

For the past seven years, Andrei Semenchenko's world has been defined by the grey walls of Sharjah's central prison, his horizon framed by fear and hope – fear of the death sentence that hangs over him, and the hope that someone will take pity and come forward with the blood money that could save his life.

Other than visits from his wife, Semenchenko's only connection with the outside world is his small radio. He has lost interest in reading newspapers, except for articles about prisoners who have been granted amnesty.

His wife and their 20-year-old son remain in the city, doing their best to go about their lives, as they have done since June 2002, when Semenchenko was arrested for the murder of Fouad al Joubri, a Syrian interpreter.

Semenchenko claims that he went to Al Joubri's office and found him being attacked by two Chechens: "He was bleeding. I left right away to go to the police. I was arrested. I was told that he died and that I killed him."

He denies this. "I am an innocent man," he says, speaking publicly for the first time since his imprisonment. "I just want to be with my wife and son."

Five thousand kilometres away, in Bangkok, another citizen of the former USSR sits in another prison cell, where he has spent the past year. This is Victor Bout, a Russian citizen who, like Semenchenko, found his way to the UAE in the early 1990s, in search of opportunities following the collapse of the Soviet Union.

As yet, Mr Bout has not been found guilty of any crime, but today he faces an extradition hearing that could see him sent to the US for trial on charges including conspiracy to provide material support to a terrorist organisation.

Mr Bout is perhaps better known as the Merchant of Death, the title of the 2007 book about him by Douglas Farah and Stephen Braun.

According to them, he is a "weapons supplier whose... vast enterprise of guns, planes and money has fuelled internecine slaughter in Africa and aided both militant Islamic fanatics in Afghanistan and the American military in Iraq". According to Mr Bout's website, he is "just a normal businessman striving for success" and "is not, and never was an arms dealer".

Whatever befalls Mr Bout, the extent to which his story is entwined with that of Semenchenko remains unclear, but entwined they most certainly are.

Last spring, Mr Bout was the target of a lengthy sting operation by the US Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), which tricked one of his representatives into offering to sell arms to what he believed were representatives of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC). According to an application for an arrest warrant to a New York court by a DEA agent in February 2008, the "farming equipment" discussed included Igla surface-to-air missiles and armour-piercing rocket launchers, which were to be parachuted into Colombia.

Mr Bout travelled from Russia to Thailand in March 2008, when he was arrested by DEA agents in Bangkok. If extradited, tried and found guilty, he faces life in prison in the US.

Mr Bout and Semenchenko were two of a breed, what the authors of *Merchant of Death* called “Soviet-bloc entrepreneurs who rose from the ashes of the Cold War”, but the link between the two men goes deeper than that.

Semenchenko was born in Ukraine in 1961. Unlike many of his countrymen, including Mr Bout – who, according to his website, served as a translator in the Soviet army – he was spared military conscription because of medical problems.

He says he first came to Sharjah in 1990, working for a tourism agency that brought Russians to soak up the sun on the UAE’s beaches. By 1994, he had settled in the emirate, managing a computer outfit until he had enough money to start his own business.

In 1996, he registered a company, the name of which was to become familiar to government agencies around the world as a central part of Mr Bout’s complex business empire: San Air General Trading.

“It was easy then,” says Semenchenko. “I called it Sun Air General Trading, but someone did not read it right and called it San Air. It was too expensive to change the name.”

He says he registered the company in Ajman Free Zone. A report by UN investigators, however, says the company originated in Sharjah Airport International Free Zone, which opened for business in 1995, and transferred to Ajman in 2001. Either way, neither zone will disclose details of the company’s ownership history.

Semenchenko opened bank accounts in Sharjah and was ready for business – all kinds of business: “Import, export, repair, auto mechanic, auto spare parts ... anything, really,” he says, shrugging his shoulders.

Life in Sharjah was good for Semenchenko and his family. “The Russian community was very small at this time and we were all connected. We would get together at parties and dinners.”

Mr Bout was one of the men Semenchenko met regularly at such events. It was not clear to many people, says Semenchenko, who he was, or what he did: “He was always travelling. Sometimes it was better to not ask questions.”

According to *Merchant of Death*, Mr Bout set up his own operation in the UAE three years before Semenchenko, picking Sharjah in 1993 as the headquarters for his burgeoning cargo business and fleet of ageing former Soviet aircraft, which carried all kinds of cargo to challenging destinations in Africa, Asia and the Middle East.

In a series of interviews, Semenchenko at first said his company had repaired some of Mr Bout’s aircraft. During a later conversation, however, he contradicted this. Their wives had spent time together during the day “but there was no business between us”.

But there was at least one piece of business linking Mr Bout and Semenchenko – the sale of San Air.

According to documents seen by *The National*, by the end of the 1990s the influx of Russians following the collapse of the USSR – and the money they were funnelling in and out of the country – had begun to attract the attention of the UAE authorities.

At the end of 1999, the Central Bank launched an investigation of branches of a bank that had been “very active in opening of accounts by Russian customers”.

A bank report dated June 8, 2000, said examiners had discovered 1,186 accounts containing Dh125.3 million (US\$34m), in some cases with “incoming remittances ... not commensurate with the level of disclosed income” and turnover “indicative of money laundering on a massive scale”.

Among them, said another report, were five accounts known as “The Semenchenko Group”; transactions in the

accounts of “San Air Gen Tdg & Andrii [sic] Semenchenko ... were of large value and no sooner the inward remittance were received these were transferred out. Inward TTs [telegraphic transfers] were to the tune of AED22.1 million and AED2.8 million respectively which were laundered”.

The reports also highlighted the account of a company called GMS General Trading, “a part of Semenchenko Group”, which on December 28, 1998, received a payment of Dh2m, transferred out on the same day.

In 2000, the Central Bank ordered a number of so-called “Russian” accounts to be closed, including those in the Semenchenko group: two of Semenchenko’s personal accounts, two in the name of San Air and that of GMS. Semenchenko says he received a call from his bank in January 2000, asking him to go in and close his accounts. “I was shocked,” he says. “I didn’t know why or what happened. I took all of my documents with me to show every transaction.” It was, he says, clear “that someone was using my account”.

He does, however, volunteer an explanation for one payment to a San Air account – Dh200,000 he says he was paid by the Rwandan defence ministry for aircraft maintenance. He denies that any payment into his accounts exceeded that amount.

Semenchenko claims that all the large transactions highlighted by the Central Bank were made after he sold San Air. When first asked, he said he could not recall precisely when he had sold the company, but thought it was at the end of 2000.

Later, however, he said it was as early as March of that year. Nevertheless, the bank documents show that at least one of the investigated transfers to GMS took place in 1998 and others were made into Semenchenko’s personal and San Air accounts before April 2000.

Semenchenko found a buyer for San Air in Sharjah’s tight Russian community.

Serguei Denissenko, he says, traded a Jeep Grand Cherokee for the company. According to the United Nations, Mr Denissenko is an associate of Mr Bout.

The names of Mr Bout, Mr Denissenko and San Air are on a UN “asset freeze” list, produced following a 2004 resolution adopted “to prevent former Liberian President Charles Taylor [or] close allies or associates ... from using misappropriated funds and property to interfere in the restoration of peace and stability in Liberia”.

The list describes San Air as “the main company behind many of Viktor [sic] Bout’s arms shipments into Liberia”.

In 2005, the US Treasury’s Office of Foreign Assets Control placed Mr Bout and Mr Denissenko on its list of Specially Designated Nationals. Mr Denissenko’s address was given as “care of” San Air General Trading in Ajman.

In a statement on April 26, 2005, the Treasury said it had “identified 30 companies and four individuals linked to Viktor [sic] Bout, an international arms dealer and war profiteer”, who “runs a network of air cargo companies that are based in various countries in the Middle East, Africa, Eastern Europe and the United States.

“Today, Bout has the capacity to transport tanks, helicopters and weapons by the ton to virtually any point in the world”.

San Air, it said, had played a “key role in supplying arms to Charles Taylor’s regime in Liberia and the Sierra Leone rebel group, the Revolutionary United Front”, and Mr Denissenko was a “senior Bout manager”.

According to a 2001 report by a UN panel of experts investigating Liberian sanctions-busting, a series of payments ranging from US\$174,000 to US\$525,000 were made to a San Air General Trading account in the UAE between June and September 2000, “for arms and transportation in violation of the sanctions”.

Semenchenko’s name appears on none of the documents issued by the UN or the US, and he continues to insist he had no business dealings with Mr Bout.

Today, as the Russian he says he knew only as “Victor” awaits his fate in Bangkok, such matters are the least of Semenchenko’s worries. He remains on death row, unable to afford the blood money that would buy his freedom.

Two months ago the family of the dead man settled on a sum of \$200,000 (Dh734,000). Semenchenko says he cannot lay his hands on that much money: “If I had all this money like you say, why would I be in here? I would pay it and be free.”

Sitting in a coffee shop in the Mall of the Emirates, Mrs Semenchenko said she had no doubt that her husband was innocent of murder. She also had no doubt that the blood money was beyond them.

“Millions?” She gave a short, humourless laugh. “No, no. Not us. We are simple people.”

She no longer wore her wedding ring, she said, nor even her earrings, because she had “sold them all so I can help to pay for my child’s education”.

In a letter to The National, her husband wrote that during his years in jail he had read reports in the media about prisoners who, like him, were unable to raise blood money.

“Those reports had amazing results,” he wrote. “Within days all of them were paid money by the broad and helpful-minded readers of the UAE.

“So I humbly request you to publish my desperate situation in your newspaper. I hope it would be a life-saving help towards me and my family.”

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