

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



PRESS CLIPPINGS

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

as at:

Wednesday, 12 March 2008

Press clips are produced Monday through Friday.
Any omission, comment or suggestion, please contact
Martin Royston-Wright
Ext 7217

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Concord Times

Wednesday, 12 March 2008

'Issa Sesay pioneered Salone's peace process'

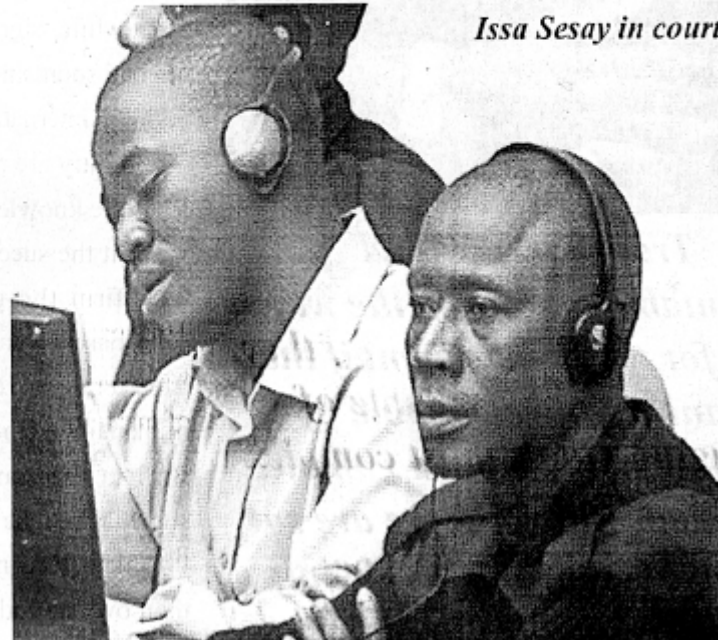
-Gen. Opande

By Ibrahim Tarawallie

Erstwhile force commander of UN mission in Sierra Leone, UNAMSIL Monday described Special Court indicttee and interim leader of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) Issa Sesay as pioneer of the peace process in Sierra Leone.

Gen. Daniel Ishmael Opande was being cross-examined by defense counsel Wayne Jordash, as one of the expert witnesses for Sesay, when he submitted that "Sesay did not

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Issa Sesay in court

Issa Sesay pioneered Salone's peace process'

From page 1

have political acumen but was rather moderate and trustworthy."

He added: "Sesay was determined to cooperate fully with the peace process in Sierra Leone. He is a young man who propelled into leadership and was very honest. He even showed respect to me as an elder."

On the troubles faced by civilians under RUF-

controlled areas, Opande told the court that the former rebel leader was concerned about the plight of civilians.

When questioned on whether he ever met other RUF commanders like Gibril Massaquoi and Mike Lamin the witness said Massaquoi was claiming to be a military man but was playing a political role in the RUF.

He said Massaquoi was strongly in support of Foday Sankoh and those who refused to cooperate with the peace process until Sankoh's release in 2000.

Meanwhile, the witness had earlier told the court that he first came to Sierra Leone on a fact finding mission and to know the status of some members of his force that were taken as

hostages in northern Sierra Leone by some RUF rebels.

The 37-year old plus two others, Morris Kallon and Augustine Gbao were charged with crimes against humanity, violations of article 3 common to the Geneva conventions and of additional protocol II and other serious violations of international humanitarian law.

Awoko

Wednesday, 12 March 2008

Defence witness reveals child combatants handing over process

By Betty Milton

Retired General Ismail Opande yesterday told the Special Court how thousands of child combatants and children associated with the war were handed over to UNAMSIL by the RUF.

The witness disclosed that between 18-21 May 2002, 813 RUF combatants were disarmed although there was outside bombardment from the Kambia border. Among the 813, 618 were adults and 192 children.

This disarmament, according to the witness, was significant as it was attended by the ESRSG and RUF delegates including Omeri Golley who was then chairman of the Political and Peace Council of the RUF, while Augustine Gbao was in attendance to lend the support of the RUF to the process.

General Opande further told the court that between 19th-20th May 2000, there was also bombardment in Jagboina in the Kono district which came from Guinea to Kambia but there was no resistance from the RUF.

He went on that on 25th May 2001, the RUF announced that it would release approximately 600 child combatants and children associated with the fighting forces and that these children were eventually handed over to UNAMSIL and were placed under UNICEF and other child protection agencies.

This event, he stressed, was significant as it was attended by UNAMSIL and RUF who had organised the release of the children.

On 4th June, he continued, 178 children associated with the war in Kailahun were handed over again to UNAMSIL among which were 40 girls and two infants and that the rest were boys and these children were airlifted to Daru.

General Opande said a meeting was held at the UNAMSIL Sector 4 headquarters in Magburuka where Solomon Berewa, Hinga Norman, Issa Sesay and Augustine Gbao, and the SRSR attended.

The purpose of the meeting was to look at possible ways of repatriating the children as the RUF had announced that it would release child soldiers.

On 22nd June, he continued, 131 child soldiers in Tongo Field were handed over and a total of 107 children were also handed over to UNAMSIL majority of them were boys.

The witness said by July 16th, a total of 1,117,000 was also handed over to UNAMSIL.

General Opande also disclosed that as part of their mandate on the disarmament process they were to find out who was fighting and those that were doing jobs as most of the children claimed that they were fighters.

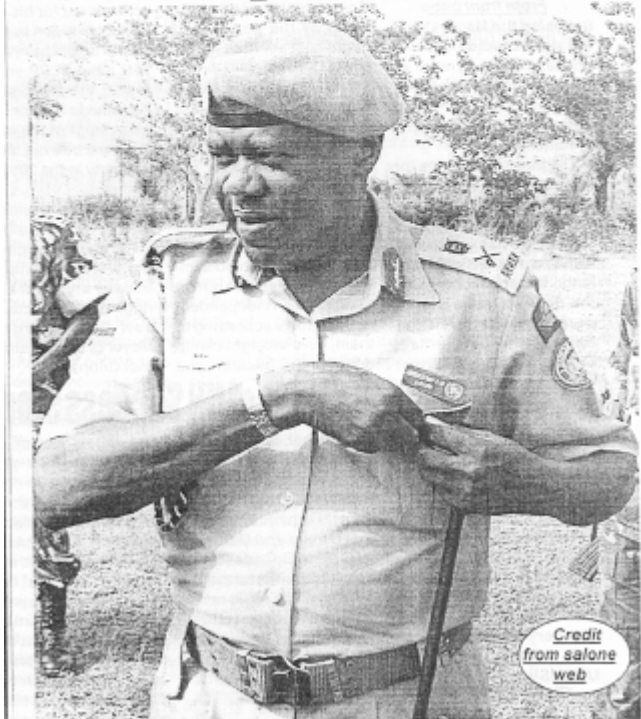
Exclusive

Wednesday, 12 March 2008

"Morris Kallon Was Part of UN Success Story"

- Gen. Opande

By Musa Sesay
Former UNAMSIL Com-
mander General, Ismail
Continued page 2



*Credit
from salone
web*

"Morris Kallon Was Part of UN Success Story"

From front page

Opande, continued his testimony yesterday at the Special Court trial chamber.

Responding to questions put to him by legal luminary and Sri Lanka born Tanoo Nylvaganam, Opanda recalled that Morris Kallon was very close to the Local Commander of UNAMSIL. According to

the General, Kallon proved to be a valuable asset to the success of the Mission especially in the disarmament process in Magburaka and Makeni.

General Opanda further noted that when he took up office many people raised doubts about the credibility and trust of the RUF and, whether he will succeed in his peace effort of getting

the rebels out of Kono which was their stronghold.

Opande said through his personal strides, he was able to go down and speak to civilians across the board but that he was unable to receive any specific complaint about Morris Kallon. According to Opanda, Kallon never played any major role in the command structure of the RUF. In another cross-examination, Opanda recalled that child combatant and children associated with the frontier were released on separate instances by the RUF and handed over to UNAMSIL in 2001.

He said they were able to separate the two categories of children by interviewing and asking them to either clean or dismantle AK 47 rifles. Meanwhile, General Opande continues his testimony today.

Exclusive

Wednesday, 12 March 2008

CDF Appeals Case Today

By Musa Sesay come up this morning at the Moinina Fofanah and
The Civil Defence Force Appeal's Trial Chamber of Alieu Kondewa were
(CDF) appeal matter will the Special Court. *Continued page 2*

CDF Appeals Case Today

From front page seven years was The Legal luminary of
both convicted by Justice slammed on the two in- the two accused persons,
Benjamin Itoe for aiding dividuals as they had Charles Margai, had earlier
and abetting atrocities already spent two promised that he was go-
committed by lower years in custody, since ing to appeal, even though
ranks of the CDF. the procedures his clients were slammed
A jail term of six and started. with shorter sentences.

BBC World Service Trust

Tuesday, 11 March 2008

By Joseph Cheeseman, at The Hague

Isaac Mongor, one Charles Taylor's trusted former bodyguards, is testifying against his former boss. Isaac is considered by many watching the trial as the Prosecution's most popular witness to so far take the stand. Almost every witness before him mentioned his name either as a trainer or as a battle front commander. Joseph Cheeseman reports.

CHEESEMAN: Isaac Tamba Mongor, the Prosecution's insider witness, continues his testimony on direct examination, revealing the direct involvement of his former boss, Charles Taylor, in diamond trade with the RUF in Sierra Leone. Isaac told the Court that when the RUF ran out of arms and ammunition, Sam Bockarie took some diamonds to Mr. Taylor in Liberia in 1998.

MONGOR: I told you that when I was coming I came along with some people who were in the mining group, who brought some diamonds. So those diamonds were the ones he took along. And when he came back he told us that the diamonds that he went with, he left them there with Mr. Taylor.

CHEESEMAN: The accused former Liberian president held his cheek firmly, and attentively looked as Isaac Mongor, smiling and rocking in his chair as he testified against the man he once saluted and served as his boss. At one point of Isaac's testimony, Charles Taylor shook his head when the witness mentioned that the commanders of the RUF wrote a letter to Mr. Taylor in 1998 requesting for more arms. The Prosecution's 21st witness told the Court that Sam Bockarie later travelled to Liberia and brought a large quantity of arms and ammunition from Mr. Taylor.

MONGOR: We started talking, and he was telling me the result of the invitation that was extended to him by the Pa. He came with some ammunition. He came back so that we can run some missions. He said they went to Burkina Faso. He brought some pictures of the hotel where they lodged. They brought out those pictures and showed them to me. And he told me that he brought some ammunition. So in his room, he had a door there leading to a place where he packed the ammunition. It was a shop-like place. So he opened the door leading from his room into the shop. So we entered there and saw the ammunition that he had brought. So he showed those ammunition to me. When I saw the ammunition I was happy because they were many.

CHEESEMAN: The former NPFL and the RUF battle front commander testified that Sam Bockarie brought back from Mr. Taylor a plan to attack several Sierra Leonean towns and cities, including Freetown. He said the accused former Liberian president introduced Sam Bockarie to Burkina Faso's President Blaise Campaore for more assistance to the RUF.

MONGOR: After he has shown the ammunitions to me, he told me the plan that he had come with with respect to those ammunitions. He told me that he and Mr. Taylor sat together and planned to come and run an operation. He said he sat with the Pa, Mr. Taylor, who took out a map and showed the locations where the RUF and the SLAs, where we occupied. He showed that to him. He came with a plan for us to launch an operation whereby we'll capture Kono, Makeni, and advance to Freetown. And we were also to attack [Juru]. Those were the areas we were to capture. We were also to launch another attack on Kenema. He said Mr. Taylor had made another connection for him when he connected him to the Burkina Faso president. So he went there to see the man, the president. So it was he and Mr. Rogers who went there.

CHEESEMAN: Testifying to treatment given to women in the Sierra Leonean town of Buedu, his former controlled area, the former RUF and NPFL commando said forced marriage was the order of the day. Some of the criminal counts against Mr. Taylor include rape, sexual slavery and other forms of sexual violence. Others are crime against humanity, violence to life, health and physical or mental well being of persons, in particular cruel treatment.

Star Radio (Liberia)

Tuesday, 11 March 2008

Ex-fighter testifies against Taylor in The Hague

Written by Wellington Geevon Smith

A half Sierra Leonean and half Liberian National who allegedly trained RUF fighters in Liberia has taken stand against Charles Taylor.

Isaac Tamba Mongor said he was appointed by Mr. Taylor to train Sam Bokarie, Issa Sasey and other RUF fighters at the Camp Nama Military Barracks in Liberia for what he called the Sierra Leone mission.

On direct examination, Isaac said he speaks Liberian English, Krio and Bassa but is testifying in Krio, so he's being interpreted.

He told the court his father is a member of the Kissi ethnic group from Kailahun District in Sierra Leone and his mother is a Bassa in Liberia.

Isaac said he joined the Armed Forces of Liberia in 1985 during the administration of Samuel Doe.

He told the court he could not withstand the training of the AFL so he abandoned the force after three months.

The prosecution 21st witness said he and other civilians were captured in Nimba County by the NPFL in 1989 and was as a commando at Gborplay.

Isaac alleged he was a member of the first group that invaded Sierra Leone in 1991.

United Nations  Nations Unies

United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL)

**UNMIL Public Information Office Complete Media Summaries
11 March 2008**

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

Newspaper Summary

Germany Announces US\$1.4 Million for Liberia National Police

(The Analyst, The News, Heritage, The Inquirer, The Informer, Daily Observer)

- The government of Germany has donated one million euros (US\$1.4 million) to the Liberia National Police. German Ambassador to Liberia Ilse Lindemann-Mache said the money is in fulfillment of a promise made by German Chancellor Angela Merkel when she visited Liberia.
- Madam Lindemann-Mache said an additional one million euros would subsequently be given to deal with Police presence in Lofa County. The one million euros would be spent and monitored by the UNDP in collaboration with UN Project Office in Liberia.
- The UNDP Resident Representative to Liberia Jordan Ryan said the amount would be divided to adequately reflect on the Police. Mr. Ryan said the one million euros would be used to train additional Police officers, the purchase of vehicles and the building of barracks in the counties.
- He said ten counties would benefit from the purchasing of the vehicles while six counties would benefit from the construction of barracks. Mr. Ryan however, felt short to name the counties that would benefit but said consultation would be held with the LNP authorities.

Anti-Rape Campaign Kicks off in Maryland County Today

(The New Liberia)

- The United Nations Mission in Liberia along with the various civil society organizations in the country would today, Tuesday, launch an anti-rape campaign in Harper, Maryland County aimed at discouraging what is believed to be persistent sexual violence against women in the county.

Dutch Court Sets Taylor's Associate Free on Arms Trafficking charges

(The News, Heritage, and New Vision)

- A Dutch appeals court on Monday acquitted an associate of detained President Charles Taylor of violating a UN embargo by allegedly trading weapons for timber in Liberia, citing a lack of reliable evidence. The Hague Appeals Court overturned the verdict from a lower court that sentenced Gus Kouwenhoven to eight years in prison for trading guns for allegedly logging rights and using his Oriental Timber Company (OTC) to smuggle weapons later used by militias to commit atrocities against civilians in Liberia. The appeals judges also upheld an earlier acquittal for war crimes. But Monday's ruling said there was little or no concrete evidence that Kouwenhoven's Oriental Trading Company dealt in weapons, despite such allegations by the UN and human rights groups.

Radio Summary Local **Media – Radio veritas** (News monitored today at 9:45 am)

UNMIL Contractors Resort to Violence - Burn down Two Vehicles

- Aggrieved contractors of UNMIL have set on fire two vehicles belonging to the Mission in Monrovia. The two Nissan jeeps were set ablaze while a third was damaged early Tuesday morning close to the mission's Logistics Headquarters, Star Base, on the Bushrod Island. Three UNMIL personnel sustained injuries during the violent act and are responding to medical attention at the mission's medical facilities at Star Base.

- The striking UNMIL contractors told reporters that the demonstration is in demand of what they called their just benefits after more than two years of service. The contractors said contrary to a UN Resolution which approved increment in their benefits, UNMIL has allegedly decided to reduce their pay from eight to six United States dollars. They also claimed that the mission has sub-contracted their services to a Lebanese businessman. The contractors threatened to burn more cars if their benefits were not settled in a week's time.
- The Liberia National Police (LNP), supported by UNMIL Military and Formed Police Units immediately responded and brought the situation under control. The LNP arrested 17 persons in connection with the incident, and investigations are still ongoing.
- UNMIL in a statement issued Tuesday condemned these acts of violence perpetrated against UN personnel and the destruction of property belonging to the UN, saying UNMIL personnel are in Liberia to support the people and government of Liberia, and these acts constrain the ability of the UN to carry out its mandate. According to the statement, UNMIL is taking all necessary security measures at all its locations, within and outside Monrovia, to prevent the recurrence of such incidents.

(Also reported on Star Radio, Truth F.M. and ELBC)

Criminals Threaten Palm Grove Cemetery

- The President of Win Builders, the group that is fencing the Palm Groove Cemetery, says unknown persons have burst in some graves at the cemetery. Mr. Debar Allen said the acts were carried out while the cemetery was closed for nearly four months. He disclosed the remains of Walter Greaves, former proprietor of the Pepper Bush Entertainment in Monrovia, was removed from his grave and the steel rods taken away.
- Mr. Allen said the graves were looted by those who were in search of steel rods and other valuable items because there is no security manning the cemetery. He said the project to fence the cemetery was near completion but there was a serious need for security men to be assigned to save the cemetery.

(Also reported on Truth FM, Star Radio, and ELBC)

Star Radio *(News culled today from website at 8:35 am)*

Education Authorities Met Heads of universities, colleges to consider closure for National Census

- Authorities at the Ministry of Education on Monday concluded a meeting with heads of institutions of higher learning to honour the Government's two weeks suspension of academic activities in support of the upcoming census in the country.
- Education Minister Dr. Joseph Korto dismissed reports that the Ministry was imposing its decision on institutions of higher learning, adding that the decision was in the national interest. He expressed regrets over the decision but said the Ministry will extend instructional days in the calendar to make up for the lost weeks. There has been no response from heads of universities and colleges on the request for temporary closure.

(Also reported on Truth FM)

Immigration Official Supports Re-arming of Police

- The Chief of Operations at the Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization has buttressed calls for the re-arming of the Liberia National Police. Colonel Fonati Nyepen said re-arming the police would go a long way in helping to contain the alarming wave of criminal activities in Monrovia and its environs.
- Col. Nyepen said peaceful residents were continuously falling prey to criminal activities and there was a need to take concrete steps to avert the situation. He said it was impossible for the Police to adequately fight criminals in the country when they are not armed.
- Col. Nyepen also recommended that any criminal caught in the act must be immediately prosecuted and executed if found guilty to serve as a deterrent. The immigration official spoke to Star Radio after criminals attacked him Sunday at the Bong Mines soccer pitch on Bushrod Island.

National Bar wants Magistrates, JPs placed under Judiciary

- The National Bar Association of Liberia has called for the enactment of laws to put Magistrates and Justices of the Peace under the Judiciary. A member of the Executive Council of the National Bar said such laws would protect magistrates, who perform judicial functions, as judges within our jurisdiction.
- Cllr. Theophilus Gould said the laws were needed because the removal of Magistrates and JPs is with the Executive while their actions are with the Judiciary. Cllr. Gould spoke on behalf of the National Bar during the opening of the March Term of the Supreme Court.
- Chief Justice Johnnie Lewis had earlier said two magistrates and an associate magistrate were dismissed for unethical behaviors. Some legal observers believed the Bar Association's latest call for laws to protect magistrates could be in reaction to the recent dismissal of Magistrate Milton Taylor.
- Government said it dismissed the magistrate for granting a 200-thousand Liberian Dollar bail to nine Ghanaians arrested for drug trafficking. Critics said the removal of Magistrate Taylor was in connection with the Angel Tokpa case.

Treason trial to delay for a week

- The treason trial involving two retired army personnel will be delayed by a week as the Judge presiding over the trial travelled to Nigeria Monday. Judge Peter Gbay-nee-wleh is among four Liberian Judges travelling to Nigeria to attend a seminar on financial crimes and terrorist financing.
- The other Judges are Evelyn Quaqua of Criminal Court 'B', Samuel Geevon Smith of Criminal Court 'C' and Relieving Judge Yusuf Kaba. Chief Justice Johnnie Lewis spoke on the travelling of the four Judicial officials Monday at the opening of the March 2008 Term of the Supreme Court.
- Justice Lewis said the Inter-governmental Action Group against money laundry and terrorist financing is sponsoring the seminar.

Germany donates to Liberia National Police

(Also reported on ELBC and Truth FM)

11 March 2008

UNMIL Statement

UNMIL Condemns Early Morning Attack on its Personnel, Destruction of UN Property

At about 6:30 am on Tuesday, 11 March, the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) was alerted of an attack on its vehicles and staff members close to its Logistics Headquarters, Star Base, Bushrod Island. During this attack, between 16 and 20 individuals, believed to be former individual contractors (ICs) of UNMIL, burnt two Nissan Patrol jeeps and damaged a third vehicle. As a result, three UNMIL personnel sustained injuries and are responding to medical attention at the mission's medical facilities at Star Base.

The Liberia National Police (LNP), supported by UNMIL Military and Formed Police Units immediately responded and brought the situation under control. The LNP arrested 17 persons in connection with the incident, and investigations are still ongoing.

UNMIL condemns in the strongest terms these acts of violence perpetrated against UN personnel and the destruction of property belonging to the UN. UNMIL personnel are in Liberia to support the people and government of Liberia, and these acts constrain the ability of the UN to carry out its mandate.

Meanwhile, UNMIL is taking all necessary security measures at all its locations, within and outside Monrovia, to prevent the recurrence of such incidents.

In a statement on 25 February, UNMIL assured affected ICs that the Mission has taken steps to ensure that all qualified, high-performing ICs are given the chance to be interviewed and considered for employment with the private Liberian company which has taken over their responsibilities. The company has reported that of 98 Monrovia-based former ICs, 24 had been hired, and of the 128 former ICs from outside Monrovia, 114 had been hired by the company. In addition, the mission stated that those affected ICs with the necessary qualifications and experience would be considered favourably for available future jobs with UNMIL. Of the 226 ICs affected by the new maintenance contract, and as of today, 11 March, only 9 Monrovia based former ICs had not picked up their final pay.

The Mission's recruitment and employment procedures are guided by the strict adherence to all the relevant General Assembly resolutions and policies, the Secretary-General's directives, UN rules, regulations, standards and codes of conduct. The Mission also maintains constant consultations with UN Headquarters on these matters.

The Analyst (Liberia)
Monday, 10 March 2008

BACK-STABBING THE TRC?

Pres. Johnson-Sirleaf's Comments Haunt Her

Following years of violence and chaos, Liberian stakeholders met in the Ghanaian capital, Accra, and with the help of ECOWAS, dedicated the Truth and Reconciliation (TRC).

Victims as well as the perpetrators of the violence and their collaborators are to work together to move the country from an era of violence to an era of truth telling, forgiveness seeking, and cultivation of peace and reconciliation.

TRC has begun that process, but it is now becoming apparent that the process has reached the cross-roads of being "crucified" or preserved: one key former belligerent element in the violence won't testify unless the other does!

Pres. Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf seems trapped in the whirlwind of that contention.



• Pres. Johnson-Sirleaf

The Analyst looks at the President utterances and their implications. Observers who described the current situation of the TRC as "crossroads nightmare" say President Sirleaf has no choice but to testify before the commission in order to preserve its dignity and anchor public trust and confidence in its hearings.

They say it is not the making of a spectacle of the TRC but the fear of silence and political maneuvering, which are the antithesis of the peace and reconciliation process that are enemies of the Liberian people. This refusal, others opined, may embolden some key perpetrators in the Liberian conflict to avoid the TRC process.

Let the President not provide an alibi for individuals who are now sheltering under the cloaks of officialdom to escape cross-examination by the people of this country for past wrongs. If she does, then she must be prepared to take blame for the demise of the TRC process. This is stabbing the commission from the back," they said.

President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf had reiterated her support for the TRC process during her monthly radio talk show, last Tuesday, but then indicated that she would be unprepared to submit to the TRC process and tell her people what she knows about the war and the period dating back to 1979.

Testing before the commission, according to President Sirleaf who insisted that she was authoring a book on what she knew about the Liberian crises, would make the TRC a spectacle.

But observers say the President was making light of a serious situation and that she needed to rethink her decision and choose the route that leads to the revelation of the truth, the offering of forgiveness, and the nurturing of reconciliation.

"We see no point in choosing, at this early stage, the route that will eventually uphold running public speculations and the suspicion borne by it in the name of avoid making the TRC a public spectacle by documenting personal accounts. It is this account that the public, 80% of whom is said to be illiterate, wants to hear in open forum," said political observer Timothy K. Moses of Tubman Boulevard in Sinkor.

He contended that by choosing the route that upholds the integrity of the TRC through the courtesy of a presidential appearance, the Liberian leader would not only be moving the commission from a ditch of public ridicule and disrepute but that she would be galvanizing the summoning and subpoena powers that are crucial to the success of its mandate.

He was not along in his contention and urging of the President to choose the path of open confession that will

open the door for other officials in the cabinet and Legislature to follow.

Some that spoke to The Analyst over the weekend said the President's appearance will also jumpstart the process reconciliation while putting a lid on an era of suspicion, speculation of the true characters of the nation's stakeholders, and the hurt and the posturing for revenge.

By being the highest financial contributor to the commission to date and by following that with a dedication that empowered the commission to begin the process of truth telling, they said, President Sirleaf had set the ball rolling toward the era of peace and reconciliation and cannot undermine that process by refusing to testify.

"It is an irony of a political drama at this time after her avowed public support for the open confession and true telling process for the President to be the first and highest public official to refuse to appear before the commission to tell the Liberian people what she knows about the war that devastated this nation and killed or maimed more than 250,000 of its citizens in cold blood," said one observer.

In commissioning the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in June 2006, President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf declared her unflinching support and unwavering commitment to do everything to make the TRC succeeds in the discharge of its mandate.

The President vowed then that if called upon she would be willing to appear and testify her role in the alleged financing of the rebellions against the Doe and Taylor administrations.

But on January 16, 2008 she modified her desire to tell her stories about the Liberian crises dating far back as 1979, when she said, "Even if I will have to voluntarily come and testify I will do so."

Liberians praised the Liberian leader for the expression of her willingness to dignify the TRC process to appear before the commissioners and tell them what she knows about the civil conflict that broke down every fabric of the nation's social, political and economic infrastructures.

But during her live phone-in radio program, "Conversation with the President," held on the state-owned ELBC and relayed on several local FM stations, President Sirleaf made a shift in her position when she somewhat evaded the TRC process.

A caller quizzed her as to whether or not she has any intentions to appear before the TRC and testify, she said, "I have said that I will appear, but I don't want to make spectacles of the process. You know I am doing a book which will be out next year and most of things people are talking about will be there."

The caller wanted to ascertain from the Liberian leader whether or not she has to emulate the example of former Sierra Leonean President Tejan Kabbah and former South African Presidents Nelson Mandela and Frederick W. De Clarke who appeared before the TRCs in their countries and give account of their involvement in the crises of those countries.

Diplomatically, political pundits say President Sirleaf has expressed her true intention not to appear before the TRC, and according to them, her statement of not wanting to create spectacles amount to declining to testify at all before the Commission to gorge out everything that she knows and participated in during the period covering TRC's mandate -1979 to 2003.

The President's other reason for her unwillingness to appear before the TRC is that she is writing her book that is expected to be released by next year.

She says things she should be testifying to at the TRC hearing are already the chief contents of the book. She however failed to give hints of some of the issues she highlighted in her pending book.

Citizens want Pres. Sirleaf testify

That single statement from the President dashed the hope and expectations that she would one day appear before the TRC to testify. Many believe she has an enriching experience to tell the Liberian people the events as they occurred between 1979 and 2003.

Although the President is yet to expound on what she means by not wanting to create spectacles, a cross section of the Liberians interviewed by The Analyst have expressed mixed reaction to President's statement.

Some believe that her statement was tantamount to eschewing the TRC process which amounts to crucifying the Commission on the altar of fears not to create spectacles and/or sparking controversy that would follow her testimony.

Bana Korkollie, a student of politics at the University of Liberia, agrees with President Sirleaf. He says there is no compelling need for the President to testify if she believes her testimony will create spectacles.

"The President has mammoth problems to tackle. She could rather focus on them instead going to the TRC to open a Pandora's Box. You don't want to shift the focus of the TRC because the president chose not to testify," Bana said.

Cecelia Behjah concurs with Bana. She says the issue of TRC is a matter of reconciliation, and noted that once the president's embarks on the course of reconciling the people this country, she will be strengthening the work of the TRC and at the same time create an enabling environment for all Liberians to co-exist and put the past behind them.

But several individuals and institutions and/or organizations have called on President Sirleaf to make a conscious effort to appear and testify before the commissioners of the TRC as a way of cementing the much-needed reconciliation drive that is yet to gain momentum in the country.

Former Senator Pro-Tempore during the regime of the former President Taylor, Tom Woewiyou recently wrote an open letter to Madam Sirleaf urging her to testify.

According to Woewiyou President Sirleaf's voluntary appearance before the TRC will lift stormy clouds that will continue to haunt Liberians should key players in the Liberian wars like her fail to tell their stories.

The former spokesman and defense minister of the defunct National Patriotic Front of Charles Taylor insists that Madam Sirleaf should appear before the TRC on her own volition to state the roles she played in the protracted and horrific Liberian civil insurgency that allegedly killed over three hundred thousand citizens and residents.

In his letter to President Sirleaf, Woewiyou said, "This letter is to express the anguish that I and most Liberians are experiencing with the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) as a direct result of the lackadaisical and inconsequential treatment given it by your Administration."

He said that based on the belief that the TRC's approach will produce a lasting-healing effect, Liberians and the International Community concluded that a War Crimes Tribunal or a prosecutorial resolution to our problem would do nothing but exacerbate the pain and continue the anguish among the people.

"Had you been interested in genuine-lasting peace and reconciliation among all the people of the Republic of Liberia, and also, had you being conscious of the deep seated pain caused by the 135 years of minority domination of the Liberian society, a principal cause of the war, your administration could have declared and sponsored a broad based National Mourning and Memorial Service across the country for the almost 300 thousand lives lost as a result of the 14-year civil war to include the two Presidents (Tolbert and Doe) that were killed under grotesque circumstances including the 13 Officials of government of the Tolbert Administration who were executed in 1980."

Another civil society organization that believes the testimony of President Sirleaf is germane is the Prisoners and Assistance Program (PAP), which says it is interested in the Truth and Reconciliation achieving its mandate with dignity.

PAP has suggested that President Sirleaf show her support for the TRC process by appearing and testifying to everything that she knows dating from 1979 to 2003.

PAP said it believes that the appearance of President before the commissioners of the TRC will help heal the wounds of the 14-year bitter civil conflict and will provide useful information as to her involvement with the

defunct National Patriotic Front of Liberia.

Quee Jarploe, a secondary school teacher, told *The Analyst*, "The President may have point that her testimony would create spectacles but how much more spectacles she can create than the ones Liberians have heard and see?"

Quee believes that President is simply crucifying the TRC by not appearing before it. "What does she expects of the other warlords and white collars rebels if all of them refuse to appear? She will be showing a bad example," Quee noted.

While proponents of the President's appearance before the commission focus solely on strengthening the citizen's confidence in the commission, there is another question that haunts the process, *The Analyst* has discovered. And that is that some key elements in government are contending that they wouldn't appear unless the President did.

One such element, it may be recalled, is former INPFL field master general, Prince Y. Johnson who now represents Nimba County in the Liberian Senate.

Senator Johnson recently told newsmen that he would not feel the compulsion to testify before the TRC unless President Sirleaf told her role in dethroning the Doe administration and the Tolbert administration before it.

Mr. Johnson's INPFL arrested, tortured, and killed Mr. Doe in September 1990, but he seems to indicate that someone else outside his movement is guiltier than himself.

He has not said who that person is. But by insisting on the testimony of Pres. Sirleaf, many say he may have an ace up his sleeves much as President is prepared to avoid a "spectacle" of accessions and denials.

Problem is, they say, Senator Johnson is not alone; there are others such as Senator Dolo and scores of others.

"If President Sirleaf will not testify because she is writing a book and does not want to make a spectacle of the TRC process, then there is a likelihood that a Pandora box would be opened that will make it difficult for anyone to testify.

The TRC has subpoena power; but if the President flouts its proceedings, will it muster and be justified, to use it against another person?" That is the question many are asking and President Sirleaf will do well to consider the question, analysts say.

Voice of America

Tuesday, 11 March 2008

Museveni Says Uganda Rebels Will Not Face International Criminal Court

By Tendai Maphosa
London

Uganda's President Yoweri Museveni says as part of the peace agreement between his government and the Lord's Resistance Army, the rebels indicted by the International Criminal Court are to be tried in Uganda under a traditional judiciary process. Tendai Maphosa attended a press conference by President Museveni in London and filed this report for VOA.



Uganda's President Yoweri Museveni, chairperson in office of the Commonwealth, arrives at central London's Westminster Abbey, 10 Mar 2008

be happy with the arrangement.

President Yoweri Museveni told reporters the International Criminal Court issued its arrest warrants for the rebel leaders at his government's request as they were waging their insurgency from outside Uganda. Now that peace has been agreed, he says the rebels are to be tried at home.

"What we have said in the agreement is that instead of using this formal Western type of justice we are going to use the traditional justice, we have got a traditional blood settlement mechanism whereby the one who committed a mistake asks for forgiveness and then there is some compensation done to the victims and then that settles the accountability," he said. "In that case we can approach the ICC and say those people whom we had brought to your attention are under our jurisdiction, therefore we would like to withdraw our complaint."

Mr. Museveni said those indicted by the International Criminal Court and other LRA fighters would, under the traditional justice system, avoid going to jail. The president added that those victimized by the Lord's Resistance Army would be compensated. He conceded that some of the victims may not

"Of course they may not be happy, but some of the communities are the ones who asked us to take that route," he said.

ICC arrest warrants for rebel leader Joseph Kony and four others were issued in 2005 for crimes against Humanity and War Crimes committed in Uganda since July 2002. Two of those wanted by the ICC are known to have since died.

President Museveni would not confirm speculation that Kony would attend the signing ceremony in Uganda.

The International Criminal Court did not respond to VOA's request for a statement regarding Mr. Museveni's comments.

But last month, the human rights body Amnesty International said that under the terms of an agreement, known as the Rome Statute, the Ugandan government had to arrest and surrender the wanted men to the International Criminal Court. Then, the government or the arrested persons could argue that Uganda is able and willing to try them in a fair trial which is not designed to shield them from criminal responsibility.

When this was brought to Mr. Museveni's attention he said his legal people would deal with the procedures.

The arrest warrants were a major sticking point in the peace negotiations between the government and the rebels.

The agreement is set for signing before the end of the month and would bring an end to approximately 20 years of fighting between the Lord's Resistance Army and the Ugandan government. Soldiers on both sides have been accused of killing tens of thousands of people and forcibly displacing about two million more

BBC

Wednesday, 12 March 2008

Museveni promises LRA local law
Uganda's President Yoweri Museveni says leaders
of the rebel Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) will face
a form of traditional justice in Uganda.

Three LRA leaders including leader Joseph Kony face prosecution at the International Criminal Court (ICC).

The charges are one of the final sticking points preventing the signing of a final peace deal.

The 22-year rebellion by the LRA in northern Uganda has left thousands dead and nearly two million displaced.

Mr Museveni said in London that local tribal elders had asked for local justice to be applied not be tried by the ICC.

"What we have agreed with our people is that they should face traditional justice, which is more compensatory than a retributive system," Mr Museveni told AP news agency.

"If that's what the community wants, then why would we insist" on a trial in The Hague, he said.

An arrangement is currently being negotiated between the government and rebels.

Under this the LRA leaders could be required to apologise for their actions and make a payment to local elders, but they would avoid prison sentences.

In 2005, the ICC charged five LRA commanders with war crimes and crimes against humanity - two have since been killed.

The ICC was set up six years ago as the world's first permanent war crimes court.

Mr Museveni's decision puts the court in an awkward position for if it does decide to drop the arrest warrants it could be accused of bowing to political pressure.

If it does not, it risks upsetting Uganda's delicate peace process.



Mr Kony remains in DR Congo because of the ICC warrant



Mr Museveni's decision puts the court in an awkward position

Voice of America

Wednesday, 12 March 2008

Uganda's LRA Rebels Welcome President Museveni's ICC Comments

By James Butty
Washington, D.C.

Uganda's Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) rebels say their reclusive leader Joseph Kony would come out of the bush at the end of March to sign a final peace agreement but only if International Criminal Court (ICC) indictments against the LRA's top commanders are lifted. Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni said Tuesday that the LRA rebels would not have to face the ICC. In stead he said those rebels who committed atrocities during the country's decades-long civil war will be tried under a traditional justice system known as Mato Oput.

David Matsanga is chief negotiator and technical advisor to the LRA on ICC matters. From The Hague, he told VOA that President Museveni's comments are a good development for the peace process if they are true.

"We have not had an official confirmation, but if the story has come on the wires, that's it. But for us in The Hague we have pushed it and we have shown that the Ugandan government has already signed a document with us and that the document is very clear. It says that they will not hand over Kony (Joseph) to the ICC. Kony will go under Mato Oput and other alternative means of justice. We are not looking for short-term solutions for our country. We want long-lasting peace," he said.

Chief Ugandan government negotiator Ruhakana Rugunda has said that a final peace agreement between LRA rebels and the government would be signed by March 28 this month.

Matsanga hoped President Museveni's comments would pave the way for signing the final peace deal with the government.

"If that is the situation that the government can put it in practical terms and assures us in black and white and say they have actually no longer acknowledge the ICC as a warranting body, that it can issue warrants against Kony and others, then that is a very good development for us. I've not read the papers. I'm in The Hague where the computers are very complicated. And if that is the information that has come from President Museveni's mouth, then that is very, very good news for the peace process. And we shall go back and talk with General Joseph Kony. If we are satisfied that the warrants will never hinder General Joseph Kony from coming to participate in nation building, that is very good. But if the warrants still stand, I want to tell you we shall not sign the peace agreement," he said.

Matsanga said the reclusive Joseph Kony would likely come out of the bush to sign the final peace agreement but only if President Museveni puts into writing that Joseph Kony and his lieutenants would not face the ICC.

"Yes, if the warrants are officially removed, Joseph Kony together with me and others will come to sign. There is no problem if the warrants are removed. And I repeat if the warrants are removed because the warrants are redundant. They serve no purpose. We have signed an agreement that said you cannot touch the generals again. The people in Uganda do not want warrants. Warrants are an impediment to peace. If Museveni can put this in writing, black and white, write the chief mediator, Dr. Riek Machar (South Sudan vice president) that the warrants are not a problem any more and that he asked the ICC to withdraw the warrants, Kony will sign the agreement," Matsanga said.

He said the 22 year-old civil war in northern Uganda was worth fighting.

“The war in Northern Uganda first of all would not have been there. The root causes must be addressed, marginalization of the people of northern Uganda, the stealing of their cattle, the beating of the people of northern Uganda which forced Kony to go to the bush. Those are the root causes that we are addressing in Juba. President Museveni must address these problems – the imbalances, the inequalities, the security policies against people from the north and the northeast is what made this war to be there,” he said.

Matsanga said both LRA rebels and Ugandan government forces committed atrocities during the war. He said the ICC is biased for bringing indictments against only LRA commanders and not the Ugandan military.