

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



Congregation (convocation) in December at Fourah Bay College, University of Sierra Leone.

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:

Tuesday, 15 January 2008

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

Tuesday, 15 January 2008

Prosecution witness denies incentive for evidence

By Betty Milton

As he continued his evidence yesterday at the Special Court trial in The Hague the third prosecution witness, Vamunya Fiah Sheriff a one-time bodyguard and close ally to former president of Liberia Charles Taylor, denied receiving incentive from the prosecution for his evidence.

During cross examination by the lead counsel for Charles Taylor, Courtney Griffiths, the witness was

asked whether he received money from the Office of the Prosecution (OTP) for the relocation of his family and that OTP was taking care of his family?

The witness denied saying that he was a staff of the Disarmament Demobilization Reintegration (DDR) and that the salary he received from the organization could take care of his family.

The defence counsel disclosed to the witness that, "once you mentioned diamonds then money started coming. You were getting the money without being interviewed. What was the money for?" The defence

lawyer asked.

The witness answered, "the money they gave was to relocate my family. I did not take money for family assistance and nobody gave us cash for medical treatment."

The witness, a former assistant director of operations, told the court that physical cash was not given to him for medical treatment but that if a family member was sick the OTP would take the person to the hospital and would pay the bills "but to say medical allowance was given to us is not true."

Mr Sheriff was further asked by the lawyer whether he attended all meetings with Mr Taylor including the one held in Guinea where Taylor met with Lansana Conte of Guinea and Tejan Kabbah of Sierra Leone.

In response the witness said, "I was there when Taylor told President Kabbah that he was not supporting the RUF and he also told President Conte that some people were grouping in Guinea to fight in Liberia."

The witness was challenged by Mr Griffiths that the witness was not present at this meeting and that in certain meetings bodyguards were not allowed to attend.

The Democrat
Tuesday, 15 January 2008

Letter

When Will Kamajoh Sam Foray Shut Up?

By Gbondima Gbondo

The self-appointed spokesman of the late Chief Sam Hinga Norman, former National Co-ordinator of the Civil Defence Militias disbanded at the conclusion of the criminal civil war and Special Court indictee, has now got a lot of things terribly wrong.

Picking bones with last week's Democrat Newspaper - Sam Foray self-styled Norman family spokesman living in the Diaspora is running dishonestly amok and ceaselessly too.

The criminal elements of the newspaper story question were all sourced to those directly affected by the thuggish and criminal eviction of Mrs. Mamie Sam Hinga Norman unceremoniously out of the Ministerial quarters they have been occupying along Spur Road, Freetown.

Parroting

Who is Sam Foray now parroting the largesse of the Victor Foh and the APC leadership towards the Norman family and those of the other remnant of Special Court indictees? One is familiar with living in the Diaspora, particularly the hassle of one not being a professional or white-collared employee - Sam Foray is not in the bracket of any qualified professional and whose only resources and strength lie in Norman family war pedigree, period!

Critical

What automatically came to the critical mind when one read in the Awareness Times Newspaper Sam Foray's disclaimer of the Democrat Newspaper eviction story is the desperate search of a hustler for a job and there are plenty under the APC.

Returning to the point question is: was there an eviction? Who effected and under whose orders and instructions was it carried out?

Answer

Sam Foray is requested to answer either in the negative or the affirmative, whether there was an eviction or not; in fact, there was and there is no denying that the Spur Road Ministerial Quarters was unroofed at all. That is material for the illumination of the eviction proper. What is, is that the quarters are for ministerial habitation and not for political parties' operatives or their Secretaries General.

Wrong

At least, the SLPP never provided one for its secretary general. Is Foray telling us that Victor Bockarie Foh has never been in a decent housing all these years whilst staying in Freetown for justification for the eviction? It could not have been a Norman family - it could have been anyone else as victim. The eviction was wrong. *Contd. Page 7*

When Will Kamajoh Sam Foray Shut Up?

From Page 6

One empathizes with Sam Foray for his naiveté in appreciating what is good and what is good for the public good and not only for the not narrow-minded family considerations;

this is the engrained attitude of Sierra Leoneans which has been keeping us as a nation down all the time; when shall it change?

Paternalistic

Another error the Sam Foray committed was his paternalistic reference to the disbanded Kamajors; there are no longer any (official) Kamajors in this nation, the fanning of militia sentiments are behind us and those who for want of constituencies desire to capitalize on the vulnerabilities of a group are missing out on a very important point: Sierra Leone is no longer at war.

Victor Foh, the benevolent, (was kind to the Norman family for political considerations) has shown his true colours and how sly and consistent he is where the Normans are not – this is where the real issue is and not in a mere eviction from a ministerial quarters wanting repair and rehabilitation.

To Victor Foh in his hearts of hearts Hinga Norman was not a war hero - but a cannibal, he played the Norman card to get rid of the SLPP - it is too early in the day to forget; try Victor Foh and you will regret it.

For di People

Tuesday, 15 January 2008

British Soja Testifies in Court

Major Joseph O'Brien a British Soja attached at the Royal Air Force Imatt testified before magistrate Shyllon at court no 3 for robbery with violence against him at Lumley Beach last year.

by
**IBRAHIM
KALOKOH**

In this testimony before the court O'Brien said that on the 24 November he was out with company at Lumley beach in a Bar at about 1:30am when some guys came in a hurry and notified them that their friend had been attacked by some guys outside the Bar. That they went out side to see what was going on when they met their colleague struggling to escape from an attack. On attempting to get closer to the scene to rescue Mr Brathony they where also attacked. He said the robbers where well determined and he was assaulted with a head cut on his face with

blood all over his face. He said he was then rescued by his friends and later taken to Imatt at Hill Station where he noticed that his money and his military Id had gone missing.

He reported the incident to their military police (MP) and they reported the matter to the Lumley police station where one of the robbers was kept. Alex Kargbo with the help of some civilians and others passing by during the said incident they arrested him and handed him to the police. The next day he was given a medical paper to be examined and treated at the Connaught hospital and the matter was charged to court after statement at the police station at Lumley.

Standard Times
Tuesday, 15 January 2008

Amputees benefit from German support

BY ABUBAKARR KARGBO

Sierra Leone Panhecs International, a group of Sierra Leoneans based in Dusseldorf, Germany, in partnership with the Mamila Group of Schermbech has donated food items to the War Wounded and Amputees at the Jui Camp on Tuesday 8th January 2008.

The items donated include bags of rice, onions, salt, magi, tomato, oil and other sporting items including football and toys for children.

The Financial Secretary of the Sierra Leone Panhecs International Mr. Osman A. Turay said that they were here to purposely see for themselves the situation of amputees in the country after the end of the war.

He described the donation as significant and told his audience how they had advocated in Germany on their behalf for humanitarian assistance. He appealed to the others to emulate their examples.

Mr. Dieter Smith and Mrs. Judrun Gerwing, who both came from big German families, consider Sierra Leoneans as warm and friendly people. "We are very sorry about the situation and do realize the constraints faced by the people. We are donating these items to show that we are always thinking about you in Sierra Leone," said Mrs. Judrun Gerwing. She commented that the Government of Sierra Leone needs the people to embark on nation build-

ing and stated thus, "The world is a nation owned by human beings, we must see each other as one".

Responding to the courtesies, the Chairman of the Amputees and War Wounded Association, Mr. Alhaji Jusu Jarka thanked the German groups for the donation. He described them as timely. Though not small, yet the donation was considered useful in the sight of God. Mr. Alhaji Jusu Jarka appealed to the group to extend further support to their counterparts in other regions. He noted the importance of education in children, especially those in Third World countries like Sierra Leone. He therefore appealed to the NGOs to support their children.

According to the Vice Chairlady of the Amputees Association, Madam Kadiatu Fornah said the food items will help them from begging in the streets and requested support of wheel chairs and crouches.

Monsters and Critics.com

Tuesday, 15 January 2008

Experts, human right workers testify in Charles Taylor trial

By DPA

The Hague - Testimony in the Charles Taylor trial before the Special Court for Sierra Leone continued on Tuesday with historian Stephen Ellis to take the stand as an expert witness.

Last Monday the prosecution began calling 144 witnesses in the trial against the former Liberian president.

In July Taylor was charged with orchestrating war crimes and crimes against humanity during Sierra Leone's 11-year civil war before the United Nations-backed Special Court for Sierra Leone (SCSL) in The Hague.

Taylor has pleaded not guilty.

In the court, located in The Hague in the Netherlands, Stephen Ellis, a renowned scholar on the history of West Africa, is due to comment on a report he was commissioned to write by the Special Court in Sierra Leone, where Taylor is standing trial.

Speaking to Deutsche Presse-Agentur dpa, Ellis said he will 'assess the background of why and how Taylor became involved in Sierra Leone, and the degree, if at all, to which he became involved in violations of human rights.'

Although the civil wars are over, the situation in West Africa is still very tense and the peace fragile.

'Mr Taylor still has substantial support in Liberia. It would be true to say that some Liberians would be happy to see him punished, but not all,' Ellis said.

Ellis, a senior researcher at the African Studies Centre in Leiden, the Netherlands, and the author of many articles and books on West Africa, will also be questioned by the court about the 1999 book *The Mask of Anarchy: The Destruction of Liberia and the Religious Dimension of an African Civil War*.

Ellis has never met Taylor, but spoke extensively with whom he calls 'people who were part of Taylor's inner circle. Some of the evidence I collected for my book originates from them.'

He emphasizes, however, that his more 'extensive discussions with members of Taylor's inner circle originate from the years following the publication of my book.'

Asked how he explains Taylor's involvement in the war in Sierra Leone, Ellis says Taylor 'wanted to 'punish' Sierra Leone for participating in the international intervention force that was stationed in Liberia in 1990.

Taylor's involvement in Sierra Leone served a clear strategic purpose.'

Apart from Ellis, members of the rebel Revolutionary United Front (RUF) in Sierra Leone will appear in court to testify about their knowledge of the military structure of the RUF and war crimes committed by the rebel forces which they personally witnessed.

A human rights worker has also been called to the witness stand, to talk about the abduction of children and their use as child soldiers between 1991 and 2002 in Sierra Leone

Associated Press

Monday, 15 January 2008

Charles Taylor Team Denies Witness Close

By MIKE CORDER – 16 hours ago

THE HAGUE, Netherlands (AP) — Charles Taylor's defense attorney accused a key prosecution witness at the Liberian ex-president's war crimes trial Monday of falsely portraying himself as a close Taylor aide and of concocting evidence so prosecutors would keep paying his expenses.

"I am suggesting to you that you inflated your role in order to lend a false credibility to your evidence," Courtenay Griffiths said as he completed more than two days of cross examination of former Taylor bodyguard Varmuyan Sherif.

"That is not true," Sherif calmly replied.

Sherif testified last week that Taylor breached a U.N. arms embargo to smuggle guns and ammunition to rebels in Sierra Leone during that country's brutal 10-year civil war, sometimes shipping weapons in rice sacks to avoid detection.

He also called Taylor, the "father of the RUF," an acronym for the Revolutionary United Front, a Sierra Leone militia notorious for terrorizing civilians by chopping off limbs and decapitating the corpses of its enemies.

Both claims underpin allegations that Taylor armed and supported Sierra Leone rebels while he was president of neighboring Liberia. He has pleaded not guilty to 11 charges including murder, rape and organizing a campaign of terror.

Sherif was the first of nearly 60 witnesses from Taylor's inner circle the prosecution plans to call.

Griffiths said last week that Sherif was not as close to Taylor as the witness claimed and that his responsibilities were mainly to ensure that cars in Taylor's motorcade had air in their tires and fuel in their tanks.

Sherif also testified last week that he saw RUF leader Sam Bockarie smuggle a mayonnaise jar full of diamonds into Liberia ahead of a meeting Bockarie had with Taylor in 1998. Prosecutors say that Taylor sold diamonds and used the proceeds to arm rebels, earning them the name "blood diamonds."

Griffiths said Sherif only began telling investigators for the Special Court for Sierra Leone about diamonds after they expressed interest in the subject.

"You told them what they wanted to hear in exchange for money after they told you in 'off the record' conversations that they wanted to hear about blood diamonds," he said.

"That's not true," Sherif replied.

"You're in it for the money, aren't you Mr. Sherif?" Griffiths added, after reading a list of payments in U.S. dollars and local Sierra Leone currency made to Sherif by investigators.

Sherif said the payments were made to cover expenses as he tried to track down other witnesses and payments made to him and his family after threats forced them to leave Liberia.

Last week, as Taylor's trial resumed after a six-month interruption, a Sierra Leonean clergyman and teacher described in harrowing detail the massacre and decapitation of 101 men and the dismemberment of a child soldier. An international diamond expert also testified that diamonds mined by Sierra Leone militias and their forced laborers funded the conflict.

AllAfrica.Com

Tuesday, 15 January 2008

Defense Completes Cross-Examination of Sherif

The monitors of former President Charles Taylor's trial report for www.charlestaylortrial.org

Defense Completes Cross-examination of Sherif; Prosecution calls Dennis Koker as Next Witness

Delay of Proceedings - This morning, the judges arrived in the courtroom at 9 a.m. and the defense team was not present. The judges were informed that defense counsel could not get into their office at the ICC. Judge Sebutinde clarified that the delay was not the fault of the security personnel, rather the "unfortunate forgetfulness" of the defense counsel who did not have their key. Charles Taylor was present at this time. He was wearing a navy suit adorned with gold cuff-links, dark red tie, gold-rimmed sunglasses, a gold ring and a gold watch.

The trial resumed at 9:15am after the brief delay.

The Court noted that the sitting hours for the trial would be changed at the request of defense counsel. The new hours are 9:30-11 a.m.; 11:30 a.m. -1:30 p.m.; and 2:30-4:30 p.m. except on Fridays where there will be no afternoon session.

Defense Continues the Cross Examination of Sherif

In its final day of cross-examination of Sherif, the defense team visited several issues examined on Friday. It also reviewed the payments Sherif received during the course of the investigation into this matter.

Defense Argued that Sherif Received Payments for Testimony Regarding Diamonds

Throughout the cross-examination, Griffiths referred to a summary of payments made to Sherif to suggest that the OTP paid Sheriff to offer testimony regarding blood diamonds. He questioned Sherif's motives for testimony and argued that "You are only in it for the money, aren't you Mr. Sherif." To make his point, Griffiths repeatedly referred to Sherif's statements with regard to seeing a jar full of diamonds in the possession of leading RUF member Sam Bockarie. First, he asked Sherif why he waited 21 months from the start of his involvement in this investigation to mention this jar of diamonds. Sherif responded that he offered more information as he began to trust the OTP. Secondly, Griffiths pointed to payments that Sherif received after testifying about the diamonds. (Charles Taylor and defense counsel laughed when Griffiths mistakenly described the jar as being full of mayonnaise rather than diamonds.) Sherif denied that his receipt of these payments were in exchange of his testimony regarding the diamonds and stated that the payments he received from OTP were for expenses. He further stated that the amounts he received from OTP did not compare to what he earned when he worked for Charles Taylor and that he still received USD 300 each month for his work on the DDRR (disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and rehabilitation) program.

Defense argued that Sherif was Prepped for Cross-Examination Testimony

Griffiths argued that the content of Sherif's testimony had been prepared during the Prosecution's preparation of this witness. In support of this contention, he pointed to references in the payment record where Sherif had been paid for "prosecution prepping". He questioned

Sherif about the content of the preparation sessions that took place in the week before the trial commenced. Sherif testified that the Prosecutors had simply questioned him during these sessions and that he only learned what cross-examination was right here in the courtroom.

Arms and the RUF

Griffiths questioned Sherif with regard to transactions involving arms and the RUF. Griffiths asked whether Sherif had seen arms deals, to which Sherif confirmed that he had seen arms being purchased and taken to Sam Bockarie. This sale of arms, according to Sherif, was done after receiving such instructions. He further testified that Charles Taylor had given him money to deliver to Sam Bockarie for the purchases.

Griffiths then questioned Sherif with regard to whether the majority of arms bought by the RUF came from former ULIMO combatants. Sherif disagreed with this characterization and stated that most of the arms came through Roberts International Airport. Sherif also confirmed that the arms for the RUF came from all warring factions.

During the questioning of Sherif, Griffiths tried to establish that Charles Taylor did not control all of the operations of these factions. Griffiths asked whether Charles Taylor, after his election, controlled everything that various factions and militias did. Sherif agreed that Taylor did not control everything. Sherif also explained that Taylor would only pay money directly to those who were obligated to him. He assisted these individuals with money and rice.

Defense counsel questioned Sherif regarding whether ULIMO bought arms illegally from ECOMOG. Sherif said he was a commander in the battlefield and that he did not purchase arms illegally. Sherif did admit that ULIMO troops would do private deals with Sierra Leonean military officers, but he was not aware of such interactions with Guinean troops. He further explained that many of the arms used by ULIMO came from captured areas.

Defense Counsel Questioned Whether Sherif was part of Taylor's Inner-Circle

Defense counsel continued to cross-examine Sherif regarding whether he was truly part of Charles Taylor's inner-circle. Specifically, Griffiths questioned Sherif regarding a 1998 meeting in Guinea with President Conte of Guinea and President Kabbah of Sierra Leone. Griffiths stated that Charles Taylor informed President Conte that he was concerned that Guinea was preparing to attack Liberia. At this meeting, President Conte assured Charles Taylor that this was not true. Griffiths asked Sherif how he knew about the content of these discussions. Sherif informed him that a close bodyguard was present at that time. Griffiths countered with the argument that this was a lie as no bodyguards were present during meetings between the heads of state. He stated that Sherif was fabricating the closeness of his relationship to Charles Taylor, which Sherif denied.

Prosecution Introduces New Witness, Dennis Koker

At the introduction of the prosecution's next witness, TF1-114, there was discussion regarding a request for rescission of the witness' confidentiality as well as a motion from the defense to exclude the witness based on the impartiality of the trial bench. First, prosecutor Brenda Hollis stated that this witness has testified openly in the previous RUF case and wishes to do the same in these proceedings. The defense counsel raised an objection because the witness testified in the AFRC case that consisted of the same panel of judges. Additionally, defense counsel noted that the panel relied on this witness for several findings of fact in reaching their judgment. The Defense counsel stated that Rule 15 mandates that judges be impartial in proceedings before

this court. Defense counsel stated that they were obliged to make this objection for the record in case there is an appeal in this matter. The court responded that the objection was "completely unmerited" and denied the defense objection.

The witness, Dennis Koker, was sworn in wearing a gray suit, a navy blue tie with stars affixed to it, and an olive green sweater vest. As Mr. Koker will be testifying in Mende, Charles Taylor wore a headphone set for the first time during the day's session in order to listen to the interpretation. Mr. Koker is from Sierra Leone and is a member of the Mende tribe. In 1991, after the war started, he served as a soldier for the NPRC in Sierra Leone. Mr. Koker provided security for the advisor to the President, E.B. Juma. Mr. Juma was a member of the Supreme Council of State.

The Trial of Charles Taylor.Org

Tuesday, 15 January 2008

11:33 Testimony of prosecution witness Dennis Koker continues

Posted by Webmaster on January 15, 2008

Court is back in session. Through a series of questions from prosecutor Christopher Santora, prosecution witness Dennis Koker relates the following:

Wit: During the AFRC junta time in Sierra Leone I was an artist in the Sierra Leonean army. I drew military emblems and wrote on military vehicles. I was at Juba workshop, Juba barracks in Freetown. I was living with my boss, E.B.S. Bangura, the commander of my unit of electrical and mechanical engineers. At the time the AFRC was driven from Freetown by ECOMOG, I saw people running, including Johnny Paul Koroma. I left with them. We went first to Tombo in the Western Urban Area, near Waterloo, on the Freetown Peninsula Road. It's past Tokeh, on the way to York. The group who left were soldiers and their families—old people, children, men, soldiers and families. We were over 5,000. We had vehicles, but most carried property. We walked for some time, and used the vehicles for some time. We walked behind the vehicles part of the time. At Tombo, Johnny Paul said he had given some money to the boatsmen. Johnny Paul was in a vehicle going slowly. With Johnny Paul were Colonel Dumbuya alias "Savimbi", Johnny Moore, my boss E.B.S. Bangura, Edward Collins, Gummo Jalloh, Pa Kosiah, Colonel Mansaray, Major Mensa. Pa Kosiah was an RUF member, a retired soldier. ECOMOG was chasing us from Freetown. Johnny Paul said we were only passing through. We crossed the river to Fogbo in boats. In my boat was Eldred Collins, Johnny Paul's family, the wife of Johnny Paul's chief of staff (Johnny Paul's elder brother—S.F.Y. Koroma). S.F.Y. Koroma himself was not in my boat. After Fogbo, we stayed in Masiaka.

When we got to Masiaka, there were more people than the town could contain. All of the soldiers from Freetown were there, in disarray. Rebels were amongst us too. We did not spend the night there. They told us Issa Sesay, the second in command for the RUF, had sent a message to disarm the Guineans. We were there when the Guinean Alpha-Jets came. There were rebel commanders in Masiaka: Eldred Collins, Gummo Jalloh, Pa Kosiah. Civilians in Masiaka were confused. Some of our colleagues took food from them, entered their houses, took their properties, and some were taken away. Other civilians from Masiaka and surrounding villages were captured and given looted property to carry. The RUF and Juntas were doing this.

From Masiaka we walked all night to Makeni—all of us, including the captured civilians with the loads. In Makeni I saw rebel and soldier commanders: Johnny Paul Koroma, Issa Sesay, Johnny Moore, Eldred Collins, Gummo Jalloh, Sammi, Major Dumbua. We saw houses being set on fire and looted. Issa said nobody should burn houses in Makeni. RUF and the Juntas started shooting at people who were setting houses on fire. I asked Collins why when they went to Mende land they were burning houses, but in Makeni we were ordered not to burn houses. He said it was an order from Issa because it was his home-town. The burning stopped after they started shooting at people. The soldiers and rebels continued to take property; Issa did not stop that. Soldiers and rebels were capturing people: civilians, children, adults, women, men. The captured civilians were forced to carry loads of looted property: household goods, clothing, many things. Some women were made wives. Small children were taken for house chores.

We went to Kono District. We stopped at Mortema and fought there against Kamajors for the whole day. I was not fighting because I didn't have a gun—I had just come from the workshop.

After we drove the Kamajors and SLAs from Mortema, we went to Koidu Town. From leaving Freetown until we arrived in Koidu Town it had been about a week. Some of the Kamajors had been killed, some fled to Guinea, and others to Tongo. RUF and AFRC Juntas now occupied Kono. When I arrived in Koidu, I went with Eldred Collins, Gummo Jalloh, Isaac, Morris Kallon, Pa Kaibanja, and captured children went to Guinea Highway, close to the mosque. We lived there, over 200 yards from the center of Koidu Town. I did not know Isaac well, and first met him when we were there. He was a Liberian from what they were saying. I heard him speaking Liberian language. Liberians say a particular word, “mameh”, that’s distinctive. I stayed a week in Koidu. Issa Sesay and Superman (Dennis Mingo) were there. Mingo was a Liberian, an operations commander who led the attack on Koidu. He captured Koidu from Kamajors and the government. AFRC commanders were also there: Gullit, Alex Tamba Brima, Honorable Sammi, Johnny Paul, Pa Morlai. At Five-Five in Koidu, a place in the center of town where the mosque is, Issa was in a jeep, and took items from us. I saw him standing with a handset—a satellite phone. I am an electrical engineer and can identify it. It was an Ericsson satellite phone with a long antenna. He was in a Suzuki jeep with his bodyguards. He got out and took some of the things we had gathered. He was talking on the satellite phone and I could hear what he was saying. He was telling Mosquito that Kono was now under their control. He addressed Mosquito as “master”. That’s what they called Mosquito even when he went to Freetown. That’s how I knew he was speaking with Mosquito, Sam Bockarie. Food was difficult to come by. We had gathered foodstuffs scattered in the streets, and Issa took some from us. At the time in Koidu, we had taken someone’s house and lived there. I saw RUF and Juntas burn houses. I asked them why. They said they had been ordered to burn civilian houses by the high command. I even saw my colleague soldiers burning civilian houses. I went and met Eldred Collins and said I had heard that house burning had started again. He said this is “Operation No Living Thing”. He said it was an order from Mosquito—that we are burning houses so that if ECOMOG or government soldiers come, they cannot stay in Kono. He said we will take the zinc roofs and build other houses. Then the RUF and Juntas would completely control Kono. I saw them shooting civilians in Kono. I saw them capture civilians in Koidu Town and surrounding villages, looting property, capturing kids—boys and girls, they shot civilians who were unwilling to carry loads. In Koidu, they captured civilians and forcefully initiated them into the force. Many women and children were captured. Those who weren’t captured ran away toward Guinea as refugees. In Koidu, women were captured and made into wives. It was like serving yourself tea to drink. It was very common wherever we went—in Freetown, Masiaka, Kono, and all along the way there. I saw it myself. Operation No Living Thing went on every day and every night, burning houses all over Kono. They burned mud houses and even concrete houses. In Koidu Town, there were more houses burned down than I could count. There were more than 100 and I couldn’t count them anymore. I wanted to find a way to reach Kailahun because that was my mother land. The group was moving towards Kailahun anyway. RUF and AFRC fighters had broken into a bank in Koidu and taken money and diamonds. They wanted to use this to open a route to Kailahun. Eldred Collins handed us over to be security for this together with Staff Sergeant Saliu Kanneh, who was Julius Maada Bio’s bodyguard. I saw the money myself in big bags. I became frightened because I had taken a military oath. We had no respect. In the military I had taken some courses and learned how to fight a war. I saw that the money was looted and thought it would be a disgrace to my family.

From Koidu I went to Gandorhun with a convoy that included Johnny Paul Koroma, Morris Kallon, Pa Kusia, Gummo Jalloh, Antie Rose (Johnny Paul’s eldest brother’s wife), and the captured civilians, who carried the loads. I personally was with my aunt, Madam Jemba Ngobeh and Eldred Collins together with his family. When we got to Baoma, I saw Kanneh who had accompanied the money ahead of us. He was naked and said they had accused of him of stealing. I learned the money was to be taken to Liberia. Our colleagues told us anything

beneficial would be taken to Charles Taylor. I did not see money given to Taylor, but I used to see things taken to Liberia.

I went with Eldred Collins, his family and others to Kailahun, along with Issa Sesay. The next morning Eldred Collins called me and took me to Issa at the roundabout in Kailahun. He gave me an AK-58 gun and said we should take arms and ammunition to Jokebu, the war front. I was supposed to use the AK-58 for offensive and defensive purposes. Jokebu is past Manowa, three miles from Gomubonbu, about nine miles northeast of Kailahun. We were carrying explosives, 7.62 NATO ammunition, 7.6 Chinese ammunition, accomodative charges—also called tank mines, and rocket propelled grenades. We used a vehicle that took us part of the way, then walked through Mende Burma and Mende Kalema with the material. We asked civilians to carry the loads on their heads. At Manowa, we took a ferry to Jokebu.

At Jokebu, we were lodged by Major Saddam, a member of the RUF and the commander at Jokebu.

Court has adjourned for the mid-morning break. The session will resume at 11:30. With the half-hour delay in video and audio to the media center, our live-blogging will continue at 12:00.

Day 7 of witness testimony

Posted by Webmaster on January 15, 2008

This morning prosecution attorney Christopher Santora will continue his examination of witness Dennis Koker, a Mende man from Sierra Leone. Court is expected to be called to session at 9:30. With the half-hour delay to the media center here at the International Criminal Court, where the Special Court for Sierra Leone is sitting for this case, our coverage will begin at 10:00 (9:00 in Sierra Leone and Liberia). As always, we endeavor to make our account accurate, but cannot fully guarantee accuracy. This is not a full transcript, but rather a summary.

Defense Completes Cross-examination of Sherif; Prosecution calls Dennis Koker as Next Witness

Posted by Webmaster on January 14, 2008

Delay of Proceedings

This morning, the judges arrived in the courtroom at 9 a.m. and the defense team was not present. The judges were informed that defense counsel could not get into their office at the ICC. Judge Sebutinde clarified that the delay was not the fault of the security personnel, rather the “unfortunate forgetfulness” of the defense counsel who did not have their key. Charles Taylor was present at this time. He was wearing a navy suit adorned with gold cuff-links, dark red tie, gold-rimmed sunglasses, a gold ring and a gold watch.

The trial resumed at 9:15am after the brief delay.

The Court noted that the sitting hours for the trial would be changed at the request of defense counsel. The new hours are 9:30-11 a.m.; 11:30 a.m. -1:30 p.m.; and 2:30-4:30 p.m. except on Fridays where there will be no afternoon session.

Defense Continues the Cross Examination of Sherif

In its final day of cross-examination of Sherif, the defense team visited several issues examined on Friday. It also reviewed the payments Sherif received during the course of the investigation into this matter.

Defense Argued that Sherif Received Payments for Testimony Regarding Diamonds

Throughout the cross-examination, Griffiths referred to a summary of payments made to Sherif to suggest that the OTP paid Sherif to offer testimony regarding blood diamonds. He questioned Sherif's motives for testimony and argued that "You are only in it for the money, aren't you Mr. Sherif." To make his point, Griffiths repeatedly referred to Sherif's statements with regard to seeing a jar full of diamonds in the possession of leading RUF member Sam Bockarie. First, he asked Sherif why he waited 21 months from the start of his involvement in this investigation to mention this jar of diamonds. Sherif responded that he offered more information as he began to trust the OTP. Secondly, Griffiths pointed to payments that Sherif received after testifying about the diamonds. (Charles Taylor and defense counsel laughed when Griffiths mistakenly described the jar as being full of mayonnaise rather than diamonds.) Sherif denied that his receipt of these payments were in exchange of his testimony regarding the diamonds and stated that the payments he received from OTP were for expenses. He further stated that the amounts he received from OTP did not compare to what he earned when he worked for Charles Taylor and that he still received USD 300 each month for his work on the DDRR (disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and rehabilitation) program.

Defense argued that Sherif was Prepped for Cross-Examination Testimony

Griffiths argued that the content of Sherif's testimony had been prepared during the Prosecution's preparation of this witness. In support of this contention, he pointed to references in the payment record where Sherif had been paid for "prosecution prepping". He questioned Sherif about the content of the preparation sessions that took place in the week before the trial commenced. Sherif testified that the Prosecutors had simply questioned him during these sessions and that he only learned what cross-examination was right here in the courtroom.

Arms and the RUF

Griffiths questioned Sherif with regard to transactions involving arms and the RUF. Griffiths asked whether Sherif had seen arms deals, to which Sherif confirmed that he had seen arms being purchased and taken to Sam Bockarie. This sale of arms, according to Sherif, was done after receiving such instructions. He further testified that Charles Taylor had given him money to deliver to Sam Bockarie for the purchases.

Griffiths then questioned Sherif with regard to whether the majority of arms bought by the RUF came from former ULIMO combatants. Sherif disagreed with this characterization and stated that most of the arms came through Roberts International Airport. Sherif also confirmed that the arms for the RUF came from all warring factions.

During the questioning of Sherif, Griffiths tried to establish that Charles Taylor did not control all of the operations of these factions. Griffiths asked whether Charles Taylor, after his election, controlled everything that various factions and militias did. Sherif agreed that Taylor did not control everything. Sherif also explained that Taylor would only pay money directly to those who were obligated to him. He assisted these individuals with money and rice.

Defense counsel questioned Sherif regarding whether ULIMO bought arms illegally from ECOMOG. Sherif said he was a commander in the battlefield and that he did not purchase arms illegally. Sherif did admit that ULIMO troops would do private deals with Sierra Leonean military officers, but he was not aware of such interactions with Guinean troops. He further explained that many of the arms used by ULIMO came from captured areas.

Defense Counsel Questioned Whether Sherif was part of Taylor's Inner-Circle

Defense counsel continued to cross-examine Sherif regarding whether he was truly part of Charles Taylor's inner-circle. Specifically, Griffiths questioned Sherif regarding a 1998 meeting in Guinea with President Conte of Guinea and President Kabbah of Sierra Leone. Griffiths stated that Charles Taylor informed President Conte that he was concerned that Guinea was preparing to attack Liberia. At this meeting, President Conte assured Charles Taylor that this was not true. Griffiths asked Sherif how he knew about the content of these discussions. Sherif informed him that a close bodyguard was present at that time. Griffiths countered with the argument that this was a lie as no bodyguards were present during meetings between the heads of state. He stated that Sherif was fabricating the closeness of his relationship to Charles Taylor, which Sherif denied.

Prosecution Introduces New Witness, Dennis Koker

At the introduction of the prosecution's next witness, TF1-114, there was discussion regarding a request for rescission of the witness' confidentiality as well as a motion from the defense to exclude the witness based on the impartiality of the trial bench. First, prosecutor Brenda Hollis stated that this witness has testified openly in the previous RUF case and wishes to do the same in these proceedings. The defense counsel raised an objection because the witness testified in the AFRC case that consisted of the same panel of judges. Additionally, defense counsel noted that the panel relied on this witness for several findings of fact in reaching their judgment. The Defense counsel stated that Rule 15 mandates that judges be impartial in proceedings before this court. Defense counsel stated that they were obliged to make this objection for the record in case there is an appeal in this matter. The court responded that the objection was "completely unmerited" and denied the defense objection.

The witness, Dennis Koker, was sworn in wearing a gray suit, a navy blue tie with stars affixed to it, and an olive green sweater vest. As Mr. Koker will be testifying in Mende, Charles Taylor wore a headphone set for the first time during the day's session in order to listen to the interpretation. Mr. Koker is from Sierra Leone and is a member of the Mende tribe. In 1991, after the war started, he served as a soldier for the NPRC in Sierra Leone. Mr. Koker provided security for the advisor to the President, E.B. Juma. Mr. Juma was a member of the Supreme Council of State.

Court is adjourned until tomorrow at 9:30 a.m.

Posted in Daily analysis | Tagged: diamonds, Koker, Sherif | No Comments »

5:00 Fourth prosecution witness takes the stand

Posted by Webmaster on January 14, 2008

Prosecutor Christopher Santora calls the fourth witness in the trial of Charles Taylor, witness TF1-114.

The witness will be testifying openly in the Mende language. This witness also testified openly in the RUF case (against Issa Sesay, Morris Kallon and Augustine Gbao).

Defense counsel Morris Anya (ph) is raising an objection because the witness also testified in the AFRC case before this same panel of judges. The chamber relied on this witness for several findings of fact in the AFRC judgement. Defense points to parts of the AFRC judgment that relied on testimony from this witness. The findings are: Bockarie controlled Kailahun, Beudu was attacked by the RUF, civilians were attacked in Beudu, identification of Alex Tamba Brima, that Alex Tamba Brima was a respected football player, that Brima took part in the May 1997 coup...

Judge Sebutinde asks what the point of this objection is.

Defense: We are concerned about the impartiality of the trial chamber regarding this witness. The witness is being brought before the chamber to testify about facts and events that took place in Beudu, Kailahun District. Some of that evidence featured in that trial of the AFRC. The chamber found him to be credible. Now he appears before the same judges. It would be appropriate, in accordance with Rule 15 of the rules of procedure and evidence, we are obligated to make this a matter of record. We propose that this situation could be resolved. Justice Sow on this bench, who did not take part in the AFRC trial, could perhaps determine the credibility of this witness. We would make the same application regarding any other witnesses who were found credible to appear in the AFRC case.

Prosecutor Brenda Hollis: Defense has raised nothing that might lead to a conclusion that the judges' impartiality would be impaired for any reasonable grounds. The standard in Rule 15 has not been met.

Judge Lussick adds: we have no idea what the witness will say in this case.

Hollis: Judge Sow is an alternate judge in this case. We oppose the defense application and make the same submissions regarding defense objections for other AFRC witnesses appearing in this case.

Judge Julia Sebutinde (to defense): Do you know that this witness is to repeat his testimony from the AFRC case?

Defense counsel Anya: There will be overlap, surely. We do not cast doubt on the judges' integrity. We are obligated to make this objection because you will be hearing testimony on matters you have already considered to be facts.

The judges are conferring.

Judge Sebutinde: The objection is completely unmerited under Rule 15. We are professional judges who are able to weigh the evidence without bias. The two cases are very different. We now call on the witness to be brought in so that we may hear his evidence.

The witness, wearing a gray suit, white shirt and dark tie, has taken the stand and is being sworn in on the Bible. He speaks in Mende through an interpreter.

Through a series of questions, prosecutor Chris Santora asks the witness about his identity and story:

Wit: My name is Dennis Koker. I was born in Jimmi Bagbo, Bo District, in Sierra Leone. I was born on December 26, 1968. I am of the Mende tribe. I went to school in my home town, Jimmi Bagbo. I stopped after grade five. I speak Mende - my mother tongue, English and Krio. Before the war in Sierra Leone, I worked in a construction company. I made road signs. After the war started, I joined the army of Sierra Leone, Daru barracks. I joined in March or April, 1991. During the NPRC regime in Sierra Leone, I was still a member of the army. The NPRC regime came into power in 1992 and was led by Captain Valentine Strasser. At that time I was personal security for a presidential advisor named E.B. Jumu. He was a member of the Supreme Council of State and an advisor to the president. At the time of the AFRC coup, I was at Juba in an electrical engineering workshop.

Time has run out on today's session. Court is adjourned to 9:30 tomorrow. Our coverage will continue tomorrow morning at 10:00 (9:00 in Sierra Leone and Liberia).

Posted by Webmaster on January 14, 2008

Prosecution has moved to enter additional items into evidence, referenced during the testimony of Varmuyan Sherif.

Defense objects to submission of an "operation order". The witness identified the signatures of Abu Keita and Benjamin Yeaten on the document. The document is not relevant to the accused, and we don't know where the document came from. Prosecution: Witness has testified to Benjamin Yeaten's signature is on this document, and that Abu Keita went to Sierra Leone to fight with the RUF, then returned to Liberia with the RUF to assist in the fight with Taylor against LURD. That is relevant to theories of liability in this case. This is proof of Taylor's close association throughout the charged period with the RUF and AFRC.

The judges are conferring among themselves.

Judge Sebutinde: The document is admissible under rule 89. The defense objections go to weight of this evidence.

Defense objects to admission into evidence of a photo of a little girl introduced by President Tejan-Kabbah at an ECOWAS meeting. This photo is not relevant. There is no connection between this victim and the accused. Prosecutor Brenda Hollis: The photo is relevant for several reasons. It shows his intent or awareness of crimes he was aiding and abetting. To his awareness of crimes he was instigating. It put him on notice of violent crimes that are reasonably foreseeable.

The judges are conferring:

Presiding Judge Sebutinde: The photo is relevant and admissible.

Defense has no further objections to admission into evidence of prosecution exhibits. Various photographs are admitted into evidence. One defense exhibit, a map marked by the witness, is also entered into evidence.

Judge Sebutinde has thanked and dismissed prosecution witness Varmuyan Sherif.

UNMIL Public Information Office Complete Media Summaries 14 January 2008

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

Newspaper Summary

Supreme Court rules in favor of presidential appointment of city mayors

(New Vision, The News, Heritage, Daily Observer, Plain Truth, Public Agenda, The Analyst, Liberian Express and The Inquirer)

- The Supreme Court of Liberia on Friday voted two for and two against to decide whether or not the President has the constitutional authority to appoint city mayors, but Chief Justice Johnnie Lewis broke the tie voting in favor of the Government's position that the President can appoint city mayors.
- The Court's ruling followed a petition filed against the appointment of a city mayor by two key opposition political parties, Liberty Party and the Congress for Democratic Change in October last year. The high court's ruling has reignited controversy over the issue, particularly since critics believe that Article 54(d) of the Liberian Constitution seem ambiguous on the matter.
- Article 54(d) states that "The President shall nominate and, with the consent of the Senate, appoint and commission: superintendents, other county officials and officials of other political sub-divisions

Four experts arrive for Teenager's autopsy

(The Analyst)

- Justice Minister Philip A.Z. Banks said experts from the Ghanaian Capital, Accra have arrive in the country to redo the autopsy of 13 years old Meideh Angel Togba who was reportedly found dead in the bathroom of guardians in Monrovia. A previous autopsy conducted to establish the veracity into the killing of teenager showed that there was no sign of foul play but child advocacy and civil society organizations raised suspicion about the credibility of the post mortem examination and encouraged the government to bring in independent expert to redo the autopsy.

Public Information Chief Asks Media to Stress Reconciliation in TRC process

(Liberian Express)

- The Chief of UNMIL Public Information Section, George Somerwill said the media has a key role to play in the ongoing hearings at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and as such must help to reconcile people regardless of their ethnic background through their reportage.
- Mr. Somerwill described Liberia's transition as critical, saying the TRC is the most important aspect needing special attention which requires all Liberians to be honest to come and speak the truth to settle their difference.

Radio Summary

Senator Says Court Decision Signals Rebirth of Superior Presidency

- Addressing a news conference Sunday, Grand Kru County Senator Blamo Nelson said that he foresees the rebirth of a superior presidency with the Supreme Court's decision supporting the Presidency's move to appoint city mayors. He expressed disappointment over the Court's ruling that election of City Mayors is Constitutional.
- Senator Nelson asserted that President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf could use the opportunity to appoint only Unity Party members to mayoral posts throughout Liberia. However, he assured

the public that his party, Alliance for Peace and Democracy will lead in efforts at the Senate not to confirm Unity Party members the President would appoint as City Mayors.
(Also reported on Star Radio, Truth FM, SKY FM and ELBS)

Lawmakers Resume Work following Recess

- According to the National Legislative Press Bureau, the House of Representatives of the National Legislature will today Monday convene at the Capitol Building to commence the Third Session of the 52nd National Legislature following three months of recess with the hoisting of the flags of Liberia and those of the 15 Counties.
- House Speaker Alex Tyler is expected to deliver the welcome statement with President Sirleaf, the Speaker of the Parliament of Burkina Faso Wright Michael Christian Kargborie, the Deputy Speaker of the Assembly of Gambia Abdullai Bonjue and other Parliamentarians from Ghana and Sierra Leone as well as members of the diplomatic corps in attendance.

(Also reported on Star Radio, Truth FM, SKY FM and ELBS)

Alleged Rapist Breaks Jail in Nimba County

- Correspondents said that alleged rapist Young Gogbayei who had been detained at the Sanniquellie prison, over the weekend broke jail and is on the run. Sanniquellie Central Prison Assistant Superintendent Wilfred Gono said that Mr. Gogbayei escaped from his cell three days ago having been arrested and detained last year for allegedly raping a 10-year-old girl.
- Meanwhile, the Superintendent of the Sanniquellie Central Prison Hilary Quiemie has been arrested and detained in connection with the escape of the alleged rapist for whom Nimba County authorities called on the Liberia National Police, citizens and residents of the County to assist in re-arresting the fugitive.

(Also reported on Star Radio, Truth FM, SKY FM and ELBS)

Leading Newspaper Apologizes for Running Libelous Advertisement

- Sources said that *The Inquirer* newspaper apologized to the head of the Mombo and Company Accounting Firm Sam Mombo for recently publishing two libelous advertisements. The apology followed a conference which the Press Union of Liberia organized to probe into an earlier complaint filed to it by Mr. Mombo. Mr. Mombo had earlier threatened to take legal action against the paper if it did not get redress from the Press Union.

(Also reported on Star Radio, Truth FM, SKY FM and ELBS)

Ghanaian peacekeepers honoured for peacekeeping duties in Liberia

Careysburg, Liberia – The Officer-in-Charge of the UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), Mr. Jordan Ryan, has commended Ghanaian military peacekeepers in Liberia for exhibiting high standards of professionalism, dedication and commitment in their peacekeeping duties. Mr. Ryan was speaking at a medal ceremony in Careysburg, some 40 kilometers northwest of Liberia’s capital, Monrovia, where he awarded UN peacekeeping medals to over 800 UNMIL Ghanaian soldiers serving in Liberia.



Mr. Ryan inspects Ghanaian soldiers on parade

Mr. Ryan, who is the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Recovery and Governance, noted that, “in addition to your peacekeeping responsibilities, you have continued to provide humanitarian assistance to the local population by offering them free medical services and also participating in medical outreach programmes.” He cited the contingent’s latest humanitarian initiative of providing trained teachers and school supplies to the Careysburg Primary School, which the Deputy UN Envoy described as “highly commendable.”



UNMIL Ghanaian military women on parade

Paying tribute to the Ghanaian military contingent commander, Brig.-Gen. Emmanuel Quist, and contingent commander, Lt.-Col. Matthew Essien, DSRSG Ryan pointed out that their outstanding and exemplary leadership enabled them to efficiently manage the contingent. Mr. Ryan also commended the Government and people of Ghana for their immense contribution and commitment towards ensuring that peace and stability are maintained in Liberia.

Maj.-Gen. J.K. Attipoe, Commandant of the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Institute in Ghana, headed the Ghanaian Government delegation that came to Liberia for the function. Also attending the ceremony were the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General for

Rule of Law, Ms. Henrietta Mensa-Bonsu, Force Commander Lt.-Gen. Chikadibia Isaac Obiakor, Deputy Force Commander Maj.-Gen. Muhammad Tahir, the acting Head of Mission of the Ghanaian Embassy in Liberia, Mr. Peter Owusu Manu, Sectors Commanders and Liberian Government and other UNMIL officials.

Ghanaian peacekeepers were among the first to arrive in Liberia to prepare the way for the establishment of UNMIL in October 2003. Since then they have played a pivotal role in keeping and sustaining the peace in Liberia.

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