SPECIAL COURT FOR SIERRA LEONE
PRESS AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE

Old Fourah Bay College in Cline Town. Photo Credit: Elizabeth Blunt (of BBC)

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 May 2007

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

The Spark
Tuesday, 15 May 2007

Kamajor Chief Priest Speaks

Initiation ceremony is a transitional period from a stage innocence to one of maternity. This practice is as old as creation. In our traditional communities, young boys and girls were or are expected to undergo these rites so as to prepare them for the challenges that lies ahead of them.

The young girls who are kept in seclusion for a considerable period are taught how to take care of their future husbands, prepare food, the home and how to rear their off springs in a healthy way. The boys are trained for masculine tasks like farming, protecting the land and family issues. One tribe that was renowned for training boys on warfare or military activities was the Kpa-mende whose youths were always ready to take up arms and defend their motherland in the absence of the stand by army.

It was not a surprise to most people that as the country was entangled in a protracted war where it was difficult to distinguish a soldier from that of a rebel as the hit and run attacks became unbearable with the killing of many innocent lives . It was during this era of no confidence in the them military force by the civilian populace that the word Civil Defence Unit began to surface and youths formed check points to monitor in the influx of people or monitor the strange activities of people.

With the dastardly attack on Komboya Chiefdom in which it was alleged that an SLA junior officer killed a commander on the ground of he being a loyal soldier, the attack on Bo town that was repelled by the youths and the killing of over 300 family members of Maada Bio in Tihun village alongside a renowned Paramount Chief, Farma Mahulor III of Kuamebai Krim by the Revolutionary United Front forces rebels leaving the corpse to decompose in open air without a befitting burial which is against the norms of the Mende culture.

Alie Kondowai was inspired in a dream to halt this barbaric act. Alie Kundorwai, the High Priest of the Kamajor militia had the revelation in a dream from his brother Kposowah who was also killed by the rebels to go in search of some herbs and follow certain instructions to protect his initiates.

According to the famous initiator, the charms and concoctions would make the militia resist to bullets as they have to abide by the taboos surrounding the initiation. In a bid to weed out unwanted elements whose desire were for personal gains or seeking revenge, candidates were nominated by their tribal elders as a requirement. It became very interesting to hear of women initiators like Mama Munda who also had considerable followers though not to that of Kondowai. As the Council Act of 1960 gave the mandate for the Police Force to issue single barrel guns to people who were respected within their communities with licence to use these guns for hunting , it was very easy to secure large cash of fire arms to defend the land. In 1995, the actual initiation started in Bonthe District and initiates from Bo, Moyamba and Pujehun Districts converged for basic military training before being sent to the battle field to halt the advances of the RUF. As a matter of fact, the fighters were expected to observe all the rules inorder to be bullet free.

At the height of the war, there was total disruption of commercial, agricultural and educational activities as a result most school pupils had no option but to join the bandwagon hence the group was accused of using child soldiers. With the proliferation of different kamajors initiation in various parts, groups like 'BORN NAKED' ' YAA MUNDA THE A VONDOR' emerged.

The operation 'Born Naked' group went to war without shirts . The Mama Munda battalion were a replica of the Manes invasion group. They dressed and behaved like (Sumba Worriors). The initiation of these kamajors posed a serious security threat as there were series of skirmishes between the regular SLA forces and the kamajors . In some places, the inhabitants preferred their brothers to police their land rather than the SLA , hence putting them odd in the eyes of the International Community. Further more, with

The boys are trained for masculine tasks like farming, protecting the land and family issues. One tribe that was renowned for training boys on warfare or military activities was the Kpa-mende whose youths were always ready to take up arms and defend their motherland in the absence of the stand by army

the hardship or poverty plaguing the land, the civilians given the task to feed and pay regular dues for the up keeping of the militia was another cause of concern. With the huge cost involved in the initiation process, we began to witness indiscipline people finding their root into the organisation hence exposing the group to ridicule as some used it for vengeance in the death of loved ones or the enrich themselves quickly. In the process, some lost their lives in the battle field.

After the 1996 Elections that brought President Kabbah to power, a command structure was set up to compliment the effort ECOMOG and the loyal forces In August 1996, the movement became a recognised body as government began to make provisions for them as President Kabbah appointed a National Co-coordinator, the late Chief Norman who was also Deputy Defence Minister. This did not go down well with the disloyal soldiers.

The Kamajors in 1996 attacked camp Zokoda in the Kenema District, librated Pujehun District, forced the RUF to negotiate and help in the restoration of President Kabbah after the May Coup. In March 2003, late Norman was arrested by Special Court of Sierra Leone while he was Minister of Internal Affairs. He was denied access to the TRC and in his absence, the movement slowly went underground . Norman was kept in ex- communication by the SCSL issuing a press release on 21st January 2005 banning all external communication with him The Registrar of the Special Court for Sierra Leone ordered all communications involving Sam Hinga Norman except for those of his legal representation be restricted within 14 days after a telephone conversation was intercepted and recorded later.

He later died in a Military Medical Hospital in Senegal and the corpse flown to Sierra Leone. Though he was later cleared of criminal records, his role in the civil conflict still liners in the minds of most Sierra Leoneans and presently little is known of the Karmajor as most of them have returned to their normal life.

Awareness Times
Tuesday, 15 May 2007

Senegalese appointed over trail of Charles Taylor

The Special Court for Sierra Leone has appointed Justice El-Hadji Milick Sow for the trial of former Liberia President, Charles Taylor, reports said. The swearing ceremony took place in the courthouse of the Special Court for Sierra Leone before the Acting Registrar, Herman Von Hebel. Representing the government was the Attorney-General and Minister of Justice. Sow will have other judges in attendance during Taylor's the trial in The Huge. His duty is to play a second fiddle —to step into the shoe of any judge that might not be available. He is reported to have a wealth of experience and has worked in so many places.

Standard Times
Tuesday, 15 May 2007

"Independence, Impartiality, Fairness and Competence" … The Backbone of the Judiciary

Apparently there are four aspects of judicial status or benchmark. These are independence, impartiality, fairness, and competence.

INDEPENDENCE

The constitutional principle sometimes referred to as the separation of powers is acknowledged, at least in theory, in most western societies, even though its implications are in some respects a matter of debate. The judiciary is seen as the third arm of government, separate from and independent of the two political arms, the legislature, and the executive. Judges maintain the rule of law, uphold the constitution, and administer civil and criminal justice according to law. Because the executive government is itself a major litigant, the independence of the judiciary from the executive government is indispensable if there is to be public confidence in the administration of justice. Almost all criminal cases are conducted in the form of a contest between the executive government and a citizen. The executive government, either directly, or through corporations, in which it has an interest, is a party to civil litigation. Civil litigation is often concerned with rights and obligations as between the government and citizens. Constitutional cases are often fought out between different governments in our global structure. Courts decide whether legislation is valid, and determine as between governments the boundaries of their respective powers. Although judges are servants of the public, they are not public servants. The tenure which they enjoy the procedures which are required in the case of a proposal for their removal, and their institutional separateness from the executive arm of government, are all aimed at securing that position. The essential obligation of a public servant is consistently with the law to give effect to the policy of the government of the day. The duty of a judge is different. The duty of a judge is to administer justice according to law, without fear or favour, and without regard to the wishes or policy of the executive government. Judges, of course give effect to the will of parliament as expressed in legislation, but their duty is to behave impartially in conflicts between a citizen and the executive. There may be a big difference between the will of parliament as expressed in legislation and the policy of the executive government from time to time.

Most members of the community tend to regard judges as public servants, at least until they begin to reflect upon the significance of the principles just mentioned. Judges however should know better. There is an occasion, pressure from some quarters for judges to be treated or to permit them to be treated, as though they were public servants. Sometimes, people in public life express frustration or indignation at the unwillingness of judges to con-

form to the policy of the executive government. Just as nature abhors a vacuum, so there is often an institutional bureaucratic abhorrence of independence. This is not surprising. Independence of any kind is likely to be regarded as a threat to a government's capacity to govern. Government would in some respects be more efficient, and life for those in power would be easier, if judges were public servants and were obliged to conform to government policy. However, efficiency, and an easy life for those in power, is not the primary aspirations of a democratic society. Those considerations are overridden by the demand for justice, and our community's idea of a just society is one in which the judiciary is, and is seen to be, independent of the executive government. It is the duty of all judges to respect and maintain that independence. That does not involve maintaining an attitude of abrasive antagonism towards everyone in government. On the contrary, there is a great deal to be achieved through appropriate cooperation between the three arms of government. Yet, if judges do not respect and value their own independence, no one else will. The independence of judges should be seen, either by the community or by judges, as some kind of perquisite for the office. Sometimes there is an unfortunate tendency to overstate the principle of independence and to invoke it in circumstances where it is not, in truth, under threat. There is a tendency in some people to turn every disagreement about the terms and conditions of judicial service, or the funding of the court system, into an issue of judicial independence. This creates a degree of cynicism.

IMPARTIALITY

Throughout the ages, and in all societies, impartiality has been regarded as the essence of the administration of justice. The image of the just judge as one who favours neither the rich nor the poor, but gives a true verdict according to the evidence adduced in court. In our post modern deconstructionist society, there are those who regard impartiality as an illusion. Rejecting as fraudulent the notion that anyone is capable of being truly impartial, some people promote the idea that the only decent judge is one who sets out to be actively partial, using judicial power to address the injustices of society, redistribute assets, promote the interests of some social group seen as worthy of support, and administer justice, not according to the law, but according to some overriding standard existing outside the law. People who take this approach consider that impartiality is bogus, and the pretence that it exists, or is capable of being achieved, is an impediment to true justice. Judges, however, are supposed to be dedicated to the proposition that the administration of justice requires both the reality and the appearance of impartiality and that both are attainable. Any judge or officer of the court who deviates from this principle is not fit to be a judge or an officer of the court. It has been wisely observed that enthusiasm for a cause is usually incompatible with impartiality, and is always incompatible with the appearance of impartiality. It may be necessary, however to emphasize the importance of maintaining the appearance of impartiality. This is where, for some judges, difficulties can arise.

It is essential for a judge to maintain in court, a demeanor which gives to the parties an assurance that their case will be heard and determined on its merits, and not according to some personal predisposition on the part of the judge. Human nature being what it is, some people are better than others at maintaining such a demeanor. It is indisputable that so many people have observed the performance of a judge who failed to live up to the ideal of impartiality. Legal practitioners likewise have all seen judges behaving well, and in another occasion seen judges not behaving well. Modern lawyers, litigants, and witnesses, and the public generally, are much more ready to criticize judges whose behaviour departs from appropriate standards of civility and judicial detachment. This is a good thing. If judges behave inappropriately, they should be criticized. Of course, on occasions, some judges are exposed to wrongheaded, extravagant, or unfair criticism. That is the price that has to be paid to remind all judges of the necessity to conduct themselves with dignity and decorum.

Let's comment on two elements such as prejudgment. Complaints of apprehended bias often involve, not a suggestion of personal prejudice, but a suggestion that the judge has made up his or her mind, and become committed to a particular outcome, before the parties have a full and fair opportunity to present their evidence and their arguments. This can be a particular problem in an age when there is a great deal of pressure on judges to deal with matters expeditiously, to discourage time wasting and delay on the part of litigants and lawyers, and to dispose of huge caseloads in a managerial rather than a judicial fashion. Some judges respond to these pressures over enthusiastically, and in doing so fall into the trap of giving the appearance of pre- judgment. There is a balance to be held between the needs of efficiency and the imperative of maintaining both the appearance and the reality of an open mind until the point of decision making.

As a general rule, it is inappropriate and often unfair for a judge in reasons for judgment to make an unqualified adverse finding concerning someone who is not a party to litigation and who has had no opportunity to answer the allegation in question

The second matter to be mentioned concerns what might generously be described as judicial humour. Some judges, out of personal good nature or out of a desire to break the tension that can develop in a courtroom, occasionally feel it appropriate to treat a captive audience to a display of wit. Sometimes this is appreciated by the audience, but sometimes it is not. When it is not, the consequences can be very unfortunate. Judges and legal practitioners may underestimate the seriousness which litigants attach to legal proceedings, thus making them to become insensitive to the misunderstandings that might arise if the judge appears to be taking the occasion lightly or, even worse, if the judge appears to be making fun of someone involved in the case. Without wishing to appear to be a killjoy. Judges should be able to caution themselves against giving too much scope to their natural humour or high spirits when presiding in a courtroom as most litigants and witnesses do not find court cases at all funny.

FAIRNESS

Every citizen of a state should be familiar with the essential requirements of fairness in the conduct of court proceedings. The judge must give both parties a proper opportunity to put their evidence and their arguments and it is imperative on him/her to listen to the evidence and the arguments and approach with an open mind. There are, however some practical aspects of the requirements of fairness that it is easy to overlook. In our adversary system of litigation the parties, through their legal representatives, decide the issues that will be presented for judicial determination, and the evidence that will be relied upon for that purpose. This is not the occasion to go into the merits of the adversary system as compared other systems. It is the occasion, however to emphasize one important aspect of that system. The judge only addresses such issues as the parties invite the judge to address and learns only so much of the facts of the case as will appear from the evidence that is tendered in the course of the proceedings. Fairness, to the parties, and perhaps to third parties, requires that the ultimate judgment be expressed in the light of an understanding of the limitations inherent in the process. Judges in the course of delivering reasons for judgment, sometimes make findings or comments which reflect a lack of appreciation of those limitations. There may be, for example, a background to litigation of which the judge will get only a partial glimpse. It may be quite unfair for the judge, in those circumstances to express unnecessary value judgments, opinions, or general conclusions of fact, without knowing the whole of the background in question. Again, evidence may be given which affects some third party not involved in the litigation but which is not challenged by the other party to the proceedings. It can cause great unfairness to third parties if judges make findings of fact or comments which pay no regard to the matter. As a general rule, it is inappropriate and often unfair for a judge in reasons for judgment to make an unqualified adverse finding concerning someone who is not a party to litigation and who has had no opportunity to answer the allegation in question. Some types of proceeding are, by their nature, particularly apt to give rise to problems of this kind.

TO BE CONTINUED

The News
Tuesday, 15 May 2007

Human Rights Commission to monitor TRC recommendations

By Allieu Kamara

Mrs. Jamesina King Chairman of Human Rights Commission Sierra Leone (HRCSL) told this medium recently in Parliament that government has appointed HRCSL to monitor the implementation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC).

She said the objective of HRCSL is the promotion and protection of human rights in Sierra Leone.

Mrs. King was in parliament to brief MPs on the functions of her commission. Giving the background of the commission, Mrs. King said the United Nations and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) encouraged governments to set up national human rights institutions as a means of creating and promoting a national culture of human rights. She said the HRCSL is an independent national human rights institution established by the Human Rights Act No.9 of 2004.

Mrs. King said their functions include investigating allegations of human rights violations and report, promote respect for human rights through public awareness and education programmes and cooperate with other institutions including public interest bodies, NGOs and international organizations working in the field of human rights.

Mrs. King said they also visit prisons and other places of detention to inspect and report on conditions. She however said that HRCSL is not a substitute for the courts. Mrs. King said HRCSL can refer to the high court for contempt any person who refuses without justifiable cause to comply with decisions, direction or order within a specified time.

The Analyst (Liberia)
Friday, 11 May 2007

The Irony of Taylor's Hague Trial

The capture, turnover, and transfer of former President Mr. Charles Taylor to face charges for war crimes and crimes against humanity may be dramatic alright.

But one seemingly difficult things that many, mainly prosecution, defense, and interest groups, don't seem to take seriously or acknowledge as a hurdle is who will testify against or in behalf of the accused.

In a suspicious alignment of vocal former aides, millions of former victims, and an overbearing international stakeholder community, analysts cannot help but to wonder about the prospects of Taylor's June 4th trial.

"Will the UN go back on its travel sanctions and assets freeze in order to nullify the "shortchange" trump card that Taylor's defense is all-too-prepared to use? Where the sanction is allowed to remain in force, will Taylor's loyalists dare the consequences any violation may bring and stand up to be counted?

Or in other regards, will ordinary victims muster the courage to testify against Taylor and risk being marked as 'the one who sold the Papay?" are the lingering questions observers are pondering.

The Analyst's Staff Writer adapts this review of the questions from an FPA article.

Taylor's June 4th trial date is drawing near and the common concern amongst prosecutors, defense lawyers, and international stakeholders seem to be about the nature, rather than the outcome, of the trial.

Key defense lawyers recently alleged that many former Taylor aides were ready to proceed to The Hague to testify on his behalf, but that they were unlikely to do so unless the restriction and spectre of the UN travel and asset freeze sanction were removed.

Shortly after Mr. Taylor's indictment in 2003, the UN short-listed a number of his former associates and family and passed a resolution prohibiting them from traveling and transacting business abroad. It is this batch that defense lawyers are arguing constitute the potential core of Taylor's witness nest that is threatened by the travel sanctions.

None of these individuals have made public their intentions to testify in favor of Taylor but reports say that has not subtracted from the arguments of Taylor's defense team that the restriction placed on them will hamper Taylor's chances at the trials.

Potential pro witnesses? Former dictator Mr. Taylor, Grace Minor, Monie Captan, Tom Woewiyu and Gus Kouwenhoven, himself recently indicted for arm-related offenses but denied ties to Taylor. Woewiyu fell out with Taylor while Minor and son-in-law Captan were later sidelined.

"Witnesses will come from Liberia, witnesses will come from Sierra Leone; witnesses will come from other parts of Africa; witnesses will come from Europe, witnesses will come from the

United States; witnesses will come from all over the place because this case is a case that involves threats to international peace.

So whatever it takes to bring the truth out so that mankind will have a basis for judgment as to what really took place in Sierra with respect to the role Mr. Taylor might have played is crucial," Cllr. Lavelli Supuwood, one of the lawyers for the former dictator, told VOA's James Butty in a recent interview.

Supuwood contended that there was no shortage of witnesses to defend Taylor provided the sanction spectre was removed by the UN in time for the defense to set up its witness pool.

Supuwood, also a former solicitor general of Liberia who recently returned from The Hague having met with Taylor, says the former Liberian president would call an array of witnesses to make his case.

The boast however appears to contradict concerns by another Taylor lawyer who openly complained this week that Taylor's defense is finding it difficult to bring witnesses to the stand because of the travel ban and assets freeze imposed on people deemed close associates of Taylor.

At a pretrial hearing in The Hague, Taylor's Karim Khan said his efforts to build a defense were being hampered by the perceived threat of U.N. sanctions. "Numerous individuals ... are unwilling to speak to the defense (because) they are petrified of having travel bans imposed upon them and having their assets frozen by the Security Council because they are associated to the defense of Mr Charles Taylor."

The chief defense lawyer said he would file a motion asking judges at the court to grant witnesses protection from sanctions. According to him allowing the sanctions to remain up to the trial date "would amount to witness intimidation, whether it comes from a group or a party or even as august a body ... as the Security Council of the United Nations".

Khan told the hearing that Taylor is being shortchanged compared to the late former Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic, who had a much larger defense team when he went on trial for genocide at the Yugoslav war crimes tribunal.

"The concern of my client is that he is being shortchanged," Khan said, adding that Taylor was having trouble meeting court officials to discuss the problem.

Familiar names top potential witness list

At the height of Taylor's rule and rise to rule in the bushes, the names of Benoni Urey, Edwin Snowe, Grace Minor, Kadietou Diarra- Finley, Belle Dunbar, Emmanuel Shaw, Kanda George, Tom Woewiyu and a host of others, now on the United Nations travel ban, openly displayed their support for Taylor.

But in the waning days of Mr. Taylor's reign, many fell by the wayside in a bid to escape international justice over their association with the dictator.

FrontPageAfrica.com recently gathered that Finley, who has made several trips over to Europe and the U.S. over the last year, would testify against her former boss.

However, Finley contacted FPA recently to denounce the report and stated that she has no intentions whatsoever of testifying against Taylor.

Asked whether she would testify in his defense, Finley declined to respond, but repeatedly declared that she has no intentions of testifying against Taylor.

Despite Finley's denial, Taylor's family members insist that, the former Taylor aide has struck a deal to testify against him. Finley explained that her trips to Europe were to seek medical treatment.

Kanda George sits in the office of former President Charles Taylor. Mr. Taylor is charged with 11 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity for his alleged role in the Sierra Leone civil war. Both the prosecution and Taylor's defense lawyers are busy preparing for the case.

"Mr. Taylor is doing well. As you know, he's a man with a very strong will power. He is looking forward that this wonderful case can start. As you know, Mr. Taylor, as a defendant in a major criminal case, does not have the burden to prove his case. It is the prosecution that has the burden to prove the crimes charged. So we are all looking forward to see this day," he said.

Potential witnesses - with family ties

Besides Finley, potential witnesses could include Snowe, a former son-in-law and former managing director of the Liberian Petroleum Refinery Corporation (LPRC).

However, much of the burden to testify could rest on Urey, who was cited by the Coalition for International Justice (CIJ) in 2005 as working with the deposed Liberian dictator to maintain Taylor's interest in Liberia.

Snowe, Urey, Shaw and Minor served as economic enforcers for the deposed dictator in Liberia, through a network of shady companies' setup in Liberia and around the world.

Die-hard loyalists to Mr. Taylor, including Cyril Allen, an ex-Chairman, National Patriotic Party could also be called as a character witness, so could the three former wives of the former president - Jewell Howard Taylor, now a Senator from Bong County, Agnes Reeves Taylor, currently in London, England and Taupee Taylor. Reeves-Taylor was also mentioned as a witness against her former husband, but she too has denied that she will testify against her former husband.

Potential witnesses - with ties to arms

While much attention will be placed to the close relatives and aides of the former president, prosecutors may turn to those directly associated to Taylor's alleged arms dealings as it relates to aiding and abetting the civil war in Sierra Leone.

Observers say this batch of potential witnesses may actually testify against Mr. Taylor to save their necks rather stand up for a pariah former underworld boss.

Chief among them is Ibrahim Baldeh, an arms dealer cited by the U.N. for being in contravention of Security Council resolution 1343.

Baldeh is a strong a strong supported Mr. Taylor's alleged effort to destabilize Sierra Leone and gain illicit access to diamonds; involved in illicit diamond sales.

Others, likely to be mentioned but difficult to call include, businessman Victor Bout. Bout is an arms dealer and transporter of weapons and minerals also citied by the U.N for breaching UNSC resolution 1343 by supporting Taylor's effort to destabilize Sierra Leone and gain illicit access to diamonds.

Though Bout has been investigated by police in several countries, he has never been prosecuted for arms dealing. But he is among more than 60 people under a UN travel ban for their association with Taylor.

Also in the list are Richard Ammar Chichakli, a Syrian-born US citizen and a family friend of the bin Ladens, Mamadee Mousa Cisse, a former Chief of Presidential Protocol and chairman of Mohammad Group of Companies, Orhan Dragas, a business partner of Slobodan TESIC, Duane Eckli, Chief Executive Officer of Ducor World Airlines, Talal Eldine, a Lebanese businessman and paymaster of ex-President Taylor's inner circle, and Baba Jobe, a former Director of the Gambia New Millennium Air company.

Despite a laundry list of potential witnesses, fear of repercussions appears to be the key that could decide Taylor's fate or perhaps lay the groundwork for appeal. Legal experts say Taylor's defense could claim that witnesses' fear of testifying is ground for a claim of unfair trial - a motion, Khan has promised to file in a bid to have the judges grant witnesses protection from sanctions.

Nevertheless, Supuwood believes that his client would get a fair trial. Contrary to what some had suggested, Supuwood said Taylor does not intend to use his case to put the system on trial the same way that the late Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic did.

"I don't see Taylor using this case for any other purpose than to defend himself against those who have charged him for being responsible for the socio-political problems of Sierra Leone," Supuwood said.

A consultant to the prosecution team declined to confirm some of the names to FPA late Wednesday, but suggested that there may be some surprises.

"Anyone who complains about travel ban, it is obvious that that person is planning to testify in his favor, because if the prosecution wants anybody to testify, they will not have the problem of worrying about the travel ban, the ban will be lifted on that person," said the consultant, who preferred anonymity for this report.

"It's going to be an interesting trial, but I'm not sure Taylor is going to go down that easy. One thing the defense has succeeded in doing is they have succeeded in infiltrating the prosecuting team," according to the consultant.

The Prosecutors' Headaches - The Flipside

For now, interests would be high in those sidelined to testify on Taylor's behalf or against him. In the high-stakes game of loyalty and betrayal, compensation and a promise of the freedom to travel again may be the ticket that decides Taylor's fate or bring to light his one-time friends, aides and family members who may have turncoat in pursuit of freedom from UN sanctions.

Added to the other extremes where there are high chances that ordinary Liberians and former victims may refrain from testifying against Taylor for fear of being branded "selling-outs", observers say there is no question that the nature, rather than the outcome of the trial remains yet a major concern.

Analysts say while it is only the defense that is making noise about witness intimidation, the prosecution has its own headaches with credible witness selection and that they too stand a slimmer chance since they have the burden to prove guilt.

"Fear of being branded a sellout and the likely sparing use of incentives may hamper the prosecutors' chances. They have not said so, but their recent trip to Monrovia is an indication that they have their problem too.

They've to draw a thick line between incentives to encourage witnesses to come out and bribery. They need credible witnesses like former fighters and battle-front commanders to make their case.

These are unlikely to take the stand without adequate incentives. Who will believe former terror-mongers and former foot-soldiers let off the hook, is another million-dollar question," said one analyst.