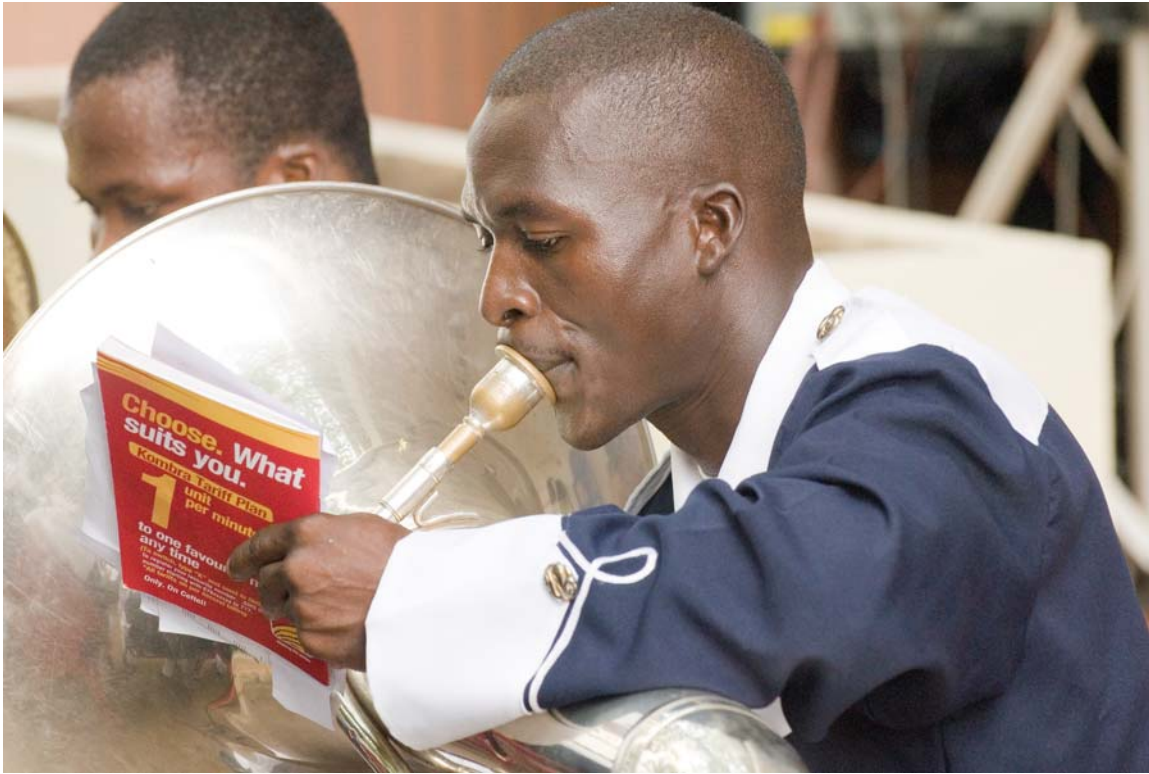


**SPECIAL COURT FOR SIERRA LEONE  
PRESS AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE**



**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, 19 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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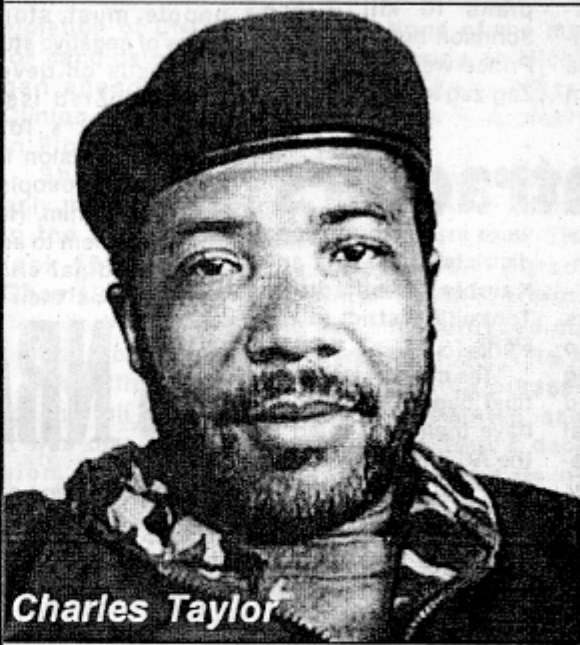
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Exclusive

Wednesday, 19 March 2008

Taylor  
Destroys  
Tangible  
Evidence



**Charles Taylor**

*By Musa Sesay*

A staunch commando of former Liberian President nick-named Zig-zag has told the court in The Hague, where is former boss Charles Taylor is standing trial for war crimes and crimes against humanity that tangible human evidences were executed by the orders of Taylor. He said Taylor dabbled in the diaboli

*Contd. page 2*

## Taylor Destroys Tangible Evidence

*From front page*

cal acts, after the Special Court in Freetown indicted him when he was still president.

He recalled major incidents he was instructed to keep the people he suspected having the potentials to give evidences to the special court in cryp-

tic silence.

Zig-zag told the court that the execution of Sam Bockarie, alias Mosquito and the Sierra Leone junta leader, Johnny Paul Koroma, was orchestrated by Taylor who instructed a crack squad to eliminate them in Monrovia.

He said Mosquito and his family were wiped out completely while Johnny Paul was also reported to have been brutally killed.

"President Taylor has plans to kill Prince Johnson but failed after Prince went to Nigeria," Zag-zag told the Court.

Concord Times  
Wednesday, 19 March 2008

# 'Leather Boot' promises diligence as Koroma's guard

By Ibrahim Tarawallie

Head of close protection unit of the Sierra Leone Police force Idrissa Ahmid

Kamara aka 'Leather Boot' Tuesday expressed commitment to serve the country diligently and as

patriotic citizen.

In an apparent attempt to allay fears

*Contd. page 4*

## 'Leather Boot' promises diligence as Koroma's guard

*From page 1*

in the public that he was part of an inept junta regime, Kamara claimed that he was one of the architects of the peace process in Sierra Leone.

"I convinced Foday Sankoh to sign the peace accord," he argued and condemned all "allegations and reckless statements" made against him by some members of the public.

He said it is high time

people stopped castigating those of them who were part of the military junta and urged that Sierra Leoneans should move towards the development of the nation.

He said he was a trained and professional soldier who joined the army in 1985, adding that he has made so many sacrifices for the development of the country which he must be commended for.

Kamara said he was not trained to victimize

innocent citizens of the country.

"I am trained in order to project my role as part of the SLP. God being my helper, I will help provide security for my country," he promised.

He said they were not rebels but patriotic soldiers and that there was no way they as Sierra Leoneans could turn down their integrity as peaceful citizens.

[Several other local newspapers carried similar stories.]

Independent Observer

Wednesday, 19 March 2008

Opinion

## **Commentary**

# **Leatherboot & Co Are Ex-Combatant, And So What?**

**By Sorie Sudan Sesay**

*The brouhaha over President Dr. Ernest Bai Koroma's choice of some former ex-combatants as presidential body-guards, is again taking another toll, this time around coming from no less a person than the Secretary General of the Civil Society Charles Mambu.*

*Of course, the criticisms of Leatherboot and others, has been going on for quite sometime now, but when such criticism are coming from a man claiming to be advocating for the voiceless, is something that deserves to be treated with the importance it deserves.*

*Civil Society Movement is expected to work as a pressure group seeking and advocating for the voiceless on national issues, but Mambu's last Tuesday remarks over the BBC is the least expected from a man of his calibre and such a statement is very inciting and a recipe for chaos.*

*Mambu's and others only argument is that Leatherboot and others are ex-combatants and a threat to national security. This, to me is absolutely crazy!*

Cotton Tree News

Monday, 17 March 2008

### **Evaluating Transitional Justice**

Written by Francis Sowa

Monday, 17 March 2008

The Transitional Justice processes in Sierra Leone should be evaluated to see if they are contributing to the country's democracy. This is according to Valnora Edwin, Coordinator of Campaign for Good Governance (CGG). Madam Edwin told CTN that Sierra Leone was going through the processes and it was necessary to see their usefulness in ensuring a smooth post conflict transition. Campaign for Good Governance in partnership with the African Transitional Justice Research Network is currently hosting a training workshop on 'Evaluating the Transitional Justice Processes in Sierra Leone'. Transitional Justice is described as methods that States may use to address past human rights wrongs including judicial and non-judicial approaches.

Standard Times  
Wednesday, 19 March 2008

# Diamond Airlines Hovercraft to rescue passengers

BY UNISSA BANGURA

Diamond Airlines, a private Nigeria owned company with various branches of business in Sierra Leone will very soon commence its over craft services at Aberdeen in the west part of Freetown to Mahera beach in Kaffu Bullom chiefdom for passengers wishing to travel out of the country.

The hovercraft a service that is the first in Sierra Leone has been in operation for close to five years. It has obtained clearance from the Sierra Leone Maritime Authority and the Ministry of Transport and Aviation for its worthiness.

Independent sources say the hovercraft itself is modern with no questionable character in terms of safety.

It was further confirmed by Maritime Authorities that the vessel has never defaulted and as regards the last incident, it was simply the work of some people who were trying to sabotage the efforts of management of the hovercraft.

Speaking to the captain Mr. Brim and the engineer Mr. Metrin Bell

at Aberdeen where the hovercraft parks, the British national explained to this writer that the hovercraft is perfectly in order and they are now fixing some new parts to upgrade the safety standard and smooth running of the vessel.

Both experts disclosed that the spare parts already imported for the safety operation of the vessel cost over USD400,000.

In a brief interview with the Managing Director Chief Tony Chinyere said that he is a businessman with a clean record and believes in delivering efficient services in his operation.

He added that very soon the hovercraft will be in operation and tickets will be sold at affordable prices.



## Jamaica Gleaner News

Wednesday, 19 March 2008

<http://www.jamaica-gleaner.com/gleaner/20080319/lead/lead6.html>

### **Jamaica-born UK lawyer to speak at UWI**

published: Wednesday | March 19, 2008



PATTERSON

**Jamaica-born United Kingdom lawyer, Courtenay Griffiths QC, will be the guest speaker at this year's Norman Manley Lecture.**

Griffiths is an expert in international criminal law and has earned a reputation as one of the top lawyers in the UK.

He is currently the lead counsel of the defence team appointed by the Special Court for Sierra Leone to represent ex-Liberian President Charles Taylor in The Hague.

This year's lecture, hosted by the Norman Manley Law School, will be held today at the University of the West Indies-based facility, starting at 7:00 p.m.

"I want to compare the ways in which US and British foreign policy operates without being subject to the kind of strictures now being applied to Charles Taylor, and ask if there can truly be a system of international jurisprudence when certain states consider themselves to be above the law," Griffiths said in reference to his lecture topic.

#### **Not guilty**

Taylor, who is currently in detention in The Hague, has pleaded "not guilty" before the Special Court on all counts of an 11-count indictment, including war crimes and crimes against humanity for alleged atrocities committed in the neighbouring country of Sierra Leone. It is alleged that he supported the key rebel group, commonly referred to as the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), through the provision of ammunition and other technical support.

One of the highlights of this year's lecture will be the reflections on the life of National Hero Norman Manley by former Prime Minister P.J. Patterson. Patterson, who served as prime minister for years and worked as an organiser for the People's National Party during the leadership of Norman Manley before himself becoming president of the party.



The prestigious, annual Norman Manley Lecture is staged to highlight issues of national and international public concern. Over the years there have been several distinguished guest lecturers from different fields of endeavour.

This year's lecture has been supported by several members of the business community, including Jamaica National Building Society, Capital and Credit Merchant Bank, NEM Insurance and Guardian Life Limited.

## UNIOSIL Media Summary

Tuesday, 18 March 2008

### **Ex-president Tejan Kabbah to testify at the Special Court**

The United Nations backed Special Court for Sierra Leone, has granted an order to former Revolutionary United Front (RUF) War Lord, Issa Sesay, to issue a subpoena to former President Tejan Kabbah, to testify on his behalf. The Special Court granted the request under rule 54 of the rules of procedure and evidence that prompted the Trial Chamber to rule past Thursday that it was satisfied that the application meets the required standard for the issuance of a subpoena. The defence lawyers for Issa Sesay, first accused in the RUF trial, have earlier requested the issuance of a subpoena of ex-President Kabbah, for a pre-testimony interview and testimony at the trial. Tejan Kabbah could give materials and substantially assist in proving Issa Sesay's innocence in regard to counts 15-18 of the consolidated indictment. "This evidence is unique and could not be obtained from any other person" the defence team submitted, *Concord Times* and *Awoko* report.

## The Analyst (Liberia)

Friday, 14 March 2008

### TAYLOR ORDERED ME BURY A PREGNANT WOMAN

#### Chief of Operations testifies

The ongoing Taylor trial in The Hague continues to unearth surprises with some of the key operatives of the former president and rebel leader not only denouncing him but also serving as witnesses for the prosecution that is seeking his eternal placement behind bars for alleged war crimes and crimes committed against Sierra Leoneans.

One of the fresh evidence for the prosecution, who alleged that he was the Chief of Operations for the war machine of Charles Taylor, has said that he was ordered by his former boss to bury in the most ignoble manner, a pregnant woman for reasons best known to Taylor.

The trial that has now gone on for several months, recently witnessed the testimony of one ex-NPFL former fighter, in person of Zigzag Marzah.

Mind moving as the testimony, the Analyst brings its many reader this special coverage of the testimony that left many hearers spellbound.



[Ex- Pres. Charles Taylor](#)

A former fighter of the defunct National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) has taken the witness stand in the ongoing trial of former President Charles Taylor and told the court that he (Taylor) ordered a lot of atrocities in Liberia and Sierra Leone during the course of the conflict.

According to the ex-fighter, who claims to be an NPFL insider, he “Zigzag” Marzah was ordered by Taylor to commit atrocities in both Liberia and Sierra Leone, and that he also traded arms for diamonds with the Revolutionary United Front (RUF)

From the scripts of his trial reports, which were posted on the internet since March 12, the prosecution attorneys seek to call a new witness and applied to the judges to omit the scope and length of witness’s examination and cross-examination.

But the judges denied the request to limiting the cross-examination. Based on this issue, the new witness, Joseph D. “Zigzag” Marzah, took the stand. Making his testimony, Marzah recounted that he was with Taylor’s National Patriotic Front for Liberia (NPFL) from the very beginning to the end and that he had risen to become Taylor’s Chief of Operations.

He recounted numerous atrocities committed in Liberia and Sierra Leone, all of which he said had been ordered by Taylor. He also claimed that near the end of the Sierra Leonean conflict, Taylor ordered him to execute Revolutionary United Front (RUF) commander Issa Sesay, who was at the time cooperating in the Peace process at the time.

In addition to Taylor’s orders, Marzah alleged that Taylor directly participated in the burying alive of a pregnant woman in Monrovia. He further alleged there was arms-for-diamonds trading between Taylor and the RUF in Sierra Leone, a claim he did not elaborate.

Opening the counter arguments into the allegations raised by the witness, the Lead Prosecutor Brenda Hollis explained to judges that rather than continue with the witness who was still testifying at the end of the on the day before (Isaac Monger), the prosecution would seek to call for a new witness.

The trial chamber which had earlier denied close session for the witness, said that the global ruling the witness was only willing to testify if additional measures were put in place to protect him and his family.

For logistical reasons not described in court, these protective measures can only be undertaken this week and shortly after the witness's return home.

For this reason, the witness would be unavailable after Friday.

The prosecution applied to the chamber to limit direct examination to one day, and the defense cross-examination to one-and-a-half days, or two days if court sits exceptionally in the afternoon on Friday. Hollis cited legal precedents for such limitations on the length of the cross-examination.

Lead Defense counsel Courtenay Griffiths argued that he did not know what the witness would say, and therefore would not be fulfilling his duty to his client if he agreed in advance to limit his cross-examination.

He argued that the chamber has an overriding duty to justice and fairness, and that concerns for witness safety and protection should not limit the right of the accused to a fair trial, including the right to full cross-examination. Griffiths cited various provisions of the Special Court's Rules of Procedure and Evidence, as well as a legal ruling at the Yugoslav tribunal.

After hearing a reply from Hollis, who argued that the rights of victims and witnesses must be balance with the rights of the accused, the judges retired from the courtroom to consider the arguments.

Upon returning, Presiding Judge Teresa Doherty announced their ruling: that it would not be in the interest of justice to grant the prosecution request for limits on cross-examination. The prosecution nonetheless called the new witness to the stand, in hopes that he might complete his testimony before the week ends.

#### **Direct examination of "Zigzag" Marzah**

The new witness was Joseph D. "Zigzag" Marzah, a Liberian of the Gio tribe. Marzah testified that he was one of 17 members of Taylor's NPFL who invaded Liberia from Ivory Coast on December 24, 1989, when his direct commander was Prince Johnson. After early infighting in the NPFL, Taylor ordered Marzah's release from a container burned by NPFL Special Forces, in which around 20 other Johnson loyalists died.

Marzah swore his loyalty to Taylor and fought under his command. Marzah testified that while Prince Johnson's forces were disciplined if they abused civilians, under Taylor they were encouraged to rape and loot; he alleged that before Taylor became president of Liberia, his forces did not receive a salary, but were encouraged by Taylor to compensate themselves by stealing from civilians.

He described NPFL checkpoints where human intestines were used as rope and strung across the road, and human heads were placed on sticks; he said that Taylor had seen many of these checkpoints.

Marzah described Taylor's introduction of Foday Sankoh to the NPFL. Later, after Marzah said Taylor had developed complete trust in him, Taylor allegedly sent Marzah to accompany Sankoh on a second incursion into Sierra Leone in 1991, where Sankoh was to become a leader.

Marzah said that when his NPFL men captured Koindu, Sierra Leone, Sankoh cried over the dead civilians and soldiers and burned houses. Marzah said he called Taylor on the radio to complain of Sankoh's weakness, and that Taylor assured him Sankoh would get used to it.

Marzah described serving in a number of NPFL units after his return to Liberia, including the "Death Squad", responsible for executing soldiers who did not obey Taylor's orders.

Marzah testified that when the ULIMO faction controlled Lofa County, Taylor gave him money to buy kola nuts and bribe Guinean border officials to take the nuts into Guinea. After this worked twice, the new route and relationships were used to transport arms and ammunition, hidden under the kola nuts, to Kissidougou, from where they were transported to the Liberian embassy in Guinea for onward smuggling to the RUF in Sierra Leone.

Marzah said that after ULIMO disarmed to join a government of national unity, the roads to Sierra Leone were open to him, and he took between 20 and 40 shipments of arms and ammunition to the RUF, always at Taylor's order.

He described some of these deliveries, and said that when he rode at the front of the convoy, they were never stopped at checkpoints because everyone knew he was Taylor's Chief of Operations.

The prosecution asked Marzah about diamonds, and he testified that he had escorted diamonds or people carrying diamonds to Taylor on many occasions.

He described in detail one very large diamond brought by Sam Bockarie ("Mosquito") to Taylor. Marzah said Taylor was impressed and gave himself and Bockarie money, along with a large quantity of ammunition to take back to Sierra Leone.

He then described a subsequent trip with Bockarie to deliver a jar of diamonds to Taylor, and Taylor's decision to introduce Bockarie to officials in Burkina Faso who could sell weapons to the RUF.

Shortly thereafter, a large Russian cargo plane brought arms and ammunition to Roberts International airfield in Monrovia, and Marzah stated that it contained many truckloads of material. Marzah said it took him 5-6 trips with two trucks to take it all to Sierra Leone.

Marzah testified that Taylor later ordered him to bring Sam Bockarie with his men from Sierra Leone, in order to end the RUF infighting between Bockarie and Issa Sesay. Bockarie and his men were integrated into various military and police units in Liberia, and many were sent by Taylor to fight in Ivory Coast.

Prosecutor Nick Koumjian asked whether Taylor had ever given him an order regarding RUF commander Issa Sesay. Marzah said that when he was in Kono, he received an order from Taylor to execute Sesay because he had signed some papers as part of the peace agreement, which Taylor regarded as a betrayal. Marzah was not successful in executing Sesay.

At the prosecution's request, Marzah went on to describe executions had conducted under Taylor's orders. He described several massacres of civilians in Liberia ordered by Taylor because he said the civilians had collaborated with his enemies.

This included a massacre of 600 at Camp Carter. In one massacre in and around Gbarnga, Marzah said he and his men had cut open the bellies of pregnant women and killed babies.

He also described an NPFL ambush of loyalists of Prince Johnson on the day that Johnson captured Samuel Doe, the President of Liberia, and alleged that Taylor ordered him and his men to kill all 72 of the Johnson men with knives.

Following the lunch break, court went into a very brief closed session without the witness, at the request of the prosecution. Just minutes later, the open session resumed.

Marzah testified that when Mr. Taylor joined the six-person interim presidency in Liberia in 1995, he ordered a ceremony to be conducted. He allegedly sent men, including Marzah and Benjamin Yeaten, to bring a pregnant woman from the streets of Monrovia.

The woman was stripped naked and placed in a pit dug on the beach behind Taylor's residence. She pleaded for her life, but, according to Marzah, Taylor threw in the first sand and then his men buried her alive. He stated that Taylor then held a white sheep by its horns while his men sacrificed it over the buried woman.

He said a massacre of around 80 civilians in the town of Kammantahun, carried out by Benjamin Yeaten, but blamed on him. He testified that Taylor gave him a red motorcycle in order to stop him from proclaiming his innocence at a massacre Marzah found disturbing - because he said that Taylor wanted to cover up for Yeaten.

Marzah described the execution of RUF commander Superman, which allegedly was organized by Yeaten at Taylor's order. Taylor believed that Superman had betrayed him. Marzah described Superman subsequently being beheaded and dismembered, with his hand delivered to Taylor as proof of the execution.

Marzah said that he and the other men on the mission cooked and ate Superman's heart at Yeaten's house, which was next to Taylor's. Similarly, Marzah described the execution of Jungle (Daniel Tamba) in Sierra Leone,

allegedly on the orders of Benjamin Yeaten.

Marzah also testified that he spoke with a soldier named Sweet Candy, who was wearing the jacket of AFRC leader Johnny Paul Koroma. Sweet Candy told Marzah that Koroma had been executed at the command of Charles Taylor because Taylor claimed that Koroma had betrayed him.

Marzah testified that Taylor sometimes called him “my son”. Koumjian then stated that he had no further questions for the witness.

### **Cross-examination of Marzah begins**

Lead Defense Counsel Courtenay Griffiths began the cross-examination by recounting with the witness all of the atrocities he had personally committed. Marzah stated that he didn’t know how many people he had killed, but more than hundred. He confirmed that he had killed babies and cut open the bellies of pregnant women at Taylor’s command.

Griffiths asked Marzah if he had any pangs of conscience. Marzah said yes, but that he had carried out the killings in order to protect himself, his family and his property, because Taylor would take retribution against anyone not following orders. Griffiths challenged Marzah to cite specific instances where Taylor had ordered pregnant women to be cut open.

Marzah responded by saying that when fighting in Gbarnga, Taylor sent him a specific message over the radio to gut a pregnant woman in retribution against the local population. Griffiths then challenged Marzah to describe a specific instance where Taylor had ordered him to kill a baby.

Marzah said that after the NPFL had captured Gbarnga, Taylor formed a unit called “No Baby on Target”, and gave them instructions to kill any baby they saw. Marzah testified that after they carried out this instruction, they reported it to Taylor and received money.

Griffiths asked Marzah if he had any regrets about “this wickedness”. Marzah responded: “I regret nothing. I don’t regret an inch.” Griffiths asked Marzah why he hadn’t fled instead of committing these atrocities, and Marzah said he had a large property and 24 children of his own to protect in Liberia.

When Griffiths asked where the executions had all taken place, Marzah said that most had been carried out in Sierra Leone and Guinea, with some in Liberia. In the course of this questioning, Marzah stated that he had participated in the invasion of Freetown. Griffiths asked if he had participated in conducting amputations, and Marzah said he had, on the orders of Taylor.

As the testimony came to a close, Griffiths asked: “Are you saying that Charles Taylor told you on the radio or phone to cut off people’s limbs?” Marzah responded: “So many times.”

Plain Truth (Liberia)  
Wednesday, 19 March 2008

# Gus Cleared Of 'Gunrunning' Charges

*-Become A Free Man Again  
-Visits Liberia Soon*



Gus Kouwenhoven

Scores of liars turned witnesses who claimed to have had first hand accounts of how the Dutch businessman, Gus Kouwenhoven traded in arms with Charles Taylor to destabilize the sub-region, are perhaps carrying crestfallen faces following the dismissal of all charges against Gus by an Ap-

peal Court in The Hague. The Appeal court has cleared Gus of all gun-running charges, contending that the evidence against him has been insufficient for a conviction. Kouwenhoven is now a free man and there strong indicators that he might likely return to Liberia soon where he has a lots of business interests.

In the last one month an anti Taylor-Gus media entity, The New Democrat Newspaper has

been dramatizing the allegation of a Gus-Taylor arms trade that destabilized the entire sub-region, specifically neighboring Sierra Leone and La Cote D'Ivoire.

Using Gus as a 'dummy' to get even with its sworn enemy Charles Taylor, the paper has been reporting what "Global Witness has said that "the barbaric regime of Charles Taylor was financed and maintained by the revenues generated from the tim-

ber trade in which Gus Van Kouwenhoven was the biggest player".

But in carefully analyzing the weight of evidence adduced by the prosecution accusing Mr. Kouwenhoven of gun-running, the court observed that the witnesses produced at the trial were unreliable.

The court said the only direct evidence of weapons and war crimes consists of the statements made by a number of

*Continue on Page 6*

## Gus Cleared

witnesses about such crimes and offenses and about the suspect's involvement in those offenses but there was no tangible or material evidence produced to corroborate the allegations.

The Appeal Court further argued that the prosecution miserably failed to prove the reliability and consistency of the witnesses who made the statements and the court has been unable to effectively comprehend the too many contradictions contained in such testimonies.

The court: "Some witnesses changed important parts of their statements and many statements are otherwise not credible".

The court argued that

after scavenging through the flood of contradictions, the remaining evidence gathered was so thin that it could not stand on its own and that it was not strong enough to come to judicial findings of the facts.

"All in all, the court of appeal has so many doubts about the evidentiary material submitted by the public prosecution service that in their opinion a sentence would not be well founded".

Credible information gathered from The Hague noted that dozens of those witnesses who testified against Gus, accusing him of gunrunning have now been mobilized to testify against Charles Taylor.

Though Taylor's acquittal is highly unlikely as he is guilty until proven dead, but the dismissal of the testimonies of witnesses against Gus by the Appeal Court in The Hague is likely to shame many anti Taylor forces and further brings into serious question the materiality and credibility of the current testimonies against the former Liberian Leader.

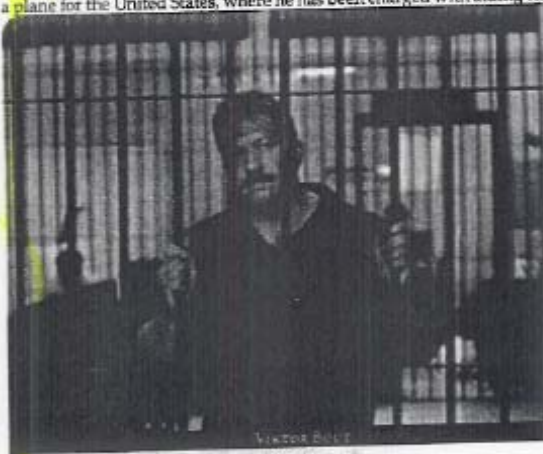
New Democrat (Liberia)  
 Wednesday, 19 March 2008

## Weapons Dealer For Trial In US

**V**iktor Bout, one of the key weapons suppliers for wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone, will be sent to the US, where he will be tried for allegedly supplying arms to terrorists, according to Reuters.

*By Darren Schuettler*

Thai police pressed alleged international arms dealer Viktor Bout to board a plane for the United States, where he has been charged with aiding ter



Viktor Bout

ism, after his arrest in Thailand, his lawyer said on Monday.  
 "He was doing everything in his power, including physical resistance to fly to the U.S.," lawyer Yan Dasgupta told reporters in Bangkok. His client was caught in a U.S. sting operation on March 6.  
 Bout was not harmed and remains in a Bangkok prison, but the move was unlawful because it did not follow proper procedure under a Thai-U.S. extradition treaty, Dasgupta said.  
 "Even with his consent, it would have been illegal," he said.



Daily Observer (Liberia)  
Wednesday, 19 March 2008

# Doe, Others Buried Policeman Alive— -Witness Gives Startling Account

By J. Alfred Chea  
from Zwedru, Grand Gedeh County

Rancy J. Borkay, a resident of Zieh Town and sixth witness who publicly testified before the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) of Liberia, electrified the huge gathering at the Zwedru City Hall on Monday, March 3, 2008 when he graphically revealed how patrolman Washington Wolo was buried alive in Tuzon, Grand Gedeh County, in 1985.

Witness Borkay, who was accompanied to the hearings held at the Zwedru City Hall by TRC's psychosocial officer and protection officer to give

his testimony, earlier swore on the Holy Bible to 'tell the truth and nothing but the whole truth' after which he began his testimony.

He recalled that before the 1985 general and presidential elections in the country, citizens were given the opportunity to organize political parties to contest said national elections.

Witness Borkay narrated that in line with the electoral process, an elder and prominent citizen of the county, Ambassador Peter Johnson, did not support the then Head of State Samuel Kanyon Doe's

National Democratic Front of Liberia (NDPL). According to witness Borkay, Johnson joined the Liberia Action Party (LAP) of which he was the first general campaign manager.

The 45-year-old witness told the TRC hearings that Johnson's political decision at the time became a major offense against the Doe erstwhile military regime which Johnson and his relatives became targets for elimination.

The witness narrated that some of Johnson's relatives and clansmen were arrested when hundreds of Doe's soldiers moved into their area on November 12, 1985, to effect a coup by Gen. Thomas G.

Quiwonkpa, former Commanding General of the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL).

"Our people were brutally handled. Some of our parents escaped to the Ivory Coast and some eventually died during that time," witness Borkay narrated.

According to the witness, after the aborted coup, the then Head of State, Samuel K. Doe, returned to Zwedru, Grand Gedeh County.

Doe headed the People's Redemption Council (PRC), a military junta that on April 12, 1980 toppled the settler-dominated True Whig Party's

See Pg. 10



The late President Samuel K. Doe

# Doe

political hegemony that ruled Liberia for nearly a century.

Hear witness Borkay: "There, he called a town meeting. Also, there was a first cousin of mine whose name was Washington Wolo, a patrolman at the time. He was assigned to Tuzon. My cousin was asked to be on duty that night though that was not his time to serve the guard. The motive behind it was that the first Lands and Mines Minister under Doe regime had died and, according to the people of Tuzon, it was customary that whenever a great man died, they had to carry someone with him but, the person had to be alive. So they buried patrolman Wolo alive in the grave near the coffin of Willie Nebo."

Nebo was the 'great man' and first minister of Lands and Mines at the time in the Doe military regime, the witness said.

"This thing caused problem and we tried to get the actual story from the then Head of State Doe but it proved futile. The people of Tuzon owed apology to the people of Zleh town for burying our brother alive with Willie Nebo. We have serious problem with them, until they come and apologize for whatever happened at the time, we will never forgive them. We hope they come to tell us what actually happened," the witness emphasized at the Zwedru City Hall.

Asked whether he knew the patrolman's burial site, the witness said it was a crime at the time to know where he was buried during the Doe regime. "It was a crime by then to ask where the burial site was; you can't try it. But we received reliable information that he was buried in the grave with Willie Nebo," witness Borkay added.

Witness further told the hearings that some of the patrolman's people had knowledge of the incident but they could not say it owing to fear, because they too were working at the Executive Mansion when Samuel Doe was Head of State.

The witness named Thomas Gbanga and Edward Slangar as some of the top confidants of Doe at the time who were 'executing these kinds of things'.

He also named some elders, old man Gaye and old man Geeblee, among others, as some of the people from Zleh Town who were severely tortured by Doe's soldiers that raided the area after Quiwonkpa's failed coup.

According to him, old men Gaye and Geeblee died after months of internal bleeding as a result of the treatment meted to them by Doe's soldiers.

Hear the witness: "These men were confidants of Samuel Doe; they were very close to Doe. Edward N. Slangar was a special aide to Doe. He and Col. Arthur Jolokari, 4th Battalion Commander of Grand Gedeh County, and one Blaye and other plain-clothed securities were there and they tortured and killed our people. It was

know about them. As for Blaye, he is in exile right now.

Giving more information on the late Minister Nebo, the witness told the TRC hearings that Nebo was a distant cousin of Doe, and was the first Minister of Lands, Mines and Energy in Doe's government. "When he died, they said there was a custom that he should be buried with someone alive and that's how they buried patrolman Wolo alive with the

coffin of Willie Nebo, who was accused.

Meanwhile, witness was consoled by TRC Chairman, Cdr. Jerome J. Verbeke, in these words:

"We appreciate you coming to the Commission to share this experience with us. Apart from us looking into past atrocities and the crimes committed during the war, the TRC is also interested in solutions of

potential conflict, issues that would cause potential conflict in the future so that we can find immediate solution to them, and so thank you for elaborating that the people of Zleh town are today not in peace with the people of Tuzon because of what had happened. I am confident that by you coming, it means that your people want to find their way out of this and want the situation resolved, so thank you."

The Analyst (Liberia)  
 Wednesday, 19 March 2008

# Misdeeds Of Doe Rule



**-Witness Says Doe Was at His Brother's Burial Alive  
 -Rules Out Reconciling Without Admission of Guilt**

**S**amuel Kanyon Doe is gone but his deeds, whether good or bad still live on. Since his climatic demise in September 1990, Liberians are managing to cope with the aftereffects of his administrative character. Though many people do not out rightly rule him out for the many contributions he made the country given his limitations in statecraft, but some of those who shared the corridors of power with him are beginning to cast long shadows on the rule of SKD, a phenomenon that they term as the misdeeds of Doc. One person who was opportune to witness the alleged "Doe's misdeeds" has been explaining his shock and stress to the TRC. Witness Rancy J. Borkay told commissioners and administrators of the transitional justice mechanism that his cousin, a former patrolman in the Liberia National Police (LNP), was brutally murdered with the alleged acquiescence of the former army officer. The Analyst looks at the statement cued from the TRC Public Hearing.

*Late President Samuel Doe*

*Cont'd on page 10*

# Misdeeds Of Doe Rule

At the TRC Public Hearings in Zwedru, Grand Gedeh County, a witness explained how his cousin was sent to his early graves in Tuzon, Grand Gedeh County apparently with the knowledge and approbation of former President Samuel Kanyon Doe. Doe, the first original native president of Liberia who took power in 1980 following bloody coup, hailed from the town Tuzon situated between Toe Town and Zwedru.

Rancy J. Borkay, the sixth witness to take stand during the Hearing explained that before the elections of 1985, they (he and his kinsmen) were given an opportunity to organize political party.

Having reached a consensus, he said one of the elders, Ambassador Peter Johnson, who hailed from his area defected and took a different turn in the political stand. By this, he said Johnson pledged his support to the Liberia Action Party (LAP) of the late Jackson F. Doe instead of the National Democratic Party of Liberia (NDPL), the party of the then president.

"He became the first campaign manager of the LAP party. That became an offense to the regime of Samuel Doe and there was elimination against his family and himself," witness Borkay recalled.

According to him, during the aborted coup by Quiwonkpa, Johnson was arrested while hundreds of Doe's soldiers move in their area, not too far from Tuzon, the home of President Doe.

When the soldiers got in the area, he claimed they brutally handled the people, and that some of parents escaped to the Ivory Coast while some eventually died in the process of their (soldiers) occupation during that time.

Witness Borkay told the TRC that following the foiled coup, President Doe returned to Zwedru and called a town meeting.

In Tuzon, the venue of the meeting, he said was a first cousin of his, Washington Wolo patrol man at the time.

"My cousin was asked to serve duty that night though that was not his time to serve the guard. The motive behind it was that the first Land and Mines Minister under Doe regime died and according to the people of Tuzon, it was customary that when ever great man died they have to carry someone with him but that person has to be alive. So they buried the patrol man Washington Wolo in the grave near the coffin of Willie Nebo. This thing caused problem and we tried to get the actual story from the then president Doe but it proved futile," Witness Borkay told the TRC hearing.

Apparently due to the rather puzzling manner in which Wolo lost his life, he said the people of

Tuzon owed them (people of Zleh Town) an apology "for burying our brother with Willie Nebo".

According to him, they have serious problem with the people of Tuzon and that until they can apologize for whatever happened at the time, they will never forgive their brothers and sisters from Tuzon, adding "We hope they will come to tell us what happened actually".

The Doe regime was marred by human rights abuses, especially after the 1985 foiled coup. Most Liberians were killed while others fled the country surreptitiously to eschew being killed by loyalists of the former president.

Giving the revelation from a citizen of Grand Gedeh County, the home of the president, that someone from the county was buried alive, observers say there is likelihood that citizens from other counties suffered most.

According to them, such is one of the many misdeeds of the Doe era which they claimed led to the outbreak of the war which left the country decimated.

### Excerpts from his testimony

Chairman: we appreciate you coming to the commission to share this experience with us, apart from us looking into past atrocities and the crimes committed during the war, the TRC is also interested in sources of potential conflict, issues that would cause potential conflict in the future so that we can find immediate solution to it and so thank you for elaborating that the people of Zleh town are today not in peace with the people of Tuzon because of what happened and I am confident that by you coming, it means that your people want to find their way out of this and want the situation be resolved, so thank you.

Chairman: what is the name of the police office that was killed?  
Primary Witness: Washington Wolo was he a citizen of Zleh town?  
Primary Witness: Yes he was a citizen of Zleh town, what year did this happened?

Chairman: is there any person that you can remember in that incident?  
Primary Witness: Thomas Gbamba, I say I can remember he was there.

Primary Witness: 1985  
Commissioner Stewart: what month this incident happen?  
Primary Witness: 1985 December to January 1986  
Who was the officer in charge on the night when patrol man Wolo was on guard?  
Primary Witness: We did not know the details we only know that he was asked to serve and the next day we did not see him again and we have not seen him since.  
Do you know where they buried him?  
Primary Witness: It was a crime by then to ask where the burial site is, you can't try it. But we received reliable information that he was buried in the grave with Willie Nebo  
Can you clarify a little bit the incident leading to his death?  
Primary Witness: I think it had some political motivation. Since that happened, did any of the family member bring that up with the Doe government or subsequent government?  
Primary Witness: No, for some of us no, but for Doe government time none of us could try it. How are you certain that this happened the way you think?  
Primary Witness: We had some of our people in the mansion too and they knew about it but could not say it.  
Commissioner Dolopei: do you know some of the people that were involved?  
Primary Witness: Most of those that were executing these kinds of things were the top confidants of the president like Edward Slinger and others.  
Were some of these confidants in your town when torturing of your people was going on?  
Primary Witness: Yes, one person I can remember on the ground was Thomas Gbamba he was on the grounds in the area when these things were going on.  
Did any other person died in that incident when the soldiers raided your town after the 85 elections?  
Primary Witness: Not instantly but few months later old man Gaye and old man Geeblee died later as the result of the beating and torturing from internal bleeding.

Commissioner Coleman: is there any

person that you can remember in that incident?  
Primary Witness: Thomas Gbamba, I say I can remember he was there.  
What was the situation regarding Mr. Slanga, and Blayee would you elaborate a little further?  
Primary Witness: These men were confidants of Samuel Doe, they were very close to Doe. Edward N. Slinger was special Aide to Doe, he and Col. Arthur Jolokarh, 4th Battalion Commander of Grand Gedeh County and one Blayee plus other plain clothes securities were there and tortured and killed our people. it was impossible for those kinds of things to go on if they don't know about it. For Blayee now he is in exile right now.  
Who was Willie Nebo?  
Primary Witness: Mr. Nebo was a distant cousin of Doe, and was the first Minister of Land Mines and Energy under Doe's government, when he died they said there was a custom that he should be buried with someone alive and that's how they buried patrol man Washington Wolo alive with the coffin of Nebo.  
Was his death a natural death, Willie Nebo?  
Primary Witness: I didn't care to know.  
Do you have any other experience with LPC or MODEL?  
Primary Witness: The only one that went really down to my heart was the one I just explained to you.  
Commissioner Syllah: did Washington Wolo leave any family behind?  
Primary Witness: Yes  
How have life been for them since their father died?  
Primary Witness: Very difficult for them, more than you can imagine.  
Commissioner Konneh: Mr. Witness I don't have a question but a comment for you. You brought this issue up for all of us to get the clear picture of what happened to your kinsman Patrolman Washington Wolo and other members of your town. And we can see that you are interested in resolving these matters, so if any one who knows any thing about this matter should please come to the commission whether in camera or public to give us some insight of this story. We want to call on the people of Tuzon and general the Krahn ethnic group that is here to take this message to our people in Tuzon so that we can sit down and see how to settle these kinds of problem, this is what our act provide that we should provide forum between a perpetrator and a victim. this fellow has come for us to see into this matter he

said no one has ever gone to them to apologize for what happened to his people we appreciate it.  
Commissioner Stewart: How do you think the TRC can facilitate peace between you?  
Primary Witness: To make the people of Tuzon to know that somebody is feeling bitter about that happened to us but, if it is not done it would not go down fine with us.  
Chairman: Besides Washington Wolo, has there being any other cases of living persons being buried?  
Primary Witness: That what they say if great people died someone must be buried with that dead person. It is their custom. Are you related to

Washington Wolo?  
Primary Witness: Yes, were first cousins.  
How did the family receive news?  
Primary Witness: Everyone was in fear, I can tell you he was the only dictatorial leader that I have seen in my life, for the years he was the president at that coup, Doe, he only pass through our town one time come to Zwedru. He was flying throughout to Tuzon and district is the first district in Grand Gedeh but he never bothered to visit us. After the patrolman disappearance aft three days his family could not see him, we check all over for him he could not be account for.

What were you doing by then?  
Primary Witness: I was in the 12 grade.  
We would need your contact address so your town people can contact us through you?  
Primary Witness: you can use the statement form to get our contact it has not changed.

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# Face With Expulsion

Reports from Ghana say a group of Liberian women refugees who have been accused by an official of the Ghana Government of holding naked protests by the roadside and are to be deported from Ghana.

According to information from Accra, hundreds of the protestors were arrested and taken away from a refugee camp in 10 buses following their protest on Monday.

The Liberian refugees, most of them females staged what they called a peaceful demonstration in the wake of the reported plans by that government to send them back to Liberia with each individual set to receive US\$100.

Instead, reports say that each demonstrating female refugee is demanding \$1,000 or to be resettled in the West, conditions which Ghana perhaps does not want to get involved with.

But according to the BBC report, the women after congregating at the camp stripped themselves naked during the protest but denied that they ever did any stripping during their month-long protests, referring to the report as "it's a lie."

At the same time, the Ghanaian Minister of Interior Minister c Ghana, Kwamena Bartels denied that his country was engaging in forced repatriation and pointed out that the Liberian war had ended in 2003.

According to him, the women have broken local laws by not informing the police of their protest. "When women strip themselves naked stand by a major highway, that is not a peaceful demonstration," he told the BBC's Network Africa programme, adding that they would be deported later this week.

At present, at least 27,000 Liberians are in Ghana after years of conflict at home in 2003. Some of the refugees told the BBC that they had been beaten by the Ghanaian police at Buduburam camp, west of the capital, Accra. They refused to be integrated into local society and say they will continue protesting at the UN refugee agency's offer. "\$100 is not anything you can start life with. We are all lost," one woman said.

Meanwhile, reports monitored from Power TV say the Liberian Senate has expressed concern over the problem with the refugees and has accordingly set up a committee headed by Grand Cape Mount Senator Abel Massally to go to Ghana and talk with the Ghanaian authorities.

# Six Clinics Risk

Senyan Town Clinic, Boegley Town Clinic and the Edina Public Health center.

He said the closure of these clinics which is largely due to the 'no money' syndrome has the propensity to undermine the health care delivery system, and also endangers the lives of the people.

He told our reporter that he recently visited some of the communities in which the clinics are, and gathered that situation is serious.

During the 2007/2008 Fiscal Year Budget, Senator Innis said he told his colleagues that the amount allocated for the health care delivery system for the counties was insufficient.

"What I was afraid of has happened and my people are about to suffer because there is no money to operate some of our clinics," he said.

Senator Innis has however called on the authorities of the Health Ministry to consider keeping the clinics functional by providing funds.

In a related development, the lawmaker has decried the continuous increment of the prices of basic commodities, especially rice and petroleum products on the Liberian market.

He observed that the ordinary people are suffering the hikes in prices of these commodities while those in government do not care

## **UNMIL Public Information Office Complete Media Summaries 18 March 2008**

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

### **Newspaper Summary**

#### **US Commits US\$5 Million to Train Riot Police in Liberia**

(The Informer)

- The US Government is committing US\$5 million toward the establishment of an emergency response unit in the Liberia National Police (LNP). Otherwise known as 'riot squad', the Unit will handle low level insurgencies, riot situations, search and rescue, violent crimes and other high profile police emergencies.
- The Deputy Chief of Mission at the US Embassy in Liberia, Brooks Anne Robinson, made the disclosure in Monrovia on Monday at a policy seminar for Liberian security agencies.

#### **UNMIL, IRI Hold Workshop on Political Party System**

(The Inquirer)

- The International Republican Institute (IRI) and the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) are today expected to conduct a two-day workshop on the Strengthening of the Political Party System in Liberia.
- The workshop will draw an array of speakers and is expected to end Wednesday in the auditorium of the University of Liberia (UL).
- Dr. Amos C. Sawyer, Chairman of the Governance Commission (GC), is expected to deliver the keynote address while officials of UNMIL will also make statements.

#### **Angry Unity Partisans Protest over 'no' job – Opt for Changes in Party Leadership**

(The National Chronicle, Daily Observer, The Informer)

- Over 300 members of the youth wing of the ruling Unity Party are continuing a peaceful protest in front of the party's headquarters.
- The youths on Monday stormed the headquarters of the party to demand the immediate resignation of the National Chairman, Dr. Charles Clarke claiming party executives have abandoned them.
- The aggrieved youths vowed to continue their protest action until Dr. Clarke resigns as Chairman of the party. Their action was intended to draw the attention of their first partisan, President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf for redress.
- Meanwhile, UP Senator John Ballout of Maryland County says change was eminent within the party but asked the youths to remain calm.
- Last week, Senator Ballout expressed disappointment over the party's failure to provide jobs for some partisans.

#### **UNMIL Awards US\$50 Each to Life Savers**

(The Informer, The Inquirer)

- The United Nations Mission in Liberia has awarded a cash amount of US\$50.00 each to four young Liberians who saved the life of a drowning local UNMIL staff, Janet Burnett.
- Presenting the awards at a special ceremony held during the mission's weekly press briefing last Friday, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ellen Løj, commended the four boys for performing such an outstanding humanitarian service and a very good example for everybody in Liberia. She described the four life savers ; Nimely Walker, John Richard,

Foday Massalay, and Rahan Roberts as shining examples of the new generation of young Liberians caring for each other.

- The UNMIL boss said the boys took a very bold step in risking their own lives in order to save another Liberian's life." That was very brave of you and I am very proud of you; I must confess," she added. She said this is a clear manifestation that Liberians are ready to move forward. SRSG Løj noted that there is a need for all Liberians to show love and care for each other in order to move Liberia forward in peace, security and prosperity.

### **Construction Company Downplays UNMIL's Mandate to Hire former ICs**

(The Star)

- [sic:] Recent assurance given by the Chief Spokesperson of the United Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) Ben Dotsei Malor that former Individual Contractors or ICs of UNMIL who recently took to the streets of Monrovia in demands of benefits and other incentives were to be hired by the St. Michael Construction Company. But the company which won the contract to render construction services – to UNMIL and promised to rehire the former contractors has turned the other way around as the company management says the former Individual Contractors are not the only Liberians.

### **Hundreds of Liberian Refugee Women Arrested in Ghana**

(The News, The Inquirer, National Chronicle, The Star and the New Democrat).

- Reports reflected across a number of media outlets continued to highlight security concerns among Liberians in Ghana where security officers in that country on Monday rounded up several hundreds protesting Liberian women at the Buduburam Refugee Camp. The women had been staging an "indefinite sit down strike" to draw attention to what they claimed as dissatisfactory arrangements to have them repatriated this year.
- The Liberian nationals have been protesting for a couple of weeks now against a plan to reintegrate them into the Ghanaian society after more than 18 years of asylum in that country. According to the New Democrat newspaper, there has been no official report from the Ghanaian government regarding the mass arrest

## **Radio Summary**

**Local Media – Radio Veritas** (News monitored at 9:45 am)

### **Angry Youths of Ruling Unity Party Picket before Party's Headquarters**

(Also reported on Star Radio, Truth F.M., and E.L.B.C.)

### **President Sirleaf, Cabinet in Voinjama for Retreat**

- President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and her cabinet delegation have arrived in Voinjama, Lofa County where they are to hold a retreat today.
- Correspondents say President Sirleaf and party made several stopovers while en route to Voinjama including a visit to the Tumutu Agriculture Programs run by the Ministry of Agriculture for former combatant in Salala, Bong County.
- The retreat is intended for Ministers to review and discuss development initiatives under the four pillars of government and to look at a national food and nutrition strategy for the country.
- The cabinet will also look at the national budget for 2008/2009, Civil Service and payroll plus a used car policy proposed by the General Services Agency (GSA).

(Also reported on Star Radio, Truth F.M., and E.L.B.C.)

### **U.S. Navy Ship in Liberia for 2-week Medical, Humanitarian Mission**

- A U.S. Embassy release issued in Monrovia says the United States Navy Ship, HSV Swift, has begun a two week mission to Liberia
- The vessel arrived on at the Freeport of Monrovia on Monday with a group of 20 civilian and military medical professionals who will provide training for Liberia Health professionals at the

country's largest referral hospital, the John F. Kennedy Hospital, the Redemption Hospital and the Edward Benyan Kessely Barracks outside Monrovia.

- According to the Chief Medical Officer, Dr. Michael Polifika, Project Hope, an international health education and humanitarian assistance organization will donate to the Health Ministry items put at US\$2 million and will be followed by a US\$50,000 donation of Hospital equipment in the coming week on behalf of the people of the U.S.

*(Also reported on Star Radio, Truth F.M., and E.L.B.C.)*

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## PopMatters Television Review

Tuesday, 18 March 2008

### Iron Ladies of Liberia: Independent Lens



Regular airtime: Tuesday, 10pm ET (PBS)

Cast: Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, Siatta Scott Johnson, Antoinette Sayeh, Beatrice Munah Sieh

US release date: 18 March 2008

by Cynthia Fuchs

#### Pressures

“She functions better under pressure.” As a makeup artist prepares the newly elected president of Liberia for her 16 January 2006 inauguration speech, she notes that Ellen Johnson Sirleaf sits quietly, contemplating the unknowable future of a nation that has endured some 14 years of civil war. The government she has inherited is rife with corruption, the economy is mired in a \$3.7 billion dollar debt, and citizens are anxiously anticipating immediate change. It’s hard to imagine more pressure.

And yet, says journalist Siatta Scott Johnson, “For a moment, we forgot all the troubles she has ahead of her.” At the start of *Iron Ladies of Liberia*, premiering tonight on PBS’ *Independent Lens*, Sirleaf invites her people to trust in her. “We know that your vote was a vote for change, we have heard you loudly,” she announces on her inauguration day. “The days of the imperial presidency... are over.” A little over a year later, in June 2007, former Liberian president Charles Taylor, goes on trial at the Hague for war crimes, with a verdict anticipated in 2010: “God willing,” he promises his followers, “I will be back.” “Liberians are a strange kind of people,” says Sirleaf. “The very people who harm us are the ones we pretend to love.”

Sirleaf is well aware of the lingering support for the former government, not least because she hears it from Edwin Snowe, Speaker of the House and married to one of Taylor’s daughters. A Harvard-educated economist and grandmother of eight who had previously been exiled to Nigeria, Sirleaf appoints a cabinet and looks to the future. As Johnson describes the process, “She’s appointing a lot of women.” These include Antoinette Sayeh as Minister of Finance, Minister of Gender Vabah Kazaku Gayflor, Minister of Justice Frances Johnson-Morris, and Beatrice Munah Sieh, the National Chief of Police. “I want to prove a point,” says Sieh, filling the frame in her crisp uniform, “that women can be trusted and placed in dangerous positions and even do better.” Still, she admits, her force is operating with minimal resources. “The police,” she notes, “do not have guns, they do not have handcuffs or vehicles... not even paper to write on.”



As the movie documents, Sirleaf and her “iron ladies” face any number of such obstacles, and yet, they approach their work with resolve and ingenuity. The film, co-directed by Johnson and Daniel Junge, extols the women’s work, and Sirleaf makes use of the camera as she negotiates with various representatives throughout the first year of her presidency.

With some 85% of the population unemployed and 75% living on less than a dollar a day, Sirleaf must also contend with over half a million returning refugees and internally displaced people, as well as the demands of a striking military. Claiming they have not received back pay or pensions, the troops create a ruckus in the streets of Monrovia. Sirleaf deflates the confrontation by bringing them inside for conversation. “I must listen to them in a way that says, ‘I want to hear you,’” she explains. “It’s an old ma way of listening.” (Repeatedly, she uses the camera as a kind of confidant, understanding its usefulness as a promotional tool.) After she hears the troops’ representatives, she explicates her government’s constraints. Not only is money short, but the “people in the villages, the true victims of the war,” also need help, and they were previously abused by the Armed Forces of Liberia. Sirleaf insists that the military leaders recognize “the poor people out there that you have impoverished.” The group’s leaders nod and agree. The “old ma” prevails.

Along with such face-to-face negotiations, the film shows Sirleaf as she also contends with the nation’s daunting debt. As she deals with the U.S. (owed some \$391 million), Sirleaf also entertains interest by the Chinese, looking to extend their influence in Africa. Following a parade that honors the visit of Chinese president Hu Jintao, Sirleaf appears meeting with George Soros, who advises her to keep both superpowers aware of the other’s offers, so they might be inclined to compete for Liberia’s business and resources. The film suggests this competition is a good thing for Liberia (during Sirleaf’s visit to the U.S., George Bush cancels Liberia’s debt, though the IMF and the World Bank are still waiting to be paid).

Essentially following the tone set by its sanguine subject, *Iron Ladies of Liberia* makes a subtle argument. If it doesn’t make the case outright that “women” are by constitution effective leaders, it does insinuate that Sirleaf and her appointees grasp what’s at stake. Showing the difficulties facing Sirleaf in impressionistic, unforgettable images—kids playing in garbage dumps, demonstrations in the streets—the documentary keeps focused on the president’s good intentions and efforts, filtered through her indomitable personality. “Basically,” she says, “I’m a very private person.” As the camera follows her on what seems perpetual public display, she recalls her former life, shopping for groceries like any other citizen. “There are times I wish I could be the old me.” But still, the film suggests, Sirleaf is built for this new life, functioning under pressure.