

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 of:

Thursday, 2 March 2006

The press clippings are produced Monday to Friday.
If you are aware of omissions or have any comments or suggestions please contact
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Table of Contents**Sierra Leone Media**

RUF Commences Trial Today <i>Awoko</i>	Page 3
What Peter Penfold Said at the Special Court at the Ongoing Trial of Hinga Norman and Two Others of the Civil Defence Forces (CDF) <i>Christian Monitor</i>	Pages 4-5
15 More RUF Released <i>Concord Times</i>	Page 6
International Media	
Nigeria: Obasanjo Must Act Now on Taylor <i>Human Rights Watch</i>	Page 7
UNMIL Public Information Office Media Summary 1 March 2006 <i>UNMIL</i>	Pages 8-11

RUF commences trial today

By Betty Milton

The prosecution's case against the three indictees of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) Issa Sesay, Morris Kallon and Augustine Gbao, is expected to commence today at the Trial Chamber I of the Special Court.

Presiding over the matter are Justices Pierre Boutet, Bankole Thompson and Benjamin Itoe.

Each of the three

indictees faces an 18 count charge, ranging from crimes against humanity, violations of Article 3 Common to the Geneva Conventions. These crimes include terrorizing the civilian population and collective punishments, unlawful killings, extermination, murder, violence to life, health and physical or mental well being of persons, sexual violence, abductions, forced labour and the use of child soldiers.

Issa Sesay, is alleged to

be the interim leader of the RUF, Morris Kallon is alleged to have been a Commander of the RUF and Augustine Gbao as a senior officer and commander of the RUF. They were all indicted on 7 March 2003 on 17 counts ranging from crimes against humanity and other serious violations of international humanitarian law.

The three accused persons were arrested on 10 March 2003 and taken into custody

Contd. Page 2

RUF commences trial today

From Front Page

of the court. At their initial appearance, which took place on 15th March, the accused pleaded not guilty to the charges.

Augustine Gbao on the other hand was first taken into custody on 10 March 2003 under Rule 40 of the Rules of Procedure and Evidence, which allows for suspects to be detained for

up to 30 days before being indicted. Gbao was later transferred to the Court's custody on 20th March and subsequently indicted by the prosecution on 16 April 2003 and Justice Bankole Thompson approved the indictment the same day. He made his initial appearance on 25th April, where he pleaded not guilty to all charges. An 18th count was

later added to them.

The trial, which will commence today and may last for 42 days, will be the seventh session with 24 witnesses to be called of which two will be coming out of this jurisdiction. One expert witness will be expected to give evidence during this trial. Among the 101 witnesses lined up for the prosecution, 57 have already testified at the Court.

Christian Monitor

2 March 2006

From Last Edition

ON CONTACT WITH NORMAN IN CONAKRY VIS-À-VIS HIS ROLE AS CDF COORDINATOR

"I was aware that Chief Norman was primarily fulfilling those duties (coordinator CDF) inside Sierra Leone or in places like Liberia where he would be having meetings with ECOMOG. Perhaps for the Court I can clarify. When I said I had no direct dealings with the CDF, I meant that I never, for example, attended any of those meetings, that's all".

"It is very difficult for me to remember clearly. During that period in Conakry there were endless meetings with people and endless messages coming through. I think it is possible that I may have received messages from time to time in connection with the various things that the British Government was doing in support of the restoration of President Kabbah's government. But generally, whereas, as I mentioned, I was seeing President Kabbah three or four times a week, I was seeing his ministers at least the same amount. I was not seeing Minister Norman because generally he was never in Conakry; he was in Sierra Leone or in Liberia, as far as I was informed".



Peter Penfold

were keeping me very much informed on what was happening, on the mood of the people".

"There was one time as part of the measures taken by ECOWAS to seek the restoration of President Kabbah's government, they had adopted a three-prong approach of dialogue, sanctions and use of force. The sanctions included petrol supplies, but on one occasion a tanker had managed to get through the sanction's cordon and reached Freetown which meant that for the first time in weeks there was electricity back on the streets of Freetown or in the houses, briefly. One would have thought that this would have been welcomed by the people of Freetown in the midst of their misery and, yet, that same day I received at least half a dozen phone calls from people in Freetown saying how could we have allowed this tanker to reach Freetown, did we not realise that the more they were able to bring in fuel and food, the longer it would keep the AFRC in power and that the people just wanted to get rid of the junta and see President Kabbah's government back".

ON BRITISH GOVERNMENT SUPPORT TO THE WAR AGAINST THE AFRC

"The British government funded, in October 1997, a workshop held in the United Kingdom to which over 30 Sierra Leoneans attended, including some who had fled from Sierra Leone to Conakry. The purpose of that workshop was to draft the 90 Day Plan which was a document outlining the priorities that President Kabbah's government would undertake on the restoration of his government. That 90 Day Plan was formally launched at a two-day conference in London later in October 1997, which President Kabbah personally launched and was attended by British ministers and other international figures".

"There was considerable assistance given by the British government. The British government was among the first countries in the world to condemn what had happened and call for the restoration of the legitimate government of President Kabbah. Within the United Nations, the United Kingdom tabled all of the resolutions and indeed helped draft most of the resolutions that the United Nations passed.

18 The decision — The decision to place me in Conakry alongside President

Kabbah was unprecedented in British diplomacy and was seen to send a clear signal that the British government continued to recognise President Kabbah and his government as the legitimate government of Sierra Leone. In Conakry, British government funds were used to establish an office of the government of Sierra Leone. In fact, we rented a disused restaurant in Conakry for these offices. In those offices British government funds were used to pay the personnel working in that office, including some of the ministers, and covering activities such as foreign relations, information and publicity, care of refugees and civil society activities”.

“The British government funded, in October 1997, a workshop held in the United Kingdom to which over 30 Sierra Leoneans attended, including some who had fled from Sierra Leone to Conakry. The purpose of that workshop was to draft the 90 Day Plan which was a document outlining the priorities that President Kabbah’s government would undertake on the restoration of his government. That 90 Day Plan was formally launched at a two-day conference in London later in October 1997, which President Kabbah personally launched and was attended by British ministers and other international figures”.

“After that conference, at the beginning of November 1997 President Kabbah and a large Sierra Leone delegation attended the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting in Edinburgh at the personal invitation of Prime Minister Tony Blair. In addition to the other activities undertaken and funded by the British government in Conakry, we established a radio station, Radio 98.1, which was established initially at Lungi International Airport”.

ON THE SUPPORT OF ECOMOG AND INTERNATIONAL GOVERNMENTS

“ECOWAS, acting on behalf of the OAU, appointed a committee of five foreign ministers to work on behalf of ECOWAS and OAU. At those meetings they adopted a three-prong approach to achieve the restoration of the legitimate government of President Kabbah; namely dialogue, sanctions and the use of force. The international community, through the United Nations, supported the OAU and ECOWAS efforts and endorsed the line of dialogue and sanctions and said that they preferred to see a peaceful resolution to the conflict”.

ON THE USE OF FORCE

“What happened, My Lord, the United Nations did not formally endorse the use of force, but said that they preferred to see a peaceful resolution. But, they did not pull back from supporting the ECOMOG forces in, for example, the implementation of the sanctions embargo, and for example, the British government supplied equipment to ECOMOG in fulfilling that duty”.

“When the rebel forces were finally driven out of Freetown in February 1998 by the use of force, from my recollection concern was expressed within the UN, but it was not condemned that the force had been used, and they welcomed the restoration of the government”.

Continued next issue.

Concord Times
2 March 2006

15 more RUF released

Story: Regina Pratt

Fifteen accused persons of the former RUF (Revolutionary United Front) rebels charged to court for conspiracy, shooting with intent and murder were Wednesday discharged by Justice Patrick Hamilton of High Court No2.

They were discharged for wanting of prosecution after the defense made a no case submission.

The accused are Ernest Gbebia, Joseph Kamanda, Ishaka Yamani, Alex Borbor Kamara, Juma Pakoh, Samuel Bassie, Musa Sahr, Alpha Foday. Vandy kamara, Ibrahim Kargbo, Suliaman Lamin, Junior Gbassa, Alpha Nonkoh Koroma, Sima Dumbuya and Abubakarr Suma.

The accused were in detention

since 2000.

Justice Hamilton, while discharging the accused read some portion of their statement, said some of them were in detention before the May 8 incident.

In his ruling he stated that there were 59 RUF accused persons and that an application was made to divide them into two groups.

He further said that he was a judge and also a jury in the said matter.

Justice Hamilton also said if the submission made by the defence counsel says the accused have no case to answer, then there is no need for the judiciary to set a tribunal.

He however informed the court that Sheku Andrew Coomber, Andrew Kambey, Alhaji Conteh, Momoh Rogers, Ibrahim Blango,

Sulay Sesay, Augustine Bongo, Foday Kini Lansana, Prince Emerson Adonis, Donald Rhodes, Sidi Koroma, Ibrahim Koroma and Mohamed Bockarie have a case to answer.

The judge informed those who will continue in the trial that if their defence is strong he will consider their case.

He also told 6th accused Sulay Sesay that the prosecution would look into his complaint on the next adjournment that he was detained on the 7th May 2000.

Speaking immediately after they were discharged, released RUF Ishaka Yamani said he is grateful to God for delivering him from this matter.

Human Rights Watch Press Release

For Immediate Release:

Nigeria: Obasanjo Must Act Now on Taylor

New Liberian President Meets with Nigerian President; Justice Crucial for West Africa

(Lagos, March 2, 2006) – When Liberia’s newly elected president visits Abuja on Friday, Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo should announce that Nigeria will promptly surrender Charles Taylor to face trial at the Special Court for Sierra Leone, the Campaign Against Impunity said today.

President Obasanjo’s meeting with Liberian President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf on March 3 will follow his reported talks last Sunday in Lagos with former Liberian President Charles Taylor.

“President Obasanjo has an opportunity to demonstrate Nigeria’s commitment to the rule of law in West Africa,” said Shina Loremikan, director of programmes for the Committee for the Defence of Human Rights, a Nigerian organization that is part of the Campaign Against Impunity. “When he meets with President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, President Obasanjo should announce he will surrender Taylor to face trial for his alleged crimes.”

The Special Court for Sierra Leone was set up in 2002 to try those most responsible for war crimes committed during Sierra Leone’s armed conflict. Charles Taylor has been accused of 17 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity by the Special Court. The crimes include killings, mutilations, rape and other forms of sexual violence, sexual slavery, the recruitment and use of child soldiers, abduction, and the use of forced labor by armed opposition groups.

In 2003 Charles Taylor left Liberia for Nigeria. Nigeria acted with the support of the United States, the African Union and other actors in the international community in taking Taylor in as a temporary measure to secure a peaceful transition in Liberia.

Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo has thus far been reluctant to surrender Charles Taylor to the Special Court. He has indicated, however, that he would consider surrendering Charles Taylor upon request from a duly-elected Liberian government.

“President Obasanjo should act now and do the right thing by surrendering Charles Taylor to the Special Court,” said Voke Ighorodje, secretary of the Nigerian Coalition for the International Criminal Court, an organization that is part of the Campaign.

The Campaign stressed that Charles Taylor’s trial must take place in accordance with international law and international standards for fair trial.

“The Special Court will not be around for much longer,” said David Anyaele, executive director of Amputees Rehabilitation Foundation, a Nigerian organization that is part of the Campaign. “This valuable opportunity to bring justice to the victims must not be squandered.”

The Campaign Against Impunity is a coalition of some 300 African and international civil society groups that was formed to press for Charles Taylor’s surrender to the Special Court. Nigerian partners in the Campaign are holding a press conference today in Lagos to urge for President Obasanjo to surrender Taylor.

United Nations



Nations Unies

United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL)

UNMIL Public Information Office Media Summary 1 March 2006

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

International Clips on Liberia

BBC 28/02/2006

EU sets aside 10m US dollars for Liberian electrification programme

The European Union has disclosed the setting up of a package of 10m US dollars for electricity to benefit the national electrification programme.

Mr. Geoffrey Rudd, charge d'affaires of the European Commission delegation in **Liberia**, said that the amount is earmarked by his commission to beef up the electrical strength of the country. Mr. Rudd pointed out that after six months of transferring the electrical equipment the electrification process will start in the country.

International Clips on West Africa

COTE D IVOIRE: in groundbreaking talks, faction leaders recommit to peace

YAMOUSSOUKRO, 1 Mar 2006 (IRIN) - The five key players in Cote d'Ivoire's conflict have renewed their commitment to peace efforts after holding their first face-to-face talks at home since war broke out more than three years ago.

While there were few concrete agreements, Tuesday's four-hour meeting behind closed doors broke new ground and brought fresh hopes of a breakthrough in stumbling efforts to reunify the West African nation, divided between a rebel-held north and government south since 2002. Winding up the talks, interim Prime Minister Charles Banny read a statement saying the country's political heavyweights supported UN resolution 1633, the blueprint for peace outlined by the international community in late 2005 to help end Cote d'Ivoire's conflict. However, Banny called the talks primarily to thaw relations among President Laurent Gbagbo, rebel leader Guillaume Soro, and the two main opposition leaders Henri Konan Bedie and Alassane Ouattara. The face-to-face meeting of the four faction leaders plus Banny had been scheduled for Monday but was delayed by one day by a row over security. Notwithstanding, Banny described the atmosphere as "fraternal."

Ivory Coast court to examine French extradition request Thursday

ABIDJAN, March 1, 2006 (AFP) - Judicial authorities in the Ivory Coast are expected to meet Thursday to examine a French request to extradite Youssouf Fofana, wanted for the grisly murder near Paris of a young Jewish man, officials said.

Justice ministry spokesman Ali Yeo said defence lawyers and prosecutors would be present at the hearing.

Ivory Coast soldiers injure 54 in attack on village

ABIDJAN, March 1, 2006 (AFP) - Ivory Coast troops attacked and injured 54 civilians in a western village after an altercation with French peacekeepers this week, a cabinet minister said Wednesday.

BBC 28 February 2006

Ivory Coast Rebels Have Double Life in Burkina Faso

By Nico Colombant and Zoumana Wonogo
Abidjan and Ouagadougou

While the Ivory Coast peace process stutters along, many northern rebel leaders have established a double life in neighboring Burkina Faso. An Ouagadougou resident says many Burkinabes would have liked their Ivorian guests to be more discreet. He says Ivorians are known as big party people and that they tried to export their lifestyle into Burkina Faso, including bringing their own DJs. Sometimes, he says, they went too far.

They even started setting up roadblocks to racket drivers inside Burkina Faso, prompting local authorities to crack down on their illegal activities.

COTE D IVOIRE: After years of delay students in north sit exams

KORHOGO, 28 Feb 2006 (IRIN) - Students in the rebel-held north of Cote d'Ivoire, their educations stopped cold by conflict, have begun sitting school exams after more than two years of doubt.

Local Media – Newspapers

International Organization Pledges Support to TRC

(The Inquirer and Heritage)

- In extension of its support to truth and reconciliation commissions in West Africa, the Open Society Initiative for West Africa (OSIWA) this week pledged to support the work of the newly commissioned Truth and Reconciliation Commission in Liberia.

President to Meet with Nigerian President on Taylor Issue

(Daily Observer)

- Presidents Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf and Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria are reportedly due to meet later this week to discuss issues surrounding former Liberian leader Charles Taylor, who has been exiled in Nigeria since 2003. President Obasanjo on Sunday held private talks with Taylor at the Murtala Mohammed Airport in Lagos.

Germany Provides US\$13 Million Development Grant

(The Inquirer)

- Germany's ambassador to Liberia Thomas Freudenhammer said in Monrovia recently that the German Bank for Development in cooperation with the German Development Cooperation had provided US\$13 million to fund the rehabilitation of roads, schools and the agriculture sector in Southeastern Liberia, particularly in Grand Gedeh, River Gee and Sinoe Counties.

Legislature Demands Budget Performance Report

(The Analyst)

- House Speaker Edwin Snowe told legislative reporters yesterday that the national legislature had requested the Executive Branch of government make available a comprehensive report on the status of the 2005-2006 national budget.

UNDP Launches Arms for Development Program in Grand Gedeh County

(New Democrat and Heritage)

- UNDP Deputy Resident Representative for Programs Elizabeth Oduor Noah over the weekend officially launched the Arms for Development Project in Zwedru, Grand Gedeh County. A UNDP press release said that the project was already ongoing in three chiefdoms in Nimba County.

President Issues Ultimatum for Declaration of Assets

(The News and New Vision)

- In the maiden edition of "Conversation with the President" recently, President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf said that cabinets and other government officials had one more week to make public their assets. She said the declaration of assets before the Senate only was not enough.

Local Media – Radio Veritas *(News monitored yesterday at 18:45 pm)*

President Sets up Joint Task Force on Livelihood at Liberia's Plantations

- An Executive Mansion press statement says President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf has set up a joint task force to assess human rights, livelihood and other issues at the rubber plantations in the country.

(Also reported on ELBS Radio and Star Radio)

Democracy Group Hails President for Assets Declaration Deadline

- In an interview yesterday, Liberia Democratic Institute Executive Director Dan Saryee said that President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf's ultimatum of one week for government officials to publish their assets was a positive move toward accountability and good governance.

(Also reported on ELBS Radio and Star Radio)

Vice President Appoints Key Office Staff

- According to a press release issued in Monrovia yesterday, Vice President Joseph Boakai appointed Cllr. Peter Amos George as his Legal Advisor, Sam Stevequoah, Chief of Office Staff, Alphonso Perkins, Administrative Director and Terrence Sesay, Press Secretary.

(Also reported on ELBS Radio and Star Radio)

Former Presidential Candidate Says Liberia's Problems Orchestrated by Culture of Indifference

- Speaking at the commissioning ceremony of a rural radio station yesterday, former presidential candidate Charles Walker Brumskine blamed Liberia's problems on

'culture of indifference' which has led successful Liberians to be concern about their personal affairs only than humanity adding the vice has made powerful Liberians to be careless about whether government has provided basic services for the ordinary people or not.

(Also reported on ELBS Radio and Star Radio)

New Airport Managing Director Poised to Reform the Sector

- Roberts International Airport (RIA) Managing Director Julius Dennis said that reforming the sector would preoccupy his administration because it is a key source of economic growth.

(Also reported on ELBS Radio and Star Radio)

Armed Forces of Liberia Recruits to Converge on UNDP

- Addressing journalists in Monrovia yesterday, the spokesman of demobilized soldiers of the Armed Forces of Liberia Lt-Col. Powell said that the soldiers have decided to converge at the United Nations Development Program to press the agency to fulfill its promise to cater to their educational needs. He added that the group was disappointed that the UNDP could not fulfill its promise.

(Also reported on ELBS Radio and Star Radio)

African River Blindness Program Ends Support to Liberia Next Year

- In an interview, National River Blindness Program Coordinator Dr. Tudae Torborh said that the African River Blindness Program would end its financial support to the Liberia program by 2007.

(Also reported on ELBS Radio and Star Radio)

ELBS RADIO *(News culled from website today at 09:00 am)*

Senator Asks Colleagues to Boycott Sessions

- Gbarpolu County Senator Daniel Nathan urged his colleagues to boycott functions of the Senate until pressing needs of Senators were addressed. He said that there were Senators who do not have offices to perform their duties.

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