

SPECIAL COURT FOR SIERRA LEONE
PRESS AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE



Nikolaus Toufar lectures students at Fourah Bay College's Mass Communications Department on international humanitarian law. [Wednesday, 19 April 2006]

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:

Thursday, 20 April 2006

The press clips are produced Monday through Friday.
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Exclusive
20 April 2006

Taylor Demands Transfer

By Joseph Turay
Former Liberian President now Special Court Indictee, Charles Taylor,

has asked the authorities of the Special Court, for him to be transferred to another cell at the deten-

tion centre at the Special Court.

The former president
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Taylor Demands Transfer

From front page

made this demand Tuesday afternoon, following a loud strange noise that came from the power generator which got him panicked.

Confirmed sources at the Court say Taylor requested the detention staff to find out what had gone wrong. The sources added that one of the court technician was later sent to Taylor's cell to cross check where the alleged noise came from.

The technician detected that nothing was really wrong inside Mr Taylor's cell, and that the noise that sent Mr Taylor panicked actually came from the generator.

It has also been confirmed that the court is presently putting modalities for Taylor to be transferred to another cell far from the power house.

Spectator
20 April 2006

Trying Dictators has never been

By Muctaru Wurie

Few months ago when I wrote 'Why must Charles Taylor face justice' I advanced several points which I believe made the former warlord and indicted war criminal legible to face the Special Court for Sierra Leone.

Whilst his dramatic arrest was widely welcomed by a great number of Sierra Leoneans and others outside Sierra Leone who believed that, despots, warlords and leaders must face the law for crimes they are alleged to have committed, it is important for us to know that the history of international criminal courts has never smooth. From the Nuremberg trials that was set up to try indicted war criminals in the Second World War to that established for the former Yugoslavia in the Hague, Netherlands, and the one in Arusha, Tanzania set up for the trial of genocide suspects in Rwanda, prosecutors and judges alike have had a very tough time in dealing with alleged war criminals (especially the high-profiled ones).

In Africa, such trials are a new phenomenon. In a continent that has been plagued with widespread human rights violations and a culture of impunity, the question is - can African leaders provide the necessary support to the court in pinning down the former Liberian leader, for example? During the trials of Slobodan Milosevic the prosecution was able to call high profile witnesses in Europe and the United States. I doubt that will happen in Africa. The fact is that most African leaders and statesmen are apprehensive of this new trend in which they perceive western countries trying to initiate a new justice system that will inevitably see some of them being called to answer for their actions. Is this therefore the beginning of a new era in Africa? By the events that led to the capture and detention of Charles Taylor it was clear that the pressure of the United States played a major role in his eventual arrest. It was extremely obvious that most African leaders were against the arrest of the former Liberian president.

The most important thing at present is that from now on, you don't need a special court for your country or region for you to be indicted. The International Criminal Court (ICC) set up by the Rome convention in 1998 of which most African countries are signatories has the authority to indict and try leaders, despots, combatants and warlords who are alleged to have committed war crimes or crimes against humanity. Only about a month ago the ICC in-

dicted and charged it first indicted-a Congolese warlord at it headquarters in The Hague.

Furthermore, notwithstanding the fact that I agreed with most who feel that there is not enough security in Sierra Leone to facilitate Taylor's trial, fears have been expressed by some observers that this will lead to some unforeseen logistical difficulties for the prosecution that will inevitably play into the hands of any well prepared defence team. Whilst many believe that the United Nations Security Council's blessings or approval for providing the legal basis for proceedings to be moved to The Hague is a done deal, many international legal experts are not sure as to how the proceedings will turn out to be. The American judge and former chief prosecutor of the Special Court, David Crane told the BBC last week that it would be hard to predict the direction of the trial at this stage.

Reacting to the proposed commencement of Taylor's trial, one of the former warlord's legal advisers, Theophilous Gould-who is based in Monrovia-stated that he was confident that Taylor would be vindicated. Because, in his own opinion, there are so much loopholes in the UN backed Special Court for Sierra Leone and the charges brought against Taylor. And he also stated that since the prosecution has had two good years to prepare their case, the defence team should also have reasonable time to prepare their case. This brings into mind questions as to how long the Taylor trial is going to last for, considering the fact that the existing basis of operations was only in a year's time. Can the UN Security Council extend the mandate of the court in order to complete the Taylor trials? The next few months will unravel the intricacies of Charles Taylor's trial.

However, the prosecution has sensed some pretty hard times ahead and may well be preparing for it as suggested by their renewed approach of fine tuning the 17 count charges to 11. Charles Taylor is going to be charged on 11 count charges of mass killing, rape, using of child soldiers, et al. Despite the fact that he was in Liberia during most part of the war, the prosecution has the burden to provide proof that he supported

's and Warlords

easy

RUF by providing arms, money and even his own men to aid them in their brutal campaign in Sierra Leone.

We all hoped for Charles Taylor to be brought before justice. Now that he is about to face justice, let's just hope that he does not have a field day in court. That will be the worst

justice to thousands of war victims who have been mutilated and affected by his destructive support for



Taylor: test case for Special Court for Sierra Leone

the bestial forces of Sankoh's Revolutionary United Front (RUF).

Independent Observer
20 April 2006

Feature

The United Nations is on a global hunt for a jailhouse for former Liberian President Charles Taylor, who is to stand trial in the Netherlands for committing "crimes against humanity" both in his home country and in neighbouring Sierra Leone. But so far, no one is willing to roll out the welcome mat to Taylor — irrespective of whether he is found innocent or guilty.

Described as a warlord and a war criminal, Taylor faces 11 charges, including torture, rape, slavery and terrorism, committed by the Revolutionary United Front and other armed forces under his direction, as president of Liberia.

If he is found guilty, the United Nations needs a jailhouse for Taylor's possibly long incarceration. If he is found innocent, the United Nations will need a new home for him.

Without either one of them, the 15-member U.N. Security Council cannot act — and has been virtually brought to a grinding halt.

Sierra Leone and Liberia — two countries where he is accused of committing war crimes — do not want him on their soil, fearing that his very physical presence could threaten the stability of both governments.

The Special Court for Sierra Leone, which has the blessings of the United Nations, is based in that country's capital of Freetown. But still Taylor's trial has been shifted from Freetown to The Hague, Netherlands, which currently hosts the International War Crimes Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia and the International Criminal Court.

The Dutch government says its role as a willing host to the Special Court is subject to several conditions, one of which is that Taylor, if convicted, has to serve his jail term in a country outside Dutch territory.

Austria and Sweden have both rejected requests to provide a jailhouse for a convicted Taylor.

But several human rights organisations and African activists have strong reservations about the relocation of the trial.

Enock Mensah, president of the New York-based African Development Institute, challenges the decision to move the trial from Africa to Europe. He said that when Taylor stepped down as president of Liberia in August 2003, Nigeria provided him sanctuary, following negotiations by



the 53-member African Union (AU).

The AU, which helped strike a deal with Taylor "should step in and find a country", Mensah told IPS. He also said that Taylor's trial should take place on African soil, not in Europe. Asked if any African country would be willing to host Taylor, he said the international community should exert pressure on the AU to find a country willing to host the trial and provide a jailhouse.

When the ex-president of the former Yugoslavia, Slobodan Milosevic, was tried for war crimes committed in his European country, his trial was held in Europe, not in Africa, Mensah said. It is unfair to Taylor if his trial is held outside Africa, he added.

In a joint statement issued last week, the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) and Liberia Watch for Human Rights (LWHR) expressed their concern over the upcoming trial in The Hague.

"Conducting trials in Sierra Leone has been crucial to facilitate re-establishing the rule of law, to rebuilding the national justice system, and to ensuring that justice is done, and is seen to be done, by the victims and the people of Sierra Leone as whole," says Sidiki Kaba, president of FIDH.

The Special Court for Sierra Leone, he pointed out, has already conducted fair trials against high top leaders such as Foday Sankoh and Sam Hinga Norman.

"It has proved it can manage security issues without creating more insecurity. Conducting fair trials in Sierra Leone can make a more significant

contribution to future stability and to the transition to democracy and the rule of law in the sub-region," according to Thompson Ade Bayor, president of LWHR.

Kolawole Olaniyan, Africa programme director of Amnesty International, is quoted as saying that the relocation of the trial to The Hague would have a negative effect "as it would distance the people of Sierra Leone from the justice process".

He said his organisation shares the belief expressed by U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan that "the capture and trial of Mr. Taylor will send a powerful message to the region and beyond that impunity will not be allowed to stand and that the rule of law must prevail".

Amnesty International, he pointed out, is not in a position to determine the severity of the threat to the security of proceedings, if they are to be conducted in Sierra Leone.

"The organisation, however, recognises that moving the trial would have a negative effect of distancing the justice process from the Sierra Leonean people, who have suffered directly as a result of the crimes for which Charles Taylor is indicted."

"Justice must be accessible and visible for the Sierra Leonean people to address the crimes which affect all strata of the population and to act as a deterrent to would-be future perpetrators of such heinous crimes", Olaniyan added.

By Thalif Deen :

Credit Inter Press Service

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ANALYSIS

Special Court for Sierra Leone

by Thierry Cruvellier, Paris

Why try Taylor in The Hague?

This week the UN Security Council may ask the Netherlands to host the Special Court for Sierra Leone, established four years ago in Freetown, so that it can try its most important defendant, former Liberian president Charles Taylor, who has been incarcerated since March 29. Officially, security is the reason cited for this relocation, which would bring an end to the "Sierra Leonean model." More than likely though, it is the result of a political agreement.

Since March 25, the day when Nigeria announced that Liberia was "free to take custody" of Charles Taylor [JT-43], the case has seen some dramatic developments. Two days later, Taylor surprised everyone by escaping. His supporters threatened "bloodshed and chaos". Nigerian president Olusegun Obasanjo was called into question by members of the U.S. Congress, who asked that President Bush cancel the meeting he had scheduled with Obasanjo on March 29.

As if by miracle, on the morning of the 29th, Nigerian authorities announced that they had arrested the fugitive along the border with Cameroon. The motive behind this incredible fool's game is unknown. However, Taylor was indeed arrested and flown to Monrovia the same day. The stopover lasted only long enough for Taylor to be handed over to UN troops, who then transported him by helicopter to the Special Court in Freetown. Three years after being indicted for war crimes and crimes against humanity by this half international court, the former rebel leader-turned-president will now face his judges. Yet there is a new twist. The

judges are now asking to try him in The Hague.

The first person to announce this relocation also revealed, in so doing, the place where the decision had been made: Washington. Ignoring the court's autonomy, President Bush did not wait for the president of the special court to officially make the request before announcing the content. "There is a process to get Charles Taylor to the court in the Netherlands," declared President Bush on March 29, according to Bloomberg. "Such a process will require a United Nations Security Council resolution," he added. A U.S. State Department spokesperson specified that even though the special court will still have jurisdiction, the magnitude of the Taylor case makes holding the trial in The Hague more appropriate. A few hours later, the president of the Special Court for Sierra Leone sent a request to this effect to the Dutch government. He stated that "stability in the region" would be threatened if the trial were held in Freetown.

None of the key players is surprised

None of the key players was surprised by this scenario. Soon after, the Netherlands publicly announced its three conditions: that there be a Security Council resolution, that the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, or more likely, the International Criminal Court (ICC) provide a holding cell and a courtroom, and that Taylor not remain in the Netherlands after his trial, regardless of whether or not he is convicted. Even

before Taylor's brief escape, the Liberian Minister of Information had expressed the desire to have the former Head of State tried "in an environment that is not hostile," which in diplomatic language means "not in Sierra Leone." The Liberian president quickly expressed his support for the request. Then Solomon Berewa, Vice President of Sierra Leone, told the New York Times that this solution would be preferable so as to avoid being "reminded of those atrocities every day." Victim trauma has become the argument here. Speaking to the Reuters correspondent in Freetown, Berewa also said that "the intention to transfer Taylor to the Hague was not for security reasons as widely believed". He explained that there is enough security in the country to have Taylor tried but that the main issue was that the Special Court had already mapped out an exit strategy, which involved bringing their operations to a conclusion at the end of December 2006.

Already back in March 2003, the prosecutor sought in vain to have another defendant, Samuel Hinga Norman, transferred elsewhere, arguing the threat of attacks on the court by supporters of the former head of the Civil defense forces. Said one former senior court official, "We were expecting the worst with the Norman case, but nothing happened. There is still a type of paranoia. People will evoke insecurity in the region, which is difficult to gauge since the region is not very stable. But do they understand what will be lost if this trial is not held in Africa?"

The arrangements concerning Taylor materialized in October 2005. That was when the office of the prosecu-

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► SECOND TRIAL FOR SADDAM READY

On April 5, the prosecutor of the Iraqi high court questioned the former president for the first time on the execution of 148 Shiites in the village of Dujail in 1982, following an assassination attempt on the president. "It was one of the president's prerogatives" to uphold sentences handed down by the revolutionary court, said Hussein, according to AP. "I had the right to question the verdict, but I was convinced that the evidence submitted was sufficient." According to the daily *Le Monde*, the high court in Baghdad announced the day before that a second, more significant trial would be held in which Hussein and six other defendants would be tried for crimes committed during the anti-Kurd campaign in Al-Anfal that resulted in 100,000 to 200,000 victims between 1987 and 1988. The investigation has been concluded; the court has appointed a chamber and the defendants will be tried on charges of "genocide and crimes against humanity," said Iraqi judge Raed Al-Jouhi. In this case, Ali Hassan Al-Majid, a.k.a. "Ali the Chemical", will be held accountable for the destruction of thousands of villages, the displacement of their residents and the gassing of the village of Halabja in March 1988, which caused 8,000 victims. But a separate trial may be devoted exclusively to Halabja according to Judge Al-Jouhi.

► AN INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL TRIBUNAL FOR HARIRI

On March 29, the UN Security Council adopted a resolution urging the Secretary-General "to negotiate an agreement with the Government of Lebanon aimed at establishing a tribunal of an international character based on the highest international standards of criminal justice" in order to try the perpetrators of an attack that killed former Lebanese prime minister Rafic Hariri. On April 4, Serge Brammertz, the head of the fact finding committee that recommended this solution, met with the president of the Beirut bar association, who would like the seat of the court to be outside Lebanon. The Minister of Justice was expecting a visit by a UN delegation.

tor received the following message from Washington: "If you want Taylor, it will have to be outside [the region] because it's too destabilizing for the region," according to a witness to these discussions. "The chances of getting Taylor were so slim that many would have taken the deal." On October 15, the chief prosecutor carelessly let it slip to the BBC that a trial in The Hague was being considered. "A number of countries – both Western and African – take the view that perhaps the interests of peace and security could best be served by a trial outside the region," said Desmond de Silva. "It is political and could become a security issue if it is not well managed," said an international expert based in the region. "There is immediate concern about how fragile it is in Liberia. There are elections next year in Sierra Leone. There are big political moves ahead, as well as in Guinea. But in Liberia, there is also a mixture of embarrassment and anger [in having Taylor being tried in Freetown]. It is about pride, and it is about sovereignty. In addition, some revelations at the trial could have huge repercussions at home."

Realpolitik

The haste by West African leaders, especially those of Liberia and Sierra Leone, to support the idea of trying Taylor in The Hague is a sign of the desire to manage their bilateral relations carefully. "Now they're telling us that the king of destabilization in the region could still destabilize it. But the fact that an African head of state is being tried in Europe is highly offensive on a symbolic level. The 'philosophical' discourse on the tribunal has been totally glossed over by realpolitik interests," laments a former senior official of the special court. Although the idea behind moving the Taylor trial was to maintain a good regional diplomatic climate, it does deliver a fatal blow to the model Sierra Leone embodied in the area of international justice.

Several NGOs are worried. According to the International Center for Transitional Justice (ICTJ), "One of the primary motivations behind the establishment of the Special Court in Freetown – hailed as a new model precisely because of its location – was to make it more accessible and to allow for participation by Sierra Leoneans and others from the region. From the outset, the Special Court has been designed and

built to conduct politically sensitive trials in-country. It has already proven its ability to manage difficult security issues," added the New York based organization, which is worried about a lack of transparency with the decision and is asking that this solution be applied only as a "last resort."

"What is so ingenious about this court is that it is located in country. It would be a lost opportunity if Taylor is transferred," added a former member of the prosecution. Former prosecutor David Crane, who indicted Taylor in March 2003 and headed up the prosecutor's office for four years, does not want to question the court that he served. However, he stresses that, "ideally it must take place in Sierra Leone. That's the whole wonderful idea about this court. I don't think the court is threatened. That's not an issue. The issue is regional instability and insecurity. It's a political decision, from both Sierra Leone and Liberia. We should see how it evolves. Political realities have modified the model. But war crimes leaders lose their luster with time."

This decision would place the United States and the African Union at loggerheads

Although this decision would clearly weaken the court's model, it would also place its main supporter, the United States, at loggerheads with the most convincing part of its discourse on international justice: placing the responsibility for trying criminals in the hands of countries where the crimes were committed. Finally, this decision would make a mockery of the African Union, which on the one hand, is anxious to maintain African sovereignty in the Hissène Habré case, and on the other hand, just when there is an operational court on the continent, agrees to strip it of its mandate.

Before Taylor was captured during his brief escape, his spiritual advisor, evangelist Kilari Anand Paul, told AFP that "Charles Taylor [had] agreed to face justice in The Hague." Appearing before the special court in Freetown on April 3, Taylor, speaking through the Principal Defender, said that he preferred to be tried in Sierra Leone in order for witnesses and his family to have better access. Already the former president seems to want to stir up trouble and use to his advantage the contradictions of those in charge of trying him.

Associated Press

20 April 2006

US keen for Denmark to house Taylor

By Nick Wadhams

New York - Denmark has come under pressure to either imprison former Liberian president Charles Taylor or give him asylum after his trial for alleged war crimes in Sierra Leone, diplomats said on Wednesday.

Efforts to begin Taylor's trial on 11 counts for his role in Sierra Leone's vicious civil war have stalled because no country has agreed to take him in once it ends.

The Netherlands has agreed to conduct the trial in facilities at The Hague - but only if it is guaranteed that he will leave immediately afterwards.

Governments fear the political fallout of taking in Taylor, a notorious former warlord believed to be responsible for thousands of deaths and widespread turmoil in West Africa.

They also fear that he might somehow continue to exert influence from prison.

Officials have also pressured The Netherlands to let the trial start and find a country to take Taylor later, so far with little success.

"We've certainly talked to the government of The Netherlands about that," US Ambassador John Bolton said. "So far, the Dutch have not been willing to do that and that's why we're continuing to search."

Sweden and Austria were initially seen as the likeliest candidates to take him in, but both refused.

Denmark is now the focus of efforts by the United States, which is leading the search for a country, several diplomats said.

Denmark's foreign ministry refused to confirm whether it had been approached to take in Taylor.

A European diplomat in New York said the request had been made informally and Denmark responded that it would need a high-level request directly from the United States before it considered taking in Taylor.

The diplomats all spoke on condition of anonymity because the talks are secret and highly sensitive.

International rights groups expressed a growing impatience to get the trial started and said the delay could cast doubts about western nations' commitment to bringing Taylor to justice.

"There is an urgent need for a state to step forward," said Richard Dicker, head of the international justice programme at Human Rights Watch.

"A prolonged delay would raise real questions about the commitment of the international community to international justice."

Bolton said he did not know whether Denmark was among those being courted because the talks were being handled in Washington.

That reflected a higher-level effort to place Taylor after his trial. While discussions had earlier been conducted by lower-level diplomats, the issue is now seen as so sensitive that it has moved up to talks between senior foreign ministry officials.

Denmark could be a good choice because its United Nations ambassador, Ellen Margrethe Loj, chairs the UN Security Council's Liberia sanctions committee.

Loj recently visited Liberia, where President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf told her that Taylor must be removed from the region urgently, the diplomats said.

Taylor is now in the court's detention centre in Freetown, Sierra Leone, guarded by a Swedish rapid reaction force.

Sierra Leone is still unstable after the end of its 1991-2002 civil war, a conflict that grew out of Taylor's 1989 rebel incursion that would ultimately leave Liberia a failed state.

The court, as well as Liberia, have asked that the trial be conducted elsewhere because they fear his presence could destabilise West Africa.

The Hague has the necessary facilities for such a delicate operation. For example, the trial could occupy space reserved for the International Criminal Court, the world's first permanent war crimes tribunal.

UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan has been directly involved in discussions about who should take Taylor, other UN officials said.

At the same time, they stressed that in meetings last week with Dutch officials and representatives of the International Criminal Court, he was not overly concerned about finding a country.

"Look on the bright side," UN spokesperson Stephane Dujarric said. "Mr Taylor is in jail.

He's in the special court where he was indicted. We feel it's safe."

While Austria and Sweden had earlier refused, another UN diplomat said governments were still trying to find a compromise they could accept.

Diplomats also plan to talk to nations that have so-called "enforcement of sentences" agreements with the UN-backed courts for Rwanda and Yugoslavia, as well as the International Criminal Court.

In the meantime, Taylor's lawyers have filed a petition seeking to ensure his trial remains in Sierra Leone. The court planned to consider the request after it returns from recess on April 24. - Sapa-AP

The Analyst (Monrovia)

19 April 2006

Govt Considers Freezing Taylor's Assets

By George Borteh

As Liberia's former President Charles Taylor awaits trial for war crimes and crimes against humanity in the Special Court for Sierra Leone, the Liberian Government says it is considering freezing his assets in compliance with the UN Security Council's conditions to end the diamond and timber sanctions.

The Chairman of the Sanctions Committee on Liberia M. Loj recently visited the country to check compliance with the timber and diamond sanctions imposed on the country.

During her visit, Madam Loj said that the Liberian government has taken steps to comply with the conditions needed to lift the sanctions.

And the Government of Liberia has said that it is prepared to comply and is considering freezing the assets of former Liberian president Charles Taylor, now facing war crimes and crimes against humanity in Freetown, Sierra Leone.

Speaking recently in a VOA interview, Justice Minister Frances Johnson-Morris said that the United Nations has set forth freezing of assets of Mr. Taylor as one of the conditions of lifting the sanctions on Liberia.

She added that the sanctions committee has set June this year to further review the sanctions and that depending on the level of compliance by the government of Liberia the country could be relieved of the burden of sanctions.

"So if we want sanctions to be lifted, we have to comply with the conditions set in lifting of the sanctions," Cllr. Morris asserted.

The Justice Minister did not say which of Taylor's assets the government could freeze or whether the government has identified the former president's assets to be frozen.

According to her the Government will have to investigate if the assets of Taylor will be seized, adding that the government does not want to fall in trouble with anybody in the process of seizing Taylor's assets.

The Minister said, "The UN sanctions committee on Liberia is in Monrovia. We held a meeting and I think she came to follow up how far the Liberian government has gone in compliance with assets seizing in keeping with section 25 of the UN Chapter concerning the obligation of member states to comply with UN Security Council Resolution." "I am not sure that we are positive about the property that Mr. Taylor may have in Liberia, but if we have to freeze assets we have to investigate and make sure that the property that we seek to effect will be the property belonging to him.

"In fact the sanctions committee is reviewing the sanction against Liberia, I think in June with the view of lifting the sanction depending on the level of compliance by the government. So if we want the sanctions to be lifted, we have to comply with the conditions set in lifting of the sanctions.

"The Liberian government needs to have sanctions lifted against it so that it can move on with its development programs and plans," Justice Minister Morris said.

The Analyst (Monrovia)

19 April 2006

Taylor Digs in Heels

Lawyer Files "No Venue Change" Motion - But Fears of Taylor Fighters Grips Freetown

The saga surrounding the trial of former President Charles Taylor is changing faces with dramatic twist by the day. Prior to his arraignment before the Special Court friends, family members, and presumed lawyers argued that justice would rather be served were Taylor to be tried in The Hague. They feared that given the perceived hostility of the trial venue, alleged presumptuous comments made by Chief Court Prosecutor David Crane, and what happened to co-indictee, RUF's Foday Sankoh, Sierra Leone was the most unlikely place on earth to seek justice. The United Nations Security Council may have taken the fear seriously as, early this month, it moved quickly to consider a resolution for the change of venue. Now when the Council seems far advanced in its search, lawyers representing Taylor announced days after his first appearance that he preferred to be tried in Freetown. Now, his lawyer has finally put in a legal injunction. The Analyst Staff Writer has been leafing through media reports on the motion for stay of venue and fears that Taylor's fighters may have already invaded Freetown.

The Special Court-assigned defense lawyer for Charles Taylor, Karim A.A Khan, has filed a motion for the trial to be held in Sierra Leone, rather than The Hague.

A Sierra Leone Concord Times dispatch last Tuesday said the filing of the motion was confirmed by Peter Andersen, Deputy Chief of Public Affairs.

According to Andersen, the motion which could not be heard immediately because the court is on recess was filed on the April 6, 2006.

The recess would last up to April 24, according to court records, after which consideration would be given for the hearing.

"Defense motion for an order that no change of venue from the seat of the court in Freetown be ordered without the defence being heard on the issue and motion that the trial chamber requests that the President of the Special Court to withdraw the requests reportedly made to (1) the government of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to permit that the trial of Charles Ghankay Taylor be conducted on its territory and (2) To the President of the ICC for the use of the ICC building and facilities in the Netherlands during the proposed trial of Charles Ghankay Taylor," demands the motion.

Asked about recent newspaper reports that fighters of Charles Taylor's NPFL are in town and whether it was of concern for the Court, Andersen replied, "those are rumors and we cannot respond to them." He said while there was need for concerns regarding the rumors, there was no need to panic because the Special Court has a well-trained Mongolian contingent that takes care of security "very seriously." Despite concerns that the former Liberian president's detention could spark more instability, the overriding sense is that justice must be done at last.

"No wicked heart shall prosper," reads the graffiti outside Sierra Leone's special war crimes court.

Until recently, that sentiment seemed a slightly forlorn hope in a country like Sierra Leone.

In a related development, the U.N. Security Council members have agreed the war crimes trial of former Liberian President Charles Taylor should be moved from Sierra Leone.

The Council has been moving frantically to get a third country to support the process but has yet to make headway, media reports said Sunday.

China's U.N. Ambassador Wang Guangya said the Security Council was still debating several issues, including who should pay the costs.

He said there were scheduled closed-door consultations early last week on the draft resolution and said he expected it to be adopted.

"I think there is agreement that he is going to be moved to The Hague," Wang said. "Now, it's only the technical side, how the resolution will look ... (so) there will be no misunderstandings, no concerns." The U.N.-backed Special Court in Sierra Leone has requested that Taylor's trial be moved out of West Africa for security reasons.

Taylor has pleaded not guilty to 11 counts of war crimes stemming from his alleged backing of Sierra Leone's rebels.

The draft resolution states that the costs of trying Taylor in the Netherlands "are expenses of the Special Court" in Sierra Leone, which is funded by voluntary contributions. It reiterates an appeal to U.N. member states "to contribute generously" to the court.

In a March 29 letter to the Security Council, The Netherlands emphasized that the Special Court must shoulder the costs of the trial and "that no additional costs shall be incurred by The Netherlands without its consent." Wang said some members of the International Criminal Court want the issue of costs to be clarified further in the resolution to avoid future disputes.

A U.N. appeal for \$25 million to fund the Special Court for Sierra Leone this year has so far received only \$9 million in pledges and \$6 million in funding, which is expected to run out soon.

U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan wrote to the foreign ministers of the 191 U.N. member states shortly before Taylor's capture, seeking \$14.4 million for the court this year, U.N. deputy spokeswoman Marie Okabe said.

She said that did not include the cost of moving Taylor's trial to The Hague, which has not yet been calculated.

U.S. Mission spokesman Benjamin Chang said the United States would seriously consider the request "because we want the court to be able to bring Charles Taylor to justice." The Dutch government also asked for assurances that once a verdict is reached, Taylor would immediately be transferred out of the Netherlands.

Sweden and Austria said last Wednesday they had received requests to imprison Taylor if he is convicted, but no decision has been announced.

United Nations

19 April 2006

DAILY PRESS BRIEFING BY THE OFFICE OF THE SPOKESMAN FOR THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

The following is a near-verbatim transcript of today's noon briefing by Stéphane Dujarric, Spokesman for the Secretary-General.

-SNIP-

Question: Only one more, is there any progress on the UN's efforts to find another country to host Charles Taylor after a trial in The Hague?

Spokesman: No, my understanding is that there's been no, there's nothing to announce at this point.

Question: In the meantime, is the UN capable of keeping him safe for an extended period in Sierra Leone?

Spokesman: The Special Court has made arrangements. I believe there's a Swedish rapid reaction force that is there. And they have taken all the measures they feel necessary to keep him safe where he's locked up.

Question: And finally on this, is the UN disappointed at the failure of the world to offer a place for Mr. Taylor, either to be imprisoned or to go into exile. Is this basically a failure by the world to follow through on its commitments to international peace and security?

Spokesman: I think, you know, to look on the bright side, Mr. Taylor is in jail. He's in the Special Court, where he was indicted. We feel it's safe. Obviously discussions were going on. I don't think they're concluded about finding another country to take him in for incarceration. So, those discussions are going on.

Question: [Inaudible] a public appeal you would make?

Spokesman: The discussions are still going on. It's not the end of the road.

United Nations



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UNMIL Public Information Office Media Summary 19 April

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International Clips on Liberia

Liberia soccer star and presidential runner-up Weah calls for jobs for his supporters

By JONATHAN PAYE-LAYLEH

Source: English General News Date: April 19, 2006

MONROVIA, Liberia International soccer superstar and Liberian presidential runner-up George Weah called on the war-battered nation's new leader to give his supporters a greater role in government reconstruction projects. Weah, who lost to President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf in Liberia's first elections since the end of a 1989-2003 civil war, said late Tuesday that he met recently with Sirleaf and pressed her to include his party members in her efforts to rebuild the country.

International Clips on West Africa

Ivorian President wants disarmament before polling

ABIDJAN, April 18, 2006 (AFP) - Ivory Coast President Laurent Gbagbo has insisted that combatants inside the country must disarm before elections planned to be held by the end of October can take place, local media reported Tuesday. "The (United Nations) resolution 1633 states that is necessary to disarm without delaying the elections. We agree with that and we want elections. But between the elections and us, there has to be disarmament," declared Gbagbo, in remarks reported by the Ivorian press. He was speaking during a weekend trip to the southwestern district of Gagnoa.

Local Media – Newspapers

President and Lawmakers in Row over National Budget

(Daily Observer, The News, The Inquirer, New Democrat, Heritage and National Chronicle)

- A letter from President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf to House Speaker Edwin Snowe read in plenary session yesterday stated that the National Legislature made compromises and extraordinary considerations against the interests of the Liberian people when it recently deliberated on the recast national budget. The Executive would be prompted to set guidelines regarding the way and manner in which the legislature conducts budgetary discussions, especially the discussion of the incoming budget for 2006, the President's letter added.

Government Considers Freezing Taylor's Assets

(The Analyst)

- Speaking in a VOA interview recently, Justice Minister Frances Johnson-Morris said that the government was considering freezing the assets of former President Charles Taylor to partly satisfy the conditions set by the UN Security Council to lift diamond and timber sanctions on Liberia.

U.S.-Based Liberian Journalists Set Up Task Force for Media Development in Liberia

(The Analyst)

- At the end of a media conference which ran from 7 to 8 April at the University of Massachusetts' Center for Democracy and Development, McCormack School of Policy Studies in Boston, USA, several U.S.-based Liberian journalists established the Liberian Media Support Initiative to mobilize resources for developing the media in Liberia.

President Nominates Ambassadors

(Daily Observer and The Analyst)

- President Johnson-Sirleaf yesterday made several nominations for ambassadorial posts pending confirmation by the Senate. Among those nominated are former presidential aspirant Nathaniel Barnes to be Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Liberia to the UN, former National Transitional Government Vice-Chairman Wesley Johnson (Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to the United Kingdom), Charles Minor (United States), Mrs. Neh Dukuly Tolbert (People's Republic of China), Cllr. Lois Bruthus (Republic of South Africa), Konah Blackett (Republic of Egypt), Edward Clinton (Republic of Ethiopia) and Rudolph Von Ballmoos (Republic of Ghana).

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

Government to Ensure Realization of Girls' Education

- Speaking in Monrovia yesterday during the official launch of the National Policy on Girls' Education, President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf said that the government was committed to galvanizing action for the achievement the policy.

(Also reported on ELBS Radio and Star Radio)

Lawmakers Seek President's Clarification on Budget

- The House of Representatives has written President Johnson-Sirleaf asking her to provide clarifications on her statement that compromises reached during the passing of the recast budget would not apply in the next budget.

(Also reported on ELBS Radio and Star Radio)

Former First Lady Criticises Government for Downsizing Workforce

- Addressing a news conference in Monrovia yesterday, former First Lady and Bong County Senator Jewel Howard-Taylor criticized the government for its decision to downsize its workforce. She argued that the exercise was not timely, especially after the passage of the budget, which includes would-be affected employees.

(Also reported on ELBS Radio and Star Radio)

Complete versions of the UNMIL International Press Clips, UNMIL Daily Liberian Radio Summary and UNMIL Liberian Newspapers Summary are posted each day on the UNMIL Bulletin Board. If you are unable to access the UNMIL Bulletin Board or would like further information on the content of the summaries, please contact Mr. Jeddi Armah at armahj@un.org.