

SPECIAL COURT FOR SIERRA LEONE
PRESS AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE

PRESS CLIPPINGS

**Enclosed are clippings of the latest local and international press on the Special Court and related issues obtained by the Press and Public Affairs Office
as of:**

Tuesday, December 21, 2004

The press clips are produced Monday to Friday.
If you are aware of omissions or have any comments or suggestions please contact
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THE AFRICAN CHAMPION

Motto: Facts Are Sacred

Tuesday December 21, 2004 INDEPENDENT

NEWSPAPER

Le 500

UN Report Exposes Charles Taylor's War Plans

The extradition of Charles Taylor, former president of Liberia, has been on the lips of prosecuting officers at the UN-backed war-crime tribunal in Sierra Leone since he fled into exile on August 11, 2003.

Although officials at the Special Court have persistently failed for the handing over of the

former war lord for prosecution, such reports have been debunked by words from Abuja that Nigeria would release Taylor only to an elected government in Monrovia.

Taylor's assailants want him primarily for his role in the atrocities allegedly committed during the Sierra Leonean decade-long civil war, but now



Kofi Annan: UN Scribe



Charles Taylor: wanted
there is more pressure Liberia and within
for his extradition inside Contd. page 3

"TAYLOR IS STILL RECEIVING MONEY FROM LIBERIA," UN REPORT

FROM FRONT PAGE

diplomatic circles because it is believed that he is adversely affecting developments in Liberia's fragile peace process through financial and moral support for surrogate warlord in Monrovia. It is now believed that Taylor is rather receiving money from Liberia perhaps to support an armed insurgency.

The December 2004 report of the UN Panel of Experts says it has evidence that former Liberian president Charles Taylor is still receiving money from Liberia.

The report has even though there has not been any direct evidence suggesting that money from assets have been diverted to former president Charles Taylor in Nigeria, information received by the UN Panel of experts shows that he is still receiving money from Liberia.

According to the experts using various sources under condition of anonymity it appears that "the financial of Charles Taylor is made in cash using both male and female couriers. The couriers deliver the cash

using international flights, but remittance is made via another intermediary in order to avoid a direct route." "In many cases, there is no need to transfer any money in cash. The former president of Liberia will contact a 'friend' by phone and instruct him to give the required funds to a third party," the Panel's report said.

Presently it is difficult to ascertain which individuals are currently supplying money to Taylor, the report noted. "The general lack of any type of financial control, and rampant corruption in Liberia make the diversion of money from one company or individual to Taylor extremely easy," the Panel's report said. "About 50% of the money may have come from government coffers."

However, it stated that "Taylor still poses a threat to future stability in Liberia." Taylor - under bloody attacks from two rebel groups battling to overthrow him - accepted a Nigerian offer of asylum in August last year under an agreement designed to restore lasting peace to war-

ravaged Liberia, said the report.

Although an arrest warrant was issued in the form of a Red Notice for Taylor's detention by the Special Court of Sierra Leone over one year ago, Taylor remains at large in Nigeria, reportedly living as a guest of honor in the Nigerian city of Calabar.

"This raises questions about the efficacy of the application of the rule of law at the international level, particularly as Nigeria is a member of the United Nations and the International Police Organization," the report contended further.

Observers say while reports of the remittance of funds to Taylor from Liberia instead of the other way around are difficult to dismiss, outright, there are **ones of** truth to them if recent reports of Taylor's bankruptcy are anything to go by.

They say the truth cannot be any farther away mainly when such reports are added to the fact that Taylor is covertly connected with several businesses in Monrovia, being the sole shareholder in some, and that the travel ban and financial freeze on some of his prime confidants and confidantes is still loosely

applied and leaky. Says the Panel's report, "Rumors abound in Liberia that other named persons like Jewel Howard Taylor are disposing of their properties. It was published in the local press that she sold two generators recently for US\$38,000 to a Lebanese businessman and the transaction was conducted in cash."

Thus far, according to the Panel's report, only Germany, United Kingdom, and the United States of America have frozen the assets of some of those listed on the asset freeze list.

Those reportedly affected include foreign businessman Leonid Minin of the Exotic Timber Company; Agnes Reeves-Taylor, former wife of exiled former president Charles Taylor, and former Maritime commissioner Benoni Urey.

No assets of any of the targeted persons are known to have been frozen in Liberia pursuant to resolution 1532 (2004) despite huge assets rumored

to be held by each of these individuals.

The Panel recommends that adequate international pressure be brought upon the New Transitional Government of Liberia for prompt implementation of the financial sanctions. It also suggests that necessary legal assistance should be provided to the NTGL on a priority basis for implementation of the financial sanctions within the territory of Liberia.

The Panel analyzed the movements of persons at Roberts International Airport for the period 1 June-5 November 2004. None of the persons mentioned on the travel-ban list, except Mohamed Salame, seen on 8th of August 2004 on his way to Abidjan, was on the airport's departure manifests.

In that regard, the Panel was informed that the Liberian immigration authorities are vigilant and are assisted by UNMIL, which has established a CIVPOL unit at the airport itself. However,

several sources have informed the Panel that some of the persons on the travel ban regularly visit their mentor in Nigeria - which suggests that other subterfuges are also used.

The Panel raised the issue of the travel ban in its meeting with Mr. Abraham B. Mitchell, the Liberian official responsible for border-surveillance matters.

He noted that two incidents had been reported to him. First, the case of Mrs. Jewel Taylor, wife of Charles Taylor, who had been arrested at RIA when she arrived from Nigeria. The second case concerned Mr.

Momo Gibba, who had tried to outwit the police by trying to pass himself off as Mo Jones before being stopped by Liberian immigration authorities.

Money transfer to Taylor may be a long way off from ascertaining, but analysts say where there is smoke, there is bound to be fire and that the NTGL and UNMIL have no option but to verify these reports and move quickly to stop it.

They say the parallel between remittance of funds and the purchase of arms for destabilization purposes is always natural and that Taylor is no stranger to such deals

Herald Sun

[Print this page](#)

Police chief's trial adjourned

Keith Moor
21dec04

VICTORIA Police Superintendent Peter Halloran's trial in West Africa was yesterday adjourned without any new evidence being heard.

The court had been due to hear an application by his lawyer, Nicholas Browne-Marke, for an acquittal on the grounds there is no case to answer. But Supt Halloran and his legal team were yesterday locked out of Sierra Leone's High Court due to a possible verdict in a high-profile treason trial.

His trial is expected to resume today. The adjournment is the latest in a long line of delays.

Supt Halloran's trial started on September 10, but has sat for less than six hours spread over more than 20 appearances since then.

The former head of the Victoria Police homicide and vice squads has denied assaulting a schoolgirl.

Victoria Police Association secretary Paul Mullett is trying to get the Australian Government to intervene to ensure international rules of justice apply.

Sen-Sgt Mullett said Supt Halloran was not getting a fair or speedy trial.

If the trial does resume today then Supt Halloran's lawyer intends arguing for an acquittal due to lack of evidence.

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The New CITIZEN

TOLONGBO

TUESDAY 21ST DECEMBER 2004

VOLUME 8 NO. 197

TEARS AFTER DEATH SENTENCE

Ten accused treason suspects out of sixteen who were charged with the offence of attempting to overthrow the government by unlawful means were yesterday sentenced to death by hanging at the Freetown High Court No. 2 presided over by Justice Bankole Rashid, a development that caused the shedding of tears and public wailing by some of the accused persons, their friends and relatives as

they were herded away into a waiting vehicle after the judge had handed down the harsh death sentence.

The protracted trial which experienced several adjournments came to a conclusion yesterday when the presiding judge asked members of the jury to pass a verdict on the accused persons.

Security was yesterday heightened around the precincts of the Law Courts Building when armed op-

erations Security Division personnel took up strategic positions and prevented passers-by from using the main routes around the Law Courts Building.

Also, crowds of people, including relatives and friends of the accused persons, milled around the Law Courts Building in central Freetown in an unsuccessful effort to gain access to the court itself.

The sixteen accused treason suspects were charged

with the offence in 2002 for plans to overthrow the legitimate government of President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah after a shot out at the Wellington base of the Sierra Leone Army Engineering Depot.

A seventeenth accused person, Santigie Kamara alias 555, had earlier being transferred to the Special Court to stand trial for various offences related to human rights violations in a court that does not

have the authority to pass a death sentence.

One of the accused persons, Mohamed Kamara, who received a ten-year prison jail sentence was the only one that stood before Justice Bankole Rashid for misprision of treason.

At the time of their arrest, allegations were rife that the accused persons attacked the army base at the premises of the former Aureol Tobacco Company,

Wellington, in a bid to access weapons and ammunition to overthrow the legitimate government.

One suspect, Mrs. Bai Marrow, had earlier being discharged in May 2003 for lack of sufficient evidence as four others, Lamin Kamara, Abdulai Kargbo, Musine Kamara and Mohamed Tarawallie were yesterday acquitted and discharged as the jurors did.

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FROM PAGE 1

not find them guilty.

The ten accused persons sentenced to death are Lance Corporal Daniel Sandy, Issa Kanu, Captain Hindolo Tyre, Alhaji Kamanda alias Gun Boat, Abdulai Tarawallie, alias Master, Richard Sellu Bockarie, Alhaji Mohamed Kondeh, Alhaji Kargbo, Ibrahim Koroma and Kai Manna.

The presiding judge, Justice Bankole Rashid, before he handed down sentence, thanked members of the jury for a job well done and also thanked both the prosecution and defence lawyers for exhibiting patience and understanding throughout the trial period.

All the accused persons sentenced to death vehemently complained that they were not guilty of the offence for which they were charged and the second accused, Captain Hindolo Tyre said, "I know I

TEARS FLOW

will be free in heaven."

Freetown lawyer, Osho Williams, in his plea for mitigation said that the judge should use his discretion and pass a custodial sentence on the accused persons as to sentence them to death would have deprived them from taking part in national development.

Osho Williams further argued that although the death sentence may be in place but it was not mandatory that the judge should use it.

Counsel for the prosecution, A.K. A Barber, responding to Osho Williams on behalf of the prosecution, said that the spates of coup attempts are too many in Sierra Leone and this should be brought to an end as he insisted that the drafting of the provision on the death penalty suggests that it was mandatory for the judge to pass death sentence and not a custodial sentence. The four accused persons

who were earlier released were asked to walk out of the dock and where quickly embraced by friends and relatives and taken away in the feat of celebrations while the relatives and friends of the twelve sentenced persons broke down and wept bitterly.

Barrister Sahid Sesay who was satisfied that one of his clients was freed also said that he wished that the death sentence was not used.

After the marathon trial, Justice Bankole Rashid stood up and adjourned the court, walking back to his chamber definitely remembering the words of Osho Williams, "all of us should go home and sleep with a clear conscience" or the words of Lawyer Sahid Sesay who had said, "the case is over but we will meet again here in the future."

The eleven sentenced people have the constitutional right to appeal against their sentences to the Appeal Court and eventually, to the Supreme Court.

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as four freed in Treason trial...

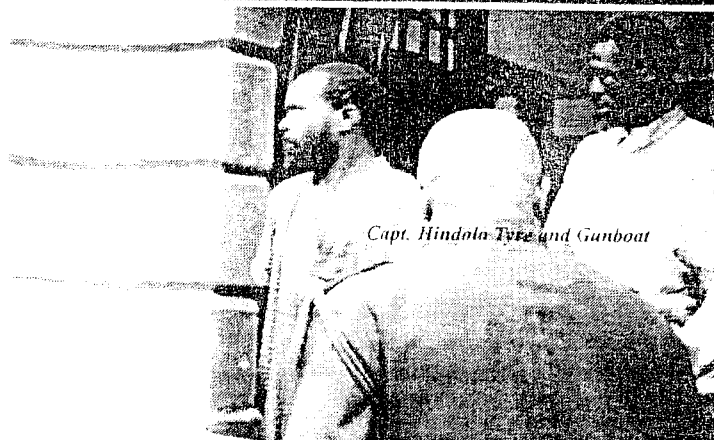
Ten to die by hanging

By Ophaniel Gooding
Sombreness gripped the vicinity of the Freetown Law Court yesterday as relatives, friends and accused persons wept openly when four persons walked off as freed men, while ten others are to die by hanging after being found guilty of treason. The Courtroom was silent as a graveyard at

night when the Foreman of the 11-man Jury- Santigie Kargbo, at precisely 11am rose to pronounce their unanimous verdict after they had considered it over the weekend. Dead silence dominated the Courtroom as the foreman pronounced the following accused guilty of the offence of treason. They are, Lance Corporal Daniel Sandy aka 'Hard Guy', Private Issa Kanu, Captain

Hindola Tyre, Alhaji Kamanda aka 'Gunboat', Abdulai Farwallie aka 'Master Sergeant', Richard Sefin Bockarie aka 'Very Fast', Alhaji Mohamed Kondeh, Alhaji Kargbo, Ibrahim Koroma and Kai Mattia. The four freed accused are: Santigie Kanu.

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Capt. Hindola Tyre and Gunboat

Ten to die by hanging

From Front Page

Mohamed Jabbie, Alusine Kamara and Abdul Sesay aka Abdul Yamba Sesay. The 16th accused- Mohamed Kamara aka 'Gbanaloko' was found guilty on two counts of Misprison of Treason and received a 10-year sentence. The eighth accused, self-styled Brigadier Santigie Kanu aka '55' is currently being detained at the Special Court, awaiting trial.

The pronouncement of the Foreman sent shock waves through the spines of the accused, as they stood motionless in the dock with tears

running down their faces. But it was a moment of joy for those whom the Jury decided have no case to answer to. Some of them burst into tears of joy while consoling those that have been convicted in the trial. Before leaving the dock as freemen, they embraced their colleagues with whom they were all standing trial since the commencement of the case on April 23, 2004. One of the freed accused was even heard telling the others: "I will pray for you," as he left the dock. The Defense Counsel led by Cecil Osho Williams speaking on behalf of the first and

third accused said, "we have done our best," mitigating that if the sentence was not mandatory at this time, he would have asked for a lenient and custodian sentence. He asked that the 16th accused- Mohamed Kamara be given another chance, as his offence does not carry the death penalty. He maintained that the custodian sentence would not do the accused any good. State Counsel- A.K.A. Barber in his interpretation of section 1.3(a) said that the penalty is mandatory; adding, "the spate of repetition of this offence cannot be overlooked."

Hindolo Trye, Nine Others To Hang

By Michael Pratt

Ten men including Captain Hindolo Trye were sentenced to death yesterday at High Court No. 2 presided over by Justice Abdul Rushid, for their involvement in a plot to overthrow the government of President of Ahmad Tejan Kabbah sometime in 2003. The others are Kai Mama, Ibrahim Koroma, Alhaji

Kargbo, Alhaji Mohamed Kondeh, Richard Sells Bockarie, Alhaji Abdoulaye Tarawali alias Master Sergeant, Alhaji Kamanda alias Gun Boat, Pvt Issa Kama and Lance Corporal Daniel Sandy.

Another suspect Mohamed Kamara alias Gbanaiko received a ten-year jail sentence. Four others: Lamina Kamara, Mohamed Jabbie, Alusine Kamara and Abu Sesay were ac-

quitted and discharged.

17 people were initially arrested in connection with the plot but one was released during the early days of the trial for want of evidence. Another suspect Santigie Kanu alias Brigadier 5-5, was handed over to the Special Court sometime in 2003, to face war crimes charges.

SEE PAGE 3

Coup Plotters Sentenced

The state was represented by the Director of Public Prosecution (DPP) Bryina Kebbie, AKA Barber, OV Robin-Mason, SA Bah, S. Jarett and JEO Kebbie. Lawyers for the defence included Cecil Osho-Williams, Saïd Sesay and Amadu Koroma.

It could be recalled that a shooting incident occurred at the Army Engineering Unit sometime in April 2003, at ATC compound, Wellington in Freetown, which was later attributed to the said coup plot.

It is not yet clear whether the death sentences in this trial will be carried out. In recent times, several local as well as international human rights groups have appealed for the abolition of the death penalty and the government may yet heed their calls.



Christian

MONITOR

The Spirit Of Truth Lives

Vol. 3 No 63 TUESDAY DECEMBER 21, 2004

INDEPENDENT NEWSPAPER

Treason!!! Ten to Die By Hanging

Ten of the 11 persons charged with treason were sentenced to death by hanging in the High Court of Freetown yesterday. The ten were Monday, December 20, 2004 unanimously found guilty of treason - conspiring to overthrow the government of Sierra Leone by unlawful means between 1st November, 2002 and 31st January, 2003 by an eleven-man jury (seven men and four women) in

the Freetown High Court.

They were sentenced to death by hanging by presiding judge, Justice Bankole Rashid.

Four accused persons were unanimously found not guilty and acquitted and discharged.

The eighth accused, former AFRC junta man Santigie Kammah, had earlier during the trial, been released to the United Nations-backed Special Court for Sierra Leone, where he has been indicted together with two other AFRC junta men - Alex Tamba Brima and Brima Bazzy

Kamara - on 18 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity.

The three AFRC junta men are expected to be tried by the three newly named Judges of the second Trial Chamber of the Special Court starting January 2005.

The sixteenth accused Mohamed Kamara was unanimously found guilty of misprison of treason (concealing knowledge that treason was about to be committed), and sentenced to ten years impris-

onment.

The trial started in the Freetown High Court on 13th April, 2003 and the eleven jurors retired to consider their verdict on Thursday December 16, 2004. The 12th juror, a male, died during the trial this year.

When asked by Justice Rashid what they had to say before passing sentence on them, each of the convicted

men said: "I am not guilty of the offence".

The defence counsel pleaded in mitigation for each of the accused found guilty of treason, although the death penalty is mandatory, according to Senior State Prosecutor Aki Barber, who pointed out to the presiding Judge that the sentence should serve as a deterrent, the spate of this offence cannot be over-

looked".

The convicted men have twenty-one days during which they can appeal against their conviction.

It will be recalled that sometime around 13th January, 2003, they attacked the Sierra Leone Military Ammunition Depot at Wellington in the east end of Freetown to obtain arms and ammunition to carry out their planned endeavour.

http://www.dailynewsinqirer.net/front_page

10 TO DIE BY HANGING IN SIERRA LEONE

Monday December 20, 2004 8 : 30 pm

10 people facing Treason charges have been found guilty and they are to die by hanging, according to a news flash from Freetown. Four others were found not guilty while one was sentenced to jail term.

Tallahassee.com

Posted on Mon, Dec. 20, 2004

Ten Sentenced for Sierra Leone Coup Plot

CLARENCE ROY-MACAULAY
Associated Press

FREETOWN, Sierra Leone - Ten men charged with plotting to overthrow Sierra Leone's government last year were convicted Monday of treason and sentenced to death by hanging.

Friends and relatives of the condemned men wailed and wept outside the heavily guarded court gates after the 11-man jury found the defendants guilty and the judge ordered them to the gallows.

"You will be taken from here to a place of lawful prison and thence to a place of execution and there suffer death by hanging," said Judge Bankole Raschid, after a court crier replaced his white jurists' wig with a black skull cap. "May the Lord have mercy on your soul."

The 10, including ex-army officers and rebels who fought during Sierra Leone's brutal 1991-2002 war, have 21 days to appeal.

Another defendant was given 10 years in prison on a lesser, related charge.

Security forces captured the men after a Jan. 13, 2003, shootout at a military base in what prosecutors called an attempt to capture weapons for an attempt to overthrow President Ahmed Tejan Kabbah's government.

In 2001, Sierra Leone held successful elections signaling its recovery from a 10-year civil war that was launched by rebels fighting to win control of the west African nation and its diamond fields.

U.N., British and Guinean forces quelled the rebels in 2000, and the government declared the war over in January 2001.

A U.N.-backed court is trying rebel and government fighters for war crimes in a conflict that saw insurgents amputating civilians limbs with machetes.

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<http://www.tallahassee.com>



Liberia: No More Guns And Nothing to Do, Say Disgruntled Ex-Combatants

UN Integrated Regional Information Networks

NEWS

December 20, 2004

Posted to the web December 20, 2004

Voinjama

"This is not what we wanted, just remaining here doing nothing," said Mamadee Keller, a former Liberian rebel fighter. He was speaking on behalf of a group of ex-combatants who have been left loitering, sometimes begging, on the streets of this remote town since handing in their weapons last month under a UN disarmament programme.

Like the other idle former fighters hanging out in Voinjama, the headquarters town of Lofa County in the heavily-forested northwest of Liberia, Keller once belonged to the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) rebel group, which has dominated life here for the past five years.

They and more than 100,000 other former combatants in Liberia's 14-year civil war, agreed to turn in their weapons to UN peacekeepers earlier this year in return for a US\$300 resettlement allowance and the pledge of jobs and training opportunities.

"We were promised by both our senior commanders and the NCDDRR [National Commission on Disarmament, Demobilization, Reintegration and Rehabilitation] that those good programs would help us become productive in society", Keller said.

There is widespread grumbling among former combatants across Liberia that they have been short-changed by the country's August 2003 peace agreement.

Keller said about 2,000 of the 5,000 former LURD fighters in remote Lofa County near Guinea and Sierra Leone were idle and destitute with nothing to do.

According to the International Crisis Group (ICG), bringing peace to Liberia ahead of elections in October 2005 will depend largely on getting these youngsters with little experience of life other than war into school or into jobs.

"If reintegration goes wrong again, war is almost certain to break out sooner or later," the Brussels-based think-tank said in a report earlier this month.

It recalled that an earlier 1997 disarmament and reintegration scheme in Liberia went badly wrong, sparking off disappointment, anger and ultimately a full-scale resumption of civil war.

Now bad feeling has broken out in Voinjama where an IRIN correspondent saw close to 50 ex-LURD fighters sitting idly just a few yards away from the main UN peacekeeping base in what they said was a protest to attract attention to their plight.

"We the ex-combatants are facing several problems in Lofa," said teenager Varley Dolley. "Before we disarmed we were told that there would be vocational training and other educational benefits for us, but since then we have not

received any".

Some of the young ex-fighters, boys and girls mostly aged between 15 and 20, have virtually become beggars, asking passers-by for money to get by.

Dolley, who was hoping to become a mechanic, said that "many times we come and just sit in front of the Pakistani (UN) peacekeepers base with the hope of them coming to our aid for training and schooling. But we have not seen sign of hope".

Edward Sally, another ex-fighter, said the slow but steady return of Liberian refugees was also complicating life for the former rebels. "Some of us now have nowhere even to sleep. Some of our friends have been kicked out of houses where we were residing because the original owners are returning and claiming them."

The estimated 5000 rebels operating in isolated Lofa country, a LURD stronghold, were among the last of the total 102,193 rebels to be disarmed in an eight-month campaign that ended late November, a month behind schedule.

In all, UN peacekeepers collected 27,000 weapons, 6.2 million rounds of small arms ammunition and approximately 30,000 pieces of heavier ordnance, including mortar bombs, from disarmament.

In return, combatants fighting for former President Charles Taylor and the two rebel movements that opposed him - LURD and the Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL) - were promised a US\$ 300 resettlement grant, half of it handed out against disarmament, the remainder to help their reintegration on return to their home community. They were also promised help with schooling and vocational training.

But the former LURD fighters in Voinjama claim they have received only half the promised cash and no training.

"We have sent several communications to the commission in Monrovia that some of us want our remaining US\$150 payment after the disarmament, so as to enable us do petty trades instead of depending on the promised educational package which we are not sure of," Keller said.

"We are not going to do anything that would disturb the peace," he added. "All we want is our training packages".

But one angry ex-fighter interrupted: "Our friends are in schools in Monrovia and other parts of Liberia, but we are not".

Speaking to IRIN in Monrovia, LURD leader Sekou Conneh said he was coming under mounting pressure from ex-combatants to ensure the delivery of their disarmament benefits.

"Those former fighters have been abandoned," Conneh said. "We are embarrassed that what was told me they would have as disarmament packages, they are not getting at the moment".

"All aspects of the peace agreement must be implemented," he added, "including the one that stated that fighters should benefit from training programmes after disarmament. This is important to maintain the peace we are now enjoying in this country".

But Molley Passaway, the spokesman for the National Commission on Disarmament, Demobilization, Reintegration and Rehabilitation (NCDDRR), told IRIN early this month that funds to provide education and training for the over 100,000 registered former combatants had run out.

"Out of those disarmed, only 26,000 are now benefiting from skills training and formal education, but the rest are of serious concern to the commission", he said.

The shortfall in training and jobs funds is due to the many more people registering for disarmament than had been expected.

Before the UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) made a start to the programme, it estimated that 38,000 ex-fighters would show up to be demobilized.

But by the time the disarmament programme finally ended last month, nearly three times that many have reported to claim their benefits. But only one in four has actually handed in a weapon.

Critics of the UNMIL disarmament programme say many civilians who never fired a gun in anger have queued up to claim the \$300 resettlement grant, with military commanders who put them up to the ruse taking a cut of their money along the way.

Back in September in New York, Liberia's transitional government and the United Nations warned donors in a joint document that restless ex-combatants who had handed in weapons but had not received promised education or training due to the cash shortage posed a threat to national security.

"The inability to absorb the demobilized combatants into training institutions is a major cause of increasing unrest and rioting," the document stated.

The statement was grimly prophetic, 16 people were killed in an outburst of rioting between Christians and Muslims in the capital Monrovia in late October. The violence spread like wildfire to several other major towns and resulted in UNMIL troops imposing a curfew for several days.

At about the same time, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) appealed for an additional US\$ 58 million dollars to help train demobilized combatants over the next three years.

"Any disruption in placing these ex-combatants in the RR (rehabilitation and reintegration) programme will have serious consequences .the overall peace process in Liberia", UNDP warned.

Only last week, the ICG added its voice to the chorus of warnings.

"Many observers fear that the presidential election in October 2005 will be seen as all-or-nothing affair, with the losers thoroughly excluded from power and thus left contemplating resumption of war," it said.

Failing a quick pay-out of the cash needed for reintegration, idle former fighters and hidden caches of arms which escaped disarmament would offer a prime recruiting pool.

"Donors who promised money in February 2004 must disburse it immediately if Liberian ex-combatants are not to be let down again," the ICG report said

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Saddam defiant as he awaits trial

Lawyer: Deposed Iraqi leader lauds resistance, rejects election

NBC EXCLUSIVE

By Moufaq Khatib and Nancy Ing Duclos

NBC News

Updated: 8:06 p.m. ET Dec. 20, 2004

AMMAN, Jordan - Saddam Hussein is in good health, but unrepentant, according to a lawyer who spent more than four hours with the deposed Iraqi leader last week. The former president praised the resistance to the U.S.-backed government and believes the forthcoming elections are illegal, according to Khalil al-Duleimi, who spoke exclusively to NBC News.

Al-Duleimi, an Iraqi lawyer and member of the Defense and Support Committee for Saddam Hussein, met Saddam on Thursday and discussed his situation during a brief stopover Sunday in Amman, Jordan, where he was briefing the other members of the Defense Committee. He declined to be photographed for security reasons.

You were appointed six months ago to represent Saddam Hussein but you were only able to meet him for the first time as his lawyer last week. How difficult has it been to receive authorization to see your client?

I waited months before receiving permission. Originally, the current Iraqi government told me that I could finally visit the president on Dec. 8 but the meeting was postponed. No reason was given. Then two days before the approved meeting, the Iraqi Lawyers Association informed me that authorization was given and I was told where to go. My meeting was scheduled for 9:30 in the morning.

Can you tell us any details about the meeting?

For security reasons I cannot give you any specific details. However, I can say an American military convoy made of several army cars picked me up. I entered what appeared to be a Humvee that had no windows. American soldiers escorted me.

I do want to say right away that the American escorts treated me with respect. They never searched me and they seemed to want to facilitate my mission with the president. For this, I would like to thank the Americans.

Do you know if you were taken to a prison?

I do not know at all where I was taken. I could see nothing from the vehicle. We drove for about an hour and just before we arrived at our destination we drove through a long tunnel that led us to my meeting point with the president.

Were there any restrictions on your meeting with Saddam?

I was told there should be no physical contact with the president. I could not embrace him and was instructed to only shake his hand. I could not accept this because Saddam Hussein is my president and I insisted on being able to accord him full respect. I negotiated with an American general and I convinced them to allow me to embrace and salute the president.

This was Saddam's first meeting with any members of his legal representatives. Can you describe his physical and mental state?

The president was in very good health and high spirits. He looked much better than his first court appearance last July 1. He has lost some weight and his face has aged. He has a thick beard and his hair is very long. He was wearing a shirt, sweater and pants and was carrying a coat in his left hand and a notebook in the other

hand. We sat across from one another in a room about four-by-two meters. A table separated us and there was an American soldier present at all times. A new soldier was rotated in every half hour during our four-and-a-half hour meeting.

The president began our meeting reciting a poem that he wrote himself. He used an Arabic expression, "If you can't be the head don't be the tail, because the tail represents the end of everything."

The Defense Committee has been working on Saddam's behalf for months. You have a team of international lawyers. Did he know he had legal representation?

This was the first time the president learned that there is a very large team of lawyers from around the world working on his behalf. He has been living in total isolation for the past year. He has no access to media or any of the other prisoners. He was very happy to hear that we are working and supporting him and he asked me to express his great appreciation. The president urged the committee to launch a full legal, political and media defense on his behalf. He gave us full powers to act as it sees necessary.

Most importantly, he condemned the role of the International Red Cross Society. He received four visits from the ICRC and he was very disappointed with them. He accuses the ICRC of being irresponsible and not dealing with his rights as outlined under the Geneva Convention. He had asked the representatives what was his status. Was he a prisoner of war? A detainee? He received no answer so he told the Red Cross representatives he would not receive them again until he was treated fairly under the Geneva Convention.

Has Saddam had any contact with his family?

He has no physical contact with his family. He has only received very few letters ,which are largely blacked out so he cannot understand anything.

What did Saddam want to know and what message did he want to deliver through you?

He asked many questions about the Iraqi people and their condition under occupation. I told him the situation and he praised the resistance in Iraq and he said the Iraqi people should resist the U.S. occupation in Iraq. He also asked about the Palestinian people and the conditions of Arab people in general.

Does Saddam know about the first Iraqi elections to be held in January?

He did not know; and even when I told him he does not believe in the legitimacy of the elections. He does not believe in these elections. He still believes he is the true president of Iraq and the elections are illegal.

As far as his defense strategy is concerned, did he give you any specific instructions?

The president stressed the need for us to defend all the detainees and all those who are harmed by the occupation. He confirmed the need to keep continuous contact with popular and governmental organizations to make the world aware of the illegality of the U.S. occupation of Iraq and his situation. He stressed the need for the international community to intervene and he condemned how he is being treated and tried.

What is the next step in the trial of Saddam? Will you have access to him again?

I just had the first meeting and it was a good one. I expect to see my client again but cannot say when. No formal charges have been laid against the president. It is very difficult to work.

You have accepted to represent Saddam, who is accused of grave war crimes against humanity. You are an Iraqi lawyer and the only member of the Defense committee that has been given access to him. Just how difficult and dangerous has your task been to represent him?

The job is very, very dangerous. I have received many death threats and less than two weeks ago, there was an assassination attempt on my life in one of the Baghdad districts. I was in a car when I came under fire from just 50 meters away. The car took 12 bullets but no one was hurt. As an Iraqi and a lawyer, I believe it's my

duty to defend President Saddam Hussein. He is and always will be my president.

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