

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



PRESS CLIPPINGS

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


as at:

Tuesday, 25 March 2008

Press clips are produced Monday through Friday.
Any omission, comment or suggestion, please contact
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Local News	
Notorious British Mercenary Explains Role in Sierra Leone / <i>Concord Times</i>	Pages 3-4
International News	
"Death Threats" to Witnesses Against Liberia's Taylor / <i>Reuters</i>	Pages 5-6
Taylor's Agents Roar – Issue Death Threats / <i>Liberian Express</i>	Page 7
'Zigzag' Unclothes Taylor / <i>The Analyst</i>	Pages 8-10
Taylor Should Look His Victims in the Eye / <i>Financial Times</i>	Pages 11-12
Taylor's Past Haunts Him in The Hague / <i>Religious Intelligence</i>	Page 13
Charles Taylor's Trial and the Return of the Conspirators / <i>The Independent</i>	Page 14
Mongolian Peace-Keeper Dies / <i>UB Post</i>	Pages 15-16
Liberia: 30,000 Rounds of Ammo Seized Near Sierra Leone Border / <i>The News</i>	Page 17
UNMIL Public Information Office Complete Media Summaries / <i>UNMIL</i>	Pages 18-22
Joe Wylie Wants to Appear Before TRC / <i>The Analyst</i>	Page 23
Liberia: Media Center Critiques TRC Coverage / <i>The Analyst</i>	Pages 24-25
Trial of Former Top Serbian Security Figures Delayed... / <i>UN</i>	Page 26

Concord Times
Tuesday, 25 March 2008



page 4

Notorious British mercenary explains role in Salone

By Tame Jalloh

Notorious British mercenary, standing trial after a botched attempt to topple Equatorial Guinea President Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo, has confessed that he also helped former President Alhaji Dr Ahmed Tejan Kabbah.

Simon Mann is being held in Black Beach prison, described as a true hell on earth, in the country's capital Malabo. He recently told TV Channel 4, after the latter won a legal battle to broadcast an interview with him, that "Sandline's most famous operation in West Africa was its support of President Kabbah of diamond-rich Sierra Leone."

Cont'd, page 4

Mann was head of Executive Outcome

Notorious British mercenary explains role in Salone

From page 1

His claim was corroborated by Tim Spicer, who also trained at Sandhurst before serving in the Scots Guards and SAS and later became head of Sandline. According to him, he worked closely with British Ambassador Peter Penfold while in Sierra Leone.

However, in language similar to that of the Labour government's description of its own foreign policy, he described Sandline's role in Sierra Leone as "ethical." Mann was said to have echoed that view of his own activities in Equatorial Guinea in his Channel 4 interview.

Meanwhile, in a July 20, 2004 commentary published by TIMES ONLINE Michael Gove argued that the world needed such men as Simon Mann.

In 1995 Sierra Leone was at the mercy of a terrorist outfit called the RUF. Under their leader Foday Sankoh they specialised in the gang-rape of minors, the use of children to murder their own parents and the random amputation of their victims' lips, ears and limbs. It was the private military company Executive Outcomes that defeated the



RUF and cleared the way for the democratic rule of President Kabbah," he stated.

President Kabbah was, however, persuaded to eject the mercenaries before they could complete their work. In May 1997 he was deposed in a coup.

Gove added that: "If Executive Outcomes had been allowed to finish its job in the first place, innocent African lives would have been saved, a materially wealthy nation would not have had its resources squandered by torturers and the West would have been able to pocket a strategic gain without the sacrifice of precious regular soldiers."

Described as "dog of war" the 53-year old was a co-founder of the mercenary company Executive Outcomes and its successor, Sandline. Both

mercenary mineral extracting companies have had a long history of involvement in mineral ventures especially in the diamond rich towns of Kono and Tongo.

Mann was arrested at Harare airport in Zimbabwe along with 69 South African mercenaries in 2004. They were on board an Antonov plane loaded with sleeping bags and supplies.

A Zimbabwean court found Mann guilty of firearms and immigration charges in 2004. He was held for four years before being extradited to Equatorial Guinea in February. He is currently being held in the notorious Black Beach prison where a German national, Eugen Nershz, was said to have died shortly after being incarcerated.

Reuters

Thursday, 20 March 2008

"Death threats" to witnesses against Liberia's Taylor

By Alexandra Hudson

THE HAGUE (Reuters) - Witnesses testifying in the war crimes trial of former Liberian President Charles Taylor are receiving death threats, deterring them from speaking in open court, officials say.

Three individuals once close to Taylor's regime and who will play a key role in linking him to atrocities in Sierra Leone had received threatening phone calls and letters, presumably from Taylor loyalists, chief prosecutor Stephen Rapp told Reuters.



Prosecutors had also received further reports of witness intimidation in Liberia and Sierra Leone despite protection schemes, and as a result some who were to have appeared in open court will now seek to give evidence privately and anonymously.

Some witnesses received death threats, a court spokesman said.

"We want people to testify in open session so the public hears it, but it can put them at risk. This concerns us a great deal," Rapp said in an interview late on Wednesday.

Taylor, once one of Africa's most feared warlords, faces charges of rape, murder, mutilation and recruitment of child soldiers during Sierra Leone's 1991-2002 conflict.

Prosecutors say Taylor, who has pleaded not guilty, wanted to plunder neighbouring Sierra Leone's diamonds and destabilise its government by controlling and arming rebels.

Last week the court heard graphic details of atrocities from Joseph "ZigZag Marzah" a former Liberian militia leader who said Taylor had ordered countless murders and acts of cannibalism.

Rapp said judges had ruled Marzah must testify in open session having balanced the threat to his security with the accused's right to a fair and public hearing.

Despite Marzah having described killing more people than he can remember, including pregnant women and babies, he, like other witnesses will not face prosecution himself.

The U.N.-backed Special Court for Sierra Leone is trying only those deemed most responsible, and prosecutors have had to assure some of those giving evidence they will not be charged.

TRIAL ON TRACK

Prosecutors, who began their case in January, expect to finish in eight months time having called a total of 72 witnesses and presented written evidence from a further 70 victims of the atrocities.

"It is going well ... but it is still remarkable given we have to bring people on a 10,000 km round-trip," Rapp said.

The trial, a landmark as for the first time a former African head of state finds himself in the dock, is being held in The Hague after fears it could stoke instability in West Africa.

"I was concerned that there might be continued efforts to obstruct proceedings ... but the trial is being fought well by both sides," Rapp added, referring to the trial's abortive start last June when Taylor boycotted proceedings, arguing he did not have adequate funds for his defence.

Rapp said experiences in Sierra Leone had lessons for the Hague-based International Criminal Court (ICC) currently facing a dilemma over whether to drop its arrest warrants for Ugandan rebels in order to further peace efforts in the country.

"There is no peace without justice. We learned that in Sierra Leone," he said.

"It was a fake peace, the rebels didn't want to disarm. Victims said how former ex-combatants came back, swaggered around and humiliated them. That didn't bring peace."

Peace arrangements must include accountability, he said.

"But international courts have to recognise different ways of allowing that accountability."

Liberian Express (Liberia)
Monday, 24 March 2008

TAYLOR'S AGENTS ROAR

-Issue Death Threats

Witnesses testifying in the war crimes trial of former Liberian President Charles Taylor are said to be receiving death threats, deterring them from speaking in open court, officials have said.

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The Analyst (Liberia)

Wednesday, 19 March 2008

'Zigzag' Unclothes Taylor

Whether the former Liberian President will get off the hook of the International Community or not, observers say, depends on the weight of the testimonies adduced against him by witnesses and the relative accuracy with which they are presented to the Court.

The particular case is reaching its all time high. According to observers, given the kinds of revelations coming from the witnesses, especially someone who is said to have closely worked with the former rebel leader, "Zigzag" Marzah has exhausted his testimony but not without revealing what most Liberians had not heard of their former president, the munching of human hearts.

Observers say Zigzag has "unclothed his former boss. The Analyst looks at the issues as contained in Zigzag's testimony and the position of the defense of Taylor.

Closing his testimony at the ongoing trial of Charles Taylor, Joseph D. "Zigzag" Marzah did not forget telling the court that his former boss had engaged in cannibalism.

According to the former fighter of the NPFL, Mr. Taylor preyed on human hearts, but Taylor's defense rubbished his claims and argued that he was at no time close to him (Taylor), meaning that his testimonies had no semblance of accuracy.

The trial has taken a two- week break and will resume with more witnesses, apparently those of Mr. Taylor.

But the Defense argument that Marzah was never close to their client (Taylor) angered Marzah and alleged that he, Taylor and Benjamin Yeaten were all in the same poro society and that Taylor himself had eaten human hearts with him on multiple occasions.

Marzah appeared shaken and crossed himself, explaining that he had broken the laws of his Poro society and exposed its secrets. Throughout the day, Lead Defense Counsel Courtenay Griffiths continued to point to discrepancies between Marzah's testimony and earlier statements he had given to the prosecution.

Griffiths also continued to argue that Marzah was not senior enough in the NPFL to have taken orders from Taylor, that arms shipments from Liberia to Sierra Leone would have been impossible while ECOMOG peacekeepers controlled the roads and airports, and that Marzah was simply lying. Griffiths suggested that prosecution's payments to Marzah gave him a reason to lie about Taylor.

At one point during the morning the Court went into a brief private session when Griffiths wanted to pose questions to the witness that raised the witness' protection concerns. It then returned to open session.

Did ECOMOG prevent or assist arms deliveries to Sierra Leone?

Griffiths asked Marzah about the period of the interim government in Liberia, and Marzah agreed that in 1996-1997 there were many peacekeepers from the Economic Community of West African States in Liberia, although he couldn't say how many. Marzah agreed that these mostly Nigerian ECOMOG peacekeepers were based at Roberts International Airfield, the Buchanan Port, and stationed at checkpoints along all major and minor roads in the country.

Even before Griffiths challenged Marzah about how he could have shipped weapons and ammunition to the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) in Sierra Leone at Taylor's orders if ECOMOG controlled these routes, Marzah argued that some Nigerian officers in ECOMOG were corrupt and had been bribed by Taylor.

Specifically, he testified that a Nigerian captain named Victor (not General Victor Malu), he said, had been assigned to Taylor's residence, and had arranged for Taylor and his men to transport weapons through the airport, and past checkpoints in ECOMOG vehicles.

Marzah couldn't recall the officer's surname, but said he had been shot and wounded in an attack on the Executive Mansion. Marzah testified that some Nigerians with ECOMOG assisted the onward delivery of weapons and ammunition to Sierra Leone, in connivance with Taylor.

Marzah couldn't say where this Nigerian Captain, Victor, had lived, at which point Griffiths asked why he wouldn't know such a thing if Marzah had really been as important as he claimed. Marzah replied that he was the third highest official in Liberia after Taylor and Yeaten due to their shared membership in a poro society. At this point, he said that he had eaten human beings with Charles Taylor.

Griffiths asked Marzah why he had never previously mentioned this bribery scheme relating to ECOMOG to prosecution investigators. Marzah answered that there was so much to tell about what he had done, and that he answered questions as they came.

Griffiths asked Marzah about the UN-supervised disarmament at the time of the interim government. Marzah testified that only the "ugly" (damaged) weapons had been destroyed, and that Taylor had ordered the good weapons buried, and transported some to Gbarnga. They had been assisted in this by the Nigerian officer, Victor.

Griffiths suggested to Marzah that he was lying about taking arms and ammunition to Sierra Leone for Taylor, that in 1996-1997 this would have been impossible due to the ECOMOG presence, and that any weapons Marzah had sold to the RUF had been done privately for his own gain. Marzah denied lying, and testified that anyone acting without Taylor's orders would have been risking their life.

Other defense challenges

In the late morning, Griffiths asked Marzah if he had been using his mobile phone during bathroom breaks in the previous days' testimony to receive instructions from someone outside the courtroom.

Marzah said his phone hadn't worked since the beginning of his testimony, and he was angry about that because he couldn't even call his family. He said court security had told him that his phone would not function again until his testimony was over. He told Griffiths to ask security about the phone if he wanted to.

When Griffiths said that Marzah was testifying in exchange for payments from the prosecution, the witness said he had a large palm and rubber farm, and that he and his wife ran several businesses, so that the amounts from the prosecution to cover his expenses meant little to him.

Griffiths suggested that Marzah got the money for the farm and the businesses through private arms dealing. Marzah replied that he made his money while working as a soldier in the Doe and Taylor regimes, and stated he had received large payments from Taylor, including one after seven safes were stolen at Roberts International Airfield and taken to Taylor at Gbarnga.

Griffiths recalled Marzah's earlier testimony about Taylor being responsible for the Camp Carter massacre at Harbel, and asked him if he was aware that a United Nations investigation found it to be the responsibility of the Armed Forces of Liberia.

Marzah insisted that Taylor had been responsible, but there was no way he would have told the investigators about NPFL involvement during Taylor's administration or he would have been "dealt with".

Marzah described Taiwanese arms deliveries brought by Gus Kouwenhoven in ships after Taylor had been elected president. Griffiths entered into evidence a recent ruling by a Dutch appeals court that overturned Kouwenhoven's conviction of breaking the arms embargo on Liberia and asserted that Marzah was lying.

Allegation that Taylor engaged in cannibalism

Griffiths put to Marzah that he had never sat with Taylor and received orders from him, and that he had never spoken with Taylor on the phone or radio. Marzah responded heatedly that he spoke to Taylor "so many times, even before he established the Poro society where we ate people's livers".

(In earlier testimony, Marzah stated that when he said "liver", he meant the human heart.) Marzah continued, saying that the reason Taylor trusted him was because of the poro society law. He said that Taylor had participated in eating the heart of Fiah Doe and Sam Dokie, and named a woman whom he said had cooked Dokie's heart for them. He continued, saying that when Taylor escaped from Ghana, he had called Yeaten to prepare two hearts, and the three had shared them upon his return.

Griffiths again put to Marzah that he had never spoken with Taylor on the phone or radio, or taken orders from him. Marzah said that they ate together in the Poro society "to safeguard our secret". He stated, "Now I have disclosed to you the secrets of my poro society", and said he would no longer be a member. He said Taylor had been the Dankpannah, the big man who gives orders in the Poro society. "When you look at his face, you will be shrouded in fear.

He had authority." Marzah crossed himself, and Griffiths asked whether he was crossing himself because he had just lied under oath. Marzah answered that he had broken the laws of his poro society, and that everything has been exposed.

Griffiths again asserted that Marzah was lying. Marzah insisted he was telling the truth, and said he would appear before Liberia's Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

Defense had no further questions, and prosecution had no questions on redirect examination. The judges also had no questions for Marzah, and he was excused. The trial session ended. There will be a two-week judicial recess beginning on Monday. The trial resumes on March 31.

Financial Times (Zimbabwe)

Thursday, 20 March 2008

Opinion

Taylor Should Look His Victims in the Eye

By Mavis Makuni

Harare

ITALIAN journalist Riccardo Orizio's curiosity to discover what evil lurks in the hearts of dictators who commit terrible atrocities against their people, resulted in the writing of his book, *Talk of the Devil*.

The book was based on interviews he conducted with seven deposed dictators including Jean-Claude "Baby Doc" Duvalier of Haiti, Mengistu Haile Mariam of Ethiopia, Uganda's former strongman Idi Amin and Jean-Bedel Bokassa the former self-styled Emperor of the short-lived Central African Empire (now Central African Republic).

Orizio also interviewed Mira Markovic, wife of Slobodan Milosevic of Yugoslavia who died in 2005 while being prosecuted for war crimes and crimes against humanity in The Hague.

Wojciech Jaruzelski of Poland and Nexhmje Hoxha of Albania were also subjects of Orizio's curiosity.

The journalist was driven by an obsession to find answers to the questions: "How does a one-time dictator, whom the history books describe as ruthless, immoral and power-crazed, grow old? What does he tell his children and grandchildren about himself? What does he tell himself?"

Orizio writes that when Amin fled Uganda in 1979, "the decapitated heads of some of his adversaries were discovered in the fridges of the presidential residence".

Bokassa was accused of cannibalism.

Similar details about such unfathomable cruelty and perversity are emerging during the trial of former Liberian head of state and warlord, Charles Taylor, who is being prosecuted for war crimes and crimes against humanity in The Hague. Testifying in Taylor's trial, Joseph "Zigzag" Marzah, a former death squad leader said the former Liberian leader used to instruct his fighters to eat even United Nations peacekeepers so as to "set an example for the people to be afraid".

Taylor is being prosecuted for backing rebels in Sierra Leone in a decade-long war in which thousands perished.

Marzah, who described himself as Taylor's former chief of operations and commander of death squads in Sierra Leone and Liberia, said the former warlord ordered militias to eat the flesh of enemies including African and United Nations peacekeepers.

Taylor's trial at the UN-backed special court in Sierra Leone was moved to The Hague in Netherlands because of fears that it could spark fresh civil strife in West Africa,

Taylor is reported to have denied all 11 charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity levelled against him.

However, for justice to be seen to be done, it now appears the best venue for Taylor's trial should have been Sierra Leone so that the surviving victims of his brutality such as those who had limbs amputated and those who lost loved ones during the sustained campaign of terror waged by the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) would have a chance to see him answering to the charges.

Taylor should be looking these victims, the youths who were forced to serve as child soldiers and the young girls who were raped after being forced to become "bush wives" for the insurgents, in the eye.

When Taylor was first taken to the Hague in 2006, the director of the International Justice Programme of Human Rights Watch said: "Now that Taylor is in The Hague, there is a real risk that his trial will feel distant and less meaningful to the people most affected by the crimes.

The court will need to ensure the trial is accessible to the people in Sierra Leone and across West Africa."

Taylor is the first African head of state to be prosecuted for crimes and abuses perpetrated while he was in office and his trial should represent a break with the past when violators of human rights and international law could commit the most dreadful atrocities with impunity.

Holding his trial on African soil would have sent a powerful warning to other abusers that they too would be brought to justice. It would also have been empowering to ordinary people to see concrete proof that everyone is equal before the law.

In 1998, African leaders mooted the idea of setting up the African Court on Human and People's Rights because of their anxiety to identify African solutions to deal with cases such as that of Hissene Habre, the former president of Chad who has been accused of human rights abuses, mass killings and torture.

Another former head of state who is yet to be brought to justice despite having been tried and convicted in absentia for genocide is Ethiopia's Mengistu Haile Mariam who has lived in exile in Zimbabwe for many years.

Like the Italian journalist referred to above, African communities that have suffered at the hands of powerful despots are searching for answers, not only as a way to achieve catharsis and closure but to ensure that no one is allowed to get away with such brutality again. This will not be an event but a process. What is important is that a start must be made.

Religious Intelligence

Thursday, 20 March 2008

Taylor's past haunts him in The Hague

By: Manasseh Zindo.

FORMER Liberian President Charles Taylor, who is in the court at the Hague, is coming into terms with his past actions that has returned to hunt him as his former allies take to the witness stand to testify against him.



It was revealed this week that he ordered his militias to eat the flesh of their enemies, a former death squad leader told the war crimes trial.

Joseph "Zigzag" Marzah said Charles Taylor had instructed his fighters in Liberia to even eat UN peacekeepers to set an example for the people to be afraid. Mr Taylor is on trial at The Hague for backing rebels in Sierra Leone in an 11-year war in which thousands died.

He has denied the 11 charges of crimes against humanity and war crimes, including rape, murder, mutilation and terrorizing the population. The trial at the UN-backed Special Court for Sierra Leone was moved away from West Africa because of fears that it could lead to renewed instability in the region. Mr Taylor also has a well-earned reputation as a political escape artist. He has extracted himself from detention in various places, including the US and Nigeria, and it was felt that a still-politically fragile Sierra Leone was not the place to hold such a high-profile trial.

The trial began last June, but was adjourned until January after only one day when Mr Taylor dismissed his lawyer. Many witnesses have since testified behind closed doors, including a rural pastor, the Rev Alex Tamba Teh, who attested to numerous atrocities allegedly committed by Sierra Leonean rebels of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF).

Father Teh said he saw a rebel commander called "Rocky" commit the premeditated mass murder, by machine gun, of a large number of unnamed civilian men. And he then described how a civilian boy was dismembered by the RUF, both hands and feet were chopped off after being placed on a log, and how the boy's torso tossed in a toilet pit.

Taylor's defence objected to the admission by the court of this type of evidence. Courtenay Griffiths QC told the BBC's Mark Doyle that such evidences was playing to the heartstrings of the world and that it was unnecessary to make people live through these traumatic events again.

"It's not contested that atrocities were committed," he said "But this is not what this trial is about." He said his client Mr Taylor was contesting the main charge that he backed the RUF, and that is what the prosecution should concentrate on.

Mr Marzah, a key prosecution witness, agreed to appear in open court only after lengthy negotiations over the protection provided for him and his family. Describing himself as Mr Taylor's former chief of operations and commander of a death squad in Liberia and Sierra Leone, Mr Marzah said the former Liberian leader ordered militias to eat the flesh of enemies in Liberia, including African and UN peacekeepers.

"He said we should eat them. Even the UN white people, he said we could use them as pork to eat," Mr Marzah said, adding that it was to "set an example for the people to be afraid". He said repeatedly that nothing was done without an explicit order from Mr Taylor and that anyone who violated his commands would be executed.

The BBC's Mark Doyle, who met Charles Taylor on several occasions when he was the president of Liberia, and attended Taylor's trial in The Hague, said Taylor used to be so powerful, so animated, and so eloquent. "Now he was in the dock, behind that glass, and we could all stare at him like an exhibit in a giant goldfish bowl."

Doyle added: "It is not suggested that he did these things personally, but that he had a command role over the Sierra Leonean rebels of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF)."

Mr Marzah in his testimony, recalled how the victims of the cannibalism were usually members of the Krahn tribe of Liberia's former president, Samuel Doe, who was in power in 1989 when Mr Taylor started the country's six-year civil war. Mr Marzah, however said they had also included troops from the West Africa ECOMOG peacekeeping force, which was deployed in 1990, and some UN peacekeepers.

The international peacekeepers eventually helped stabilize Liberia, leading to a peace agreement in 1995 and a presidential election two years later that Mr Taylor won. "We ate a few (ECOMOG Soldiers), but not many. But many were executed, about 68," Marzah told the panel of judges, presided over by Justice Julia Sebutinde from Uganda.

When asked by defence lawyer Courtenay Griffith about how the militiamen would prepare a human being for eating Mr Marzah described the splitting, cleaning, decapitating and cooking of the corpse with salt and pepper. "We slit your throat, butcher you, throw away the head, take the flesh and put it in a pot. Charles Taylor knows that," he added.

Mr Marzah also described how he had killed so many men, women and children that he had lost count, and also slit open the stomachs of pregnant women on Mr Taylor's orders. In his earlier testimony, Mr Marzah told the court he had taken weapons, some stored at Mr Taylor's presidential mansion, to Sierra Leone and returned to Liberia with diamonds which he then delivered to Mr Taylor.

Charles Taylor is accused of funding Sierra Leone's former rebels, the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), by selling diamonds on their behalf and buying weapons for them. The trial of Charles Taylor is expected to last at least a year.

The rebel RUF became so notorious for hacking off the hands and legs of civilians during their armed rebellion in Sierra Leone from 1991-2002.

The Independent (Liberia)

Tuesday, 25 March 2008

Opinion

Charles Taylor's Trial And The Return Of The Conspirators

By Sylvester Yanuif Pongesse II, from The Hague

It is emerging even as Africans are mourning the legacies of the bloodless genocide of 400 years slavery, the debasing legacy of imperialism, and the grinding cruelty of colonialism, the predators are at it again, they are devising new insidious ways of perpetrating the subjugation of Africa.

The latest weapon is the diabolical arsenal is imbued in the neo-colonial legal paradigm creating an imposing hybrid courts which overwrites the traditional legal system and operates an selective justice. The courts are created on the presumption that Africa is suffering with inequality and must be rescued from pervenience. The prosecution claims that the trial of those bearing the greatest responsibility for all civil wars that have rained atrocities in the region would serve the ends of justice for the victims. Most importantly, the trials would serve as a deterrent against impunity.

However, beneath this honest objective lies an evil conspiracy. The conspirators' real objective is to legitimize their improper political activities through the hybrid courts, the marketplace which is to implement a policy of neo-empire diplomacy and subordinate Africans perceived as threats to Western economic interests in Africa.

The conspiracy is being carried out under arthaic logic. In the process, the predators have sanded up pseudo benevolence by telling Africa that conflict is in the throes of decadence characterized by widespread impunity, and therefore, it must be rescued from perdition and pervenience. To demonstrate their commitment to this cause, certain powerful countries have routinely stopped complaints about donors' fatigue, and they have issued blank checks and underwritten the cost of these special litigations.

The meaning of the imposition of hybrid courts is the same as those provided for slavery, imperialism and colonialism. The arrogant pretension of assisting a beleaguered race is akin to the existing situation of slavery.

In this age of technology, however, such an obnoxious endeavor is repulsive. It has been exposed because many people do not owe for history. It is on this likelihood that the Special Court for Sierra Leone sitting in The Hague introduced an ignoble lie for Africa. In March 2003, the hybrid court indicted former Liberian President Charles Taylor for war crimes and crimes against humanity by allegedly committed by funding and exercise command and control responsibility over Sierra Leone's fighters over the Sierra Leone army during their civil war.

In spite of the inherent contradictions of prosecuting a sitting head of state on criminal charges on the breach of the principle of non vicarious liability in criminal matters, Taylor's trial has been hailed around the world, albeit emotionally and hypocritically, without awareness to historical past and future.

Many people have forgotten that Taylor emerged as the political stage as a hero as a result of a minimal conspiracy of world leaders with the Liberian military dictator Samuel Doe. Like every African, having seized power in a bloody coup, President Doe consolidated in entrenching himself

for life. Doe killed his opponents, harassed progressive political parties and organized a bogus election transferring him from military to civilian position. The lesson in Liberia was such that, when Taylor leashed the people's uprising in 1989, the whole country welcomed him, at least to put an end to Doe era.

The world must be reminded about the motive of sending Nigerian soldiers into post-independence Liberia. Former Nigerian military leader Ibrahim Babangida, in defiance of the usual of conspirators, sent Nigerians to Liberia to rescue his friend and business partner, Doe. It was a pre-emptive effort. From all indications, Nigeria was not on the popular side. This perhaps explains why Liberians were hostile to the Nigerian contingent in ECOMOG and the high casualties on Nigerians including two journalists.

Contrary to indications that Taylor believed his way to the presidency, he declared that he transformed his NPTL to a political party, and contested and won the 1997 elections conducted ECOMOG and the CACJ. It was the inability of the losing parties to accept the results with the consent of certain powerful countries that led to the continuation of the war during Taylor's presidency.

One year into Taylor's presidency in 1999, Liberian dissidents claiming to be Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) launched a proxy war from invasion on Liberia from Gambia and Sierra Leone. There is irrefutable evidence that the first organizing meeting of LURD took place in Chicago with loyalist of Samuel Doe and disaffected American-Liberians and US officials attend and participating in raising the seed capital for the rebellion against Taylor's administration.

It has also been established that LURD was armed with British and American weapons and took its intelligence support from the past. The war resulted in bringing Liberia to the level of bloodletting as a post-election Liberia.

In an attempt to ward off foreign influence and take responsibility for regional conflicts, ECOMOG launched a peace initiative bringing the warring parties to the conference table. However, there was let up in the intrusion of foreign powers. The United States unleashed a very hostile policy toward Taylor. American war ships were posted on Liberia's waters without a by-laws agreement with the Liberian government.

And so, as of the time President Obasanjo came to power, Liberia was burning in war. Niger's experience as the regional power was in the ascendancy. Hiding the middle as the regional actor President Obasanjo persuaded Taylor during an extraordinary ECOMOG/ AU conference in Abuja (June 2003) to voluntarily resign the presidency to stop the bloodletting in his country. A deal predicting President Taylor from prosecution at the Special Court for Sierra Leone was reached.

Obasanjo flew to Monrovia on July 5, 2003 and allowed Taylor that Nigeria had authentic intelligence that the US was planning to intervene in Liberia and take out the government in the Paramountcy of the UN was extended an invitation to Taylor to take up residence in Nigeria. This is how Taylor went to Nigeria.

When Taylor arrived in Nigeria in August 2003, the media predicted that given Obasanjo's note Taylor might have reached his watan. It came to pass. President Obasanjo took his character as tricky player with him to the international arena. In trying to salvage his third-term ambitions, Obasanjo made off Taylor to domestic opposition parties and the Americans whose backing he sought.

The Americans were glad to take Taylor without assets. They immediately conveyed him to the hybrid court for prosecution. In essence, Obasanjo betrayed the African decision to perclude Taylor from his Agent from getting a slice on his own image, President Obasanjo put Nigeria on record as the one that served as an accomplice in the conspiracy to dismantle the African possibility.

The perception of the conspiracy have since worked themselves into the historical patriarchy fight for impunity in Africa. Their agents continue to reel the air with deception that the Special Court for Sierra Leone is an UN court; that at last, justice is being served, and the day of power has dawn in West Africa. Of course, a new day has dawn. The success of arraigning an African head of state for prosecution gives the pervious nation a carte blanche to plot many more conspiracies, legitimize their improper political motives through hybrid courts, take out African leaders not beholden to them, and thrust brighter other leaders with Taylor's pastime into useful submission and self-annihilation.

Vital Concerns

UB Post

Thursday, 20 March 2008

Mongolian Peace-Keeper Dies

Written by Ch.Sumiyabazar

A Mongolian soldier died due to a heart condition during an UN-mandated mission to Sierra Leone last week.

Lieutenant Colonel D.Narantulga, a commander the fourth rotation of Mongolian contingent troops in Sierra Leone (MONBAT), died on March 14 because of a heart illness.

Narantulga's body will return to Ulaanbaatar on Friday, following a forensic examination required by the UN at a Ghana-based hospital.

UN peacekeeping officers held a memorial service at the UN Headquarters in Liberia on Monday.

The General Staff of the Mongolian Armed Forces (GSMAF) was forced to defend itself against media speculations the death "was caused by substandard" pre-deployment check-ups.

Last November, a peacekeeper on the third-rotation of the MONBAT force died of cardiac illness during his mission.

GSMAF refused to deny that weather conditions in the tropical, West African country may have significant effects on the welfare of soldiers, but said personnel came under strict medical examination before deployment.

Sierra Leone has a climate dramatically different to Mongolia, with temperatures constantly ranging between 35°C and 38°C.

Narantulga, 46, was to be promoted to colonel rank this week, on the eve of the 87th anniversary of the Mongolian Armed Forces.

GSMAF expressed deep condolences to the family, said Major General Ya.Choijamts, Chief Officer of the Peace Support Unit.

"Lt. Colonel Narantulga commanded the fourth rotation of troops in Iraq and was a commander of the first Mongolian peacekeeping battalion. He was also a military observer in Democratic Republic of Congo," said Choijamts.

Narantulga's family has a history of military service – both his parents are army officers, and Narantulga was the first of seven boys.

Coijamts said Narantulga was last contacted two days before his death, on Wednesday March 12. "He worked hard from 14 to 15 hours a day regarding some UN operations there that were leveled down." Lt. Colonel L.Ontsgoibayar has now been appointed acting commander of MONBAT, which has protected the Special Court for Sierra Leone since January 2006.

While Sierra Leone is Mongolia's first peacekeeping deployment in West Africa, some soldiers have served in UN missions in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Western Sahara, and Sudan. Other soldiers in the unit have taken part in peace-support missions in Afghanistan and Iraq.

The Special Court is an independent tribunal established jointly by the UN and the Sierra Leone government that aims to give justice to perpetrators of war crimes and crimes against humanity under international humanitarian law.

The News (Liberia)

Monday, 24 March 2008

Liberia: 30,000 Rounds of Ammo Seized Near Sierra Leone Border

Monrovia

Liberian Police have seized 30,000 rounds of ammunition for AK-47 assault rifles in the western region of the country, close to the border with Sierra Leone, a report by the French News Agency (AFP) said.

The AFP, quoting a senior Liberian police officer who spoke on condition of anonymity, said some of the ammunition were initially found last Wednesday by local people at Sinje - a Liberian town bordering Sierra Leone - who intercepted three canoes with alleged arm traffickers crossing the Marfee river.

Liberian police backed by their UN counterparts went on to find other stashes on Thursday after they received a tip-off from people of the town.

According to the report, one of the canoes was transporting a big bag and the others were escorting it.

"The people of Sinje tried to apprehend them to know what they were carrying and that resulted in a fight," the police officer said, but the alleged arm traffickers fled, leaving the bag of 2,061 machine-gun rounds.

People in the area then tipped off national police and they were assisted by security forces from the UN mission in the country.

"With the support of the UN police, we carried out a search in the areas. This is how we discovered 28,000 rounds of machine-gun ammunition on Thursday," the official added.

When the headquarters of the UN Mission was contacted, the acting spokesperson confirmed the information but said the ammunition in question was old and unusable materials left behind by former fighters.

The spokesperson said in 2006 ammunition was discovered in the same area apparently left behind by ex-fighters and that the latest catch of unusable materials should not create any fear.

It can be recalled, at the end of 2007, the United Nations Security Council renewed an arms embargo on Liberia for one year on the grounds that the situation in the West African country remains fragile despite reports that the country is stabilizing.

Liberia was devastated by consecutive civil wars between 1989 and 2003 and the country's timber and diamond resources, together with diamonds from Sierra Leone also then wracked by war, were taken by the belligerents to pay for weapons.

United Nations  Nations Unies

United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL)

**UNMIL Public Information Office Complete Media Summaries
24 March 2008**

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

Newspaper Summary

First Batch of Liberian Deportees from Ghana Arrive Home

(The News, Public Agenda, The Inquirer, The Analyst, New Democrat, Daily Observer, The Monitor, Heritage)

- Sixteen Liberians deported from Ghana arrived in the country Sunday, claiming they were legitimate refugees. They are part of the first batch of 30 Liberian refugees the Ghanaian government has begun deporting for illegally residing in Ghana and were disturbing the peace.
- The deportees have however denied the Ghanaian government claims of illegal residency and going contrary to the laws of the host country.

Liberia's Census Kicks off to a 'Slow' Start

(New Democrat, Daily Observer, The Monitor, The News)

- Various print media outlets reflected public sentiments on the reported delay in starting the census exercise on the first day. The New Democrat says all areas surveyed in Monrovia saw no enumerators on Friday. According to the paper, the situation was the same in other counties including Margibi and Grand Bassa. Accordingly, officials of the Liberia Institute of Statistics and Geo – Information Services (LISGIS), the group spearheading the census, admitted to the poor start of the exercise on the first day but attributed the reported failure to lack of logistics and protest staged by some candidates on the same day.

UNMIL Corroborates Reports on Discovery of Cache of Ammunition – Says they are expired bullets

(Heritage)

- The UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) confirmed media speculations of the discovery of a cache of ammunitions in Grand Cape Mount County but clarified that the discovered ammunitions are all expired bullets which are no longer useful. The clarification follows reports that the Police and UNMIL had discovered 55,000 rounds of 'new' ammunition along the Mafa River in Western Liberia.
- However, UNMIL Chief of Public Information George Somerwill said that the ammunitions were buried in the sand along the Mafa River by former fighters of some of the disbanded warring factions during the civil war, and urged the public not to panic.
- A similar situation was reported in August last year when state security sources and media reports raised unnecessary alarms by providing a misreading of a discovery, whereas the items discovered turned out not to be 'new ammunitions infiltrated into the country' but some empty shells of ammunitions covered in rust and other debris.

Local Radio Summary

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

Catholic Cleric Wants Government to Respect Religious Sensitivity

- Delivering his Easter Homily on Sunday, the Apostolic Administrator of the Catholic Church in Liberia, Monsignor Andrew Karnley cautioned government to respect religious sensitivity in the country.

- The caution is in an apparent reaction to government's refusal to adjust the date of the National Population and Housing Census following an appeal from the Church.
- The Catholic Church as well as the Liberia Council of Churches (LCC) had appealed for the adjustment because the commencement of the census coincided with "Good Friday" which the Church said was a sacred obligation and thought it should not come in clash with a civic duty.

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

Ghana Deports First Batch of Liberian Refugees

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

MSF-Belgium signals Departure Plan from Liberia

- The Medical Charity, Medecine Sans Frontier (MSF) Belgium has spoken of plans to end its mission in Liberia after operating in the country for nearly 20 years.
- MSF-Belgium said it works in emergency situation and said with the conflict in the country over it was preparing to hand its activities to government by next year.

Local Media – Star Radio *(News culled today from website at 8:35 am)*

Two Presidential Guards arrested with drugs

- The Drugs Enforcement Agency in Bong County has arrested two Presidential guards with over 715 kilograms of marijuana. Officers Robert Kamara and Paul Kraah were arrested with a Sierra Leonean Sunday morning at the Iron Gate in Gbarnga.
- The Special Security Service personnel were riding on board a vehicle with license plate marked BC-967. The SSS officers with ID Cards Numbers SSD 00147 and SSD 00150 said they had travelled with President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf to Lofa County.
- According to them, they decided to stay behind to purchase the drugs. DEA Deputy Chief of Operations in the county, Benjamin Glassco put the cost of the drugs at more than one million Liberian dollars.
- The two SSS officers and the Sierra Leonean have been charged with drugs trafficking and expected to appear in court Monday.

More 'ammunitions' discovered in Western Liberia

- There are reports of the discovery of more ammunition in the Western Liberian County of Grand Cape Mount. Sources say Police and UNMIL officers have unearthed more than 55,000 additional gunshots.
- UNMIL and the Liberian National Police are carrying on a vigorous search operation along the Murphy River. The search started Wednesday when the joint security found 28,000 rounds in the western region.
- The LNP and UNMIL launched the search operation because the gunshots were new. The information has not been independently confirmed as security authorities remain tight-lipped.

United Nations  Nations Unies

United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL)

**UNMIL Public Information Office Complete Media Summaries
20 March 2008**

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

Newspaper Summary

Liberia Braces to Conduct First Post-war Census after 24 years

(The Informer, Heritage, The News, New Democrat, Daily Observer, The Analyst, and The Inquirer)

- The Liberia Institute of Statistics and Geo-Information Services (LISGIS) will on Friday spearhead a nationwide National Housing and Population Census from March 21-27, 2008.
- The census will be the first in 24 years since Liberia last conducted a population and housing census in 1984. Results from the last census, according to several publications, put the country's population at 2.5 million, but current rough estimates indicate that there are approximately three million or more people in Liberia.
- The 2008 census is apparently in view of the fact that the demographic profile of Liberia has changed considerably since the censuses of 1962, 1974, and 1984.
- It is perceived that the census would help Government devise ways to foster the development and transformation of the country.
- Despite numerous calls from the Christian community to reschedule the commencement of the 2008 census on Friday because the day coincides with Good Friday, which is a Christian holiday, LISGIS, the group spearheading the process, says the census will go ahead as planned.

UNMIL, Police Raid Monrovia Ghetto

(The Inquirer)

- The Liberia National Police (LNP) along with UNMIL soldiers has once again raided a notorious ghetto area popularly known as "BLAGBA" on Centre Street. The area was a popular hideout for hardened criminals. Officer Daniel Gueh who is in charge of the area said the criminals, ranging from drug addicts, prostitutes, gamblers, pick-pockets and cell phone snatchers had inhabited the place for over five years. The latest raid has left neighbours of that area with mixed feelings for fear of being attacked by the criminals in the face of demolishing their hide-out.
- Meanwhile, residents are calling on the Government to increase security patrols in their area in order to prevent these desperate criminals from attacking their homes and business places.

Armed Men Surface in Gbarpolu....Shootout leaves one Wounded

(The Independent, The Monitor)

- Reports from Gbarpolu County say armed men have surfaced in the mining area of Kumgbor. The report indicated that the armed men are said to have shot and injured one person during an attack on a mining concession over ownership. According to the reports, the shooting incident occurred when confusion broke out between the American Mining Associates (AMA) and another mining company known as the Swarry Group or the "Big Kroco." The AMA is said to have accused the management of "Big Kroco" of illegal mining in their area, something that triggered the confusion.

Lofa Superintendent Gets Tough with Shady NGOs Wants them out of the County

(New Democrat, Daily Observer)

- Lofa County Superintendent Galakpai Kortimai has threatened to pull down the signboards of ineffective NGOs in Lofa County. Mr. Kortimai described the NGOs' operations in the county as celebrating holiday. He said a total of 63 NGOs are in Lofa mainly in Voinjama but little can be seen of their work and warned that the authorities would uproot the signboards from town where these NGOs are not present. The Lofa County Superintendent then called on the "ineffective" NGOs to leave the county if they are not ready to work.
- Meanwhile, the Superintendent has instructed his deputy to create a database on the NGOs as a means of monitoring them. Superintendent Kortimai recommended to the Planning Ministry to liaise with the county authorities on the activities of NGOs in the country.

LMC Launches Report on Media TRC Coverage

(The Inquirer, The News, The Parrot, The Analyst, Daily Observer)

- The Liberia Media Centre (LMC) has announced that preliminary findings on the media coverage of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) public hearings covering January and February beginning Thursday. A release from the media centre, signed by its Executive Director, Lawrence Randall said the research targeted eight newspapers and four radio stations. The newspapers include the Daily Observer, The Inquirer, Heritage, New Democrat, The News, The Analyst, National Chronicle and Public Agenda. The four stations include Star Radio, Radio Veritas, ELBC and Truth F.M. The research was aimed at monitoring the quality of media reports of the TRC Public hearings; evaluating the media understanding of the process and legal institutional framework; assessing the depth and relevance media outlets were devoting to articles on the TRC.

Government to Generate US\$4.8 M Annually from Amended Firestone Agreement

(Heritage, The Monitor, The Inquirer)

- Agriculture Minister, Dr. Chris Toe says the government will generate revenue of US\$4.8 million annually from the amended Firestone-Liberia agreement when approved by the Legislature. The amended agreement was recently submitted to the Legislature by the Executive for scrutiny and subsequent approval.
- Addressing a one-day public hearing on the amended agreement, Minister Toe disclosed that prior to signing the agreement government was generating a revenue of US\$2.8 million annually. Speaking further, he said the company would also be subjected to all taxes and laws of the country in line with the agreement.

Local Radio Summary

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

Catholic Church Pleads for Adjustment in Start of Census

- In a release issued in Monrovia the Catholic Church in Liberia has again sounded another appeal for the adjustment in the date of the National Population and Housing Census.
- The Church said while the participation in the census is a civic duty, Christians have a sacred responsibility to observe and celebrate the death and suffering of Jesus Christ.
- The Census is due to commence on Friday which coincides with "Good Friday".
- Earlier, the Liberia Council of Churches (LCC) expressed similar concern asking government to rethink its decision to commence the census on the same day as "Good Friday".

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

7-Year Old Boy Found Hanged in Guardians House

- Another child has been found dead in his guardians' house in the "Gorbachop" Plank field market area in Paynesville outside Monrovia.
- The seven-year-old boy identified as God's Gift was found hanging from a window with his neck tied to a white piece of cloth.

- Following the incident the homicide division of the Liberia National Police (LNP) backed by UNMIL moved in and made a number of arrests including the boy's father and other close relatives were picked up and are reportedly undergoing preliminary investigation.
- The latest death of the seven year old boy brings to nearly five, the number of children who have died under "questionable" circumstances in the past one year.
- Prominent among the deaths is that of little Angel Togba which an autopsy revealed was strangled to death after being sexually abused.

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

International NGO Gives Malaria Drugs to Three Counties

- An international organization, Mentor Initiative has donated a consignment of malaria drugs to three counties.
- Speaking at a news briefing Wednesday, the Country Director of the group, Madam Kristin Banek said the drugs were donated to the health teams of Bomi, Gbarpolu and Margibi Counties and said the European Commission Humanitarian Aid funded the purchase of the drugs.
- Madam Banek said Save the Children, would distribute the drugs to forty-five public clinics in the counties.

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

Local Media – Star Radio *(News culled today from website at 8:35 am)*

Commerce Ministry, U.S. Agencies Hold Workshop on Boosting Export

- A Ministry of Commerce statement has announced the holding of a two-day workshop to help booster exports under the US African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA).
- The workshop which is being held in collaboration with the US State Department intends to provide practical advice to Liberian entrepreneurs wanting to increase and diversify their exports to the United States and would also provide a forum for the US and Liberian public and private sectors representatives to exchange ideas on enhancing trade relations.

The Analyst (Liberia)
Wednesday, 19 March 2008

JOE WYLIE WANTS TO APPEAR BEFORE TRC

By George J. Borteh

Former Deputy Defense Minister for Administration at the Ministry of National Defense in the then National Transitional Government of Liberia (NTGL), Mr. Joe Wylie says there is a need for him to appear before the Truth & Reconciliation Commission (TRC), whether he receives invitation or not.

He said he has a story to tell the Liberian people and the rest of the world that during the 15-year old civil conflict the entire population of his village was killed in one day by the defunct National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL).

A Mr. Wylie said the number killed was put at 48 and were killed by one NPFL rebel General identified as Gen. Noragar in Tar Town, near Greenville in Sinoe County.

Though the former Deputy Defense Minister is yet to be invited by the TRC for its Public hearing in order to testify, he added that Gen. Noragar also matched to the next village and put the villagers under captivity for two years. He disclosed that all the women in said village were kept under sex slavery for two years and some were taken away.



● Mr. Joe Wylie

Mr. Wylie made the disclosure in Monrovia recently in an interview with The Analyst, “He matched to the next town 20 miles away with all the women in the town and kept them there as sex slaves for two years”, he said.

“And some of them were taken from our county (Sinoe), and we don’t know there were about,” the former deputy defense minister noted. He said it is a good thing to appear before the TRC in order for the reconciliation process to be successful.

He noted that testifying before the TRC will open old wounds but pointed out that said initiative will be his own way of opening the room for forgiveness. Mr. Wylie is calling on those in the wrong to appear before the TRC and testify so that the peace and reconciliation segments of the country will be settled.

He called on those who have evidence of his activities oin the civil war conflict to come forward and produce same.

Ministry Finance Threatens Penalties For Late Filing

The Ministry of Finance has announced penalties for business houses that fail to file income tax return by March 31. A Finance Ministry release said penalties for late filing, late payment and interest rate will be imposed on business houses operating in the country consisting with the Revenue Code of Liberia, Act 2000.

According to Section 51, 52 and 11 of the revenue of Liberia, business houses shall be fined for late filing, late payment of income tax and interest rate.

A release signed by Deputy Finance Minister for Revenue, Elfrieda Stewart Tamba and Acting Finance Minister, M. Tarnue Mawolo reminder taxpayers of the need to comply with filing of their annual business income return in keeping with Section 902 of the revenue Code of Liberia.

The Analyst (Liberia)

Monday, 24 March 2008

Liberia: Media Center Critiques TRC Coverage

The Liberia Media Center has released preliminary findings on the media coverage of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission public hearings in Liberia. In a thirty-seven page report released on Thursday, LMC said overall, the media should be commended for generally staying above the fray in the conduct of their work.

It said most of the language used in the various reports reflected the language of the TRC. In a press statement distributed to the media, LMC said comparatively, the broadcast sector outperformed the print media by ensuring that news and information were thoroughly balanced in a 2-1 ratio.

The release quoting the findings, said some of the reports from both the print and broadcast media violated Articles 12 and 23 of the Press Union of Liberia Code of Conduct. Article 23 states "Journalists should not publish or broadcast any report or write-up affecting the reputation of an individual or an organization without a chance to reply. That is unfair and should be avoided".

"Most of those accused during public hearings were not contacted for reaction, while some of the accused voluntarily reacted but their responses to the allegations received little prominence compared to when the story was first told.

Journalists in very rare instances utilize information regarding the mandate, structure, functions and general legal framework of the TRC in providing context to testimony, emerging developments and stories" the release quotes the findings.

It claimed there were very minimum follow-ups on stories from the hearings and hailed media efforts to provide lengthy investigation into allegation linking famed musician and current Executive Mansion Aide, Sundaygar Dearboy to atrocities allegedly committed during the war. But the Center said it was alarmed by the fact the investigation was facilitated by the TRC.

LMC has asked the TRC to avoid been seen as facilitating the practice of investigative journalism. "Investigative reporting should be demand driven and supported by media institutions themselves so as not to compromise the integrity of their investigation" the release noted.

While congratulating the New Democrat Newspaper for devoting huge space and conducting follow-ups on a number of their reports and the quality of their newspaper, it encouraged the paper to clearly delineate its news from its opinion pages.

"In covering the Charles Taylor Trial and TRC, it is hard to tell when a story is news or opinion. News stories are often linked to feature pages and do sometimes take the form of opinions, with a visible slant seen in some of its coverage."

It frowned on the paper's consistent publication of gruesome pictures and said the New Democrat published twice as much gruesome pictures compared to all newspapers combined.

The release said, LMC acknowledged strides by the Daily Observer, The News, the Heritage and The Inquirer in their coverage of the TRC but said they needed to improve their contents and provide multiple perspectives to their reports.

It praised the Catholic-run Radio Veritas for its exceptional coverage of the hearings. It said the station devoted more airtime on aggregate and recorded more diversity numbers.

It also praised Star Radio for its February coverage and has encouraged ELBC and Truth FM to review their broadcast schedule as they failed to air seventy-five (75) and forty-five (45) of their news bulletins respectively.

In other developments the center has called President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf not to abandon her earlier pledge to face the TRC. "This in our view will lend further credibility to the process, provide the necessary momentum for its finalization and improve public perception of the TRC process" the findings noted.

LMC also wants the TRC to probe news reports of fighting between two Commissioners during public hearings in River Gee County, as it was important for the Commission to lead by example.

The project if funded with support from UNESCO Paris and the International Center for Transitional Justice (ICTJ).

UN News Centre

Tuesday, 18 March 2008

Trial of former top Serbian security figures delayed by UN war crimes tribunal

18 March 2008 – The start of the war crimes trial of two former high-level officials with the Serbian secret service was today postponed by the United Nations tribunal set up to deal with worst crimes in the Balkan conflicts of the 1990s because of the medical problems of one of the men.

The trial chamber of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY), sitting in The Hague, ordered that the trial of Jovica Stanišić and Franko Simatović – due to start this month – be delayed, at least until a hearing on 1 April to reassess the health of Mr. Stanišić.

A report by the medical officer with the tribunal's detention unit stated that Mr. Stanišić suffers from pouchitis, osteoporosis and has kidney stones, while he is also being treated for deep depression.

An independent psychiatrist appointed by the ICTY registry and a gastroenterologist will also assess Mr. Stanišić ahead of the 1 April hearing.

The two men are accused of having directed, organized, equipped, trained, armed and financed secret units of the Serbian state security apparatus which murdered, persecuted and deported Croats, Bosnian Muslims, Bosnian Croats and other non-Serb civilians from Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia between 1991 and 1995.