

SPECIAL COURT FOR SIERRA LEONE
PRESS AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE



PRESS CLIPPINGS

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

Monday, 27 March 2006

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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Sierra Leone Media

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Awoko
27 March 2006

Zambian Lt. Col. explained how they were abducted

A Lieutenant Colonel (Lt. Col) in the Zambian Army, Kasoma Edward has told the Special Court of how a total of about 100 Zambian peacekeepers, including himself, were abducted by members of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF).

The witness, whose code number TF1-288 during his evidence in chief, narrated

how they were captured in a village called Moria and was taken to Yengema.

He said during his assignment to Sierra Leone in April 2000 for the United Nations peacekeeping mission, the initial agreement was that they should be deployed at Koidu. He stated that he was the Commanding Officer of about 800 men who were divided into four

companies, initially based at Lungi Airport where they stayed for barely a week.

Continuing his evidence, the Zambian Lt. Col. stated that he received a message from the Force Commander, Vijay Jetley on 1 May 2000 informing him to move to Makeni to stabilise the situation there.

On 2nd May they left Lungi and he was assigned to move with the Sector

Headquarter of the Kenyan contingent which numbered about 30 whose Commander was Brigadier Mulunga Igkeh and was based in Magburaka.

At Lunsar, he noted, they received information from the local populace and the Nigerian contingent that were deployed there that the RUF troops had set road blocks along the highway. As a result of this information, the witness said, he reduced his convoy leaving the fighters that would easily react to any situation. The total strength was about 200 men but was dropped to 100 plus.

TF1-288 went on to state that he informed the Force Commander about the situation but was told to proceed with the mission. After 12 Kilometres, he was told that there were shootings and roadblocks but they continued their journey until they met the roadblocks. There they were told by those manning the checkpoints that they had heard that the Zambians would be deploying in Koidu, which they were happy about but before they could proceed they should meet with their bosses.

"I communicated with my

Company Commander who said there was no problem and that we should go. "We moved with a group of men to a village called Moria where there was an RUF ambush and they surrounded us. They did not waste any time in disarming us. The RUF numbering about 100 men including young boys between the ages of 10-12 years were all brandishing weapons, "RPGs and grenades", he disclosed adding, "I was later taken to a shelter where I met Morris Kallon who pointed a pistol at my ear and gave me a stern order to instruct my Second In Command (2-I-C) to send some vehicles for them. He took the paper from me and wrote something, which he forced me to sign under gunpoint. I stayed with them for three hours and was later taken in a van with Morris Kallon sitting on the passenger's seat".

The prosecution witness further stated that they proceeded to Makeni where he saw other abducted Zambian soldiers and they were all disarmed and stripped off their military uniforms.

The witness said he was later taken to a house in Makeni where there were

lots of armed RUF men. "I was introduced by Morris Kallon to Issa Sesay as the Zambian Contingent Commander. Sesay gave instructions that I should be taken to an unknown destination. I was put in our vehicle, which was driven by the RUF to Yengema. The Zambian soldiers numbering about 100 were taken to a school block. It was at this point that I met General Mulunga who had also been abducted together with 15 Kenyan soldiers also".

Continuing the Lt. Col said, "we were taken to one RUF officer Col Monica where we stayed for 23 days with uncomfortable life. No shoes, no bath and no proper food. When Foday Sankoh was arrested in Freetown the hostility became intensified".

He stressed, "Our lives were being threatened frequently, later there were pressures from the International Community for our release. The 100 soldiers were first released, later Gen. Mulunga was taken to Issa Sesay in Koidu who gave orders that we should be taken to Pendenbu. Upon my arrival at Pendenbu I met a Liberian military helicopter which took that to Liberia for medical check-up."

Concord Times

27 March 2006

Irish troops to arrest Taylor

Story: Sahr Musa Yamba and Mariama Kande

IRISH troops, serving in UNMIL in Liberia, have been put on high alert to arrest Charles Taylor, deposed president of Liberia, the IRISH INDEPENDENT states.

Taylor is wanted for war crimes at the Special Court for Sierra Leone.

The Irish troops, according to reports, are to arrest and bring him to justice at the Special Court

in Sierra Leone.

The troops, reports say, heavily-armed and backed by armoured vehicles, are on stand-by in the

Cont. page 3

Irish troops to arrest Taylor

From page 1

capital Monrovia to bring Taylor to face trial in Sierra Leone after the Liberian Cabinet approved of the plan.

Meanwhile, reports monitored by Concord Times state some of Charles Taylor's loyalists in the Capital Monrovia have been rounded up by security personnel

Reports say the Taylor loyalists have been meeting secretly to stifle Taylor's arrest and onward transmission to the Special Court.

In a related development, Nigerian Federal Government Saturday affirmed Charles Taylor would be handed to the Liberian authorities. But no timetable has been set for that.

In a related development, Amnesty International (AI)

Sierra Leone has called for the extradition of Charles Taylor to Sierra Leone to answer to charges of crimes committed during the ten-year war at the Special Court.

Brima Sheriff, Acting Director AI Sierra Leone and chairman Coalition for Justice and Accountability (COJA) made this statement during a press briefing at their Pademba Road office Thursday.

"Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo should promptly comply with Liberian President Johnson Sirleaf's request for former Liberian president Charles Taylor to face trial at the Special Court for Sierra Leone," the Campaign Against Immunity (CAI) said.

Sheriff said that as the day

marked the 15th anniversary of the devastating conflict, members of the Campaign Against Immunity are holding news conferences in Monrovia, Freetown, and Lagos to press for Taylor's surrender to the Special Court.

Sheriff said in 2003 Taylor left for Nigeria as a temporary measure to secure a peaceful transition in Liberia. He insisted that President Obasanjo has refused surrendering Taylor to the Special Court despite Johnson Sirleaf's request, which Obasanjo committed himself to. "The CAI urges African leaders to give this commitment meaning by expressing support for Taylor's surrender to the Special Court," Sheriff stated noting that in 2006 the African Union reiterated its commitment to fight impunity consistent with provisions of its constitutive act.

Sulaiman Jabati, Executive Director for COJA in his statement said that the

CAI that comprises of some 300 African and international civil Society groups has been engaged in the campaign to ensure Taylor's extradition since 24th August 2005.

"How long must the victims keep waiting to see justice done?" He asked noting it is time for Taylor to face trial for his alleged crimes. Alfred Carew, Executive Director National Forum for Human Rights pledged his organization's support to the call for Taylor's extradition.

Patrick Fatoma of the outreach section of the Special Court said that they are delighted to know that Sierra Leoneans are keen to see Taylor answer for his crimes.

Roland N. Johnson Head of Chancery of the Liberian Embassy in his statement said that they will stand by Amnesty International to see justice take its course on the Taylor issue but stated that the Liberian Embassy is not the decision making body of the Liberian people.

Concord Times

27 March 2006

The Day Taylor Comes to Town – Lansana Gberie

Guest Writer

By O. Sankoh

Lansana or Lans Gberie is a household name in Sierra Leone. He is one of our finest researchers and a Nobel laureate nominee who of course has every reason to vent his anger on the Special Court stemming from the way and manner Norman who fought on the side of government as Kamajor chief and Deputy Defence Minister was indicted in 2003, bundled out of his office in cuffs and flown out to be locked up in some unsavory condition in Bonthe and to the apparent spending of so much sums of United States dollars on its staff thus making what our Civil Servants here collect in the name of salary look like peanuts.

Yes, I am sure that Lans will also be angry that Foday Sankoh, the main architect of this whole civil strife escaped the court within a whisker when death suddenly and naturally caught up with him without facing justice from a court where its Prosecutor, David Crane proven him and other indictees guilty even before found guilty and was hell bent on ensuring they never see the light of a free day. Indeed, it will be totally useless for me to ask whether Lans was angry or not when news came in that Sam Maskita Bockarie had been killed and at some point, Johnny Paul Koroma was proclaimed dead and at another, not dead and yet, at another point, doubts on whether he still exists lingers.

Well, here is something that should make Lans shout Hallelujah for the court or, it may even force him to throw a party and drink beer with colleagues at the Special Court.

If recent reports from the Nigerian media and by extension, the present hullabaloo between Liberia's President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf's government and die-hard loyalists of former president and rebel warlord, Charles Gbankay Dakpana Macarthur Taylor are anything to go by, then the Special Court is about to land its biggest catch and naturally, my good old friend, Lans should be preparing to decorate his face with smiles. After all, Taylor had said before he reluctantly left the seat of power "that God willing, I will be back". Yes, God is willing for Taylor to face the Special Court. Shout hallelujah somebody!

It is no longer secret that Taylor, the man who once said on the BBC in the late 1990s that 'Sierra Leone will taste the bitterness of war' for merely encouraging ECOMOG to use this country as a base is on his way to share cell with the likes of Norman, a man he literally hounded and haunted in Liberia.

Taylor is no stranger to jails. Like his best friend, Foday Sankoh, he once tasted the comfort of Pademba Road

prisons, but if when he does come to Freetown anytime from now, the scenario will be different. His address will be at New England Ville where officials of the Special Court have confirmed that his presidential suite; sorry, a cell has been prepared and waiting for him. However, what they did not tell Taylor is that he will not miss the use of his precious toy, the mobile phone (one will be given to him just like the other inmates together with Top-Up cards) and as an ardent follower of soccer, he will still have the rare opportunity of watching either Man U, Arsenal or Barcelona playing. Did I hear you ask about conjugal visits since he has, just like the king of Lesotho, over a dozen concubines to service?

When (or should I say if) Taylor finally lands at New England, he will be the biggest catch the grubby waters of the court have ever made. In fact, it will even dwarf the detention of Sankoh and Chief Norman and the local media will also have something to celebrate about. His celebrity status alone is something a Lansana Fofana-like journalist would surely not want to miss and just like a casket designer would pray every morning "Oh Lord, please let somebody die today so that I will be asked to prepare a casket for him," so will journalists here also be itching for that day to come when they will be called upon to attend a Press Conference to announce the arrival of the 'Lion in Calabar' (apologies Joe Lamin).

Taylor's coming will surely make headline news but have you paused for a second to think about the ramifications (if any) of his coming? Reactions on this of course will surely be mixed. While others will be waiting to line the streets, walls and gates of New England just to get a glimpse of De Papay, I am sure there are others that will be asking other questions and amongst these will be security as a very top priority.

Needless to say, after the final exit of UNAMSIL in late December, the security of our nation now rests squarely in our own hands. We have an army that is British trained, no question about that. We have loyal troops - no question again but how prepared are we should 'Taylorists' (who still commands growing support in Liberia) try to create mischief back here? Let us not forget that the head of the current Liberian legislature, Edwin Snowe was made by Taylor and he is currently on a UN travel ban list because of his relationship with his friend in Calabar. Next is Jewel Howard-Taylor, his estranged wife who also sits in the current Legislature as a senior Senator and in fact, was she not on BBC the other day claiming that she, together with Taylor's party, the

NPP threw their support to Madam Sirleaf instead of the footballer , George Weah during the second round of that country's elections late November last year because a deal was struck on the Taylor issue? Lest I forget, General Peanut Butter, a one time commander in the Taylor army also sits in the Legislature as a Senator and Chairman on the National Security committee. These are all behind not having Taylor come to Freetown and above all, this call has been made several times by Sando Johnson who was a Speaker in the Taylor government on almost all the radio stations and newspapers in Liberia.

For those that support Taylor, he should not by any stroke of imagination be sent here.

Considering that one should always be prepared for war in moments of peace- the question is, how prepared are we for any eventuality? Has our Commander -in-Chief an Air force? And is it true that the army lacks modern war artifacts to properly engage the enemy?

If no, why is Yenga still being occupied by an occupation force from Guinea? Or are we still trying to exhaust all diplomatic channels?

Can somebody tell me how secured are our borders? Fact is, crimes committed against humanity should not go unpunished and a common legal dictum is that "justice delayed is justice denied," and Taylor should not be even thought of as a sacred cow for a man accused of a crime is presumed innocent until proven otherwise. Let Taylor have his day in court but because of the aforementioned and many

other reasons to follow- read my lips- is it not ripe enough for Pa Kabbah to ask that Taylor be sent to a third country, possibly the Hague for trial? Even Liberia's president Sirleaf , from all indications is merely bowing to international pressure thus reneging from her campaign promises of the Taylor issue being a non-starter on her agenda. Now, she wants support but this can only come if and only when she handovers Taylor. She is also fully cognitive of the fact that the peace process in Liberia is still in its diapers. It must also be made clear that most of the dogs of war from this country and Liberia are still holding out in Ivory Coast where disarmament is yet to be done.

Yes, we want to see De Papay get his day in court, but this issue should be treated with some caution. Call me a pessimist if you like, but when this same man promised that this country was going to taste the bitterness of war, did it not come to pass? What did our authorities do to stop a pending crisis? Nothing.

Well, something perhaps! Cock and bull stories. Nothing more.

If indeed he comes to town, history would have been made and this will give both the accuser and accused an opportunity to meet face to face, prove beyond all reasonable doubt based on evidence and evidence alone that yes indeed, Taylor, the one time rebel warlord in Liberia and later, president of that country is guilty or not.

Till then, I wait to see Liberia's most feared Taylor taking the plea- "are you guilty or not guilty?"

Awareness Times
27 March 2006

More calls for Taylor hand over

By Tom E. Tommy

Campaign against Impunity, a coalition of 300 African and international civil society groups formed to ensure the surrender of Charles Taylor to the Special Court for Sierra Leone, has added its voice to the numerous local and international calls for his ultimate hand over to face trial for his alleged crimes against humanity.

In a press release by the organisation, it calls on Nigerian President, Olusegun Obasanjo to comply with Liberia President, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf's request for former Liberia President, Charles Taylor to be extradited to Liberia so that he can be handed over to face trial at the Special Court for Sierra Leone.

"President Johnson-Sirleaf has taken a crucial stand against impunity in Africa by requesting Taylor's surrender," the release asserted, adding, "Now President Obasanjo must demonstrate that he too cares about justice on the continent by handing over Taylor to the special court," the Director of Programmes for the committee for defence of human rights which is also part of the campaign is quoted as saying.

Charles Taylor has been indicted on 17 counts of crimes and crimes against humanity for his role in the armed conflict in Sierra Leone that lasted from 1991-2002. The crimes include killing, mutilations, rape and other forms of sexual violence, sexual slavery, the recruitment and use of child soldiers, abduction and the use of force labour by armed opposition groups.

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



In a statement issued by the Nigerian government last Friday, 17th March, President Obasanjo was quoted as saying that he will consult with African Union and ECOWAS on the request. President Sirleaf has also indicated that she wants consultation between Obasanjo and regional leaders on the issue. Nevertheless, Johnson-Sirleaf is equally clear that following such consultations, Taylor should face trial. "It is a fundamental principle of criminal justice that justice delayed is justice denied" says Kolawole Olaniyan, African program Director of Amnesty International.

"How many years must the victims keep waiting to see justice? Sulaiman Jabati, the Executive Secretary of Sierra Leone Coalition for Justice and accountability, also part of the Campaign against Impunity, questioned and asserted, "It is time for Taylor to face trial for his alleged crimes."

In January 2006, the African Union reiterated its commitment to fight impunity consistent with the provisions of its constitutive act.

The Campaign against Impunity urges African leaders to give this commitment a meaning by expressing support for Charles Taylor's surrender to the special court for Sierra Leone.

Exclusive
27 March 2006

Nigeria Agrees To Hand Over Taylor

Nigeria has agreed to hand over to Liberia the country's exiled former leader, Charles Taylor.

A statement from Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo said the Liberian government was free to take Mr Taylor into custody.

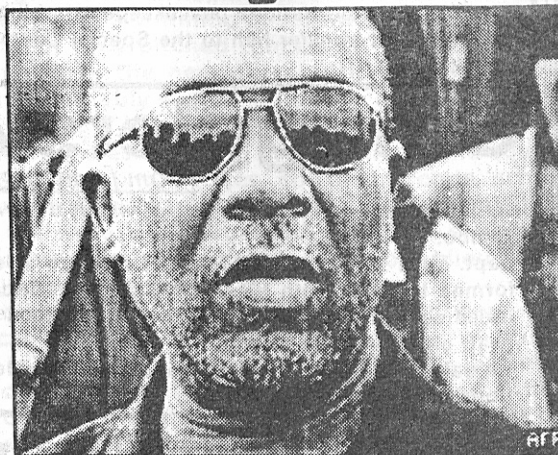
Liberia formally requested his extradition earlier in March.

A UN-backed war crimes tribunal in Sierra Leone wants to put Mr Taylor on trial. He went into exile in Nigeria in 2003 after standing down as leader.

The move was part of an international deal to end Liberia's 14-year civil war.

'Timing'

The Nigerian statement said: "President Olusegun Obasanjo has today, 25 March, informed
Contd. page 2



Charles Taylor

Nigeria Agrees To Hand Over Taylor

From front page

President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf that the government of Liberia is free to take former President Charles Taylor into custody."

TAYLOR TIMELINE

1989: Launches rebellion
 1991: RUF rebellion starts in Sierra Leone
 1995: Peace deal signed
 1997: Elected president
 1999: Lurd starts rebellion to oust Taylor
 June 2003: Arrest warrant issued
 August 2003: Steps down, goes into exile in Nigeria

Profile: Charles Taylor

Taylor ripples across region

Mr Obasanjo had consulted the leaders of the African Union and West African regional grouping Ecowas, the statement said.

Mr Obasanjo has always refused to send Mr Taylor to Sierra Leone, saying he would only extradite him following a request from an elected Liberian leader.

Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf took power in Liberia in January after winning last year's elections and visited Nigeria earlier this month.

The statement said that Mr Obasanjo's only objections to surrendering Mr Taylor had been to do with "timing and continued peace in Liberia".

It did not say when or how he would be handed over.

'Immunity'

Mr Taylor is accused of selling diamonds and buying weapons for Sierra Leone's Revolutionary United Front rebels, who were notorious for hacking off the hands and legs of civilians during a 10-year war.

The rise and fall of Liberia's Charles Taylor.

He also started the Liberian civil war in 1989, before being elected president in 1997.

Mr Taylor's supporters have said that he enjoys immunity from prosecution under the peace deal which saw him step down.

But human rights activists have accused him of breaking the terms of that deal by trying to influence Liberian politics.

When it sought Mr Taylor's extradition, the Liberian government said it would, if the request was granted, send him straight to Sierra Leone.

The 15,000 United Nations peacekeepers in Liberia are under instructions to arrest Mr Taylor and transfer him to the Special Court for Sierra Leone if he sets foot on Liberian soil.

Statement by the Federal Government of Nigeria

25 March 2006

FORMER PRESIDENT CHARLES TAYLOR TO BE TRANSFERRED TO THE CUSTODY OF THE GOVERNMENT OF LIBERIA

On March 5th, 2006, a formal request was sent to President Olusegun Obasanjo by President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf of Liberia requesting that former President Charles Taylor be turned over to the custody of the Government of Liberia.

Considering the involvement of the African Union and ECOWAS in the arrangement which resulted in the voluntary relinquishing of office by President Charles Taylor and his abode in Nigerian (sic) in 2003, President Obasanjo consulted the current and past Chairmen of the AU and ECOWAS.

It should be recalled that at the time, the understanding among those involved in the arrangement was that the departure of Charles Taylor was a pre-requisite for the implementation of the just concluded Accra Comprehensive Peace Agreement on Liberia, but that both the AU and ECOWAS could not hand over Charles Taylor to the Sierra Leone Special Court as rather precipitately demanded by the Court's prosecutor.

Since 2003, the Federal Government of Nigeria has resisted persistent pressures to violate the understanding of 2003 and to deliver Charles Taylor to the Sierra Leone Special Court. Rather, the Federal Government has insisted that Charles Taylor can only be turned over, on request, to a democratically-elected government of Liberia at a time that such a Government considers appropriate.

The request of President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf in her letter of 5th March constituted her determination that the time was opportune. With no substantive objection other than timing and continued peace in Liberia raised by those other Heads of State involved in the 2003 arrangement, President Olusegun Obasanjo has today march 25th informed President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf that the Government of Liberia is free to take former President Charles Taylor into its custody.

Abuja 25th March 2006

SPECIAL COURT FOR SIERRA LEONE
Office of the Prosecutor

PRESS RELEASE

Freetown, 25 March, 2006

Desmond de Silva, QC - The Prosecutor of the Special Court welcomes Nigerian announcement on the transfer of Charles Taylor

I would like to congratulate President Johnson-Sirleaf for having made her request for the surrender of the fugitive Charles Taylor. I am also indebted to President Obasanjo for agreeing to transfer Charles Taylor in order that he can be brought to trial before this international criminal tribunal for the many terrible crimes against the people of Sierra Leone for which he has been indicted.

My thanks go out to African leaders consulted by the Presidents of Liberia and Nigeria and of course also to the United States and the United Kingdom who have been so steadfast in seeking to ensure that the rule of law is upheld and that an end is brought to impunity.

This is a most significant day for those who support the cause of international justice around the world, and for the victims of so many conflicts who have suffered so grievously.

Produced by the
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Special Court for Sierra Leone
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Visit the Special Court's website at www.sc-sl.org

SPECIAL COURT FOR SIERRA LEONE
Office of the Prosecutor

PRESS RELEASE

Freetown, 26 March, 2006

Urgent Statement by the Prosecutor of the Special Court, Desmond de Silva, QC, on his request to Nigeria to execute a warrant of arrest on former President of Liberia Charles Taylor

Until the indicted war criminal Charles Taylor is in the hands of Liberian authorities to whom Nigeria is making Taylor available for collection, the spotlight of the international community will be upon Nigeria. In particular, the watching world will wish to see Taylor held in Nigerian detention to avoid the possibility of him using his wealth and associates to slip away, with grave consequences to the stability of the region.

I have therefore transmitted via the High Commission of Nigeria in Freetown, an official request to President Olusegun Obasanjo, whose contribution to peace in the sub-region has been huge, to take all necessary steps to ensure that Charles Taylor is unable to abscond. In particular, I have requested President Obasanjo to have his authorities execute the warrant for the arrest of Charles Taylor issued by the Special Court and transmitted to Nigeria in November 2003.

Produced by the
Office of the Prosecutor
Special Court for Sierra Leone
Email: SCSL-Prosecutor-Press@un.org
Visit the Special Court's website at www.sc-sl.org

BBC Network Africa

27 March 2006

The Nigerian authorities are under growing pressure to hand over the former Liberian leader, Charles Taylor... Desmond de Silva is the Chief Prosecutor at the special tribunal in Sierra Leone, where Taylor is wanted to face charges of crimes against humanity

And Taylor must be alert to the fact that the net closing in on him. And given the amount of money he has, and he's able to abscond that the right course would be to apply [words indistinct] that an arrest be carried out immediately and that Taylor should be held in detention until the Liberia authorities [word indistinct] him.

Taylor is alleged to have been behind of campaign of killing and torture in the brutal civil wars in both Liberia and Sierra Leone in the 1990s. As part of a deal to end the conflict, he was given sanctuary in Nigeria. One obstacle to his being removed was the threat of instability in Liberia. Our correspondent Mark Doyle joins us now from Freetown, Sierra Leone. Good morning, Mark. Is there a feeling there that perhaps there's some open sores surrounding Charles Taylor is about to be resolved?

DOYLE: Well it's all, I'm afraid, it's unclear at the moment. I'm here in Sierra Leone where the United Nations war crimes court has made it very clear that they want the Nigerians to turn Charles Taylor over, and but the Nigerians have been fairly vague about exactly what they'll do. They've said that Liberia can come and collect him. But since Liberia doesn't really have the facilities to do that, doesn't have a police force really or an army or even any airplane as a result really of twenty years really of war in Liberia, it's most unclear what the Liberians will do, so they'll be turning to the UN and particularly to the UN war crimes court here to try and persuade the Nigerians to hand him over.

What is the potential threat of instability in the region if this situation where he's being held in Nigeria at the moment is to be altered and he's to be removed possibly to face the war crimes tribunal?

DOYLE: Well while Charles Taylor is in Nigeria, he got exiled there in 2003 as a result of a diplomatic deal which ended the war. While he's in Nigeria, if he's not meddling in politics in Liberia, it shouldn't be a problem. But the fact is that he's a very wealthy man still with a lot of influence in Liberia and in the region in general, and that's why the UN war crimes court wants him to face trial here in Sierra Leone where the war crimes court is trying all of those with, in the words of the court, the largest responsibility for atrocities committed during the Sierra Leone war because, of course, Liberia backed the main rebel movement during that war.

And I guess, briefly Mark, where you are in Sierra Leone there is an appetite, a strong appetite, to see him facing justice.

DOYLE: There is, certainly, but also great tension both here in Sierra Leone and in Liberia and the region in general while this situation is not resolved. At the moment it's a very tense international standoff with this wanted war criminal in Nigeria and the Nigerian authorities, you'll hear lots of voices, people shouting here in Sierra Leone behind me, but people are all discussing this issue, and they want Charles Taylor to face justice, most of them. Of course his supporters want the opposite. But it's a tense international standoff.

Mark Doyle live from Freetown, Sierra Leone. Many thanks.

Transcribed by the Public Affairs Office, Special Court for Sierra Leone

New York Times

27 March 2006

Nigeria Pressed by U.N. Court to Arrest Liberia's Ex-Leader

By LYDIA POLGREEN

FREETOWN, Sierra Leone, March 26 — Pressure mounted Sunday on Nigeria to arrest Charles G. Taylor, the former president of Liberia who is under indictment for war crimes in connection with his role in the brutal, decade-long civil war here.

Mr. Taylor apparently remains in Nigeria, where he has been living since 2003, when a deal brokered by Nigeria's president, Olusegun Obasanjo, sent him into exile. But security around the compound where he is living has been lax, according to local news reports and Human Rights Watch, leading to fears that Mr. Taylor may try to flee.

Desmond de Silva, the chief prosecutor of the United Nations special court set up to try those accused of atrocities in Sierra Leone's civil war, which ended in 2002, called upon Nigeria to arrest Mr. Taylor immediately. "Until the indicted war criminal Charles Taylor is in the hands of Liberian authorities, to whom Nigeria is making Taylor available for collection, the spotlight of the international community will be upon Nigeria," Mr. de Silva said Sunday in a statement.

"In particular, the watching world will wish to see Taylor held in Nigerian detention to avoid the possibility of him using his wealth and associates to slip away, with grave consequences to the stability of the region," he said.

If Mr. Taylor is brought to Sierra Leone, he will be the first African head of state to face international prosecution for war crimes, a precedent that will surely resonate on a continent where a fraternity of presidents has traditionally protected its own, no matter how grave their alleged crimes, with comfortable exile rather than the jail cell that awaits Mr. Taylor here.

Mr. Taylor had been living in a seaside villa in Calabar, a resort town on the eastern edge of Nigeria's coastline, with dozens of relatives and close associates — an exile supplemented by money he is suspected of having stolen from the Liberian treasury while he ruled the country, from 1997 until his ouster in 2003.

That wealth, with his long history of wiggling out of seemingly impossible jams, only increases the need to secure his arrest immediately, said Corinne Dufka, a researcher for Human Rights Watch in Dakar, Senegal.

"There is an international arrest warrant for Taylor, so we are asking Nigeria to honor the arrest warrant," Ms. Dufka said.

In 1985, Mr. Taylor escaped a Massachusetts jail, where he was awaiting extradition on charges he embezzled at least \$1 million from the Liberian government. The circumstances of his escape have never been fully explained.

Backed by Libya and other regional powers, Mr. Taylor unleashed a cycle of civil war in Liberia and its neighbors during the 1990's. He was indicted by the court in Sierra Leone in 2003 on 17 charges in connection with his role in this country's war, which killed 50,000 people, displaced millions and left thousands maimed.

Nigeria has been under pressure, particularly from the United States, to turn Mr. Taylor over to Liberia. Although he is not under indictment in that country, the United Nations has authorized his transfer to Sierra Leone. Mr. Obasanjo had said he would comply only with a request from an elected Liberian government.

During a visit to the United States this month, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, Liberia's newly elected president, requested that Mr. Taylor be turned over, and on Saturday, Nigeria's government indicated that it would comply. Mr. Obasanjo is due to visit the United States this week.

Reuters

26 March 2006

Court prosecutor asks Nigeria to arrest Taylor

DAKAR (Reuters) - The prosecutor of the U.N.-backed Sierra Leone court seeking to try former Liberian President Charles Taylor for war crimes said on Sunday he had asked Nigeria to arrest Taylor to prevent his escape.

"I have requested (Nigerian) President Obasanjo to have his authorities execute the warrant for the arrest of Charles Taylor issued by the Special Court," the prosecutor, Desmond de Silva, said in a statement.

Nigeria, where Taylor has lived in exile since 2003, said on Saturday it would transfer the notorious former regional warlord to Liberian custody. He is wanted by the U.N.-backed Special Court for Sierra Leone where he has been indicted on 17 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity.

International rights groups have expressed fears that the vagueness of Nigeria's handover announcement, which failed to specify a firm arrangement for his transfer for trial in Sierra Leone, could allow him to escape.

"The watching world will wish to see Taylor held in Nigerian detention to avoid the possibility of him using his wealth and associates to slip away, with grave consequences to the stability of the region," de Silva said in his statement, which was sent to Reuters.

Voice of America

26 March 2006

Questions Raised Over Future Taylor Handover

By Joe Bavier

Abidjan

A decision by the Nigerian government to lift former Liberian warlord-turned-president Charles Taylor's asylum has been welcomed by human rights activists, both in his home country and abroad. But the terms of his possible future handover remain unclear, raising questions over where he will be sent next.

Saturday's statement by the Nigerian government clearing the way for Charles Taylor's extradition was clear on one important point. The former warlord, who is accused of sowing instability throughout West Africa, can now be released into the hands of Liberian authorities.

For years during the 1990s, Taylor led a brutal rebel campaign in Liberia to topple then-President Samuel Doe. But he has been formally indicted to face war crimes charges at the U.N.-backed Special Court in Freetown for his role in perpetuating Sierra Leone's own bloody civil war.

Nigeria has repeatedly refused to honor the Special Court's extradition request, saying such a move would violate the asylum agreement it brokered with Taylor. His decision to accept asylum in Nigeria ended a rebel siege of the Liberian capital, Monrovia, in 2003 and a decade-and-a-half of on-and-off civil war.

Earlier this month, Liberia's recently elected president, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, made a formal request to the Nigerian government for Taylor's handover. Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo had earlier said he would be willing to hand over the former warlord, if a democratically elected government in Liberia asked him to.

But with the path now cleared for Taylor's extradition, there is disagreement in Liberia over where he should be sent.

George Mulbah is a newly elected member of parliament from Taylor's own National Patriotic Party.

"The issue of Mr. Taylor is beyond the control of the government," Mulbah says. "We have been told that the African Union has unanimously agreed, and Nigeria has agreed to extradite him. All we want is a free and fair trial within the confines of the law."

That, Mulbah says, cannot happen in Sierra Leone.

"We will also want the international community to have some consideration, instead of Freetown, that we use The Hague," Mulbah says. "That would be the best area, because, there, the environment would not be hostile. He will have his date in court."

The Hague has most recently been the setting for a special war crimes tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, which was trying former Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic until his death earlier this month.

Liberian democracy advocate Ezekiel Pajibo says a trial in The Hague is out of the question, as is any attempt to bring Taylor back to Liberia.

"Mr. Taylor has not been indicted for crimes in Liberia," Pajibo says. "He has been indicted by the Special Court on Sierra Leone for war crimes and crimes against humanity committed in Sierra Leone. Mr. Taylor is wanted by the Special Court, so we believe the appropriate place for Mr. Taylor is in Freetown, behind bars, where he will pose little to no threat to Liberia."

But the question of where Taylor will stand trial is not the only one being raised. First, the Liberian authorities will have to take him in charge. And with the country's infrastructure in ruins and a police force and army that is still being formed, some say the country is physically incapable of handling Taylor's extradition.

Activist Pajibo says the United Nations should step in.

"The government of Liberia does not have the capacity to fetch Mr. Taylor. We think what the Liberian government can now do is to request the U.N. mission in Liberia to accomplish the task," Pajibo says.

But it remains unclear whether Nigeria would allow this.

Whatever Liberia decides to do must be done quickly, say some human-rights groups.

Long before coming to power in Liberia, Taylor had once escaped from prison in the United States.

U.S.-based Human Rights Watch has denounced a marked lack of security at Taylor's compound in the southern Nigerian city of Calabar. It urged Nigeria to take immediate steps to ensure the former warlord would not be allowed to flee again.

And, Special Court prosecutor Desmond de Silva said Sunday he has asked Nigerian authorities to arrest Taylor, to keep him from escaping.

BBC

26 March 2006

Taylor move challenges Liberia

By Jonathan Paye-Layleh
BBC News, Monrovia

The Liberian government has said it is "obliged to comply" with Nigeria's position regarding the handing-over of former President Charles Taylor but finds it difficult to arrest him in Nigeria, as has been suggested.

Information Minister Johnny McClain said the government was, instead, working out plans with the international community for the transfer of Mr Taylor to the court in Sierra Leone.

Nigeria invited the Liberian government on Saturday to take delivery of Mr Taylor whenever it wished to do so.

But Mr McClain said the government did not understand how it would "go to arrest a former president in a foreign territory".

"We do not have any extradition treaty between Liberia and Nigeria," he said in a telephone interview.

"Besides, Taylor was not indicted by a Liberian court," he added.

The government, he said, was "working out the modalities" with its international partners for the transfer of Mr Taylor to Sierra Leone.

Mr McClain said that even though Liberia did not have control over what would happen at the court, it would ensure that Mr Taylor was tried "in an environment that is not hostile".

Bewildered

Liberians have been baffled about the terms on which Nigeria agreed to turn Taylor over.

The way things are now looking, it is possible that Taylor will not appear in court in person
Comfort Swen
Monrovia second-hand cloths dealer

Nigeria agreed that the government of Liberia could take charge of Taylor if and when ready, indicating that the federal government did not intend to facilitate his physical hand-over. "This, in my opinion, is [Olusegun] Obasanjo's way of showing displeasure over the early request for Taylor's transfer," said Chris Sumo, a university student.

"Otherwise he would have definitely arranged a programme during which the former president would be handed over here in Liberia or in Sierra Leone."

Comfort Swen, a second-hand cloths dealer in the Monrovia commercial district of Waterside added:

"The way things are now looking, it is possible that Taylor will not appear in court in person.

"He may remain in exile and make a representation in court through his lawyers."

Allies arrested

The legal counsel of Charles Taylor's National Patriotic Party, Theophilus Gould, told the Associated Press news agency on Saturday that there was a legal team working "around the clock to ensure that the former president has qualitative and adequate legal representation" in court.

Mr Gould, a renowned lawyer and former Liberian solicitor-general, spoke before he got reports that the Nigerian president had agreed to hand Mr Taylor over.

National Security Agency (NSA) officials have displayed to AP two Taylor loyalists who were reportedly picked up early on Saturday.

Andy Kwemini and Alex Twe were taken from their detention cell looking tired but in good health.

NSA deputy director Lemuel Sherman could not say why the men had been arrested but only allowed AP to see them.

Mr Kwamini was an aide to Mr Taylor while Mr Twe was one of his "generals" before the end of war in 2003.

The homes of the two men were broken into at dawn on Saturday by local police backed by United Nations police, according to Mr Gould.

Their cell phones and those of their wives were taken away by the police before they were taken away, he said.

There were unconfirmed reports late on Saturday of the arrests of more Taylor loyalists.

Nobody was available at the justice ministry for comment.

But the arrests follow a press statement from the ministry on Friday evening in which the government said it had received reports that Taylor loyalists were engaged in "secret meetings" in Monrovia with the intent of opposing his transfer to court in Sierra Leone.

Story from BBC NEWS:

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/africa/4847616.stm>

Published: 2006/03/26 16:46:22 GMT

Reuters

25 March 2006

Nigeria says to transfer Taylor to Liberia

By Estelle Shirbon

LAGOS (Reuters) - Nigeria will transfer former Liberian president Charles Taylor, who is living in exile in Nigeria and has been indicted for war crimes, to Liberian custody, the Nigerian government said on Saturday.

The former warlord is seen as the mastermind behind once intertwined civil wars in Liberia and neighbouring Sierra Leone, where a special U.N.-backed court wants to try him for supporting brutal rebels in exchange for diamonds.

Nigeria issued a statement confirming that the transfer would take place, but a government spokeswoman declined to comment on exactly how it would work.

"President Olusegun Obasanjo has today ... informed President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf that the government of Liberia is free to take former President Charles Taylor into its custody," the statement said.

International rights group Human Rights Watch welcomed Nigeria's move.

"This is a great day for justice, not only for the victims of Sierra Leone's brutal war but also for the fights against impunity, which has devastated so many lives in West Africa," said Corinne Dufka, head of the group's West African section.

Johnson-Sirleaf, Liberia's first post-war president who was elected last November and took office in January, had asked Nigeria to consider handing over Taylor so he could stand trial at the Sierra Leone court.

Taylor agreed to go into exile in Nigeria in 2003 as part of a peace deal to end 14 years of civil war in Liberia.

The wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone, two of modern Africa's most brutal conflicts, cost tens of thousands of lives and spawned a generation of violent, armed young men.

Many in the two countries have expressed fears that Taylor's return could reopen old wounds, undermining a fragile peace.

PRESSURE

A spokesman for Taylor, reached on his mobile telephone, declined to comment on Nigeria's decision to hand him over.

The pressure had been building on Taylor and his entourage since Johnson-Sirleaf's request to Nigeria became public.

Airport sources in Calabar, the southeastern city where Taylor lives, said about 10 members of Taylor's family left on Tuesday with lots of luggage, which was unusual as they didn't normally travel in large numbers or with many bags.

Around 20 family members have left in the last week or so, the sources said.

The Nigerian government said it had resisted persistent pressures to deliver Taylor to a special U.N.-backed war crimes court in Sierra Leone "as rather precipitately demanded by the court's prosecutor".

Nigeria has argued that handing Taylor over to the court would have violated the agreement under which he stepped down. Obasanjo was keen not to be seen as having gone back on his word.

"The federal government has insisted that Charles Taylor can only be turned over, on request, to a democratically-elected government of Liberia at a time that such a government considers appropriate," the statement said.

"The request of President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf in her letter of March 5 constituted her determination that the time was opportune."

Taylor stands accused of supporting Sierra Leone's rebels, notorious for hacking off the limbs of civilians during the 1991-2002 civil war, which cost an estimated 50,000 lives.

The charges do not include his role in starting Liberia's civil war, which killed 250,000 people and spread violence to nearby states.

(Additional reporting by Ani Akpan in Calabar, Tom Ashby in Lagos)

BBC

25 March 2006

Nigeria to give up Charles Taylor

Nigeria has agreed to hand over to Liberia the country's exiled former leader, Charles Taylor.

A statement from Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo said the Liberian government was free to take Mr Taylor into custody.

Liberia formally requested his extradition earlier in March.

A UN-backed war crimes tribunal in Sierra Leone wants to put Mr Taylor on trial. He went into exile in Nigeria in 2003 after standing down as leader.

The move was part of an international deal to end Liberia's 14-year civil war.

'Timing'

The Nigerian statement said: "President Olusegun Obasanjo has today, 25 March, informed President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf that the government of Liberia is free to take former President Charles Taylor into custody."

TAYLOR TIMELINE

1989: Launches rebellion

1991: RUF rebellion starts in Sierra Leone

1995: Peace deal signed

1997: Elected president

1999: Lurd starts rebellion to oust Taylor

June 2003: Arrest warrant issued

August 2003: Steps down, goes into exile in Nigeria

Mr Obasanjo had consulted the leaders of the African Union and West African regional grouping Ecowas, the statement said.

Mr Obasanjo has always refused to send Mr Taylor to Sierra Leone, saying he would only extradite him following a request from an elected Liberian leader.

Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf took power in Liberia in January after winning last year's elections and visited Nigeria earlier this month.

The statement said that Mr Obasanjo's only objections to surrendering Mr Taylor had been to do with "timing and continued peace in Liberia".

It did not say when or how he would be handed over.

'Immunity'

Mr Taylor is accused of selling diamonds and buying weapons for Sierra Leone's Revolutionary United Front rebels, who were notorious for hacking off the hands and legs of civilians during a 10-year war.

He also started the Liberian civil war in 1989, before being elected president in 1997.

Mr Taylor's supporters have said that he enjoys immunity from prosecution under the peace deal which saw him step down.

But human rights activists have accused him of breaking the terms of that deal by trying to influence Liberian politics.

When it sought Mr Taylor's extradition, the Liberian government said it would, if the request was granted, send him straight to Sierra Leone.

The 15,000 United Nations peacekeepers in Liberia are under instructions to arrest Mr Taylor and transfer him to the Special Court for Sierra Leone if he sets foot on Liberian soil.

Associated Press

25 March 2006

Nigeria: Liberia Free to Take Ex-Leader

Sat Mar 25, 10:44 AM

ABUJA, Nigeria - Nigeria said Saturday it will send back to Liberia exiled ex-president and one-time warlord Charles Taylor, wanted for trial on war crimes by a U.N.-backed court.

Newly inaugurated Liberian President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf recently asked that Taylor's asylum in Nigeria be ended and Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo said he would discuss the request with regional leaders.

On Saturday, Obasanjo agreed to hand Taylor to Liberia.

Obasanjo "has today March 25 informed President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf that the government of Liberia is free to take former President Charles Taylor into its custody," the presidency said in a statement.

There was no word on when Taylor could be sent to Liberia. Liberian officials weren't immediately available for comment.

Taylor could be sent directly to Sierra Leone, where a U.N.-backed court has indicted him on 17 counts of alleged war crimes for his role in supporting that country's brutal rebel movement during a 1991-2001 civil war.

Obasanjo granted Taylor, a one-time warlord and rebel leader himself, asylum in Nigeria to help end the 1989-2003 civil war that Taylor started. Obasanjo was lauded at the time for brokering peace and helping arrange Liberia's transitional administration but has been under pressure recently to hand Taylor to the war crimes tribunal.

Obasanjo has said he would accede to any request from a democratically elected Liberian leader. Sirleaf's January inauguration after a November electoral victory ended Liberia's postwar administration. At the time she said that Taylor's extradition was not a priority for her government.

Her request for extradition came while she was on an official visit to the United States, prompting speculation that she had changed her mind under pressure from U.S. officials who could offer substantial aid.

The Nigerian announcement comes as Obasanjo prepares to visit Washington and meet with President George W. Bush on Wednesday.

Voice of America

25 March 2006

Nigeria Agrees to Extradite Taylor to Liberia

By VOA News

25 March 2006



Nigeria has agreed to extradite Liberia's exiled former president, Charles Taylor, to Liberia.

The Nigerian government made the announcement in an official statement Saturday. It is not known when the extradition will take place.

A United Nations-backed court in Sierra Leone indicted Taylor on war crimes charges. He was granted asylum in Nigeria in 2003 to help end Liberia's 14-year civil war.

Liberian President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf previously had urged African leaders to agree to send Taylor to a war crimes tribunal for prosecution.

Charles Taylor (file photo)

The government statement said Nigeria resisted calls to turn Taylor over to the special war crimes court because it would have violated the agreement under which Taylor left office.

Nigeria had maintained that Taylor would only be handed over to Liberia if a democratically elected Liberian government made a request.

Voice of America

25 March 2006

Dispute in Liberia Over Taylor Handover

By Franz Wild
Abidjan
24 March 2006



Charles Taylor (file photo)

Last week Liberian President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf requested former Liberian President Charles Taylor's handover from Nigeria. Now Liberians are arguing where he should be tried.

When Liberia's newly elected President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf asked Nigeria for the handover of former Liberian President Charles Taylor last week, most Liberians welcomed the news. This was an opportunity for the warlord turned president to be brought to justice.

Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo offered Taylor asylum in 2003 to bring Liberia's civil war to an end. Now, Nigeria's government says it is considering the handover request.

If handed over, Taylor would be transferred to Sierra Leone, where he has been indicted by the U.N.-backed Special Court. He faces charges of war crimes, crimes against humanity, and recruiting and using child soldiers for combat. He denies the charges.

Many Sierra Leoneans were also quick to express their delight, when they heard that Taylor may be tried for allegedly instigating the war there.

Since the former rebel leader, Foday Sankoh, died of a stroke while in the court's custody, and other senior rebels disappeared, Taylor's would be the first high-profile case to be heard.

Sierra Leone journalist Samuel John told VOA last week, this would shed light on some of the causes of the war in Sierra Leone.

"Everybody's looking forward to the testimony of Charles Taylor, because he has been accused of steering the war in Sierra Leone," he said. "I think, now that Foday Sankoh is dead, we can hear the truth from Charles Taylor."

A former Taylor supporter and interim Liberian president, Moses Blah, told VOA that it was too soon to hand Taylor over for trial. He said the Liberian government should prioritize by focusing its energy on pressing issues like reinstating water and electricity supplies in the country.

Mr. Blah said that Taylor still had many supporters in Liberia who were likely to cause trouble if he was sent to Sierra Leone.

One of these supporters is former member of the legislature, Sando Johnson. He tells VOA that he objects to Taylor's trial in Sierra Leone, saying he would not have a fair hearing. He says, Taylor is already considered guilty by the special court.

Statements such as these created security fears among officials in Liberia. They are concerned that if Taylor was sent to Sierra Leone, his supporters could possibly protest violently. Sando Johnson says that he will use the law to pursue the case, but will not get involved in any violent backlash.

Another option being considered is bringing Taylor back to Liberia.

Though Taylor does not face any charges in Liberia, he could be arrested by the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL).

Special assistant to the prosecutor at the Special Court Harpinder Adhwal said UNMIL does have grounds to arrest Taylor if he enters Liberia.

"If he is transferred to Liberia, there is actually a Security Council resolution, resolution 1638, which gives UNMIL the capacity to apprehend and detain Charles Taylor, and facilitate his transfer to the Special Court," he explained. "So if he does set foot in Liberia, there is a Chapter Seven resolution that allows UNMIL to facilitate his transfer to the Special Court."

An analyst from the International Crisis Group, Mike McGovern, points out that giving up Taylor would discourage others in similar situations in the future.

"If that deal saved a lot of civilian lives, one would want to be able to reproduce such a deal in another circumstance," he said. "So in some other country having a war, which has another brutal dictator refusing to leave and who is promising to fight to the death, you would want to be able to use the same kind of diplomatic tools to get that person out of that situation and save civilian lives."

But McGovern warns that any delay in the handover could aggravate the situation.

"What we are up against is the need for a quick decision," he added. "You cannot allow the decision making process to languish, because that gives all of the momentum over from President Johnson Sirleaf to Charles Taylor and his supporters who will have time to organize, who will have time to make their case. On the other hand President Johnson Sirleaf will look to be rather weak, rather exposed."

At this stage it is difficult to be absolutely certain that Charles Taylor will actually be transferred. However, Mrs. Johnson Sirleaf has received back up from President Bush.

Human Rights Watch

26 March 2006

Nigeria: Agreement to Hand Over Taylor

(New York, March 26, 2006) – Nigeria's announcement that it will consent to the transfer of former Liberian President Charles Taylor to Liberia is a landmark step toward ensuring justice for West Africa, Human Rights Watch said today. Now Taylor must be physically transferred to the U.N.-backed war crimes court in Sierra Leone. Nigeria must ensure that Taylor is not permitted to flee from justice and the international community must ensure that security in Liberia is maintained during this process. "Nigeria's announcement that Taylor can be sent to Liberia moves us one giant step closer to him facing trial," said Richard Dicker, director of the International Justice Program at Human Rights Watch. "The day the Special Court takes custody of Taylor will be a tremendous moment for the people of Sierra Leone, Liberia, and all of West Africa. It will give victims of the widespread murder and mayhem associated with Taylor the chance to finally see justice done."

The transfer will enable Taylor to face trial at the Special Court for Sierra Leone where he is indicted on 17 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity because of his support for rebels in Sierra Leone. The crimes include killings, mutilations, rape and other forms of sexual violence, sexual slavery, the recruitment and use of child soldiers, abduction, and the use of forced labor by armed groups.

According to news reports, Nigeria will not actually transport Taylor to Liberia, but will allow for his transfer to take place. However, credible sources in the past week have told Human Rights Watch that little or no security exists around Taylor's compound in Calabar, Nigeria, prompting fears that he might escape before he can be brought to justice.

"Nigeria must urgently take steps to tighten security around Taylor's villa in Calabar and should immediately take him into custody," said Dicker. "It would be a disgrace if Nigeria allowed Taylor to flee."

In 2003 Taylor left Liberia for Nigeria, where he was offered asylum and has since then been living in Calabar. Nigeria, acting with the support of the United States, the African Union and other actors in the international community, offered to take in Taylor as a temporary measure to end the bloodshed in Liberia and secure a peaceful transition to a new government.

President Olusegun Obasanjo, who is to visit Washington this week, had previously resisted surrendering Taylor to the Special Court but indicated that he would respond to a request from a duly-elected Liberian government. Liberian President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf made such a request, which was publicized on March 17.

The logistics of Taylor's transfer to the Special Court have not yet been clarified. However, in November 2005, the U.N. peacekeeping force in Liberia was given authority to detain and transfer Taylor to the Special Court for Sierra Leone for prosecution if he enters Liberian territory. The U.N. force must also maintain security amid fears in Monrovia that Taylor allies might use his transfer to stir up violence in Liberia.

"We call on all governmental and inter-governmental actors in West Africa to ensure Taylor promptly appears for trial," said Dicker. "The U.N. peacekeeping forces in Liberia and Sierra Leone will need to play their role to ensure justice can be done while stability in West Africa is maintained."

The Special Court for Sierra Leone was set up in 2002 to try those most responsible for war crimes committed during Sierra Leone's armed conflict.

BBC

26 March 2006

Nigeria pressed to detain Taylor

Nigeria should take former Liberian President Charles Taylor into custody immediately to ensure he does not flee, a human rights group has said.

Human Rights Watch made the call after Nigeria said on Saturday that it would hand the former leader, who faces war crimes charges, back to Liberia.

In Liberia, a number of Mr Taylor's supporters have been detained amid fears they may stage an armed uprising.

Mr Taylor was exiled in Nigeria in 2003 in a deal ending Liberia's civil war.

UN forces standing by

Mr Taylor faces 17 charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity for his role in the civil war in Sierra Leone.

“Nigeria must urgently take steps to tighten security around Taylor's villa in Calabar and should immediately take him into custody.”

Richard Dicker, Human Rights Watch

The 15,000 United Nations peacekeepers in Liberia are under instructions to arrest him and transfer him to the UN-backed Special Court for Sierra Leone if he ever sets foot on Liberian soil.

But Human Rights Watch say they are concerned this will never happen, despite Nigeria's announcement, because security surrounding him and his residence in Calabar, Nigeria is so lax that he may be able to escape justice.

"Nigeria must urgently take steps to tighten security around Taylor's villa in Calabar and should immediately take him into custody," Richard Dicker, director of the International Justice Program at Human Rights Watch, said.

"It would be a disgrace if Nigeria allowed Taylor to flee," he said.

'Reneging on deal'

On Saturday, Nigeria's President Olusegun Obasanjo said Liberia's new government was free to take him into custody.

TAYLOR TIMELINE

- 1989: Launches rebellion
- 1991: RUF rebellion starts in Sierra Leone
- 1995: Peace deal signed
- 1997: Elected president
- 1999: Lurd starts rebellion to oust Taylor

June 2003: Arrest warrant issued

August 2003: Steps down, goes into exile in Nigeria

Mr Obasanjo had previously refused to send Mr Taylor to Sierra Leone, saying he would only extradite him following a request from an elected Liberian leader.

Liberia's Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, who took office in January after winning elections late last year, visited Nigeria earlier this month and the extradition request was made earlier in March.

A spokesman for Mr Taylor said Nigeria's move was in breach of the 2003 peace deal, which ended 14 years of civil war in Liberia, of which Mr Taylor's exile was a crucial part.

"African leaders cannot afford to renege on that agreement," the spokesman, Sylvester Paasewe, told Reuters news agency.

Associates arrested

In Liberia itself, the authorities have arrested members of Mr Taylor's National Patriotic Party.

The party's legal counsel, Theophilus Gould, told the BBC they had been seized during raids on their homes, and they could be held for up to 48 hours before being charged.

Leaders of the party have expressed anger at the Nigerian decision to send Mr Taylor back and warned that the move was likely to provoke renewed violence.

Tens of thousands of people died in the interlinked conflicts in Sierra Leone and Liberia.

Mr Taylor is accused of selling diamonds and buying weapons for Sierra Leone's Revolutionary United Front rebels, who were notorious for hacking off the hands and legs of civilians during a 10-year war.

He also started the Liberian civil war in 1989, before being elected president in 1997.

Story from BBC NEWS:

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/africa/4846452.stm>

AFP

26 March 2006

Straw Hails Nigeria's Decision to Turn Taylor Over to Liberia

Britain has hailed Nigeria's decision to hand over former Liberian leader Charles Taylor to the government of Liberia to pave the way for his trial on war crimes charges in an international court.

"This is an important day for the international rule of law," Foreign Secretary Jack Straw said in a statement that paid tribute to how Nigeria's President Olusegun Obasanjo handled this "very difficult issue."

"I understand that once the transfer has taken place, the Liberian government, with the assistance of the UN Peacekeeping Mission in Liberia, will be able to transfer Charles Taylor to the jurisdiction of the Special Court for Sierra Leone," he said on Saturday.

"The UK strongly supports the Special Court and the principle that everybody should be answerable for their actions," Straw said.

"We have always been committed to seeing Charles Taylor face the charges against him -- relating to crimes against humanity and war crimes -- in the Special Court," the foreign secretary said.

"His trial will be a big step forward for Sierra Leone and Liberia in addressing the atrocities of that period," he added.

Obasanjo, who for years has resisted pressure to hand over Taylor to the international court, announced Saturday that he has agreed to Liberia's extradition request for Taylor, but did not state when the former strongman would leave his country.

Taylor, 58, is accused of plundering his own west African state while arming and training the notorious Revolutionary United Front (RUF) in Sierra Leone.

His support of the civil war in Liberia's eastern neighbor, in exchange for still-unknown amounts of "blood diamonds", fuelled a 10-year conflict that left more than 200,000 people dead and thousands more with missing limbs in one of the most brutal wars in modern history.

BBC

25 March 2006

In quotes: Reactions to Taylor handover

Nigeria has agreed to hand over Liberia's exiled former leader Charles Taylor, who faces war crimes charges in neighbouring Sierra Leone. Here are some reactions:

LIBERIAN PRESIDENT ELLEN JOHNSON-SIRLEAF

We must recognise that Liberia is greater than any one person, tribe or group of people. Whatever decision taken is the will of God. We must work together with commitment to move our country forward. The future of this country is bright and the future will be secure if we work together.

ERIC KENNEDY OF CHARLES TAYLOR'S NATIONAL PATRIOTIC FRONT

This is a sad day for Africa for Nigeria to succumb to this. Nigeria should not have agreed... Taylor is important. I know there will be some kind of consequences if he is extradited. Mr Taylor enjoys the support of many people. This is a violation of the peace accord.

DESMOND DE SILVA, CHIEF PROSECUTOR AT THE UN-BACKED COURT IN SIERRA LEONE

It is a remarkable day for the Special Court and it is a defining day in international criminal justice. It [Charles Taylor's transfer] will take a little time, two to three days; I would hope no longer than that.

ELISE KEPPLER, HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH

We call for urgent steps to tighten security around his villa in Calabar and for him to be immediately taken into custody. This is a tremendous moment for the people of Sierra Leone, Liberia and all West Africa. Taylor can now face trial at the war crimes court in Sierra Leone where he is indicted on 17 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity for his role in the armed conflict there.

BRITISH FOREIGN SECRETARY JACK STRAW

This is an important day for the international rule of law. The UK strongly supports the Special Court and the principle that everybody should be answerable for their actions. We have always been committed to seeing Charles Taylor face the charges against him... His trial will be a big step forward for Sierra Leone and Liberia in addressing the atrocities of that period.

VOKE IGHORODJE, NIGERIA'S COALITION FOR THE INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT

We are very happy if this is true. It is now for Ellen Johnson Sirleaf to do the right thing and take him to the Special Court in Sierra Leone.

CHARLES TAYLOR'S "SPIRITUAL ADVISER" DR KILARI ANAND PAUL

"There is no question in my mind that there will be chaos."

New York Times

26 March 2006

Nigeria Will End Asylum for Warlord

By LYDIA POLGREEN and MARC LACEY

FREETOWN, Sierra Leone, March 25 — Nigeria said Saturday that it would end the asylum of the deposed Liberian dictator Charles G. Taylor and turn him over to the Liberian government for trial.



Mr. Taylor, a warlord-turned-president, spawned a bloody cycle of civil wars that killed 300,000 people across West Africa in the 1990's. He was indicted by the United Nations-backed Special Court here in Sierra Leone in 2003 for war crimes and crimes against humanity during this country's decade-long insurgency.

But the court has been unable to arrest Mr. Taylor, who left Liberia as rebels narrowed in on him in 2003. Instead, he went into exile in Nigeria, where authorities agreed in an internationally brokered deal to grant him safe haven in order to end 14 years of civil war in Liberia.

"God willing, I will be back," the flamboyant Mr. Taylor said as he bid farewell to his country.

Since agreeing to accept Mr. Taylor, the Nigerian government has rebuffed many attempts to put him on trial before the international court, saying it was awaiting a request from an elected Liberian government. Liberia's new president, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, raised the issue this month with President Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria, describing it as an important part of bringing stability to Liberia.

"Liberia's peace is fragile," she said this month after announcing her extradition request. "There are many loyalists in our country to Mr. Taylor."

In Sierra Leone, where a cell has sat empty awaiting Mr. Taylor's arrival, there was fear and awe of the man who let loose so much misery in a nation smaller than South Carolina and home to five million people.

"We are very afraid of Charles Taylor coming here," said Jerry Nyuma Bongay, a 25-year-old student in Freetown. "But we want him to face justice. He hurt us too much."

Desmond De Silva, the chief prosecutor for the Sierra Leone court, hailed the announcement. "This is a remarkable day for justice," he said. "This is very important because it is all part of the fight against impunity."

In a statement on Saturday, Mr. Obasanjo said Liberia was free to take Mr. Taylor into custody. Although he is not under indictment in Liberia, United Nations peacekeepers there have been authorized by the Security Council to transfer him to Sierra Leone.

The statement gave no date or details for the transfer, but Mr. Obasanjo said he had never been against surrendering Mr. Taylor to a democratically elected government in Liberia. Ms. Johnson

Sirleaf was sworn in as Liberia's president in January, becoming Africa's first woman to be elected head of state.

Mr. Taylor was forbidden from leaving Nigeria during his exile, but he continued to meddle in his former country's affairs from his government guest house in Calabar, on Nigeria's southern coast, using some of the millions of dollars he is accused of stealing from Liberia's coffers.

Security around Mr. Taylor's villa has been lax, said Corinne Dufka, a researcher for Human Rights Watch based in Dakar, Senegal, prompting fears that Mr. Taylor may try to escape. "We are calling on Nigeria to tighten security around Taylor," Ms. Dufka said. "I think there will be a great sense of relief when Charles Taylor is actually in the custody of the special court."

The court, set up in 2000, had issued an arrest warrant for Mr. Taylor on 17 counts in 2003 but Nigeria ignored it. Mr. Obasanjo had said that he would honor a request by Liberia's government to relinquish Mr. Taylor, but until this year Liberia had only transitional leaders.

With the backing of Libya and other regional powers, Mr. Taylor unleashed his horrific brand of warfare across the region for the better part of two decades, dragooning young boys into combat, first with violence, then with drugs, money and sex.

In Sierra Leone, he is accused of training and arming Sierra Leone's rebels in a bloody conflict left tens of thousands of people dead.

Lydia Polgreen reported from Freetown, Sierra Leone, for this article, and Marc Lacey from Nairobi, Kenya.

Sunday Independent (Nigeria)

26 March 2006

Obasanjo Returns Taylor to Liberia

By Chesa Chesa, Abuja

After three weeks of consultations and suspense, President Olusegun Obasanjo at the weekend finally consented to handing over exiled ex-President of Liberia, Charles Taylor, back to his country.

The request for the return of Taylor was made by the new Liberian president, Mrs. Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf.

A deal brokered by African Union (AU) and ECOWAS leaders in 2003 saw Taylor quitting office in the face of advancing rebels, to take up asylum in Nigeria, with a proviso that he be handed over to and only on the request of a democratically elected government in Liberia.

Sunday Independent had exclusively reported the decision of the Presidency to revoke the asylum of Taylor in its March 12, 2006 edition. Taylor has been indicted on several charges of war crimes by a United Nations War Crimes Tribunal in neighbouring Sierra Leone which requested his extradition.

Obasanjo had however stuck to the 2003 deal and had refused to release him.

A statement issued by Aso Rock on Saturday confirmed that Sirleaf formally requested for Taylor's extradition three weeks ago and that President Obasanjo had granted the request after consultations with current and past AU and ECOWAS leaders involved in the arrangement.

A statement released by the Presidency on Saturday read in part: "With no substantive objection other than timing and continued peace in Liberia raised by those other Heads of State involved in the 2003 arrangement, President Olusegun Obasanjo has today March 25th informed President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf that the Government of -Liberia is free to take former President Charles Taylor into its custody."

When contacted, Obasanjo's spokesperson, Mrs. Oluremi Oyo, did not confirm if there would be a formal hand over ceremony to signal Taylor's departure from Nigeria.

It is now expected that Sirleaf would hand over Taylor, who has been exiled in Calabar, to the UN Court in Sierra Leone for prosecution.

The full text of the federal government statement reads: "On March 5th, 2006, a formal request was sent to President Olusegun Obasanjo by President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf of Liberia requesting that former President Charles Taylor be turned over to the custody of the Government of Liberia.

"Considering the involvement of the African Union and ECOWAS in the arrangement which resulted in the voluntary relinquishing of office by President Charles Taylor and his abode in Nigeria in 2003, President Obasanjo consulted the current and past chairmen of the AU and ECOWAS.

“It should be recalled that at the time, the understanding among those involved in the arrangement was that the departure of Charles Taylor was a pre-requisite for the implementation of the just concluded Accra Comprehensive Peace Agreement on Liberia, but that both the AU and ECOWAS could not hand over President Charles Taylor to the Sierra Leone Special Court as rather precipitately demanded by the Court’s prosecutor.

“Since 2003, the Federal Government of Nigeria has resisted persistent pressures to violate the understanding of 2003 and to deliver Charles Taylor to the Sierra Leone Special Court. Rather, the Federal Government has insisted that Charles Taylor can only be turned over, on request, to a democratically-elected government of Liberia at a time that such a Government considers appropriate.

“The request of President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf in her letter of 5th March constituted her determination that the time was opportune. With no substantive objection other than timing and continued peace in Liberia raised by those other Heads of State involved in the 2003 arrangement, President Olusegun Obasanjo has today March 25th informed President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf that the Government of Liberia is free to take former President Charles Taylor into its custody.”

Cocorioko website

25 March 2006

Handing Over Charles Taylor: It's Time

JURIST Guest Columnist [David Crane](#), former Chief Prosecutor of the Special Court for Sierra Leone, now at Syracuse University College of Law, says it's time for Nigeria to hand over former Liberian president Charles Taylor for trial on war crimes charges...



A little over three years ago, on 3 March 2003, I signed the international indictment of President Charles G. Taylor of Liberia for 17 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity while serving as Chief Prosecutor of the international war crimes tribunal in West Africa, called the Special Court for Sierra Leone. I sealed that indictment, awaiting the appropriate time to unseal it. I did so, on 4 June 2003, as Charles Taylor arrived in Accra, Ghana to allegedly begin the peace process to end the Liberian civil war. The unsealing of his indictment was a carefully laid plan to humble Africa's most powerful warlord before the law and to bring world attention to this African leader who destroyed two West African nations, Sierra Leone and Liberia, and was individually criminally liable for the murder, rape, maiming, and mutilation of over a million human beings. The unsealing was also necessary to ensure that a legitimate peace process began in Accra, not a flawed series of dialogs with an indicted war criminal. With the stroke of my pen, the rule of law was shown to be more powerful than the rule of the gun. There was dancing in the streets of Sierra Leone that day.

Though appropriately warned, the international community was not ready to see this head of state, only the second in history behind Slobodan Milosevic, and the first African head of state to be indicted for war crimes at the international level, turned over to an international tribunal they created to prosecute those who bore the greatest responsibility for the atrocities that took place in Sierra Leone during the ten-year long civil war in the 1990's. Scrambling, the United States, Great Britain, the United Nations, and Nigeria entered into an agreement to put Taylor aside in Calabar, Nigeria while a peace took hold in Liberia.

It has been two and a half years now since Taylor left Liberia, stripped of his political power by the indictment. He sits brooding, yet still meddling, in Nigeria. To date, despite tremendous international pressure, and a request by the new Liberian President, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf to hand Taylor over to the Special Court for Sierra Leone, President Obasanjo of Nigeria has refused to do so, saying it is not time, that peace needs to take hold in Liberia before it can be done. Obasanjo is in violation of both international and Nigerian domestic law in holding Taylor. He continues to defy the international arrest warrant. He should be brought to task for this.

It is now time. There will be no peace in Liberia until Taylor is handed over to the tribunal in Freetown, Sierra Leone for a fair trial on the 17 count indictment. Taylor swore to the people of West Africa that he would be back, "God willing". This statement sent a chill through all of us. We knew he meant it, and because of this statement a true peace in Liberia will never take hold; millions of US dollars will go for naught. Even a large peacekeeping force in Liberia will not be sufficient, as they will not be able to remain there forever. Taylor is young and patient. He knows us better than we know ourselves. He will wait and when the world has moved on to another crisis he will make his move and return to Monrovia, the capital. What will happen after that is too horrific to contemplate.

Taylor is well placed politically to return. He has meddled in the election process that saw President Johnson-Sirleaf elected as the first female president of any African state, by ensuring that he controls the legislature. Many leaders in that legislature are old Taylor cronies, some indictable war criminals. Even his wife has been elected a senator. Most politicians in Liberia are looking over their shoulders, as are business leaders and civil society, knowing that if they commit to the new president they could be jeopardizing their lives should Taylor return. An armed group in Taylor's home county of Lofa stands ready, on Taylor's orders, to move on Monrovia when the peacekeepers leave.

To end this possibility and fear in Liberia, Taylor needs to be handed over to the Special Court for Sierra Leone. It is that simple. By doing so he will be carved out of Liberian politics, his supporters no longer having a rallying point, and the new government can look forward, not back, to start solving Liberia's massive internal problems.

Last week, while in the United States, Liberian President Johnson-Sirleaf did publicly acknowledge that Taylor needed to be handed over so that justice could run its course, and she called on Nigeria to do just that. Before a cheering joint session of Congress, she pledged that Liberia would be a democratic success in West Africa. Next week President Obasanjo will visit the United States. It is hoped by then he will have an announcement to make related to Taylor and his hand over. It is now time, President Obasanjo, time for justice to begin in West Africa.

David M. Crane is a distinguished visiting professor of law at Syracuse University College of Law and formerly the Chief Prosecutor of the Special Court for Sierra Leone.

Cocorioko website

25 March 2006

COME GET TAYLOR , OBASANJO TELLS JOHNSON-SIRLEAF

Saturday March 25, 2006

Today is another historic day in the annals of international justice in Africa. The government of Nigeria's President Olusegun Obasanjo announced that after consultations with other African leaders and the African Union (AU) , the President has agreed to turn over alleged war criminal Charles Taylor to Liberia for prosecution by the Special Court in Sierra Leone.

"The President has today March 25 informed President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf that the government of Liberia is free to take former President Charles Taylor into its custody," a statement from Abuja, Nigeria said . Thus ends a sordid saga that threatened to derail justice in Africa when it seemed that President Obasanjo would continue to provide sanctuary for the alleged war criminal whom he granted asylum almost three years ago as part of a deal to have Taylor step down as Liberia's President as rebel forces strafed the capital, Monrovia.

This is a big day for justice in Africa and a red-letter day for the fight to end impunity in the continent .It is a monumental victory for human rights and justice in Africa .Now, the message will ring clear and loud in Africa : "The days of barbarity and impunity are over. If you hurt and kill innocent people , you will pay for it, whatever your station in life. " .

It is also a big victory for advocates of justice, including COCORIOKO , who have been striving relentlessly to convince the government of the U.S, the Senate , international leaders and international stakeholders to convince President Obasanjo to turn Taylor in for trial by the Sierra Leone Special Court which indicted him three years ago for war crimes , following his role in triggering and sponsoring the Sierra Leone war.

It is victory also for the Special Court which will be landing its biggest catch since it issued indictments on March 7, 2003 on those it deemed as bearing the greatest responsibility for the Sierra Leone rebel war which killed over 50, 000 innocent people, left a whole colony of maimed and amputated victims and ruined the country infrastructurally and economically.

Cocorioko website (opinion)

25 March 2006

http://www.cocorioko.com/_statements

LIBERIAN WAR-MONGERS SHOULD NOT UNDERMINE JUSTICE

By Leeroy Wilfred Kabs-Kanu

There is no doubt that Liberia's former President, Charles Taylor, committed despicable and macabre war crimes when he let loose on the nation of Sierra Leone blood-thirsty and savage rebel fighters, who not only killed over 50, 000 innocent children, women and men, but completely destroyed a once paradise-like country.

When you add to those crimes what Taylor did to his own country by triggering a civil war that left over 200, 000 people dead and the nation in ruins, you would understand why there is no way that the Butcher of Gbarnga should not be brought to justice. If Taylor is let off the hook, a terrible precedent of impunity will be set that will sink the African continent one day.

It is therefore incumbent on President George W. Bush, the U.S. Congress, the United Nations, ECOWAS and the international community not to allow the war-mongers in Liberia to have their way in undermining the process that has been set in motion to bring Taylor to justice.

It is an insult to civility and international decorum for these thugs and killers in Liberia who should, by right, have been cooling their heels in prison, to be crying their heads off that they will resort to terrorism if Taylor is punished for his crimes. What kind of beasts and animals are they that they have such contempt for justice?

Even children yet to be born will one day look at the ruins of Liberia and Sierra Leone and view the horrific pictures of the two wars--Of innocent pregnant women being disembowelled for instance--and be outraged if they learn that those who perpetuated these vile crimes against innocent people walked free.

The international community should stand ready to enter Liberia, as the U.S. did in Panama, to uproot these vandals, rapists and butchers if they try any more funny tricks in the country. Liberia does not only need peace and tranquillity; she needs to be part of a process where the rule of law is seen to be operating internationally. The peace and stability of Liberia depends on the smooth movement of the wheels of justice. Liberia can never actualize the high standards of peace and stability she wants to set in her new dispensation if she has in her midst lawless people who think that they are untouchable.

If these people are allowed to have their way, isn't it logical to conclude that one day they will hijack the democratic process and overthrow the just-installed government of Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf in their show of impunity? Will any government, any civilized and democratic process ever be safe in the hands of these animals?

The last thing Liberia and Africa need is the implantation and concretization of the spirit of impunity. It was this spirit that set the stage for the bloody and unnecessary coups and wars that turned Liberia and Sierra Leone into living hells for hard-working people who deserved a better deal. The time has come to uproot this system of impunity.

Ellen Johnson Sirleaf has started on a wonderful note to bring reconstruction and progress back to Liberia. The international community, including President Bush and the UN should rally around this new , promising Liberian leadership to ensure that it achieves its goals and objectives .--And there is no better way to do this than by not only providing the economic aid Sirleaf needs to rebuild Liberia but to make Liberia safe and secure.

The UN Peacekeeping Force in Liberia has to be beefed up to meet the challenges of anarchists and terrorists. The UN Security Council should set up contingency plans to have the peace-keeping force in Liberia for the next 5 years to help Mrs. Johnson-Sirleaf consolidate peace and rebuild the country.

Cowards fear nothing but the guns of restraint and punishment .It was these same guns that put paid to the animals in Sierra Leone , led by Foday Sankoh. The same guns can crush and put out of business the animals in Liberia.

Charles Taylor must face justice, notwithstanding the threats of violence from his supporters.

Vanguard (Nigeria)

26 March 2006

Charles Taylor, 66 aides counted

By John Ighodaro, Calabar.

Former Liberian President Mr. Charles Taylor and 66 aides and extended family members were Thursday counted in the ongoing census exercise in Calabar, Cross River State. Mr. Taylor who commended the census enumerators who counted members of his household at the Government Guest House in Calabar however expressed doubts that any census could be free of 'irregularities'.

The former Liberian President gave such information as having been born 57years ago in Liberia and residing in Calabar for almost three years.

When Vanguard visited the Eastern Naval Command residential quarters in Calabar which houses over a hundred people, there were complaints from some naval officers who said they had not been counted.

According to Seaman A.A. Ibrahim, 'I don't live here. I am on guard here, but enumerators have not come to my residence yet; so I have not been counted. Some enumerators were here yesterday (Thursday); they came in here around 10am and left around 8pm. They were only able to count some people. There are still many left that have not been counted'.

There have been appeals for more hands to be engaged aspecially in a situation where three or four enumeration areas are allotted to just two people.

The state National Population Commission (NPC) commissioner Mr. John Kum has however expressed hope that the exercise will be successful. In his view the "initial hitches are gradually giving way.'

He appealed to the enumerators and supervisors to ensure that no one was left out in the exercise.

United Nations



Nations Unies

United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL)

UNMIL Public Information Office Media Summary 24 March 2006

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

International Clips on Liberia

Bush, Obasanjo to discuss Darfur, Taylor's fate

WASHINGTON, March 24, 2006 (AFP) - US President George W. Bush will welcome Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo on March 29 for talks to include peacekeeping efforts in Sudan's troubled Darfur region, the White House said Friday.

Bush will thank Obasanjo "for his leadership as chairman of the African Union in the deployment of African troops in response to the genocide in Darfur," Bush spokesman Scott McClellan said in a statement.

They will also take up "a broad range of regional and international issues including continuing cooperation in the areas of Darfur, regional security, energy security, fighting corruption, strengthening democratic institutions, and the need to bring Charles Taylor to justice," he said.

BBC Monitoring of *The Guardian* 24/3/2006

Nigeria said puts finishing touches to ex-Liberian leader's extradition

Excerpt from report by Anietie Akpan and Francis Obinor entitled "Taylor's relations, aides leave Calabar" published in Nigerian newspaper The Guardian web site on 24 March

Former Liberian President Mr. Charles Taylor may have begun preparations for his proposed extradition home as about 20 of his relations and aides have left Calabar.

Already, the federal government is putting finishing touches to the extradition, which may take place any moment from now. Also, high level consultations are currently on with Taylor, the Cross River State Governor Donald Duke, President Olusegun Obasanjo, the Liberian government and the international community.

As part of the preparations, some members of his family and associates on Tuesday [22 March] boarded an ADC airline with heavy luggage to an unknown destination en-route Lagos. One of Taylor's close aides, popularly known as Banana, was seen at the airport on Tuesday with his wife and some luggage checking out of Calabar.

International Clips on West Africa

Guinea's Conte, better, flies home to protest call

By Saliou Samb

CONAKRY, March 24 (Reuters) - Guinea's veteran President Lansana Conte flew home from medical treatment into a new political row on Friday as opponents demanding a unity government vowed to defy his ban on street protests.

Source: Reuters Foundation 23 Mar 2006

UN troops return to west Ivory Coast after riots

By Loucoumane Coulibaly

ABIDJAN, March 23 (Reuters) - U.N. peacekeepers have started returning to the west of war-divided Ivory Coast after abandoning their bases during anti-U.N. riots in January, the mission's military spokesman said on Thursday.

Local Media – Newspapers

President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf Complains to UN about Suspected Rapists

(Heritage and Poll Watch)

- In an exclusive interview with the Voice of America in Washington D.C., President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf said that her government would exert effort to extradite the suspected Russian gang rapists who escaped the country while undergoing investigation for the alleged crime. She added that the issue was raised during her meeting in New York with UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan.

UN Envoy Commends Religious Leaders

(The Informer)

- In his keynote address to the Inter-Religious Council of Liberia Annual General Assembly yesterday, Special Representative of the Secretary General Alan Doss commended religious leaders of the country for the major role they played during the past presidential and general elections which he said had climaxed their overall effort to resolve the conflict.

Senator Makes Staggering Revelation to Destabilize Liberia

(The Analyst, The News, The Informer, The Liberian Diaspora and The Inquirer)

- Speaking to journalists yesterday, Senate Security Committee Chairman Prince Johnson said that he had received calls from some former commanders of former President Charles Taylor's rebel group for him to join a plan to destabilize the country. He alleged that because he rejected the calls, his life was being threatened by the former rebel commanders including former Battle Field Commander Roland Duo.

Foreign Minister Says Liberia will Collaborate on Disaster Prevention

(National Chronicle and Heritage)

- In a statement delivered on behalf of President Ellen Johnson to mark World Meteorological Day yesterday, Foreign Minister George Wallace said that Liberia would cooperate with the rest of the world to protect the ecology. He declared that the Liberian government has installed a satellite facility to track pre-warnings against natural disasters.

Female Lawyers Frowned at Untried Rape Cases

(National chronicle)

- Appearing before the plenary of the National Legislature yesterday, Association of Female Lawyers Chief Prosecutor Ester Seton-Cee said that over 100 untried rapes cases were resting with the Criminal Courts at the Temple of Justice and called for a fast track court to speedily resolve them.

Security Reform Group Recruits over 1,600 Soldiers for Armed Forces of Liberia

(National Chronicle)

- In a press interview yesterday, DynCorps Chief Information Officer Edith Bawn said that the group has recruited over 1,600 cadets, including 141 former soldiers of the

Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL) and 284 staff of the Ministry of Defense. She added that the recruits would have to pass HIV/Aids and TB tests to remain part of the AFL.

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

Court Records Show Murders Dominated Crimes in Monrovia

- According to journalists that surveyed court records in Monrovia yesterday, murders have dominated crimes allegedly committed by inmates who are being held at the Monrovia Central Prison, followed by rape, theft of property, armed robbery and aggravated assault while others are held in the prison for terrorism and arson.

(Also reported on ELBS Radio and Star Radio)

Senate Confirms Controversial Deputy Defense Ministers

- According to the National Legislature Press Bureau, the Senate yesterday confirmed Deputy Defense Minister for Operations Dionysius Sebwe and Deputy Defense Minister for Administration Othello Warwick after the two men had renewed their Liberian citizenship.

(Also reported on ELBS Radio and Star Radio)

Education Ministry to Streamline Teachers in Rural Liberia

- Speaking at a meeting with local education administrators in Gbarnga, Bong County, yesterday, Education Minister Joseph Korto declared that no County or District Education Officer would handle the salaries of teachers serving in rural Liberia. He also said that the Ministry would work with the Ministry of Finance to streamline the payrolls for teachers nationwide.

(Also reported on ELBS Radio and Star Radio)

Finance Ministry Officials Apologize for Extra-budgetary Spending

- Speaking at the Senate to explain the Ministry of Finance's spending procedures, Deputy Finance Minister for Administration Francis Karpeh and Deputy Finance Minister for Expenditures Edward Liberty said that they were apologizing to the Senate for not seeking its consent to issue a Check for US\$64,000 to fund an upcoming conference of the Makona River countries in Foyah, Lofa County.

(Also reported on ELBS Radio and Star Radio)

Senate Makes Staggering Revelation to Destabilize Liberia

Security Reform Group Recruits over 1,600 Soldiers for Armed Forces of Liberia

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United Nations



Nations Unies

United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL)

UNMIL Public Information Office Media Summary 25 March 2006

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International Clips on Liberia

UPDATE 1-Nigeria says to transfer Charles Taylor to Liberia

LAGOS, March 25 (Reuters) - Nigeria will transfer former Liberian president Charles Taylor, who is living in exile in Nigeria and has been indicted for war crimes, to Liberian custody, the Nigerian government said on Saturday. It issued a statement headed "Former president Charles Taylor to be transferred to the custody of the government of Liberia", which read: "President Olusegun Obasanjo has today ... informed President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf that the government of Liberia is free to take former President Charles Taylor into its custody."

UN News Service

Head of UN mission in Liberia appeals for assistance in cementing peace there

24 March 2006 – To consolidate the peace in Liberia, following the installation of a democratically-elected government in the aftermath of a brutal, decade-long civil war, the head of the United Nations Mission in the country (UNMIL) today cautioned the Security Council against a precipitous drawdown of the mission's forces while also appealing for actions to improve the country's economy. "The next two years will be critical for Liberia," Alan Doss, Secretary-General Kofi Annan's Special Representative told the Council, as he briefed it on Mr. Annan's latest report on UNMIL's activities. "Experience has taught us that an incomplete effort in consolidating the peace is often a prelude to renewed conflict," he added.

BBC Monitoring Africa of The Guardian Website 25 March 2005

Ex-Liberian President Taylor, family members counted in Nigeria's census

Text of report by Nigerian newspaper The Guardian website on 25 March

Former president of Liberia, Mr Charles Taylor, and about 106 members of his family and associates were counted in Calabar, the Cross River State capital, on Thursday [23 March]. Taylor, who is believed to be making preparations for his extradition, was enumerated in his Solomon Umoh Lodge Government House. He likened his counting to the Biblical enumeration of the children of Israel that were in exile in Egypt.

BBC Monitoring 24 March 2006

Liberia poll loser Weah slams President Sirleaf-Johnson over unfulfilled pledges

Text of interview with Liberian presidential loser George Weah by Reporter Dzifa Gbeho broadcast by Ghanaian independent Joy FM radio on 24 March

[Presenter] With just three months in office Liberian President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf is being criticized for not showing enough commitment to improve the quality of life of the Liberian people. Presidential candidate in the just-ended elections [and leader] of Liberia Congress of Democratic Change [CDC], George Weah, says so far no concrete efforts are being championed by Ellen Sirleaf Johnson's government. He says President Johnson-Sirleaf has not fulfilled her promise of a government of national unity in Liberia. Mr Weah was

particularly upset that Francis Johnson Morris, the electoral commissioner, has been elected minister for justice. When he came by our studios, Joy News reporter Dzifa Gbeho asked him his view on how well President Sirleaf has performed so far.

[Weah] She keeps saying that she would do good things. She told the world that she wants a government of national unity, she wants a government of inclusion, and up today she has never employed all of the people that never voted for her. The CDC political party is out of her government; all the other allies (are) out of her government.

International Clips on West Africa

Annan renews bid for more UN troops in Ivory Coast

By Irwin Arieff

UNITED NATIONS, March 24 (Reuters) - U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan renewed a plea on Friday for more U.N. peacekeepers in Ivory Coast, warning the Security Council that security there remained fragile and could deteriorate quickly. The 15-nation council last month approved the transfer of a small mechanized unit from Liberia to bolster the peacekeeping force in Ivory Coast but rejected Annan's request for an extra 3,400 soldiers and 475 police officers. The United States, which pays about a quarter of the U.N. peacekeeping budget, objected to the additional troops and police absent concrete evidence the two sides were committed to working together toward peace.

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

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

Female Lawyers Say Rape on the Increase

- The Association of Female Lawyers of Liberia (AFFELL) said recently that the number of rape cases in Liberia have increased since the passage of the Rape Bill into law.
- Appearing before the House of Representatives, AFELL President Cllr. Lois Brutus said that at least six rape cases are reported daily. She blamed the situation on the slow pace with which the courts are handling rape cases.
- She said that out of the 110 cases of rape before the court, only five were scheduled for the current term of court.

Justice Ministry Keeps Taylor Loyalists under Surveillance

- Justice Minister Frances Johnson-Morris said yesterday that alleged loyalists of former President Charles Taylor were being kept under surveillance in the wake of constant reports of secret meetings to destabilize the country.
- Cllr. Johnson-Morris said that the ministry had officially informed the UNMIL about the situation.
- She called on the public to report any strange movements and secret meetings in their communities.
- She also pleaded with the media to avoid sensationalizing anti-peace information.

Former Government Forces Commander Deny Destabilization Claim

- The former frontline commander of troops loyal to former President Charles Taylor, Roland Duo, yesterday denied claims by Nimba County Senator Prince Y. Johnson that he was leading a plot to destabilize the country.
- A recent graduate of the University of Liberia, Mr. Duo said that he was now a refined person.

Justice Ministry to Deal Decisively With Police Brutality

- Solicitor-General Tiawan Gongloe told Star Radio yesterday that the Justice Ministry was ready to deal decisively with acts of police brutality.

- He observed that the security situation in the country fell short of perfection as the entire country remains a hotspot for crimes.
- He said that the police was planning a rigorous campaign to weed out criminals from communities.
- Cllr. Gongloe also said that arming the police in the near future remained farfetched as their mental capacity still needed to be adequately built.

Liberian Refugee Agency Cites Difficulties in Resettlement Program

- The head of Liberian Refugee agency LRRRC, Cllr. Wheatonia Dixon Barnes said in Monrovia yesterday bad roads, the lack of school and health facilities and the lack economic opportunities were hampering the return of over 180,000 Liberians still in refugee camps in the sub-region.
- She urged the government to support Liberian refugees and internally displaced persons to return home.

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Los Angeles Times

24 March 2006

Note: in March 2004 the Special Court raised money for the Single Leg Amputee Football Club and the amputee association through a football game at the National Stadium, "Play for Justice".

Playing After a Big Loss

For those who lost limbs in Sierra Leone's brutal civil war, taking to a soccer field again is a reward in itself, one that gives them hope.

By Robyn Dixon, Times Staff Writer
March 24, 2006

FREETOWN, Sierra Leone — Mohammed Lappid remembers the day he started playing soccer again, straining every muscle to kick the ball, and missing. Then missing again.

Playing was something he needed to do. It took a month's practice before he managed to make contact.

The game had been in the 22-year-old's blood since his school days. That was before he lost a leg, like thousands of others, in Sierra Leone's cruel civil war.

Soccer on one leg is a whole different ballgame. Your body is a traitor and balance an elusive friend. Catch a crutch on a small rock or stumble, and you're down like a felled tree.

"Some people said, 'Go and find a better thing to do. One leg, you can't play football anymore,' " said Lappid, remembering that day five years ago when he and a few other amputees first got together to play on a stony stretch of dust here. "Many of us said, 'Let's give it up.' Some left."

But once they taught themselves to play, they found the old rush was still there: hurtling to the goal, crutches flying, connecting boot with ball and sending it sweetly home.

"We started the team, only a few of us. Only some of us had the courage to try to kick the ball," said Lappid, who, like the other team members, plays on crutches without a prosthesis.

"It was very hard," he added. "I was feeling very discouraged, and I was ashamed of that. At that time, many of us were angry. Some were grumbling because it was not easy to play the ball."

The country's 10-year civil war left thousands of people disabled. Militias hacked off civilians' feet or hands, melted plastic into their eyes or mutilated them in other ways. Many others lost limbs after bullet and land mine injuries.

After the war ended in 2001, Lappid and others sat around in a Freetown amputees' camp mourning their many losses, bereft of hope or ambition.

"I felt isolated," said Jabati Mambu, 22. "I felt angry because I didn't want to be there."

Then one day a Seattle woman named Dee Malchow, a nurse and herself an amputee, visited the camp.

"I didn't know what to say to them. They looked so hopeless and overwhelmed and beat down," said Malchow, a member of the Prosthetics Outreach Foundation in Seattle.

"The nurse in me wanted to fix them."

One of the boys approached her and she dropped a suggestion like a small seed tossed onto the red Sierra Leonean dust: Amputees overseas played soccer, so why not here?

Today, the Single Leg Amputee Sports Club has three teams with a total of about 80 members, and the aim is to set up a national league. There also are plans to get female amputees involved in the sport.

"When we started training, people were laughing at us," Mambu said. "We were falling down, getting injured. Some were just saying, 'How can a one-legged man play soccer? It's impossible.' We said, 'It's possible.' "

When the boys from Manchester United, Arsenal or Liverpool run onto the field in Europe, the crowds go wild in Freetown. Whenever there's a game, cinemas and ad hoc screening rooms are packed with fans watching their teams play live.

If the children kicking rubber balls around the dusty alleys of Freetown share one dream of escape, it's to be up there playing soccer on those screens one day.

As a member of the school soccer team, Mambu used to skim along on the wing at the edge of the field, trying to score goals. He was sure he would rise and play for his country.

In 1999, when Mambu was 16, Revolutionary United Front rebels opposing the government of President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah attacked Freetown, the capital. People ran into any nearby house to escape. Dozens of strangers were in Mambu's house as the rebels approached.

When the militiamen burst in, Mambu dived under a bed and others hid elsewhere. The fighters got him first and took several others as well. Outside, the rebels ordered a boy to fetch an ax. They grabbed Mambu and hacked at his left arm.

"When they saw I was putting up resistance they cut off my right hand" in punishment, he said. "Everyone scattered, and I was there bleeding and unconscious until the next morning."

That they severed the right hand is "worse for me to this day. I find it very difficult to even write," said Mambu, now a student and the goalie for the amputee team. (In amputee soccer, all players are one-legged, except for the goalie, who must be an arm amputee.)

For Mambu, playing goalie will never offer the same thrill as playing his old position on the wing.

"I'm forced to be the goalie," he said sadly. "I've been a full active player on the pitch [playing field]. I would have been happy to have played for my country's national team. I don't enjoy being a goalie."

Obai Sesai, 22, plays defense on his amputee team. He hid during the 1999 attack on Freetown but heard rebels capture his mother, beat her and start raping her.

"I walked out of the bush to go rescue my mother," he said. In the struggle she escaped, but he was shot in the leg. He ran and hid in the bush for two days with a swelling leg before he managed to get to the hospital, where his foot was amputated.

Rebels attacked the hospital, but Sesai escaped, walking many hours on a wooden crutch to safety. It was a year before he found his mother.

Lappid lost his leg when he stepped on a land mine. He was taken to a hospital but received no treatment for a month because all the doctors had run away.

"My mum went and met a doctor and said, 'Oh doctor, my son is dying, go and help him,' " Lappid said. "My mum got down on her knees and begged."

He had several operations and spent more than a year in the hospital.

"I was praying to be dead," Lappid said. "When I was feeling pain, I was crying out. I was praying, 'Let God take my life because my suffering is so much!' I know that God wanted me to be somebody in future. That's why he didn't answer my prayer."

In the hustle of Freetown's narrow streets, people hawk shoes, belts and bananas, pirated music, plastic tote bags, newspapers and coconuts, anything that will sell. Amputee beggars, including some team members, dodged cars.

This is a poor country where unemployment is high and everyone suffered in the war. Albert Sandy, principal at Freetown's Milton Margai School for the Blind, said disabilities, even those resulting from war, were often seen in Sierra Leone as a curse from God or one's ancestors to punish wrongdoing. Employers generally don't hire, or even interview, disabled people.

The school board has been pushing for legislation to give the disabled equal opportunities and rights.

"Attitudes are not changing," Sandy said. "Even at the very top, it's difficult for them to accept a disabled person."

But when the Single Leg Amputee Sports Club competes, people are dazzled by the speed and energy of the game and by the skill of the players — the rules forbid using crutches to touch the ball. The players' faces seem to show double the pain and effort of the able-bodied players who have used the soccer field a few minutes earlier.

One amputee player tumbles so hard he ends up on his head, then crashes down into the dust, face clenched in agony. Another falls and loses his wooden crutch but struggles up with angry determination, hops after the ball and somehow, as graceful as a ballet master, kicks it without the crutch.

"I'm overwhelmed watching it," said Malchow, who considers herself the team's mother. "It almost brings tears to your eyes watching them."

Lappid used to be a right-footer before losing that foot.

"But when I get the ball and play it, it's the same," he said. "I cross it to my colleague. He passes and reaches the goal. If I or my friend gets a goal, I feel very happy. We hold onto our friends to celebrate."

Malchow, who has worked with amputees for 30 years in Seattle and helped found the amputee soccer league there, says it costs an amputee far more effort to do what an able-bodied person can on the field, but the satisfaction can be greater, too.

"The happiness I get when I get the ball is more than I used to get when I played on two legs," Sesai said. "I feel joyful. It's a way of showing people."

He added that being on the team "lessens the pain. I feel I'm among others who have the same pain."

In 2003, the Sierra Leonean players traveled to Britain and competed against tough, experienced amputee teams, some with members who had played professionally before losing their legs. Last August the players, sponsored by donors in the Netherlands, competed in the World Championship of Soccer for Amputees in Brazil.

With their inexperience and limited funding, it wasn't surprising that they lost most of their games in Britain and Brazil. But each trip was in its way a miracle, an improbable chance for young men who had been struggling on the harsh fringes of Sierra Leonean society to step into another world.

Just traveling overseas was enough to make them famous in Freetown. Now they are pointed out not because of their disabilities but because they are members of the team.

"Before the football team, I had nowhere to go. I just sat and thought about my problem," Lappid said. "I was thinking, 'I have one leg. What importance am I in the community?'"

"As soon as I had the football team, I did not sit around anymore. It's made my life change. Now I have courage. I'm not thinking about my problem anymore. And now I am a very strong person in the community. Anywhere I go, friends love me."

The World Amputee Football Federation has endorsed Sierra Leone as host of the first African amputee soccer tournament in October. But uncomplicated happy endings are hard to come by in this part of the world: Playing host to the competition would cost about \$300,000. The club is broke and expects no financial help from the Sierra Leonean government for the tournament.

In fact, the club is so poor that the players were forced to stop training and playing two months ago because there was no money to transport them to the soccer field each week.

As team members wait to see what will happen and when they will play again, they battle their ongoing pain.

Lapid lives in a tiny palm-frond shack. With open sewers and rotting vegetables strewn about, it's hard for even an able-bodied person to weave through narrow paths after dark to reach his curtained doorway. Inside, Lapid's voice is soft in the dim candlelight.

"We have the pain until God takes our lives," he said. "It's not finished yet."

Two years ago, Lapid enrolled in law school, and he now looks to the future. As though unfolding a map to a secret treasure, he confides his plans to marry his sweetheart, finish his studies and become a lawyer like his grandfather.

"I hope people will realize we can do a lot of things," he said. "Not just play football."