

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:

Tuesday, 28 February 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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Issa Sesay to undergo surgical operation

By Betty Milton

The first indictee in the trial of the three Revolutionary United Front (RUF) indictees, Issa Sesay will be undergoing surgical operation.

At a status conference held at the Special Court, the lead counsel Wayne Jordash for Mr. Sesay, in answering to question posed to him by Justice Bankolé Thompson about the health of his client,

said his client's condition continued to be difficult and this needed urgent attention.

Mr. Jordash disclosed that the operation would be done in Freetown and they only needed to put modalities in place.

At the conference, it was also disclosed by the Principal Defender Mr. Vincent Nmeielle that he received a letter on 17th February from the third

accused, Augustine Gbao, who wanted to withdraw his defence counsels but that this decision was not within their power to withdraw any representations.

Justice Thompson said that the Bench was deliberating on this issue and that the matter needed to be addressed in a manner most conducive to the Court, and assured the third accused that the matter was receiving serious attention.

The 7th session of the RUF trial will commence on 2nd March to 6th April 2006 with 24th prosecution witnesses. Two of these witnesses will be coming out of this jurisdiction and they are expected to testify on the 20th and 27th March respectively.

It could be recalled that the prosecution team has presented 57 witnesses for the past sessions.



Exclusive

28 February 2006

As RUF Trial Begins...

Issa Sesay To Undergo Surgery

By Mohamed Kai

As the status conference for the trial of members of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), opened. Joe Dash, who is de-

fence counsel for the first accused Issa Sesay, has expressed grave concern over

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Issa Sesay To Undergo Surgery

From front page

the health status of his client.

Mr. Dash informed the court that Mr. Sesay has bullets still lodged within his pelvis and needs urgent medical attention.

He further disclosed that he had been in constant touch with the Special Court's administration to enable the RUF indictee to undergo surgery overseas.

According to Mr. Dash the court has confirmed to him that the surgery would be done in Freetown.

"Issa Sesay is having difficulty with his health and that urgent steps must be taken to address the situation," Mr. Dash said.

Also the Special Court Principal Defender seized the opportunity to inform the court that the third accused, Augustine Gbow, has written a letter to the court stating that he no longer needs any legal representation in his trial but noted that Gbow's position will be looked into from a legal point of view.

The status conference which was formally opened by Justice Bankole Thompson, dilated on the methodology which the court will adopt in trial process especially with regards to issues relating to detention facilities, trial logistics, filing of documents and witness and of course the over all welfare of detainees.

Justice Thompson told the court room that the trial of the three RUF indictees will go into full swing 2 March 2006 and assured that the court will ensure a fair and expeditious trial in order to dispense justice to accused persons.

Exclusive

28 February 2006

1450

V.J Kumar Jetley To Testify At Special Court

By Mohamed Kai

Informed sources close to Defence Counsels for members of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) have intimated that the first Commander of the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) Major General V.J Kumar will soon arrive in Sierra Leone to testify at the Special Court trials.

Also expected to testify is the former head of the United Nations Observer Mission in Sierra Leone Major General Shoubas Joshi, Major Mohamed Wan of the Nigerian Army and Major General Kelley of the British Army.

The above named witnesses played diplomatic roles in the decade long civil conflict which devastated all facets of the Sierra Leone society.

Charles Margai Re-arrested On Bench Warrant

BY ALLIEU V. KAL SAMBA

The matter against firebrand lawyer and proposed leader of the PMDC, Charles Francis Margai and ten others yesterday took a new dimension when police officers arrested Mr. Margai in his chambers, acting on a bench warrant issued and signed by Magistrate M.A.D Shyllon.

Margai was the only available accused arraigned before Magistrate Shyllon of court No. 3, while the others in the provinces were absent.

This latest development relates to the accused lack of appearance when the matter came up on Tuesday 21st February, 2006. Magistrate Shyllon informed the court that the prosecutor Mr. Robin-Mason, assisted by Mr. Monfred.M. Sesay, accordingly applied for bench warrant, which the court granted.

But Mr. Margai countered that he was not served any notice of transfer, from Bo's jurisdiction into Freetown. Margai further argues that the file before the Magistrate has no application of affidavit indicating the transfer of the matter and what court to attend. "My Lord, I believe there was no such notice," stressed the learned attorney. So any bench warrant issued and effected will be tantamount to unlawful imprisonment.

Magistrate Shyllon agreed the submission was substantially correct.

~~A defence lawyer for the other~~



accused, Mr. A.B. Lansana, commonly referred to as all and best Lansana, made similar submission. He assured the Magistrate that his client would be made available on the next date of adjournment.

He furthered that his clients were living in the provinces and could not vouch for their presence in court "if the mat-

ter is adjourned for today".

The Magistrate in his ruling discharged Margai and the other accused on the first file and rescinded the bench warrant. The matter was adjourned to today.

Many people however felt curious about the absence of both prosecutors, Mr. Robin Mason and Monfred M.

Sesay in court yesterday.

The eleven accused expected to attend court today are Charles Margai, Mohamed B. Sannoh, Lamin Ngobeh, Sam Foryoh, Arrow Bockarie, Rachel Baby and others. Immediately after the court sitting, Margai was spotted with a large number of supporters heading towards his Rawdon Street chamber.



NIGERIAN TRIBUNE



News

updated: 27 Feb 2006

Charles Taylor set to return to Liberia

PREPARATIONS are now in top gear to return former Liberian President, Charles Taylor, to his country after several months of sojourn in Nigeria. This indication came on Sunday during a meeting between President Olusegun Obasanjo and the former Liberian leader at the presidential wing of the Murtala Mohammed International Airport in Lagos.

Taylor was first to arrive at the airport from Calabar at about 1:50pm aboard a presidential jet with registration number 5N-FGE and was quickly joined by his host governor, Donald Duke of Cross Rivers State. The president touched down a few minutes later and joined the duo. They held a closed door meeting that lasted for 25 minutes.

Though none of those who participated in the meeting was willing to divulge what was discussed, an informed source said the meeting became imperative in view of the clamour that Mr. Taylor should be released to face charges of war crimes and crimes against inhumanity levelled against him by an international court sitting in Sierra Leone.

The source, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said Mr. Taylor could now return home as there was relative peace in Liberia after the successful conduct of elections. Mr. Taylor, who arrived at the airport with aides and stern-looking security men, did not entertain questions from newsmen while his bodyguards also warned photo journalists not to take pictures.

An attempt by a photo journalist to photograph Mr. Taylor drew the ire of the security men who attempted to seize his camera but for the timely intervention of his colleagues. Mr. Taylor left for his Calabar base aboard the same presidential jet in the company of Governor Duke at about 2:40pm, a few minutes after President Obasanjo left for his Otta farm.



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Obasanjo, Taylor in Secret Talks

Daily Champion (Lagos)

NEWS

February 27, 2006

Posted to the web February 27, 2006

By Felix Nwaneri
Lagos

PRESIDENT Olusegun Obasanjo yesterday held talks with former Liberian leader, Charles Taylor at the Presidential Lounge of the Murtala Muhammed Airport, Lagos.

However, details of the talks which lasted about 30 minutes before the president proceeded to his Ota Farm, Ogun State, was not disclosed to journalists.

Also at the meeting was Cross River State governor, Mr. Donald Duke.

The meeting may not be unconnected with plans to hand over Taylor back to Liberia, following the successful conclusion of elections and swearing-in of a new government led by Mrs. Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf.

Taylor, it would be recalled had been in Nigeria since August 2003, with his family on an asylum, which was brokered by African Union (AU) leaders as part of efforts to restore peace to the then war-torn Liberia.

But he had continued to be in the news as international human rights associations have persistently asked Nigeria to release him to face trials at the International War Crimes Tribunal, over alleged war crimes committed during the Liberian civil war.

However, Nigeria has persistently resisted attempts to forcefully abduct the former Liberian leader, insisting that any attempt to seize him would amount to a violation of Nigeria's territorial integrity.

Only recently, President Obasanjo held talks with Mrs. Johnson-Sirleaf on Taylor's future.

Mrs. Johnson-Sirleaf, while touring West African countries after her swearing-in, discussed the question of Taylor's future with President Obasanjo, but no decision was taken.

President Obasanjo, had promised to hand over Taylor to an elected Liberian government.

The deposed Liberian leader, had arrived the airport in Nigerian Presidential jet marked 5N-FGE and was ushered into the Presidential Lounge by protocol officers before President Obasanjo joined him few minutes later, having arrived in another Presidential plane, marked 5N-FGN.

Governor Duke, who is Taylor's host, later joined the two of them and was later to depart for Calabar alongside the exiled Liberian leader aboard the presidential jet which brought him from Abuja.

Looking smart in a black trousers and brown top, with a staff in hand, attempts by photo journalists to take pictures of Taylor, were prevented by security operates attached to him.

Approached to comment on the outcome of the meeting, Senior Special Assistant to the President on Media, Mrs. Oluremi Oyo declined comments.

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Obasanjo meets with exiled Taylor

Abuja - Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo has met exiled former Liberian leader Charles Taylor, who is wanted for war crimes, ahead of a visit to Nigeria this week by Liberia's current president, officials said on Monday.

Taylor has been living in exile in south-eastern Nigeria since 2003 under a peace deal for Liberia which Obasanjo helped broker to end a brutal 14-year civil war there.

Liberian President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, who was sworn in as Africa's first elected woman head of state on January 16, faces foreign pressure to ask Obasanjo to extradite Taylor to be tried for war crimes before a United Nations-backed court in Sierra Leone.

Johnson-Sirleaf is scheduled to travel to Nigeria to give a public lecture in the West African oil producer on Saturday.

Obasanjo held a brief private meeting with Taylor at Lagos airport on Sunday, his spokesperson Remi Oyo said. "He (Obasanjo) needed to meet briefly with him but the details are not for the public," she added.

Asked whether any decision had been taken to extradite Taylor, she replied: "No".

Seventeen war crimes charges have been lodged against Taylor in the special UN-backed court probing Sierra Leone's war, which stemmed from Liberia's own civil war started by Taylor in 1989.

An estimated 250 000 people were killed in Liberia's conflict and 50 000 more died in Sierra Leone, where Taylor is accused of giving guns to rebel fighters in return for diamonds.

Facing calls from rights groups and foreign governments to demand Taylor's extradition, Johnson-Sirleaf has said that while she believes he should "have his day in court", her first priority is to foster reconciliation and rebuild Liberia.

Obasanjo has said in the past Nigeria will only hand Taylor over to an elected Liberian government and will not send him to a third country.

- *Additional reporting by Felix Onuah in Abuja and Tom Ashby in Lagos*

REUTERS 

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Taylor meets Obasanjo in Nigeria

Nigeria President Olusegun Obasanjo has met privately with the former Liberian President Charles Taylor, who lives in exile in the east of Nigeria.

Officials said their conversation at Lagos airport on Sunday lasted about 30 minutes but gave no further details.

Nigeria is under pressure to hand Mr Taylor over to an international tribunal in Sierra Leone that indicted him on war crimes charges.

President Obasanjo is due to meet Mr Taylor's successor later this week.

Officials said Mr Taylor arrived in Lagos in a plane belonging to the president's fleet and they met in the presidential lounge before he returned to Calabar.

Speaking after assuming power last month, Liberian President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf said that prosecuting Mr Taylor was "secondary" to her agenda.

Her comments came after more than 300 Liberian and international rights bodies wrote to her, calling for Mr Taylor to be tried in Sierra Leone.

Mr Taylor, who has been in Nigeria since leaving power in 2003, is accused of backing the notorious RUF rebels in Sierra Leone's 1990s civil war.

Mr Taylor stood down as rebels threatened to seize the capital, Monrovia.

His departure into exile was part of a deal backed by African and Western powers, which ultimately led to last year's elections, won by Mrs Johnson-Sirleaf.

Mr Obasanjo has rejected previous calls to send Mr Taylor to Sierra Leone but has said he would be willing to hand him over to an elected Liberian government

Story from BBC NEWS:

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/africa/4754982.stm>

Published: 2006/02/27 11:45:45 GMT

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UNMIL Public Information Office Media Summary 27 Feb 2006

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

International Clips on Liberia**Nigerian president meets privately with exiled Taylor**

LAGOS, Feb 27, 2006 (AFP) - Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo met privately with exiled Liberian former president and warlord Charles Taylor at the weekend, a presidential official said Monday.

"It was a brief meeting that lasted less than 30 minutes at the presidential lounge of the airport in Lagos on Sunday," the official said. Details of the visit were not made public. Obasanjo will play host on Friday to Liberia's newly elected president, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, and Taylor's continued stay in Nigeria is likely to be on the agenda.

www.cocorrioko.com

OBASANJO ABOUT TO HAND TAYLOR TO LIBERIA?

Monday February 27, 2006

COCORIOKO has been receiving stunning reports all weekend that Nigeria's President Olusegun Obasanjo may have started setting the machinery in motion to at last remove the albatross from around his own neck--Return former Liberian President Charles Taylor to his country. The usually reliable sources , one of whom is at the United Nations, but prefers anonymity at this time, told this newspaper that Obasanjo may have stood down from his resistance over the issue of surrendering Taylor , due to extreme pressures from the U.S. , the international community and civil organizations within Nigeria .

According to the UN source, President Obasanjo has been looking for a better face-saving approach to turning Taylor over without damaging his self-respect after earlier vowing that he will not bow to pressures from even the U.S. He is said to be planning to use as his excuse the return to normalcy and constitutional government to Liberia .It would be a perfect excuse for Obasanjo and it will not breach his commitment to provide asylum for Taylor while efforts were being made to find lasting peace in Liberia.

BBC Monitoring Africa,25 February 2006

Liberia: UN rights official urges government to hire foreign judges

A UN independent human rights expert has called for the employment of foreign judges for the courts of Liberia. Dr Charlotte Abaka suggested that the foreign Judges should come from countries that share similar jurisdiction with Liberia. Dr Abaka said the guiding of Liberia's judicial officials by foreign experts was also part of interim measures to assist the judicial system of the country.

International Clips on West Africa

BBC 27/02/2006

Landmark meeting for Ivory Coast

By James Copnall
BBC News, Abidjan

Major political and rebel leaders will hold talks in the Ivory Coast for the first time since a 2002 uprising. President Laurent Gbagbo, opposition leaders Henri Konan Bedie and Alassane Ouattara, and rebel leader Guillaume Soro meet in the capital Yamoussoukro. The four rarely speak and have not met on Ivorian soil since Mr Soro launched a rebellion in September 2002, which split the country. The meeting is aimed at achieving peace among the four important leaders.

VOA

Question of Nationality Mires Ivory Coast Conflict

By Joe Bavier Bouake, Ivory Coast, 23 February 2006

Ivory Coast has a new prime minister, a new reconciliation government, and a new road map for peace intended to end the country's three-year-old civil war and pave the way for elections before the end of October. But, the thorny issue of nationality, at the heart of the conflict, has yet to be resolved - a particularly important issue as voters are still unsure if they will be able to vote in upcoming elections.

Local Media – Newspapers

Legislative Leaders to Address Press Union's Forum Today

(The Inquirer, The News and Liberian Express)

- House Speaker Edwin Snowe and Senate President Pro Tempore Isaac Nyenabo are expected today to address the Press Union of Liberia (PUL) monthly intellectual discourse--the Edward Wilmot Blyden Forum—on the topic: Sustaining Liberia's New Reform Agenda: The Legislative Perspective.

President Urges Ex-Combatant to Vacate Rubber Plantation in South East

(The News, The Analyst, Heritage)

- Speaking in Greenville, Sinoe County, during an ongoing nationwide tour, President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf appealed to ex-combatants occupying the Sinoe Rubber Plantation to turn the plantation over to government in order to attract viable investment and create jobs for the citizens.

UNMIL Renews Commitment to Government

(Daily Observer)

- Speaking at the UNMIL Fijian Police Medal Parade in Monrovia yesterday, Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Luiz Carlos da Costa, assured the government that UNMIL will continue to provide security and stability while the government focuses on rebuilding Liberia, including the National Police.

World Bank Provides US\$25 Million Grant for Road Repair

(Daily Observer)

- Following a weekend meeting in Monrovia between Public Works Minister Willis Knuckles and World Bank Official Ben Gericke, the Public Works Ministry announced that the World Bank had agreed to provide US\$25 million for urgent rehabilitation of roads in Liberia.

Government to Shortly Set Up Constitutional Reform Commission

(The Inquirer)

- Addressing officials and members of the Liberia National Bar Association in Monrovia recently, President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf announced plans by the government to establish a National Commission on Constitutional and Legal Reforms.

Five Arrested in Monrovia for Gang Rape

(New Democrat)

- Liberia National Police Acting Inspector-General, Al Karlay told New Democrat yesterday that five Ukrainians helicopter pilots serving as contractors with UNMIL had been arrested for allegedly drugging and gang-raping a number of Liberian girls.

Private Sector to Provide Electricity to Monrovia Shortly

(New Democrat)

- European Commission Delegation in Liberia Charge' d' Affaires Geoffrey Ruud told journalists in Monrovia plans were in the works for a private international firm to take over the Liberia Electricity Corporation and restore electricity to Monrovia within 10 months.

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

President Requested to Delay Civil Servant Retrenchments

- Congress for the National Trade Unions Association Secretary-General Jerry Duplaye has appealed to President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf to delay the implementation of plans to downsize the civil service because the exercise would pose unbearable hardship. He rather urged the President to design strategies that will create job opportunities or other alternatives for retrenched civil servants.

(Also reported on ELBS Radio and Star Radio)

Liberians Have Held Thanksgiving Mass for Ailing Catholic Archbishop

- Speaking during a national thanksgiving mass for ailing Archbishop Michael Francis in Monrovia yesterday, President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf said that the absence of the Archbishop's voice against human rights abuses had increased the rate of human rights violations.

(Also reported on ELBS Radio and Star Radio)

ELBS RADIO *(News monitored yesterday at 19:00 pm)*

Presidential Nominees Face Senate Confirmation Today

- A Legislative press statement yesterday said that the Senate will today conduct confirmation hearings for Deputy Post and Telecommunications Minister for Operations-designate Evans Kwah and Deputy Post and Telecommunications Minister for Technical Affairs-designate Sekou Kromah.

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

House Leaders Address Journalists Forum Today

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