

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



A relic at a railway museum at Cline Town.

PRESS CLIPPINGS

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

as at:

Thursday, 3 December 2009

Press clips are produced Monday through Friday.
Any omission, comment or suggestion, please contact
Martin Royston-Wright
Ext 7217

Local News

“My Fighters Entered Guinea in Hot Pursuit Missions” / <i>The Spectator</i>	Pages 3-4
Taylor NPFL / <i>The Exclusive</i>	Page 5
Taylor Denies that His NPFL Fighters took Peoples Properties / <i>Awoko</i>	Page 6
Taylor Continues to Deny ALL / <i>Premier News</i>	Page 7
Rioting Prisoners Stab Six Wardens / <i>Concord Times</i>	Page 8
Corruption and Conflict in the Local Justice System / <i>Standard Times</i>	Pages 9-10

International News

...To Grant Liberian Citizenship To Sierra Leonean Rebels / <i>CharlesTaylorTrial.org</i>	Page 11
Cannibalism / <i>BBC World Service Trust</i>	Page 12
Taiwan, Libya Backed Campaign / <i>UPI.Com</i>	Page 13
UNMIL Public Information Office Media Summary / <i>UNMIL</i>	Pages 14-18
ICC Appeals Chamber Overturns Decision on Bemba's Interim Release / <i>The Hague Portal</i>	Page 19
Rwanda - First landmine-free Country / <i>BBC Online</i>	Pages 20-21
Feature Film 'Kinyarwanda' Being Shot in Rwanda / <i>Radio Netherlands World</i>	Page 22
Hariri Probe Team Arrives in Beirut / <i>Agence France Presse</i>	Page 23

"My Fighters Entered Guinea On Hot Pursuit Missions" -says Taylor

Charles Taylor this week reiterated a familiar position that he has maintained right through his testimony as a witness in his own defense—that he was a peace me-

diator and that he did not help Sierra Leonean rebel commanders to plan a military take-over of Sierra Leone. The former Liberia president also told Special Court for Sierra Leone judges that

his fighters did not enter neighboring Guinea to attack the Guinean government but rather went there on missions of "hot-pursuit" after rebel forces fighting to unseat his Liberian government ran into Guinea.

On Thursday, the accused former Liberian president, answering questions under cross-examination by prosecutors told the court that in 1999, he hosted Revolutionary United Front (RUF) leader Foday Sankoh, his deputy Sam Bockarie and Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) leader Johnny Paul Koroma for a meeting in Liberia. The meeting, Mr. Taylor said, was geared towards reconciling the differences that existed among the rebel commanders. Mr. Taylor explained that

My Fighters Entered Guinea On Hot Pursuit Missions

own interpreters but said he was requested to have his Chief of Protocol travel with Mr. Bockarie and he did. Mr. Koumjian suggested to Mr. Taylor that it is the task of the host government to provide interpreters for their visitors.

"Sir, isn't it the protocol that when you are visiting the president of a country in that country, it's the host government that provides the interpreter?" Mr. Koumjian asked Mr. Taylor again. In response, Mr. Taylor said, "that is a protocol, I will agree, but that is not what you will call the only protocol, there had been times when presidents had come to visit me and I will provide the interpreters and some of them will provide their own."

The prosecution has led evidence pointing to the alleged relationship that existed between Mr. Taylor and RUF commander Mr. Bockarie. Witnesses have testified that the RUF commander used to take orders from Mr. Taylor. It has also been alleged that Mr. Bockarie used to transport Sierra Leone's blood diamonds to Mr. Taylor, who in return gave the RUF commander loads of arms and ammunition. Mr. Taylor has denied these allegations.

Prosecutors have alleged that during Mr. Bockarie's 1998 trip to Burkina Faso, the RUF commander returned with arms and ammunition through Liberia's Roberts International Airport (RIA). During cross-examination on Wednesday, Mr. Koumjian pointed out that it would not be possible for a plane full of arms and ammunition to arrive in Liberia for use by RUF rebels in Sierra Leone without the president knowing. Mr. Taylor responded that it was possible to bribe corrupt officials, pointing out how he had also bribed officials in other countries to bring arms and ammunition to Liberia in violation of a UN arms embargo.

"It would not be impossible." Mr. Taylor responded. "It is very, very simple. It depends on the quality of corrupt offi-

cial involved, it would never get to my attention. I, during tough times transferred arms and ammunitions through countries that did not even know. So that happens all the time. It depends on how much you are willing to pay to who you are dealing with," he added.

Mr. Koumjian accused Mr. Taylor of using his position as an Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) negotiator to support the RUF in pursuit of their war in Sierra Leone. Mr. Taylor dismissed the allegation as wrong. Mr. Taylor is responding to charges that he was involved in a joint criminal enterprise with RUF rebels in Sierra Leone. Mr. Taylor has denied allegations that he supplied arms and ammunition to the rebels in return for Sierra Leone's blood diamonds and that he helped them plan certain operations during which atrocities such as rape, murder, and amputation of civilian arms were committed. Mr. Taylor has said that he did not have arms and ammunition to fight rebel forces in his own country and therefore could not have supplied any materials to the RUF. He has dismissed the charges as a scheme by western countries, specifically Britain and the United States to bring him down. As he continues his testimony, the former president has challenged prosecutors to present evidence that he used Sierra Leone's diamonds to enrich himself and open bank accounts in various countries as alleged. From July 14 to November 10, Mr. Taylor testified in direct-examination as a witness in his own defense. As his cross-examination commenced, prosecutors sought to present "fresh evidence" to impeach Mr. Taylor's testimony but the accused former president's defense objected, calling it a "trial by ambush." The judges will use Monday to determine whether such "fresh evidence" should be used by the prosecution. There will therefore be no court hearings on Monday.

Taylor NPFL

Liberia's Former President Charles Taylor has denied allegations that his fighters forcibly took people's property during the country's 15-year civil war. Mr. Taylor said those who attempted confiscating people's belongings were dealt with by him. But Prosecuting Attorney, Brenda Hollis, accused him of misleading the court.

Mr Taylor also rejected suggestions that arms and ammunition were supplied to his rebel group, the NPFL, by Libya. BBCWST's John Kollie transcribes reports from The Hague on the trial of the former president...

Mr Taylor has been closely questioned

about the period during which he was preparing the revolution that overthrew President Samuel Doe in 1989-90. He said that by the time he launched his invasion of Liberia, his NPFL fighters had acquired all the arms and ammunition they needed. Miss Hollis pressed him further.

This was a moment of tense exchange between the former Liberian leader and prosecutor Brenda Hollis. It was all over alleged looting and seizure of property by the NPFL fighters loyal to Mr. Taylor when they entered Liberia.

Mr Taylor said although most fighters did not live in their own homes, the NPFL fol-

lowed customary practices of asking local Chiefs to provide lodging, while other residents simply offered the use of their homes to the Front.

Mr. Taylor also disclosed he received 1 million US dollars from Taiwan which he said was used to finance his presidential campaign and setup the Charles Ghankay Taylor foundation.

Meanwhile the judges have granted a request from the prosecution to introduce fresh material which will challenge some of the evidence given by Mr Taylor in his defence.

The trial of Mr. Taylor continues in The Hague.

Awoko

Thursday, 3 December 2009

Taylor denies that his NPFL fighters took People's property

Liberia's former President Charles Taylor has denied allegations that his fighters forcibly took people's property during the country's 15-year civil war. Mr. Taylor said those who attempted confiscating people's belongings were dealt with by him. But Prosecuting Attorney, Brenda Hollis, accused him of misleading the court.

Mr. Taylor also rejected suggestions that arms and ammunition were supplied to his rebel group, the NPFL, by Libya. Mr. Taylor has been closely questioned about the period during which he was preparing the revolution that overthrew President Samuel Doe in 1989-90. He said that by the time he launched his invasion of Liberia, his NPFL fighters had acquired all the arms and ammunition they needed.

This was a moment of tense exchange between the former Liberian leader and prosecutor Brenda Hollis. It was all over

alleged looting and seizure of property by the NPFL fighters loyal to Mr. Taylor when they entered Liberia.

Mr. Taylor said although most fighters did not live in their own homes, the NPFL followed customary practices of asking local Chiefs to provide lodging, while other residents simply offered the use of their homes to the Front.

Taylor Continues To Deny All

Liberia's Former President Charles Taylor has denied allegations that his fighters forcibly took people's property during the country's 15-year civil war, saying those who attempted confiscating people's belongings were dealt with by him.

By John Kollie

But Prosecuting Attorney, Brenda Hollis, accused him of misleading the court.

Mr. Taylor also rejected suggestions that arms and ammunition were supplied to his rebel group, the NPFL, by Libya.

Mr. Taylor has been closely questioned about the period during which he was preparing the revolution that overthrew President Samuel Doe in 1989-90.

He said that by the time he launched his invasion of

Liberia, his NPFL fighters had acquired all the arms and ammunition they needed, but Miss Hollis pressed him further.

This was a moment of tense exchange between the former Liberian leader and prosecutor Brenda Hollis.

It was all over alleged looting and seizure of property by the NPFL fighters loyal to Mr. Taylor when they entered Liberia.

Mr. Taylor said although most fighters did not live in

their own homes, the NPFL followed customary practices of asking local Chiefs to provide lodging, while other residents simply offered the use of their homes to the Front.

Mr. Taylor also disclosed he received 1 million US dollars from Taiwan which he said was used to finance his presidential campaign and setup the Charles Ghankay Taylor foundation.

Meanwhile the judges have granted a request from the prosecution to introduce fresh material which will challenge some of the evidence given by Mr. Taylor in his defence.

The trial of Mr. Taylor continues in The Hague.

Concord Times (Freetown)

Thursday, 3 December 2009

Sierra Leone: Rioting Prisoners Stab Six Wardens

By Sahr Morris Jr

Freetown — Hundreds of inmates rioting over poor conditions at Freetown's central prison stabbed six guards during a two-hour clash on Tuesday, leaving the officers in critical condition, a government official said on Wednesday.

The worst incident in a series of riots at the overcrowded facility in recent years comes as the nation struggles to clamp down on high crime levels fuelled by poverty and simmering frustrations since a 1991-2002 civil war.

"There was a riot between hundreds of prisoners and recruit prison officers at the central prison...in the early hours of yesterday," said Mohamed Jimmy, a prison department spokesman. "The fighting lasted for almost two hours when reinforcements from the prison department entered."

He said six prison officers were getting medical care for severe stab injuries sustained in the riot, while four of the inmates were being treated for broken legs and deep cuts.

Jimmy said this was the fourth such protest in recent years.

"The Freetown central prison at Pademba Road was built to accommodate only 350 prisoners, but today it is overcrowded with a total of 1,000," he said.

CORRUPTION AND CONFLICT IN THE LOCAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

COMMUNITY BASED JUSTICE only works effectively where there is a moral consensus. Unfortunately, there are many signs that this consensus has come under severe strain in rural Sierra Leone in recent years.

PART OF THE problem is chieftaincy over-zealous enforcement of their subjects, community obligations, especially unpaid labour, unfair compulsion of rural youths to perform communal labour, has been a hot topic in the community consultations since the end of the war (Fanthorpe), 2004 Richards, Bah and Vincent, 2004) and there is a sign as yet that problem is abating. For example, a NGO fieldworker, interviewed in Tokolili District in Januray 2009, spoke of how the chief and Imam of the village in which we worked expected villagers to work on farms for them every year.

YOUTHS WHO REFUSED to comply with these demands would be fined and if they showed any further defiance, their families would be told that they would be excluded from future aid distributions.

BUT THE ELEMENT of the problem is that many chiefs and Local Court functionaries have come to rely on the local justice system as a source of private income.

ONLY PARAMOUNT CHIEFS and speakers receive salaries, and these are rarely paid on time. Pending the implementation of local courts Bill, 2008) Local Courts functionaries are supposedly paid out of general chiefdom revenues.

HOWEVER, the management of chiefdom finances remains in disarray and many do not receive salaries at all. Many court functionaries only work when there is a case to be heard and find their main livelihood in farming (Richards, Bah and Vincent, 2004.6) for both chiefs and Local court functionaries, revenue from fines and fees represents a major cash windfall and rarely finds its way into chiefdom bank accounts. As a result, justice becomes a market in which satisfaction usually goes to the highest bidder.

THIS PROBLEM WAS particularly acute at the end of the civil war and was highlighted in the CGRP Consultation.

AT THAT TIME, the local justice system not only

suffered from financial corruption but also political corruption. Workshop participants accused chiefs of using the Local Courts to punish anyone who defied their authority yet also ensuring that family members and political allies were never summoned. However, chiefs were also facing competition from range of other authorities intent on pursuing the same strategies.

MAGISTRATE CUSTOMARY LAW Officers, District Officers, Provincial Secretaries and members of Parliament. The resulting erosion of public confidence in the justice system is evident in the contribution of a young NGO worker in a discussion group held in Rokpour in Kambia District, October 2002, unlike Kambai in Biriwa, Rokupr is situated in an area of intensive commercial farming, which supplies rich and other produce to Freetown and Guinea. The areas political connections to Freetown are therefore much stronger than those of Biriwa chiefdom

and the Socio- economic profile of its population more diverse. As the young man observed. OUR PROBLEM IN this country is that is too centralized. Freetown is everything. If somebody comes to this area from outside, they do not regard the chief, they prefer to go to Freetown.

THE CHIEF IS not given the power for people to find out if he is an effective ruler. If you have a land issue, the chief has a mandate to preside over the case. But the losers will go to Freetown to contact the politician and they will come back and reverse the case. We have no guideline on justice, nobody knows where the law lies. Losers also go to the DO (District officer) . the door has been opened to expeditors if you don't have connections in Freetown, you can do nothing up-country. Everything costs money and we are poor people.

CharlesTaylorTrial.org (The Hague)

Wednesday, 2 December 2009

Liberia: Prosecutors Question Charles Taylor On His Decision To Grant Liberian Citizenship To Sierra Leonean Rebels

Alpha Sesay

Prosecutors today questioned former Liberian president Charles Taylor on his decision to grant Liberian citizenship to Sierra Leonean rebel forces who relocated to Liberia in December 1999 after falling out with the Sierra Leonean rebel group's hierarchy.

Mr. Taylor has long stated in his direct-examination that when Sierra Leone's notorious rebel commander Sam Bockarie became a hinderance to the peace process in the country and eventually fell out with Revolutionary United Front (RUF) leader Foday Sankoh, West African leaders took a decision to get Mr. Bockarie out of Sierra Leone and have him relocated to Liberia. As Mr. Bockarie departed Sierra Leone for Liberia, hundreds of his loyal rebel fighters followed him to Liberia. Prosecution witnesses have testified that Mr. Bockarie relocated to Liberia on the invitation of Mr. Taylor. The former Liberian leader has denied these assertions. Mr. Taylor has stated that upon arrival in Liberia, Mr. Bockarie and his rebel followers were all granted Liberian citizenship before Mr. Bockarie's followers were recruited into Liberia's Anti-Terrorist Unit (ATU).

During his cross-examination today, prosecution counsel Mr. Nicholas Koumjian asked Mr. Taylor under what authority he had granted Liberian citizenship to Mr. Bockarie.

"Under the constitution of Liberia and long standing practice," Mr. Taylor responded.

When the Liberian constitution was presented to Mr. Taylor, the former president referred the court to Chapter 4, Article 27, sub-sections (b) and (c) and explained that "the constitution does not spell out exactly but statutes are enacted." The former president read sub-sections (b) and (c) of the above Article of the Constitution which provide that:

- b) In order to preserve, foster and maintain the positive Liberian culture, values and character, only persons who are Negroes or of Negro descent shall qualify by birth or by naturalization to be citizens of Liberia.
- c) The Legislature shall, adhering to the above standard, prescribe such other qualification criteria for and the procedures by which naturalization may be obtained.

Mr. Taylor told the court that "based on those provisions and the legal advise that i received and based on long standing practice from President Tubman, I had the right to grant citizenship."

BBC World Service Trust

Wednesday, 2 December 2009

Cannibalism

The former Liberian president, Charles Taylor, has again rejected allegations that he recruited child soldiers to fight in his country's civil war. The prosecution at his war crimes trial in The Hague put to him the comments of a former high-ranking United States official who said he saw fighters aged from 14-16 in Taylor's forest camp. The Prosecution also claimed that the NPFL rebels were involved in acts of cannibalism during the conflict. From The Hague, Adolphus Williams reports.

Prosecution Lawyer Nicholas Koumjian referred to a book written by a former U.S Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, Herman Cohen.

In the book, the author described a visit to Liberia in the early 1990s during the Liberian civil war. Mr Koumjian read an extract to the court and asked Mr. Taylor to respond.

KOUMJIAN: "On 20 September, in the most interesting experience of the mission, we flew to the northern Cote d'Ivoire airport at [Mann], joined by our Ambassador to Abidjan, Kenneth Brown, we boarded 4-wheel drive vehicles and crossed ten miles into Liberia to meet with Charles Taylor. The most striking, and frightening, aspect of Taylor's forest hideaway was the overwhelming presence of heavily-armed 14 to 16-year old boys." Now, that's true, isn't it Mr. Taylor? You had teenage very young boys armed in your forces, correct?

TAYLOR: That is not correct, that's the very reason why I suggested that this document be [indistinct]. Here is Mr. Cohen meeting me, and he's seeing individuals around. And he comes up specifically with two age groups. Never asked why aren't they 19 and 20 or 14 and 15. Mr. Cohen has the audacity to specifically state ages of individuals that he's just seen, has never asked a question. I just thought it was stupid. It is very foolish for Mr. Cohen to have made such a determination without asking a single question and not even knowing who he was meeting, to just come up with two ages. Why didn't he call ages below or above? That's why we brought it, to show the folly involved in some of these statements that people make.

WILLIAMS: The prosecution also questioned Mr. Taylor about evidence that the NPFL and the Special Security Service, the SSS, had engaged in widespread acts of cannibalism. Nicholas Koumjian asked whether such reports had ever reached the former president.

TAYLOR: Those reports did not get to me, because I think if they have reached to me, ah no, they never [got] to me. I would have known what to do, no.

KOUMJIAN: Mr. Taylor, did you ever get any reports specifically of the SSS engaging in cannibalism.

TAYLOR: SSS, no. The SSS, no.

KOUMJIAN: Mr. Taylor, what effect do you think it would have on the civilian population, by the way, to know that cannibalism had taken place? Would that frighten people?

TAYLOR: Yes I'm sure, definitely it would...well, it depends, you ask me about frightening, yes, for some people frightening, for others it would just be bizarre.

WILLIAMS: Mr. Taylor also denied suggestions that the rebels indulged in special rituals, led by a juju priest or had tattoos in the belief that this would protect them against bullets during combat.

Earlier, Defence Lawyer Courtenay Griffiths angrily accused the prosecution of running its cross-examination "by relay", with Nicholas Koumjian appearing one day and the chief trial lawyer, Brenda Hollis, the next. Mr Griffiths said this was totally unsatisfactory.

Mr Koumjian said his colleague was not in court because she was working on identifying fresh material which will need to be disclosed to the defence later in the trial.

The presiding judge said he took note of the objection and would see how things developed.

UPI.Com

Wednesday, 2 December 2009

Taiwan, Libya backed campaign

Former Liberian President Charles Taylor, facing a Sierra Leone war crimes tribunal, says Taiwan and Libya contributed to his 1997 presidential campaign.

"In 1996-1997, I received money from Taiwan and Libya," Taylor reportedly told the court Tuesday, asserting the Taiwanese government gave him \$1 million, allegedly delivered through the country's embassy in the Ivory Coast.

In testimony published on his Web site, Taylor also reportedly told prosecutors for the U.N. Special Court for Sierra Leone in The Hague that Taiwan gave him the money for "public relations reasons.

"They developed an interest in me," the Web site quoted Taylor as saying. "They were concerned that China will block their interest in Liberia. It was like a form of PR for them because they were concerned that diplomatic support will continue after I became president."

Taylor also asserted he received \$500,000 from Libyan leader Moammar Gadhafi.

Prosecutors have charged Taylor with 11 counts of war crimes, crimes against humanity and other violations committed during the civil war in Sierra Leone from 1996 to 2002, and have presented scores of witnesses who linked Taylor to atrocities.

UNMIL Public Information Office Media Summary 2 December 2009

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

International Clips on Liberia **Truth Commission Releases Final Report**

Dec 02, 2009 (TRC/All Africa Global Media via COMTEX) -- THE TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION OF LIBERIA (TRC) have announced the release and publication of its final reports after several weeks of editing and technical work leading to its publication. The report which is an edited version of the "TRC FINAL REPORT, VOLUME II, CONSOLIDATED REPORT (UNEDITED)" was released on June 30, 2009. At least 1,500 copies of the report is now in print, courtesy of funding provided by the UNDP. The report, containing twenty-one (21) chapters, and approximately 1,500 pages in all is published in three volumes as follows: Volume I: Preliminary Report , presented to the Government of Liberia December 20, 2008; Volume II: Consolidated Final Report, presented to the Government of Liberia June 29, 2009; Volume III: Appendices Containing thirteen (13) titles of supplemental and specialized reports. Volume IV: Transcripts Containing ten thousand pages of testimonies from TRC witnesses during the Survivors' Hearings, Thematic and Institutional Hearings and the TRC Diaspora Hearings, remains unpublished. According to a TRC press release issued December 1, 2009 in Monrovia, the report provides a historical analysis of the conflict in Liberia, the root causes of the conflict and 142 pieces of recommendations intended to redress Liberia's legacy of conflict, dysfunction, massive human rights violations and promote national peace, unity and reconciliation. In all, the report includes eight (8) recommendations for public sanctions and prosecution combined and another eight (8) peieces of recommendations relating to economic crimes. The remaining total of 126 recommendations relate to a wide range of public interest issues including public integrity, corruption, human rights, economic empowerment, good governance, national identity and reparation, amongst others intended to resolve past conflicts as part of a national progression towards lasting peace and reconciliation.

Sierra Leone **Rioting Sierra Leone prisoners stab six wardens**

FREETOWN, Dec 2 (Reuters) - Hundreds of inmates rioting over poor conditions at Freetown's central prison stabbed six guards during a two-hour clash this week, leaving them in critical condition, a government official said on Wednesday. The worst incident in a series of riots at the overcrowded facility in recent years, comes as the West African nation struggles to clamp down on high crime levels fuelled by poverty and simmering frustrations since a 1991-2002 civil war. "There was a riot between hundreds of prisoners and recruit prison officers at the central prison...in the early hours of yesterday," said Mohamed Jimmy, a prison department spokesman. "The fighting lasted for almost two hours when reinforcements from the prison department entered."

Cote d'Ivoire **Ivory Coast leader urges peaceful, not rushed vote**

OUAGADOUGOU, Dec 2 (Reuters) - Ivory Coast President Laurent Gbagbo has urged patience with the country's long-delayed elections, saying he was more concerned about avoiding a new civil war than hurrying the potentially divisive poll. Speaking overnight before a meeting with mediators in neighbouring Burkina Faso on Wednesday, Gbagbo reacted to demands from the opposition in the world's top cocoa grower to fix a new date for the vote. "For us, it is not enough to go to elections. We are emerging from a war and we want to hold elections without returning to war because of them," Gbagbo announced on arriving in the Burkina capital late on Tuesday. No new date has been

set for the election since it was acknowledged that it would not go ahead as planned on Nov. 29. That was the latest in a long line of missed deadlines for a poll supposed to take place in 2005. Critics accuse Gbagbo of deliberately delaying the election, but he has repeatedly denied this.

Local Media – Newspaper

Armed ERU Police Officers In Sinoe County For Plantation Takeover...

(New Democrat, National Chronicle, Daily Observer, Liberian Express)

- More than 50 armed officers of the Emergency Response Unit (ERU) of the Liberia National Police (LNP) are in Sinoe County to quell a possible revolt by ex-combatants engaged in illicit tapping at the Sinoe Rubber Plantation.
- Over the weekend, authorities of Sinoe ordered the ERU to take over the plantation and restore law and order there.
- According to reports, the mandate to the ERU was contained in an announcement signed by Sinoe County Attorney John Gabriel.
- In another development, at least seven persons have been arrested and charged with economic sabotage in Sinoe County, the LNP has confirmed.
- Those arrested, according to reports, have been arraigned before Greenville Magisterial Court.

Elections Commission, CDC Trade Allegations

(The Inquirer, The Analyst, daily Observer, New Democrat, The News)

- The National Elections Commission (NEC) says no amount of threats can compel it to alter the results of any election in the country.
- NEC Chairman James Fromayan said despite the high level of transparency in the electoral system, individuals still sing what he calls chorus of cheating.
- Mr. Fromayan cited the just-ended Montserrado Senatorial by-election in which the Commission noticed the most pronounced and vicious allegations.
- He said the NEC was accused by some members of the Congress for Democratic Change (CDC) of being bribed by the ruling Unity Party (UP) to cheat in its favor and also made direct threats against the Commission and its chairman in particular, which were further amplified with hate messages on Ambassador Weah's private station, King's FM especially during the first round of polls.
- But CDC's Standard-bearer George Weah has refuted Fromayan's claims that King's Fm preached hate messages on November 10, the day of the by-election.
- Ambassador Weah said Mr. Fromayan needs to prove alleged threats on his life by his partisans or officials of the party. He however maintained that Mr. Fromayan is not a neutral person on the Board of Commissioners and as such he should be removed.

US Embassy Commends Opposition Role In Democratic Process

(The Analyst, Heritage, National Chronicle)

- The United States Embassy near Monrovia has congratulated Montserrado County Senator-elect Geraldine Doe-Sheriff of the Congress for Democratic Change.
- At the same time the Embassy clarified the US Government supported no candidate in the November By-election.
- The statement however said the United States was pleased that women and opposition political forces continue to play a strong role in Liberia's democratic process.
- The Embassy said it looks forward to working with Senator-elect Doe-Sheriff when she joins the next session of the National Legislature in January 2010.
- The statement further said the U.S. Embassy salutes the people of Montserrado following their successful selection of a new senator in an open and competitive run-off election.
- According to the statement, the U.S. Embassy which fielded nearly nineteen observer teams composed of American and Liberian staff on November 24, described the electoral process as free, fair and absent of fraud.
- Meanwhile, the United States has reiterated its support to improving the capacity of the National Elections Commission ahead of the 2011 general elections.

US-based Group Launches Positive Change Project

(The Informer)

- A US based organization Nu-Vision-Pac has announced a pilot project intended to foster positive change in Liberia.
- The Chairman of the group Benjamin Sanvee said the project co-named 'Team Africa' would focus on building the capacity of youth to become community leaders.
- Mr. Sanvee said under the project, the youth would be encouraged to influence change from the bottom by engaging their local leaders.
- He said the bottom-up approach is a concept drawn from the life of Barrack Obama who was a community organizer and later became President of the United States.

US Gets Tough Against Sanctioned Liberian Officials, Others

(New Democrat)

- Liberian nationals and entities are amongst those of 10 other countries to face tougher enforcement of economic sanctions against them, according to the US Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC), which is in charge of administering and enforcing the US economic sanctions laws.
- The OFAC document does not list individuals and entities under US sanctions, but the UN Security Council imposed sanctions on former Liberian President Charles Taylor, members of his family and several of his former officials.
- These sanctions against certain individuals exclude those against countries, and Liberia as a country is not listed among them.

Government Provides Additional Document On "Angel's" Murder Case

(Heritage, Daily Observer)

- Government has provided more documents relative to the Angel Tokpah murder case to the defense team.
- The Prosecution provided some of the documents a week ago, but the defense team requested more, including the original copies.
- According to court records, the documents include police charge sheets, a special investigative report on the suicide case, and statements of Dr. Anthony Quaye, among others.
- Defense lawyers requested the documents during the second sitting of the ongoing pre-trial conference.
- The defense has meanwhile asked the court for time to study the documents to establish their accuracy.
- Defense also wants the state provide the original copy of the report of the Ghanaian investigators.
- Meanwhile, the court has ordered the prosecution to provide the rest of the relevant documents as a means of ending the pre-trial hearing.

Nigerian Businessman US\$500,000 Resumes Tomorrow

(Public Agenda)

- The long running case involving a Nigerian Businessman Valentine Ayika whose US\$500,000 was reportedly seized by the Liberian Government and deposited in the Central Bank of Liberia, has finally been scheduled for hearing tomorrow Thursday, December 3, 2009.
- According to a petition for a Writ of Error, the Supreme Court of Liberia has ordered all parties associated with the case to be present at the hearing.
- The compliant, Valentine Ayika was arrested some time ago at which time it was reported that he had with him US\$500,000 when he entered the country without declaring the amount to the security assigned at the Roberts International Airport.
- Investigation conducted however shows that the money was not counterfeit, but was later reported that the money was drug money, something Mr. Ayika denied, stating that his money was a drug-free fund and rather a hard earned business money.

Woods Warns Public Works' Contractors, Set US\$30M For Road Projects

(Heritage, The Informer, The News, Public Agenda)

- Public Works Minister Samuel Kofi Woods has sent a very strong message to all engineering companies that have been contracted by the Ministry to perform certain functions on behalf of the Ministry not to be complacent.
- Minister Woods said that there would be no compromise for contractors who will fail to acceptably perform their duties in line with the contractual agreements reached between them and his Ministry.
- He said there are laws on the book to prosecute contractors who will abandon projects or implement them dismally at the loss of government and by extension the Liberian people, adding that "if people fail to perform, they will be dragged to court".
- The Public Works Minister spoke over the weekend in Fleadin, Salcepea-Mahn District, Nimba County where he had gone to inspect two concrete bridges under construction by two local companies, Card and Redes in collaboration with Liberia Agency for Community Empowerment (LACE).
- Meanwhile, Minister Woods said US\$300 million had been earmarked for the reconstruction of the Monrovia-Ganta border highway as well as the Bokay Town-Buchanan road in Grand Bassa County.

Health Ministry Gets US\$450,000 Lab Equipment

(The Inquirer, Daily Observer)

- The Ministry of Health and Social Welfare yesterday December 1, 2009 received several assorted laboratory equipment valued around US\$450,000.
- UNDP Procurement Associate David Mulbah who presented the equipment said the laboratory materials were procured with money from the Pool Fund and Global Fund for AIDS.
- Receiving the consignment, Dr. Dahn said the equipment will be used at the Public Health Reference Laboratory in Charlesville, Margibi County where the Liberia Institute for Biomedical Research is stationed.

Local Media - Star Radio *(culled from website today at 09:00 am)*

Government Provides Additional Document On "Angel's" Murder Case

Chinese Companies Eye Liberia's Agriculture Sector

- Assistant Commerce Minister for Industry, Sei Gahn says several Chinese companies have expressed interest in investing in Liberia's agriculture sector.
- Assistant Minister Gahn said the Chinese are mainly interested in processing cassava one of Liberia's cash crops.
- He said the Chinese companies expressed the interest when a Commerce Ministry delegation headed by Minister Miatta Beysolow visited China recently.
- According to him the companies reached the decision following the presentation of a true picture of Liberia's Cassava Sector by the Commerce Ministry delegation.

ERU Awaits Last Order To Take Over Sinoe Rubber Plantation

NEC, CDC Trade Allegations

(Also reported on Radio Veritas, Truth FM, Sky F.M., and ELBC)

US Embassy Commends Opposition Role In Democratic Process

(Also reported on Truth FM, Sky F.M., and ELBC)

US-based Group Launches Positive Change Project

(Also reported on Truth FM, Sky F.M., and ELBC)

Radio Veritas *(News monitored today at 09:45 am)*

Police To Burn Over 3M Liberian Dollars Worth of Narcotics Drugs

- The Liberia National Police will today Wednesday, December 2 burn narcotics drugs valued at over three million Liberian dollars.
- The Police Anti-drug Unit said the drugs were confiscated over the period of five months.

- The Police said the drugs to be burnt include 350 kilograms of marijuana that worth over two million Liberian dollars and 208 grams of high substance drugs worth over one million Liberian dollars.
- The burning exercise is expected to take place in Paynesville.

SSS Warns Public Against Intruding Into The Presidential Convoy

- The Special Security Services (SSS) says it has observed with dismay and utmost surprise that despite its earlier warning to the public, drivers, pedestrians and some individuals against intruding in the presidential convoy, people are still violating the right away of the presidential convoy.
- According to the SSS, the flagrant violation, which ignores its warning by drivers, pedestrians and some individuals has the propensity to endanger the life of the President, Vice President and other VIPs whom it says it is duty bound to protect at all times in keeping with the Act establishing the SSS.

The Hague Portal

Wednesday, 2 December 2009

ICC Appeals Chamber overturns decision on Bemba's interim release

The ICC Appeals Chamber has reversed the decision of the Pre-Trial Chamber allowing the provisional release of Jean-Pierre Bemba Gombo.

On 2 December 2009, the Appeals Chamber of the International Criminal Court (ICC) reversed a decision of the Pre-Trial Chamber (PTC) which allowed Jean-Pierre Bemba Gombo's provisional release.

On 14 August 2009 the Pre-Trial Chamber ordered Bemba's release on the grounds that due to changed circumstances continued detention was no longer necessary to ensure his appearance at trial. The implementation of the interim release was deferred pending a decision upon to which state Bemba would be released.



Under Article 60(3) of the Rome Statute, the PTC “shall periodically review its ruling on the release or detention of the person, and may do so at any time on the request of the Prosecutor or the person.” It may then choose to modify conditions of detention due to a change in circumstances. Under Rule 118(2) of the Rules of Procedure and Evidence, the PTC's decision under Article 60(3) on detention must be reviewed at least every 120 days. Sitting as a Single Judge, Judge Ekaterina Trendafilova noted that “continued detention or release is not of a discretionary nature” and was “mindful of the underlying principle that deprivation of liberty is the exception not the rule”, ordering Bemba-Gombo's release, albeit with conditions.

Prosecution's Appeal

The Prosecution appealed the decision of the Pre-Trial Chamber of 14 August 2009. The Appeals Chamber upheld both grounds of the Prosecution's appeal, saying that the PTC had “misappreciated and disregarded relevant facts” in reaching its conclusion that a substantial change of circumstances warranted Bemba's release. The Appeals Chamber also decided that a state willing to accept the person must be named before provisional release and conditions are ordered.

Bemba is set to face trial on 27 April 2010 on charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity committed in the Central African Republic (CAR). On 15 June 2009, Pre-Trial Chamber II confirmed the charges against Jean-Pierre Bemba Gombo, determining that there are substantial grounds to believe that he is criminally responsible as a military commander for two counts of crimes against humanity (rape and murder) and three counts of war crimes (rape, murder and pillaging).

BBC Online

Wednesday, 2 December 2009

Rwanda - first landmine-free country



Rwandan soldiers were specially trained for the mine clearance programme

Rwanda has been declared free of landmines - the first country to achieve this status.

The announcement was made at the Cartagena Summit on a Mine-Free World in Colombia.

Hundreds of people have been killed and horrifically injured by landmines in Rwanda.

Landmines were laid between 1990 and 1994 in Rwanda and over the past three years more than over 9,000 have been destroyed by Rwandan soldiers.

Ben Remfrey of the Mines Awareness Trust, which supervised the clearance, says although other countries have had far more mines laid, this is a significant step.

"Rwanda has made history by becoming the first country in the world to be officially declared free from landmines," he told the BBC World Service.

"Rwanda had a problem, it wasn't huge but it was still significant... and had a big social and economic impact."

Land scarce

Landmines have been devastating for Rwanda since their existence prevented many people from being able to live from their land.

Since 80% of the population earn a living by through agriculture, and Rwanda is Africa's most densely populated country, land is already scarce.

Nteziyaremya Alphose, a 40-year-old farmer living in a village north of Kigali, had mines on his farm.

Two adults lost legs and a child and a cow were killed on his farm. Now his land has been cleared, he says his family are able to grow enough produce to feed themselves.

"I can now use every piece of my land without becoming a victim of landmines, my livestock can now graze on this land and not be taken away from me," he says.



Nteziyaremya Alphose is looking forward to being able to farm without fear of mines

Destroying the mines

The landmines were cleared by Rwandan soldiers who were specially trained in Kenya at the International Mines Action Training Centre.

One hundred and eighty soldiers were involved in the clearance process in which 20 minefields were surveyed and de-mined over three years.

The mines, mostly anti-personnel landmines, were either neutralised or destroyed where they were found by qualified personnel.

To be declared as landmine-free, Rwanda had to meet the conditions of the Ottawa Landmine Treaty. These stipulate that not only does a country have to ensure its land is free of mines but also that it destroys its landmine stockpiles.

The Mines Awareness Trust say that all Rwandan stockpiles were destroyed either by burning or controlled explosions, ensuring these items could never be used again.

A dog specialist and a team of Mine Detection Dogs provided a final check of all the land surveyed and manually cleared so that the land could be signed off to international standards.



Each of the minefields was checked by Mine Detection Dogs

Overall, 1.3m square metres of land were tested and cleared.

Gareth Thomas, Africa Minister at the Department for International Development which funded the programme, said that this project was important for Rwanda.

"This means that Rwandans from those areas are now able to farm their land," he told the BBC's World Today programme.

The Anti-Personnel Mine Ban convention, better known as the Ottawa Convention, was brought into force 10 years ago.

Its aim was to help rid the world of landmines on the ground as well as stockpiled mines.

Since then, a total of 165 states have ratified the convention and production of anti-personnel mines has ceased in 38 countries.

But according to Landmine Monitor's estimates, more than 160m mines are held by countries not party to the convention and 13 states are still producing mines or retain the right to do so.

Radio Netherlands World

Tuesday, 1 December 2009

Feature film 'Kinyarwanda' being shot in Rwanda

By International Justice Desk



Kigali, Rwanda

A feature film telling the story of the Rwandan Muslim community during the 1994 genocide is currently being shot in Rwanda.

At the time of the

1994 Rwandan genocide, the Mufti of Kigali, the most respected Muslim leader in the country, issued a fatwa forbidding Muslims from participating in the killing of the Tutsi. As the country became a slaughterhouse, mosques became places of refuge where Muslims and Christians, Hutus and Tutsis came together to protect each other.

Executive producer Ishmael Ntihabose based the film on true accounts from survivors who took refuge at the Grand Mosque of Kigali and the madrassa of Nyanza. It interweaves six different tales that together form one grand narrative that allegedly provides 'the most complex and real depiction yet presented of human resilience and life during the genocide'.

The film, financed by the European Commission's European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights and produced by the Association of Muslims of Rwanda (AMUR) stars Cassie Freeman (Spike Lee's "Inside Man") as Lt. Rose Kabuye. 36 local film students and 14 international film makers are also part of the crew.

Shooting started on November 14th and is scheduled to wrap up around December 7th. Director Alrick Brown is sharing the latest news of the film as it happens on Twitter.

Photo: Kinyarwanda trailer

Agence France Presse

Thursday, 3 December 2009

Hariri probe team arrives in Beirut

By International Justice Desk



Beirut, Lebanon

The UN-backed investigation into the assassination of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri is making good progress, the lead prosecutor said.

Daniel Bellemare, the Canadian chief prosecutor for the tribunal, arrived in Beirut on Wednesday for a seven-day visit with top government officials, the United Nations reports.

Bellemare told reporters following a meeting with Lebanese President Michel Suleiman that the investigation into the assassination was "making progress and proceeding at full pace."

Hariri and 21 others were killed when a massive explosion ripped through his motorcade in downtown Beirut in February 2005.

A statement from Bellemare's office stressed the importance of moving forward with an unfettered investigation to bring the perpetrators to justice.

"He emphasized that the process he is leading is purely evidence-driven and that the people of Lebanon deserve nothing less than an outcome that cannot be overcast with doubts about the credibility and the integrity of the justice rendered by the tribunal," the statement continued.

The Special Tribunal for Lebanon at The Hague, Netherlands, was formed when a UN investigation found Lebanese proceedings were flawed and Syria, which was blamed for the assassination, was complicating the investigation.

The tribunal, which adopted formal procedures in March, is the first such body to examine the crime of terrorism. Proceedings are expected to last at least five years.