

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



The third Taylor Status Conference at The Hague, Friday 26 January 2007.

PRESS CLIPPINGS

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

as at:

Tuesday, 30 January 2007

Press clips are produced Monday through Friday.
Any omission, comment or suggestion, please contact
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Awoko

Tuesday, 30 January 2007

Prosecutor Welcomes Start Date in Taylor Trial, Promises Access for Sierra Leoneans

The trial of former Liberian President Charles Taylor is slated to begin this June, as ordered by a Judge of the United Nations-backed Special Court for Sierra Leone.

The case against Mr Taylor, who is accused of committing war crimes and crimes against humanity during the civil war in Sierra Leone from 1996 through 2002, will begin on June 4.

At the Taylor Status Conference held on January 26 at the trial venue in The Hague, it was announced that the date for commencement of trial had been changed from the original date of April 2 at the request of the Taylor Defence to provide additional time for its preparations.

Justice Teresa Doherty, who presided at the Status Conference, made rulings on several other matters, including the setting of the date for the filing of pre-trial briefs.

Taylor has pleaded innocent to charges of war

crimes and crimes against humanity linked to the killing, mutilation, and sexual violence involving thousands of victims, as well as the recruitment and use of child soldiers.

Responding to reporters' questions after the hearing concerning the nature of the Prosecution's case, Stephen Rapp, The Prosecutor, said, The indictment alleged acts that included the most horrendous things humans can do to one another.

Whereas the other trials of the Special Court for Sierra Leone are being conducted in that nation's capital, Freetown, the Taylor case will unfold at the facilities of the International Criminal Court in The Hague. The Prosecutor noted that the decision to move the trial was a result of negotiations aimed to keep the peace in Sierra Leone and the region as a whole.

The decision was supported by the United Nations and the key governments in the region, including Liberian President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf. Mr. Rapp emphasised that while the trial has been

moved due to regional security concerns, it is the Special Court for Sierra Leone, and only the Special Court, that is conducting this trial. I want to emphasise from the outset that this trial will be conducted first and foremost in the name of, and on behalf of, the people of Sierra Leone.

Regarding concerns that the distance between The Hague and the Sierra Leonean capital would prevent the people of the country from witnessing justice being done, The Prosecutor spoke about the extensive Outreach programme of the Court.

Last year, 780 meetings were held in every region of the country to inform the public of the Court's work, Mr. Rapp commented. Every effort is being and will be made to ensure that Sierra Leoneans have transparent access to this trial. Each case at the Special Court is heard, argued and decided upon in their name, and the many miles between The Hague and Freetown will not change that.

Awareness Times

Tuesday, 30 January 2007

Charles Taylor's trial to be delayed!

Former Liberian President Charles Taylor's lawyers reportedly need more time to prepare his defence against charges that he directed a campaign of murder, rape and enslavement in West Africa. Reports have it that judge Teresa Dorherty has made it clear however that Taylor's war crime trial will begin in June as planned. According to reports, Taylor has pleaded innocent to charges linked to the killing and mistreatment of thousands of people during the 10 years civil war in Liberia's neighbor, to the Northwest of Sierra Leone.

Concord Times
Tuesday, 30 January 2007

SLPP blasts Norman, RUF, AFRC support for PMDC

By Ibrahim Seibure

The Sierra Leone People's Party has denounced the purported endorsement of the People's Movement for Democratic Change (PMDC) by Special Court detainees Chief Hinga Norman and eight others of the RUF and AFRC. The SLPP Secretary General, Jacob Jusu Saffa, yesterday dismissed the development as "not a threat."

"We know we have the support of the people of Sierra Leone," Saffa said.

The nine detainees who signed the statement declaring support for the PMDC are: Chief Sam Hinga Norman, Moinina Fofanah, Alieu Musa Kondewa, Issa Hassan Sesay, Augustine Gbow, Morris Kallon, Tamba Brima, Ibrahim Bassy Kamara and Santigie Borbor Kamara.

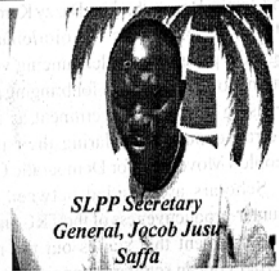
They urged their "supporters, sympathizers, friends, relations

and well-wishers to support the People's Movement for Democratic Change (PMDC) in the forth-coming presidential and parliamentary elections."

"We have put all of our individual differences aside to support a single political party of our choice in the forthcoming elections. We know that the only dividing force that bears greatest responsibility for the current problems in our country, Sierra Leone, is the

Government of the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP)," they said in the statement.

Saffa thinks such move is unserious and preferred to stress that the ruling party has delivered on its promise to Sierra Leoneans. "We have delivered and the nation has accepted us. They are not a threat at all," Saffa said yesterday.



SLPP Secretary
General, Jacob Jusu
Saffa

Concord Times
Tuesday, 30 January 2007

Opinion

By Karamoh Kabba

Sierra Leone's decade-long war is over at last, but the new coalition of detained former members of warring factions says the awkward combination of Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and Special Court (SC) of Sierra Leone is the detractor of the provisions of the Lomé Peace Accord of 1999 and TRC's imperative recommendations. The Lomé Peace Accord, which was ratified by the government of Sierra Leone Parliament grants pardon to all combatants of the civil war, whilst one of the 'ten commandments' [imperative recommendations] of the TRC reads; "Release of person held in Safe Custody detention. Never again resort to Safe Custody detention. Never again resort to Safe Custody detention." Nonetheless, detaining and trying those allegedly bearing "the greatest responsibility" for war crimes and crimes against humanity in Sierra Leone by the SC contradict the aforementioned provision of the Lomé Peace Accord and recommendation of the TRC.

On Thursday, January 11, 2007, various members of warring factions in SC detention for allegedly bearing the greatest responsibility for war crimes and crimes against humanity coalesced in common interests to participate in the democratic process and jointly support a single political party in Sierra Leone. Chief Sam Hinga Norman, Moinina Fofana and Alicu Musa Kondewa of the Civil Defence Forces (CDF); Issa Hassan Sesay, Augustine Gbow and Morris Kallon of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF); and Tamba Brima, Ibrahim Bazy Kamara and Santigie Kanu of the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC), signed a press release denouncing violence, thanking the international community for bringing peace to Sierra Leone, accusing the SLPP government as the dividing force in Sierra Leone and declaring their joint-support for the People's Movement for Democratic Change (PMDC).

Scholars are divided between the usefulness and counter-productiveness of the TRC and SC in Sierra Leone. One argument that stands out the most amongst many Sierra Leonean scholars supports the detainees' claim that the SC is a distraction to especially the TRC's

Voices from confinement

Former Warriors Declare their Supports for PMDC in Sierra Leone

recommendations: How would the ANC have become the honorable democratic institution it is if South Africa had chose a special court over a truth commission? One question that often garnishes the preceding assertion is; what would have become of the fate of Nelson Mandela? The most egregious war crimes and crimes against humanity were reported out of Sierra Leone during its darkest period of that bleak decade. These crimes were because of fighting one of the most ruthless civil wars in recent histories. As well, members of the ANC and the Apartheid government of South Africa committed serious crimes against humanity on the long walk to freedom.

Sierra Leone's war was unique in the sense that unlike many rebel wars in Africa that metamorphose into ethnic cleansing, a fourth angle to the rebel, army and peacekeepers in Sierra Leone was fomented by ethnic groups against their tormentors in the form of what we know as CDF that was headed by the then Deputy Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Sierra Leone, Chief Sam Hinga Norman, who is now one of the SC's detainees. It is a fair to middling assertion that the CDF helped to avert ethnic cleansing in Sierra Leone. The army had been demoralized and its members transmuted either into various warring factions by force, by default or by choice or fled. The Commander in Chief was at the head of that fleet of soldiers that fled. That left the Deputy Commander in Chief, Sam Hinga Norman, with no choice but the courageous members of the CDF that came to his rescue to represent his Commander in Chief, President Ahmed Tejan Kabbah, with valor and honor. Chief Norman had the fullest support and backing of President Tejan Kabbah, who gave directives from Guinea, until the badly negotiated SC by Solomon Berewa, the then Attorney

General, now Vice President and frontrunner of the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP), came into the picture.

What would be the fate of the President of Sierra Leone after he leaves the office of the president when the SC sticks to its gun of going after those bearing the greatest responsibility for war crimes and crimes against humanity? In 1998, President Tejan Kabbah wrote an article for the Daily Mirror in London denying an allegation of using mercenaries provided by Sandline and trafficking of weapons to the CDF through the same source, [Sandline now mines Sierra Leone's diamonds]: "My Government did not use mercenaries provided by Sandline. It is true that a delivery of light weapons, arranged by a third party, was made by Sandline for the use of our Civil Defence Units. But that only occurred after the removal of the illegal regime." Wayne Madsen, in his well-researched work, "Genocide and Covert Operations in Africa 1993-1999" writes; "On February 22, 1998, Sandline, with the approval of the Britain's Foreign Office and British High Commissioner in Sierra Leone Peter Penfold, arranged to ship thirty tons of Bulgarian AK-47 rifles to Kabbah's waiting forces in Sierra Leone." The Nigerians of the ECOMOG troops at Lungi Airport seized the cargo of ammunition, bound for the Kamajor local militias who were waiting to stage a counter coup against the military regime that had kicked President Kabbah out of office, Madsen explains. Is it a double coincidence that Sandline Company mines Sierra Leone's diamonds?

The warring factions that signed the January 11 press release are the major stakeholders in Sierra Leone's civil war and peace process. These united voices from the dividing force empirically debunks the SLPP's claim of bringing peace to Sierra Leone. *To be continued*

The New Citizen
Tuesday, 30 January 2007

“Police Shot Me On The Buttocks”

- Victim

23-year old Sama Kanu, a bar tender at Kagibs Entertainment Plaza, Kissy and of 9 Jamboria Drive Tengbeh Town yesterday visited the offices of the New Citizen at No. 7 Wellington Street in Freetown where she disclosed that the police shot her on the buttocks during last Saturday's fracas along Cole Farm, Wilkinson Road. "On that fateful morning, I was returning from Lumley where I had gone to buy fish when on reaching Cole Farm, the driver of the 'poda poda' vehicle in which I was traveling instructed all the passengers to disembark the vehicle as he could no longer continue the journey due to the then tense situation." Sama Kanu added that while she was trying to move to a secured location, "I suddenly felt a sharp pain on my buttocks. At first I thought it was a stone that had hit me but after careful examination by



Sama Kanu, victim of Cole Farm upheaval

Contd. back page

“Police Shot Me...”

From page 1

other people, it was discovered to be a gunshot." She narrated further that she became unconscious and that she was conveyed to the Marie Stopes Clinic along Aberdeen Road where she was not attended to, then to another private clinic where she was administered with first aid and later to the Murray Town Health

Center where she was treated and diagnosed with a gun shot wound.

"Gun shot wound, dressing stable, occasional bleeding from the site. Referred for further RX and Mang," the Murray Town Ministry of Health Sierra Leone General Clinic Form of Sama Kanu dated 27th January 2007 states.

At the Goderich Emergency Clinic, where Sama

Kanu arrived at 10:35 a.m., she was diagnosed for "gun shot wound to buttocks entry/exit- alleged to have been shot by an unknown person. B.P. 100: 160-HR 89: RR-Spoc/98: No neurological symptoms: Discharge wound daily: Oral antibiotic: G/surgery to follow up," the medical report affirms.

The News

Tuesday, 30 January 2007

Police denies setting driver ablaze

By Zainab Kanu

Acting Assistant Inspector General of Police in charge of operation, Morie Lengor has denied allegation that police officers set a taxi driver Abubakarr Sillah ablaze which

left him with serious burns last Saturday at Cole Farm. Morrie Lengor last Saturday told a huge number of drivers

some of whom are executive members of the Drivers Union that the taxi driver was about to be arrested by the police officer for buying

petrol at black-market which he claimed was illegal when according to him the driver lit the fire that left him in critical con-

dition. However, during the riot that ensued, police used live bullets to drive away the angry crowd and about 20 arrested.

Cocorioko Website

Monday, 29 January 2007

PMDC's Claims That Hinga Norman and Co. Have Joined Them; SLPP Taking it With a Pinch of Salt

The ruling Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP) says it does not believe claims by the opposition People's Movement For Democratic Change (PMDC) that Former Internal Affairs Minister , Chief Hinga Norman and other indictees of the Special Court have joined them.

Talking to COCORIOKO exclusively this weekend were the Chairman of the SLPP North American Branch, Mr. Matthew Margao and his Deputy , Mr. Sallu Saidu and both men ridiculed the document that the PMDC released as coming from the indictees. Mr. Margao made it clear that as far as the SLPP was concerned , Hinga Norman is still a registered member of the party and the party has not been officially informed by Norman about the stories being peddled by the PMDC

Mr. Sallu Saidu (Sparco) was the first SLPP man contacted by this newspaper last evening to comment on the report that Chief Norman and other indictees of the Special Court had joined the PMDC .He seriously doubted the veracity of that claim but referred the COCORIOKO to the Chairman, Mr. Margao, who, he said, had the authority to make any statement on the issue. He had to follow protocol, he said. We had been trying to get Mr. Margao in vain when we contacted Mr. Saidu.

Fortunately, after many tries, Mr. Margao returned our calls. He was calm and unruffled by the PMDC claims and he rejected them flat as untrue. "As far as we are concerned," he stated : "Chief Norman is still a registered member of the SLPP. He has still not resigned. Since we the SLPP brought democracy to Sierra Leone, we will welcome the move if Chief Norman decides to join any other political party, but there is communication available that he has resigned from the SLPP. We still regard him as a member of the SLPP."

Mr. Margao continued ; I just had a talk with J.J.Saffa about the issue and we infact want to stay out of the debate on the issue. The PMDC wants to provoke us into a debate over the issue but we are not going to fall for that. We have too many other issues to address .We know that if Chief Hinga Norman has truly resigned, we should have been the first to know. He should have informed us formally. "

Mr. Margao is writing an official release on the subject for publication tomorrow.

Telegraph (UK)

Tuesday, 30 January 2007

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/main.jhtml?xml=/news/2007/01/30/wleone30.xml>

Commander Blood waits for ex-president to face justice over war

By Mike Pflanz in Freetown

The man once known as Commander Blood sat bare-chested on his bed, rubbing sleep from his eyes, and began to talk of his life as a 15-year-old rebel leading 50 child soldiers.

"They gave us injections so we were wild, we saw the enemy like animals, we killed them before they could kill us," he said in Freetown, Sierra Leone's cramped and rundown coastal capital.

Charles Taylor, one-time warlord then president of Liberia, is blamed for fuelling the war that robbed Commander Blood, whose real name is Abdul Kargbo, of his childhood.

Taylor is now behind bars in The Hague, the first of Africa's band of blood-soaked leaders to be indicted for war crimes. Much rides on his case, but already there are delays.

The trial's start date in April was postponed last week for another three months at the request of the defence. This pushes proceedings close to Sierra Leone's presidential election, on July 28.

Alone among the indictees of the Special Court for Sierra Leone, he will be tried in The Hague, for fear the rump of his supporters could wreck any trial held in West Africa.

Sitting in a heavily fortified hillside compound in central Freetown, the court follows United Nations-backed tribunals for the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda.

Those have been criticised for their delays and expense. Neither sits in the countries where the crimes they are prosecuting took place.

"Those models of international prosecution are now probably not sustainable," said Dr Christopher Staker, the Special Court's deputy prosecutor.

"Here we have provided a workable new model which is practical, cost-effective and, crucially, is in the country it's talking about."

The Sierra Leone court has indicted just 13 people, compared to 160 or more at the Yugoslavia hearings, and 70 at the Rwanda tribunal. Three of its cases are completed or well under way, and the first verdicts are due by Easter.

Although Liberia's president until he fled in 2003, Taylor, 59, has been indicted by the court for neighbouring Sierra Leone for "assisting, encouraging, directing or controlling" the killings there.

In return for Sierra Leone's diamonds, Taylor is charged with giving the rebel Revolutionary United Front (RUF) training, weapons and equipment.

About 50,000 people died and two million, a third of the population, fled their homes. Thousands lost limbs in arbitrary amputations by the RUF.

"Bad people must learn that justice will catch them, or these terrible things will happen again," said a subdued Commander Blood, as he headed out looking for a dollar or two washing cars on Freetown's humid streets.

Voice of America

Monday, 29 January 2007

Charles Taylor to Go on Trial June 4th

The trial of former Liberian President Charles Taylor has been set for June 4th by the United Nations-backed Special Court for Sierra Leone.

Taylor stands accused of war crimes and crimes against humanity during the civil war that devastated the West African nation from 1996 to 2002. Taylor has pleaded innocent to the charges.

Peter Anderson is the spokesman for the court. VOA English to Africa reporter Chinedu Offor asked him why June 4th was chosen for the trial. He said it was a mutual agreement between the defense and prosecution.

“There [was] initial disagreement over the date for the trial and the court ruled that it could be changed if the defense presents a credible reason for a change. They did and the new date was then agreed on,” he said.

Anderson said the prosecution is ready to present its case despite comments from the defense that Taylor is in poor health.

“The case will go ahead. As far as we know, Taylor is in good health and would be present at the trial, which would be in the form of those already held in Sierra Leone,” he said.

He said while the impending trial is being watched closely in the country, citizens are hopeful the event will heal several decades of bitterness and war. Anderson said, “Some might be of the opinion that the trial might open up old wounds, he said. “Sometimes it is necessary to open up wounds for real healing.”

LegalBrief Africa

Monday, 29 January 2007

<http://www.legalbrief.co.za/article.php?story=20070129170606262>

Tough judge to handle Charles Taylor trial

Ugandan High Court Judge Julia Sebutinde has been handed the trial of former warlord and ex-Liberian President Charles Taylor, according to a report in The Monitor.

Sebutinde is attached to the UN Special Court for Sierra Leone (SCSL). Taylor faces charges of crimes against humanity and violations of international humanitarian law, including murder, rape and the use of child soldiers during the war in Sierra Leone. The SCSL said Sebutinde had been elected Presiding Judge of Trial Chamber II which will try Taylor in The Hague. Principal Judge James Ogoola expressed support for the appointment. 'As head of the High Court, I am very excited that one of our own has been found capable of heading this high-powered court ... this speaks volumes about the capability and independence of (Uganda's) High Court. Sebutinde is best known as the head of three high-level commissions of inquiry she conducted on behalf of the Uganda Government between 1999 and 2001. She courted controversy with her tough handling of witnesses during investigations into corruption in the Uganda Police Force, the purchase of junk helicopters by the Ministry of Defence as well as graft in the Uganda Revenue Authority.

Cocorioko Website

Monday, 29 January 2007

Special Court of Delay?

By Jacob Sax Conteh
Virginia, US
Jacobconteh@yahoo.com

How can justice that has been delayed for so many years be real justice? How can those of us who lost loved ones in the senseless carnage in Sierra Leone be assured that the same thing will never happen again when the perpetrators of one of the most cruel and brutish wars in modern history have not been punished because of an intricate court system which sees many foreign and national workers of the Special Court live in luxurious houses, ride air-conditioned SUVs and fly wherever they want in the country when our people continue to languish in poverty and diseases, some without hands and feet? I often shudder when I think of the untold misery the rebels caused in Sierra Leone, and how up to this day none of the leadership of that movement has been convicted in a court of law. The rebel leaders – Sam Bockarie and Foday Sankoh died without facing justice. Jonny Koroma is missing, and now Issa Sesay is in Senegal getting first class medical treatment. This is wrong. The UN can do better than that. We cannot continue to wait without seeing someone locked up for good in a less luxurious hotel (prison) like the one the killers now enjoy in Freetown. Though many of us are willing to forgive and move on with our lives, we also need the process of justice to be accelerated. Here in the United States and in many other countries in the world, serious cases are often tried and concluded in a space of a year or two. So why is it that more than six years after the war officially ended, we are still waiting for the Special Court to nab the rebels.

The answer lies in the way the UN operates. In Rwanda, despite warning from several groups, the UN stood by or left the Tutsis and moderate Hutus to be massacred before heading there to set up a tribunal to prosecute the killers, many of whom have either been killed in reprisal killing or have simply disappeared into oblivion. After the Rwanda genocide, many Hutus, including innocent women and children fled to Goma, Zaire to escape from Paul Kagame and his army. But Kagame and his henchmen took advantage of lapses in Zairian security and massacred thousands of Hutus, and the UN did not do anything. In Zaire itself, it took the UN years to react to the continued rape and murder of innocent civilians. In Liberia and Sierra Leone, the Nigerians would have easily ended the rebel carnage if they had the support of the UN Security Council, but here again the UN failed miserably. They sat in their offices in New York until thousands of people lost their lives. In Sierra Leone, when the UN finally decided to act, they sent a group of inept and ill-equipped peace keepers five hundred of whom the RUF rebels took hostage. That emboldened the rebels to press the war until they almost overran the entire country.

Today, the UN is a toothless lame bulldog when it comes to Darfur. While thousands of poor defenseless people are killed in that region in an ethnic cleansing foray, the UN cannot agree on what to do to rescue the people of Darfur. This is an outrage. But the UN will surely set another tribunal to bring the perpetrators to justice years later.

I call on the UN Special Court in Sierra Leone to speed up its process and bring the killers of our people to justice. That will finally put to rest the anguish many of us still feel knowing that the murderers, rapist and gangs that terrorized our people have never paid the price for their act.

United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL)

UNMIL Public Information Office Media Summary 29 January 2007

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

International Clips on Liberia

THE GUARDIAN January 29, 2007

Debt: Brown presses G8 to help Liberia

LARRY ELLIOTT

Gordon Brown is seeking to put fresh impetus behind debt relief for the world's poorest countries by pressing Britain's G8 partners to back the write-off of the \$3bn (pounds 1.53bn) owed by Liberia to its creditors. The chancellor met Liberia's president, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, in Davos late last week and assured Africa's first woman leader that he would back her in her attempts to free the country - one of the poorest in the continent - from the debt burden built up by its corrupt former leaders, Samuel Doe and Charles Taylor.

China to fulfil its Sino-African Forum pledges

BEIJING, Jan 29, 2007 (Xinhua via COMTEX) --China will sign debt relief agreements with 33 African countries by the end of 2007 to honor the pledges it made at the Sino-African Forum, the Ministry of Commerce said here Monday. The move came a day before President Hu Jintao sets off on an African tour which will take him to Cameroon, Liberia, Sudan, Zambia, Namibia, South Africa, Mozambique and the Seychelles.

International Clips on West Africa

January 26, 2007 8:25 AM GMT

UN chief wants to split peacekeeping department

By Evelyn Leopold

UNITED NATIONS (Reuters) - U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon proposed splitting the burgeoning peacekeeping department in two and downgraded the disarmament department to an office, according to a memo obtained by Reuters on Thursday. The proposals have been discussed informally for several weeks but Ban now put them in writing to regional groups for approval by the 192-member General Assembly "as early as possible."

PREVIEW - Hu visit may mark end of China's African honeymoon

By Andrew Quinn

JOHANNESBURG, Jan 28 (Reuters) - Less than a year after his last visit, Chinese President Hu Jintao will make another swing through Africa this week amid growing signs that Beijing's African honeymoon may be nearing its end.

Local Media – Newspaper

Supreme Court Hands Down Ruling in Snowe’s Case Today

(Daily Observer, The Informer, The News, Heritage, The Analyst, Public Agenda, Liberian Express, New Democrat, The Inquirer and The Independent)

- Liberia’s highest court, the Supreme Court, will today hand down its decision into the Writ of Prohibition questioning the legality of a group of lawmakers sitting at the Unity Conference in Virginia, outside Monrovia and the subsequent removal of House Speaker Edwin Snowe.
- Lawyers representing the embattled Speaker and members of the “majority bloc” held a four-hour legal argument before the full bench of the Supreme Court last week.
- Mr. Snowe’s lawyers argued that it was unconstitutional and a violation of the House’s rule to have held sessions outside the City of Monrovia and remove Speaker Snowe while the members were on their agriculture break.
- Amid the legal battle over the sitting of the Legislature in Virginia, President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf has signed the Joint Resolution on the temporary sitting of the Houses of Representatives and Senate at the Unity Conference Center.
- The resolution authorizes the use of the Unity Conference Center as the declared and designated temporary official seat of the Legislature, pending the return of the lawmakers to the Capitol Building which is undergoing renovation.

TRC Postpones Public Hearings

(The News, Heritage, Public Agenda, and The Analyst)

- The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) of Liberia has announced the postponement to a later date of the commencement of its hearings which was scheduled to begin on 30 January at the Centennial Memorial Pavilion in Monrovia.

Training of New Liberian Army Suffers “Setback”

(Daily Observer, The News and Heritage)

- The training of recruits for the new Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL) could face setback as facilities for the trainers at the VOA Camp in Careysburg, outside Monrovia are yet to be completed.
- Defense Minister Brownie Samukai said over the weekend that he is “highly frustrated” and disappointed with what he called the delay in the construction of the VOA headquarters for the training of members of the new army.

Taylor’s Loyalists Accuse Special Court Investigator of Attempted Bribery

(Heritage, The Inquirer and New Democrat)

- Two loyalists of former Liberian President Charles Taylor claimed at a news conference Friday that two investigators of the Special Court for Sierra Leone said they would offer huge sum of money as inducement for them [loyalists] to testify against their former boss.
- Former Bomi County Senator, Sando Johnson and Dopoe Mankarzon, both of whom are former military officials in the Taylor regime accused “Pete McLaren and Joseph Siaffa” of attempting to kidnap them in a black tainted windshield jeep after a failed discussion last week to have them serve as witnesses against Mr. Taylor.

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

Investment Forum for Liberia Opens in Washington D.C. in February

- According to a press statement issued by the Embassy of Liberia in Washington D.C., an investment forum to showcase trade and investment opportunities in Liberia will open in Washington D.C., bringing together Liberians and international investors on February 15. The sectors include agriculture, mining and natural resources, power generation and electricity, construction and infrastructure development.

(Also reported on ELBS Radio and Star Radio)

Liberians Complain of Bad Labour Treatment at Chinese Construction Site

- Some Liberian workers of a Chinese construction company in Bong County over the weekend complained of an unfair labor practice.
- The Spokesman of the group, Mr. Sulmutrick Kieh alleged that working condition at the company is "very terrible" as they work without safety gears thereby exposing them to health hazards. But the Adam Bill Corneh Enterprise, which serves as a liaison between the workers and the Chinese company, denied the allegations.

(Also reported on ELBS Radio and Star Radio)

President Johnson-Sirleaf to Deliver "State of the Union Address" Today

- A release issued by the Presidency said that President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf will today deliver the "State of the Union Address" at the Unity Conference Center although the Supreme Court which is hearing a complaint over leadership at the National Legislature will deliver its verdict only today.
- The Minister of Information stated that the President had received a Joint Resolution passed on Friday by the Senate and the Representatives at the UCC, paving the way to deliver the Address. The Constitution of Liberia states that the Speaker of the House shall preside in a Joint Chamber of the National Legislature. Meanwhile, the Supreme Court will today decide the case involving embattled Speaker Edwin Snowe and the majority bloc of the Lawmakers sitting at the House of Representatives.

(Also reported on ELBS Radio and Star Radio)

Star Radio *(News culled from website today at 09:00 am)*

Lofa County Faces Water Shortage

- Lofa County Representative Malian Jalieba told reporters over the weekend that the County was facing a shortage of safe drinking water because the wells dug by aid organizations in the County had gone dry due to the improper way they were dug.

County Attorney Says Police Received Bribe to Release Convicted Rapist

- Bomi County Attorney Nkrumah Tee-Kay accused Liberia National Police Officers assigned in the County of receiving bribe to release from detention convicted rapist Varney Gangarmah and 6 others. Attorney Tee-Kay said that he believed that money exchanged hands to secure safe passage for the rapist and his colleagues.

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. Weah Karpeh at karpeh@un.org.

BBC Online

Monday, 29 January 2007

ICC trial for DR Congo's warlord

The International Criminal Court (ICC) has ruled there is enough evidence against a DR Congo militia leader to launch the court's first trial.

Thomas Lubanga, 46, is accused of recruiting child soldiers during DR Congo's brutal 1998-2003 civil war

Prosecutors allege that children as young as 10 were kidnapped and forced to fight in 2002-2003,

The ICC, based in The Hague, was set up in 2002 as the world's first permanent war crimes court.

It was designed to end the need for the various ad hoc war crimes courts which have been established, including the chambers created to deal with war crimes committed in the former Yugoslavia and the genocide in Rwanda.

The US strongly opposed the creation of the ICC, fearing the political prosecution of its soldiers.

Death threats

Four million people are estimated to have been killed during the conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo,

Mr Lubanga led the Union of Congolese Patriots (UPC) militia in the north-eastern Ituri district, where fighting continued long after the official end of the five-year war in 2003.

"Lubanga made children train to kill, Lubanga made them kill and Lubanga let the children die... in hostilities," prosecution lawyer Ekkehard Withopf told the court during a hearing in November.

The prosecution says children were snatched as they walked to school and forced to fight for Mr Lubanga's ethnic Hema militia against their Lendu rivals.

The child soldiers were later instructed "to kill all Lendu including men, women and children", a prosecution statement says, based on testimony from six children.

Mr Lubanga denies any wrongdoing. His lawyers say he was trying to end the conflict and is being punished by the international community for refusing to give mining concessions in areas he controlled to foreign firms.

Referring to his enemies, he once told UN peacekeepers: "Those who have committed genocide or massacres have to be punished."

The BBC's Mark Doyle says the conflict in Ituri manifests itself as an ethnic war, but its root cause is the criminal mining of the region's gold and other minerals.

Lobby group Human Rights Watch says some 60,000 civilians have been slaughtered in Ituri province by various militias.

It calls for them all to be investigated, along with government officials from DR Congo and others who may be implicated from neighbouring Rwanda and Uganda.



Lubanga denies three war crimes charges



Profile: Thomas Lubanga

THE SCOTSMAN
Tuesday, 30 January 2007

World court to try Congo warlord

By CHRIS STEPHEN

A NEW chapter in international justice opened yesterday with the International Criminal Court (ICC) confirming that a Congolese warlord arrested last year will stand trial.

Thomas Lubanga Dyllo will face charges of recruiting child soldiers for fighting in Congo's civil war.

Prosecutors say Lubanga, the founder and leader of a militia in the Ituri district, trained children as young as ten to kill.



The 46-year-old, who holds a degree in psychology, has denied the charges.

His trial will be the first held by the new court, which opened four years ago, has 104 member states and is specifically constituted to try individuals for genocide, war crimes and other major human rights violations.

It comes amid unprecedented activity in war crimes courts, in what looks to be a key year in the history of international justice.

In the coming weeks, prosecutors of the Sierra Leone Special Court, also temporarily sitting in The Hague, will begin the case against Charles Taylor, the former Liberian president .

Taylor is the first former African head of state to go before a war crimes trial, and he is accused of using rape, murder and slavery to control of Sierra Leone's diamond fields in the late 1990s.

Meanwhile, early next month the ICC is expected to recommend charges in a separate investigation, aimed at Sudanese officials blamed for orchestrating ethnic cleansing in Darfur. Taken together these cases are likely to determine the future course of war crimes justice, or indeed whether it has a future.

Last year saw many question the efficacy of war crimes justice after the two high profile trials, of former Yugoslav strongman Slobodan Milosevic and Iraq's Saddam Hussein.

Rights groups are now hoping that war crimes justice can now prove its worth in Africa.

Another bonus for advocates of war crimes justice has been a recent about-turn in the attitude by the United States. Until last year it was opposed to the ICC, arguing that the court, the world's only permanent war crimes court, could be used to mount political prosecutions against the US.

But as the Bush presidency begins the long process of winding down, John McCain, a leading Republican candidate, has called for the US to join the ICC. Washington has now backed the ICC's Darfur investigation and is likely to supply satellite photographs and signals intercepts to investigators.

Radio Free Asia

Friday, 26 January 2007

http://www.rfa.org/english/news/politics/2007/01/24/cambodia_krtrial/index.html

Khmer Rouge Tribunal - Interview with a Co-prosecutor

by Dan Southerland

PHNOM PENH—When it comes to international war crimes trials, Robert Petit seems to have done it all.

Khmer Rouge Trial Prosecutor Robert Petit



Following stints in Rwanda, Kosovo, East Timor, and Sierra Leone, the veteran Canadian prosecutor is now facing one of his biggest challenges—developing cases for Cambodia’s long-awaited Khmer Rouge tribunal.

Towards the end of last year, the U.N.-backed effort to open the tribunal ran into serious difficulties when Cambodian and international jurists failed to reach agreement on internal procedures.

The two sides are now making a new effort to overcome differences. Critics argue that Cambodian judges are subject to political interference from the Cambodian government, making it difficult to hold fair trials. So I think that overall in six months we have a pretty good record, especially considering the limited resources we have.

Khmer Rouge Trial Co-Prosecutor Robert Petit

Unlike the trials dealing with the former Yugoslavia, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, and East Timor, the Cambodian tribunal will be more closely linked to Cambodian law.

And, as Robert Petit acknowledges, Cambodian law is full of “gaps and inconsistencies.”
'A lot of progress'

Some critics suspect that the Cambodian government has been using its influence to delay progress toward the opening of the tribunal, partly because of a fear that the findings could implicate or embarrass members of the government, some of whom are former Khmer Rouge themselves.

Petit, who is a co-prosecutor working with a Cambodian counterpart, declines to speculate about Cambodian government motivations or possible delaying tactics. He argues instead that he and the other jurists involved are making good, steady progress.

“I don’t comment on speculation,” said Petit in an interview with Radio Free Asia. “I don’t think that would be wise on my part.”

“We’ve made a lot of progress, more than other tribunals [at this stage]. We have investigators who have started amassing a fair amount of information. We’ve developed cases. And we have a pretty good idea already of where we’re going to go.”

“So I think that overall in six months we have a pretty good record, especially considering the limited resources we have, compared with any other tribunal that I know about.”

Petit served as a criminal prosecutor in Montreal for nearly a decade. Then he decided to try something different. He launched a new career as an international prosecutor.

From 1996-99, he worked as a legal officer in the prosecutor's office of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda. From 1999-2004, he served in quick succession as a legal adviser with the U.N. mission in Kosovo, a prosecutor with the U.N. mission in East Timor, and senior trial attorney with the Special Court for Sierra Leone.

Petit sees similarities between the Khmer Rouge case and those of other war crimes trials. But he also sees significant differences.

As for similarities, he says, "It's always about victims, isn't it? And trying to bring justice for somebody whose rights and integrity have been violated. To a certain extent, it's always the same."

But then he finds huge differences in Cambodia.

We have strong cooperation and good relations and good planning to achieve the purpose of our mission.

Co-Prosecutor Chea Leang

To begin with, much time has passed. The Khmer Rouge began their full-scale reign of terror more than 30 years ago, in April 1975.

Many Cambodians have been reluctant to talk about what happened and their government has not encouraged discussion. School textbooks barely touch on the subject.

Many are still confused as to why the Khmer Rouge killed so many innocent people. By some estimates up to two million people died from executions, starvation, and overwork.

"Obviously the passage of time is a big factor," says Petit. "There is a lack of understanding about what happened.

"In Rwanda, you knew why you were being killed. It was because you were a Tutsi. And the government had been saying for 30 years that the Tutsi were the enemy. Here that's not the case. A whole generation grew up not really learning about this. And there are all those survivors who don't really want to tell their children what happened to them.

"There's a knowledge gap that did not exist in some other cases. It's not either harder or easier to deal with—just different."

Since last July, Petit has been working on a regular basis with a Cambodian counterpart, East-German trained co-prosecutor Chea Leang.

"We're working very well together," says Petit.

In a brief interview, Chea Leang agreed. "We have strong cooperation and good relations and good planning to achieve the purpose of our mission," she said.

Does she believe that trials will begin this year?

"Now we are working on internal rules," she says. "If we agree on those, we expect a trial to take place in 2007."

Asked if he expects to see trials this year, Petit says: "Yes. I would hope so. And I'd be very surprised if we didn't have trials. I'd be very disappointed. There must be. There's no way around it. There must be."



Justice Initiative

Friday, 29 January 2007

Press Release

Urgent Action Needed on Rules for Khmer Rouge Court

New York, January 29, 2007—Urgent action is needed to ensure the timely adoption of rules to govern the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC), the Open Society Justice Initiative said today. Last week's reported progress is welcome, but concerns about delays and political interference at the court must be addressed quickly, the group said.

Nine judges from the ECCC—the court charged with prosecuting the senior leaders and those most responsible for the crimes of the Khmer Rouge—met last week to clarify the internal rules that will govern the court. While this Review Committee settled many outstanding questions, significant issues remain which could affect the court's ability to meet international standards, including the full and independent participation of international defense counsel. Concerns about political interference in the process continue to stoke fears that Cambodian judges may not be free to exercise independent judgment.

Swift action by the ECCC judges is still needed to settle the remaining rule disputes and avoid further delays in a court that is already six months into its projected three-year lifespan. Even after the Review Committee completes its work, the rules must be approved by a full plenary of all 25 judges.

"The judges' plenary session must be held and internal regulations must be adopted as soon as possible," said James A. Goldston, executive director of the Open Society Justice Initiative. "Further delays risk jeopardizing the court's effectiveness, compounding concerns about political interference and fatally damaging the credibility of an accountability process which has been 30 years in the making."

Court administrators must immediately put into place several institutional safeguards, said the Justice Initiative. Such safeguards should include:

- Hiring well trained and high quality translators to ensure misunderstandings are kept to an absolute minimum.
- Placing an international judge on the ground in Phnom Penh to facilitate judicial leadership and ensure that progress is being made to keep the ECCC on schedule.
- Hiring law clerks immediately to assist the judges with legal research and preparation for the next Review Committee and plenary session.
- Organizing training for the judges in Cambodian law and procedure, international law and procedure, and international fair trial standards. The court has failed thus far to provide such training, undoubtedly contributing to the current difficulties in finding agreement on the rules.
- Holding the next Review Committee and plenary session outside Phnom Penh to ensure distractions and opportunities for political interference are minimized.

The success of the ECCC requires continued and powerful diplomatic engagement and attention by donor states and the United Nations. International and Cambodian NGOs also need to monitor the ECCC, and publicly and independently report on the process as it unfolds. Transparency and a heightened sense of urgency are required of the ECCC. All interested parties need to engage closely with the rules process, and to speak out loudly, if signs of political interference and delay appear to jeopardize the process.

Voice of America

Monday, 29 January 2007

African Union Chooses Ghana Over Sudan as Bloc Chair

The African Union has picked Ghana to lead the organization, rejecting a bid by Sudan because of the crisis in Darfur.

The A.U.'s chief executive, Alpha Oumar Konare, announced the decision at the A.U. summit in Addis Ababa Monday.

He said by a consensus vote, member nations chose Ghanaian President John Kufuor to hold the A.U.'s rotating chairmanship.

Sudan had said it would fight to lead the 53-member organization. But several member nations opposed Sudan because of the chaos and violence in Darfur.

This is the second year in a row Sudan was denied the A.U. chairmanship because of the Darfur situation.

More than four years of fighting in the region has killed some 200,000 people, and driven more than two million others from their homes.

Sudan is accused of fueling the conflict by arming Arab militias. President Omar al-Bashir has rejected U.N. efforts to deploy a larger peacekeeping force to the region.

An African Union force of 7,000 has been ineffective in stopping the region's violence.



President John Kufuor of Ghana, center, leaves 8th African Union summit in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 29 Jan 2007