

SPECIAL COURT FOR SIERRA LEONE
PRESS AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE



PRESS CLIPPINGS

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

Thursday, 30 March 2006

The press clips are produced Monday to Friday.
If you are aware of omissions or have any comments or suggestions please contact
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Sierra Leone Media

Kenyan Brigadier Narrates Ordeal / New Citizen	Pages 3-4
Caught / Awoko	Pages 5-7
Taylor in Special Court Cell / New Citizen	Pages 8
Charles Taylor and the Peace Process / New Citizen	Page 9
No Hiding Place! Taylor Lands at Special Court	Pages 10-11
Taylor in Special Court Net / Awareness Times	Page 12
That Escape and Dramatic Taylor Arrest / Awareness Times	Pages 13-14
A Case of Regional Betrayal or Quest for Local Justice? / For di People	Page 15
At Gamboru-Ngala Border Crossing...Taylor's Dollars, Range Rover Jeep Seized / Independent Observer	Page 16
Taylor's Extradition and the International Community / Salone Times	Page 17
Charles Taylor Now in Custody of Special Court / Sierra News	Pages 18-19
Taylor Now at Special Court / Spectator	Pages 20-21
When Taylor's Trial Begins at Special Court / Spectator	Page 22
Investors Reportedly Scared...Irish and Swedish Troops on Alert for Special Court / Standard Times	Pages 22-24
Chief Prosecutor Announces the Arrival of Charles Taylor at the Special Court / OTP	Page 25
Press Conference – Desmond de Silva / SCSL	Page 26

International Media

Liberian Seized to Stand Trial on War Crimes / New York Times	Pages 27-29
Taylor sent to war crimes court / BBC	Pages 30-31
West Africa's wars catch up with Taylor / BBC	Pages 32-33
Charles Taylor in custody to face war crimes trial / Reuters	Page 34
Charles Taylor to Face War Crimes Charges in Sierra Leone / Voice of America	Page 35
Liberia's Taylor taken before tribunal / Associated Press	Page 36
Nigerian Police Arrest Fugitive Liberian Warlord / Ohmy News	Pages 37-38
Irish troops play role in ex-warlord's capture / Irish Examiner	Pages 39-40
Taylor behind bars / News24.com	Page 41
Taylor's loyalists stormed Calabar before failed escape bid / Vanguard	Page 42
Secretary-General's Press Encounter With CNN and UNTV / UN	Page 43
Liberia: U.S. Congressman Royce Commends Turn-Over of Charles / Liberian Times	Page 44
Liberia: The Transfer Of Mr Taylor, A Test To National Unity / Liberian Times	Pages 45-46

New Citizen
30 March 2006

KENYAN BRIGADIER NARRATES ORDEAL

By Samuel Serry Jr.
A Kenyan Brigadier, Lionel Ngondi, witness no. T. F. 1-165 at the ongoing RUF trial at the Special Court yesterday testified how his troops then serving as UNAMSIL peacekeepers were attacked and in the process two of the UN peacekeepers were killed by RUF fighters at a DDR camp between Makeni and

Magburaka in 2000. Led in evidence by Prosecution Lawyer, Mohamed Bangura, the witness said the peacekeepers were attacked by RUF fighters under the command of Augustine Gbao and that the RUF fighters also demanded that ten of their colleagues who had earlier turned in
Cont. back page

From page 1

BRIGADIER

their rifles to the UN peacekeepers be handed to them.

The witness further narrated that the situation escalated as RUF fighter, Morris Kallon drove a vehicle towards the camp, firing warning shots.

"RUF's Morris Kallon scolded, slapped and bundled a military observer, Major Ganase into his car and drove off to Makeni," the witness testified.

He continued when he stated that the peacekeepers attempted to negotiate with the RUF's high command but sensing that the RUF was not ready for any meaningful dialogue, he ordered his troops out of the camp to avoid unnecessary confrontation, but that the RUF fighters opened fire, injuring three of his men.

Following that incident, according to the

taken hostage at another DDR camp in Magburaka.

The witness further testified that the situation prompted the deployment of Zambian troops who were also abducted between Lunsar and Makeni.

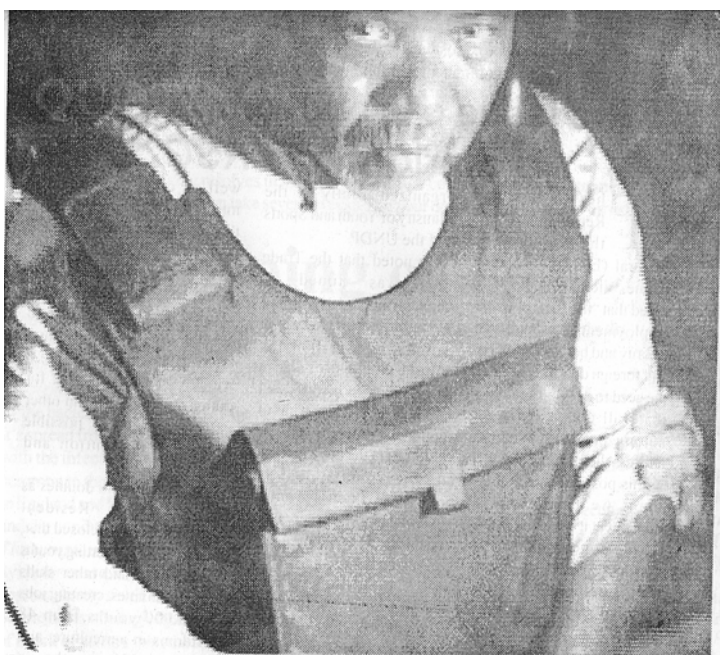
He further stated that he lost contact with his soldiers at Makump as RUF fighters opened fire on them at point blank range, hitting one

Private Yusuf on his chest.

The witness concluded that that his men had to defend themselves as soldiers and escaped to Makeni through the bush path while another Kenyan peacekeeper, Private Wayana, who was shot on his hip, died later at an Islamic hospital in Makeni.

Awoko
30 March 2006

Caught



By Betty Milton & Kelvin Lewis

Charles Taylor in bullet proof

Charles Taylor showing handcuffs

At exactly 7pm the drone of the UN helicopters increased as they approached New England /ille where the Special

Court is located. Red lights on the top of light poles had been lit apparently to guide the helicopters. Unexpectedly they did

not come from the sea side, rather they emerged from the hills and onlookers scrambled to catch a first hand glimpse of the carriers bringing the infamous former

Liberian President Charles Taylor.

Five minutes later the first of the two helicopters landed within the detention centre as the

other continued to hover around. A white Toyota Land cruiser was then driven close to the steps of the helicopter. Several security men alighted and took up

positions forming two lines leading from the helicopter to the open back doors of the waiting Toyota. Then the handcuffed hands became

Contd. Page 2

Caught

From Front Page

visible, followed by the physical frame as Charles Taylor wearing a black bullet proof vest over his off white gown stooped down to prevent his head from hitting the top of the helicopter and climbed down the steps. As he took the few steps into the waiting vehicle his head dropped down fixing his gaze on the ground.

The vehicle then moved close to the door of the cells and Taylor again alighted and again he fixed his gaze on the ground not saying a word and appearing to be really shocked he walked within the two lines created for him into the cells.

In the cell block, the Deputy Inspector General of Police Oliver Somasa formally arrested Charles Taylor on a warrant issued by the Special Court for Sierra Leone, then the mandatory cautionary statements were read to him along with the new indictment. This brief ceremony was witnessed by the Regional Police Commissioner for the Western Area Tamba Gbeki and the Director of the Criminal Investigations Department Chief



Desmond De Silva

Superintendent Musa Bockarie Lappia. DIG Somasa then again formally handed over Mr Charles Taylor to the Special Custody for custody and detention.

Outside in the streets movement had come to a virtual stop as people ran out of their homes to look at the two helicopters circling the city before moving towards the Special Court.

"This is indeed victory for justice" exclaimed an onlooker as the white helicopter landed at the Special Court airstrip

Barely an hour later after Taylor landed Chief Prosecutor, Desmond de Silva announced to journalists at the Special Court that "today is a momentous occasion and an important day for international justice, the international community and above all, the people of Sierra Leone."

He went on "The

indictee Charles Taylor has today been safely secured and is now in the detention facility of this international tribunal here in Freetown" The Chief Prosecutor emphasized that "his presence in the custody of the Special Court sends out the clear message that no matter how rich, powerful or feared people may be, the law is above them."

De Silva disclosed that the earlier 17 count indictment which had been issued by the former Prosecutor David Crane had now been amended to 11 counts to "ensure a more focused trial."

Questioned on when Taylor might face the Judges in Court the Prosecutor explained that he will now have to serve the new indictment on his lawyers, who are likely to claim that the prosecution has had two years to make their case so they must be given another six

months. This he said is likely to prolong the time table and therefore he could not say specifically when the trial will begin.

On the question of security he said Taylor "is something of an escapist but I think that he might find it rather difficult on this occasion." He maintained that they have got "reinforcements coming in at first light."

On the issue of speculations that Taylor may

be taken to the Hague for trial De Silva answered that "The people indicted by the Special Court for Sierra Leone were intended to be tried in Sierra Leone, the court however has the ability to sit elsewhere if required" adding that "he (Taylor) would be making his first appearance before a judge in Freetown." That initial appearance he said could be in a very short time "indeed it could be by the end of this week."

New Citizen
30 March 2006

TAYLOR IN SPECIAL COURT CELL

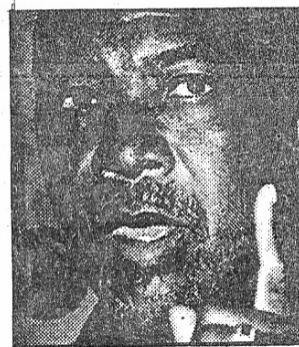
The Special Court Prosecutor, Desmond de Silva yesterday evening informed media practitioners at the Special Court Room No. 2 that the fugitive former President of Liberia, Charles Taylor is now safe and secure at the cell of the Special Court, New England Ville in Freetown.

He said, "today is a momentous day for

international justice and unity as Charles Taylor, an indictee of the Special Court has been safely secured at the Special Court for trial. ... And this is a clear message to all those who see themselves as powerful and feared as the law is supreme."

Special Court indictee Charles Taylor was yesterday evening ferried from the Liberian capital of Monrovia to Freetown, where he was handed over to the Special Court authorities.

The Nigerian authorities who had granted



Charles Taylor

From page 1

him sanctuary had earlier extradited him to his native Liberia, where the United Nations-peacekeepers in that country, UNMIL,

New Citizen
30 March 2006

COMMENTARY

CHARLES TAYLOR AND THE PEACE PROCESS

Charles Taylor is finally facing the Special Court in Sierra Leone after three years of avoiding to make his presence felt at the court. To many Sierra Leoneans, the fact that Charles Taylor will at last face justice is an indication that justice should have no boundaries and that those guilty of promoting impunity must answer for their deeds.

There is no doubt therefore, that Charles Taylor must have his day in court for after all, Sierra Leone is a democracy and the Special

Cont. back page

SPECIAL COURT

promptly arrested him, putting him onboard a UN helicopter and brought to Sierra Leone.

By 7 o'clock yesterday evening, Charles Taylor was already occupying his cell at the Special Court on Jomo Kenyatta Road in Freetown.

Earlier, the former Liberian President actually attempted to flee Nigeria but was arrested along the border with Cameroon, causing President Obasanjo's government to lose its temper and taking the firm decision to get him out of Nigeria without further delay.

Charles Taylor, who is the first accused on the Special Court list and was originally

charged with a seventeen count indictment but which yesterday was reduced to eleven.

When Charles Taylor entered the facilities of the Special Court yesterday, he also joined former Minister of Internal Affairs in Sierra Leone, Sam Hinga Norman; RUF's Issa Sesay; Morris Kallon of the RUF; Augustine Gbao, also of the RUF; Moinina Fofana of the CDF; Santigie Kanu alias 55 and Ibrahim Bazy Kamara, both of the AFRC.

Charles Taylor had earlier fought very hard to avoid appearing before the Special Court, utilizing the services of former Freetown Lawyer, Terrence Terry to make several representations on his behalf.

But Terrence Terry's efforts were cut short by his sudden death two years ago. Some Liberians were clearly satisfied that at last their alleged tormentor would face justice at the Special Court in Freetown just as some other Liberians believe that it is a shame for a former President that ruled their country to be dragged before a Special Court like any other common criminal.

The trial of Charles Taylor, who actually won convincing presidential elections in his native Liberia in 1997, serves as a lesson to all politicians but more importantly Heads of State as the international justice system does not condone sacred cows.

Democrat
30 March 2006

No hiding place!

Taylor lands

at Special Court



By Abayomi Tejan

Charles Taylor arrived under heavy air and land military escort at 7.00pm yesterday. He is presently reclining in his lonely cell after he was whisked into the penitentiary in a white flowing gown, handcuffed and surrounded by combat ready troops. Crowds of onlookers cheered at the victory of having the common enemy in our custody. *See details on page 4*

Taylor will never again see the light of the day

From Page 1

When news broke out early this week that Charles Taylor had escaped from Nigeria, sections of the local press groped in the dark in search of hard facts but could find none. Incredible stories marred the integrity of editors that concocted alarming headlines on the possible whereabouts of Africa's most wanted war criminal. Those papers became a laughing stock to news vendors as news emerged that Taylor had been captured while attempting to cross the border into Cameroun.

Sporadic scenes of jubilation cut out the obvious apprehension shown by many locals that another war was imminent with Taylor at large. This sharply contrasts with the leftist approach to relevance of the Special Court and Taylor's prosecution for horrendous crimes his ignoble regime facilitated in Sierra Leone. One of Taylor's closest confidants poisoned the atmosphere with a vicious propaganda that Taylor was in the bushes of Liberia- a sinister propaganda that rocked the peaceful atmosphere this country now enjoys.

Queer scripts suggesting that Taylor be tried in the Hague betrays the ignorance and naivete of mediocre journalist who ought to know that only crimes committed after 2000 could be tried By the International Criminal Court at the Hague. It is a pity that supposed journalists exploit the gullibility of a civil populace incapable of understanding the full implications of Taylor's role in the conflict in Sierra Leone.

Had Taylor not been captured Nigeria would have betrayed the cause of freedom and the rule of law in the subregion; Obasango would also have antagonized the right thinking portion of the civilized world and would have faced dire consequences based on statements of Condolezza Rice, US Secretary of State. In addition, the role of Nigeria in the long drawn conflict in Liberia and Sierra Leone would have come under close scrutiny, and would have lent credence to arguments that Nigerian troops deliberately protracted the war to fetch more diamonds and continue in their sexual exploits of our young girls, which led to the slaughter of a good number of Nigerian soldiers in Sierra Leone.

Frantic moves are underway at the Special Court for Sierra Leone to receive its indicttee who probably bears the greatest responsibility for the horror at Freetown on January 6 1999, and the aggregate of war crimes and crimes against humanity committed in the course of the conflict.

Already crack Môngolian troops have been deployed in readiness for the arrival of Charles Taylor, but there are concerns over the integrity of the Nigerian troops stationed adjacent to the cells, and there are suggestions that in the light of the foiled attempt by persons yet unknown to unleash another round of terror in the subregional, the services of those Nigerian troops ought to be dispensed with.

Taylor in Special Court net

From front page

By Sayoh Kamara & Saffia Kabba

Charles Ghankay Taylor is currently in the net of the UN backed court in Freetown following his capture by Nigerian Police yesterday as he attempted to flee the country.

Charles Taylor was brought to the Special Court on board a United Nations helicopter from Liberia, where he had been formerly handed over to the Liberian authorities by his Nigerian hosts on request. He was immediately handed over to the United Nations.

The helicopter which brought Taylor direct into the Special Court premise landed at about 6:45pm, while another a security escort, hovered around the court's premises.

Taylor handcuffed and dressed in brown suit with a black bullet proof jacket over, looked depressed and downcasted. He did not speak to any body and kept his head bowed.

During a press conference late yesterday evening, the Chief Prosecutor of the Special Court for Sierra Leone, Desmond de Silva QC described the day as "a momentous occasion and an important day for international justice."

The presence of Charles Taylor in the custody of the court, de Silva

maintained, "Sends out the clear message that no matter how rich, powerful and feared people may be-the law is above them."

The Special Court had originally indicted Charles Taylor on 3rd March, 2003 on a 17 count indictment for war crimes and crimes against humanity during the conflict in Sierra Leone.

According to de Silva, on 16th March 2006, a Judge of the Special Court gave leave to amend the indictment against Taylor under which he now stands charged with eleven counts.

The Chief Prosecutor disclosed that Charles Taylor will make his initial appearance at the Special Court to enter a plea by the end of the week.

On whether his full trial will take place here, de Silva stated, "There is an option to transfer the trial to another country, but for now I think it will be done here in Freetown."

On how secure the Special Court is to handle a high profile criminal like Charles Taylor who has a record of prison escapes, de Silva retorted, "Taylor will find it extremely difficult to escape on this occasion. We have adequate security on the ground and in the even of any eventuality there are reinforcements that can come at first flight to rescue the situation," he assured.

Awareness Times

30 March 2006

Monday, it was announced from the Federal Republic of Nigeria that fugitive Liberian President, Charles Ghankay Taylor has disappeared from his residence in the state of Calabar, north of the country amid all the security that was centered around the residence for three years.

His mysterious disappearance, an apparent affront to justice, sparked huge doubts on the integrity of the Nigerian government especially President Obasanjo, whose brotherly role in the peace and stability of the West Africa sub region, is acclaimed by his African colleagues as well as those of the west and the United Nations. This however put under strain with the developments surrounding the escape of Taylor.

President Obasanjo by all indications was diplomatically averse to the Special Court's indictment of Charles Taylor in the first instance, as was depicted by his outburst in Accra when a warrant of arrest was issued by the Special Court through the International Police (INTERPOL) when he the President Taylor was attending a summit of ECOWAS Heads of State in Accra.

Although it was then the sole responsibility of the Ghanaian government to have enforced the warrant, this did not materialise because at the time, it was considered an affront to the respect of the leaders to oversee the arrest of a colleague Head of State on an official function on behalf of his country. It was widely believed at the time that President Obasanjo influenced that no decision, ultimately endorsed by the other Heads of State and as a result, Mr. Taylor was allowed an unhindered return to Liberia.

The position of President Obasanjo and a few other West African leaders at that time was based on the maintaining of the dignity and respect of the African leader in light of their held notion of Pan Africanism. It was believed within that circle that it was disrespectful to the African leadership for a sitting President to be indicted by a not well recognized court and would be prosecuted by a 'junior legal luminary' referring then to the then American Chief Prosecutor of the Special Court, David Crane, whose earlier remarks at the onset of the court were considered as derogatory to the integrity of the African'. This position, in my candid opinion was one that had lived with President Obasanjo up to when he mediated the exit of Taylor out of Liberia and was granted asylum in Nigeria.

This was a move indeed endorsed by ECOWAS, the AU and certainly, the UN. It was a move that was to ensure the democratization of Liberia, considering the transgression of Mr. Taylor on the presidency and the potential threat posed by the Liberians United for Development (LURD) rebels, which could have resulted in further loss of lives and the destruction of properties in that belligerent state. The agreement however conditioned the Nigerians to subject Mr. Taylor to the strict conditions of political asylum, conditions which included; refraining himself from the politics of Liberia directly or indirectly and to hand over Mr. Taylor any time on the request of any democratically elected President of Liberia.

However, indications were that the Nigerian government of President Obasanjo did not heed any of these conditionalities, as Mr. Taylor was reported to be engaged in direct contacts with politicians and other senior Liberian stake holders during the democratization process and this was confirmed by the massive campaigns mounted by people reported as being under his influence and financial support, who actually voted to the Liberian legislature. This was a mis en place tactic by Mr Taylor to lead his cohorts to obstruct any legislative ratification of his extradition to the Special Court for Sierra Leone. The other reported infringement of the agreement was the imbalance by the Nigerian government over the transfer of money by the war times indicted criminal. He was reported to having visitors from all over the world including his former NPFL War Commanders in Liberia, with whom he planned and strategised. Charles Taylor when he Calaba was treated like a Diplomat. He had a fleet of vehicles with diplomatic registration numbers on them, which gave him the immunity to do what ever he liked outside his asylum conditions, such as his so-called self regulated escape.

It was not therefore in any way convinced with what ever explanation that was given by the Presidential Spokesman, Mr. Kayode in his attempt to exonerate the Nigerian government from blame over the then escape. Had it not been that the United States government and indeed the wider international community was firmly behind the issue of addressing impunity as far as the Sierra Leone situation was concerned, President Obasanjo would have had his objective attained much to the chagrin of the thousands of war victims in Sierra Leone. Because he simply would

not like seeing Mr. Taylor stand trial, he subjected himself to ignorance of the possibilities of Taylor escaping, a move which Human Right Organisations in and out of Nigeria itself had since signalled about. But again, just to ensure that things work the way it happened on last Monday, 24 hours after the Nigerian government had announced its willingness to handover Mr. Taylor, President Obasanjo left the country for the United States in order for the escapade to go on its planned course. Could the Nigerians not have placed Taylor under control immediately they had communicated their consent to hand him over if they were not prepared for the swift criticisms and of course embarrassments from the international community?

However, after making the run and provoking the diplomatic uproar for two days, which perhaps was against the escape plan of the Nigerian authorities, Taylor was apprehended yesterday morning on the north-eastern border of Nigeria almost entering into Cameroon. Indications were that he was heading for Libya, the country of his godfather through Chad.

Why I have strong reservation over the Nigerian government's so-called ignorance of the Taylor escape is that, firstly, he was arrested immediately by the Nigerian police President Obasanjo ordered so, after he had been squeezed diplomatically especially by President George W. Bush and, secondly, he was caught driven in an "ash-colour range rover with a diplomatic registration number", which was an indirect order to all security forces concerned within Nigeria, not to have obstructed his escape. But because Taylor and perhaps those ordered to over see the exercise had not worked according to schedule, they were caught off target. Taylor was reported caught with large quantities of United States Dollars at his point of arrest. With these, I stand strongly to submit that the Nigerian authorities, especially President Obasanjo had full knowledge of the escape and perhaps the intended point of call. Now, the same pressure that necessitated the orchestrated arrest of Taylor is the same pressure that has forced President Obasanjo to this time round waste no time to order the immediate repatriation of the fugitive to Liberia. May be this time round, the Nigerians will not be requesting for President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf to go and collect Taylor, it will be done at their free will as a way of cleaning their hands like Pontius Pilate did in the case of Jesus Christ when he handed the Prophet to the Pharisees.

This was what was expected of big brother Nigeria long since. They have played a very crucial role in the restoration of civilization in the lives of the Liberian people and as well helped the return of that country among the community of civilized nations. What Nigeria was about to fail in doing however, was the setting of a precedence in the condemnation of impunity, especially by African Leaders against their people, be it directly or indirectly.

It was my hope that Nigeria had learnt enough from the experience in Rwanda and the addressing of impunity by the UN Tribunal in Arusha, Tanzania. It was my hope that Nigeria had learnt from the experience of the cooperation of other African states in their handing over of people who had been indicted by that Tribunal to face trial. It was my hope that Nigeria, considering the huge financial, material and human loss it experienced in Sierra Leone as a result of the war which was sponsored by Charles Taylor would have joined the 5million people in Sierra Leone, including the thousands of amputees, war wounded, victims of rape and so on, to say 'No more to impunity!' This however has not been the case. Big brother Nigeria was bent on providing protection to an individual that had in fact sponsored the summary amputation and killing of thousands of its own citizens.

I will not refer to this entire episode of the escape and arrest of Charles Taylor as a typical Wild West style of protectionism, rather I will refer to it as a typical West African style of protectionism, which in essence could not match the whims and caprices of the West.

That mysterious escape and dramatic arrest of Taylor has a thick dark cloud over it, but as already indicated, we are suspiciously awaiting the outcome of the commission ordered by 'Mr. President' of Nigeria that will be looking into the circumstances of Taylor's escape. Already the security officers detailed on his security are said to have been arrested. If there is no under hand at play in this whole business, May the Truth and Nothing but the Truth come up. Then, Nigeria would have proved to the entire world that it is not hypocritical about its big brotherly role in this western angle of Africa.

For di People
30 March 2006

Commentary

by Jia Kangbai

A Case of Regional Betrayal Or Quest For Local Justice?

EVENTS WEEKS ago across the diaspora ranging from the death of Slobodan Milosovic of the former Yugoslavia, to the extradition of a former rebel commander, Thomas Lubanga of the Democratic Republic of Congo to The Hague to face war crimes charges, to the intention by the Liberian government of Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf to have Mr Charles Taylor extradited to Sierra Leone to face the UN-backed Special Court, can best be described as both coincidental, eventful, resourceful and of a big time precedent.

All three men played very pivotal roles in the carnage and active destruction of their own country and to say justice will never catch up with them is foolhardy. For what goes around must come around one day.

Albeit the international attempts to have the various individual justice systems try these men, it is the twin or two-track justice system of the UN-backed Special Court for Sierra Leone, which may try Taylor that sounds of much interest in the first place.

The twin justice system of the UN-backed Special Court for Sierra Leone is an interesting character and the blending of International Humanitarian Laws alongside the local laws of Sierra Leone just make the UN-backed Special Court so unique.

So there is a plethora of questions awaiting Charles Ghankay Taylor when he lands at the Lungi International Airport on his way to his cell along Jomo Kenyatta road.

Firstly, can the Special Court for Sierra Leone use the local laws of the country to try Charles Taylor when he is not a citizen of Sierra Leone? If the Special Court prosecutors can offer an answer to the above question, then a precedent can be set wherein foreigners and non residents who are found to have violated the laws of one country can be brought to book in that same country.

This precedent could have set aside the entity of sovereignty of a nation; for a nation is described as independent when the sovereignty of its people and State is upheld, respected, and not undermined. The various attempts to have Taylor tried in Sierra Leone, using both Sierra Leonean laws as well as interna-

tional laws, can have boomerang effect in years to come. For what will happen if a Sierra Leonean, either by himself or through proxy or intermediaries, covertly, overtly or even in actuality commits a crime in Liberia?

Should such a Sierra Leonean, irrespective of his status be held responsible and tried big time like what is about to be done in the case of Charles Ghankay Taylor-the West African bad boy of the nineties?

The expected extradition to Sierra Leone of Charles Taylor will surge the ongoing peace process in the country into a crucial and interesting phase but with much uncertainty and tension. Taylor is still a key player not only within Liberia, but also in the West African sub region.

In fact, the incumbent Liberian government has recognized this single salient fact that they have even come public to indicate that Taylor still runs some amount of the local economy in that country and also bears a large support.

The pending extradition of the former Liberia godfather has also provoked the question of regional loyalty and peace brokering mechanism. Taylor's exit from the seat of power in Liberia was as a result of months of negotiations that were brokered principally among many of the African key players, the likes of Thabo Mbeki of South Africa, Kuffour of Ghana and of course Nigeria's Olusengu Obasanjo.

One thing that will definitely come to the surface is that bringing Charles Taylor to Sierra Leone for a court system that is loathed by many Sierra Leoneans and even seen as unnecessary will undermine future attempts by regional leaders in Africa to broker peace within member states of the sub region.

In future, beleaguered African leaders will always be pointing to the 'betrayal' of Taylor by his African brothers to an American-backed justice system that was held in Sierra Leone. And if the Nigerian foot shuffling may come to an end, people will always see Nigeria as a very unreliable partner in any negotiation.

Remember the way the former Liberian leader (again), Samuel Kayon Doe met his brutal death? There is a whimsical account of how ex-president Doe was literally sold out by a Ghanaian commander serv-

ing in the ECOMOG peacekeeping force in Liberia at the time. Perhaps this is one very reason why the Nigerians are playing the Taylor game with the highest form of diplomacy and maturity - they (Nigerians) don't want the blood of Taylor in their hands.

The case of Charles Taylor coming to face trial is episodic. Everything is now set in the tinderbox and the fuse is about to be ignited.

But will he (Taylor) be granted a fair trial? Taylor's case is a fore gone conclusion as far as the general public perception of the man Taylor is concerned.

Taylor has been indicted, docked, prosecuted, convicted and sentenced even before his arrival in Freetown. The man (Taylor) is a gonna. He won't get fair trial here in Freetown.

The pending trial of Charles Taylor brings me face-to-face with the trial of OJ Simpson - that US football celebrity who was found wanting for the alleged murder of his wife, Nicole Simpson.

There is no escaping or avoiding the comparison of the two trials for the Taylor war crimes saga adds a new dimension to the debate of mind-set justice in a sustained theater of American bully.

Even before the request to have him extradited, Taylor's indictment, like the OJ Simpson trial, made the media and legal analysts to operate with little restraint and without a sense of proportion. The media and the law minded shoved away all professional ethics and morality and tend to feast on the Taylor menu of the day. All other matters were dredged up and presented to the general public as if they were not important. The worst prosecutor for Taylor - an American called David Crane was conjured simply because the Americans want to teach Taylor a bitter lesson.

There is no neutrality when it comes to trying Taylor. No objective feelings as far as Taylor-the bad boy of West Africa is concerned. No nothing. Just a straight case and a guilty verdict. So why waste our time?

Taylor standing trial in Sierra Leone is just one of the increasing neocolonialism which is becoming paradoxical in our modern day world. For who will try George Bush for all the atrocities his men are committing in Iraq?

At Gamboru-Ngala Border Crossing...

Taylor's Dollars, Range Rover Jeep Seized

Charles Taylor arrived surprisingly yesterday morning in the town of Gamboru-Ngala, close to the Cameroon border in the north-eastern Nigerian state of Borno in

a Range Rover Jeep with diplomatic corp number plate, according to the *BBC* quoting a trader working at the frontier the *AFP*

(French news agency) spoke to.

One report say he was accompanied by his wife Jewel, a Senator in the Liberian House of Representatives and one of their

children.

"He was wearing a white flowing robe," said Babagana Alhaji Kata. And it was the same attire he was on when he was flown to Liberia later in the day

and subsequently to Sierra Leone to start the long journey to face justice.

"He passed through immigration but when he reached customs they were suspicious and they insisted on searching the jeep, where they found a large amount of US dollars. After a further search they discovered he was Charles Taylor." The driver of the jeep, according to reports last night, abandoned the vehicle together with another passenger and fled into the direction of Cameroon.

Nigeria has arrested Mr. Taylor's Nigerian guards and has launched an investigation. They are to explain the security lapse that saw Taylor leave his luxurious mansion in Calabar unchecked. This notwithstanding, observers believe the entire drama was staged-managed by Nigeria to have Taylor leave her soil against the background of mounting pressure from the international community.

President Obasanjo was embarrassed at Monday's development but was relieved yesterday at news of Taylor's arrest coming just as he was about to meet President Bush at the White House.

& spends first nite in cell

Mr. Taylor arrived in Freetown shortly before 7pm last evening in a UN helicopter that airlifted him from Liberia after his formal handing over by the Nigerians to the

Liberian authorities who later turned him over to the Sierra Leone Special Court. As he walked out of the Nigerian Presidential jet, he was official served with the

warrant of arrest prepared three years ago but which the court was unable to execute after a botched attempt in Ghana.

In Sierra Leone airspace,

people cheered in the centre of Freetown as the helicopter flying overhead made its way towards the direction of the Special Court.

After the usual formalities, the court's most high profile indictee was escorted to his cell to await a fixed date for his trial to begin.

EDITORIAL

TAYLOR'S EXTRADITION AND THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

The news that Charles Taylor had escaped from his Calabar exile home in Nigeria yesterday was a cause of worry for most West Africans especially in Ivory Coast, Guinea and Sierra Leone – countries that tasted Charles Taylor's toxic export of war and mayhem. This was clearly evident by the responses mailed to and aired over international radio stations frequently listened to by West Africans like BBC, VOA and RFI. In his home country Liberia, though, opinions were mixed on his extradition to Liberia and onward conveyance to Sierra Leone.

Taylor's subsequent arrest on Nigeria's boarder with Cameroon and swift flight to Liberia from where he was further conveyed to Freetown where he will be tried by the UN-backed Special Court for Sierra Leone, speak volumes of what pressure from the international community (especially the all-powerful America) can achieve within a specified period of time, if they are committed. It is no gainsaying that the Nigerian Government was not a hundred percent committed to handing over Charles Taylor to the Liberian Government.

Statements that Charles Taylor was not a prisoner in Nigeria; that it was not the responsibility of the Nigerian Government to arrest Taylor, or that the Liberian Government should go to Nigeria and get him if they wanted to, and the eventual escape (or attempt to escape) were frustrating for the effort to arrest and extradite the war criminal to Liberia.

But when America frowned over Taylor's escape and Condoleeza fumed and made very strongly worded statements on the issue, the criminal was arrested just within a few hours of what was a rapidly deteriorating diplomatic relationship between Uncle Sam and the Nigerian Government.

The dramatic resolution of the Taylor-escape saga clearly indicates that the West can achieve a whole lot more in Africa if they are committed to it.

As we applaud the individuals, organisations and nations that contributed to actualise the conveyance of Charles Taylor to Freetown for trial at the Special Court, we in addition encourage the West, particularly America, to continue to take such rigid stance in the future on African issues. Maybe, if America had taken such a stance on Sudan's Dafur crisis, more lives would have been saved.

If America takes the stance it adopted within hours of Charles Taylor's escape on issues like democracy, good governance, corruption and the fight against killer diseases like HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria in Africa, much can be achieved in splits of seconds.

It is high time America stood its ground in sustaining democracy in Africa. For example, America should be firm in speaking the truth to third-term seeking presidents that the new global political trend does not have provision for pilfering with constitutions to legitimise the undue imposition of presidents on to their citizens. Based on what happened within hours of Taylor's escape, we as well believe that the West can do a lot more in minimising corruption in Africa by making good governance, transparency and accountability benchmarks for the award of aids and grants as well as continued diplomatic ties and trade relationships.

If African leaders know that they risk the possibility of being isolated by the west if they do not meet these benchmarks, they would be compelled to comply to the norms of good governance and be prepared to relinquish power when once their time is up.

sponsoring what he described "this historic event" and that the Commonwealth Business Council (CBC) under the leadership of the Director General Dr. Mohan Kamil who chaired the proceedings of the conference.

Welcoming the business investors, to Sierra Leone, the President hoped they would equally find time to enjoy the beautiful environment of the country.

"Especially to our visiting foreign investors, people of this country are anxiously looking forward to work in partnership with you. Of course, as you may probably aware this country had in recent decade faced huge challenges of civil conflict, deep-rooted poverty and bad governance", he pointed out.

He however, said that the country had worked hard to restore peace, security and stability such as, the flyer for this conference accurately depicts, there has been a better for international investors and entrepreneurs to at a look at a country on a verge of full recovery and sustainable high private sector led growth.

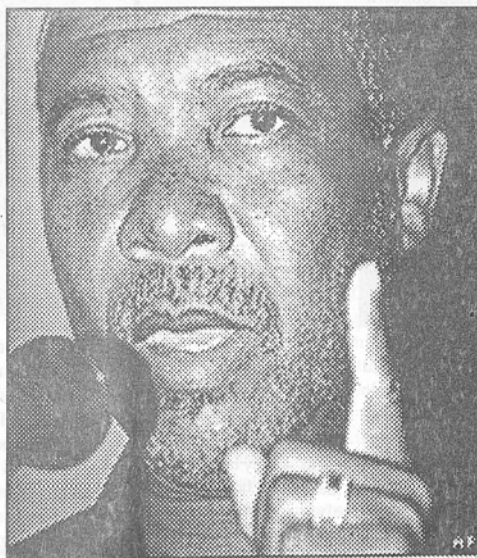
See back page

Charles Taylor now in custody of Special Court

Exiled former Liberian president and war crimes suspect Charles Taylor was brought to Freetown late last evening from Monrovia after being caught trying to escape from Nigeria. Former Liberian leader was first flown to Robert'sville airport in Monrovia on a special Nigerian aircraft where he was handed over to Liberian Government authorities who later handed him over to Unomil for onward transfer to the Special Court in Freetown. Mr Taylor is accused of selling diamonds and buying weapons for the Revolutionary United Front rebels

The rebels were notorious for hacking off the hands and legs of civilians during their

See back page



understanding for donor organizations and other partners to identify possible areas of intervention and support.

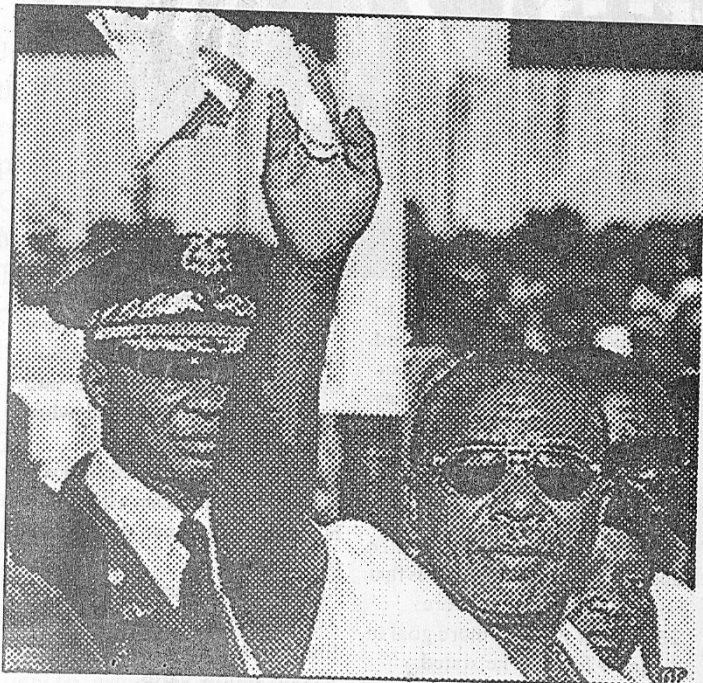
Mr. Angelo disclosed that UNDP was supporting youths in vocational and other skills training activities, creating jobs for 15,000 youths from 48 chiefdoms in agriculture, and engaging 550 youths in reforestation through replanting of fuel wood in 11 communities in the Western Area of the country.

The Vice-President Solomon Berewa, assured the youths of the Government's commitment to continue to support them in national development. He said the Government will continue to lay premium on ensuring the employment and empowerment of the youths so that they will be able to contribute towards the development of the country.

Mr. Berewa reiterated that youth issues were central to the development agenda of Government, and urged them to project the image of the country

See back page

Charles Taylor now in custody of Special Court



decade-long war.

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

Mr Taylor was detained earlier by security forces in the town of Gamboru-Ngala, close to the Cameroon border in the north-eastern Nigerian state of Borno. The former Liberian leader had arrived at the frontier in a Range Rover jeep with diplomatic corps number plates, a trader working at the Gamboru-Ngala border post is reported to have told journalists.

"He was wearing a white flowing robe," said Babagana Alhaji Kata.

"He passed through immigration

but when he reached customs they were suspicious and they insisted on searching the jeep, where they found a large amount of US dollars.

"After a further search they discovered he was Charles Taylor."

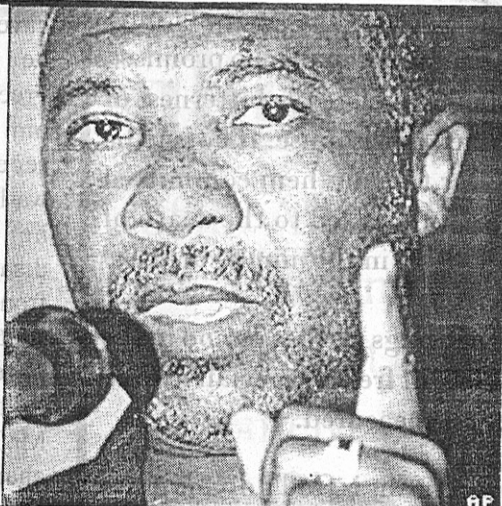
Nigeria has arrested Mr Taylor's Nigerian guards and has launched an investigation.

President Obasanjo ordered Mr Taylor to be sent back to Liberia immediately to be placed in custody there, Information Minister Frank Nweke told reporters.

News of his detention came an hour before Mr Obasanjo was due to leave

Spectator
30 March 2006

Taylor now at Special Court



Taylor: caught at last

The arrest of Charles Taylor by Nigerian soldiers along the North East border with Cameroon, who was later flown to the Nigerian Capital and then taken on board a

Nigeria Presidential jet bound for Liberia where he was to be received by the UNMIL force. The UN troops transferred him in a white helicopter to Sierra Leone to face trial at the Special Court for crimes against humanity.

According to a BBC report, they left Liberia yesterday after long delay because of bad weather but finally took off from the Roberts International Airport in Liberia for the Special Court
continued page 2

Taylor now at Special Court

from front page

A good number of Liberians noted that it is a disgrace to their country; while others are saying that every body must carry his own cross as such Taylor must be tried.

The Chief Prosecutor of the Special Court Desmond De Silva noted that he would have preferred for Taylor to be brought directly to Freetown instead of taking him to Liberia. They have received the one time warlords at the Special Court, he said. Mr Taylor's disappearance on Monday from his villa in Calaba in southern Nigeria came after Nigeria said Liberia was free to "take Taylor into custody". Mr Taylor was indicted on 17 charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity, for backing Sierra Leone's rebels. He resigned in 2003 and went into exile in a deal to end Liberia's civil war. He is reportedly being held in the town of Gamboru-Ngala, close to the Cameroon border

in the north-eastern Nigerian state of Borno and near the city of Maiduguri. "He's in the custody of security agencies in Borno," said Police spokesman Haz Iwendi. Nigeria had been sharply criticised for allowing Mr Taylor to escape, with US President George W. Bush facing calls to cancel his planned meeting with Nigerian counterpart Olusegun Obasanjo in Washington later on Wednesday. Mr Taylor's future was due to be discussed at their meeting. President Obasanjo had been "very shocked" by Mr Taylor's disappearance, Nigerian Information Minister Frank Nweke told the BBC's Focus on Africa programme. Nigeria had arrested Mr Taylor's Nigerian guards and set up a panel to investigate the matter, Mr Nweke said. **Escape** after Nigeria announced it would let Mr Taylor face trial, Desmond de Silva, Chief Prosecutor of the war crimes court in Sierra Leone, called for Mr Taylor's

immediate arrest, warning he could use his vast wealth and contacts to organise his escape. He described Mr Taylor as one of the three most important wanted war crimes suspects in the World. He then condemned his reported escape as "an affront to Justice". Lobby group Human Rights Watch called Mr Taylor's disappearance is a "disgrace", whilst United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan said he was deeply concerned. He called for countries in the region not to give refuge to Mr Taylor and to comply with a request to hand him over. US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said reports of Charles Taylor's escape were a matter of "utmost seriousness". She stressed to a congressional panel that Nigeria had made a commitment that Mr Taylor would be monitored while in exile. Ms Rice did not respond to a suggestion by one of the senators that it would be inappropriate to hold the Bush-Obasanjo talks under the circumstances.

Spectator
30 March 2006

When Taylor's Trial begins at Special Court

Sierra Leoneans are really apprehensive about the future especially when Charles Taylor's Trial begins. A good number of Sierra Leoneans are of the view that trying him here will send a lot of fear, threats and the likes. Sierra Leoneans had nothing to say initially when Hinga Norman, Issa Sesay, Moinina Fofanah and a host of others were arrested by the special court and charged with crimes against humanity, everybody wanted Charles Taylor, Johnny Paul Koroma to also face trial. Presently there is a drastic u-turn in the opinion of Sierra Leoneans as they no longer want Taylor's trial to be conducted here because of what they term as "security risk".

Whosoever committed crimes against humanity must be brought to justice and there are other courts like the Hague, they are presently trying a good number of people who committed crimes in Kosovo, the late Melosovic who was also under trial until his death few weeks ago, DR Congo rebel leader who is to be extradited to face trial in the Hague etc.

Charles Taylor too can be taken there and tried as long as it is all geared towards punishing those who brought pain to defenseless people.

Presently the security network at the Special Court has been beefed-up to welcome the man who promised Sierra Leoneans that; they will taste the bitterness of war and who surely fulfilled his promise. If he is to be tried in that same land for the mayhem committed by the orders he gave to his boys led to the death of innocent civilians especially so in the mining areas.

Everybody knows that the pangs of that period in the history of Sierra Leone is still fresh, especially when name like Charles Taylor is measured.

What we need as Sierra Leoneans is God's divine grace to avert any problem but we must accept it as fact that when your child hurts you, measures must be taken for it not to repeat it self.

In the case of Charles Taylor nothing absolutely is going to happen, he should and must face trial for the crimes he committed.

Standard Times
30 March 2006

APOLOGY

The Editorial Team of the Standard Times newspaper wishes to apologise to its numerous readers regarding the paper's front page lead article captioned, "Charles Taylor surfaces in South Africa" in yesterday's edition.

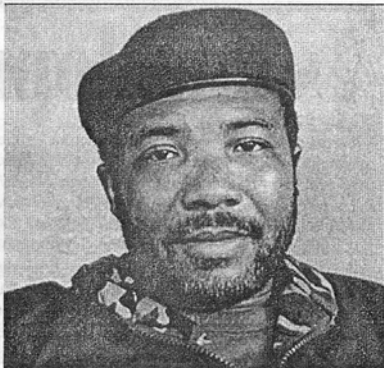
The information about Taylor's arrest on the boundary between Nigeria and Cameroon was received from our source in Nigeria in confidence, but in making the final decision, the team decided to discard the Cameroon story and use the South Africa breaking news story. We however regret the embarrassment.

Investors reportedly scared...

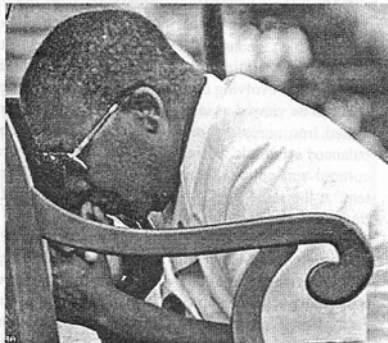
Irish and Swedish troops on alert for Special Court

Charles Taylor, former president of Liberia landed on the soil of Sierra Leone at the enclosed Special Court for Sierra Leone detention facility in the evening hours of yesterday, Wednesday 30th March 2006 around 7:23 p.m. with a heavily armed Unmil Officers from Liberia. He is to respond to eleven

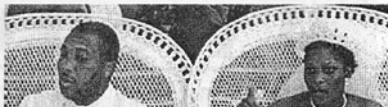
CONTINUED PAGE 11



Taylor.. during the war days



Taylor.. praying



Irish and Swedish troops on alert for Special Court

FROM PAGE 1

counts charges of crimes against humanity, violation of International Human Rights and the Geneva Convention levied against him.

Initially it was seventeen counts, but according to the Special Court Public Relations Officer, Mr. Peter Andersen, the charges have now been reduced to eleven.

As he landed on the soil he was taken straight into place of residence at the facility which, according to the Court official has been prepared for him since his indictment in June 2003.

His trial, according to the official, will commence in six months time from now since he may need defence counsels to represent him.

About security for both the Special Court and the country, the Special Court spokesman revealed that the Court is well secured and prepared to maintain tight security.

"We have ... and there is the Irish and Swedish rapid response team in place in readiness," he assured.

Regarding national security the spokesman said that the security of the state is the responsibility of the government, which he believes had

already been put in place

SPECIAL COURT FOR SIERRA LEONE
OFFICE OF THE PROSECUTOR

PRESS RELEASE

Freetown, 29 March 2006

Chief Prosecutor Announces the Arrival of Charles Taylor at the Special Court

Freetown – The Prosecutor, Desmond de Silva QC, today announced the arrival of Charles Taylor into the custody of the Special Court for Sierra Leone.

“Today is a momentous occasion and an important day for international justice, the international community and above all, the people of Sierra Leone. The indictee Charles Taylor has today been safely secured and is now in the detention facility of this international criminal tribunal here in Freetown,” said Mr de Silva.

“His presence in the custody of the Special Court sends out the clear message that no matter how rich, powerful or feared people may be – the law is above them.”

The Prosecutor originally indicted Charles Taylor on 3 March 2003 on a 17-count indictment for war crimes and crimes against humanity committed during the conflict in Sierra Leone.

“On the 16th March 2006 a Judge of the Special Court gave leave to amend the indictment against Charles Taylor. Under the amended indictment Taylor is charged with 11 counts. This will ensure a more focused trial. The thrust and gravity of the former indictment is in no way diminished.

“In summary, he now stands indicted for war crimes, crimes against humanity, and other serious violations of international humanitarian law, including sexual slavery and mutilations.”

The Special Court is an independent tribunal established jointly by the United Nations and the Government of Sierra Leone. It is mandated to bring to justice those who bear the greatest responsibility for atrocities committed in Sierra Leone after 30 November 1996. To date, the Prosecutor has indicted thirteen persons on various charges of war crimes, crimes against humanity, and other serious violations of international humanitarian law. Two indictments were withdrawn following the deaths of the accused. Nine indictees are currently in the custody of the Court.

Press Conference – Desmond de Silva

29 March 2006

Q. Given the slow pace of some of these trials, how long do you expect the Taylor prosecution to take?

DE SILVA: Well, the Taylor trial will begin when we've got a court free. You must understand that there is quite a deal of evidence that we have collected against Mr. Taylor while will in due course be served on his legal representatives. They will need time to prepare his defence. They could turn round and say the Prosecution has had two years to prepare the case against him and now therefore they need six months to prepare their defence. That would not be unreasonable. So the trial of Charles Taylor is many months away. And so I'm afraid that is the only answer I can give your question, and I can't answer it more explicitly than that.

Q. You just saw Charles Taylor in the detention centre. You are the first person privileged to see him. What's your assessment of (inaudible)? What did you say to him?

DE SILVA: I didn't speak with Mr. Taylor. I observed the warrant of arrest being read to him. He was sitting in a chair, and the person reading the warrant of arrest was (indistinct). I don't wish to make any further comment in that regard.



Q. Mr. de Silva, there is no gainsaying that Charles Taylor has very strong influence in West Africa and his home country Liberia. Do you think there is security enough to keep him here in the Special Court, considering the fact that he had once escaped from a maximum security prison in the United States?

DE SILVA: Yes, he's something of an escapist, but I think he might find it rather difficult on this occasion. I think the security situation here is under control. We have had ongoing security assessments. Our assessments, I take the view, meet the needs of the moment, and we've got reinforcements coming in at first light.

Q. Yes, there are speculations that Taylor would be taken to the Hague. Could you explain to us whether this is possible or not.

DE SILVA: The people indicted by the Special Court for Sierra Leone were intended to be tried in Sierra Leone. The Court, however, has the ability to sit elsewhere if required. That is the only answer I am going to give you because that is the only answer I can give at this moment. He will be making his initial appearance before a judge in Freetown.

Q. Can you tell us, Mr. de Silva, when he might make his initial appearance?

DE SILVA: That initial appearance could be in a very short time. Indeed, it could be by the end of this week.

Q. My question is just like a supplementary one to what Kelvin asked. What factors would necessitate him being taken to the Hague, because it concerns the ability (as heard) for him to be tried in the Hague?

DE SILVA: Well, those factors haven't arisen yet, and I don't propose to answer speculative questions.

Thank you very much, ladies and gentlemen.

New York Times

30 March 2006

Liberian Seized to Stand Trial on War Crimes

By LYDIA POLGREEN

FREETOWN, Sierra Leone, March 29 — Charles G. Taylor, the warlord who became Liberia's president, was captured Wednesday after a dramatic 24 hours in which he disappeared from the villa in Nigeria where he had lived in exile and then was recognized at a remote outpost as he tried to leave the country.



He was brought here to face war crimes charges for his role in a brutal decade-long civil war in Sierra Leone, one of a series of conflagrations that he set off, killing at least 300,000 people. He is the first African head of state to face such charges in an international court.

Mr. Taylor's arrival by helicopter under extraordinary security capped a saga that began nearly three years ago, when he fled his nation in the face of a rebel onslaught. He was captured Wednesday morning after a customs official recognized him as he tried to escape into Cameroon.

He arrived unshaven and dressed in a white tunic covered by a bullet-proof vest, tan pants and slip-on shoes. His appearance was in stark contrast to his dapper look in his last public appearance, in 2003, when he went into exile after a 14-year civil war that killed a quarter million of his countrymen, defiantly declaring, "God willing, I will be back."

He did return to Liberia, briefly, on Wednesday, but only to be handed over to United Nations troops who promptly flew him here, where he was read the indictment from a United Nations-backed court dealing with war crimes in Sierra Leone — 11 counts of crimes against humanity — then jailed.

Desmond de Silva, the prosecutor who will try the case, said Mr. Taylor's arrival "sends out the clear message that no matter how rich, powerful or feared people may be, the law is above them."

The trial is sure to resonate on a continent where dictators have ruled with ruthless impunity. From Idi Amin, the soldier whose murderous rule in Uganda gave way to comfortable exile in Saudi Arabia, to Haile Mengistu Mariam, whose 14-year Communist rule in Ethiopia brought political purges that killed more than a million people but who is now living quietly in Zimbabwe, African leaders who brutalize their citizens have faced few consequences.

"The current perpetrators of serious human rights crimes should be put on notice that international courts take the crimes they commit very, very seriously," said Corinne Dufka of Human Rights Watch.

Mr. Taylor's arrival here was a dramatic turn in the already complicated saga of the effort to bring him to justice after he ignited a series of civil wars in the 1990's that engulfed much of West Africa.

In the early 1980's, Mr. Taylor was a senior government procurement officer in Liberia. Charged in 1983 with embezzling nearly \$1 million, he fled. He was arrested in Massachusetts in 1984, then escaped from jail in 1985. He resurfaced in Liberia in 1989 as a Libyan-trained warlord, leading a rebel force. He was elected president in 1997, in a vote overshadowed by fears of what might happen if he lost.

A warrant for his arrest was issued in March 2003. But as part of an agreement to remove him from power and halt a bloodbath in Liberia, Nigeria offered him asylum and refused to hand him over to the court in Sierra Leone, where he was accused of fomenting a civil war.

Though under intense pressure by the United States to arrest him, President Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria had insisted he would hand over Mr. Taylor only to an elected Liberian government. Earlier this month, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, Liberia's new president, herself facing pressure from the United States, made the request, and Mr. Obasanjo agreed.

But Nigeria insisted that it was Liberia's responsibility to go and arrest him, with Mr. Obasanjo's spokeswoman declaring that Mr. Taylor was "not a prisoner," which seemed almost to taunt Mr. Taylor into trying to escape from his lightly guarded compound in Calabar.

Late Monday night the Nigerian government said he had vanished. He was found more than 600 miles north, in an ash-colored Land Rover with a large quantity of dollars, in the company of a woman and a driver, Haz Iwendi, a spokesman for the National Police, said by telephone.

A customs official spotted Mr. Taylor, whose vehicle had diplomatic license plates, early Wednesday morning in the border town of Ngala, Mr. Iwendi said.

The escape was an acute embarrassment for Mr. Obasanjo, who arrived Tuesday in Washington for a visit to the White House to discuss security in the volatile Niger Delta, where attacks by militants on oil facilities and kidnappings have slashed output. Nigeria is the United States' fifth-largest supplier of oil.

Outraged American lawmakers called on President Bush to cancel his meeting with Mr. Obasanjo, with whom Mr. Bush has had a warm relationship, based in part on their shared Christian faith and bolstered by Mr. Obasanjo's role as a regional problem solver.

But internal problems have eroded the Nigerian's status. Militants in the Niger Delta, sectarian violence that killed more than 100 people last month and a political crisis stemming from plans to try to extend his rule to a third term have roiled Nigeria.

Mr. Bush met with him on Wednesday, and at a joint news conference, hailed the arrest of Mr. Taylor. "The fact that Charles Taylor will be brought to justice in a court of law will help Liberia," Mr. Bush said, "and is a signal, Mr. President, of your deep desire for there to be peace in your neighborhood."

Mr. Taylor was flown on a Nigerian government jet from Borno State, in northeastern Nigeria, where he was captured, to Monrovia, Liberia's capital. There he was handed over to Liberian

officials, who promptly turned him over to United Nations peacekeepers, who arrested him. After a brief medical checkup, he boarded a helicopter for Sierra Leone.

The reaction to Mr. Taylor's arrival here was muted and fearful.

J. B. Jenkins-Johnson, a human rights lawyer in Freetown, worried that Mr. Taylor's arrival would cause unrest in a country still reeling from the long civil war. "Let them not bring that man here," Mr. Jenkins-Johnson said. "This man will bring us nothing but problems."

Indeed, many Sierra Leoneans wonder if the court's work will do much to help them improve their lives. "The Taylor case doesn't have a lot of resonance," said Olu Gordon, a political analyst and journalist in Freetown. "It is abstract, while the problems they face are concrete: what to feed their children, how to pay for school, and so on."

The loudest calls for Mr. Taylor's arrest came not from his victims but from the United States, which has backed the international court here financially and diplomatically.

Ms. Johnson Sirleaf, the Liberian leader, had been hesitant to act on Mr. Taylor, saying that the peace in Liberia was still fragile and that any action could stir up his allies, several of whom hold seats in Liberia's new legislature. Several of his commanders remain in Liberia, and news of Mr. Taylor's arrest caused immediate fears of a coup attempt.

But removing him from the scene could also help stabilize the region, said Mike McGovern, an analyst for the International Crisis Group, by demoralizing Mr. Taylor's supporters.

"The arrest closes an ugly chapter in Liberian history and gives people the confidence to look to the future," Mr. McGovern said in an interview in Monrovia. "A lot of people are still sitting on the fence. Once they have a clear idea of where Taylor is and what's likely to happen to him, they're likely to really turn their backs on that period and move forward."

In Liberia, human rights advocates exulted in the news. "This is a great day," said Jerome J. Verdier Sr., head of the country's Truth and Reconciliation Commission. "It's a fundamental triumph for the rule of law both in Liberia and the sub-region."

Katharine Houreld contributed reporting from Monrovia for this article, and Steven R. Weisman from Washington.

BBC

30 March 2006

Taylor sent to war crimes court

Former Liberian leader Charles Taylor has been transferred to the UN-backed war crimes tribunal in Sierra Leone.

Mr Taylor was flown to the court after being taken into UN custody in the Liberian capital, Monrovia.

He was repatriated from Nigeria on Wednesday, hours after being caught trying to escape custody - ending his exile of nearly three years there.

The former president is wanted by the Sierra Leone tribunal for his alleged role in Liberia's brutal civil war.

He faces 17 charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity, and is accused of backing rebels notorious for mutilating civilians.

Mr Taylor was flown into the compound housing the court in the capital Freetown and taken into custody, where a cell was waiting for him.

'Vindicated'

The former leader had been in exile in Nigeria since 2003 after a deal ending Liberia's civil war.

He went missing on Monday from his southern villa after the country announced Liberia was free to detain him.

TAYLOR TIMELINE

1997: Elected Liberian president after leading rebellion

1991-2002: Alleged role in Sierra Leone's civil war

June 2003: Arrest warrant issued by Sierra Leone tribunal

August 2003: Begins exile in Nigeria after civil war at home

March 2006: Detained by Nigeria while fleeing

Mr Taylor was captured on Wednesday morning by security forces close to the Cameroon border, and then deported.

On arrival at the airport in Liberia's capital, he was led to a UN helicopter which took off for Sierra Leone.

Correspondents say the capture came as a relief to Nigeria, which had faced criticism for allowing him to escape, despite warnings he might flee.

The president denied it was negligent in its handling of the suspect.

Speaking in Washington, Olusegun Obasanjo said he felt "vindicated" by the capture.

Those who had suggested Nigeria may have been complicit in Mr Taylor's initial escape were wrong and owed him an apology, he added.

For his part, Mr Bush welcomed the capture and said he appreciated Nigeria's work to apprehend him.

Diamonds and weapons

Mr Taylor started Liberia's civil war as a warlord in 1989, before being elected president in 1997.

After this I believe there will once more be peace and stability in all West African regions
Farmer Augustine, Monrovia

He is accused of selling diamonds and buying weapons for Sierra Leone's Revolutionary United Front rebels, who were notorious for hacking off the hands and legs of civilians during their decade-long war.

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

Instability also spread into neighbouring parts of Ivory Coast and Guinea.

Human rights activists have accused Mr Taylor of being at the centre of a West Africa-wide web of armed groups.

The court's chief prosecutor has said Mr Taylor is the third most wanted war crimes suspect in the world.

The special court was set up to try to bring to justice those responsible for crimes during the decade-long civil war which officially ended in 2002.

The tribunal was established with the agreement of Sierra Leone and operates under both Sierra Leone domestic law and international humanitarian law.

It is beyond the control of the UN Security Council and is managed by countries - led by Britain and the US - which are funding it.

Story from BBC NEWS:

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/africa/4858692.stm>

BBC

29 March 2006

West Africa's wars catch up with Taylor

By Elizabeth Blunt

BBC Africa analyst

Charles Taylor is being deported to Liberia, but it is not Liberia which has a warrant out for his arrest.

UN forces in the country have a mandate to hand him over for trial by the special war crimes court in neighbouring Sierra Leone.

The charges against the former Liberian president relate to the much wider conflict in West Africa, which started in 1989 with the rebellion he backed in Liberia, but later spread to engulf the whole region.

Sierra Leone saw some of the worst atrocities. The war there started just over a year after the war in Liberia.

The basis of the charges against Charles Taylor is the belief that he was the moving force behind that conflict.

The leader of the rebellion, Foday Sankoh, was an old friend of his, and a number of his Liberian fighters also fought with Mr Sankoh's Revolutionary United Front (RUF).

The RUF used Liberia as their rear base; it was through Liberia that they sold their diamonds and got their arms.

End of impunity?

Liberia under Mr Taylor's leadership was a source of instability for Guinea and the Ivory Coast as well, and kept the regional organisation, Ecowas, in a constant state of crisis.

So other west African leaders probably breathed a sigh of relief when he was taken out of circulation and went into exile in Nigeria.

But his impending transfer to the court also has implications for the worldwide move to hold heads of state accountable for crimes committed during their time in power.

In the past, African leaders, even if they got forced out of office as result of their own excesses, could usually rely on their fellow presidents to protect them and offer them comfortable homes in exile.

A successful prosecution of Charles Taylor would signal that that era may be coming to an end.

Disaster to triumph

Mr Taylor was arrested in north-eastern Nigeria after he disappeared from the villa where he was being held under virtual house arrest.

A Nigerian police spokesman has said Mr Taylor was arrested at a border crossing point on the route which leads to Cameroon and Chad.

The Nigerian authorities said on Tuesday he had disappeared the previous evening from the house in Calabar which had been his home since he was forced out of power in 2003.

It had looked like a disaster for the Nigerian authorities, on the eve of their president's visit to Washington - an internationally wanted war criminal disappearing from under their noses the very day after the special court prosecutor warned he might try to escape.

Now, it seems more like a triumph.

Mr Taylor was identified and arrested by security forces when he turned up at the border, despite the fact that he was using a border crossing as far as possible from the place where he vanished.

Obasanjo's obligations

Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo has ordered his immediate repatriation to Liberia.

And so, when Mr Obasanjo meets George W Bush this afternoon, he will be able to assure the US president that Nigeria has finally and fully complied with their demands for Mr Taylor's surrender.

And he will even be able to do so without compromising his earlier positions.

A Nigerian government spokesman in London said that for Mr Taylor to have left Calabar and be found at the northern border was obviously a violation of his conditions for staying in Nigeria.

So President Obasanjo is now no longer likely to feel bound either by any guarantees of protection which he had given to Mr Taylor, or by his more recent insistence that Mr Taylor would only be surrendered if the Liberian authorities came to collect him.

Story from BBC NEWS:

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/africa/4857482.stm>

Reuters

29 March 2006

Charles Taylor in custody to face war crimes trial

March 29, 2006, 20:15

UN officials took custody of Charles Taylor, the ex-Liberian president, in Liberia today and flew him to Sierra Leone to face trial for war crimes only hours after Nigeria had captured him as he tried to flee. Protected by a ring of UN troops, UN and Liberian officials handcuffed the grim-faced former warlord after he was flown from northern Nigeria where police intercepted him today trying to sneak across the border into Cameroon.

He was immediately flown by helicopter towards Freetown, the Sierra Leonean capital, where a UN-backed special court has indicted him on 17 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity stemming from Sierra Leone's 1991-2002 civil war. Taylor, seen as the mastermind of a web of brutal West African regional conflicts that killed as many as 300 000, is accused of receiving diamonds in exchange for supporting Sierra Leonean rebels who often hacked off the limbs of their victims.

Taylor's brief disappearance had initially drawn sharp international criticism as Olusegun Obasanjo, the Nigerian president, began a visit to the United States. But Obasanjo said in Washington today after meeting George W Bush, the US president, he felt vindicated by the capture.

Human rights groups

Human rights groups said Taylor's speedy transfer to face justice would send out a strong message on the world's poorest continent, where thousands have endured death and suffering at the hands of dictators, tyrants and warlords.

"Today, Liberia and Sierra Leone are safer and more hopeful places. Today West Africa has moved one step closer to dismantling the devastating grip of impunity," said Corinne Dufka, head of the West Africa office of Human Rights Watch. - Reuters

Voice of America

29 March 2006

By Franz Wild

Abidjan

29 March 2006

Witnesses say captured former Liberian leader Charles Taylor has been taken to Sierra Leone in a U.N. helicopter. He is being transferred to a U.N.-backed court in Sierra Leone where he faces charges of crimes against humanity.

Taken to Liberia on a Nigerian government jet, Charles Taylor was arrested by the U.N. Mission in Liberia.

Hundreds of U.N. peacekeepers who waited in the rain took part in the operation.

Immediately after Taylor set foot on Liberian soil, Liberian government and U.N. security officials surrounded him and led him to the waiting helicopter in handcuffs.

Journalists who had come to witness his transfer were not let near the plane. They reported that Liberian police swung batons at them to keep them from the airstrip.

The U.N. Mission in Liberia had the authority to take Taylor into custody as soon as he entered the country.

"There is actually a Security Council resolution, resolution 1638, which gives UNMIL the capacity to apprehend and detain Charles Taylor and to facilitate his transfer to the Special Court," said Harpinder Adhwal, special assistant to the prosecutor at the Special Court. "There is a Chapter Seven resolution that allows UNMIL to facilitate his transfer to the Special Court in Sierra Leone."

She also told VOA she believes prosecutors have a strong case against Taylor and are delighted that they are now able to try him.

Heavy security was also present at the helicopter landing pad in Sierra Leone.

Taylor was indicted in 2003 and faces 17 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity, including training and using child soldiers, in the 10-year civil war in Sierra Leone. He has also been accused of spreading instability throughout West Africa and trading resources for weapons during his time in power in Liberia. Taylor has repeatedly denied wrongdoing.

Compound of house where former Liberian leader Charles Taylor lived near seaside town of Calaber

Earlier, Nigerian police captured Taylor near the border with Cameroon after he left his villa in southeast Nigeria, where he had been in exile since 2003.

Associated Press

29 March 2006

Liberia's Taylor taken before tribunal

Fugitive former president faces war crimes trial

By CLARENCE ROY-MACAULAY

Associated Press

FREETOWN, SIERRA LEONE - The two white U.N. troop transport helicopters carrying their prize — a manacled former African leader — circled down out of the west African skies to land inside the heavily guarded compound of an international war-crimes tribunal.

Former Liberian President Charles Taylor, looking chastened after hours in the skies over the region ruined by wars he stoked, was escorted to jail by U.N. peacekeeping troops from Mongolia.

Taylor's foiled escape from Nigeria with sackloads of cash and his transfer to the U.N.-backed Sierra Leone court that has indicted him on 11 counts of crimes against humanity for supporting brutal rebels here is a watershed moment for the tribunal and also for West Africa, a region long shaken by Taylor's warmongering.

"Today is a momentous occasion, an important day for international justice, the international community, and above all the people of Sierra Leone," said Desmond de Silva, chief prosecutor of the tribunal called the Special Court.

"His presence in the custody of the Special Court sends out the clear message that no matter how rich, powerful or feared people may be, the law is above them."

De Silva said Taylor would make his first court appearance this week.

U.N. peacekeepers from Mongolia escorted Taylor, in handcuffs and looking dejected, behind the razor-wired gate blocking the holding penitentiary where he joined nine other defendants, all charged like Taylor with crimes committed during Sierra Leone's brutal 1989-2002 civil war.

Taylor, a bombastic speaker during his time in the bush and as Liberia's president, made no comment.

Taylor is charged with 17 counts of crimes against humanity stemming from his support of the Revolutionary United Front rebels that terrorized the civilian population here for years, chopping off the arms, legs, ears and lips of their victims.

Ohmy News

30 March 2006

http://english.ohmynews.com/articleview/article_view.asp?article_class=3&no=282501&rel_no=1

Nigerian Police Arrest Fugitive Liberian Warlord

Charles Taylor set for immediate deportation

Charles Taylor, the warlord and exiled ex-president of Liberia, who disappeared from his Calabar Villa residence in Nigeria on Monday night, has now been found and arrested by Nigerian police. National police spokesman Haz Iwendi, who announced the capture, said that he was caught at Nigeria's southern border with Cameroon as he approached Customs, apparently trying to get to Cameroon, March 28.

"Mr. Taylor has been arrested. He was arrested in the early hours of today at Gamboringala, in Borno State. He is currently with the security agents. He will be flown to Abuja later," Iwendi confirmed.

Taylor Timeline

Born January 28, 1948

Arthington, Liberia

Political party National Patriotic

Order 22nd President of Liberia

President from August 2, 1997 to August 11, 2003

Preceded by Samuel Doe

1989: Launches rebellion

1991: RUF rebellion starts in Sierra Leone

1995: Peace deal signed

1997: Elected president

1999: Lurd starts rebellion to oust Taylor

2006: Nigeria agrees to hand him over to Liberia

The customs officials recognized Taylor when he approached their post and immediately detained him.

As eyewitness Babagana Alhaji Kata, a trader working at the Gamboringala border post, told an AFP reporter, Taylor arrived at the frontier disguised in an ash-colored Range Rover with the diplomatic corps number plate 81 CD 85.

"He was wearing a white flowing robe," Kata explained.

"He passed through immigration, but when he reached Customs they were suspicious and insisted on searching the Range Rover, where they found a large amount of U.S. dollars. After a further search they discovered he was Charles Taylor," he added.

The earlier announcement of his disappearance had already sparked serious concerns among Liberians and as well as international condemnation. In Liberia, the news of his disappearance

was the talk of the day virtually everywhere. All business came to a standstill, and the government was quick to urge the population to be calm, while they investigated the claim.

U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said of Taylor's escape that it was a matter of the "utmost seriousness." Chief Prosecutor of the War Crimes Court in Sierra Leone, Desmond de Silva, who on Sunday predicted a possible escape that would qualify Taylor as one of the three most-wanted war crimes suspects in the world, termed news of his escape as "an affront to justice." He added that Taylor's flight was "a threat to the peace and security of West Africa."

U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan had said that he planned to talk to the Nigerian authorities about the escape. He further urged all countries to refuse to give Taylor any kind of asylum.

Taylor disappeared on the eve of Nigerian President Obasanjo's meeting with President Bush. Frank Nweke, Nigeria's information minister, announced that President Obasanjo was "very shocked" by Taylor's disappearance.

Nigeria reluctantly announced on Saturday that it would hand Taylor over to a U.N.-backed Sierra Leone tribunal to be tried for alleged war crimes related to Sierra Leone's 1991-2001 civil war, but the government had made no moves to arrest him.

Following announcement of Taylor's disappearance on Tuesday, Obasanjo immediately ordered the arrest of all the security personnel deployed to guard him at his residence in Calabar.

Obasanjo has now given a further order that Taylor be deported to Liberia to face the charges against him.

Taylor now seems set to become the first African leader to face trial for crimes against humanity.

Irish Examiner

30 March 2006

Irish troops play role in ex-warlord's capture

ELITE Irish troops with the UN were involved in the capture and detention yesterday of former Liberian President Charles Taylor, while he was trying to flee from Nigeria.

Members of the Defence Forces 94th Infantry Battalion Quick Reaction Force serving with the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) escorted Taylor from the capital Monrovia to the UN Special Court in Freetown, Sierra Leone, where he is wanted for war crimes.

More than 100 Irish troops provided a robust security presence during the operation, a spokesperson for the defence forces said.

Taylor vanished on Monday from the Nigerian villa where he had been living since 2003, prompting an international outcry. He was taken into custody by border guards in northern Nigeria as he tried to cross into Chad.

Nigerian government spokesman Femi Fani-Kayode said: "Our security teams moved fast. We looked for Charles Taylor, we apprehended Charles Taylor when he was intending to leave the country, and we are in the process of repatriating Charles Taylor back to Liberia ... I suppose there is a good deal of relief everywhere."

The capture shows that Nigeria is living up to its responsibilities, he added.

A senior Nigerian government official said UN troops, including Irish soldiers, would take charge of Taylor in Liberia. There are 15,000 UN peacekeepers in the country.

Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo, on a state visit to the US, ordered an investigation into how Taylor was able to elude his security detail, and promptly had the guards arrested. The probe should be finished in about two weeks, said Mr Fani-Kayode.

In a news conference before his meeting with US President George W Bush, Mr Obasanjo said he viewed Taylor's Monday night disappearance with "utter dismay" but felt "vindicated" now that he had been captured.

"Those who said that (Nigeria may have helped Taylor escape) are wrong and should apologise. Mr Taylor is neither a friend of the president of Nigeria nor that of its people."

Mr Obasanjo said Taylor and his wife were captured in a village on Nigeria's border with Chad early yesterday morning.

Mr Bush, appearing with Mr Obasanjo after the pair's meeting, said Taylor's quick capture was "a signal of your (Obasanjo's) desire to have peace in your neighbourhood".

The 58-year-old former Liberian leader had been living in a villa in Calabar since August 2003 as a guest of the Nigerian government. Nigeria granted asylum to Taylor under an agreement that helped to end Liberia's 14-year civil war. He was not held under house arrest.

On Saturday, the Nigerian government gave permission for Liberian authorities to take him back to Liberia.

Taylor was Liberia's president from 1997 until he was forced from office in 2003. A court in neighbouring Sierra Leone indicted him on 17 counts of alleged war crimes after accusing him of supporting rebels in that country who were committing atrocities against civilians.

The former warlord has said he is willing to go before a war crimes tribunal at The Hague, Netherlands, but did not want to be tried in Sierra Leone.

News24.com

29 March 2006

http://www.news24.com/News24/Africa/News/0,,2-11-1447_1907526,00.html

Taylor behind bars

Freetown - Liberia's former warlord turned president, Charles Taylor, arrived on Wednesday evening at the United Nations complex in Sierra Leone housing the special court on war crimes, a British diplomat told AFP.

Taylor was immediately taken into custody at the tribunal detention centre, after being flown by helicopter directly into the UN complex in the Sierra Leonean capital, Freetown, from neighbouring Liberia.

"It is a great day for Sierra Leoneans and Liberians," the British diplomat told AFP on condition of anonymity.

"Taylor once said that Sierra Leoneans would face the bitterness of war. Now perhaps he will test the bitterness of justice," he said.

"I have won all my battles, but there are more to be fought," Desmond Da Silva, the chief prosecutor of the UN-backed special court for Sierra Leone, told reporters.

Taylor - a former guerrilla chieftain - is wanted by the court for war crimes and crimes against humanity committed during the Sierra Leonean civil war of 1991-2001, which claimed about 200 000 lives.

Prosecutors at the court allege Taylor sponsored the brutal rebels of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), which slaughtered, maimed, raped and enslaved tens of thousands of civilians during the civil war.

The special court has drawn up a 17-count charge sheet alleging crimes against humanity, murder, sexual violence and unlawful use of child soldiers.

Taylor is considered the single most powerful figure behind a series of civil wars in both Liberia and Sierra Leone between 1989 and 2003, which between them left about 400 000 people dead.

Taylor was captured in Nigeria early on Wednesday as he tried to flee the country following the Nigerian government's decision to hand him over to Liberia.

Vanguard (Nigeria)

30 March 2006

Taylor's loyalists stormed Calabar before failed escape bid

By John Ighodaro

Calabar — Following the failed escape bid of former Liberian President, Mr. Charles Taylor, it has now been revealed that about 30 Liberian supporters of the former Liberian President had come into Calabar from Liberia a few days before the failed escape bid.

Vanguard gathered that they might have come into the country to assist him in the failed project. A cyber café operator in Calabar, Mr. Terrence Bassey, told Vanguard that Liberians flooded his cyber café days before Taylor tried to escape.

His words: "They came in here and were sending e-mails and they were faces I had not seen before because I know quite a lot of Charles Taylor's people around here but these were Liberians I had not met before."

Asked how he knew they were Liberians, Bassey said "the way they speak; their kind of English. I knew they were new arrivals."

Most Calabar residents don't appear to care about the whereabouts of Mr. Taylor. They don't see it as part of their daily worries as to whether the ex-Liberian President lives in Calabar or in Nigeria or whether he tried to escape and was caught.

But Bassey however showed some interest in Taylors affairs. His words: "I do not think what Taylor did is right. As a big brother, Nigeria brought him here so that there can be peace in Liberia. We did that as Liberia's big brother. And while here, we treated him well and for him to try to sneak out was very unfair. He wanted to put Nigeria in a very embarrassing situation."

United Nations

29 March 2006

SECRETARY-GENERAL'S PRESS ENCOUNTER WITH CNN AND UNTV

Q: Charles Taylor is now in a cell in Sierra Leone. Your comment?

SG: I am pleased and relieved that he has been delivered to the Tribunal [Special Court] in Sierra Leone. I think it strikes an important blow to impunity. It sends a message, not only to the people of Liberia, but all around the sub-region and around the continent that impunity will not be allowed to stand and the brutal leaders who brutalize their people, who get engaged in organizing wars, recruiting boys and girls and turning them into child soldiers, will pay a price. This is the second time in a relatively short time that the UN has been able to arrest two men with that record. [Thomas] Lubanga [Dyilo, the alleged founder and leader of the group known as Union des Patriotes Congolais] was arrested in eastern Congo and he is now in The Hague awaiting trial and now it's Taylor. I think it's a warning to all would-be warlords that they will be held to account and that impunity will not be allowed to stand. Those days are gone and they should really think before they engage in any such adventure.

Q: This has been a pretty frenetic last 24 hours regarding Mr. Taylor. What were your thoughts after he disappeared and now?

SG: I couldn't believe it and I spoke to the President of Nigeria yesterday who was equally shocked and distressed and told me he was doing whatever he can to make sure that he is apprehended. And also indicated that the guards had been locked up. Obviously, he is a very relieved man today and I must applaud him and his government for their vigilance and determination to ensure that he was delivered to the Tribunal.

Q: Milosevic of Serbia was delivered to The Hague and four years later he eventually died before justice was served. There is still a lot of work to do on the Taylor prosecution. Are you going to call for speedy justice?

SG: I would expect that this will be much speedier than Milosevic's case and I think lessons have been learned all round and I would expect the Court to move much faster here.

Q: Your message for those who were victimized by Taylor, allegedly in West Africa, from Sierra Leone to Liberia, diamonds, murder, rapes – what's your message?

SG: Obviously, the arrest and indictment and the judgment of Taylor will not resolve all their problems, but they can really not be peace without justice, without reconciliation. And I think this event, this arrest of Taylor and his eventual judgment would bring some solace to those who have lost loved ones and those who suffered during the war in Sierra Leone and in Liberia. But at least they can continue their life in the knowledge that he is no longer among them and he is not in a position to harm them.

Q: He is now in the Court's hands, UN helicopter flying him there some of the way. Thank you Mr. Secretary[-General] for commenting on Charles Taylor.

Liberian Times

29 March 2006

Liberia: U.S. Congressman Royce Commends Turn-Over of Charles Taylor to the Special Court for Sierra Leone

by Eric Cullen / Press Secretary For Rep. Ed Royce

"A clear and present danger is finally out of the game," he said
WASHINGTON, DC -- Representative Ed Royce (CA-40), vice-chairman of the Subcommittee on Africa, Global Human Rights and International Operations, issued the following statement upon the turn-over of former Liberian President Charles Taylor to the Special Court for Sierra Leone. Taylor faces a 17-count indictment for crimes against humanity and war crimes committed during Sierra Leone's civil war. Royce has been a leading congressional advocate for Taylor's extradition since the Court's 2003 indictment. Taylor's turn-over follows a chaotic day in which Taylor escaped his supposedly secure exile in Calabar, Nigeria.

"Bringing Taylor to the Court is critical for two reasons. First, as dramatically demonstrated with his attempted flight, Taylor remained a threat to Liberia and the region. A clear and present danger is now out of the game. Second, justice and the rule of law have finally won a victory in West Africa," Royce said.

"Ending Taylor's cushy Nigerian exile was long overdue," Royce said. "Bringing this murderous former head of state to the Court is a big step toward greater accountability in Africa." Royce, who has pushed the Administration on Taylor since he left Liberia, credited it today, following President Bush's meeting with Nigerian President Obasanjo in the Oval Office today. "The Bush Administration worked hard to make this happen," he said. "It took some time, but the bottom line is that Taylor will be put in cell block #9 in Sierra Leone."

Royce chaired the House Subcommittee on Africa from 1997-2006. Under his chairmanship, the Subcommittee held several congressional hearings focused on Liberia, Sierra Leone, Charles Taylor and the Special Court for Sierra Leone. In 2005, Royce authored a congressional resolution that passed the House of Representatives calling on Nigeria to send Taylor to the Special Court. Last December, Royce wrote President-elect Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, requesting that she ask President Obasanjo to turn-over Taylor to the Special Court.

Liberian Times

29 March 2006

Liberia: The Transfer Of Mr Taylor, A Test To National Unity

by J.Momolu Kaindii,Jr. / Contributing Writer

The years 1979, 1980, 1989 and 1999 will forever remain in stoned memory of Liberians. Events in these years had widened the troubling device between the settlers and the multi-ethnic native population. Messer Gabriel Baccus Mathews, Samuel Kayon Doe, Charles Taylor and Sekou Damate Conneh are in the docket for the events in these years.

Despite the physical death of those events, their impacts on Liberia remain to challenge the national unity of Liberia. One of the gloomy impacts of those events, which stands to post a hydra test to the resolve of Liberians to live out of the past and forge ahead with the reconstruction of their individual and collective lives in a peaceful and stable environment, is the issue surrounding the transfer of former President Charles Taylor to face trial in the Special UN-backed War Crime Court in Sierra Leone.

Many Liberians, including this author, viewed the elections in October and November 2005 that elected the first female President of Liberia and Africa as a rebirth of the Liberian Nation. These elections with the full involvement of the international community should seal up forever the awful chapters created in the history of Liberia by those years. Liberians both in and outside Liberia should consciously reflect the relevance of the 2005 elections not within the subjective context of electing Madam Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf as President of Liberia, but rather within the objective reality of the multiple opportunities they availed to Liberia to re-emerge again as a potentially viable nation.

This must be the patriotic and cardinal responsibility of all Liberians everywhere in the world. The greatest threat facing Liberia's future today is that involving former President Charles Taylor answering charges in the Sierra Leone Court of war crimes and crime against humanity. The people of Liberia must not underestimate this threat. They must stand together shoulder-to-shoulder and back-to-back with their government to protect and defend Liberia from the perceived threat poses by the nature of this issue.

The experiences gained out of the events of the later days of the 20th century should galvanize and cement the national unity of Liberia. All Liberians must in a united front vehemently resist through concrete actions the temptation of once again plunging Liberia into a vicious conflict that will compel the international community to term Liberians as idiots.

Even the accused Mr. Taylor has the obligation to leave a safer space for his generation, and I would think it is the singular reason why he voluntarily resigned the presidency on 11 August 2003 only to preserve the Liberia.

This cause is sacred and all Liberians must now demonstrate a solemn commitment in preserving the Liberian state through a strong union that can no longer be crack by ethnicity, economic opportunity, religious and political manipulations. This is the only reliable instrument that can defeat any calculated evils that may cause Liberia to repeat the circumstances in the last days of the 20th century.

A strong national unity is the only viable vanguard force that will truly defend Liberia's sovereignty and ignite and glow its prosperity. This must now be demonstrated in face of report of the arrest of Mr. Taylor while escaping his asylum in Nigeria. We must now hold firmly together to pass this hydra test and preserve the dignity of our nation and secure the future of posterity.

About the Author:

In addition to being a contributing writer for TheLiberianTimes.com, J.Momolu Kaindii,Jr. usually contribute articles to two local media: The Informer and Liberian Express.

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