

SPECIAL COURT FOR SIERRA LEONE
PRESS AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE



PRESS CLIPPINGS

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

Tuesday, 5 April 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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Awareness Times
5 April 2006

Amputees want Taylor tried in Freetown

By Vidal Boltman

Members of the Amputees and War Wounded Association have called for the trial of the former warlord and President of the Republic of Liberia, Mr. Charles Ghankay Taylor, to be held here in Freetown, and not in The Hague as many prominent

people have suggested.

According to them, the trial of Mr. Taylor here in Sierra Leone will give them the opportunity to witness the proceedings live, adding that this will go a long way to heal their wounds.

It could be noted that Mr. Charles Taylor who is facing eleven counts charges relating

to crimes against humanity and war crimes, made his initial appearance on Monday 3rd April 2006, during which he pleaded not guilty to all the charges.

It could also be noted that during his initial appearance to take the plea, Mr. Taylor, through his battery of defence

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Charles Taylor: At the hearing

Amputees want Taylor tried in Freetown

From front page

lawyers, did make a submission that he wants to be tried here in Sierra Leone.

This is against the backdrop that his family might not have adequate access to him in a situation wherein he is tried in The Hague or any where else.

Apart from the amputees, other civil society groups have expressed the need for the former warlord to be tried in Sierra Leone so as to ensure increased access to his trial by the victims and survivors of the war which is said to have been allegedly fueled by the criminal manipulations of Mr. Taylor.

As Taylor asks for trial in Salone...

NPP

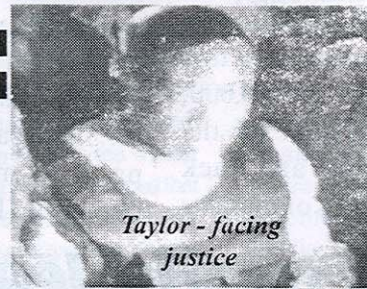
Story:
Sahr Musa
Yamba
&
Ibrahim
Seibure



*Sirleaf -
courageous*

threatens

Sirleaf



*Taylor - facing
justice*

with court

action

As Special Court indictee and erst-
while President of Sierra Leone,
Charles Gankay Taylor asked,
through the Principal Defender of
the Court, to be tried in Sierra
Leone, his National Patriotic

Party (NPP) has threatened court
action against Liberian President
Ellen Johnson Sirleaf.

NPP, in a press conference in Libe-
ria Monday, condemned the Spe-
cial Court. They pledged to use their
resources, human and financial, to
support their leader's trial.

NPP further threatened to take le-

Cont. page 3

NPP threatens Sirleaf with court action

From page 1
 gal action against President Sirleaf for "kidnapping" Taylor and handing him over to the Special Court. Taylor who made his initial appearance before the court Monday when asked to plead guilty or not guilty, challenged the legality of the court in respect of its jurisdiction over him. Taylor pleaded to the court through the Principal Defender, Vincent Nmehielle that he feared for his life and as such did not want to be tried in The Hague, but in Sierra Leone. The Defense counsel said Taylor's reason for the trial to be held in Freetown is to facilitate easy access to his family and witnesses. He said the accused wanted his family around as a source of moral support. The Principal Defender stressed that Mr. Taylor expressed concerns about his life because Foday Sankoh

of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) died in detention at the Special Court while Slobodan Milosovic also died in detention in The Hague. Taylor pleaded "not guilty" to the charges, 11- count charges which include: count 1- terrorizing the civilian population, count 2-unlawful killing, count 3- violence to life, health and physical or mental well-being of persons, in Particular murder, count 4-rape, a crime against humanity, count 5- sexual slavery and any other form of sexual violence, a crime against humanity, count 6- outrages upon personal dignity, a violation of Article 3 common to the Geneva Conventions and of additional protocol 11, count 7-violence to life, health and physical or mental well-being of persons, count 8- other inhumane acts, a crime against humanity, Count 9- conscripting or enlisting chil-

dren under the age of 15 years into armed forces or groups. Count 10- Enslavement, a crime against humanity and count 11, looting. Meanwhile Taylor invited four lawyers from Ghana and Liberia to advise him on his indictment before his plea Monday. The lawyers include Kofi Akainyah, Nana Ato Dadzie from Ghana, Councilor Francis Y.S Garlawolu and Theophilus C. Could from Liberia. Kofi Akainyah explains that they arrived in the country on Sunday on the invitation of Charles Taylor to advise him on his indictment before he appears in court. Asked whether they are going to present Charles Taylor, he replied that Taylor requested them to come and advise him and that it is left with him to decide later what to do next. He reveals Taylor has been his client before now.

Tuesday 4th April, 2006

Peace & Democracy are two sides of the same coin

Taylor Prefers Trial In Salone

By Isatu Gbla and
Mariama Turay



Mongolian soldiers were strategically deployed within the precincts of the Special Court. Other security personnel searched spectators trooping in to have a glimpse at the Special Court's most high profile indictee.

One hour to the start of the hearing, the courtroom had already been completely full to capacity. The prosecution and defence lawyers were already seated before Justice Richard Hussick walked in. The Trial Chamber II became silent like a graveyard.

Suddenly, Charles Ghankay MacArthur Taylor dressed

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Taylor prefers trial in Sierra Leone than The Hague

from front page

in black suit, white shirt and maroon tie was ushered into the court with his head bowed low as if in silent prayer. All eyes were fixed on him. He looked downcast as he sat in the dock. He was without his traditional dark glasses which had become part of his personal style while he was rebel leader, Head of State and as an exile. The charges against him were formally read and he

was asked to take a plea. Instead he made a short statement, describing himself as the 21st President of Liberia and also saying he did not recognise the jurisdiction of the court. The Judge overruled him and asked again that he

entered a plea which he did by pleading not guilty. After this, the Judge told him that adequate time would be given him to prepare his defence. Vincent Nmehiee from the Principal Defence Office, who represented him in the absence of a lawyer,

informed the court that the accused feared that his life would be in danger should the trial be moved outside Sierra Leone. Adding that the witnesses were all here and secondly trying the accused here would give him the opportunity for his relatives to visit him. Later, the Judge in accordance with rule 61(4) informed the accused that the Registrar of the court would have to fix a date for his trial.

Salone Times
5 April 2006

EX-LIBERIAN SUPREMO IN THE DOCK

TAYLOR: 'I DONT RECOGNISE SPECIAL COURT'

By Mohamed Kalokoh

Former President of Liberia and Special Court indictee Charles Taylor has said that he does not recognise the jurisdiction of the Special Court of Sierra Leone. He was making a plea on the eleven- count charge of Crimes against Humanity and related offences preferred against him yesterday at the Special Court court room, New England Ville, Freetown.

Dressed in black and white suit with a red neck tie and appearing confident in the dock, the former warlord and President pleaded not guilty to all eleven counts after he was asked by the Presiding Judge, Richard Lussick to confine himself to his plea.

Before the charges were read, Justice Lussick told the court that the accused

had certain rights, adding that he is presumed innocent until proven otherwise. He said that the accused also has the right to defend himself or to request the assistance of a legal representative.

The indictment alleged that the accused, born in Liberia on the 25th January 1948, former president of Liberia
SEE BACK PAGE



Charles Taylor in handcuffs being carried into his cell at the Special Court

Taylor In Court

and leader of the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL), was individually responsible for terrorising the civilian populace of Sierra Leone. According to the indictment, the accused under his assistance and directives did encourage members of the KUF and AFRC junta and former Liberian fighters to burn property of civilians in Sierra Leone between November 1996 to January 18, 2002.

The Prosecution further alleged that under his directive and control, the indictee encouraged the rebels to unleash mayhem on February 1st 1998 to December 31st 1998 in Koidu and its environs.

It was further alleged that the accused did encourage the recruitment of child soldiers whereby unlawful killings of innocent civilians in Freetown and other parts of the country occurred.

Between November 30, to January 18 2002, according to the indictment, the accused assisted the AFRC, RUF and former Liberian fighters to maim

and kill an unspecified numbers of people in Kenema district.

Speaking through his principal defender Vincent Marley the accused said that he is afraid for his life, adding that former RUF leader Foday Sankoh former Serbian leader, Milosevic had both died while in detention facing trial for war crimes.

Marley said amongst other things that the court should ensure the safety of the accused. On the issue of the accused being tried in Sierra Leone the defence team leader said that the accused had requested for him to face trial in Sierra Leone and no where else.

The accused raised fears that if tried elsewhere, his family members may be denied visa to travel to witness his trial.

Responding, presiding Judge Richard Lussick said that the concern raised by the accused is going to be looked into and the Court Registrar notified for appropriate action to be taken.

The court was adjourned for the Registrar to communicate the next date for trial.

Standard Times
5 April 2006

Security build-up at Special Court... 250 Mongolians combat ready

BY
SANTIGIE
KAMARA

The Executive Representative of the UN Secretary General (ERSE), Mr. J. Victor Angelo has informed members of the press that there are a total number of two hundred and fifty ro-

bust, swift and well-trained professional Mongolian soldiers in Freetown for the security of the UN backed Special Court for Sierra Leone, adding that there is no cause for a security alarm.

The (ERSG) made this disclosure at a well-attended press conference at the Uniosil headquarters at Mammy Yoko Hotel on Tuesday 4th of April 2006.

Mr. Angelo also noted that

if the need arises they could bring additional troops to beef-up the security at the Court.

He also spoke about the United Nations resolution, which he said would be

passed soon to mandate the International Criminal Court (ICC) to try Charles Taylor in The Hague.

The ERSG also briefed members of the press about

the efforts of the United Nations in Sierra Leone in consolidating peace and security, fast tracking development and the protection of human

rights in the country.

He assured the people of this country about UN commitment towards peace and security.

United Nations Security Council

4 April 2006

Resolution 1667 (2006)

Adopted by the Security Council at its 5406th meeting, on 31 March 2006

The Security Council,

Recalling its previous resolutions and statements by its President concerning the situations in Liberia and the subregion, in particular its resolutions 1626 of 19 September 2005 and 1638 of 11 November 2005,

Welcoming the Secretary-General's report of 14 March 2006 (S/2006/159),

Welcoming the inauguration of President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and the installation of the newly elected Liberian Government,

Emphasizing that significant challenges remain in completing reintegration and repatriation of ex-combatants and restructuring of the Liberian security sector, as well as maintaining stability in Liberia and the subregion,

Expressing its appreciation for the continuing support of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the African Union (AU) for the Liberian Peace process, as well as for financial and other assistance provided by the international community,

Welcoming the transfer of former President Charles Taylor to the custody of the Special Court for Sierra Leone, and renewing its expression of appreciation to Nigeria and its President, Olusegun Obasanjo, for providing for former President Taylor's temporary stay in Nigeria,

Determining that the situation in Liberia continues to constitute a threat to international peace and security in the region,

Acting under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations,

1. Decides that the mandate of the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) shall be extended until 30 September 2006;
2. Decides to extend the provisions of paragraph 6 of resolution 1626 (2005) for the period specified in paragraph 1 above;
3. Reaffirms its intention to authorize the Secretary-General to redeploy troops between UNMIL and the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire on a temporary basis in accordance with the provisions of resolution 1609 (2005), as may be needed;
4. Takes note of the letter of the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council dated 22 March 2006 (S/2006/184), and expresses its determination to review the tasks and the troop level of the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI) by the end of April 2006, with a view to a decision on its reinforcement;
5. Requests the Secretary-General to review his recommendations for a drawdown plan for UNMIL and to present further recommendations in his next regular report to the Council on UNMIL's progress with the implementation of its mandate;
6. Decides to remain actively seized of the matter.

United Nations Security Council

4 April 2006

Letter dated 31 March 2006 from the Permanent Representative of the Netherlands to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

The Government of the Netherlands has received a letter from the President of the Special Court for Sierra Leone in which the Court seeks the consent of the Government of the Netherlands to hold the trial of Charles Taylor in the Netherlands and to facilitate the conduct of the trial (see annex I).

It is my honour to inform you in your capacity as President of the Security Council that the Government of the Netherlands has informed the Special Court for Sierra Leone that it is willing to host the Special Court for the trial of Charles Taylor, provided that a few conditions are met. These conditions are outlined in a letter from the Government of the Netherlands to the Special Court for Sierra Leone dated 29 March 2006 (see annex II). I would be grateful if you could arrange for the present letter and its annexes to be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Frank Majoor
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

Annex I to the letter dated 31 March 2006 from the Permanent Representative of the Netherlands to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

It has become apparent to me that security and issues related to the stability in the region would make it impossible for Charles Taylor, the accused in case No. SCSL-2003-01, to be tried in Freetown by the Special Court for Sierra Leone ("Special Court").

Pursuant to rule 4 of the Rules of Procedure and Evidence of the Special Court, I am empowered to authorize a Trial Chamber to exercise its functions away from the seat of the Special Court. It is my intention to exercise this power to authorize the trial of Charles Taylor to be held at a venue outside of Sierra Leone.

The cost of establishing a courtroom facility of the requisite standard in order to conduct a single trial would undoubtedly be prohibitive. I have therefore requested the Registrar of the Special Court to ascertain whether any existing international criminal court with such facilities might be in a position to make some of those facilities available to the Special Court for a limited period, on a cost-recovery basis, and in particular, whether the International Criminal Court would be in a position to assist the Special Court in this respect.

It would be necessary for the Government of the Netherlands to give its consent for any such trial to be held in the territory of the Netherlands if appropriate facilities can be made available there for use by the Special Court, and I am now writing to you to seek this consent. We would request that the Government of the Netherlands facilitate the conduct of the trial of Charles Taylor in the Netherlands, in particular by:

(a) Allowing the detention and the trial in the Netherlands of Charles Taylor by the Special Court;

(b) Facilitating the transport upon request of the Special Court of Charles Taylor within the Netherlands outside the areas under the authority of the Special Court;

(c) Enabling the appearance of witnesses, experts and other persons required to be at the Special Court under the same conditions and according to the same procedures as applicable to the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia.

I would emphasize that our request to the Netherlands to host the trial of Charles Taylor extends only for the duration of the trial, including the appeal, and that Charles Taylor would need to be relocated to another State after the judgement is final. We will ensure that a subsequent location for Charles Taylor is found prior to his transfer to the Netherlands.

I would like to thank you in advance for your consideration of this request, and look forward to your response.

(Signed) Justice A. Raja N. Fernando
President
Special Court for Sierra Leone

BBC Focus on Africa

4 April 2006

LEAD-IN: ...security. Charles Taylor appeared in the Special Court for the first time yesterday, where he pleaded not guilty to 11 charges, including bearing the most responsibility for murder and rape. There are moves to try Mr. Taylor at the international war crimes court in the Netherlands, but the former Liberian leader, who once escaped from jail in the United States, says he wants to be tried in Sierra Leone. The UN Special Representative in Sierra Leone, Victor Angelo, discussed Mr. Taylor's security at a press conference today, and Josephine Hazley called him up to hear what he had to say to allay the security fears of some Sierra Leoneans.

ANGELO: We are fully equipped, because we have a very good Mongolian contingent that is attached to the Special Court, to protect the Special Court. This contingent belongs to UNMIL, and is under the leadership of UNMIL, and these Mongolian soldiers are top level and very good soldiers and we have 250 of them, and so I can say we are in a position to ensure the protection. But we are offering the provision to bring additional troops if necessary.

Have you got the wherewithal to deal with any subversive elements who might have ideas as to how to come and get Mr. Taylor, because don't forget, he's escaped once from a jail in America.

ANGELO: Yes. Well, as I told you, we have a very strong protection team, these Mongolian troops, and these based up by other troops that are based in Liberia. I would say that if anybody is thinking of any adventure he will, or she, or they will meet a very, very strong response and it will be a major mistake on their side, because our soldiers are extremely well organised, they are very professional, and I really do not think that people are foolish enough to even think of any adventure at this stage.

Well just on a general thing on the security, the internal security in Sierra Leone as well you discussed in your press conference, what's the state of the general security in Sierra Leone itself at the moment?

ANGELO: Very good. We have a very stable and I would say one of the safest countries in West Africa. Things have changed quite a lot since the end of the war. We have been able to keep peace first, and now we are consolidating the peace process, and we are building and strengthening the capacity of the national police, the capacity of the National Office of Security as well as the capacity of the military to deal with the security situation in the country, and I would say this is now a very, very safe nation.

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

Amnesty International

3 April 2006

Public Statement

AI Index: AFR 51/004/2006 (Public)

News Service No: 087

3 April 2006

Fighting impunity in Africa: Need for a comprehensive and consistent approach

Amnesty International welcomes the surrender of former Liberian president Charles Taylor to the custody of the Special Court for Sierra Leone, where he has been indicted and will face trial on 11 charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity. The organization also welcomes the arrest, on 17 March, of Thomas Lubanga -- leader of an armed political group in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) -- who was surrendered to the International Criminal Court on suspicion of having committed war crimes.

These arrests represent important steps in the fight against impunity in Africa and send a message that those involved in human rights violations will be brought to account. However, further steps must be taken to ensure that other alleged perpetrators of human rights violations in Africa, including Hissène Habré, former president of Chad, face justice.

Following the surrender of Charles Taylor, the Special Court has requested that -- for security reasons -- the trial be moved to the The Hague, The Netherlands. Amnesty International has been supportive of Special Court and its important role in achieving justice for the thousands of victims of crimes against humanity, war crimes and other crimes under international law in Sierra Leone. Amnesty International believes that whether Charles Taylor is tried in Freetown or elsewhere under the jurisdiction of the Special Court, it is critical that protection for all witnesses is guaranteed, and that the trial be accessible to and known by the victims, their families and the wider Sierra Leonean society. Such measures are essential to ensure the relevance and contribution to the crucial message that impunity for crimes under international law will not be tolerated and that justice will be achieved for the victims of these crimes -- so that justice is both done and seen to be done.

Amnesty International shares the belief expressed by the UN Secretary-General that "the capture and trial of Mr. Taylor will send a powerful message to the region and beyond that impunity will not be allowed to stand and that the rule of law must prevail."

In the past decades the perpetration of crimes under international law has plagued many parts of Africa. African men, women and children have been victims of genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity and other crimes under international law. Suspected perpetrators are rarely brought to justice, benefiting from amnesties and similar measures, while the victims have been frequently denied an effective remedy.

The Constitutive Act of the African Union recognizes among its fundamental principles and objectives the "condemnation and rejection of impunity". Amnesty International therefore calls on African governments to ensure that suspected perpetrators of crimes under international law do not benefit from impunity. African states must try suspected perpetrators of crimes under international law in full accordance with guarantees of fair trial and without the imposition of the death penalty, and must extradite them to states that are willing to prosecute them in accordance

with fair trial standards or surrender them to internationalized courts. Governments must also comply with any request made by the International Criminal Court to surrender accused persons.

Background

Charles Taylor has been accused of 11 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity against the people of Sierra Leone by the Special Court. The crimes include killings, mutilations, rape and other forms of sexual violence, sexual slavery, the recruitment and use of child soldiers, abduction, and the use of forced labour by Sierra Leonean armed opposition groups. In 2003 Charles Taylor was granted refugee status in Nigeria. On 29 March, pursuant to a request from the Liberian government, he was surrendered to the Special Court for Sierra Leone in Freetown.

On 17 March 2006 Thomas Lubanga Dyilo, a national of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and alleged founder and leader of the Union des Patriotes Congolais (UPC) was transferred to the ICC. He has been charged with committing war crimes under Article 8 of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court committed in the DRC since July 2002, including, "enlisting and conscripting children under the age of fifteen and using them to participate actively in hostilities".

Hissene Habré, former president of Chad, was indicted by a Belgian court on 19 September 2005 for war crimes, crimes against humanity and torture. Belgium requested Senegal to extradite him. The Senegalese authorities arrested Hissène Habré on 15 November 2005. However, on 25 November 2005, the Court of Appeals of Dakar ruled that it had no jurisdiction to rule on the extradition request. In January 2006, the African Union Assembly mandated a Committee of Eminent African Jurists (Committee) "to consider all aspects and implications of the Hissène Habré case as well the options available for his trial" The AU Assembly has requested the Committee to "finalize its work and submit a report to its next Ordinary Session in July 2006".

Associated Press

5 April 2006

Taylor may stand trial in The Hague

By Michelle Faul

Freetown - The international community is determined to move former Liberian president Charles Taylor's war crimes trial to The Netherlands, and will even make sure that his defence witnesses will be able to appear there, a United Nations official said.

At his first court appearance on Monday before the UN-backed war crimes court, Taylor had asked through his lawyer that his case remain in Sierra Leone, where he is accused of backing notoriously brutal rebels during a 1991-2002 civil war. Taylor, who entered a plea of not guilty on Tuesday, argued that defence witnesses would find it difficult to travel to Europe.

No date for the start of his trial has been set. Taylor still is talking to numerous lawyers but has not decided on a defence team, which it could take months to prepare.

The question of where the trial will be held also must be resolved, and a sticking point may be that Taylor has become an international pariah, welcome in no country.

Court officials have asked that the trial be moved to The Hague, Netherlands, because of fears the 58-year-old Taylor, once among the most feared warlords in the region, could still spark unrest in West Africa. The UN Security Council is considering a draft resolution that Dutch officials had requested before agreeing to the transfer. The trial would remain under the auspices of the independent, international Special Court sitting in Sierra Leone, with the International Criminal Court providing only the courtroom.

The Dutch are insisting that a third country agree to imprison Taylor if he is convicted. But several diplomats at the United Nations told reporters on Tuesday that no country wants to have Taylor for 20 or 30 years - either in jail or in exile.

J Victor Angelo, the top UN official in Sierra Leone, said the draft resolution, which he said could be adopted in the next few days, includes a clause "which means the witnesses and experts and anybody else required for a fair trial will be given all the facilities to be able to appear before the trial court".

Angelo did not say who would pay for travel to the court or address whether those subject to UN travel bans would be accommodated. Several of Taylor's relatives and close associates are under a UN travel ban.

"The international community and the Security Council seem to be very clear as far as the message is concerned that Mr Charles Taylor should be tried in the Netherlands," Angelo said at a news conference. "The point here is what would be the impact on security and stability in the sub-region if Mr Charles Taylor is kept in Freetown?"

Liberian President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf has expressed fear that Taylor's supporters could use a trial in the region as an excuse to mount another insurgency in her country, one that could, like the war Taylor launched in Liberia in 1989, spill across the region.

Taylor is accused of backing the Sierra Leonean rebels in exchange for a share of Sierra Leone's diamond wealth, which he used to fund his ambitions in Liberia.

He pleaded not guilty on Monday to 11 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity, including cutting off of limbs and other body parts; rape, abduction and sexual slavery; pillaging; and conscription of boys and girls.

Taylor's appearance - three years after he was indicted and a week after he tried to escape being handed over to the court - forced him "to face the people of Sierra Leone, against whom he is accused of committing heinous atrocities", the court's chief prosecutor, Desmond de Silva, said in a statement on Monday.

De Silva added a precedent had been set: "Those who commit atrocities and violate international humanitarian law will be held accountable, no matter how rich, powerful or feared people may be - no one is above the law."

Security was tight. Taylor - and court officials who have received death threats - were protected by bulletproof glass and by dozens of UN peacekeepers from Mongolia and Ireland. - Sapa-AP

Associated Press

5 April 2006

U.N. Looking for Country to Take Taylor

U.N. Special Court Struggling to Find Country to Take Charles Taylor Once Trial Is Over

By NICK WADHAMS

The Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS - The U.N.-backed court that would prosecute former Liberian President Charles Taylor has run into trouble trying to persuade any government to either imprison him or give him asylum once the trial ends, diplomats said Tuesday.

The diplomats said the main concern was deciding where to send Taylor if he is acquitted on 11 counts alleging war crimes and crimes against humanity during Sierra Leone's 1991-2002 civil war. Sweden is the likely candidate to imprison him if he's found guilty, but is otherwise reluctant, they said.

The issue of where to send Taylor has become a pressing one because the U.N. Security Council agreed not to pass a resolution transferring his trial to The Hague, Netherlands until a deal is arranged.

"The problem is nobody wants to have this guy on their territory in jail or not for 20 or 30 years," said one diplomat.

That diplomat and several others at the U.N. insisted on anonymity because the talks are secret and Taylor has not been convicted yet.

Last week, the Special Court for Sierra Leone asked that Taylor's trial be conducted at The Hague for security reasons. He is accused directing rebels in Sierra Leone and trafficking in guns and diamonds while in power in neighboring Liberia.

In a March 29 letter made available Tuesday, Dutch Foreign Minister Bernard Bot told the Security Council that the Netherlands would agree to hold the trial, but only on three conditions: that the legal arrangements be made; that a court at the Hague make facilities available; and that a country agreed to take Taylor in afterward.

In blunt terms, Bot wrote that arrangements must be made "to ensure that Mr. Taylor is transferred to a place outside of the Netherlands immediately after the final judgment of the Special Court."

At his first court appearance Monday before the U.N.-backed war crimes court, Taylor had asked through his lawyer that his case remain in Sierra Leone. Taylor, who entered a plea of not guilty, argued that defense witnesses would find it difficult to travel to Europe.

But J. Victor Angelo, the top U.N. official in Sierra Leone, said the draft resolution, which he said could be adopted in the next few days, includes a clause "which means the witnesses and experts and anybody else required for a fair trial will be given all the facilities to be able to appear before the trial court."

"The international community and the Security Council seem to be very clear as far the message is concerned that Mr. Charles Taylor should be tried in the Netherlands," Angelo said at a news conference. "The point here ... is what would be the impact on security and stability in the sub-region if Mr. Charles Taylor is kept in Freetown?"

Liberian President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf has expressed fear that Taylor's supporters could use a trial in the region as an excuse to mount another insurgency in her country, one that could, like the war Taylor launched in Liberia in 1989, spill across the region.

Taylor is accused of backing the Sierra Leonean rebels in exchange for a share of Sierra Leone's diamond wealth, which he used to fund his ambitions in Liberia.

Britain's U.N. Ambassador Emyr Jones-Parry said earlier Tuesday that the council hoped to adopt a necessary resolution by Thursday to send Taylor's trial to the Netherlands.

He said there were technical details to work out such as financing and deciding which court inside The Hague complex would handle the trial. Jones-Parry did not raise the issue of where to send Taylor.

But diplomats said that had become the main sticking point by Tuesday afternoon.

The Netherlands has contacted several European nations, including Sweden and Austria, about where to send Taylor. A Swedish diplomat, also speaking on condition of anonymity, said his nation might make a decision in the next day or two.

The statute creating the Sierra Leone court says that if convicts cannot be imprisoned in that country, they can also go to countries that have so-called "enforcement of sentences" agreements with the U.N.-backed courts for Rwanda and Yugoslavia.

Countries with those agreements include at least nine European countries: Austria, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Norway, Spain, and Sweden.

The African nations of Mali, Benin and Swaziland also have such agreements, but are considered less likely because of the security threat Taylor poses.

The Sierra Leone court is handling cases stemming from more than 10 years of fighting for control of Sierra Leone and its diamonds, a conflict that saw rebels hacking off the limbs, lips and ears of civilian victims.

Associated Press writer Michelle Faul contributed to this report from Freetown, Sierra Leone.

Reuters

4 April 2006

War crimes suspect Taylor hunts for defense lawyers

By Nick Tattersall

Former Liberian leader Charles Taylor is hunting for lawyers to defend him after pleading not guilty to war crimes at a U.N.-backed court in Sierra Leone, his advisors say.

Africa's most feared warlord pleaded innocent on Monday to 11 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity for his role backing rebels who raped and mutilated civilians and recruited child soldiers during Sierra Leone's 1991-2002 civil war.

From his heavily-guarded cell in the Special Court compound, nestled among the shanty-covered hills of the capital Freetown, Taylor has been receiving legal advisors from around the region but has yet to decide who should defend him, lawyers said.

"We were able to see him and give him our advice. He will consider it and act on it but he has not yet chosen his own defense team," said Azanne Kofi Akainyah, a lawyer from Ghana who came to Freetown at Taylor's request and met him on Monday.

"He was resolute, not downhearted, fully aware of the political machinations behind everything," Akainyah told Reuters late on Monday.

Taylor's aides have said he would like Harvard law professor Alan Dershowitz to lead his defense.

Taylor was defended at Monday's hearing by a staff lawyer from the tribunal, Vincent Nmehielle, who told the court the former Liberian leader did not currently have sufficient funds to employ his own defense team.

"NO MONEY"

"Mr. Taylor has made it clear that he has no money," Nmehielle said after the hearing. "But he has not hidden the fact that if he is able to raise the necessary money, he would love to defend himself with a legal team of his choice."

The former warlord was flown, handcuffed and surrounded by UN peacekeepers, to the Freetown tribunal last Wednesday, after nearly three years in exile in Nigeria.

He was arrested trying to leave Nigeria in a car with a trunk full of banknotes.

The U.N.-backed court has asked the Netherlands to hold his trial in The Hague, citing fears keeping him in Sierra Leone could provoke unrest there and in neighboring Liberia, where some of his supporters have threatened violence if he is judged.

Taylor told the court he did not recognize its right to try him, an appeal based on his status as a head of state at the time the indictment was served, which has already been dismissed once by the tribunal in 2004.

"This is just a sort of pathetic attempt to reassert this head of state immunity that has already been rejected," the tribunal's chief prosecutor, Desmond de Silva, told Reuters after the hearing.

"He does not have head of state immunity any more than Milosevic did," he said.

The prosecution now has 30 days to present the defense with the evidence on which it relies before Taylor's legal team prepares its case, a process expected to take several months.

Reuters

4 April 2006

Taylor's trial may end Africa's gentleman's club

By Daniel Flynn

DAKAR (Reuters) - Africa's ageing presidents may act as a gentleman's club sheltering former dictators but Liberian warlord Charles Taylor's trial suggests club rules could be changing.

Taylor became the first African leader to stand before an international court on Monday after Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo, under pressure from Washington, handed him over to face trial in Sierra Leone for war crimes.

The former warlord, who fled to exile in Nigeria under a 2003 peace deal to end Liberia's 14-year civil conflict, was Africa's most notorious war crimes suspect and his arrest was welcomed across the world's poorest continent.

"The message here for the political leadership of Africa is that the days of absolute impunity for mass crimes is coming to an end, and that is a major milestone," Richard Dicker, director of Human Rights Watch's international justice programme, said.

In the past, notorious African dictators such as the former-Zaire's Mobutu Sese Seko and Uganda's Idi Amin have fled overseas to live out their days unpunished.

Rights activists hope the Taylor decision will stiffen Africa's resolve to tackle rights abuses. The International Criminal Court (ICC) is probing war crimes in Uganda, Democratic Republic of Congo and Sudan's Darfur region.

The first big test will come in June, when an African Union (AU) summit must decide whether to extradite former Chad President Hissene Habre from exile in Senegal to Belgium to face charges of mass murder and torture during his 1982-1990 regime.

But enormous resistance remains to foreign meddling in African affairs. Sudan, due to chair the AU in 2007, blocked a visit this week by U.N. Under Secretary General Jan Egeland to Darfur, where Khartoum is accused of backing genocide.

Taylor's trial on charges of backing rebels in Sierra Leone during a 1990-2001 civil war may also deter African leaders from sanctioning further tribunals, analysts say.

"This opens up an enormous can of worms for African presidents," said Richard Reeves, West Africa specialist at London-based think-tank Chatham House. "If you look at any African leader in office for more than a dozen years, they have all tried to destabilise neighbouring countries."

COMING OF AGE

Known as "Pappy" to a generation of drug-crazed child soldiers, Taylor became a byword for more than a decade of civil wars in Sierra Leone and Liberia. But leaders in Guinea, Ivory Coast and Burkina Faso also played their part.

With many leaders having much to lose by Taylor taking the witness box, his arrest took many Africans by surprise.

"That we have not heard a wave of condemnation from African leaders after one of their own handed over Taylor shows the African Union is coming of age," Kenya's Sunday Standard wrote in an editorial.

It may have been the introduction of Africa's first elected female president which helped change the rules of the "gentleman's club": Liberian President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf took office in January and soon sought Taylor's prosecution.

But the Habre case may prove more problematic. Many African leaders resent that a court in an ex-colonial power, accused of rights abuses in Congo, is trying to extradite one of their own.

"It must be Africa which tries him ... It is a question of finding an African judiciary to judge the case," Senegalese President Abdoulaye Wade said at an AU summit in January.

The torture charges against Habre could also be much more commonly applied than war crimes accusations facing Taylor.

"The Habre case is more worrying for African leaders as it is more universal in its implications," said Reeves. "They will find it a very difficult decision."

The fate of other ex-leaders, such as Ethiopia's Communist dictator Mengistu Haile Mariam, may depend on the Habre ruling.

Mengistu, accused of a "Red Terror" which killed thousands during his 1977-1991 rule, remains a guest of Zimbabwe President Robert Mugabe despite Ethiopia's attempts to extradite him.

In Congo, Taylor's trial raised hopes the ICC probe could gather pace. Last month a Congo militia leader Thomas Lubanga became the first suspect transferred to the ICC for trial for conscripting children during a 1998-2003 war.

"This is a sign to those in power who have the blood of the Congolese people on their hands," said Dolly Ibefo, vice president of Congolese rights group, La Voix des Sans Voix.

Many ordinary Congolese, used to decades of rights abuses, remain phlegmatic about Taylor's arrest.

"I guess it is a good sign," said Jean-Pierre, a taxi driver. "They arrested Lubanga ... but what about the others here in Congo. The ones who are still in power."

Time

4 April 2006

Analysis: Why Charles Taylor May Not Stay in Africa

Some fear the Liberian warlord's presence could destabilize the region all over again

By SIMON ROBINSON

When former Liberian president Charles Taylor appeared before the Special Court for Sierra Leone on Monday, initially refusing to recognize its authority before pleading not guilty, it marked the first phase in the trial of one of Africa's most wanted men. "The people of Sierra Leone have been waiting patiently for three years to see the accused finally face the trial chamber," said prosecutor Desmond de Silva. "Many voices have come together to uphold the rule of law and justice. The voice of the people of Sierra Leone was the loudest and I commend them for their courage, conviction and persistence." But for all the applause, Taylor's first day in a Freetown court may also be his last.

Within hours of taking custody of Taylor last week, the Special Court — an independent tribunal established jointly by Sierra Leone and the United Nations and mandated to bring to justice the leaders behind war crimes and atrocities committed during Sierra Leone's civil war—asked the Netherlands if it could hold Taylor's trial in The Hague. Prosecutor de Silva, as well as the leaders of neighboring African countries, believe that trying Taylor in Sierra Leone could destabilize the region. Taylor still has thousands of supporters, most of them unemployed former soldiers, in Liberia, which he ruled for seven years, as well as in neighboring Sierra Leone, whose civil war he allegedly fueled by buying diamonds and supplying arms. Many observers fear that Taylor could call on those same loyal men and boys to foment trouble again. "We have a very fragile peace process ongoing," Liberia's Minister of Information Johnny A. McClain told Time. "Liberia does not have an army because we are restructuring our army. We do not have a police force because we are restructuring our police force. So our security is in the hands of the United Nations."

From his exile in Nigeria between August 2003 and last week, human rights groups say Taylor continued to meddle in the internal affairs of Liberia. In the run up to last year's Liberian presidential poll, which elected Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, Taylor financed the campaigns of several loyalists who ended up in parliament, says Corrine Dufka, a researcher for Human Rights Watch. "Once people see him on television, isolated and removed, it starts to demystify him," says Liberia's Labor Minister Samuel Koffi Woods. "It's only then that the mini warlords who are still here will understand that they too can be held accountable."

The U.S. and E.U. have backed the Special Court's request to move Taylor to Europe—a place Taylor himself has said in the past he would prefer to be tried. The big donors are spending millions rebuilding Liberia and Sierra Leone and both understand the sensitivities of holding his trial in the region. The U.S. may have balked at the idea if it meant transferring jurisdiction to the International Criminal Court, which Washington does not support. But no matter where the actual trial is held, control of the case will stay with the Special Court, which Washington sees as a model for future war crimes courts and a welcome alternative to the permanent ICC. Compared to the International Criminal Tribunals for the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda, which are often criticized for the glacial pace of their prosecutions, "the court in Freetown is progressing faster, for less money and in a more focused way," says Mike McGovern, West Africa project director for the Brussels-based research and lobby group International Crisis Group. "The perception is that they're harder-working." With Taylor now in its hands, the coming months will surely be even busier.

--With reporting by Johnny Dwyer/New York

Ghanaweb

4 April 2006

<http://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/artikel.php?ID=102105>

Ghanaian lawyers to defend Charles Taylor?

Former Liberian leader Charles Taylor is hunting for lawyers to defend him after pleading not guilty to war crimes at a U.N.-backed court in Sierra Leone, his advisors say.

According to a reliable source, two Ghanaian lawyers Nana Ato Dadzie & Azanne Kofi Akainyah, have joined Taylor's team of defence lawyers.

Africa's most feared warlord pleaded innocent on Monday to 11 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity for his role backing rebels who raped and mutilated civilians and recruited child soldiers during Sierra Leone's 1991-2002 civil war.

From his heavily-guarded cell in the Special Court compound, nestled among the shanty-covered hills of the capital Freetown, Taylor has been receiving legal advisors from around the region but has yet to decide who should defend him, lawyers said.

"We were able to see him and give him our advice. He will consider it and act on it but he has not yet chosen his own defence team," said Azanne Kofi Akainyah, a lawyer from Ghana who came to Freetown at Taylor's request and met him on Monday.

"He was resolute, not downhearted, fully aware of the political machinations behind everything," Akainyah told Reuters late on Monday.

Taylor's aides have said he would like Harvard law professor Alan Dershowitz to lead his defence.

It is believed Nana Ato Dadzie flew to Freetown, Sierra Leone, yesterday. He is to join a legal team that includes two Liberian and three Sierra Leone lawyers.

Nana Ato Dadzie was for a very long time, in the PNDC era, a PNDC Secretary (Minister) at the PNDC Secretariat and later became Chief of Staff to President Jerry John Rawlings.

He had previously held the position of PNDC Secretary (Minister) for the Central Region.

He was one of six persons who were prosecuted by the Kufuor administration in the infamous 'Quality Grain Trial', which sent former NDC Ministers Kwame Peprah and Ibrahim Adam and Dr. George Sipah-Yankey into prison to serve jail terms.

Nana Ato Dadzie is currently defending the Ghana Palaver in the case "Paa Kwesi Nduom Vrs The Ghana Palaver" which is before the National Media Commission.

The Analyst (Monrovia)

4 April 2006

Taylor Somersaults Again

By Gibson Jerue
Freetown

Liberian ex-President President Charles Taylor prefers to be tried in Freetown rather than The Hague in the Netherlands, his 4-man defense team told the Special Court yesterday.

"He wants to be tried in Sierra Leone and nowhere else," his principal defense counsel, Vincent Nmehielle of Nigeria, said.

Taylor who made a debut appearance before the special court yesterday to plead guilty or not guilty on an 11-count indictment of war crimes and crimes against humanity charges brought against him reportedly told his lawyers that even though he feared for his safety in Sierra Leone he wanted to be tried in the region, in part because it would be easier for defense witnesses to appear.

Taylor met with his lawyers for the first time Monday morning shortly before his court appearance.

The two lawyers from Liberia and two from Ghana said he is likely to consider their advice on how to build his defense team.

The reason for Taylor's decision, according to the lawyers who could not represent him at yesterday's trial because they had not completed procedures necessary to appear before the court, is that Freetown represented the lesser of two evils.

While Foday Sankoh died in the same cell now assigned him, the leader of Serbia, Slobodan Milosevic died recently in his cell while facing war crimes and crimes against humanity in The Hague.

He then requested that the court put in place a mechanism whereby his security would be assured.

"We consider our mission accomplished," said Kofi Akainyah, a Ghanian member of the defense team even though the court is yet to rule on the new request that contradicts widespread security concerns of Taylor relatives and counsels as well as the Government of Liberia.

Court chief prosecutor Desmond de Silva dismissed such concerns, insisting that Taylor has no reason to fear for his safety.

The announcement which left most of the 100 spectators of the crowded courtroom flabbergasted yesterday came shortly after preliminary court proceedings in which Mr. Taylor, having failed to convince the court that it lacked jurisdiction to try him, condescended and pleaded not guilty.

"Most definitely, your honor, I did not and could not have committed those acts against the sister republic of Sierra Leone. I think that this is an attempt to continue to divide and rule the people of Liberia and Sierra Leone and so most definitely I am not guilty," Taylor who appeared in court

wearing a dark suit and maroon tie, said after Justice Richard Lussick read the charges against him.

The charges against him include murder, rape, sexual slavery, physical violence and cruel treatment, recruiting child soldiers and terrorising the civilian population.

The chief prosecutor at the court describes the 58-year-old Taylor as one of the three worst war criminals in the world, alongside the Serbian fugitives Ratko Mladic and Radovan Karadzic.

According to him, Taylor provided the RUF leader Foday Sankoh with training, money, arms and ammunition to start his rebellion in Sierra Leone, and even lent him fighters to take part in the initial attack.

He also alleged that the former president of Liberia shared a common plan with the rebel commanders to gain power and control over Sierra Leone, so he could gain access to its diamonds and have a government in Freetown which would support his aims, our correspondent says.

Security was tight at the Special Court in Sierra Leone, the country to which Taylor is accused of exporting his civil war. Court officials who received death threats and Taylor will be protected by bulletproof glass and dozens of U.N. peacekeepers from Mongolia and Ireland.

By 12 noon yesterday, the vicinity of the Special War crimes Court for Sierra Leone was becoming crowded. Sierra Leoneans and Liberians living in Freetown were converging to witness the commencement of one of the most momentous trials since the constitution of the Special Court.

The Rapid Response troops of the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) of the Irish and Sweden forces, aided by their Mongolian counterparts were posted around the main compound at New England and within the compound itself.

All soldiers were in bow arm as if they were ready for battle, and although they did not intimidate or molest any visitors of the court, those who saw such posting of military personnel for first the time shivered.

Journalists, some of whom started arriving at the Court at early as 10:00 a.m. were seen brandishing their still and video cameras at least to get a shot of the former Liberian President Charles Taylor leaving his cell east of the court's compound.

The security forces did not however allow anyone to see Taylor before he was taken into Court Two where he will be standing trial under presiding Judge Richard Lussick a Samoan national.

Getting into the courtroom was smooth but security check was thorough, and no cell phone, radio, recorder, camera or any electronic device was permitted to pass through.

Everyone - journalists and diplomats, including Liberia's Ambassador to Sierra Leone, Thomas Brima - was told to form the queue to make it in. A Security officer later recognized Amb. Brima and took him from the long queue to enter the courtroom.

Four lawyers who might form part of Taylor's defense team - Cllrs. Francis Garlawolu, Theophilus Gould, including two Ghanaian lawyers Nana Ato Dadzie and Kofi Akainyah were

present but did not form part of defense team that represented Taylor yesterday.

When all have entered and seated and Chief Prosecutor and his team had seated ahead of Judge Richard Lussick, the court clerk called for attention and the formalities were observed.

Both Chief Prosecutor Desmond de Silva and the Court's assigned Principal Vincent Nmehielle had nothing to say, and the judge ordered the clerk to read to Taylor the 11-count charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity.

The eleven counts were read one by one to Mr. Taylor who was seated, dressed in a dark suit, white shirt, and maroon tie with a wrist watch.

He intermittently tried to force a smile when the clerk read that he personally facilitated, ordered, planned and/or designed to rape, take sex slaves, etc.

There were nine characteristics of all the crimes the court is holding Taylor for, apart from some emphasis on some of the charges.

Charges include cutting of limbs, rape, taking of sex slaves, arson or burning of villages, and mutilation.

"Civilians were shot, burned in their homes, hacked to death and killed while trying to escape from attacks on their homes or from their captors," part of it reads.

Others are conscription of child soldiers, force labor, abduction, and looting or pillaging of national resources and properties of civilians.

Having read the charges Judge Lussick then put it to Mr. Taylor to respond by entering a plea of guilty or not guilty. "Do you understand the charges levied against you," the Judge asked.

Taylor stood for a while as if he was not hearing what the Judge was asking him. The Judge asked three times, and then Taylor decided to answer. "Yes, I do," he responded.

Then he started: "As it pleases the Court, I will like to plea to all the 11 counts because there are certain issues in there that I like to answer to and there are others I have problem with.

But Judge Lussick urged him to go ahead and enter a plea before he can obtain the right to raise any issues before the court, as a matter going by the rules of the court.

Then Taylor stood again, this time, he said, "I did not and could not have committed these acts against the sisterly Republic of Sierra Leone." "If I understood you well that means you are entering a plea of not guilty?" Judge Lussick asked.

"Yes, I am not guilty," Taylor replied: Shortly after Taylor pleaded not guilty; his assigned lawyer raised a number of concerns, saying that the accused (Taylor) has expressed fear for his life in the cell of the Special Court.

Some Sierra Leoneans harbor fears that Taylor trial in Freetown may cause some security problem for city and are therefore suggesting that Taylor be taken to some other place, like The Hague to be tried there.

But the Netherlands has reportedly set three conditions before the country can host the trial of the former president.

The former Liberian President also told the court that he needs the moral support of his family members and relatives and requested the court to work out means to allow his family to visit him.

Meanwhile, six persons said to be witnesses for the Special Prosecutors were qualified and sequestered expected to give evidence against the war crimes suspect.

Taylor showed little emotion as a court official, Krystal Thompson of the United States, read the indictment. He sat at a table, flanked by two security officers. When the official read "murder, a crime against humanity," he laced his fingers on the table before him.

Principal court defender Vincent Nmehielle said he had received calls from lawyers from all over the world wanting to represent Taylor. He also said the indicted Liberian warlord had told him he wanted time to get together a top-notch team and was happy to be represented by Nmehielle at Monday's hearing.

Nmehielle said Taylor asked his office to contact two lawyers he wanted on his defense team: Harvard law professor Alan Dershowitz and British lawyer Karim Khan, who represented Taylor when he challenged the jurisdiction of the war tribunal in 2003.

Taylor had earlier asked Paul to contact lawyers in the United States and Britain, saying: "Bring two attorneys. Bring them any way you can. I need somebody to take charge of this defense immediately ... (I need) to put things into motion because we have only 30 days to answer the indictment." The leader of Taylor's defense team, Francis Garlawulo, said Taylor was president when indicted in 2003 and argued the U.N.-backed court had no jurisdiction over Liberia or its head of state. The court's appeals chamber rejected a similar argument made by a Taylor lawyer after the indictment was filed.

Garlawulo also questioned whether Taylor could receive a fair trial given intense publicity surrounding the case, saying in recent days images of Sierra Leoneans maimed by rebel fighters have dominated the world's television screens.

As the hour long hearing ended, Taylor stood, smiled and blew kisses to relatives who were in the courtroom.

The hearing was adjourned but no new date was set for Taylor's next court appearance.

There are fears Taylor's presence in Freetown could trigger unrest, both in Sierra Leone and Liberia, where some of his supporters have threatened violence if he is tried.

"I think he will not get a free trial because he has already been indicted, tried and sentenced in the papers and in the media," said one of his sisters, Louise Taylor Carter. She and four other relatives had brought him religious books to read.

Taylor was reportedly caught along the Nigeria-Cameroonian border by Nigerian customs officials when he tried to escape late last month.

He was later flown to Freetown to face charges.

But his spiritual adviser said Nigerian security forces encouraged Taylor to flee and helped him get to the Cameroon border before turning around and arresting him in a double-cross.

Indian evangelist Kilari Anand Paul said Taylor told him in a phone call from jail Saturday that State Security Service agents in two vehicles came to his villa in southeastern Nigeria the night of March 28.

Taylor said they escorted him north, and then released him "in the middle of nowhere," Paul said from his home in Houston. "He said, 'Where are you guys going?' And they said they received instructions to leave him and they left." Before Taylor could cross into Cameroon, the agents who had freed him "turned up and arrested him ... they had guns and told him to surrender himself," said Paul, who met Taylor in 2003 and says he helped broker Taylor's exile to Nigeria.

"The story is a far-fetched figment of his jaundiced imagination," Obasanjo spokesman Femi Fani-Kayode told The Associated Press. "He must have been reading too many James Bond novels."

The Analyst (Monrovia)

3 April 2006

Guilty Before Trial

By Gibson W. Jerue
Freetown

Jennebah Kemokai is on crutches she was forced to carry after a rockets launched by rebels of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) in 1996 near Kenema that cut off her both legs. Her shoulders are now well built to hold up the weight of her body on the crutches.

Jennebah, 24, knows little about war crimes or crimes against humanity, but she has been following the Charles Taylor saga, and when he was recently arrested and turned over and detained in Freetown she followed that too.

"To me eh, Taylor must die. He killed all our people; he was the cause I am like this today," she told The Analyst in Kenema.

She has no second thought that Taylor may get out of this legal snare some day: "The man is guilty! I don't know why they are wasting their time to take him to court." Jennebah may sound unreasonable to those who hold in high esteem the innocent until proven guilty principle, but she is not alone in her conviction about justice where Taylor is concerned.

Many of those interviewed in Freetown and major towns along the route from Liberia through Kenema share her conviction. In their views Taylor is the cause of their personal and national miseries and that therefore he is as good as made to pay for his sins.

They believe that he stands a slim chance of vindicating himself from the 11-count charges leveled against him for allegedly aiding the RUF to carry out mayhem against the people of Sierra Leone.

Mamadu Jalloh is another Sierra Leonean who has no doubt about Taylor's guilt: "But Mr. Pressman you don't have to ask me whether I believe Taylor committed the crimes or not. He is the main man behind Sam Bockarie, I mean the late Bockarie. If they ask me what to do with Taylor, I will tell them keep him in jail until God gets ready for him to die." Mamadu, who spoke to The Analyst at Janju Street in Freetown while slicing a bread, said that he was well off before the war in Sierra Leone, "but look at me, I am only doing this small business now to survive." There were others who though believe that Taylor is guilty of the charges against him contend that he go through the trial at the Special Court "so that he can talk for himself whether is he guilty or not".

Many Sierra Leoneans seem to be finding it difficult to draw a line between the part Taylor may have played and the actions of their fellow compatriots that wrecked the nation, brought it to its knees, caused it social, economic, and political life to plummet, and damaged its basic infrastructures.

Kosonikeh Burkarie seems angry with Taylor even now that he is being held in Freetown.

"This man is the mean evil behind the RUF, Foday Sankoh, and Sam Bockarie and others. He is the demon that Satan sent to the sub-region, and there is no joke he must pay for it," he said.

Not all Sierra Leonean though believe that Taylor should get a summary guilty verdict. Those who believe in the Divine think God should intervene though they felt short of saying in which way He should. They also would not say what should become of the legal process currently in place while God takes over.

One such Sierra Leoneans is Kadiatu Bangura: "As for me they say Taylor has committed plenty crimes against humanity, but I feel that they should forgive him and forget about the things that happened to us. Let them leave him with God." According to Kadiatu, if she were asked by the Special Court to give an advice on what should be done with Taylor, she would tell the court to let him go and let all other people go too for peace's sake.

But her buddy, who sat nearby her, Maraty Kollokoh, did not share that same view. "Taylor committed the crimes, but we can not stand here and say he is guilty. Let them try him to show to other African presidents that it is not good to act wicked." Patrick Johnson, a driver, agrees with Maraty: "I believe he (Taylor) committed the crimes. He should be found guilty in a real court of justice, and there should be a proper trial." Patrick said he has no sorrow for Taylor. "He does not need to be sorry for." But he indicated that justice should not end with Taylor.

"There are others who committed crimes and are walking around freely. They should be tried also," he said.

Patrick divided the alleged war criminals into three: the collaborators, the perpetrators and the supporters. Taylor, he believes, falls in the latter group.

The Special War Crimes Court seems to agree with Patrick's analysis about wrong doing but disagree that all levels of responsibility should be tried.

In their view, the supporters, the group in which Taylor is being placed, bear the greatest responsibility like a commander in a battle and therefore should be held liable in a court of law.

Manbo Dumbuya, a foreign currency exchanger, is convinced that there are proofs to convict Taylor.

"There are proofs. Everybody knows what Taylor did that the Special Court is talking about; there is no secret about it." But of all the interviewees a Fulani boy who only identified himself as Balde came out clearly to express fear that Taylor's presence in court detention in Freetown has some security implications.

"Here is not right place to try Taylor. I believe he still has supporters in Liberia and Sierra Leone who could do anything. They should take him somewhere else; we don't have problem," Balde said.

Irrespective of the ordinary citizens' views a lawyer who declined to identify himself capsuled the Taylor trial saga this way: "See, the rule of law is good for everybody. It is the law that strengthens democracy" According him, Taylor's refusal to submit to the court would not have helped his reputation and those of his children.

"Even if he died without facing those charges and exonerating himself, the stigma will live after his children and children's children. So it was better he was turned over to fight his case," he added.

Perhaps in an apparent attempt to allay fears being expressed about fair trial and trial in dignity by the government of Liberia, relations of Taylor, and human rights institutions in Liberia, the Chief Prosecution of the Sierra Leone Special Court issued a release indicating that that Taylor will be given fair trial was out of question.

"Under Article 17 of the Statute of the Court and international criminal law, Mr. Taylor is entitled to a fair trial and is presumed innocent until proven guilty in a competent judicial tribunal. Though he now stands indicted for war crimes, crimes against humanity, and other serious violations of international humanitarian law, these charges do not constitute evidence of his guilt beyond all reasonable doubt," a March 31 Special Court for Sierra Leone press release quoted the Chief Prosecutor as saying.

In accordance with the fair-trial doctrine, the Registrar of the Special Court on March 29 informed Charles Taylor's principal defender, Vincent O. Nmehielle, shortly upon taking custody of the indictee.

"The Principal Defender is mandated to ensure, and will work towards ensuring, that his rights are fully respected in accordance with the requirements of the various instruments of the Court and under international human rights law," the release noted.

Already, lawyers from the Defence Office met with Mr. Taylor on the morning of Thursday, March 2006 and described him as "in fairly good health and in good spirits".

According to the release, he also addressed personal matters as well as detention-related issues. It did not elaborate.

Mr. Taylor, who is said to be considering possibilities in respect of his legal representation, is entitled to the right to be tried in his presence and to defend himself in person or through legal assistance of his own choosing.

He also has the right to be assigned counsel if he is found not to have sufficient means to pay for it, according to the court's press release.

It is not clear when Taylor will make his debut appearance before the Special Court, but a Special Court statement last week alluded to the possibility of the debut appearance coming on as early as today.

Meanwhile, at UN Headquarters, the Security Council discussed the proposed transfer of Charles Taylor to a facility outside Sierra Leone while remaining under the Special Court's responsibility.

In response to questions about what the Security Council was saying and doing about the change of venue, UN Secretary General Kofi Annan said March 29, "Well, I think it's been a fast-moving development and I'm sure the Council, which has been following it very, very closely, will pronounce itself -- indicate some action - particularly in the next phase on the Taylor issue. I think everybody agrees [it is] a wise move to move it to The Hague." In another related statement the Executive Secretary of ECOWAS, Dr Mohamed Ibn Chambas, said ECOWAS will continue to

support the Government President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf as it seeks truth, justice and national reconciliation after years of pain, trauma and senseless violence.

Charles Taylor had been living in his exile home in Calabar, Rivers State in Nigeria before he was turned over by the Obasanjo government to the Liberian Government.

Taylor had attempted escaping but was shortly arrested at the Nigeria-Cameroon border riding a Jeep bearing a diplomatic license plate.

On arrival at the RIA, Mr. Taylor was cuffed by the UNMIL troops on ground and sent to Freetown in a chopper to answer to his charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity.

The News (Monrovia)

4 April 2006

JPC Frowns On State Security

Monrovia

*Days following the arrest and transfer of former President Charles Taylor to the UN backed war crimes court in Sierra Leone, the Catholic Justice and Peace Commission (JPC) has expressed concern over the recent wave of arrests by state security forces of certain individuals believed to be loyalists of the former head of state.

The Commission said guilt by association should be discouraged at all levels of government. The human rights group observed that guilt by association, which was the order of the day by preceding governments, should be history of the past.

In a statement issued on the arrest and trial of the former Liberia leader, JPC cautioned state security functionaries that acts that border on installing fear and intimidation in the people are counter productive to national reconciliation and healing.

"JPC submits that individuals should be held accountable for their actions and not on account of perceived imagination of government functionaries. Liberians have seen enough scan tactics and intimidation.

These acts have caused hatred, violence and destruction to our beloved nation," the statement stressed.

At the same time, the Commission says it supports call for the transfer of Mr. Taylor to the International Court in The Hague for trial. The group called on the Special Court for Sierra Leone to ensure that the rights of Mr. Taylor are scrupulously protected as provided for under the international law.

In this regard, JPC said it believes in the due process of law, which guarantees the presumption of innocence until the guilt is established beyond all reasonable doubts, that the accused confronts his accusers and examine them and that the accused be represented by counsels and should be given the choice and opportunity to testify in his own behalf and produce witnesses in keeping with law.

The human rights organization said anything short of this would be unacceptable and tantamount to the abuse of the rights of the former president.

"The Special Court and the world at large is under both moral and legal obligation to ensure that the accused former President Taylor is accorded a free, fair and transparent trial consistent with the rule of law," JPC emphasized.

African News Dimension

5 April 2006

[http://www.andnetwork.com/app?service=direct/0/Home/\\$StorySummary\\$0.\\$DirectLink\\$1&sp=128028](http://www.andnetwork.com/app?service=direct/0/Home/$StorySummary$0.$DirectLink$1&sp=128028)

Taylor's trial is in the best interest of Liberia, Sierra Leone says EC

Monrovia (AND) The Charge d' Affaires of the European Commission in Liberia, yesterday told media that the trial of Charles Taylor is in the best interest of Liberia and Sierra Leone.

Mr. Geoffrey Rudd said the EC welcomes and support the move to arrest the former Liberian President.

Responding to a question yesterday on what the EC/EU make of the extradition of the former Liberian leader to face trial in Sierra Leone when he addressed journalists at a news conference, Mr. Rudd said the EU general position is that it fully support the extradition and subsequent arrest and detention of Mr. Taylor to face prosecution for the alleged war crimes and crimes against humanity.

He felt short in elaborating further but said the EU/EC has already issued a statement on the issue from Brussels expressing its overwhelming support of the trial of the former Liberian President.

Asked as to what he makes of the establishment of a war crime court for Liberia after years of civil war as is being done in Sierra Leone, Mr. Rudd said, "The EC does not have not have a definite position on a war crime court for Liberia but we believe people should respect human rights and should be brought to justice when they commit crimes."

Mr. Rudd added that it is the position of the EC to see people who commit crimes being brought to justice to answer for their crimes stressing that the EU will support any move to prosecute those that commit crimes or are accused of such crimes.

He disclosed that last week, a special delegation from the EC, was in the country and held discussion with the Liberian leader Ellen Johnson Sirleaf.

According to him one of the issue that topped the agenda, was human rights, and the issue concerning the operation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) in the country.

At the end of the delegation's visit, it was resolved that a mission from the EU will arrive in Liberia in April this year to consult with the government on progress made in the areas of democracy, good governance, human rights, rule of law and the fight against corruption.

African News Dimension

5 April 2006

Taylor's family safe in Sierra Leone

Monrovia (AND) The family of Charles Taylor yesterday said that they are safe in Sierra Leone. A senior member of Mr. Charles Taylor's family said that since their arrival in Freetown, there has been no harassment or molestation from the people of that country against members of the family.

Mr. Sando Johnson, a cousin of the former President who spoke to some Liberian radio stations via phone from Freetown, said no member of the family has been intimidated by the people of Sierra Leone since they arrived in that country last week, something which he said has made them very surprised.

Mr. Johnson, former President Taylor's sister Gebia Taylor and several other members of the family are in Freetown to see the former President.

He said up to the time he was speaking they have not met with the former President but said modalities for them to see him were, being worked on.

Mr. Johnson, a member of the parliament under the Taylor's government, said from what is happening they are pleased and harboring no fear for the trial to be held in Freetown.

He lauded the role played by the Sierra Leone Ambassador to Liberia Patrick Foyah who he said had been along with the family from the time they left Liberia and is assisting them to achieve their mission in Sierra Leone.

In a related development, members of President Sirleaf's party in the National Legislature, has welcomed the move to extradite, detain and prosecute the former Liberian leader.

Parliamentarian Buffor Chambers who is the head of President Sirleaf's Unity Party members in the parliament, told journalists today that the government's action was not in any way wrong as is being perceived in many quarters.

He told journalists that Mr. Taylor has a problem with the international community and therefore should face the international community at the UN court.

By Patrick Wrokpoh Liberia (AND)

Associated Press

5 April 2006

Sierra Leone tribunal an experiment

By HEIDI VOGT
ASSOCIATED PRESS WRITER

DAKAR, Senegal -- The Sierra Leone court that made Charles Taylor the first African president to answer war crimes charges is an experiment in international justice, a hybrid tribunal being tested by the debate over where the former Liberian president should be tried.

The Sierra Leone Special Court is the first U.N.-sponsored tribunal to prosecute war crimes in the country where they occurred, and it is being heavily backed by the United States as a model. It was established in January 2002 under an agreement between the United Nations and the Sierra Leone government.

Mohamed Suma, head of an independent group that monitors the court, said the aim is for his countrymen to see justice firsthand after their brutal civil war.

"The lack of justice, the lack of access to justice was one of the primary causes of the war, so people want to see justice," Suma said. He noted that the court's audience has included villagers bused in by outreach groups and college students, along with amputees from the war and relatives of the accused.

"If you look at the Rwanda court, it's not associated with the people," Suma said. "It's far away from them. If you look at Yugoslavia, it's so distant." The tribunal trying those involved in the Rwandan genocide is in neighboring Tanzania, while the Yugoslavia war crimes tribunal is at The Hague, Netherlands.

Yet Liberian President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf has asked that the trial of Taylor, who is accused of playing a leading role in Sierra Leone's 1991-2002 civil war, be moved to The Hague, arguing the sight of a former president on trial so close to home could undermine Liberia's tenuous peace.

A group of Sierra Leonean civil rights groups met with Desmond de Silva, chief prosecutor of the Sierra Leone court, on Friday and unanimously voiced their disapproval of the idea, Suma said.

"It is secure to have Taylor here and try him here; it's just paranoia" to say otherwise, Suma said.

The court borrows judges and procedures from Sierra Leone's judicial system as well as from foreign courts. To streamline justice, it only went after those with "greatest responsibility" for the atrocities of the West African country's civil war, and so indicted just 13 men, including Taylor.

Those involved in the Special Court say it is an experiment that has worked, and has advantages over courts at The Hague and elsewhere. It handles cases stemming from a struggle for control of Sierra Leone and its diamond wealth, a conflict that saw rebels hacking off the limbs, lips and ears of civilians.

The Yugoslavia and Rwanda tribunals have been going on since 1993 and 1996, respectively, and have indicted more than 100 people between them.

"The perception is that they take too long and are too expensive," said Peter Andersen, spokesman for Sierra Leone's court in Freetown.

Both the Yugoslavia and Rwanda courts were forced on their governments by the United Nations, while Sierra Leone requested the Special Court. If the case moves to The Hague, Taylor's trial would still be overseen by judges from the Sierra Leone tribunal, a group of 11 that includes four nominated by the Sierra Leonean government.

"The international community got this right. It's located at the place where it should be, and that's at the scene of the crime," said David Crane, the former lead prosecutor who indicted Taylor. "It is more efficient to have it in the location because that's where all the witnesses are."

Crane and his successor were appointed by the U.N. secretary-general.

As important as it has been to hold hearings in Sierra Leone, the trial of Taylor, the most prominent suspect to be brought before the court, may be different, said another Sierra Leonean monitor, Thomas George.

George said he has spoken to Liberians who have told him a Taylor trial in Sierra Leone would not be good for regional relations.

"Liberians will regard Sierra Leone as hostile, because they will see Sierra Leone putting their president on trial," he said.

The Sierra Leone experiment has not worked seamlessly. Crane said the delay in getting Nigeria to turn over Taylor means the court will continue past a planned five-year term. Nigeria had given Taylor refuge for more than two years before reluctantly agreeing last week to surrender him for trial.

Andersen said court staff have had to spend much of their time raising funds, because the court is supported by donations.

And despite the efforts of outreach groups, spectators at the court generally have been journalists, not members of the public.

"There are some of the victims, yes. But mostly, it's the press. Although we invite the public, very few people come," said Andersen.

"Sometimes people are a little nervous about having to go by a lot of people with machine guns," he said, referring to security at the court. But he said the public follows the trials through radio announcements and videos the court sends out.

CNN

3 April 2006

Sierra Leone amputees in a league of their own

Injuries sustained in civil war haven't kept soccer players off field

By Jeff Koinange

FREETOWN, Sierra Leone (CNN) -- It's 8 a.m., and a soccer game is under way on a makeshift field by the exotic beaches of Sierra Leone, along the Atlantic Ocean.

But it's no ordinary soccer game, for every one of the players on the six-a-side practice session is missing a leg or an arm or both.

They're all amputees, victims of the West African country's brutal decadelong civil war that cost up to 50,000 lives and left a nation of armless and legless victims. The conflict ended in 2002, but so many people are missing limbs that there is a full-fledged national soccer league for amputees. It has about a dozen teams, with legless field players and handless goalies.

Players struggle as they hobble on crutches and fight for ball possession. But some, such as 19-year-old Amadu Kamara, show amazing dexterity when it comes to ball and body control. Then again, he should.

Kamara was a budding high school soccer star when the civil war was at its height. One day, when fleeing from the rebels, a bullet hit him in the thigh. He was found three days later by government troops who took him to a local hospital.

Doctors didn't have the equipment or drugs to treat him and decided to amputate his leg, cutting short his career. He lay depressed for two months.

Seven years later, he's on the beach on crutches, maneuvering his way past other players while dribbling the ball.

"The civil war was terrible," Kamara says. "It's reduced us to a nation of beggars ... one-armed and one-legged beggars."

He is referring to the thousands of amputees who've made this country's busy thoroughfares their homes, begging for alms from sympathetic motorists and passers-by.

Many lost limbs

One of those amputees is Suleiman Sesay, who says he vividly remembers the day the rebels invaded his city.

Sesay says they rounded up him and other teens and took them to their stronghold, miles away. They were given chores -- collecting firewood, fetching water, cooking and cleaning. They worked for days on end with little food.

One day, Sesay says, he and his friends refused to do a chore, so the rebels decided to make examples of them. The rebels took them outside and in front of everyone grabbed axes and machetes and started hacking at their limbs.

"They gave us a choice," he says. "Do you want short sleeves or long sleeves?"

He says he didn't know what the question meant and even thought it was a joke. He took a gamble and said short sleeves.

"They chopped my arm at the elbow," he says. "Six swings and my arm came off."

His friend Ali had chosen long sleeves, and his hand was hacked at the wrist. And on it went until all 12 teens had their limbs severed.

"My other friend, Mohammed, a very good soccer player, had his leg chopped off," Sesay says. "The rebels said they'd done it deliberately so he could never play again. Mohammed bled to death some hours later."

Some blame Taylor

Abu Sesay (unrelated to Suleiman) was 2 months old when the rebel onslaught came to his village. His father took off with Abu on his back. The rebels' bullets cut short his run. They shattered Abu's leg and killed his father instantly.

Abu was tossed into the bushes and discovered two days later. By that time, gangrene had set in, and his leg had to be amputated.

Seven years later, Abu sits by the step of his mother's house watching his siblings play. Kadiatu Sesay says she wishes her son could be a normal kid like her other children.

"I can't even afford to pay school fees or indeed feed my children, let alone buy Abu a prosthesis."

I ask Abu if he's ever heard of Charles Taylor, former president of Liberia, a neighboring country. Taylor sits in a jailhouse here in Freetown.

Taylor is accused of countless atrocities in Sierra Leone, including aiding the rebel movement that spurred this nation's civil war and hacked off the limbs of many of its people. Taylor stands accused by a Sierra Leone special court of war crimes and crimes against humanity. He has pleaded not guilty.

Merely 7, Abu knows about Taylor and has a definite opinion of him: "I wish I could use a bullet on him the same way one was used on me. I've never met Charles Taylor, but I know he's a bad man."

As I watch the amputees play soccer by the Atlantic, my thoughts turn to Taylor and his alleged victims. This isn't the way soccer was meant to be played, but don't tell that to these incredibly determined young men.

UNMIL Public Information Office Media Summary 4 April 2006

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

International Clips on Liberia

International community determined to move former Liberian president's trial to The Hague

By MICHELLE FAUL

Source: AP Alert – Crime Date: April 04, 2006

FREETOWN, Sierra Leone _The international community is determined to move former Liberian President Charles Taylor's war crimes trial to the Netherlands, and will even ensure that his witnesses will be able to appear there, a U.N. official said Tuesday. At his first court appearance a day earlier before the U.N.-backed war crimes court, Taylor had asked through his lawyer that his case remain in Sierra Leone, where he is accused of backing notoriously brutal rebels during a 1991-2002 civil war.

War crimes suspect Taylor hunts for defence lawyers

By Nick Tattersall

FREETOWN, April 4 (Reuters) - Former Liberian leader Charles Taylor is hunting for lawyers to defend him after pleading not guilty to war crimes at a U.N.-backed court in Sierra Leone, his advisors say.

International Clips on West Africa

Sapa-AFP 04 April 2006 05:59

Rights groups concerned over Taylor trial

Susan Njanji | Freetown, Sierra Leone

Rights groups in Sierra Leone said on Tuesday they feared former Liberian president and warlord Charles Taylor, on trial for crimes against humanity, could undermine -- or even escape -- international justice. Taylor pleaded not guilty on Monday during his first appearance at a United Nations-backed court to charges including murder, mutilation, sexual slavery and use of child soldiers during a decade of atrocities in Sierra Leone.

Local Media – Newspapers

Taylor Wants Trial in Freetown, Not The Hague

(Daily Observer, The News, The Inquirer, The Analyst, New Democrat, The Informer, The Forum and The Tribute)

- Making his first appearance in the Special Court for Sierra Leone yesterday, former President Charles Taylor pleaded not guilty to all 11 charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity, adding also that he did not recognize the court's authority.
- He said that his trial was only an attempt to divide, rule and separate the two republics of Sierra Leone and Liberia.
- Lawyers defending Mr. Taylor said that he prefers to be tried in Freetown, Sierra Leone rather than The Hague, Netherlands.
- Editors: Mr. Taylor reportedly said today that the trial should be west Africa but not Sierra Leone.

Political Party to Sue Government over Taylor's Arrest

(The Inquirer, The Informer and The Forum)

- In a position statement issued in Monrovia yesterday, the National Patriotic Party (NPP) criticized the Nigerian and Liberian governments for their roles in the transfer of former President Taylor, describing the action as a violation of his rights.
- NPP Secretary-General John Whitfield said that the party would use all its resources to pursue legal action against the Liberian government for such an "unconstitutional act."

Supporter Says Nigeria Betrayed Taylor

(Daily Observer, The Inquirer and New Democrat)

- Indian-born American Evangelist K.A. Paul, who is spiritual advisor to detained former President Taylor, told *Associated Press* recently that Mr. Taylor had informed him via telephone from jail that Nigerian security service agents had encouraged him to flee to Cameroon before turning around to arrest him in what he called an act of double-cross.

Churches and Rights Group Want to Be Represented at Taylor's Trial

(The Liberian Diaspora)

- The Liberia Council of Churches and the Catholic Justice and Peace Commission have requested that they be represented at the trial of former President Taylor to ensure justice, transparency and respect for Mr. Taylor's human rights.

Two Ex-Combatants in Row over Taylor's Trial

(Daily Observer)

- Police in Monrovia are holding 20-year-old Zicko Seedee for aggravated assault after he wounded a colleague ex-combatant from the LURD rebel movement, Boakai Tarkowah, during a heated argument over the trial of former President Taylor.

UNMIL Police Accused of Assaulting Private Citizen

(The Liberian Diaspora)

- In a letter of complaint to Special Representative of the Secretary-General Alan Doss, a Liberian man, Konah Parker, claimed that two American-accented UNMIL Police officers occupying an UNMIL vehicle on 28 March, manhandled and hurled invectives at him following a traffic jam involving his vehicle.

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

Taylor Enters Not Guilty Plead at Special Court

(Also reported on ELBS Radio and Star Radio)

Former Ruling Party to Sue Government for Surrendering Taylor

(Also reported on ELBS Radio and Star Radio)

UNDP to Sue Development Partners

- Addressing a news conference in Zwedru, Grand Gedeh County yesterday, United Nations Development Program (UNDP) Country Director Steve Ursino said that the agency was considering suing some of its implementing partners which failed to implement projects awarded them. Mr. Ursino lamented that the delay in implementing projects deprived the communities of basic services.

(Also reported on ELBS Radio and Star Radio)

Vice President Urges Liberian Women to Face Up to Challenges

- Addressing the opening of a training session for women policymakers in Monrovia yesterday, Vice President Joseph Boakai urged Liberian women to continue to face up to political and social challenges in their quest to accomplish universal gender equality in Liberia.
- The Chief Executive Officer of the training session's sponsor, the US-based Hound Alternatives Fund said that she was delighted to be in Liberia and to be a part of the training for Liberia's female lawmakers and cabinet post holders.

(Also reported on ELBS Radio and Star Radio)

Liberians Debate Need for War Crimes Tribunal in Liberia

- Callers to a radio phone-in talk show in Monrovia yesterday initiated a debate on whether or not a war crimes tribunal should be set up to try other alleged war criminals in Liberia.
- Responding to questions in the studio, former Bong County Representative Joseph Cornomia noted that trying former President Charles Taylor would only amount to what he called "selective justice." He said that there were still people in Liberia who planned, financed and executed the civil war and they should be prosecuted.
- However, others opposed the tribunal's establishment in Liberia because they thought it was too late to do so.

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

Police Recover Stolen Vehicle in Lofa County

- Police in Lofa County yesterday retrieved a vehicle allegedly stolen from a staff member of the German Technical Cooperation in the county.
- Lofa County Police Commander Col. Steven Bangalu said that the armed robbers used an AK-47 raffle to snatch the vehicle and fled across the Liberia-Guinea border.

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

Khaleej Times (United Arab Emirates)

5 April 2006

Opinion

Trying Taylor

AFRICA'S most feared warlord and Liberia's former president, Charles Taylor, has finally been brought to the book. Although if Taylor will be actually made to pay for the 11 counts of war crimes against him remains to be seen, putting Africa's elusive war criminal in the dock is nothing short of an achievement for the international community.

This is especially significant for Africa and its people who have had the rare misfortune of suffering numerous dictators and criminals in the past few decades following the exit of colonial powers from the continent. Taylor faces justice for his role in orchestrating the decade-long civil war in Sierra Leone between 1991 and 2002. Armed with Taylor's blessings and material support, Sierra Leone's rebels unleashed terrible crimes against a defenceless populace. Mass rape, slaughter and mindless violence claimed over 250,000 lives underscoring the fact that unlimited power to individuals can lead to unthinkable consequences.

As the Balkan conflict has demonstrated with deadly consequences, crimes, especially war crimes, must not go unpunished. Be it in the case of Slobodan Milosevic or Charles Taylor, it is crucially important to send the message to tyrants everywhere that justice sooner or later follows all crimes. The trial of Charles Taylor must serve as a reminder to the dictators of the Dark Continent that they cannot get away with murder.

Japan Times

5 April 2006

Opinion

EDITORIAL

Africa's despots put on notice

The arrest of Mr. Charles Taylor, the former president of Liberia, and his arraignment before a United Nations-sponsored war-crimes court, could herald the beginning of a new era in Africa. Mr. Taylor is the first African head of state to be held responsible for the atrocities he set in motion during his bloody reign. For too long, the continent's leaders have acted with impunity and enjoyed virtual immunity no matter how horrific their behavior. Mr. Taylor's arrest and trial provide hope that time has passed.

Mr. Taylor was a warlord. His concern was personal enrichment and power. His aim was securing control over the rich diamond fields of western Africa. To get his hands on those beyond his country's borders, Mr. Taylor backed rebel groups in neighboring countries. His favorite tool was a local militia, often made up of child soldiers -- frequently kidnapped to serve him. They were infamous for hacking off the hands and arms of enemies and civilians, and for raping women. It is estimated that he is responsible for as many as 300,000 deaths during the decade of conflict he sponsored and supported in Sierra Leone.

In 2003, an escalating civil war at home finally drove him from office. He accepted exile in Nigeria, but vowed to return home. Despite promising to retire from politics, he was accused of fomenting more conflict in Liberia and elsewhere in the region from his base in Nigeria.

The government of Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo was reluctant to credit the charges or to crack down on its guest. As demands for action mounted, Mr. Obasanjo said he would send Mr. Taylor back to Liberia only if the government there requested it: He was confident that the situation there would remain too fragile and Mr. Taylor's return would prove too disruptive and dangerous to contemplate.

He did not bank on Ms. Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf being elected president in Liberia earlier this year and demanding Mr. Taylor's return. With his bluff called, Mr. Obasanjo then said the Liberian government would have to come get Mr. Taylor, as the warlord was not actually a prisoner in Nigeria. This was a virtual invitation for Mr. Taylor to flee -- and he did.

Fortunately for Liberia and Nigeria -- the disappearance of the warlord on the eve of his official visit to Washington was a black eye for Mr. Obasanjo -- Mr. Taylor was apprehended as he attempted to cross the border into Cameroon in a car sporting diplomatic license plates and carrying several sacks of money, gold and jewels.

After his arrest, Mr. Taylor was sent to Sierra Leone where he faces charges on 11 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity. His case will be heard by a special United Nations court that is investigating the violence that engulfed Sierra Leone for over a decade.

The capture of Mr. Taylor could herald a sea change in Africa. While some militia leaders have been put before international courts, Mr. Taylor is the first head of state from Africa to face

justice in an international court for actions taken while in power. Sadly, the continent has had some wretched rulers, from Idi Amin to Robert Mugabe.

Yet rather than hold their counterparts accountable, African leaders have been inclined to turn a blind eye to horrific misbehavior and even provide shelter -- as if to ensure that they too would enjoy the same protection if they should ever be turned out of office.

Now, the world's poorest citizens can take some comfort that their rights stand to be protected from the tyrants and dictators who have battled for power and abused them in the process. As Mr. Desmond de Silva, the court's prosecutor exulted, Mr. Taylor's "presence in the custody of the Special Court sends out a clear message that no matter how rich or powerful or feared people may be, the law is above them."

The reinforcement of the rule of law is especially welcome after the death of former Serb leader Slobodan Milosevic. He died while in custody in The Hague during his trial for war crimes. Some worried that in death he had cheated justice and might somehow undermine the legitimacy of such tribunals. The capture and remand of Mr. Taylor should be considered proof that the demand for justice has not flagged.

Africa's tyrants and dictators have been warned that they too will be held accountable for their actions. Africa's age of impunity is over.