

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



PRESS CLIPPINGS

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

as at:

Friday, 6 November 2009

Press clips are produced Monday through Friday.
Any omission, comment or suggestion, please contact
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Concord Times
Friday, 6 November 2009

Taylor admits aiding RUF

By Tamba Jean-Matthew
try.

A UN Special Court report said "in a surprising move, Charles Taylor reinforced the truthfulness of his former vice president's testimony against him earlier in the trial."

The report quoted Taylor as testifying in court that "To a great extent, Moses Blah (Taylor's former Vice President) told the court the truth."

When asked by his defence counsel to give his view on his
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Former Liberia President Charles Taylor, who is being tried by the UN-backed court for Sierra Leone in The Hague for

crimes he allegedly committed in the neighbouring country, has confessed to sending fighters to help rebels inflict mayhem on civilians during the 11-year war in the coun-

Taylor admits aiding RUF

From page 1

former vice president's testimony, Taylor said: "There were three areas where unfortunately, he (Blah) was wrong, but added that 90-95 per cent of what he (Blah) said is true."

Taylor's analysis of Blah's testimony came as part of his ongoing effort to respond to evidence provided by several prosecution witnesses, disputing their claims that he provided support for the Revolu-

tionary United Front (RUF) rebels in Sierra Leone after November 1996 at the height of the civil war which left an estimated 250,000 dead.

In May 2008, Blah had testified for the prosecution against his former boss a testimony which covered Taylor's activities from the late 1980s when the two men were together in Libya and planning to invade Liberia, up to 2003 when Taylor

handed the presidency of Liberia to Blah and sought asylum in Nigeria under pressure from the then US government of George W. Bush.

Taylor went through some aspects of Blah's testimony and agreed with him that as vice president, he had no knowledge that arms and ammunition were transported from Liberia to Sierra Leone for use by RUF rebels.

*Credit: Daily
Nation Africa*

The Exclusive
Friday, 6 November 2009

Sierra Leonean Witness, Others Nail Taylor

Charles Taylor has been responding to two key Liberian witnesses, Hassan Bility and Moses Blah and a protected Sierra Leonean

witness, all of who gave evidence supporting prosecution charges of Taylor having links with the RUF rebels in Sierra Leone. Mr. Taylor de-

nied the testimonies of Hassan Bility that he was arrested for writing about Taylor's support to the RUF

Continued page 2

Sierra Leonean Witness, Others Nail Taylor

From front page

and tortured by government security operatives.

Mr Taylor also dismissed the evidence of the protected Sierra Leonean witness who alleged that Taylor ordered his torture on suspicion of being a Kamajor fighter, resisting the RUF.

As for Former President Moses Blah, Mr Taylor agreed that Blah's evidence was 95 percent true, except for three areas.

Charles Taylor condemned the testimony of Hassan Bility as an independent journalist and called him an unlawful combatant serving as a principal point of contact for Former ULIMO-K leader Alhaji

Kromah and the LURD rebel Leader Sekou Damantee Konneh.

He rejected Hassan Bility allegations that he was tortured and electrocuted on his private parts.

As for the Sierra Leonean protected witness, he testified last year saying he and two other Sierra Leoneans were arrested accused of being Kamajors fighters and detained at the ATU Gbartala base.

The witness said at the ATU base they were tortured and melting plastic and candles dropped on their bodies. He said when they were brought before Taylor at his White Flower home in Monrovia they were flogged in the full view

of the Former President.

Regarding Moses Blah's evidence about the Taylor-Foday Sankoh acquaintance on the Libyan base of Tarjura as the beginning of the relationship between the National Patriotic Front of Liberia and the Revolutionary United Front, RUF, Mr. Taylor rejected that piece of evidence.

Taylor said he did not know Sankoh as the leader of the Sierra Leonean training group in Libya. He maintained Ali Kabba was the leader of the RUF and although he had relations with the rebel group, he cut all relations with the RUF in 1992.

Also read this story on www.exclusivepress.net

Premier News
Friday, 6 November 2009

Tejan Kabbah Wanted to Try Me

Tejan Kabbah Wanted To Try Me

Charles Taylor refuted Mr. Bility's testimony that on October 20, 1997, while visiting the headquarters of Mr. Taylor's National Patriotic Party (NPP) in Monrovia, he made handwritten notes of Mr. Taylor's comments in which he threatened to unseat Sierra Leone's President, Ahmed Tejan Kabbah.

"Taylor said that if I thought he would not unseat Kabbah's government, then I must be from an alien planet. He said that he had the best ground force in the region and Kabbah wanted to try him," Mr. Bility was quoted in his 2008 testimony in The Hague.

Mr. Bility also said that RUF commander Sam Bockarie was present at the NPP office during his visit to the office.

In a surprising move, Charles Taylor yesterday reinforced the truthfulness of his former Vice President's testimony against him last year, but dismissed the evidence of a Liberian journalist as full of "lies" and "exaggeration."

"To a great extent, Moses Blah told the court the truth," Mr. Taylor said when asked by his defense counsel to give his view on his former vice president's testimony.

"There were three areas where unfortunately, he was wrong but 90-95 percent of what he said is true."

Mr. Taylor's analysis of Mr. Blah's testimony came as part of his ongoing effort to respond to evidence provided by several prosecution witnesses, disputing their claims that he provided support for Revolutionary United Front (RUF) rebels in Sierra Leone after November 1996, amid the country's 11-years conflict.

In May 2008, Mr. Taylor's former vice president Moses Blah, had testified for the prosecution against his former boss (Taylor), a testimony which covered Mr. Taylor's activities from the late 1980s when the two men were together in Libya and planning to invade Liberia, up to 2003 when Mr. Taylor handed the presidency of Liberia to Mr. Blah and sought asylum in Nigeria.

Mr. Taylor said he agreed with Blah that as vice president, he had no knowledge that arms and ammunition were transported from Liberia to Sierra Leone for use by RUF rebels.

Mr. Blah said in his May 2008 testimony that while Liberians fought as part of the RUF in Sierra Leone, this was not an official policy of the Liberian government, a point on which Mr. Taylor agreed with him yesterday.

Mr. Taylor also agreed with his former vice president's testimony that when the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) attacked Liberia in 1989, current Liberian president Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf was responsible for the NPFL's fund raising issues in the United States.

"I can specify three areas where he lied," Mr. Taylor told the Special Court for Sierra Leone judges. "One is how he spoke about the Sam Bockarie issue was wrong. He was sent to handle the Sam Bockarie situation; he took the body to Monrovia and delivered it at the funeral home. Unfortunately, I don't know why he lied."

"The second thing is he said he did not know he'd become vice president. The third area he could have been more forthcoming was about the activities of Sam Lato. He knows that Sam Lato was tried by court martial before he was executed. Other than that, for whatever reason he came here, he was as factual as he could," he said.

Mr. Taylor also dismissed claims made by a previous prosecution witness, Liberian journalist Hassan Bility, as "lies."

In his 2008 testimony against Mr. Taylor, Mr. Bility told the court that he was arrested and tortured by Mr. Taylor's government in June 2002. He said that Mr. Taylor personally interrogated him, telling him to stop writing about his support for the RUF. Mr. Bility said Mr. Taylor accused him of transporting arms and ammunition to Liberia and keeping them at the United States embassy in Monrovia, with the aim of unseating his government. Disputing the witness' claims, today Mr. Taylor said that he never accused Mr. Bility of transporting arms into Liberia and that he did not tell him anything about his association with the RUF.

"He was an enemy combatant," Mr. Taylor said. "I told him that the only thing that will set him free is for him to confess. There was a plan made to attack my residence in Kongor Town and he was supposed to find the people to launch the attack. He worked as a combatant at a different level," he added.

Mr. Taylor denied Mr. Bility's assertion that he had said he was not "going to allow anybody to arm twist the RUF."

Mr. Taylor dismissed Mr. Bility's statement as a "fabrication."

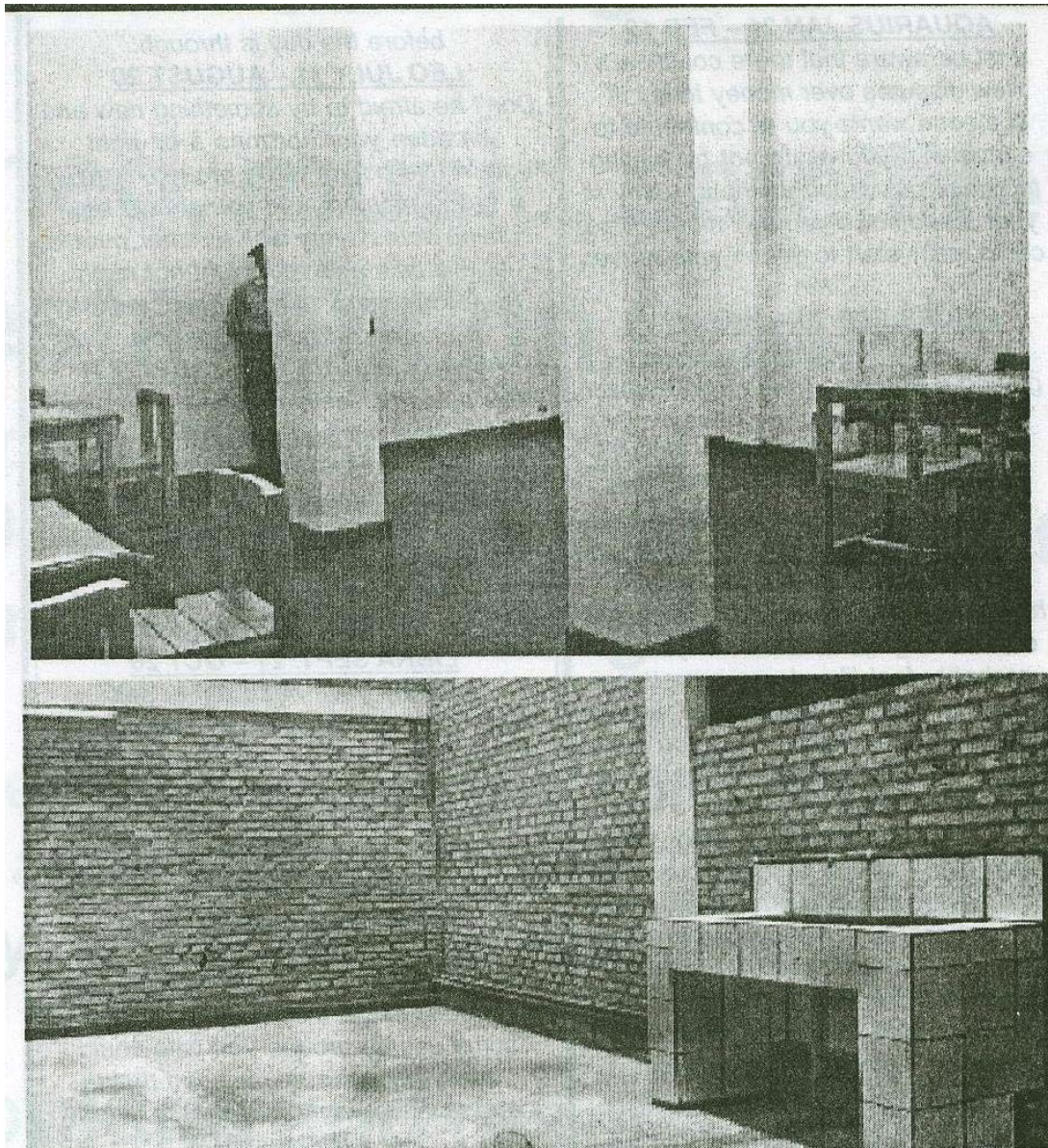
"The whole thing that you just read is just fabrication," he said. "I don't know how I'll remove Kabbah in October 1997 when he is already out of power. There was no Sam Bockarie at no NPP headquarters in 1997, that's a lie," he added.

In May 1997, President Kabbah was overthrown by soldiers of the Sierra Leone army, during which time Mr. Kabbah sought refuge in Guinea. The soldiers formed a merger with the RUF rebels and together, they ruled Sierra Leone until February 1998 when they were forcefully removed from the country's capital Freetown.

Independent Observer

Friday, 6 November 2009

Inside Mpanga Prison...where Issa Sesay and Other are Detained



Part of the facility where they are held was originally built to house persons convicted by the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR), and meets the international standards for treatment of prisoners which are required for persons convicted by international tribunals.

These facility, the Special Court says are not available in any detention centre in Sierra Leone.

Acting Registrar of the Special Court said on Tuesday that she was in Rwanda when the convicts arrived and spoke to one of them on the phone before she returned to Sierra Leone and what she was told is they like their new environment.

Premier Media
Friday, 6 November 2009

ICC to investigate Kenya violence

The International Criminal Court's chief prosecutor says he will request ICC judges to open an investigation into Kenya's post-election violence.

Luis Moreno-Ocampo made the comments after meeting Kenya's president and prime minister, who said they would co-operate with the ICC probe.

Prominent politicians, including cabinet ministers, are suspected of masterminding the violence.

The clashes left some 1,300 people dead and forced 300,000 from their homes.

President Mwai Kibaki and Prime Minister Raila Odinga agreed to share power to end the clashes that followed the



Kenya's president and prime minister have promised full co-operation

December 2007 poll.

Mr Ocampo made the comments at a joint news conference with the two leaders.

"I informed them, in December I would request to the judges of the International Criminal Court to open an investigation and that is the process established by the Rome Treaty," he said.

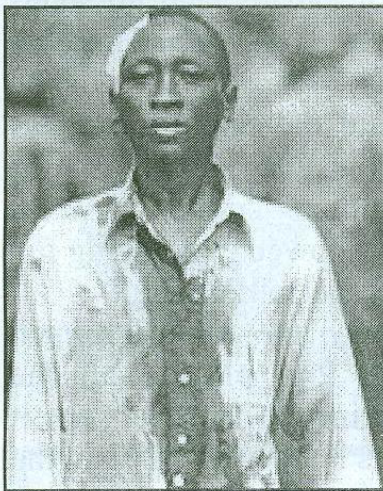
"I explained to them that I consider the crimes committed in Kenya were crimes against humanity, therefore the gravity is there. So therefore I should proceed."

The BBC's Caroline

Karobia in the capital, Nairobi, says this is a significant step forward as the government has been sending out mixed signals about the prospect of sending suspects for trial in The Hague.

A power-sharing deal in February 2008 - brokered by former UN head Kofi Annan - agreed that a local tribunal would be set up to prosecute those behind the violence.

But several deadlines to set it up were missed and Mr Annan handed over list of 10 suspects to the ICC - their identities have not been made public.



Premier News
Friday, 6 November 2009

Court imposes lawyer on Karadzic

The UN's Yugoslav war crimes court has appointed a lawyer to represent ex-Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic whenever he fails to appear in court.

It also adjourned his trial to 1 March to give his counsel time to prepare.

Mr Karadzic - who has been representing himself - appeared in court for the first time on Tuesday after boycotting the start of the trial last week.

He insists he is innocent of all 11 war crimes charges from the 1992-95 Bosnian war, but has refused to enter pleas.

Mr Karadzic, 64, faces a maximum sentence of life in prison if convicted.

"The accused's conduct has effectively brought the trial to a halt, which is evidently his purpose," a court statement said, AFP news agency reported.

It ordered the court registry to appoint counsel to represent Mr Karadzic's interests when the trial



Radovan Karadzic faces 11 war crimes charges, including genocide resumes, "if that should be required", stating that he would still "continue to represent himself including by dealing with the day-to-day matters." Mr Karadzic has seven days to apply for permission to appeal. At Tuesday's hearing, he argued that he had insufficient time to prepare his defence and sought a 10-month adjournment.

But presiding Judge O-Gon Kwon dismissed the claim, saying the court had already determined the defendant had ample time to prepare.

Mr Karadzic was arrested in Belgrade in 2008, after

nearly 13 years on the run.

During his time in power, Mr Karadzic was president of the self-styled Bosnian Serb republic, and commander of its army during the 1992-1995 Bosnian conflict, which left more than 100,000 people dead. He was indicted in 1995, and faces two charges of genocide, nine of war crimes and crimes against humanity. He was taken to the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) in The Hague last year. Prosecutors say Mr Karadzic led an ethnic cleansing campaign in the conflict, calling him the "undisputed leader" of Serbs responsible for carrying out atrocities.

Prosecutors have said he was responsible for the Srebrenica massacre, in which up to 8,000 Bosniak men and boys were killed.

The Bosniak people - most of them Muslims - are descended from Bosnian Slavs who adopted Islam under Ottoman Turkish rule in the Middle Ages.

CharlesTaylorTrial.org (The Hague)

Friday, 6 November 2009

Liberia: Taylor Accuses Britain Of Transporting Arms To Sierra Leone; Says He Had No Links With Al Qaeda

Alpha Sesay

Charles Taylor today accused Britain of transporting arms to Sierra Leone in violation of a United Nations arms embargo on the country, and of using him as a scapegoat by falsely accusing him of responsibility for the flow of arms into the country. Mr. Taylor also denied widespread press and investigative reports that the terrorist group, Al Qaeda, traded diamonds with Sierra Leonean rebels under his supervision in Liberia.

In his testimony today, the accused former Liberian president told the judges that when the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) overthrew the elected government of Sierra Leone in 1997, the country's ousted president, Ahmed Tejan Kabbah, engaged a British mercenary group, Sandline, to dislodge the illegal AFRC junta regime from the country's capital Freetown. He explained that the arrangement was facilitated by then British High Commissioner to Sierra Leone Peter Penfold, whom he said already had links with Sandline prior to his assignment to Sierra Leone in March 1997. Sandline, Mr. Taylor said, provided training and arms for Sierra Leonean civil militia, the Kamajors, as well as Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) peacekeepers. Mr. Taylor said that the British navel ship HMS Conway was also in the high seas supplying arms and ammunition to forces loyal to President Kabbah. According to Mr. Taylor, the British — who had drafted a United Nations resolution imposing an arms embargo on Sierra Leone — were the ones violating the sanctions.

"The British government was breaking the United Nations resolution," Mr. Taylor alleged.

According to Mr. Taylor, when it became clear that the British were the ones violating the UN sanctions on Sierra Leone, they decided to use him as a scapegoat, alleging that he was the one supplying arms to rebel forces in his neighboring country.

"The explanation as to how arms are flowing into Sierra Leone is that they are coming from Liberia. They will bring in these arms and build this lie that arms are coming from Liberia," he said.

"They were aware but they put the blame on Taylor and I say to the world that how can I supply arms to Sierra Leone when I do not have arms in Liberia?" the former president asked.

Mr. Taylor further alleged that Sandline also had an association with another company which had diamond interest in Sierra Leone, an interest he said that Sandline was keen to protect.

"One of the companies associated with Sandline had diamond interest in Sierra Leone. Sandline is protecting that interest," he said.

The accused former president reiterated a familiar position that these allegations are part of a conspiracy theory to destroy him.

"All of this is an orchestration for my destruction," he maintained.

Mr. Taylor also made attempts to discredit international press reports that he was involved in a diamond trade with Sierra Leone's Revolutionary United Front (RUF) rebels. Referring to a June 2000 Washington Post and an August 2000 Wall Street Journal reports which both accused him of being involved in a diamond trade with the RUF, Mr. Taylor told the judges today that these were "deliberate attempts to spread disinformation to destroy me."

Also in his testimony today, Mr. Taylor discussed in detail a report by a Washington Post reporter Douglas Farah, which linked him with the terrorist group Al Qaeda. The report, published in October 2003 and titled "The Role of Conflict Diamonds in Failed States" alleged that Al Qaeda operatives made regular visits to Liberia during which they purchased diamonds from Sierra Leone's RUF rebels. According to the report, Ibrahim Bah, an alleged agent of Mr. Taylor, had close ties with an Islamic fundamentalist group in Afghanistan.

The report further alleged that armed guards associated with Mr. Taylor escorted Al Qaeda operatives into Liberia to purchase conflict diamonds. Mr. Taylor denied the contents of the report, saying that if he had any knowledge that Ibrahim Bah was involved in such actions, he would not have entered Liberia.

"Bah would not have stayed in Liberia if we had known," he said. The former president told the judges that "there are no armed guards escorting Al Qaeda into Liberia."

Mr. Taylor also refuted contents of the Mr. Farah's report which alleged that by the end of 2001, Al Qaeda dispatched two operatives to Liberia offering to buy all diamonds the RUF could produce.

"That is so not true," Mr. Taylor told the judges.

Mr. Taylor explained that when these allegations were made, his government cooperated with the United States authorities. After a thorough investigation, it was revealed that there were no Al Qaeda operatives in Liberia, he said. He explained that by the time Mr. Farah wrote his report in October 2003, "the matter was already properly investigated and dismissed."

Mr. Taylor further challenged the contents of a report by Belgian Federal Criminal Investigators, which alleged that Al Qaeda had a relationship with RUF rebels in Sierra Leone, through Liberia, under Mr. Taylor's supervision.

"It is totally untrue. The report does not contain any factual evidence of the conclusion reached in that statement," Mr. Taylor responded.

Mr. Taylor said he was not aware of any meetings between RUF and Al Qaeda operatives in the Hotel Boulevard in Monrovia, as alleged in the Belgian report.

Dismissing the report, Mr. Taylor told the judges that "this gives all the signs of a well orchestrated set of lies. How can professional people behave like this? This is a very amateurish report here destined to destroy people."

Mr. Taylor is responding to allegations that he provided support to RUF rebels in Sierra Leone through the supply of arms and ammunition in return for the country's diamonds. Mr. Taylor has denied the allegations against him and he is testifying as a witness in his own defense.

Mr. Taylor's testimony continues on Monday.

A stitch in time

A simmering border dispute between Sierra Leone and Guinea might escalate if Ecowas does not intervene now, reports **Lansana Gberie** from Freetown, Sierra Leone.

A NECESSARY – AND MUTUALLY applauded – security measure taken by Guinean forces during Sierra Leone’s brutal rebel war has, somehow, now escalated into a border dispute which threatens the stability of both states. But while the Yenga dispute is often cast in romantic and highly inflammatory terms by Sierra Leonean poets, civil society activists, and journalists, the entire story is steeped in bathos.

Before the war, Yenga was a tiny impoverished fishing village of fewer than 100 people and 10 antique shacks. But it is strategically placed among a system (albeit largely undeveloped) of inter-connected waterways, tied to the large Moa River, and formed by the converging of three other rivers emanating from Guinea, the Mellacourie, Fourecaria, and Bereira. Much of this area, extending far into northern Sierra Leone, was once known collectively as Mellacourie.

Until its recent notoriety, hardly anyone emerging into Yenga from the humungous grassed and potholed road would take any particular notice: the more important places were Kailahun, Koindu, Bomaru and Sienga on the Sierra Leonean side, and Guekecdou and Forecariah on the Guinean side. It was a sleepy fishing hamlet, separated from Guinea by the Moa River, but this cartographic factor was purely fictive for the people living on both sides of the river: movement from Sierra Leone into Guinea and vice versa was unrestrained by border guards, and people on each side of the river maintained families on both sides.

Believe it or not, this was exactly the vision of the colonial powers, Britain and France, when they demarcated the area between the two competing empires, the

new political and geographical reality expressed only in the two dozen or so beacons planted by the Europeans, over them flying two flags, at the close of the 19th century. They rudely separated the Kissy people – separated even families – living in the area, forcing them into states they never bargained for.

The border demarcation was not exactly as perfunctory as the carving out of Uganda – given as a birthday gift to Britain’s Queen Victoria by an English adventurer marauding through East Africa – but the logic was the same: there was scant consideration for the Africans living in these places, and of course no concern about the future viability of the hastily created states.

So why do people in the poverty stricken and militarily disabled Sierra Leone and Guinea, just recently emerged from brutal wars (with Guinea still crippled by political instability), speak about this strip of land as though they want to ignite another violent conflict in the region? There is obviously a need for a serious reality check.

I recently spent a grim afternoon with a very senior Sierra Leonean army officer who told me rather blithely, and against all available evidence, that all the Sierra Leonean military needed was the order from “the civilians” and Yenga would be recaptured from the Guineans promptly.

“The border demarcation by the colonial powers, Britain and France, gave scant consideration to the Africans living in these places, and of course there was no concern about the future viability of the hastily created states”

Right: Guinean soldiers show what they are capable of – roughing up demonstrators in Conakry on 28 September, when 158 people were shot dead by the security forces

And as I write, there is a virtual movement in Sierra Leone quaintly named “Save Yenga Save Salone”, a campaign that has attracted media activists, poets, “civil society” and some politicians.

One such politician, Musa Tamba Sam, belonging to the opposition Sierra Leone Peoples Party (SLPP), recently tried to get Yenga debated in parliament, but the effort was wisely rebuffed by the Speaker. The issue, the Speaker said, was being handled diplomatically by the government – and it is as well. Honourable Sam is from Yenga, born at a time when the village was still part of the Kissi Teng Chiefdom in Kailahun District in the Eastern Province of Sierra Leone.

The uncharacteristic restraint of President Ernest Koroma’s government on the Yenga issue, which mirrors that of the previous Kabbah’s, is admirable: if every serious national issue since Koroma came to power had been approached the same way – calmly and deliberately – then a lot of the serious errors of judgement, the churlish sacking of civil officials believed to be supporters of the opposition, attacks on opposition



infrastructure, and other acts of venality and peevishness, that his government has committed would have been avoided.

The Yenga issue is, as hinted above, the legacy of two searing historical factors: European colonialism and a brutal postcolonial civil war. Surprisingly both now carry equal resonance – but for all the right reasons, the emphasis should be

on the more recent past.

For Guinea entered Yenga not as an enemy but as a friend in pursuit of a common enemy, a “rebel” force of medieval barbarity. Guinea, in fact, has been a very good neighbour of Sierra Leone’s, on countless occasions coming to the aid of the desperately inept Sierra Leone army and to take in tens of thousands of Sierra Leoneans

fleeing the depredations of the rebels, as refugees. I will return to this point, but first to the colonial provenance.

Ian Brownlie’s *African Boundaries: A Legal and Diplomatic Encyclopaedia*, published by Hurst (London) for the Royal Institute of International Affairs in 1979, is the invaluable guide to the historical basis of African borders. The book repro-

Feature

GUINEA/SIERRA LEONE

duces a number of documents, including agreements and letters and memoranda, from British and French officials which formed the basis of the Sierra Leone-Guinea border. The first was the Anglo-French Convention of 28 June 1882 (preceding the Berlin Conference, which officially partitioned the African continent among the Europeans, by two years): the British recognised French claims to Mellacourie (of which, as I noted earlier, Yenga would have formed a part), which now meant French control of the entire Futa Jallon region – the basis of their colony of Guinea. Article 11 of the Convention stated that the “Island of Yelboyah, and all islands claimed or possessed by Great Britain on the West Coast of Africa lying to the south ... as far as the southern limit of the... colony of Sierra Leone,” would henceforth be recognised by France as belonging to Great Britain, and the “Matacong, and all islands claimed or possessed by France on the West Coast of Africa to the north ... as far as Rio Nunez,” would be recognised by Great Britain as belonging to France.

This document is rather vague when broken down into parts, and successive agreements between the two European powers would modify it considerably; in fact the present border was only firmly agreed in 1912-13. The original agreement, for example, placed Pamalap and a large part of Kabala District under French jurisdiction; pressure from British merchants – the area was important for the groundnut trade – forced the British authorities to renegotiate with the French, and these places were ceded to the British.

The British foreign secretary, Sir Edward Grey, who never visited West Africa, proposed the final adjustments in January 1911. The new agreement defined the Moa or Makona River as the physical boundary dividing the two entities; none of the documents, which are exact about place names and physical conditions (“ruined villages” etc), mention Yenga. It almost certainly did not exist at the time.

But the final protocol delimiting the boundary is precise: “the frontier... follows the thalweg of the River Meli [from Guinea] to its meeting with the Moa, or Makona, on the understanding that the islands marked by Letters A and B on the attached map belong to France, and that the island marked C belongs to Great Britain.” The protocol, signed at

Right: So far, on the Yenga dispute, Sierra Leone's president, Ernest Bai Koroma, has kept a cool head despite some hawkish military men asking for action

Pendembu on 1 July 1912, accepted Grey's proposal that within six months of the signing of the agreement “the natives in the transferred territories shall be permitted to cross the frontier to settle on the other side, and to carry with them their portable property and harvested crops”.


Grey had also proposed, and this was accepted, that where “a river forms the boundary, the populations on both banks shall have equal rights of fishing.” And there is the rub. What if something more valuable than fish, oil or diamonds say, were found in the river – how would this agreement work? The agreement simply said that the use of “hydraulic power” in the river would only be authorised by agreement between the two states.

And of course using a river as a boundary is problematic, since rivers can dry up (there is the greenhouse effect, which no one knew about then), and damming can change the course of any river.

In fact it all worked well until the recent war in Sierra Leone and, with it, the Revolutionary United Front's (RUF) discovery of diamonds in the Moa and subsequent Guinean occupation, provoked by RUF incursions into Guinea. It worked rather too well, in fact.

Graham Greene, idling for a day or so at that border area in the early 1930s, walked from Kailahun into Guinea (then French Guinea) – but of course he does not mention Yenga in his classic travel book of this West African trip, *Journey without Maps*. Almost certainly he would not have taken notice. The border between the two colonies, Greene wrote, “is the Moa River, about twice the width of the Thames at Westminster.” And then Greene makes a very sapient observation: “The curious thing about these boundaries, a line of river in a waste of bush, no passports, no customs, no barriers to wandering tribesmen, is that they are as distinct as a European boundary; stepping out of a canoe one was in a different country. Even nature had changed; instead of forest ... a narrow path ran straight forward for mile after mile through tall treeless elephant grass.”

I recently visited the area. The lush

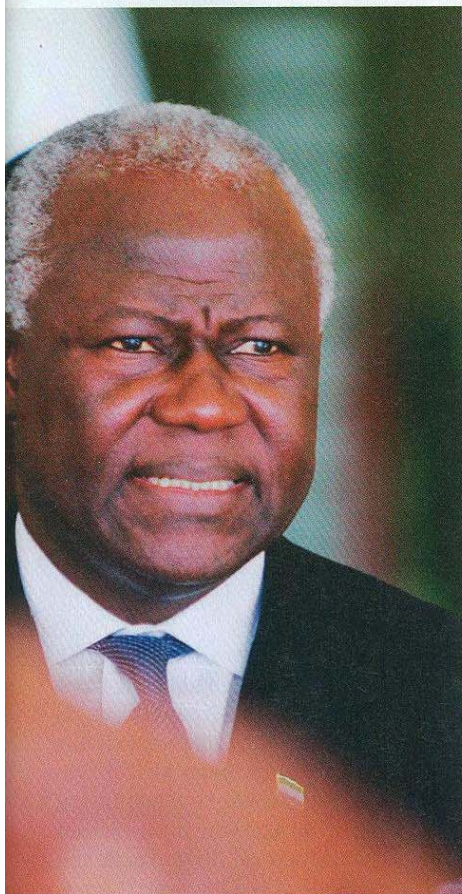


“Guinea has historically been a very good neighbour of Sierra Leone's, on countless occasions coming to the aid of the desperately inept Sierra Leonean army and to take in tens of thousands of Sierra Leonean refugees fleeing the depredations of the rebels”

rainforest on the Sierra Leonean side that so impressed Greene has largely been denuded – by unrestrained logging activity, generally having no husbandry, etc – and one now sees the same humungous or elephant grass that Greene saw on the Guinean side harassing the tiny road leading to Yenga. Guinean troops are now firmly in control, and recently forced a Sierra Leone political contingent to disarm its security before entering the place.

A bad sign, but in fact it was not always like that. The problem began in September 2000 when the RUF attacked a number of Guinean border towns south of the capital, Conakry. The area had become home to tens of thousands of Sierra Leonean refugees, fleeing attacks on civilians inside Sierra Leone, part of the RUF's 10-year campaign of terror and destruction in that country.

Not long afterwards, the RUF attacked Guinean towns and villages in the “Parrot's Beak” area of the country, emerging from Sierra Leone and from points along



rebels operating from Kabala, a Sierra Leonean town close to the Guinean border, were diversionary, and the rebels withdrew without much resistance after Guinean forces counter-attacked. Better planned and more coordinated incursions were soon to follow, however.

In January 2001, the RUF moved from Sierra Leone, along with Liberian forces, into the diamond-rich areas around Macenta (in the so-called Forest Region), Madina Oula (near Kindia) and the important trading city of Guéckédou, which, like Forecariah, was home to tens of thousands of refugees. The attacks on Macenta and the destruction of Guéckédou alerted the Guineans to the seriousness of the crisis. The attacks quickly spread, threatening to engulf the districts around Bonankoro. Then finally Guinea responded

“The talks about Yenga have become open-ended, and there is no assurance that it will be restored to Sierra Leone soon, or perhaps ever at the current pace”

the Liberian border. Here they caused much greater destruction and dislocation, driving Guineans out of their homes along with as many as 75,000 Sierra Leonean refugees who had been living on the Guinean side of the border for several years.

The RUF attacks attracted little attention, except as a humanitarian footnote to the more notorious conflict in Sierra Leone. I spent two weeks in Guinea at the time researching a report for Partnership Africa Canada, and I reported then that Guineans themselves appeared to be confused.

In early September 2000, following rebel attacks on Forecariah, less than 100 km from Conakry and home to tens of thousands of refugees from Sierra Leone and Liberia, the late Guinean President Lansana Conté broadcast an inflammatory statement on state radio and television. He blamed the incursions on the refugees, provoking widespread attacks by Guinean police, soldiers and civilian militias on the already traumatised refugees.

The attacks on Forecariah, by RUF

proportionately. With crucial help from the United States (which maintained an annual C-JET training programme with the Guinean army) and France, Guinea acquired some armoured helicopters and some old MiG fighter bombers which were used to pound rebel bases in both Sierra Leone and Liberia.

Guinea also helped to train over 1,000 Donsos (the Kono name for Kamajors or Civil Defence Forces), made up of Konos and Kissis from the Yenga area and Kono District, all about the Guinea-Sierra Leone border, deploying them against the RUF. I saw about a thousand of them during my visit, and also saw British officers, who had an open-ended military commitment to Sierra Leone, helping to train the Guineans and the Donsu militia.

Guinea routed the RUF, helping to accelerate the disarmament process in Sierra Leone: in effect, Guinea defeated the RUF. It then occupied the Sierra Leonean side of the border, including Yenga.

After the war ended, Sierra Leone’s

then president, Tejan Kabbah, negotiated the withdrawal of most of the Guinean forces, but renegade officers, now engaged in lucrative mining at Yenga, refused to move, and the then ailing Guinean leader, Lansana Conté, was simply a hostage of the military. An agreement was signed on 15 November 2002, months after the war officially ended, by Sierra Leone’s internal affairs minister, the late Hinga Norman, and his Guinean counterpart, El-Haj Moussa Solano, affirming the colonial era border agreement.

But the agreement was not conclusive; it called for the setting up of a committee to work towards a resolution that would restore Yenga to Sierra Leone but assure Guinean border security – a very legitimate issue obviously. But the talks have become open-ended, and there is no assurance that Yenga will be restored to Sierra Leone soon, or perhaps ever at the current pace.

There is a problem with the Guinean presence at Yenga, but clearly it is a volatile issue, especially with the attempt to politicise it. But all loose talk about reclaiming the village by force should be discouraged. Inflammatory steps by some NGOs, like World Vision, which a couple of years ago claimed that it was prevented by Guinean troops from building a school at Yenga, should be firmly suppressed. Many of the impoverished villages on both sides of the border do not have functioning schools, so why pick on a beleaguered Yenga?

The flamboyant Sierra Leonean defence minister, Paolo Conteh, has been quoted as saying that there is no point in negotiating with the new Guinea junta since it has not been recognised by both Ecomog and the African Union (AU). He has a point, though it is utterly impolitic of him to have gone public with such a statement: street corner talk has its place; but it should not be allowed in the Defence Ministry or State House.

While President Koroma can make his votaries and supporters feel good by declaring that Sierra Leone and Guinea are sister countries working together to resolve the Yenga issue without resort to international mediating bodies, the overheated rhetoric elsewhere is not reassuring. It is time that Ecomog takes tentative steps to engage both nations on the issue. There is a clear early warning signal here. ■ **NA**

Star Radio

Friday, 6 November 2009

“National disservice” JPC on handling of TRC final report

By Moses Wenyoun

The Executive Director of the Catholic Justice and Peace Commission has termed as a National disservice, government’s approach toward the TRC Final Report.

According to Cllr. Augustine Toe, the entire report is being disregarded simply based on two cardinal recommendations that are part of over thirty others.

He named the recommendations as prosecution and lustration or political ban for thirty years.

Cllr. Toe said huge financial and human resources were committed to the TRC process for over two years to facilitate the work of the commission.

He said the TRC process that was embraced from the beginning has now become a subject of criticism because of disagreement people have with the two recommendations.

Cllr. Toe said policy makers and warlords who are campaigning against the report are basing their argument mainly on what he called politics of fear.

He said those policy makers and warlords insist that if the two recommendations are implemented "Liberia will return to war."

Cllr. Toe spoke Wednesday at the University of Pennsylvania Law School in Philadelphia, USA at a panel discussion on the TRC report.

The Forum was sponsored by the International Human Rights Advocates-student group at the University of Pennsylvania Law School.

Agence France Presse

Thursday, 6 November 2009

I'm victim of 'intelligence plot', Taylor tells war crimes trial

THE HAGUE — Liberia's former president Charles Taylor on Thursday blamed an "intelligence plot" involving the British government for the fact that he is standing trial for war crimes charges in The Hague.

"Everything that is being played out for your honours in this case is all based on an intelligence plot with key players, senior officials in governments and intelligence agencies," he told judges of the Special Court for Sierra Leone.

"This is a careful orchestration for my destruction."

Taylor claimed it was organisations like private military company Sandline, not him, that brought arms into Liberia's neighbour Sierra Leone, where he is accused of having fuelled war by arming the rebel Revolutionary United Front (RUF) in exchange for so-called "blood diamonds".

"It is Sandline with the ... knowledge and/or acquiescence of the British government, of senior ministers, that would bring in these arms and build this lie that the only way the arms are getting into Sierra Leone is because they are coming from the Charles Taylor government," he said.

"This whole thing that the British say they didn't know: it was not possible for them not to have known. Their ambassador (was) meeting Sandline's people all day.

"They are aware and to hide that fact they put the blame on Taylor."

The warlord, 61, has been on trial since January 2008 on 11 charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity stemming from the brutal 1991-2001 civil war in neighbouring Sierra Leone.

The RUF is blamed for the mutilation of thousands of civilians who had their hands and arms severed in one of the most brutal wars in modern history, which claimed some 120,000 lives.

Taylor took the stand in his own defence on July 14, dismissing as "lies" charges of murder, rape, conscripting child soldiers, enslavement and pillaging against him.

He has been on trial since January 2008. His cross-examination is expected to start next week.

Radio Netherlands Worldwide

Friday, 6 November 2009

ICC: Congo's Bemba trial set for April

By Thijs Bouwknecht



*The Hague,
Netherlands*

The war crimes trial of former Congolese rebel and vice-President Jean-Pierre Bemba Gombo will start next April, the International Criminal Court (ICC) announced on Thursday.

Bemba, the defeated contender in Democratic Republic of Congo's 2006 presidential election, is accused by the ICC of leading Congolese rebels who waged a campaign of rape and torture in Central African Republic in 2002-2003.

Announcing his trial date of 27 April 2010, the ICC said in a statement that Bemba is charged with two crimes against humanity, involving murder and rape, and three war crimes, which involve pillaging as well as murder and rape.

Bemba, whose 2006 election defeat by Joseph Kabila turned him into Congo's most prominent opposition figure, fled into exile in 2007 saying he feared for his life.

He was arrested by Belgian authorities in May 2008 and was transferred to the ICC in July of that year.

He is currently awaiting his trial in The Hague.

Kenya Broadcasting Corporation

Friday, 6 November 2009

Mudavadi cautions against meeting

By:Simon Achola/kna

Deputy Prime Minister and Local Government Minister Musalia Mudavadi has dismissed calls by various stakeholders for the International Criminal Court (ICC) Chief Prosecutor Luis Moreno Ocampo to meet victims of the post election polls during his current short visit.

Mudavadi says Ocampo can only meet the victims and perpetrators of the post poll chaos once the prosecution process has commenced.

He says the proposed meetings are likely to jeopardize the outcome of Ocampo's investigations.

Speaking when he officially opened the Kitale ASK Show, Mudavadi said the enactment of a new constitution was the only way to protect fundamental human rights of all Kenyans.

He urged politicians to shun situations that could trigger tensions that fueled the post election skirmishes.

Meanwhile, Justice and Constitutional affairs minister Mutula Kilonzo has come to the defence of the government over its position not to refer the post election cases to The Hague, instead opting for the international Criminal Court prosecutor Luis Moreno Ocampo to request the trial chambers at The Hague to commence investigations in December.

Addressing the press in his office Thursday evening, Mutula said referring the cases to the ICC will greatly affect the realization of the reform agenda since most senior government officials vital to such reforms might be extradited.

He however reiterated his stand that he prefers that the Imanyara's bill be strengthened to meet the international standards so that the suspects are tried through a local tribunal.

Elsewhere, German ambassador to Kenya Margit Hellwig-Boette says the ultimate decision on where perpetrators of the post election violence should be tried lies with the Kenyan people.

Ms Helwig-Boette told the press in Nakuru that peaceful elections in 2012 could only be ensured if the culture of impunity is dealt with once and for all.

She noted that peaceful elections would be pegged on reforms within the country's electoral systems adding that there was an important need to hasten the process.

She expressed concern that time was running out fast and appealed to the government to hasten the reform process to ensure that adequate reforms are enforced before the next general elections.

The ambassador encouraged the formation of a local tribunal to allow ownership by the Kenyan people noting that the involvement of the international prosecutor Luis Ocampo would ensure that the process meets international standards.