

SPECIAL COURT FOR SIERRA LEONE
PRESS AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE

PRESS CLIPPINGS

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

Thursday, October 06, 2005

The press clips are produced Monday to Friday.
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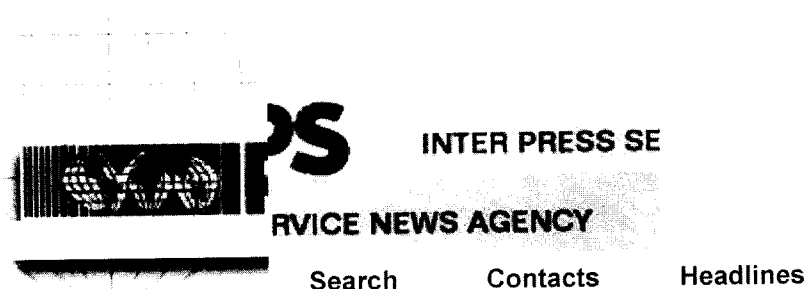
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**'PRESIDENT KABBAH MADE ANIMAL SACRIFICE TO BE REINSTATED
BY ECOMOG IN 1997'**

- Gullit quoted at Special Court

Thursday October 6, 2005

A Prosecution witness has told the Special Court that he heard from Gen. Gullit that President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah offered 7 black and 7 white cows as sacrifice to be reinstated in 1997 after his overthrow on May 25, 1996 by the AFRC Military junta lead by Johnny Paul Koroma . The report was sent in by new Freetown reporter, Amidu Kamara.



SIERRA LEONE: Funds Sought to Finish War Crimes Trials

Elisabeth Schreinemacher

UNITED NATIONS, Oct 5 (IPS) - A special criminal court trying those charged with war crimes in Sierra Leone will run out of money next year unless some 25 million dollars is raised to keep it running.

At a U.N. pledging conference held last week, Deputy Secretary-General Louise Frechette urged countries to give generously.

"By doing so," she said, "states will make clear that those who commit heinous crimes against international law, wherever they may be, must be held accountable."

The Special Court for Sierra Leone (SCSL) was established in January 2002 by an agreement between the United Nations and the government of Sierra Leone.

Its mandate is to prosecute "persons who bear the greatest responsibility for serious violations of international humanitarian law" committed in the country since Nov. 30, 1996, the date of the Abidjan Peace Agreement between the government of Sierra Leone and the rebel Revolutionary United Front (RUF).

The conflict was one of the region's most brutal, involving widespread rape, amputation of limbs, and other atrocities against civilians.

The SCSL was funded by voluntary contributions until the end of 2004. In June 2005, the U.N. General Assembly appropriated 20 million dollars to supplement the Court's financial resources for the first six months of this year, and authorised another 13 million dollars to meet expenses for the second half of 2005.

Starting on Jan. 1, 2006, the Court will revert to voluntary contributions. According to Robert Vincent, the court's registrar, 25 million dollars will be needed to finance its activities next year.

"We have seen a tremendous amount of support today, so we are very hopeful that we will approach that amount in the coming weeks and months," he said at the pledging conference.

In addition to the European Commission, 14 U.N. member states have already made pledges of up to nine million dollars.

The biggest pledge -- 3.5 million dollars -- came from Britain, followed by Canada with 1.7 million dollars and The Netherlands with 1.2 million dollars. Other countries that made pledges during the conference are Denmark, Australia, Belgium, Norway, Turkey, Finland, Germany, Italy, Greece and Sweden.

Vincent noted that the United States has also been one of the biggest contributors and supporters of the Special Court, having already given a total of 22 million dollars.

"And we fully expect the United States to again be the major contributor to this Court," he said. "We already have an indication that they will be contributing this year."

Although 11 defendants have been indicted, two key suspects are still missing -- Johnny Paul Koroma and Charles Taylor. Koroma is the former leader of the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) and Taylor is the former president of neighbouring Liberia.

Taylor, who faces 17 charges related to supporting the insurgency and providing arms and training to the RUF, is being protected by the government of Nigeria, which refuses to surrender him.

Desmond Silva, the chief prosecutor, stated that, "At the moment we can only operate diplomatically, because the Court... do(es) not have any power to compel Nigeria to surrender Mr. Taylor."

According to Silva, the Court is likely to fulfill its task within the next 18 months.

Daudi Ngelautwa Mwakawago, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Sierra Leone, said at a press conference last week that the United Nations has largely met the security goals it set out to achieve six years ago.

Once 17,000-strong, the U.N. Mission in Sierra Leone is now down to 2,000 troops. Since peace was consolidated in 2002, the government has disarmed 70,000 combatants, and nearly 9,500 police have been trained and equipped.

Mwakawago told IPS, "What is important from all the accounts and publicity the proceedings have received in the country is that the question of impunity is now being challenged, which is a significant contribution of the Court."

Another pledging conference for Sierra Leone will be held in London at the end of November. The United Nations estimates the country needs 1.7 billion dollars to begin tackling issues like poverty and corruption.

Mwakawago expressed concern about the 40 percent unemployment rate and 70 percent illiteracy rate, especially among young people, many of whom were caught up in the civil war.

"We cannot continue peacekeeping -- we need peace-building now," Mwakawago said. "So my opinion is that the country is ready now for the next phase of development."

Press freedom is another burning issue in Sierra Leone with the government's jailing of journalist Paul Kamara, who was accused of "seditious libel" for articles criticising President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah.

Kamara was convicted on Oct. 5, 2004 and sent to Pademba Road Prison in the capital of Freetown to serve a two-year sentence. Local and international press freedom groups have repeatedly called for his release.

"President Kabbah's government should not hold Paul Kamara in prison one day longer," said Ann Cooper, executive director of the New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists. "Sierra Leone is one of the very few countries in Africa that has sentenced a journalist to prison for doing his work. This is not what one expects to see in a democratic country." (END/2005)

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War court faces financial woes
06/10/2005 09:21 - (SA)

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Key suspects still on the loose

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Desmond Silva, the chief prosecutor, said: "At the moment we can only operate diplomatically, because the court... do(es) not have any power to compel Nigeria to surrender Mr Taylor." - Sapa-IPS

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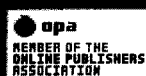
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Appeal hope

01oct05

POLICE Supt Peter Halloran is expected to soon know the result of his appeal against a sex conviction in West Africa.

The decision was delayed when one of the three appeal judges in Sierra Leone went on holiday in July.

Halloran's lawyer was told there may be a decision next week. He was sentenced to 18 months' jail but released on bail.

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US renews plea for Liberian ex-president's arrest

05 Oct 2005 22:37:26 GMT

Source: Reuters

Background

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UNITED NATIONS, Oct 5 (Reuters) - The United States renewed a plea to the U.N. Security Council on Wednesday to authorize peacekeepers in Liberia to arrest former President Charles Taylor if he returns home after next week's elections.

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A draft resolution circulated among council members by Washington would empower the U.N. mission in Liberia "to apprehend former president Charles Taylor in the event of a return to Liberia" and transfer him to a special court in Sierra Leone, where he is wanted for war crimes.

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Taylor was indicted by the Sierra Leone tribunal in March 2003 on 17 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity for fueling civil war in West Africa through an illicit trade in arms for diamonds mined by rebel groups.

Experts from the council's 15 member nations met on Tuesday to discuss the U.S. draft resolution but have not yet reported back on what changes, if any, would be required to win their support for the measure, council diplomats said.

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Source: AIAfrica Global Media

Date: 05 Oct 2005

High stakes for the region as Liberians prepare to vote

Liberia faces a 'make-or-break' situation as voters go to the polls next week, officials and Africa-watchers in the United States agree. The election is a central facet of the peace accord signed two years ago ending nearly 15 years of deadly armed conflict that spread throughout the West African region, claimed hundreds of thousands of lives and caused incalculable economic destruction.

"Liberians need to realize that this is their one shot at peace and development," says U.S. Rep. Ed Royce, a California Republican who chaired the House Africa subcommittee for the past eight years. "Americans are pulling for them."

"This is Liberia's first and best opportunity to establish a democratic society," says U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Thomas Woods. In an interview he said the administration of President George W. Bush is generally pleased by the way the campaign has been conducted and is hopeful that the process will produce "a stable democratic government that espouses free market policies and can be a good partner for us in the region."

Walter Kansteiner, who was responsible for Africa as Assistant Secretary of State during Bush's first term, says the election "represents Liberia's opportunity to return to the family of democracy." The United States, along with other members of the international community, "has expended a lot of resources to stabilize Liberia, and now the Liberians have to demonstrate that pluralism is achievable."

The campaign has been vigorously contested, particularly at the top of the ticket, where 22 candidates are on the ballot. Two other would-be contenders have gone to court for certification to join the field.

Local press and pollsters identify the front-runners as Ellen Johnson Sirleaf (66) of the Unity Party, who is a former banker and United Nations development official, and soccer star George Weah (39) of the Congress for Democratic Change, along with two lawyers and veteran politicians, Varney Sherman (52) of the Coalition for the Transformation of Liberia and Charles Brumskine (54) of the Liberty Party.

The elections represent "a rare if not final chance for Liberia to emerge from cronyism and conflict" after the years of civil war, says Susan Rice, who was Kansteiner's counterpart as Assistant Secretary of State under President Bill Clinton. "The burden really falls on the Liberian people to seize this opportunity," she says. "In the past, they haven't."

Liberia has the longest-standing ties with the United States of any African nation. Freed slaves and a few free-born African Americans came ashore in 1822, transported by a U.S. Navy ship and supported by the American Colonization Society. The Society was established by prominent U.S. citizens to encourage emancipated blacks to leave North America and settle on Africa's west coast. In 1847, the new arrivals declared a sovereign republic they called Liberia, named its capital after President James Monroe, adopted a U.S.-style constitution, a red-white-and-blue flag with a single star and the dollar as their official currency.

In World War II, the United States used Liberian territory to re-supply Allied troops in North Africa, and the Firestone plantations there became a source of vitally needed rubber. During the Cold War, Liberia hosted sophisticated U.S. communications facilities and served as a CIA staging post for anti-Soviet activities and later for operations against Muammar al-Qaddafi's regime in Libya.

The descendants of Liberia's founders, dubbed Americo-Liberians, exercised political and economic control over the indigenous population until a bloody 1980 coup, led by a young, unschooled master sergeant, Samuel K. Doe. Initially popular with the impoverished majority - and welcomed as the representative of a new era in Liberian politics by the administration of President Ronald Reagan - Doe presided over a decade-long slide into anarchy and despotism.

The corruption and incompetence prompted widespread support among Liberians for a rebel incursion in 1989, led by Charles Taylor, an exiled former government procurement officer. But more chaos followed, with Taylor rivals, one of whom executed Doe in 1990, sponsoring their own militias. Taylor, backed by youthful armed

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factions, gained control in 1994 and emerged as the winner in 1997 elections that were marred by instability and intimidation.

"The United States has a historical responsibility to Liberia," says Vivian Lowery Derryck, senior vice president of the Academy for Educational Development, who headed the Africa bureau at the U.S. Agency for International Development during the Clinton administration and is serving as a member of the election observer team from the Carter Center and National Institute for Democracy. "The outcome is very important to us."

For more than a decade, conflict in Liberia was a festering sore for the West Africa region, pouring refugees, arms and civil strife into neighboring Sierra Leone, Cote d'Ivoire and Guinea. The entire region felt the economic impact, and West African nations took the lead role in the peacemaking process. The price tag for Nigeria's peacekeeping interventions in Liberia and Sierra Leone between 1990 and 2003 may have run as high as U.S. \$15 billion, Nigerian Vice President Atiku Abubakar said last month.

"Instability in West Africa, with Liberia at the epicenter, has opened the way for regional predators to profit from the suffering," Rice says. "This has retarded the potential for progress throughout a region that is important to the United States - from Ghana to Nigeria, from Senegal to Mali."

Kansteiner says he hopes that elections in Liberia will have an opposite influence - pushing West Africa in a positive direction by "providing proof that democracy can take hold."

The country's last elections failed to deliver that result. "Liberians had the opportunity in 1997 to get it right and to bring the nation together, and it didn't happen," says Howard Jeter, former U.S. ambassador to Nigeria who was Special Presidential Envoy for Liberia at the time. "If they don't have a credible election devoid of corruption and fraud, I am fearful that the international community will lose interest in helping Liberia," he says. "Liberia should be a prosperous country, but you can't have a prosperous nation without peace and respect for the rule of law. The ball is in their court."

Royce, a prominent Republican member of the U.S. House, fears that this election could also be tainted by Taylor, even though he was forced to vacate office in August 2003 and is living in exile in Nigeria. Royce charges that Taylor is meddling in Liberian politics and undermining security in the region and says he should be deported to stand trial before the Special Court for Sierra Leone, where he has been indicted for war crimes, human rights violations and other atrocities during the war in Sierra Leone in the late 1990s. "I'd feel a lot better about Liberia's prospects for success if Charles Taylor was awaiting trial in Freetown," Royce told AllAfrica.

Riva Levinson, managing director at BKSH and Associates, a Washington government-relations firm with a high-profile client list, believes Taylor's conduct of the 1997 election led directly to the region's emergence as a criminal and terrorist safe haven. "Liberia proceeded to fall apart and the ramifications were felt throughout the region," she says. Levinson worked as a volunteer in 1997 for Ellen Johnson Sirleaf - who came in a distant second to Taylor, after he vowed to resume the civil war if he lost. Levinson is supporting Sirleaf again "because I believe in her ability to bring peace and economic opportunity to the Liberian people."

Sirleaf is a former finance minister, who also worked at Citicorp and the World Bank and holds a Masters in Public Administration from Harvard University. She was jailed by the Doe regime, before escaping the country, eventually becoming head of the Africa bureau at the United Nations Development Programme. For most of the past decade she has lived in West Africa, working with financial institutions and civil society organizations.

If she wins, Sirleaf would become Africa's first elected woman head-of-state, a prospect that Rep. Diane Watson (D-California) says "could usher in an era of empowerment for women on the continent." In a statement, Watson, who is a member of the House Subcommittee on Africa and International Human Rights, praised Sirleaf for "running on a reform, anti-corruption agenda, which threatens to upset the established political order not only in Liberia but also in Africa at large."

Derryck also holds Sirleaf in high esteem. "She has been a champion of human rights and women's rights for a long time, she's a competent seasoned administrator, and I'm sure she would make a good president."

By fielding what he sees as a "healthy list" of presidential contenders, Kansteiner believes Liberia is positioned for a successful election. "The candidate I personally know best is Ellen, and I have tremendous regard for her abilities as someone who could pull the country together and provide the leadership required for the next

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important phase." But like other Americans interviewed for this article, particularly former officials, Kansteiner demurred from making an endorsement, saying: "I'm sure there are other worthy candidates, as well."

Some Liberia watchers believe that sports superstar George Weah, who was international football player of the year in 1995, has an unassailable edge among the presidential candidates. His name recognition among youth and his practice of showering Liberian dollar bills along his route attract enthusiastic crowds to his campaign events. The philanthropic activities he has funded for years, including scholarships and donations to Liberia's football team, have won him additional supporters, particularly among the country's most disadvantaged.

In an August article, New York Times Magazine writer Andrew Rice quotes Weah as saying that he is running because the people demanded it, and he wants to give something back to the country that sponsored him. Doe, a soccer fan, made him captain of the Liberian national team and funded the development of his talent. But after an uneasy relationship with Taylor, Weah fled the country, becoming an international football phenomenon and a wealthy role model for impoverished young Liberians.

Derryck sees Weah as a "fresh face," someone who "models being an engaged citizen" for Liberia's youth.

"Newcomers like George Weah represent the future," says Leonard Robinson, president of the Africa Society in Washington, D.C., who worked to resolve the Liberian civil war while serving in a State Department policymaking post in the early 1990s. Robinson, who also expresses great respect for Sirleaf's record and experience, believes Liberians desperately want to "restore the country's dignity and end the era of destruction and embarrassment." He says that may lead them to turn to a next-generation leader for "a fresh start."

Weah "reflects the hope of many Liberians that national presidential and parliamentary elections on October 11 will mark a turning point in the country's bloody history," the Financial Time's Dino Mahtani reported this week. But Mahtani does not believe the contest is over. "While Mr Weah's popularity is undeniable, other candidates could pose a threat," he wrote, "especially if voting goes to a second round."

During the campaign, Weah's lack of political experience and limited education has been an issue. Born in 1966 in a Monrovia slum, he left high school early to pursue a soccer career. The Daily Observer, a respected Liberian newspaper, reported earlier this year that the bachelor's degree in sports management listed on Weah's campaign biography came from a 'diploma mill' that has been shut down by the Federal Trade Commission in Washington in cooperation with the British government. The web site also touts Weah's service since 1994 as a goodwill ambassador for Unicef, the United Nations Children fund, alongside other international celebrities, including Angelina Jolie, Harry Belafonte and Youssou N'Dour.

The 'ambassador' title is used repeatedly on the Weah website, although at home he seems to prefer the royal appellation 'King George', according to various newspaper profiles. Andrew Rice notes that Weah, who critics portray as a playboy surrounded by sycophants, wears a gold ring embellished by a lion, has a carved wooden throne in his office, and is catered to by aides drinking aged cognac.

"Weah's popularity is due to the fact that he is a soccer player," George Fahnbulleh, a Liberian commentator living in the United States, told Voice of America this week. "That is it." He said using the title 'ambassador' is an attempt to inflate his stature and is something Jolie and other celebrities serving the United Nations refrain from doing. Fahnbulleh said he fears that Weah's lack of political know-how could open him to manipulation by others and drag the country down again.

U.S. officials in Washington and Monrovia, speaking privately, give Weah generally positive reviews and have especially welcomed his unqualified support for a financial reform package known as Gemap (Governance and Economic Management Assistance Program), under which externally selected financial experts will be positioned in key government agencies to monitor fiscal performance over the next three years. Donors have made adherence to the program a condition for aid totaling over \$U.S. 500 million that has been pledged for the country's post-war recovery and reconstruction.

Although Sirleaf, along with other leading candidates, has endorsed the plan, which she says is a reasonable donor response to the "serious financial mismanagement" of the transitional government, she has also stressed the need for Liberians to manage their own affairs responsibly. At a campaign appearance outside Washington, D.C. in August, before a crowd of Liberians working in the United States, Sirleaf appealed to them to be engaged

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in their country's rebuilding.

Among supporters at the event, there were widely expressed fears that Weah would become another African "big man," tolerating cronyism at home and subject to manipulation from abroad. Several speakers, who warmed up the crowd for Sirleaf's speech, said they had initially believed Weah's appeal to poor youth would help end the era of armed militias that have destabilized the country, but that they had come to believe that Sirleaf's policies and experience were the best guarantors of Liberia's future.

Sirleaf outlined her six-point program of peace and security, reconciliation, good governance, resource management, accountability and transparency and gender equity. Showing some of the fire she has also brought to recent rallies across Liberia, she exhorted the group to bring their resources and skills home and work to finally end war, corruption and poverty. "Liberia is blessed with resources," she said. "For God's sake, Liberians should not be poor!"

Whoever wins, this is the first time in the history that everybody eligible to vote will be able to express themselves freely at the ballot box," says the Africa Society's Robinson. "Liberians are demonstrating they are hungry for the taste of free and fair elections."

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05/10/2005 22:49:35

Liberia Elections to Go Ahead on Schedule

MONROVIA, Liberia (AP) Liberia's first postwar elections will take place on schedule next week, a mediator said Wednesday after emergency talks resolved a dispute that threatened to delay the long-awaited ballot.

Liberia's Supreme Court ruled last week that two presidential candidates initially excluded from the Oct. 11 vote could register to run. But U.N. officials said reprinting ballot papers to include their names would have delayed the vote.

Nigerian President Abdulsalami Abubakar, who flew Wednesday to Liberia to resolve the issue, told reporters after several hours of talks that the two independent candidates excluded from the poll had agreed to withdraw their bids to run.

``The election is on course and come Oct. 11, God willing, the election will take place," Abubakar said.

Twenty-two candidates are running for president, including African soccer legend George Weah and former rebel leader Sekou Conneh, whose mid-2003 siege of Monrovia helped drive warlord-turned-president Charles Taylor into exile.

Liberians are supposed to vote for a new president and legislature to replace the interim government that came to power after Taylor was forced into exile when a 2003 peace deal ended years of fighting.

Liberia's civil war began in 1989 and left up to 200,000 people dead in this West African country of 3 million.

US renews plea for Liberian ex-president's arrest

UNITED NATIONS, Oct 5 (Reuters) - The United States renewed a plea to the U.N. Security Council on Wednesday to authorize peacekeepers in Liberia to arrest former President Charles Taylor if he returns home after next week's elections.

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Experts from the council's 15 member nations met on Tuesday to discuss the U.S. draft resolution but have not yet reported back on what changes, if any, would be required to win their support for the measure, council diplomats said.

Hopes for peace and jobs afloat among ex-fighters in Liberia's Titanic

by Lauren Gelfand

MONROVIA, Oct 6 (AFP) - It seems strangely fitting that some 1,500 former child soldiers loyal to Charles Taylor have taken up residence in the dank bowels of a building known as the Titanic, blackened by neglect and listing in the soft earth of Liberia's rain-soaked capital.

Fitting perhaps because it was they, many of them from the time they should have been starting secondary school, who were responsible for sinking Monrovia into successive civil wars that ravaged the west African nation.

"I took up arms when I was 12, when Charles Taylor came to Nimba county (north) to recruit us to join his war against the government," said 26-year-old George Bull, known as "Power" during his time as a member of the Jungle Fire militia and now a husband and father of two young girls.

"Twelve years old. If I had stayed in school then, who knows? I could now be in university, or working in computers. Instead I am in tenth grade, and I am struggling."

In the two years since a peace pact was signed to bring an end to the rebel war against then-president Taylor, 103,000 boys and girls -- now men and women -- like Bull have been disarmed in a 220 million-dollar (180 million-euro) process run by the UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL).

And if the soldiers, rebels and militants have renounced war and embraced peace like the rest of their war-weary nation, they remain close to each other, and their

former commanders, awaiting the promise of a rebuilt economy and a transition to true democracy that they hope elections set for October 11 will provide.

"We held arms together, now we study together," said Bull, who wears his kelly green uniform pants even when he is not in school because he lacks the funds to buy another pair.

"It is good, I think, for us to remain so close, because it reminds us of where we have been."

That closeness has evoked fears, particularly since the rehabilitation and reintegration phase of the UN process has not yet been completed, of a reprise of fighting at home or, worse still, the stealth crossing of Liberia's porous borders by ex-combatants to join other conflicts such as one simmering to the east in Ivory Coast.

Bull himself, like many of the squatters in the Titanic, is of two minds about returning to the battlefield -- wanting desperately to lead an honest life but knowing that as an unskilled and partially educated Liberian, he is of more use in arms than in an office.

"I want a job. I want a home for my family. I want UNMIL to give me what they promised me," he said, his wide smile darkening.

"I cannot promise that if someone comes to me and says 'take arms and go over the border' that I will not, if I get a contract that will help me take care of my family."

According to Charles Achodo, disarmament program and policy adviser for the UN Development Program, some 38,000 ex-combatants have received reintegration benefits that provide schooling or vocational training, with another 33,000 enrolled in similar projects courtesy of UN development partners.

That leaves roughly 26,000 people still waiting for assistance, which Achodo said would be forthcoming -- should a 10 million-dollar funding gap be closed -- so as to wrap up the program within the three-year projected time frame.

"The DDRR (disarmament and reintegration) process was supposed to create space so that the government could function, so that the economy could grow, that the private sector could become engaged and for Liberia to become more attractive to foreign investment," he said in an interview on Wednesday.

"The rest, ultimately, is up to Liberia itself. We are not here to provide everything but to help get the country on track so it can provide for itself."

Joseph Duo is doing his level best to provide for himself and his own wife and three children, turning from guns to God after more than a decade in arms for Charles Taylor.

With dreadlocks and a torso pocked with bullet holes he claims number more than 70, Duo, then known as General Chevy, became an iconic image of the war for a

photograph in 2003 that showed off both his dazzling smile and his shoulder-propelled rocket launcher.

"I myself fought a constructive war and am proud for doing my part to defend my country," said the 28-year-old, whose slight figure and modest demeanor belie his history as a bloodthirsty commander in Taylor's army.

"But now I want to rest, to go to work in a new Liberia. I may have been a symbol of war but now I want to be a symbol of peace."



UNMIL Public Information Office Media Summary 5 Oct 2005

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

International Clips on Liberia

10/05/2005 11:34:15

Abubakar leads delegation to Liberia to resolve election dispute

By EDWARD HARRIS

MONROVIA, Liberia (AP) — Former Nigerian President Abdulsalami Abubakar arrived in Liberia on Wednesday at the head of a delegation of the 15-nation West African community to mediate in a dispute that could delay the country's first postwar elections.

Liberia's Supreme Court ruled last week that two presidential candidates initially excluded from the Oct. 11 vote could register to run. U.N. officials said reprinting ballot papers to include their names would delay the vote.

Liberian polls to go ahead on Oct 11 - US diplomat

By Nick Tattersall

MONROVIA, 5 Oct (Reuters) - Liberia's first elections since the end of a civil war will go ahead as planned on Oct. 11 despite a successful Supreme Court appeal by three barred candidates, the U.S. ambassador said on Wednesday. "The elections definitely are going to go forward on the 11th ... and the rule of law will be fully respected," Donald Booth, the U.S. ambassador in Monrovia, told a news conference.

5 Oct 2005, The Washington Post

Liberia's 'Iron Lady' Goes for Gold; Election Would Mark a First for Africa

Lane Hartill

Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, one of the top candidates in **Liberia's** presidential election this month, was chatting recently with President John Kufuor of Ghana.

"Do you have a problem with a woman president?" she recalled asking him. Kufuor's response, she said, was: "I don't consider you a woman." Johnson-Sirleaf said she laughed, but in some ways she agreed with him. Nicknamed the "Iron Lady of Liberia," the 66-year-old economist has often held jobs in fields dominated by men, including finance minister of Liberia and vice president of Citicorp. She has also run for office against one autocratic Liberian leader and gone to prison for criticizing another.

If elected in Tuesday's vote, the first since the end of a long civil war, she would become the first female president in Africa, joining a fraternity whose members are often described as "Big Men."

"King George" courts the poor in Liberia poll race

By Katharine Houreld

HARPER, Liberia, 5 Oct (Reuters) - His supporters call him "King George", but Liberia's soccer millionaire and presidential hopeful George Weah is courting poor Liberians in his bid to win an election scheduled for next week. Although questions have arisen over whether Liberia's first post-war polls can go ahead on Oct. 11, the 38-year-old soccer star has been taking his campaign to some of the remotest corners of the country to increase his chances of victory.

BBC

October 5, 2005

Liberian poll: The main contenders

Liberia's 2005 presidential elections have attracted 22 candidates vying for the country's highest office. The BBC's Jonathan Paye-Layleh in Monrovia takes a glimpse at the six candidates who opinion polls have indicated are the most likely winners.

Charles Brumskine, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, Roland Massaquoi, Varney Sherman, Winston Tubman, George Weah.

International Clips on West Africa

UN official urges foreign assistance for Sierra Leone

The Guardian, Lagos

October 5, 2005

UNITED Nations top representative in Sierra Leone, Daudi Mwakawago has urged foreign assistance for the country to help tackle poverty, corruption and unemployment.

The UN estimates that Sierra Leone needs \$1.7 billion to begin tackling crushing poverty, illiteracy and youth unemployment.

Local Media – Newspapers

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