

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 at

Wednesday, 7 June 2006

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

“I’m Not Guilty” – Tamba Brimah / <i>Awoko</i>	Pages 3 - 4
Special Court Trial / <i>For di People</i>	Page 5
Guilty Takes Witness Stand at Special Court / <i>Independent Observer</i>	Page 6

International News

Court to rule on guns for timber / <i>Agence France Presse</i>	Pages 7-8
The Leader Has Asserted That Handing Over Taylor... / <i>Libyan Jamahiriya Broadcasting Corporation</i>	Page 9
Verdict Due on Liberia War Crimes / <i>BBC Online</i>	Page 10
“Hinga Norman is Alive and Well,” Say Family and Friends / <i>The Patriotic Vanguard</i>	Page 11
The ICC will leave no stone unturned to catch Kony / <i>The New Vision (Uganda)</i>	Pages 12-13
UNMIL Public Information Office Media Summary / <i>UNMIL</i>	Pages 14-17

Awoko

Wednesday, 7 June 2006

“I’m not Gullit” -Tamba Brima

By *Betty Milton*

Former Public Liaison Officer 1 (PLO1) of the defunct Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC), Tamba Brima, yesterday told the Special Court that it was only when he was indicted by the Court that he became known as Alex Tamba

Brima.

The accused, who is alleged to have carried the nickname “Gullit”, denied ever being called such, adding that that nickname was that of his elder brother, Komba Brima, who was killed during the May 8, 2000 attack on Foday Sankoh’s house in Freetown.

Mr. Brima, who is

testifying in his own defence in the ongoing trial of the three ARFC indictees, stated that he was never part of the AFRC force which took over power in the May 1997 coup and that he only knew of the coup after they were summoned by his Officer in Command, Captain (Capt) Paul Thomas, at the 7th Battalion

Contd. Page 2

I'm not Gullit

From Front Page

Barrack at Juba.

The witness maintained that after Capt Thomas had summoned them to a parade, they were briefed about a sporadic firing at the Army Headquarters at Cockerill.

In that regard, he continued, they went immediately to the "ammo dump" where they collected their personal rifles, magazines and bandoliers.

The PLO1 further maintained that he later returned to his area of deployment, which was at the Guardroom for ¾ hours and was there when the late Capt Simbo Sankoh went with a vehicle with other soldiers and ordered him to join the other soldiers in the vehicle, which he did and that they were taken to the AHQ.

Mr. Brima said on their arrival at the AHQ, he first saw Corporal (Corp) Gborie who told Retired Capt. Messeh Koroma that a pin in one of the guns they were

using had been damaged and that Capt Koroma whispered to Corp. Gborie who immediately went away.

"When Corp. Gborie returned he came with my father who was a weapon repairer and was an expert in it. My father and I did not speak to each other. The next day there was fighting between the Sierra Leone Army (SLA) and Nigerian ECOMOG troops at Aberdeen. My father was also taken there to do repairs on the double barrel guns and a bomb was fired close to him which sent him into comma and was rushed to the 35 Hospital where he later died," he said.

Narrating further, the PLO said he was told to go to Wilberforce Barracks but on his way he had an accident in which the driver and another soldier died, but he and three officers were

injured and were taken to the 34 Military Hospital for admission.

At the hospital, he continued, Major Tarawallie and Capt. Thomas occasionally visited him. During one of such visits, he said, they gave him a gift and a chit to collect five bags of rice for his father's burial rites.

The witness said, "Abu Sankoh aka Zagalo together with Corp. Gborie visited me at the hospital and invited me to a meeting at the Cockerill conference hall. Johnny Paul Koroma, Zagalo, Corp. Gborie, Hassan Bangura and Sergeant Ibrahim Kamara attended the meeting. At this meeting, I was appointed a Council Member and the announcement was made by the Secretary General, Col. Abdul Karim Sesay, who said I was appointed because of my dad's good works."

For di People
Wednesday, 7 June 2006

SPECIAL COURT

WHEN THE first defence witness in the Ruf trial, Tamba Brima took the witness seat yesterday morning, he told the court how he was appointed member of the AFRC council that overthrew the SLPP government in the May 25 1997 coup.

Continued Page 7

SPECIAL COURT TRIAL

From Front Page

Tamba Alex Brima, commonly called 'Gullit' denied both names-Alex and Gullit saying that the names belonged to his late brother, Komba Brima, a soldier whom he said was shot and killed by Gibril Massaquoi during the civil society demonstration at Foday Sankoh's house in 2000.

ammunition depot

He said on Sunday 25 May 1997 while he was in his apartment at the seventh battalion barracks, he heard the sound of the military trumpet indicating alarm and that they quickly assembled at the usual place where one captain Paul Thomas addressed all the soldiers that were present. He said soon after this address, he immediately went to the ammunition depot where he was issued a rifle and four magazines for self-defence and he deployed at the Guardroom of the main entrance of the seventh battalion barracks.

After he had spent close to four hours at his post, the witness said late captain Simbo Sankoh arrived in a military vehicle with some soldiers on board and asked him Tamba Brima to get on board the vehicle and they drove off to Cockerill. At Cockerill, the witness said captain Simbo Sankoh assigned him to special duties while he was with one Alie Messeh Koroma and that soon after, one corporal Gborie arrived in the compound and spoke with Messeh.

That Gborie left Cockerill but later returned in the company of his father but was later taken together with his father to Murray Town by Gborie in order to repair a gun.

The witness said while his father was busy repairing the gun a bomb was shot by the Nigerian soldiers and it landed very close to where his father was and that

he ended up in coma as a result of the shock. He said his father was later conveyed to the military hospital where he died a couple of days later. Brima said he was later invited to a meeting held at Cockerill where he met officers like Hassan Bangura, Johnny Paul Koroma and captain Abdul Karim Sesay who told him that he had been appointed member of the AFRC because of the good works of his late father.

But that prior to the coup, the witness told the court that his enrollment number was the same in the army up to the time of his retirement, and that throughout his time in the army, he had never noticed numbers being transferred from one soldier to another. That his brother, Komba Brima was enlisted in the army in 1991 and before his death he was a staff sergeant.

That after his military training, he was transferred to the Naval branch of the army and later deployed at Bonthe Island where he worked as coast guard in protecting the coast during the civil war and was subsequently deployed in various locations in and around Bonthe including Bendu-Cha. Brima said he was issued a rifle and four magazines to protect himself and worked in Bonthe from 1991-1992. Following his transfer to Freetown, he said he was deployed to Captain Strasser who was the chairman of the NPRC, the military junta in power.

personal bodyguard

That he became personal security and bodyguard to the chairman and was answerable to one Patrick Amara, Captain Abdul S Kargbo and late Abu Tarawallie who was the ADC to Captain Strasser. Brima said he was with Captain Strasser until he was overthrown in January 1996, after which he was deployed at the army headquarters with the Chief of staff, Komba S Mondeh.

Testifying further, he said he later went on study leave after he had been attached to the PRO unit by Colonel Komba Mondeh and paid regular visits to the office to collect his benefits. He said he served in the PRO unit up to the end of the NPRC regime but denied having any hand in the coup of May 25 1997 and that he came to know about it through Captain Paul Thomas who went to seventh battalion and addressed them on the general situation. He said captain Paul Thomas told them that he had received information from officers that there was shooting around and that he later got another information that the Ruf were in the city.

internal pain

That on the 26 May 1997 he left for Wilberforce barracks in a military vehicle but got an accident along Spur Road in which the driver and one soldier died on the spot while two of them were conveyed to the military hospital for internal pain and that while he was in the hospital Captain Paul Thomas visited him and gave him money and a chit to collect five bags of rice for his father's funeral.

He said Tamba Gborie later visited him and Abu Sankoh alias Zagalo who extended an invitation to attend an AFRC Council meeting, adding, that corporal Gborie had already made a radio announcement that the AFRC had taken over power from the SLPP government. "I was forced to attend the meeting, because I was some how concerned about the Ruf, so when I heard that the soldiers and the Ruf were operating as one unit I was not pleased at all," the witness concluded.

Independent Observer
Wednesday, 7 June 2006

Guillit takes witness stand at Special Court

When the AFRC trial resumed yesterday at the Special Court, it was the Defence that

opened its case in respect of Alex Tamba Brima alias Guillit, Brima 'Bazzy' Kamara, and Santigie

Borbor Kanu alias Brig 5-5.

Each face a 14-count indictment alleging war

crimes, crimes against humanity, and other serious violations of international humanitarian law.

In an opening statement which lasted for just under an hour, Prof. Geert-Jan Knoops, Lead Counsel for

Third Accused Kanu, laid out the Defence case on behalf of all

see page 2

Special court trial

from front page

three defendants. This was followed by opening statements on factual points from Lead Counsel for First and Second Accused.

The trial, which is being held before the Special Court's Trial Chamber II, began on 7 March 2005. The Prosecution concluded its case on 21 November 2005 after calling 59 witnesses.

In December 2005, counsel for the Defence filed Motions for Judgment of Acquittal on behalf

of all three accused. Those motions were dismissed by the Trial Chamber on 31 March 2006, clearing the way for the start of the Defence case.

Following the opening statement, the Court began hearing evidence from the First Accused, Alex Tamba Brima, who is testifying in his own defence. The AFRC trial is the second

Special Court trial in which the Defence has opened its case. Defence counsel opened their case in the trial of three alleged CDF leaders on 19 January 2006.

Agence France-Presse

Monday, 5 June 2006

Court to rule on guns for timber

Stephanie van den Berg

The Hague - A Dutch court is set to hand down its judgement on Wednesday on Guus Kouwenhoven, a businessman accused of war crimes over allegedly trading guns for timber in war-torn Liberia.

Kouwenhoven, also known as Mr Gus, is charged with war crimes for delivering guns which the militias of Liberian warlord-turned-president Charles Taylor used to commit atrocities against civilians.

The 63-year-old businessman is also accused of breaking the United Nations arms embargo against Liberia. Prosecutors have demanded a 20-year prison sentence and a fine of €450 000.

According to the prosecution Kouwenhoven smuggled guns into the country in exchange for lucrative timber concessions for his logging companies OTC and RTC. These weapons were subsequently used by Taylor's troops during the bloody 14-year civil war.

According to the indictment, Kouwenhoven's logging company OTC also had militias of its own which were sent to fight rebels opposing Taylor.

Taylor faces charges

Taylor fled Liberia in 2003 after he stepped down to give a UN-brokered peace process a chance to stop the bloodshed. He is currently in the custody of the UN-backed Special Court for Sierra Leone, where he faces charges stemming from atrocities committed there.

In April, the former president pleaded not guilty to charges of sponsoring and aiding rebel groups who perpetrated murder, sexual slavery, mutilation and conscription of child soldiers in Sierra Leone.

Close ally

During his trial prosecutors cited correspondence found in Kouwenhoven's homes to show that the Dutch trader was a close ally of Taylor.

The Dutch businessman wrote to Taylor: "in everything I do I think of you...I need you to succeed as that is my survival too".

"The accused knew what was going on, he had influence and was implicated in the day-to-day running" of the Taylor regime, prosecutor John Lucas concluded.

Kouwenhoven has always denied the charges and used his last words in court at the end of his three-week trial to profess his innocence.

"I never saw weapons on a ship in the port of Buchanan (where OTC had its offices). I was never present when arms were handed out. I was never present at military meetings with Taylor. I never encouraged OTC personnel to go to the front lines," Kouwenhoven told the court.

His lawyers have demanded his acquittal and tried to cast Kouwenhoven as someone who had become "crushed between the different forces working to remove the regime of Charles Taylor".

Libyan Jamahiriya Broadcasting Corporation

Monday, 5 June 2006

http://en.ljbc.net/online/news_details.php?id=1633

The Leader has asserted that handing over of Taylor offends Africa

2006-06-05



Judge Desmond De Silva, Former chief judge of the international court on Sierra Leone said the trail of the former Liberian President, Charles Taylor trail will not take place this year , before the court.

This came in the statement of the judge in the Sierra Leonean capital Freetown carried by Pana news agency.

The Leader of the Revolution, President of the Conference of Leaders and Head of States of Cen-Sad Community has asserted that what is being said about the handing over of Taylor to an international court for his trail is a serious precedent that offends Africa and damaging the credibility of Africa, the morals of Africa, which does not need for an international court to which an African president is sent for trail. In this context the leader said in this respect, at the inaugural session of the 8th session of the Conference of Leaders and Head of States of the Cen-Sad Community in Tripoli, Thursday.

"We know that a civil war and a power struggle took place in sisterly Liberia, and that an elected president who is President Taylor was elected but a rebellion was staged against him, as we say that President Gbagbo was elected and a rebellion is staged against him, and the Chadian President was democratically elected and a rebellion was made against him, President al-Bashir was democratically elected, I mean seven millions gave him his votes in Darfur but a rebellion was made against him.

Any how a rebellion was made against Taylor, and a civil war started. An elected president has the right to defend legitimacy, however, when matters exacerbated and pressure increased on Liberia, the Liberian President took an historic and brave decision to step down to his vice -president and went as a political exile in Nigeria. Our brother Obasanjo was overseeing this process. In exchange for the end of civil war Taylor steps down in exchange for peace in his country. Indeed by his stepping down civil war ended, elections were organized, and our sister Ellen Johnson won the elections.

The case ended by such sacrifice from Taylor and by the confidence of the Liberian people in our sister Ellen.

Later, we were surprised that Taylor was caught and it has been said that he would be extradited for an international trail. This action destroyed the credibility of Africa, the morals of Africa and seriously harmed Nigeria, and no longer a sanctuary. This thing should not have happened and not appropriate for Cen-Sad, for Africa, Liberia or Nigeria. Then, It is said he tried to flee and was arrested at the borders, I mean a fabricated process, an excuse that is far worse than the guilt. This is immoral, and I condemn it , this is a fact".

The Leader added; " I have no connection with the policy of Taylor in Liberia which is of concern to the Liberian people, who decisively settled this issue. His policies is not of our concern, but this does not mean we are approving his policies, if he slaughtered people and launched a war, not at all, we are not speaking about that, we are speaking about something else, we are speaking in terms of principles. I mean a process decisively decided in this way, it should not be exploited and manipulated, other wise , there would be no safety, or sanctuary, and no longer credibility or morals. Then, all head of states would be subject to this destiny, this is a series precedent.

Taylor should stay in Nigeria without trail and not to be extradited to any court, because there is no right to do this at all. This is nothing to do with his policies in Liberia. His policies in Liberia led to war, and led to his exit from Liberia, and led the Liberian people to select another president, this is something else.

Taylor should return to Nigeria, and in the future would return to Liberia with peace, democratic work, peaceful work and through parties".

The Leader stressed by saying; " Any person who commits a crime punishable by national law or humanitarian law, he should shoulder his responsibility, but we should not be in the auction or the international market. This offends Africa. This is an insult to very African President".

BBC Online

Wednesday, 7 June 2006

Verdict due on Liberia war crimes

A Dutch court is due to deliver its verdict on a timber merchant charged with arms smuggling and war crimes during Liberia's civil war.

A militia employed by Guus van Kouwenhoven, 63, is accused of killing a group of civilians, including babies.

He allegedly broke a UN arms embargo by selling weapons to ex-President Charles Taylor. In return, Mr van Kouwenhoven allegedly received logging concessions.

He denies the charges and his lawyers say prosecution witnesses were paid.

The Dutchman is the first person to be charged with war crimes relating to Liberia's 14-year conflict, in which many atrocities were committed.

During the three-week trial, prosecutors demanded a 20-year prison sentence and a fine of 450,000 euros (\$575,000; £310,000).

They want a fine because of the profits he allegedly made through his companies - the Royal Timber Company and Oriental Timber Corporation.

During Liberia's civil war, lobby group Global Witness successfully campaigned for UN sanctions to be imposed on the country's exports of "blood timber".

'Inner circle'

According to a UN report submitted to The Hague, Mr van Kouwenhoven, known in Liberia as "Mr Gus", formed part of Charles Taylor's "inner circle".

"Militias formed by the Dutchman's timber companies are alleged to have participated in massacres of civilians where even babies were not spared," a prosecution statement said.

"The weapons used by the militias to commit these war crimes are alleged to have been supplied by the Dutchman."

Charles Taylor launched a rebellion in Liberia in 1989, before eventually being elected president in 1997.

He soon faced accusations of diamond smuggling and arms dealing on behalf of rebels in neighbouring Sierra Leone.

From 1999 Liberia descended once more into civil war as rebels mounted a campaign to oust the president, who went into exile in 2003.

Mr Taylor was arrested earlier this year and may also end up on trial in The Hague.



Liberia was wracked by civil war for most of the 1990s

The Patriotic Vanguard

Tuesday 6 June 2006.

“Hinga Norman is Alive and Well”, Say Family and Friends”

There have been wild rumours for some weeks about the health of war crimes indictee chief Hinga Norman. These rumours reached alarming proportions over the weekend, prompting the press release below:



FOR PUBLIC RELEASE

The family of former Regent Chief and leader of the Sierra Leone Civil Defence Forces, Chief Sam Hinga Norman (photo), wishes to inform the public that rumours circulating in Freetown that the chief has passed away are entirely false. It is also not true that the chief's health condition at present, though serious, is life threatening as previously reported. Mr. Norman has been examined by competent medical authorities and both the family and Mr. Norman's legal advisers are clearly aware of the extent of his illness which is related to injuries he incurred during his arrest and transfer to Bonthe Island on 10 March 2003 on orders from the so-called special court for Sierra Leone.

The family is also aware that a decision to transfer Mr. Norman to a medical facility outside Sierra Leone for medical treatment has been made although his destination is as yet unknown. While the family appreciates the widespread public interest in Mr. Norman's health and welfare, they kindly appeal to friends and supporters as well as news media to refrain from initiating or perpetuating rumours which are bound to cause panic or undue hardship on the family, the general public as well as Mr. Norman himself.

It is regrettable that the telephone situation at the Detention Center is still too unreliable and restrictive for direct outside communications with Chief Norman. However, we assure the public, friends and well wishers that should there be any significant development in the health and well-being of Chief Norman, the public will be duly informed.

We are also informed that following a meeting between Counsel for Mr. Norman, Dr. Bubuakei Jabbi, and Principal Defender, Vincent O. Nmehielle, an official statement regarding Mr. Norman's health and well-being will be issued shortly. Further inquiries can be directed to Dr. Jabbi or Mr. Nmehielle in Freetown.

Rev. Alfred Munda SamForay For & On Behalf of:

Chief Sam Hinga Norman & Family, The Hinga Norman-CDF Defence Fund & The Sierra Leone Working Group.

The New Vision (Uganda)

Tuesday, 6 June 2006

The ICC will leave no stone unturned to catch Kony



PEACE? Kony (third left) meets Southern Sudan delegation in May

--The LRA leader and his lieutenants is better off being tried in Uganda

Last week in this column a group of Acholi in the diaspora (including this writer) put forward the aptly named Te Cwaa (under the tamarind tree) proposal with nine key ingredients crucial to brokering a peace deal in northern Uganda.

The main ideas of Te Cwaa included working with the government of Southern Sudan as the peace broker, recognising the role of the International Criminal Court (ICC), guaranteeing the safety of the LRA by allowing them to surrender to the UN, advocating for Kony and his co-accused leaders to be tried within Acholiland and not at the Hague, and inviting key Acholi groups to be part of the international court proceedings.

The responses to the Te Cwaa proposal coming out of Uganda and from around the world have been positive. Many respondents generally supported the idea of allowing the Vice-President of Southern Sudan Dr. Machar to act as mediator between the government of Uganda and the LRA. Many also agreed with the idea of establishing the ICC seat of justice in Acholiland and creating an advisory body to the ICC made up of Acholi groups. But two areas of concern were also raised about the proposal. The first was about the timing that injects the ICC into the sensitive peace negotiations. A number of writers argued that the ICC dilemma should be left out of the Te Cwaa proposal for now because it will only spook Joseph Kony and the LRA. Why would Kony and his rebel leaders possibly willingly walk out of the bush straight into the arms of the ICC, they asked.

“The fine details of what your group wrote could be considered later but not at this sensitive and delicate time,” wrote one respondent. The second objection was about the mechanism for the surrender of top ranking LRA officers, including Joseph Kony. The Te Cwaa proposal outlined the scenario in which Kony and the top LRA leadership would surrender in UN-patrolled demilitarised zone within Acholi. However, as one observer pointed out, such an arrangement is fraught with problems not the least of which is the UPDF forces lining the Uganda-Sudan border. Why would the LRA break through such a ring of steel just so that its leaders can surrender to the UN inside Acholi?

Another respondent strongly argued that “assembling a UN force to provide a demilitarised

zone in Acholi is logistically expensive, bureaucratic, cumbersome and can be a lengthy process. We neither have the lives, money or time to wait for the UN to act. The SPLA's willingness and link offers us an affordable and expedited road to the peace process". Instead, the respondents suggested that the LRA should surrender either to the UN forces in the Democratic Republic of Congo or to the government of Southern Sudan. The latter option makes especially good sense because trust has been established between the LRA and Vice-President, Dr. Riek Machar. However, on the issue of the timing of the ICC warrants for the arrest of Kony and his lieutenants I can report that the group that wrote Te Cwaa firmly believed that it was important to be honest and forthright with Joseph Kony and the LRA about what lay ahead of surrender. As the group saw it, the ICC is the one irrevocable reality hovering over the peace process.

To the proponents of Te Cwaa, it is, therefore, naïve, and even dishonest to reassure the LRA that the ICC will be called off so long as they willingly negotiate a peaceful surrender.

The implacable resolve of the ICC to arrest Kony and his four officers was further boosted last Thursday when the International Criminal Police Organisation — Interpol — issued Red Notices for their arrest. In other words, the ICC has just cranked up the heat on the LRA leadership instead of turning it down.

As happened in the cases of former Serbian leader Slobodan Milosevic, and Liberia's Charles Taylor, the ICC will relentlessly pursue those accused men to the bitter end. To date, it continues to hunt for two indicted Serb military leaders Radovan Karadic and General Ratko Mladic, who have so far eluded capture.

But in March, Mr. Taylor found out that even the protection of a powerful country like Nigeria was no match for the resources of the ICC. It was puzzling to hear President Museveni recently suggest that some kind of protection could be arranged for Kony and his men if they chose to negotiate for peace. The declaration was inconsistent with the hard and fast reality that the ICC will not back off from pursuing Kony and his top associates for charges of crimes against humanity handed down last year.

There is nothing President Museveni or anybody else can do to stop the ICC from meeting its mandate. It is precisely because of these irreconcilable goals — the call for peace now and the urgency for justice now — that the Te Cwaa proposal offers Kony and his men the opportunity to surrender to face trial in Acholi rather than risk capture and being sent to the Hague to face justice.

Kony, in other words, needs to be persuaded that a trial at home will afford the LRA top officers to surrender with some semblance of dignity (an important point for the LRA) and, furthermore, to be tried among the people of Acholi and Uganda who will be thinking not only about justice, but also about lasting reconciliation.

In any event, the authors of Te Cwaa are encouraged by the debate and will continue to listen to ideas before drafting formal proposals to be sent to the president of the ICC, government of Uganda, government of Southern Sudan and the LRA.

United Nations  **Nations Unies**

United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL)

UNMIL Public Information Office Media Summary 6 June 2006

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

International Clips on Liberia

AP 06/06/2006 04:07:53

Liberia Begins Recruiting Women Soldiers

MONROVIA, Liberia The first African country led by a democratically elected woman began recruiting women into its new post-war army Monday. Liberia's new army will initially number 2,000 troops, including about 400 women, said Edith Bawn, spokeswoman for the government body that oversees the creation of the armed forces and includes representatives of the United Nations and the United States. On Monday, dozens of women lined up outside a military barracks in the capital Monrovia. "I want to join the army because I love my country and feel that my country is more important than I am," said one of them, Edith Nelson.

International Clips on West Africa

Ivory Coast court seek to quiz ex-minister and general over bombing

ABIDJAN, June 6, 2006 (AFP) - Ivory Coast's military court wants to question former defence minister Rene Amani and the former head of the loyalist army, Mathias Doue, over the 2004 bombing of French forces, legal sources said Tuesday. "An international summons has been issued to find General Doue ... so that he can appear in front of a judge," the government commissioner, Navy Lieutenant Commander Ange Kessi, told AFP.

Ivory Coast repatriates trafficked Burkinabe children

ABIDJAN, June 6, 2006 (AFP) - Ivorian police have returned 33 children destined for cocoa plantations in the south of the country to their homes in neighbouring Burkina Faso, local media reported Tuesday. The children, aged between 10 and 17, were being transported to the vast plantations of Soubre province when they were stopped on May 31, and then repatriated with the help of a German non-governmental organization.

Local Media - Newspapers

English Queen Urges Liberian Leader to Emulate Mandela

(Daily Observer)

- In an exclusive interview with the *Daily Observer* in Monrovia yesterday, President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf said England's Queen Elizabeth II admonished her to emulate the reconciliatory spirit of former South African President Nelson Mandela.

- President Johnson-Sirleaf added that already, the British government had consented to give support in the areas of civil service reform, formulating anti-corruption legislation and code of conduct for all three branches of government.

President Announces Order to Suspend Tariff on Cement

(Daily Observer and The Informer)

- President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf yesterday issued Executive Order #5, suspending the protective tariff of US\$2 on each 50 kilogram of a bag of cement in the country.
- An Executive Mansion press statement said that the Order would reduce the rising cost of cement on the market which would be disadvantageous to consumers and encourage the establishment of local industries to serve suppliers of goods and services at reasonable prices.

House Speaker to Avoid Executive Mansion Functions

(The News and Heritage)

- Speaking to journalists yesterday, a Chief of Staff at Speaker's Office Darius Dillon said that House Speaker Edwin Snowe would boycott all functions at the Executive Mansion until the necessary measures guaranteeing his respect were put in place.
- Mr. Dillon noted that he was disappointed that at last Friday's occasion organized at the Executive Mansion for the visiting Saudi Prince, Speaker Snowe was never provided a seat causing him to boycott the program.

Ex-Combatants Acquire UNDP-Sponsored Skills Training

(The Inquirer)

- A local non-governmental organization Liberians United to Serve Humanity (LUSH) in collaboration with UNDP, over the weekend graduated 800 ex-combatants from its skills training program for war affected people. LUSH Executive Director Reverend Robert Karloh said that the beneficiaries were trained in masonry, carpentry, tailoring, auto-mechanics, agriculture and electricity.

Human Rights Group Urges Government to Halt Retrenchment of Civil Service

(The Inquirer)

- In its quarterly report, the National Human Rights Center of Liberia (NHRCL) has urged the Government of Liberia to stop the retrenchment of the civil service until a holistic assessment of the issues of recruitment; employment conditions and salaries were harmonized. The group suggested that the assessment should prioritize local and central government administrations as well as Liberia's foreign missions.

African Women Educationalists Call for Free Education for Girls

(Daily Observer)

- Addressing a forum to create gender awareness among students in Monrovia recently, Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE) National Coordinator Winifred Deline entreated the government to guarantee free education for girls to help increase their literacy levels. She called for more scholarships to encourage women to acquire academic knowledge without hindrances.

Education Ministry Supports WAEC on Results before Graduation

(The News, The Inquirer and The Analyst)

- The Ministry of Education on Monday said it supports appeals by the West African Council (WAEC) that high school graduation ceremonies be held after the official release of examination results.
- Education Minister Dr. Joseph Korto told journalists Monday that the call is a brilliant step in the improvement of education and that his ministry will shortly meet with school principals to discuss the issue and come up with a position that will be in the best interest of the country.

UNOPS Reacts to Corruption Scandal

(The News)

- In a press release issued on Monday, the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) disagreed with media reports of corruption at the agency.
- UNOPS clarified that the just completed bridge project for Barclayville did not utilize any Trust Fund, nor was a tender rendered for its construction as was reported in the Wednesday, 31 May 2006 edition of *The News*.
- In an editorial, *The News* said it did not accuse the UN of any wrongdoing. Instead, it reported the corrupt practice of individuals working with the UN agency hoping that an investigation would be conducted to prevent recurrence of such ugly act.

Ellen Dumps Mainland China

(Plain Truth)

- [sic]:President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf has begun to gamble Liberia's avowed position on the One-China Policy by encouraging secret talks with high ranking officials from Taiwan to establish diplomatic relations. The President had been meeting and holding secret discussions with Taiwan's Foreign Minister James C.F. Huang in a mood described by diplomatic sources as positive steps toward the renewal of diplomatic ties.

Local Media – ELBS Radio

President Issues Executive Order to Suspend Tariff on Cement Products

(Also reported on Star Radio)

House Speaker to Avoid Executive Mansion Functions

(Also reported on Star Radio)

Education Ministry Supports WAEC's Call to Halt Graduations until Exams Results Released

(Also reported on Star Radio)

European Steel Company to Invest US\$1 Billion in Liberia

- Briefing journalists in Monrovia yesterday, Mittal Steel Company Secretary Manager Robert Ferguson said that the company would invest close to US\$1 billion targeting the renovation of housing; railroads and the port as priority areas.

(Also reported on Star Radio)

Budget Bureau Director Says Fiscal Budget Nears Completion

- Bureau of the Budget Director Augustine Ngafuan told a news conference yesterday that the fiscal budget would be ready this month and that the Bureau has conducted budget hearings with the ministries and agencies of government. He added that the Bureau was planning another retreat on the budget with the cabinet after which the draft would be submitted to the President for her review.

(Also reported on Star Radio)

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