

**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:

Thursday, 8 November 2007

Press clips are produced Monday through Friday.
Any omission, comment or suggestion, please contact
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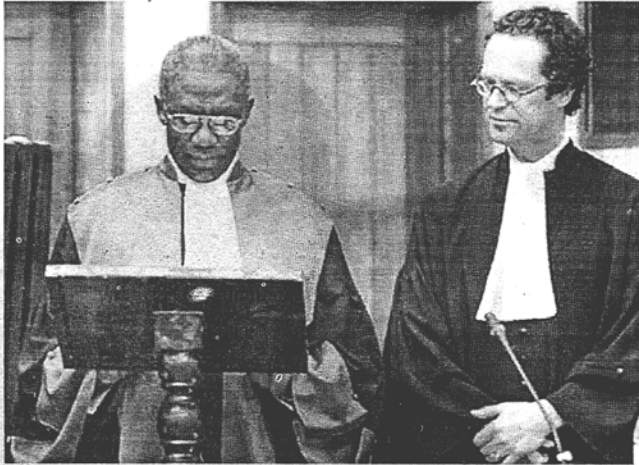
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Awareness Times
Thursday, 8 November 2007

Justice Jon Kamanda sworn in as Appeals Judge at Special Court



Oath being administered by the Registrar, Herman von Hebel

According to a Special Court press release issued to this medium, Justice Jon Kamanda, a Judge of the Sierra Leone Appeals Court, was sworn in yesterday, Wednesday November 7th 2007 as Justice of the Special Court's Appeals Chamber.

Justice Kamanda was appointed by the Government of Sierra Leone. Under the Statute of the Special Court, three of the five Appeals Chamber Judges are appointed by the Secretary-General of the United Nations, and two are appointed by the Government.

Justice Kamanda will now replace Justice Geoffrey Robertson, QC, who resigned in August of this year.

The Solemn Declaration was administered by the Registrar of the Special Court, Herman von Hebel, in the presence of Special Court Judges, staff, invited guests and journalists. The Declaration was witnessed by Attorney General and Minister of Justice Serry Kemal, and by Victor de Angelo, the Executive Representative of the Secretary General of the United Nations.

Justice Kamanda trained as a Barrister at the Inns of Court School of Law in London, and was called to the Bar at the Middle Temple. From 1976-80 he worked as State Prosecutor in the Government Law Office, rising to the rank of Senior State Counsel. In 1980 he entered private practice in criminal law.

He was elected to Parliament in 1982 and was appointed Deputy Minister of Mineral Resources. In 1985 he was made the country's Minister of Health.

From 1987-92 he served as Deputy Managing Director of the National Diamond Mining Company. Justice Kamanda has served as an Appeals Court Justice in the Sierra Leone judiciary since 2004 and is the Presiding Judge in criminal appeals. He is also a High Court Judge in the Civil Division.

Appeals are currently pending before the Court in the case of The Prosecutor vs. Alex Tamba Brima, Brima Bazzy Kamara and Santigie Borbor Kanu (the AFRC case) and in the case of The Prosecutor vs. Mojinina Fofana and Allieu Kondewa (the CDF case).

Special Court gets fifth Appeal Judge

By Ibrahim Tarwallie

A new Appeal Chamber Judge was sworn in at the Special Court for Sierra Leone yesterday—the fifth since

served as Lead Prosecutor at the Court Martial set up by the National Provisional Ruling Council (NPRC). Von Hebel said Justice

the Sierra Leonean judiciary.

But some Sierra Leoneans don't feel appointing a new judge is worthwhile.

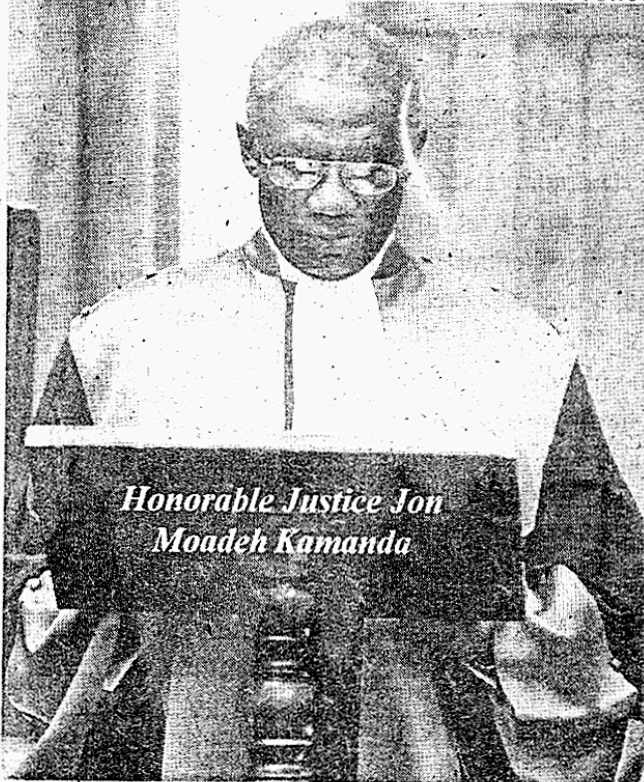
Freetown college student Amara Kamara said the appointment of another judge by the president is a waste of money that could be used elsewhere to develop the country, especially because the court will be closed in 2009.

"I think it is a waste of resources by the government to appoint another judge for the Special Court. I am against his appointment because it is not relevant," he said.

Adama Kamara also agrees. The Freetown trader stated that the Special Court should not have set up in the first place because it is not important to Sierra Leoneans.

"I am not in favour in the setting up of the Special Court; neither do I support the appointment of another judge," she said.

Kamara said that the money spent on the opening of the Special Court should have been spent in developing the country.



Honorable Justice Jon Moadeh Kamanda

the court was established in 2002.

Honorable Justice Jon Moadeh Kamanda, a Sierra Leonean, will replace Justice Geoffrey Robertson, an Australian/British. He was appointed by President Koroma; his first Special Court appointment since becoming president.

Special Court Registrar Herman Von Hebel said the ceremony marks another milestone of the Special Court and added that the new judge once

Kamanda also served as State Prosecutor in the Government Law Office, rising to the rank of Senior State Counsel. As well, he trained as a Barrister at the Inns of Court School of Law in London.

President of the Special Court Justice George Gelaga King said appointing Justice Kamanda is an honour, especially because the Special Court is an international judicial tribunal and not part of

Salone courts ignoring rape cases

By Rachel Turner

Since 2000 there have been no convictions for rape in Sierra Leone, despite the fact that hundreds of rapes have occurred, according to a Family Support Unit (FSU) representative.

The representative, who asked to remain anonymous, said there were some rape convictions in 2005 and early 2006, but none since.

"In late 2006 and 2007 there have been no convictions which has caused an increase in rape cases," she said.

The support officer said she is worried because rape cases are increasing and

nothing is being done about it. She said the courts say there is often lack of evidence and witnesses don't turn up to testify - often because they don't receive compensation.

"The court process to invite victims and witnesses to come and testify is very, very slow," she said. "I don't know why." She said often the parents of the victim ask for money from the accused before the case can reach court and be legally tried. "When we try to visit their homes, they say it is their own problem."

There have recently been several reports of sexual assault in the country,

especially in children - some as young as one-year old.

Criminal Investigation Officer Nathaniel Williams said rape, indecent assault and abuse of young girls has steadily been on the rise in Sierra Leone.

"We are trying to combat these crimes," he said. "We caught some youths in the abandoned city hall building who were in the habit of raping girls in that area."

Theresa Ramatu Vincent, a Freetown housewife, said she is angry that rapists are not being convicted of their crimes.

"These people are wicked, they should be punished so,

that the others can stop doing what they are doing," she said.

Vincent said she feels sorry for parents who have to ask for money from perpetrators, because they are not aware of their rights.

"These rapists don't have the fear of God in them," said Emilia Fofanah, a Freetown businesswoman outside the law courts.

She said the court should be ashamed for not taking appropriate action on rape cases. "They should be sentenced to prison for 40 or 50 years, so others will stop," she said.



Emilia Fofanah and friends outside courthouse

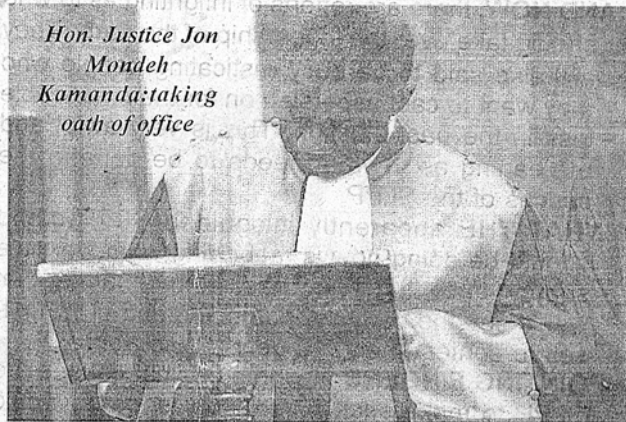
Justice Kamanda Now Special Court Judge

By John Alfred
Gbokor Kamara

The Hon. Justice Jon Mondeh Kamanda was sworn-in as Judge for the Appeals Chamber of the

Contd page 2

Hon. Justice Jon
Mondeh
Kamanda: taking
oath of office



Hon. Justice Jon Kamanda Now Special Court Appeals Judge

From front page Special Court of Sierra Leone on Wednesday the 7th November 2007 at the Special Court of Sierra Leone. He replaces Geoffrey Robertson who resigned earlier. The swearing-in ceremony was witnessed by H.E. Mr. Victor Angelo, Executive Representative to the Secretary General (UNIOSIL) and other dignitaries including government officials. Mr. Herman Von Hebel, Registrar of the Special Court said Hon. Justice Jon Mondeh Kamanda has 2 to 3 trials of the CDF and AFRC to preside over and that both trials are in the Appeals stage. He further said that the

newly-appointed judge has a wealth of experience in the field of law. He revealed that from 2004 to date, he is the Justice of Appeal in the Sierra Leone Judiciary; President Judge – Criminal Appeals Court and also High Court Judge Civil Division. In 1998 to 2004, he was in Private Legal Practice essentially in Criminal Trials. In 1997 to 1998 he was refugee in Guinea as a result of the conflict in Sierra Leone. In 1992-1997, he was in Private Legal Practice essentially in Criminal Law, and lead prosecutor at the Court Martial set up by the NPRC. In 1987 – 1992, he was

Deputy Managing Director, National Diamond Mining Company. In 1985 – 1986, he was Minister of Health and member of Cabinet in the Government of Sierra Leone. In 1982-1985, he was Deputy Minister of Mineral Resources. In 1982-1986, he was Member of Parliament representing the Kono Central Constituency. In 1980 – 1982, he was in Private Legal practice Criminal Law. In 1976-1980, he was State Prosecutor in the Government Law Office, rising to the rank of Senior State Counsel. In 1968 – 1971, he was a High School Teacher, rising to the rank

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Hon. Justice Jon Kamanda Now'
Special Court Appeals Judge

From page 2

of Senior Teacher of the Government Secondary School, Kenema.

Educational Background- In 1971-1975, he trained as Barrister at the Inns of Court School of Law, London, and was called to the Bar at the Middle Temple. In 1967-1968, he attained a Diploma in Education course from the University of Sierra Leone. In 1964 – 1967, he acquired the Bachelor of Arts (BA) Second Class) from Fourah Bay College, University of Durham, majoring in International Relations, English and Public Administration. In 1962-1964, he obtained three GCE advanced levels in English, Economics and History at the St. Edwards, Secondary School. In 1960- 1962, he also obtained a Grade I (one) in the School Certificate Examination.

His Primary and Secondary schools were respectively at the Kenema Church of England School and the Government Secondary School, Kenema.

Special Court swears new judge

By Zainab Kanu

The Special Court for Sierra Leone (SCSL) yesterday sworn in its new Appeal Judge, Justice John Kamanda.

Speaking at the ceremony at the Special Court room, the Special Court Registrar Hermanvon Hebel who administered the swearing said that the

appointment of Justice Kamanda is done by the President of the Republic of Sierra Leone, Ernest Bai Koroma.

He also gave a brief background of Justice

Kamanda as a member of the High Court of Sierra Leone also a former State Prosecutor, a member of the Bar Association, and also former Parliamentarian from the Kono District and former Minister of

Cont. page 2

Special Court swears new judge

From front page

Health and Sanitation, and up to date he is still a legal practitioner.

On his educational background, the Registrar said Justice Kamanda after graduating from Fourah Bay College, trained as a Barrister at the Inns of Court Law School in London.

Taking his oath as Appeal Judge of the Special

Court, Justice Kamanda promised to work in the Special Court without fear or favour.

President of the Special Court, George Gelaga-King congratulated the new judge in his appointment, mentioning UNDP's Victor Angelo as one of the brains behind the appointment. The President informed the incoming judge that the

Special Court is not part of the judicial system in Sierra Leone, and such an appointment must be taken seriously.

He said the Special Court is expecting the judge to help bring justice to the country.

The Attorney General and Minister of Justice, Serry Kamal and Justice Ade Renner-Thomas were also present at the ceremony.

MOTUBA'S CORNER



Is Amnesty International serious?

Since the establishment of Amnesty International decades ago it has not created much impact in the whole world. The organisation advocates, and defends the right of people but fails to realize that most of those they are defending have deprived others of their human rights.

Motuba heard Amnesty International Sierra Leone Director saying government should now apologise to all those that were sexually abused. Brima also went on to state that AI has urged government to go in line with recommendations in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission by compensating all those that were raped or sexually abused.

Motuba knows it was very unfortunate for those that were sexually abused and therefore something needs to be done but for AI to say government should owes an apology means every Sierra Leoneans should be compensated either directly and indirectly.

Brima was a bit confused when he was asked whether AI makes provision for those category of people but stated that there is no provision and the only thing AI does is to make recommendations to government. Motuba believes this is very absurd.

Motuba wants to know the achievements of Amnesty International in Sierra Leone. No one could attest to the fact that AI had done A or B in this country.

What has AI done towards the many abuses on women and children? What was the outcome of a principal that was beaten up by policemen? What has, AI done towards human rights abuses in the country?

If Motuba may ask has AI blacklisted any organisation for violating human rights? No! Has Sierra Leone ever benefited from AI, for the past decades? These questions should be answered by those shouting above their voices in the name of defending human rights.

Motuba knows AI is a complete write-off and has not done anything for the benefit of Sierra Leoneans.

Awoko

Thursday, 8 November 2007

New Appeals Court Judge for Special Court

By Betty Milton

Sierra Leonean born Justice Jon Kamanda was yesterday sworn in as the new Appeals Court judge replacing Justice Geoffrey Robertson

who resigned recently from the UN backed Special Court for Sierra Leone.

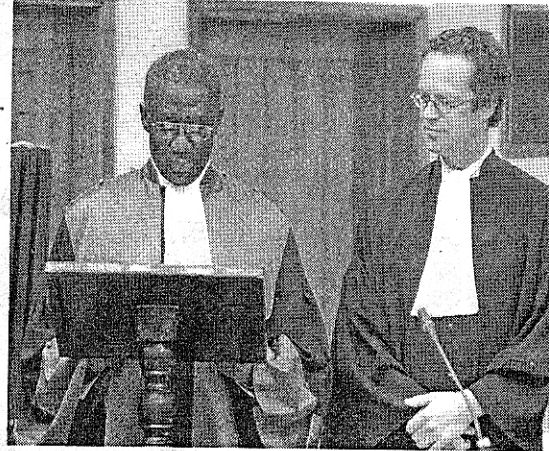
At the ceremony, which took place at the Trial Chamber II, the president of the Court George Gelaga-King in welcoming the new judge said, "such appointment is made on the qualification, hard work and wealth of experience of the Judge. And such appointment should be taken seriously."

He noted that the appointment of Justice Kamanda was crucial at this time.

The appointment of Judge Jon Kamanda, Justice Gelaga-King went on, was done by president Ernest Bai Koroma but that it was done in consultation with the United Nations Secretary General in accordance with the mandate of the court.

Mr Gelaga-King said, "the Special Court is an

would take to Yonibana,



Justice Jon Kamanda taking the oath

international criminal tribunal and not part of the Sierra Leone judiciary. Although they have concurrent jurisdiction the Special Court has primacy over the local court here as this is stated in the Statue and Agreement of the court".

Justice Gelaga-King said the President acted

promptly in appointing Justice Jon Kamanda to replace Justice Geoffrey Robertson "who because of personal and family reasons could not reside in here".

Justice Jon Kamanda before this appointment was the Judge of the Appeals Court in Sierra Leone judiciary and presiding judge of criminal

Cont. Page 6

Awoko

Thursday, 8 November 2007

Pushing for women's access to Justice

By Mohamed Fofanah

Amnesty International, under the special programme on Africa, is currently focusing on women's access to justice in rural communities.

Community volunteers in Masiaka are currently undergoing a six-day training on domestic violence, traditional justice system and general human rights training.

Masiaka is one of three chiefdoms: Koya Marampa and Buya Romande, where Amnesty will undergo this pilot phase. Amnesty's regional campaign coordinator, Fredrick Gershon Lawson, said they had drawn participants for the training from community members like

teachers, pupils, the war wounded and other stakeholders. "This is the second volunteer training project (VTP) for Masiaka", he stated.

He said when these community volunteers would have been trained they would then become human rights activists in the community, visiting police stations and courts, doing follow up on cases bordering on human rights issues and generally push for the strict observance of human rights.

Mr Lawson said the teachers and pupils, who are receiving training, would establish human rights clubs in their schools.

Zachariah Deen, one of the volunteers participating in the workshop, told Awoko that they had been brought to a level where they were now conscious of the rights of people, and that with that knowledge they would act as gadflies to ensure that the rights of everyone in their community were respected, especially the women.

He said they would also advocate and lobby stakeholders in their communities to ensure that women got access to justice.

Kojo Ernest Armon, one of the facilitators of the training said they had discovered that there were lots of problems in that community in terms of political tolerance and women's access to justice.

The Deplorable Conditions of the Prisons Force: A Case for Hon. Dauda Kamara

The existence of an ineffective and ill-equipped Prison's Force would surely not contribute towards building the effectiveness of a country's justice sector. As it is presently, the Sierra Leone Prison's Force and the Pademba Road Maximum Prisons, a subset of the former are in a very deplorable condition, which is the best word to say. The administrative and professional hierarchy of the Sierra Leone Prison's Force continues to experience a plethora of difficulties, which seems to be uncontrollable, and these problems have been discovered to be linked with the perennial occupation of the position of the Director of the Force, by Mr F.S. Conteh. Undoubtedly, he has been and continues to be Sierra Leone's longest serving director of a national institution of that nature. Sierra Leoneans have been overshadowed with the perpetual state of wretchedness that is presently enveloping the prison's force and we are demanding a correction of the status quo.

For over twenty years (20 yrs), the Directorate of the prison's force is egocentrically coordinated by F.S. Conteh and the administration is a complete mess to the officers and men of the force in particular and the Sierra Leonean community as a whole. The administration of the prison force is termed, a complete mess because since the inception of the tenure of office of F.S. Conteh, the status of the Prisons Force has been deteriorating from bad to worse. We are very much concerned with the existing inefficiencies and ineffectiveness of F.S. Conteh, especially in the manner he steers the force.

What sincerely puzzles Sierra Leoneans is the reason(s) that has (have) continuously prevented successive governments of Sierra Leone, from either sending F.S. Conteh on a leave or terminating his services entirely, especially when he is administering a failed institution. It is still unimaginable to believe that, throughout his period of maladministration, F.S. Conteh vehemently refused to proceed on leave, using all sorts of political connections to perpetrate his stay and wicked acts on his subordinates. It is widely rumoured that whenever F.S. Conteh detects that there are moves to send him on leave, he would orchestrate means to forestall the exercise. This has been the activities and operations of F.S. Conteh, till date and he is certainly determined to introduce his previous techniques of fraudulent manipulations under the new dispensation of President Ernest Bai Koroma. The question that has been asked is why F.S. Conteh refused to proceed on leave, even when it would be in his best interest to take a break off his stressful daily avocations. The answer to this question is simple and one would find it written all over his face greed! The excessive inborn selfishness of F.S. Conteh is what has perennially denied him the opportunity to proceed on leave. We are aware that, the annual

government's revenue allocation to the Prison's force is enormous and he has always been denying to proceed on leave, in a bid to frustrate the universally proclaimed ideologies of transparency and accountable. Mr. F.S. Conteh might have been doing things he does not want his inevitable successors to uncover and as such, he has reluctantly won himself the uncelebrated title of Sierra Leone's longest serving Director of a government entity, without any benefit. What kind of a man is F.S. Conteh? The citizens of Sierra Leone need to be adequately informed about reasons as to why he is refusing to proceed on leave. Candidly, F.S. Conteh should not be the kind of Sierra Leonean that should hold onto a particular strategic national position for even a quarter of the period he has spent, not to even talk about a seeming life long administrator. Our position is not based on his political connections or affiliation but rather it is entirely based on his professional competence and patriotism.

Why continue to keep a man of a downward integrity and competence like F.S. Conteh, whose only gift to his institution and the public is maladministration. Take a look the personnel of the Sierra Leone Prisons Force and compare their outward appearances with not even the other government forces, but those mushroom private security personnel that have proliferated the city of Freetown, one would surely give more respect to the private security than to the Sierra Leone Prisons officers. This is the kind of status that the Sierra Leone Prison's Force successfully attained under the leadership of F.S. Conteh. A prison department that does not have regular supplies of logistics not to even mention the irregularity that surrounds the payments of the monthly salaries of its personnel, the unavailability of vehicles for the officers and personnel of the Prison's Force should not only be mentioned. It is truly an unimaginable shortage that is being experienced, with regards the supply of vehicles to the Sierra Leone Prison's Force. Without exaggeration, the Pademba Road Maximum Prisons is in an unbelievable status. This has been the only prison in the sub-region, where prisoners have successfully escaped from, detention on diverse occasions. The prisons authorities have on different occasions failed to convey prisoners from the prison's facilities at Pademba Road to the law court building at Siaka Steven Street, to answer to various criminal and civil law suits filed against them, as a result of the unavailability of vehicles. There have been times without number when the Prisons administration had to hire the services of commercial vehicles to convey prisoners. This is the kind of prisons administration that has been in existence all these years.

Honorable Dauda Kamara, the Minister of Internal Affairs and Local Government must automatically

COMMENTARY



endorse the termination of the tenure of the present administration if there should be anyway forward. The activities and operations of F.S. Conteh and some of his senior management staffs speak for itself and there is no way their terrible deeds could now be swept under the carpet. They have done too much evil to be easily forgotten about, and the only available remedy to this current national brouhaha is to institute a change of leadership and administration. It is definitely needless to outline the actual status of the prisoners at the Pademba Road Maximum Prisons. Their plights are very incredible and it seemed as if the present administration cannot do anything to salvage the status quo. As a nation, Sierra Leoneans are very sad over the selfish approach that has been employed by F.S. Conteh to administer the Sierra Leone Prisons Force. It is our immediate expectation that the government of President Ernest Bai Koroma through the able leadership of Hon Dauda Kamara makes an immediate enquiry into the status quo of the Prisons Force.

For di People

Thursday, 8 November 2007

Amputee Team Due In Turkey

ACCORDING TO public relations officer **Albert Mustapha, the national amputee football team will be in Turkey over the weekend for a World Cup tournament in that country's capital, Ankara.**

The team was formed after the war ended in 2001 when it was realized that many of their numbers were passionate about football and some could play. Mustapha said that some had their limbs chopped off by rebels while others had them cut off by medical experts due to bullets lodged in their legs and arms.

four years

He said Sierra Leone for the past four years has been the only country representing the whole of Africa internationally and able to interact with other amputees and realized that life was not over for them and that they could also play their favourite game through various contacts and visits to other nations in the sub-region. Four other Africa teams are also going to Turkey to take part in the competition, including Nigeria, Ghana and Senegal from the sub-region.

other venture

Mustapha expressed his team's appreciation to the UN for providing much-needed funds and also Africell mobile phone company for the tickets. He hoped other well-meaning organizations and people will come onboard and help the amputees not only in sports but in any other venture.

United Nations  Nations Unies

United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL)

UNMIL Public Information Office Media Summary 7 November 2007

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

International Clips on Liberia

AP 11/07/2007 06:18:54

West African military heads denounce US approach to Africa command

JONATHAN PAYE-LAYLEH

MONROVIA, Liberia _ West African military chiefs charged that the United States has failed to adequately consult with countries that will be affected by a planned American military command for Africa. In a statement issued late Tuesday at the close of a two-day conference of West African military heads, the group said the plan "had not been fully understood" by African countries and called for "further sensitization by the United States authorities at the highest political level." The U.S. Defence Department created a unified U.S. military command for the continent last month. Africom, as the command is called, consolidates operations that had been split between three other regional commands, none of which had Africa as a primary interest. An Africom spokesman said the U.S. government has had a series of consultations and discussions with African countries as it prepared for the reorganization

International Clips on West Africa

Government Asked to Apologize to Sexually Abused

Rachel Horner and Danny Glenwright

Freetown, Nov 06, 2007 (Concord Times/All Africa Global Media via COMTEX) -- Bintu Kondowah's sister was raped by rebels during the 11-year civil war. Ever since, she's been too ashamed to return to her village and visit her family. Kondowah thinks her sister would be relieved if the government came out to acknowledge, and apologize for, the horrible sexual crimes that occurred in Sierra Leone over the last 15 years. "My sister would be happy if the government apologized officially to victims," she said. "

Local Media – Newspaper

UNMIL Thrashes speculations that its Helicopter might have been Shot

(The News, New Democrat and The Informer)

- The United Nations Mission in Liberia in a statement issued on Tuesday discounted speculations in some international news agencies that its cargo helicopter which crashed near Ganta in northern Liberia last Friday might have been hit by gunfire. The Mission said that an extensive probe on the cause is continuing and that it was too early to speculate.

UN Launches appeal to meet urgent humanitarian needs for Liberia

(Heritage, The Informer, The News and National Chronicle)

- The United Nations and its partners in Liberia on Tuesday launched the mid-year review of the 2007 Common Humanitarian Action Plan aimed at raising US\$64million for urgent strategic humanitarian priorities in Liberia. "Despite some improvements in political, security and the socio-economic conditions of Liberians, humanitarian needs do still remain," said Mr. Jordan Ryan, the UN Humanitarian Coordinator for Liberia and Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General. The appeal covers water and sanitation, health and agriculture.

Local Media – Radio Veritas *(News monitored today at 9:45 am)*

UNMIL Dismisses Russian "NOVOSTI" Report on Helicopter Crash

(Also reported on ELBS, Star Radio, SKY FM and Truth FM)

West African Military Chiefs Express Confidence in Peace in the Region

- During a courtesy call on President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf following their meeting in Monrovia, the Military Chiefs of West African States expressed confidence in the general restoration of peace in the sub-region in that the countries which experienced conflicts have become stable.
- Burkina Faso's General Alie Touray who spoke for the soldiers said that the West African Military Chiefs agreed to setup a stand-by military force of up to 2,700 troops for the region by 2010. They congratulated President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf for receiving the highest American honor for freedom award from President George Bush.
- For her part, President Sirleaf said that true security in the region fully depended on addressing the needs of the people, but promised that Liberia's territory will not be used to destabilize West Africa.

(Also reported on ELBS, Star Radio, SKY FM and Truth FM)

Senator Criticizes Government's Anti-Corruption Bill

- Speaking to Radio Veritas yesterday, Grand Cape County Senator Abel Massallay said that the anti-corruption bill President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf submitted to the National Legislature for approval was selective in that it omitted the regimes of Presidents William V.S. Tubman and William R. Tolbert. The bill seeks to deal with corruption from President Samuel K. Doe through the Charles Gyude Bryant's Transitional governments; something the Senator thought was unfair and capable of promoting disunity in the Country.

(Also reported on ELBS, Star Radio, SKY FM and Truth FM)

Bong Legislative Caucus Abhors Police Brutality against House Speaker

- According to a release, the Bong County Legislative Caucus has condemned the alleged assault on Deputy House Speaker Togba Mulbah by security officers at a checkpoint in Kakata, Matrgibi County.
- The Caucus' Acting Chairman, Representative Samuel Bondo said it was regrettable that security officers who should protect senior members of the National Legislature rather choose to assault them.

(Also reported on ELBS, Star Radio, SKY FM and Truth FM)

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The Analyst (Monrovia)

7 November 2007

UNMIL Identifies Helicopter Crash Victims

It is now clear that the three crew members who lost their lives in the fatal UNMIL helicopter crash are all Russians, the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) with whom they worked prior to their demise confirmed yesterday.

Late Friday afternoon, UNMIL helicopter navigating logistics to various outstations in Nimba, came down crashed minutes after takeoff in the forest of Ganta, Nimba County. Though, the cause of the crash has not yet been established, observers are claiming engine failure.

Since the crash, UNMIL has been endeavoring behind the scene to come up with a genuine picture relative to names and nationalities of three crew members.

In a statement issued yesterday indicating the identification of the dead three crew members, the multi-national force of about 14, 000 strongmen and women said:

"It is with profound sadness that it wishes to confirm the official identification of the three crew members who perished in the cargo helicopter crash that occurred on Friday, 2nd November 2007, near Ganta, Nimba County, in north-eastern Liberia."

UNMIL named the three, all of Russian nationality as the pilot in Command, Vitali Drozdov (age: 42); Co-Pilot, Sergey Kolosov (age: 53 years); and Flight Engineer, Nikolai Zhorikov (age: 58).

According to the statement, the force has already officially informed the next-of-kin of the deceased, but fell short of saying in which countries they are.

In the wake of the unfortunate situation that befell the force at the time it is trying to reduce its strength in the country, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Alan Doss, and the leadership of the mission - on behalf of the United Nations - extend their heartfelt sympathies and condolences to the bereaved families and friends of the three men.

The United Nations says it recognizes and appreciates the valuable contribution made to the work of UNMIL, by these three men, who have made the ultimate sacrifice. Meanwhile, an extensive investigation has been launched in an effort to determine the causes of the crash.