

SPECIAL COURT FOR SIERRA LEONE OUTREACH AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE



Special Court President Justice Jon Kamanda toured the newly set up accommodation quarters and offices of the Mongolian Guard Force at the detention facility today, and viewed remodelling of the detention facility, which was handed over to the Government of Sierra Leone in November.

PRESS CLIPPINGS

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

as at:

Tuesday, 9 March 2010

Press clips are produced Monday through Friday.
Any omission, comment or suggestion, please contact
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Special Court Update

"Charles Taylor Did Not Help Sierra Leonean Rebels To Attack Freetown In 1999"

Prosecutors Say His Evidence Is Inconsistent

Charles Taylor did not provide support to Sierra Leonean rebel forces in their attack on the West African country's capital Freetown in 1999, said the former president's first defense witness who concluded his testimony this week. Prosecutors, on the other hand, accused the witness of giving testimony which was inconsistent with his own written statement and with Mr. Taylor's evidence as well.

Mr. Yanks Smythe, a Gambian national who was a member of Mr. Taylor's National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) rebel group and who, upon attaining Liberian citizenship was appointed by Mr. Taylor as Liberia's top diplomat to Libya and Tunisia, told the court that neither Mr. Taylor nor his security forces supported or participated in the Sierra Leonean rebel attack on the country's capital Freetown in 1999.

Mr. Yanks' testimony - consistent on this point with Mr. Taylor's own testimony - stands in contrast to that of several prosecution witnesses, who had testified that the former Liberian president provided the support needed for the rebels to attack Freetown. Prosecution witnesses had also testified that both Mr. Taylor and his Special Security Services (SSS) director, Benjamin Yeaten, were in radio contact with one of the top Sierra Leonean rebels, Sam Bockarie, during the attack. In his re-examination on Wednesday, Mr. Smythe dismissed the allegations as lies, adding that no member of Mr. Taylor's security apparatus travelled to Sierra Leone for the operation.

"To your knowledge, were any employees or members of the SSS during that period of time engaged in any fighting in Sierra Leone?" Mr. Taylor's defense counsel, Mr. Morris Anyah, asked the witness in re-examination, as he sought to clarify allegations that Mr. Taylor sent fighters to help the rebel forces in the 1999 invasion of Freetown.

"No, to my knowledge, none of the SSS were involved in any fighting in Sierra Leone," the witness responded. Seeking to clarify the issues further, Mr. Anyah asked the witness whether "to your knowledge, were any members of the SSS, in particular Benjamin Yeaten, engaged in any radio communications with persons in Sierra Leone during that period of time?" Again, Mr. Smythe responded that "to my knowledge, no." Earlier on Monday, the witness dismissed prosecution assertions that his testimony is contradicting that of the former Liberian president, telling the court that neither he, nor Mr. Taylor, is lying to the judges.

(RUF) leader Foday Sankoh via a radio message to go and acquire arms for the RUF. After agreeing with Mr. Koumjian that Mr. Taylor did indeed go to Gbarnga in October 1996, the prosecutor read a portion of Mr. Taylor's previous testimony in which the former president had denied ever going to Gbarnga during that period. Upon hearing what Mr. Taylor said about the same incident in his testimony, Mr. Smythe sought to clarify his response, saying that he was in agreement with Mr. Taylor's account.

"You just told us Charles Taylor moved to Gbarnga after the 31st of October 1996, was that correct?" Mr. Koumjian asked the witness.

The witness responded that "when there was an attack on his life, he left Monrovia during that period and he went to Gbarnga but he never stayed there, he came back to Monrovia, this is what I am saying." "Sir, who is lying when we talk about Charles Taylor being in Gbarnga in 1996, you or Charles Taylor," Mr. Koumjian again asked the witness.

"Nobody is lying here," the witness responded. Also in his cross-examination on Monday, Mr. Koumjian attempted to point out that Mr. Smythe's evidence about Mr. Taylor's personal security personnel having heavy weapons also contradicted that of the former president's prosecutors reminded the court that on September 30, 2009, Mr. Taylor said that he did not even have arms and ammunition to give his personal security personnel and so could not have had same to supply RUF rebels in Sierra Leone. Mr. Taylor had testified that the United Nations took away all his arms and ammunition during the disarmament process in Liberia. Mr. Koumjian on Monday asked the witness to describe the kinds of weapons that Mr. Taylor's personal security carried.

"That weapon is ah, I think its GMG," the witness said, adding that GMG means "General Machine Gun." Asked whether it was an "anti-aircraft type of weapon," the witness responded that "I don't know what you are talking about, I know it's GMG, General Machine Gun." "And it was actually somehow fixed to the back of like a Pick Up truck, correct?" Mr. Koumjian enquired further. "It's in a Pick Up truck," the witness responded.

Mr. Taylor during his testimony told the court that he never had an anti-aircraft weapon during the entire period of the Liberian conflict. On Tuesday, as prosecutors pointed out inconsistencies in his written statement to defense lawyers and his oral testimony in court, Mr. Smythe said that certain aspects of his written statement were

made to defense lawyers in 2009 differed. In his response, Mr. Smythe said that such inconsistencies were as a result of misrepresentations made of what he had said in his written statement. The witness in his testimony had said that contrary to what prosecution witnesses said in court, there was no group for child soldiers called Small Boys Unit (SBU). He said that the term SBU was created by NPFL commanders who had rescued and were taking care of children abandoned in the frontlines. Mr. Koumjian pointed out that the witness's written statement revealed a different story.

"Mr. Witness, you told the defense last year, didn't you, that there was an SBU unit, that these were under-aged, and they were part of the NPFL," Mr. Koumjian put to the witness. "This is a complete misrepresentation of what I said, I never said that. This was not what I said," the witness responded. "The defense invented this, is that what you are saying?" Mr. Koumjian again put to the witness. "I don't know what you mean by they invented but this is not what I said. I said SBU as I stated in my testimony here, yes, this is what I know about SBU," the witness again responded.

As Mr. Koumjian pressed further on what the words "SBUs were under-aged" meant in his written statement, the witness responded that "I'm saying this is a complete misrepresentation of what I said in my statement. This is not what I said."

Mr. Koumjian also pointed out that while the witness' courtroom testimony said that he never fought on the frontlines for the NPFL, his written statement revealed a different story. In the witness's statement, he was quoted as having taken part in an attack during "Operation Octopus," a 1992 attack on Monrovia by NPFL rebels. The witness insisted that he had again been misrepresented by those who obtained his statement.

The witness also in his testimony in court had said that the first time he met Mr. Taylor was in 1987 at the Mataba guesthouse in Libya where Mr. Taylor reportedly lived alongside dissident leaders from Gambia and Sierra Leone. Mr. Koumjian pointed out that the witness's written statement revealed that he had met Mr. Taylor at the Libyan revolutionary training camp Tajura, not Mataba. Reading from the witness's written statement, Mr. Koumjian quoted that "the first time witness met CT [Charles Taylor] was in 1987 in Tajura, not at Mataba meetings."

Mr. Smythe insisted that that was a complete misrepresentation of what he said. "I never saw Mr. Taylor in Tajura," he said. While Mr. Smythe in his testimony tried to rebut prosecution evidence against Mr. Taylor, prosecutors during cross-examination also tried to discredit the witness's testimony. Like defense lawyers did with prosecution witnesses under cross-examination,

prosecutors also tried to highlight inconsistencies in Mr. Smythe's oral testimony in court and his written statement made to defense lawyers. It will be left with the judges to determine the credibility of the witness and whether his testimony can be relied upon.

As Mr. Smythe ended his testimony on Wednesday, Mr. Taylor's next defense witness took the stand. The witness, DCT 125, is testifying as a protected witness because, like some prosecution witnesses, security reasons demand that his identity not be revealed to the public. Aspects of DCT 125's testimony are heard in private/closed session to the exclusion of the general public. For those parts of his testimony which are heard in open session, the witness is testifying using voice and facial distortion, meaning that members of the public cannot identify his voice and face.

On Thursday, the witness told the court that Mr. Taylor only wanted power to empower the Liberian people to develop their country. "Charles Taylor wanted power, control his people and to empower them with the authority to develop their country in Liberia," the witness said today as he testified about the former president's motivation to wage a rebel war in the West African country of Liberia. The witness described himself as a founding member of the Mataba; that is, the "Libyan Bureau" which provided military and ideological training for revolutionaries from different parts of the world. Testifying about the character of Mr. Taylor, the witness described the former Liberian president as a very secretive person and an "intellectual bourgeois capitalist" - a description which drew a smile from the very attentive Mr. Taylor.

Reading from the Mataba manifesto, the witness told the court that the document called on all revolutionaries around the world to come together and fight against "state sponsored terrorism."

Mr. Taylor is accused of providing support to the RUF, a Sierra Leonean rebel group which prosecutors say committed heinous crimes in Sierra Leone such as rape, murder and "terrorizing the civilian population." Some prosecution witnesses also testified before Special Court for Sierra Leone judges that with Mr. Taylor's involvement, terrorist operatives from the fundamentalist group Al Qaeda visited Liberia and RUF controlled territories in Sierra Leone. Defense counsel for Mr. Taylor, Courtenay Griffiths, today asked the witness the Mataba's position on terrorism. "The Mataba, according to our aim and objectives, is not a terrorist organization. The Mataba is a combination of all revolutionary forces to device strategies to face imperialism and its allies wherever they are," the witness said.

Premier News

Tuesday, 9 March 2010

Charles Taylor Trial

Taylor's Witness Denies He Helped Rebels

Charles Taylor did not provide support to Sierra Leonean rebel forces in their attack on the West African country's capital Freetown in 1999.

This was said by the former president's first defense witness who concluded his testimony this week. Prosecutors, on the other hand, accused the witness of giving testimony which was inconsistent with his own written statement and with Taylor's evidence as well.

Mr. Yanks Smythe, a Gambian national who was a member of Taylor's National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) rebel group and who, upon attaining Liberian citizenship was appointed as Liberia's top diplomat to Libya and Tunisia, told the court that neither Taylor nor his security forces supported or participated in the Sierra Leonean rebel attack on the country's capital Freetown in 1999.

Mr. Yanks' testimony, consistent on this point with Taylor's own testimony, stands in contrast to that of several prosecution witnesses, who had testified that the former Liberian president provided the support needed for the rebels to attack Freetown. Prosecution witnesses had also testified that both Taylor and his Special Security Services (SSS) director, Benjamin Yeaten, were in radio contact with one of the top Sierra Leonean rebels, Sam Bockarie, during the attack.

In his re-examination on Wednesday, Smythe dismissed the allegations as lies, adding that no member Taylor's security apparatus travelled to Sierra Leone for the operation.

"To your knowledge, were any employees or members of the SSS during that period of time engaged in any fighting in Sierra Leone?" Mr. Taylor's defense counsel, Morris Anyah, asked the witness in re-examination, as he sought to clarify allegations that Taylor sent fighters to help the rebel forces in the 1999 invasion of Freetown.

"No, to my knowledge, none of the SSS were involved in any fighting in Sierra Leone," the witness responded.

Seeking to clarify the issues further, Anyah asked the witness whether "to your knowledge, were any members of the SSS, in particular Benjamin Yeaten, engaged in any radio communications with persons in Sierra Leone during that period of time?"

Again, Smythe responded that "to my knowledge, no."

Earlier on Monday, the witness dismissed prosecution assertions that his testimony is contradicting that of the former Liberian president, telling the court that neither he, nor Taylor, is lying to the judges.

During Monday's cross-examination, prosecution counsel Nicholas Koumjian, questioned the witness about Taylor's presence in the former NPFL headquarter town of Gbarnga.

According to Koumjian, the witness seemed to be contradicting what the former president said in his own testimony.

Mr. Koumjian suggested to the witness that in October 1996, Taylor moved to Gbarnga and instructed Revolutionary United Front (RUF) leader, Foday Sankoh, via a radio message to go and acquire arms for the RUF. After agreeing with Koumjian that Taylor did indeed go to Gbarnga in October 1996, the prosecutor read a portion of Taylor's previous testimony in which the former president had denied ever going to Gbarnga during that period.

Upon hearing what Taylor said about the same incident in his testimony, Smythe sought to clarify his response, saying that he was in agreement with Taylor's account.

"You just told us Charles Taylor moved to Gbarnga after the 31st of October 1996, was that correct?" Koumjian asked the witness.

The witness responded that "when there was an attack on his life, he left Monrovia during that period and he went to Gbarnga but he never stayed there, he came back to Monrovia, this is what I am saying."

"Sir, who is lying when we talk about Charles Taylor being in Gbarnga in 1996, you or Charles Taylor," Koumjian again asked the witness.

"Nobody is lying here," the witness responded.

Also in his cross-examination on Monday, Koumjian attempted to point out that Smythe's evidence about Taylor's personal security personnel having heavy weapons also contradicted that of the former president's. Prosecutors reminded the court that on September 30, 2009, Taylor said he did not even have arms and ammunition to give his personal security personnel and so could not have had same to supply RUF rebels in Sierra Leone.

Mr. Taylor had testified that the United Nations took away all his arms and ammunition during the disarmament process in Liberia.

Mr. Koumjian on Monday asked the witness to describe the kinds of weapons that Taylor's personal security carried.

"That weapon is ah, I think its GMG," the witness said, adding that GMG means "General Machine Gun."

Asked whether it was an "anti-aircraft type of weapon," the witness responded that "I don't know what you are talking about, I know it's GMG, General Machine Gun."

And it was actually somehow fixed to the back of like a Pick Up truck, correct?" Mr. Koumjian enquired further.

"It's in a Pick Up truck," the witness responded.

Mr. Taylor during his testimony told the court that he never had an anti-aircraft weapon during the entire period of the Liberian conflict.

On Tuesday, as prosecutors pointed out inconsistencies in his written statement to defense lawyers and his oral testimony in court, Smythe said that certain aspects of his written statement were misrepresented.

During Tuesday's cross-examination, Koumjian tried to point to Smythe that certain things about which he has testified in court differ from what he had said to Taylor's defense lawyers when they obtained a statement from him in June 2009.

For example, Koumjian pointed out that the witness has testified in court that Taylor's NPFL rebel group did not use child soldiers. However, his written statement made to defense lawyers in 2009 differed.

Culled from Charlestaylortrial.org

Awareness Times
Tuesday, 9 March 2010

***The Bar Association expresses
support for International
Women's Day-2010***

BAR ASSOCIATION PRESS RELEASE: The Sierra Leone Bar Association congratulate Women, all around the World, particularly our mothers, sisters and children of Sierra Leone, as they celebrate yet another epoch of International Women's Day.

The year 2010 is a milestone for gender equality and women's rights, as it marks the 15th anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action as well as the 10th anniversary of the Millennium Declaration and Security Council resolution 1325, both instruments highlighted the plight of women and girls in conflict situations and the role played by women in prevention and resolution of conflicts, as well as peacekeeping, peace-building, reconciliation and reconstruction.

However, enormous challenges continue to face Women as a result of labor and political discrimination, gender based violence, widespread food insecurity, inadequate medical facilities and access to justice.

Violence against women stands in direct contradiction to the promise of the United Nations Charter to "promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom." The visible consequences are immediate, close and personal, and go beyond the realm of rhetoric. Death, injury, medical costs and lost employment are but the recognized outcomes.

Therefore, the Bar Association has for the first time in its history, set up the National Center for the Prosecution of Violence against Women, with the mandate to investigate and prosecute gender based violence and domestic abuse, promote local law enforcement policy, and train enforcement officers in what a prosecutor needs in order to effectively prosecute these types of cases.

The Bar Association consequently calls on the Government of Sierra Leone, to heighten its drive for social equity, justice and women empowerment.

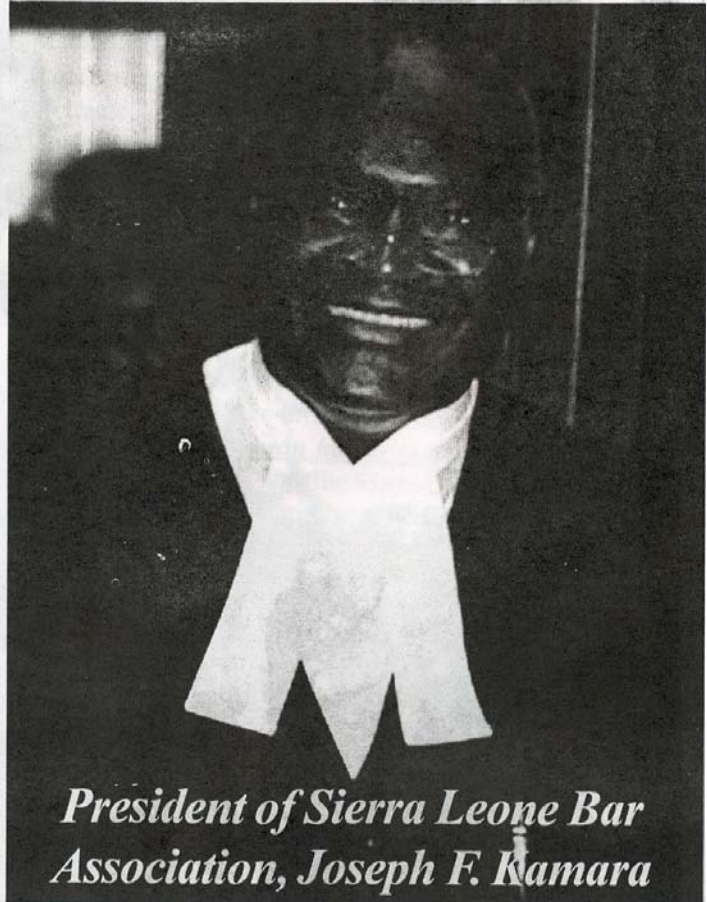
And further call on the International Community, people of Sierra Leone and stake holders in justice sector development to recognize the role and contribution of women in societal development.

The Bar Association remains committed to the pursuit of justice, protect and secure the rights of all, and promote legal development.

Joseph F. Kamara, Esq.

President

= PHOTO NEWS =



***President of Sierra Leone Bar
Association, Joseph F. Kamara***

Charlerstaylortrial.org

Monday, 8 March 2010

Charles Taylor Trial Resumes Tomorrow

By Tracey Gurd

Dear Readers,

The Charles Taylor trial will resume again tomorrow (Tuesday) and continue through the rest of the week. No proceedings were held today as the Special Court for Sierra Leone has to share the courtrooms at the International Criminal Court with its own ongoing trials.

**UNMIL Public Information Office Media Summary
8 March 2010**

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

International Clips on Liberia

International Clips on West Africa

Guinea

Guinea Sets June 27 Presidential Election Date

CONAKRY, Guinea (AP) - Guinea's interim leaders say a presidential election will be held June 27 in the West African country. It could be the nation's first democratic vote, as a coup leader grabbed in power in 2008 and the nation had previously been led by two dictators since gaining independence from France. The coup leader agreed to go into voluntary exile after he survived an assassination attempt following a massacre at a pro-democracy rally in September. The transitional government was established with help from international mediators. Also Sunday, a decree from interim leader Gen. Sekouba Konate said the government has established a national transitional council of 155 members.

Sierra Leone

Sierra Leone's Attorney General is Corrupt and Should Be Sacked

<http://www.newstimeafrica.com/archives/11191>

Abdul Serry Kamal is definitely not the type of man any government want in its cabinet. The cabinet of any government should constitute of individuals with an impeccable public service record. But I can assure you that this is not the case in Sierra Leone. There is a criminal who holds the office of Minister of Justice and Attorney General in the administration of President Ernest Bai Koroma of Sierra Leone. I challenge the so-called Honourable member to contest the fact that he has not squandered money from innocent victims of the law – people who have been innocent but found guilty because this man has constantly manipulated the legal framework of justice and fair trial for financial gain. When a man who according to Sierra Leonean standards, is considered rich, decides to steal from the poor – it is not only disgraceful – he is not fit to hold any public office. So many families in Sierra Leone have been victims of this conman of the law who uses his position to destroy family values and tradition through bribery and corruption. There have been so many people whose inheritance from deceased family members have been stolen or diverted to wrong recipients as a result of will's being tampered with or forged by this shameless devil's advocate who stands accused of the most heinous crimes in the Sierra Leone society.

Ivory Coast

African Union urges Ivory Coast to hold vote

ADDIS ABABA (AFP) – The African Union called Monday on Ivory Coast to hold its presidential election, delayed since 2005, by the agreed deadline of early May. The African Union's Peace and Security Council urged all political forces in Ivory Coast to work to create a climate that would allow the holding of a "free, legal and transparent election within the agreed timeframe". President Laurent

Gbagbo sacked the country's Independent Electoral Commission (CEI) and the government last month, triggering a fresh political crisis, with the putting down of sometimes violent demonstrations leading to at least seven deaths. Gbagbo had accused the CEI of fraud in putting together the list of eligible voters. The African Union welcomed the installation of a new CEI and government last week, calling for "all parties to immediately provide their full support to the CEI".

Local Media – Newspaper

President Sirleaf Declares Toda March 8 International Women's Day

(The Inquirer, the Informer, Public Agenda)

- President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf has by proclamation declared today March 8 International Women's Day to be celebrated as a working holiday.
- The day will be celebrated under the theme "Equal Rights, Equal Opportunities, Progress for All."
- The proclamation is in consonance with the UN resolution adopted in December 1997 declaring March 8 Women's Rights and International Peace Day.
- President Sirleaf in the proclamation called for the Day to be used to create awareness on women struggle for equality, justice, peace and development.
- Meanwhile the Gender Ministry has announced an official programme in observance of the Day.

LACC, EFCC Agree To Forge Partnership, Cooperation And Collaboration

(Daily Observer, The Inquirer, Heritage, The News)

- The Liberia Anti-Corruption Commission (LACC) and the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission of Nigeria (EFCC) have agreed to forge partnership of cooperation and collaboration in the fight against corruption in the two countries and the sub region.
- The two institutions reached the agreement when the three-member delegation of the LACC headed by its Executive Chairperson, Cllr. Frances Johnson Morris visited Nigeria to hold discussions with authorities of the EFCC.
- The two institutions also emphasized the need for such partnership among law enforcement agencies in Africa particularly the West African sub region in order to make the continent a hell for corrupt leaders and unattractive for money launderers.

Drugs War Begins, As Senate Meets With Experts

(Public Agenda)

- The Judiciary Committee of the Liberian Senate on Friday ended Hearing into a proposed bill seeking punishment for drug traffickers.
- Framers of the bill have stipulated that 25 years imprisonment be set for any one found guilty of drug trafficking.
- Criminal lawyer Cllr. Michael Jones told members of the Senate Committee that drugs should be done away with.
- He said those who traffic and/or use drugs should have an extremely harder punishment.
- According to Cllr. Jones, the law under review should include at least, 60 years jail sentence for would-be drugs criminal.
- But Cllr. Jones' proposal was reinterpreted by another lawyer, Cllr. Frances Johnson Morris as something against the constitution.
- Cllr. Morris, chairperson of the Liberia-Anti Corruption Commission said Cllr. Jones' version of the argument was overly stringent and should not be considered.
- She said convicts of such crime should have a reasonable jail sentence as a means of a possible rehabilitation for the person.

'Information on Burning of Policeman Is Evolving' – Minister Tah

(Daily Observer)

- The Minister of Justice, Cllr. Christiana Tah, has said that information concerning the Capitol By-Pass incident in which a senior police officer, Amos Tutu, was set ablaze after he reportedly shot and killed ex-police officer, Preston Davies, is evolving.
- Minister Tah said information that had previously been released on the incident by the Ministry of Justice (MOJ) was based on preliminary investigation, adding that as the criminal investigation progresses, more information had been evolving.
- She added that criminal investigation into the incident was still ongoing.
- However, Police Inspector General Marc Amblard told a news conference over the weekend in Monrovia that officer Tutu was not on any official assignment when the incident on Capitol By-Pass occurred.

Liberty Party Political leader Urges Christians, Muslims

(The Inquirer, National Chronicle, Public Agenda)

- The political leader of the opposition Liberty Party, Cllr. Charles Brumskine is urging Liberians both Christians and Muslims to faithfully subscribe to Article 14 of the Liberian Constitution that speaks of religious freedom and tolerance.
- Cllr. Brumskine said as organic and fundamental as Constitution, its provisions are only as good as we decide to make them.
- He added that the recent outbreak of violence in Voinjama, Lofa County may be an example, stressing that it could have been avoided and that all Liberians must resolve anew that such incident should not occur again in Liberia.
- The Liberty Party political leader spoke recently at an interactive forum held among heads of Liberia's Muslim Council.

Rice Processing Scaled Up In Rural Liberia

(The Inquirer, Heritage, Daily Observer)

- The United Nations World Food Programme (WFP), through the Ministry of Agriculture, turned over four semi-industrial rice milling machines to farmers' cooperatives in Liberia at a ceremony in Gbedin, Nimba County.
- According to a press release, the donation was made within the framework of Purchase for progress (P4P), a WFP initiative to purchase food locally for use in WFP feeding programmes.
- "Through the donation of these rice mills, we hope to improve the efficiency of farmers' groups in rice processing and increase their know-how in the use and management of appropriate technologies," said WFP Representative Louis Imbleau.

Former Information Minister Files US\$190,000 Bail Bond

(Heritage, New Democrat)

- Former Information Minister Laurence Bropleh, indicted for corruption, appeared in Criminal Court "C" last Friday as his prosecutors, state lawyers were absent, while the court endorsed his US\$190,000 bond criminal appearance bond filed.
- State lawyers had earlier filed a six-count motion urging to court deny a bail bond.
- They argued that the US\$190,000 bond through the African Insurance Company on February 15, 2010 was insufficient.
- But Judge James Gilayeneh said he endorsed the bond in line with Section 10.7 of the Civil proceeding Law because state prosecutors failed to appear for hearings.

Anti-Polio Campaign Launch Gets Huge Turnouts

(The News)

- The National Immunization day was launched Friday with massive turnout of residents of the Township of West Point and other areas.
- The huge turnout which included mothers brought their children under five years to be immunized against the crippling disease, Polio.
- The immunization exercise also brought together representatives of WHO, UNICEF, Monrovia Rotary Club and members of the National Traditional Council of Liberia.

BANENGR 11 Rated As Real Peacekeeper

(The New Republic)

- The Country Representative of the World Food Programme in Liberia, Mr. Louis Imbleau has described UNMIL Bangladeshi Engineering Battalion (BANENGR 11) in Nimba County as the “real peace keeper” for going beyond their call of duty.
- Mr. Imbleau made the assertion recently when he toured many project sites under the sponsorship of BANENGR 11.

President Sirleaf Praises BANENGR 11

(The New Republic)

- President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf has praised the UNMIL Bangladeshi Engineering Battalion (BANENGR 11) for the level of humanitarian services being rendered the country and its people.
- The President thanked the Bangladeshi peacekeepers for going beyond their peacekeeping mandate and engaging the society through the training and empowerment of the young people.
- President Sirleaf spoke recently when she inaugurated a market building in Saclepea City, Nimba County.

False Alarm Over “Black Gina” Attack

(The News, Heritage)

- Hundreds of people in central Monrovia were in a state of pandemonium when reports spread across the city that some “unknown people” have attacked “Mandingoes Muslims” in the “Black Gina” community in Gardnersville.
- The reports were termed as a false alarm by residents of the Black Gina community who said the rumors may have been raised by thieves who wanted to create a situation to carry out their craft.

Star Radio *(News monitored today at 09:00 am)*

President Sirleaf Declares Today March 8 Int’l Women’s Day

USAID Spends Over US\$2 Billion In Liberia

- The US Agency for International Development (USAID) says its has spent more than US\$2 billion in Liberia on the improvement of the quality of life in the country.
- The Economic Growth Team Leader of USAID, Mr. Macdonald Homer said the assistance represents the fruit of the partnership between the peoples of Liberia and the United States.
- Mr. Homer spoke Friday when he dedicated two major projects in Nimba County under the USAID funded Liberia Integrated Assistance Programme.
- The Liberia Integrated Assistance Programme is a three-year programme implemented by the Catholic Relief Services with partnership with Africare and Samaritan Purse.

Radio Veritas *(News monitored today at 09:45 am)*

President Sirleaf Ends Southeastern Tour

- President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf has returned to the capital following a weeklong visit to the southeastern counties of Maryland, River Gee and Grand Gedeh. The President also made stops in Nimba and Bong Counties.
- President Sirleaf described her visit to the counties as rewarding.
- The Liberian leader said she was very pleased over the outcome of the tour, because the people have caught up with the vision of development.
- She lauded the efforts of Liberians, particularly rural dwellers, toward Government’s national development initiatives in the areas of reconstruction and agriculture.
- The President has, meanwhile, expressed satisfaction over the level of progress being made by Liberian farmers in Gbedin Town, Nimba County where they are producing local rice for school feeding programmes in the country.
- The Liberian leader also thanked partners, including the Food and Agriculture Organization, the World Food Programme, and the United States Agency for International Development for

lending support to the programme, which is also being supported by United Nations Development Programme and SOCODEVI.

(Also reported on Truth FM, Sky FM, and ELBC)

Catholic Archdiocese Of Monrovia To Send Fact Finding Team To Voinjama

- Co-adjutor Archbishop Lewis Zeigler of the Catholic Archdiocese of Monrovia says the church is planning to dispatch a fact finding team to Voinjama Lofa County on reports that the Catholic Church was burnt in the recent violence in the county.
- At least four persons were reported dead and several properties destroyed in the violence that erupted in the wake of the mysterious death of a schoolgirl Korpo Kamara.
- Co-adjutor Archbishop Zeigler said the Catholic Church will not use the eye-for-an-eye method to respond to the conflict which had no Christian roots.
- He said the Catholic Church reportedly burnt by the rioters will be rebuilt because it needs to continue its service to the Lord.

LACC, EFCC Agree To Forge Partnership, Cooperation And Collaboration

Supreme Court Opens March Term, National Judicial Conference Today

- The Supreme Court of Liberia will today Monday open its March term of court at the Temple of Justice.
- Monday event is the first bi-annual opening of the Supreme Court which takes place every year in accordance with the Liberian Constitution.
- Meanwhile, the Supreme Court of Liberia will today Monday convene a five-day national judicial conference following the opening of the court.
- The conference the first of its kind in Liberia will be held under the theme: "The Judiciary: Cornerstone of our Democracy."

Radio Netherlands Worldwide

Tuesday, 9 March 2010

Bemba War Crimes Trial Delayed

By International Justice Desk



The Hague, Netherlands

The International Criminal Court (ICC) is pushing back the start date of the trial of a former senior official of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) who has been charged with war crimes.

The trial of Jean-Pierre Bemba Gombo was set to commence on 27 April, but will now begin on 5 July. He faces charges for alleged crimes committed in the Central African Republic (CAR) between October 2002 and March 2003, including rape, murder and pillaging.

Under The Hague-based ICC's complementarity principle, it can only intervene if there are no national proceedings against those responsible for the crimes.

Last month, Mr. Bemba's defence team challenged the admissibility of the case against him on the grounds of respecting the complementarity between the ICC's work and that of authorities in the CAR, arguing that he should not be tried before the Court.

It also questioned "the lack of the requisite level of gravity" as well as "an abuse of process in the case against Mr. Bemba," according to a press release issued by the ICC.

In the announcement made today, the trial chamber said that is "in the interests of justice" to rule on the defence's application prior to the start of the proceedings.

[The Office of the Prosecutor and the victims' legal representatives have until 29 March to submit their observations, while authorities in both the CAR and the DRC have a 19 April deadline by which to respond.

The trial chamber said today that it will issue its decision after considering observations as well as oral submissions made at a status conference scheduled to be held 27 April.

The ICC's pre-trial chamber confirmed last summer that Mr. Bemba had the "necessary criminal intent" when in 2002 he ordered his armed group, the Mouvement de libération du Congo (MLC), into the CAR to back up embattled leader Ange-Félix Patassé. It said that MLC fighters committed war crimes and crimes against humanity during that mission, with Mr. Bemba "effectively acting as military commander."

He was transferred to the ICC in July 2008 after being arrested by Belgian police. Last September, the Court decided that Mr. Bemba will remain in custody until the start of his trial, reversing an earlier decision to grant him temporary conditional release.

The situation in the CAR is one of four – along with the Darfur region of Sudan, the DRC and Uganda – currently under investigation by the Prosecutor of the ICC, an independent, permanent court that tries persons accused of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes.

Lubanga Trial Website (The Hague)

Monday, 8 March 2010

Congo-Kinshasa: Lubanga Witness Says ICC Agents Paid Him to Tell Lies

Wairagala Wakabi

Judges in the Thomas Lubanga trial today heard how agents of the International Criminal Court (ICC) allegedly paid a Congolese barber who had never been a soldier to lie to the court's investigators that he was a former child soldier.

The agents – or intermediaries – arranged a series of meetings with the man and ICC prosecution investigators in the eastern Congolese town of Bunia and in the Ugandan capital Kampala, today's defense witness told court.

The eighth witness to appear for the Lubanga defense, who started giving testimony today, said at one time he spent two weeks in a Kampala hotel while he and the intermediary had a series of meetings with ICC prosecution investigators. The witness gave evidence with his voice and face distorted to protect him against possible reprisals.

This witness mostly testified in open session but neither his name nor that of the intermediary was mentioned in court sessions that were open to the public. The intermediary was referred to as 'Mr. X'.

Defense counsel Jean-Marie Biju-Duval asked the witness to explain his initial meetings with 'Mr. X'.

"He told me that he was working with ICC," said the witness. "He told me that he needed someone to say something about Mr Thomas Lubanga, so that is what we planned during the meetings: to tell lies."

Mr. Lubanga is on trial at the ICC over the use of child soldiers in inter-ethnic conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) during 2002 and 2003. ICC prosecutors say Mr. Lubanga was the president of the Union of Congolese Patriots (UPC) and the commander-in-chief of its armed wing, the Patriotic Forces for the Liberation of Congo (FPLC).

Some weeks after the witness met 'Mr. X', he met prosecution investigators, first in a nightclub in Bunia, and then in Kampala, Uganda, he told the court.

But before meeting the ICC prosecution investigators, 'Mr. X' coached him and other people about what to tell the investigators. In those coaching sessions, some of which lasted overnight, the witness and other people who were to claim to ICC prosecution investigators that they were former child soldiers were given names of former FPLC commanders which they were told to mention to the investigators.

"What kind of lies had to be planned with Mr X?" asked Mr. Biju-Duval.

"The lie that we had to plan was to say that he [Mr. Lubanga] had enrolled children in the army and that I myself was amongst those children and that I had seen those children. Furthermore that there had been young girls [in UPC's militia]," replied the witness.

"Why did you agree to meet investigators to tell them lies?" Mr. Biju-Duval asked.

"Well, at that time there was money and they bought me drinks and they encouraged me to take action, they gave me some money and I agreed to lie. So that is how those things came to be," the witness said.

“Who gave you money” Mr. Biju-Duval asked.

”It was ‘Mr. X’,” the witness stated.

”Did he tell you anything else? Did he promise anything else?” Mr. Biju-Duval asked.

“He didn’t promise me anything. He didn’t tell me anything, he said I was going to leave Bunia and go to the country of the white people,” the witness responded.

The witness did not say how much money the intermediary paid him. He also did not say what happened after he met ICC prosecution investigators in Kampala and told them that he had been a child soldier. Tomorrow the defense will continue to question this witness.

Earlier today, the seventh defense witness completed giving his evidence. The 25-year-old said he served as the bodyguard of a brother to Bosco Ntaganda, who was reportedly the deputy chief of staff of the FPLC. He testified in full public view, although some parts of his testimony were in closed session.

Radio Netherlands Worldwide

Tuesday, 9 March 2010

Sri Lanka rejects UN war crimes probe

By International Justice Desk



Sri Lanka's President Mahinda Rajapaksa has told UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon that a proposed UN panel to look into possible human rights abuses in Sri Lanka's civil war is unwarranted.

President Rajapaksa claims no such probes have ever been launched in other countries ravaged by civil wars. He warns that an inquiry will be perceived as interference with the general election due on 8 April and will compel Sri Lanka to take measures.

Rights groups and Western governments have been pressing for some kind of accountability for the thousands of civilian deaths in the last months of the island's 25-year war against the Tamil Tiger rebels. The rebels had fought to create a separate state for the island's Tamil minority.

Rights groups have accused Sri Lanka and the rebels of war crimes during the conflict's final phase and have demanded an independent probe into the allegations.