

SPECIAL COURT FOR SIERRA LEONE
OFFICE OF THE PROSECUTOR

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Prosecutor Welcomes Arrest of Taylor Associate on Charges of War Crimes

The Prosecutor for the Special Court for Sierra Leone, David M Crane, has welcomed Friday's arrest of Charles Taylor associate Gus Kouwenhoven by Dutch national police. Mr Crane says his investigators provided extensive assistance to Dutch investigators in this case. Kouwenhoven is charged not just with violating the UN arms embargo on Liberia, but also with war crimes committed against the people of Liberia.

"I have long been aware of Gus Kouwenhoven's criminal activity, his involvement in Charles Taylor's inner circle and direct support for Taylor's war machine," Mr Crane said. "I did not have evidence to find that Kouwenhoven was among those bearing 'greatest responsibility' for international crimes in Sierra Leone, so I could not indict him. However, I instructed my investigators to cooperate with Dutch authorities wherever possible."

"I have always said that the conflict in Sierra Leone and West Africa involved many outside actors, including Europeans and Americans. The trial of Gus Kouwenhoven will shine new light on the role of arms traffickers and international financiers. It will also highlight the abuse of West African resources in fuelling conflict. With this arrest, The Netherlands have struck a major blow against Western profiteers who enrich themselves on the suffering of Africans."

Mr Crane said Charles Taylor's partners in crime in the Revolutionary United Front and Armed Forces Revolutionary Council are now on trial at the Special Court for Sierra Leone, and Gus Kouwenhoven will soon be in a Dutch courtroom.

Charles Taylor remains wanted at the Special Court in Freetown to face his indictment on 17 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity. Mr Crane said when Taylor is delivered for trial, it will be clear that the international community is fully committed to ending the cycle of violence and impunity in West Africa.

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