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 of:

Thursday, 15 December 2005

The press clips are produced Monday to Friday.
If you are aware of omissions or have any comments or suggestions please contact Ibrahim Tommy
Ext 7248
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Kamajor rejects Charles Margai and his Spokesman...

But Special Court says no way

STORY: Safari Musa Yambui

Alius Konduwa, sorcerer of the defunct Kamajor militia currently indicted by the Special Court for war crimes, has rejected the services of Charles Francis Margai and his spokesman, Ansu Lansana, both of who are solicitors for Konduwa at the Special Court.

However, Chief of Press and Public Affairs of the Special Court, Alexandra George told Concord Times Wednesday Margai is still the defense counsel for Konduwa.

"Charles Margai is a court-appointed defense counsel so he can't just tender his resignation. That resignation letter was rejected as the court takes the interest of the client into account. The court has to make the decision of withdrawing a defense counsel," Alexandra said. The Special Court Chief of Press and Public Affairs says the letter written by Charles Margai tendering his resignation is an old one that was discarded.

In letters dated 24th October 2005, 8th November 2005 and 22nd November 2005. [Continued page 3]
Evening Scoop
15 December 2005

Charles Margai to Cross-Examine Pa Kabbah, 3 Others

Quite contrary to a report in one of the local tabloids, that legal luminary Charles Francis Margai has lost his job at the Special Court, Evening Scoop can authoritatively say that Margai is at the moment busy preparing himself to cross examine President Kabbah on January 17th 2006 at the Special Court.

"If I had lost my job, I would not be addressing myself to cross-examining witness for my client" Margai said in a brief telephone call. He referred to the article and letter in the local tabloid as inaccurate and misleading. He expressed surprise over the fact that the newspaper did not cross-check its facts before going to press with a story that has changed over half a month ago.

Counsel Ansu Lansana speaking on the issue said that their client Kamajoh High Priest Kondewa was being unduly influenced by outside forces and as such the trial chamber decided to relieve them at the time. The Trial Chamber acting on second thought, he said, 'long resolved the vex issue as they thought it fit to retain them to continue defending the Kamajohs.'

It may be recalled that in our November 29th edition, (vol.1 No. 41) we reported an exclusive that President Kabbah will have to face the

Contd. Back Page
Cross-examine

From Front Page

Special Court on the 17th January as the first witness for Chief Sam Hinga Norman and others. Former Vice President Joe Demby and former High Commissioner Peter Penfold are the second and third witnesses respectively.

Margai: Still in action
As national tension mounts...

MAJOR DONORS

WARN KABBĀH!

THE EMBASSIES of the United States and France, the British High Commission and the Delegation of the European Commission in Sierra Leone have expressed grave concern about the arrest of Charles Margai, warning that this may have implications for the country's security and stability.

The diplomatic missions also expressed fear that such development may affect the preparations for credible and democratic elections in 2007.

"It is important that all parties and candidates for the elections should be able to prepare for these on an equal basis." 

"We encourage all parties, their leaders and supporters in Sierra Leone to now expeditiously, and according to the due pro-
KABBAH: the last warning from donors?

act moderately and responsibly, and avoid any actions or statements that could heighten tensions,” a joint press release issued by the four missions reads.

MITCHENER: warns success. We remain in close touch with all parties, and continue to monitor developments closely,” the release concludes.
Diplomats' statement annoys Government

Sterry Abdul Koroma
Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Corporation, Mohamed Koroma Wednesday registered government's displeasure over a joint statement issued by the European Union, British High Commission, French and US Embassies in Freetown over the arrest and trial of Charles Margai, leader of the Peoples Movement for Democratic Change (PMDC).

Koroma who was speaking at a press briefing at State House said the international community should allow the police to do their job as the latter has spent a lot of resources on them.

"Some people took the law into their hands and blockaded the convoy of the Vice President," he said.

The joint diplomatic release stated that "we are concerned, as this may have implications for Sierra Leone's security and stability and also for the preparations for credible and democratic elections in 2007..." and continued, "it is important that all parties and candidates for the elections should be able to prepare for these on an equal basis."

The Foreign Minister says the missions that issued the statement should have waited for the appropriate time.

Minister Koroma cautioned the diplomatic missions not to interfere in our state of affairs adding some of those statements do not tell well.
U.S. Should Press Liberian Leader on Taylor's Surrender

14 Dec 2005 14:47:23 GMT
Source: Human Rights Watch

(New York, December 14, 2005) – Condoleezza Rice should urge Liberia's president-elect to call on Nigeria to surrender Charles Taylor to the U.N.-backed war crimes court in Sierra Leone. Human Rights Watch said in a letter released today. Liberian President-elect Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf is visiting Washington this week and is expected to meet with the U.S. secretary of state on Thursday. Johnson-Sirleaf is scheduled to take office on January 16.

"Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf needs to know that she has firm U.S. support to request Charles Taylor's surrender to the Special Court," said Richard Dicker, director of Human Rights Watch's International Justice Program. "This will strengthen her hand to take this crucial step once she takes office."

Former Liberian President Charles Taylor has been indicted by the Special Court for Sierra Leone on 17 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity for his role in contributing to the deaths, rape, abduction and mutilation of thousands of civilians during Sierra Leone's armed conflict. Taylor has lived in exile in Nigeria since August 2003.

Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo has thus far refused to surrender Taylor to the Special Court. At the same time, Obasanjo has indicated that he would consider surrendering Taylor upon a request from a duly-elected Liberian government. While such a request is not necessary, given Taylor's outstanding indictment, Johnson-Sirleaf's position on this issue is likely to prove pivotal to Taylor's surrender.

Human Rights Watch welcomed the Bush administration's recent expressions of support for Taylor's surrender, including Bush reportedly raising the issue with Johnson-Sirleaf in a telephone call at the end of November. Rice's meeting this week with Liberia's president-elect should build on these efforts.

"This visit by Liberia's incoming president gives the Bush administration a prime opportunity to press for justice in West Africa," said Dicker. "Rice should make the most of this meeting."

HRW news
Human Rights Watch Letter to Secretary Rice on Charles Taylor

December 12, 2005

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Secretary Rice,

When you meet with Liberian President-elect Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf this week, we urge you to impress upon her the vital importance of her calling on Nigeria to promptly surrender former Liberian president Charles Taylor to the Special Court for Sierra Leone. Upon taking office on January 16, 2006, President Johnson-Sirleaf will no doubt be confronted with many urgent and competing demands. However, by asking for Taylor's surrender to the Special Court, she would take a giant step forward in helping to establish the rule of law in West Africa. We believe that your comments to her on this issue would be invaluable. Knowing that she is supported by the United States – one of Liberia's key allies – will no doubt assist her in taking this step.

Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo has thus far refused to surrender Taylor to the Special Court, where he is indicted on seventeen counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity, on the basis that Taylor was granted asylum with the international community's support and to prevent civilian casualties in the battle over Liberia's capital in 2003. At the same time, President Obasanjo has indicated that he would consider surrendering Taylor upon a request from a duly-elected Liberian government. While such a request should not be needed given Taylor's outstanding indictment, President-elect Johnson-Sirleaf's position on this issue is likely to prove pivotal to Taylor's surrender.

Human Rights Watch welcomes reports of the U.S. administration's expressions of support for Taylor's surrender to face trial at the Special Court for Sierra Leone, including President Bush and you raising the issue with President Obasanjo when he was in Washington, DC in May 2005 and recently President Bush raising this with President-elect Johnson-Sirleaf in a telephone call. Nigeria's continued harboring of Taylor goes against the strong trend against impunity for perpetrators of serious crimes under international law and is an affront to victims of his alleged crimes. Moreover, as a state party to the 1949 Geneva Conventions and the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, Nigeria has undertaken legal obligations to cooperate with efforts to bring
those who commit serious violations of human rights and humanitarian law to justice. Additionally, consistent reports of Taylor's involvement in de-stabilizing activities in West Africa also suggest that his continued presence in Nigeria could have a devastating impact on civilians in Liberia and elsewhere in the sub-region.

Sierra Leoneans and Liberians alike have emphasized to Human Rights Watch researchers the singular importance of Taylor's trial before the Special Court to achieving justice for serious crimes in Sierra Leone. With the Special Court expected to operate for a limited duration, particularly given its scarce resources, time is of the essence for Taylor to face trial there. Of course, Human Rights Watch also realizes that his trial by the Special Court does not preclude a trial for the many war crimes for which Taylor has been accused in Liberia. We as well urge that in due time Mr. Taylor and others be held responsible for these.

Strengthening the rule of law and stability in West Africa is undoubtedly a priority of the U.S. administration. We hope you will maximize the opportunity presented by your meeting this week to strongly convey to President-elect Johnson-Sirleaf the crucial importance of her calling on Nigeria to surrender Charles Taylor to the Special Court, and upon taking office, the priority she must afford it. Given the longstanding relationship between the United States and Liberia and U.S. involvement in the negotiations that led to Taylor's current stay in Nigeria, your voice on this issue will be critical.

Sincerely,

Tom Malinowski
Washington Advocacy Director

Richard Dicker
Director, International Justice Program

cc: Jendayi Frazer, Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, Barry F. Lowenkron, Assistant Secretary, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor
Royce, Bipartisan Group of Lawmakers Call for former Liberian President Charles Taylor to Be Brought to Justice; Bipartisan, Bicameral Group Contacts Secretary Rice ahead of Thursday’s meeting with Liberian President-Elect Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf

12/14/2005 12:48:00 PM

To: National and International desks, Political Reporter


WASHINGTON, Dec. 14 /U.S. Newswire/ -- Saying they would feel considerably more optimistic about Liberia’s future if former Liberian President Charles Taylor faced his war crimes indictment at the Special Court for Sierra Leone, a bipartisan group of lawmakers led by U.S. Rep. Ed Royce (R-Calif.) suggested Wednesday that Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice make the issue a priority.

In a letter to Secretary Rice that comes in advance of her scheduled Thursday meeting with Liberian President-Elect Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, the legislators ask Rice to make the status of Charles Taylor, who continues to enjoy asylum in Nigeria, a paramount concern of the United States in conversations with the President-Elect.

"It is my hope that Secretary Rice will strongly recommend to President-Elect Johnson-Sirleaf that she call upon the government of Nigeria to transfer Charles Taylor to the custody of the Special Court for Sierra Leone, which has indicted him for war crimes and crimes against humanity," said Royce, who noted that Nigerian President Obasanjo has committed to consider an extradition request made by a democratically-elected Liberian government.

"The present situation provides a unique window of opportunity. Delay only works to Mr. Taylor’s advantage. The time for action is now. For if we fail to act, and Mr. Taylor is allowed to escape justice, history will look poorly upon the international community, and the future of millions of West Africans will be needlessly imperiled," Royce continued.


Royce chaired the House Subcommittee on Africa for eight years (1997-2005). He is currently the vice-chairman of the panel.

Text of the letter to Secretary Rice:

December 13, 2005

Dear Madame Secretary:

On the occasion of Liberian President-Elect Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf’s visit to Washington, we write to respectfully request that you make the status of former Liberian President Charles Taylor a paramount concern of the United States in your conversations with the President-Elect. It is our hope that you will strongly recommend to President-Elect Johnson-Sirleaf that she call upon the government of Nigeria to transfer Charles Taylor to the custody of the Special Court for Sierra Leone, which has indicted him for war crimes and crimes against humanity. The treatment of Taylor is a matter of security and justice for the West African people.
The election of Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf in November promises a new beginning for Liberia. Liberians enthusiastically demonstrated their faith in the democratic process, marking the freest and fairest election in their country's history. In 2003, Congress, on a bipartisan basis, played a leadership role in appropriating $200 million for relief and reconstruction efforts in Liberia. Since that time, Congress has worked to ensure strong funding for Liberia during the appropriations process to see that the basic needs of the Liberian people are met. Many in Congress look forward to continued work with you and the new Liberian government to confront the country's many political, development, and other challenges.

We would be considerably more optimistic about Liberia's future, however, if Mr. Taylor faced the 17-counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity charges that the Special Court has lodged against him. In our view, progress in Liberia, and the international community's considerable investment in the region, is in jeopardy so long as Mr. Taylor is permitted to elude justice and meddle in Liberian politics. Of equal importance, justice must be pursued for the people of West Africa, who were brutalized in the war Taylor is accused of fueling. The United States and other governments have strongly supported the Special Court and its mandate, both financially and politically. This investment risks producing little return, however, if Mr. Taylor remains outside of its reach.

Unfortunately, Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo has resisted numerous calls, including by the United States Congress, to transfer Mr. Taylor to the custody of the Special Court. However, President Obasanjo has committed to consider an extradition request made by a democratically-elected Liberian government. That is why we are asking you to request that President-Elect Johnson-Sirleaf now call for the Nigerian government to deliver Mr. Taylor to the Special Court.

Last month, we were encouraged to see the United Nations Security Council unanimously adopt a resolution, cosponsored by the United States, mandating that the U.N. peacekeeping force in Liberia arrest and transfer Mr. Taylor to the Special Court for Sierra Leone to stand trial if he were to return to Liberia. This resolution -- which emphasized that Taylor's stay in Nigeria is temporary and recognized him as a threat to the region -- is further indication of the international community's strong desire to see Mr. Taylor face the Special Court. Additionally, the European Union, days after President-Elect Johnson-Sirleaf's election, issued a statement that the new Liberian government "must cooperate fully with the international community to ensure that former President Charles Taylor is brought to court." Should Mr. Taylor continue to evade justice, the international community may show reluctance to continue with its strong support for the reconstruction of Liberia and Sierra Leone.

President-Elect Johnson-Sirleaf has a strong democratic mandate to call for Mr. Taylor to be placed in the custody of the Special Court. Such a call by the Liberian President-Elect would send a powerful message that the use of violence to achieve political ends is no longer acceptable in West Africa, and would help usher in a new era for the rule of law in the region.

Madame Secretary, Mr. Taylor must be held accountable. Achieving this end will require decisive and quick action by President-Elect Johnson-Sirleaf, backed by the United States. While some will argue that the "timing is not right," we believe that the present situation provides a unique window of opportunity. Delay only works to Mr. Taylor's advantage. The time for action is now.

Thank you for considering our views.

Sincerely,

/S/

Representative Ed Royce

Representative Henry Hyde

Senator Barack Obama

Senator Lincoln Chafee

Representative Betty McCollum

Senator Patrick Leahy

http://releases.usnewswire.com/printing.asp?id=58145

12/15/2005
Representative Frank Wolf
Senator Jack Reed
Representative Vic Snyder
Representative Sue Kelly
Representative Dianne Watson
Senator Russ Feingold
Representative Chris Smith

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CONCERNED BY TENSION, SECRETARY-GENERAL URGES RESPECT FOR LIBERIA POLL RESULT

The following statement is attributable to the Spokesman for UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan:

The Secretary-General is concerned about the recent disturbances in Monrovia and the tensions resulting from protests by supporters of the Congress for Democratic Change (CDC) against the results of the run-off presidential election of 8 November. The Secretary-General calls on the leaders and supporters of the CDC to respect the internationally certified results of the election and adhere to universally accepted standards of democratic governance and the rule of law.

The leadership of the CDC and their followers should refrain from any violence, which is absolutely unacceptable, and allow any complaints to go through the full legal process set out in Liberia's electoral legal framework. The Secretary-General calls on all Liberians to work together in charting a course for political stability, social and economic development, and the strengthening of the rule of law in their country.

* * * *

For information media • not an official record • also available at http://www.un.org/News
**International Clips on Liberia**

**Liberia: U.N. steps up security in Liberia after riots**

Miami Herald via NewsEdge Corporation

The U.N.'s peacekeeping mission in Liberia said Monday it had stepped up security measures across the capital after police clashed with angry supporters of the loser in the country's first post-war presidential election.

In a late Sunday speech that fired up hundreds of supporters, International soccer superstar George Weah said he would work to stymie the January inauguration of Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, who won the November balloting to become Africa's first elected female head of state. Weah rejects the results, charging fraud.

Angry Weah supporters attacked U.N. and Liberian police afterward in Monrovia's streets, leaving several security force members injured, the U.N. said.

Police detained 40 Weah supporters suspected of rioting, it said. The U.N. Mission blamed Weah's political party for the violence, asking party leaders "to call on their supporters to prevent any further disturbances."

**U.S. Reiterates Fairness of Liberia Election As Sirleaf Arrives for Top-Level**

Washington, DC, Dec 13, 2005 (allAfrica.com/All Africa Global Media via COMTEX) -- Elections in Liberia "were free and fair and the most successful in Liberia's history," a State Department official said Tuesday. "Any opposition allegations of isolated irregularities do not affect the credibility of the outcome," said the official, who cannot be named according to State Department briefing policies.

George Weah, the international soccer star who lost to Ellen Johnson Sirleaf by a margin of nearly 20% in the country's run-off balloting on November 8, returned to Liberia on Sunday reiterating his claim that he is the country's rightful leader.
UN official deplores Cote d'Ivoire's inaction against rights violators
BBC Monitoring International Reports via NewsEdge Corporation

As a prelude to the celebration of International Human Rights Day on 10 December, ONUCI gave a news conference yesterday to present its programme of action and appraise the human rights situation in Cote d'Ivoire.

Mr. Munzu deplored the fact that the government was not doing enough to fight impunity and especially to punish violators of human rights. "When one observes the government, one doesn’t have the impression that something is being done to follow up the findings of our investigations, with the view of taking legal action leading to the punishment of those guilty," he stated.

Local Media – Newspapers

Police Send 38 Rioters to Court
(The News, The Inquirer, The Analyst and New Democrat)

- Briefing news media yesterday, Liberia National Police Inspector-General Joseph Kerkula said that the police had transferred to the court 38 suspected rioters who were arrested in Sunday’s disturbances at the Congress for Democratic Change (CDC) headquarters. He said that the suspects were charged with crimes including assault and terrorist threats.

UN Envoy Denounces Weah’s Declaration as President
(New Democrat and The Analyst)

- In an UNMIL Radio interview this week, Special Representative of the Secretary-General Alan Doss said that the Comprehensive Peace Agreement which makes provision for the process of choosing a new leader has been implemented with the National Elections Commission declaring Madame Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf winner of the election. Mr. Doss added that the process has been endorsed by regional leaders and was observed and certified by national and international observers.

Weah Denies Proclaiming Himself President
(New Democrat and Heritage)

- In a closed door meeting with National Transitional Government Chairman Charles Gyude Bryant yesterday, defeated presidential candidate George Weah denied that he had pronounced himself president, Information Minister William Allen told journalists.

Weah Did Not Officially Meet Ghana’s Leader Say Ghanaian Journalists
(New Democrat)

- Prominent Ghanaian journalists Nana Coomson and Nana Jehu-Appiah told New Democrat via telephone yesterday that as far they knew CDC standard bearer Weah had no official meeting with Ghanaian President John Kufuor contrary to Weah’s recent claim that he had returned from holding discussions with president Kufuor and South Africa’s leader Mbeki regarding his protest against the election result.

CDC to File Injunction against Johnson-Sirleaf’s Inauguration
(The News)

- Appearing on a Sky FM talk show yesterday CDC Secretary-General Eugene Nagbe said that the CDC will file to the Supreme Court an injunction against the
inauguration of President-elect Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, saying her election was fraudulent.

Peacekeepers Perform Major Surgical Operations in Bomi County
(The News and Heritage)
- Months after a strange disease hit Bomi County leaving a number of persons partly and completely blind, an eye specialist at the UNMIL Pakistani contingent level-II field Hospital in the area recently carried out successful operations to restore the sights of 42 Liberians, the contingent Commander Maj.-Gen. Mohammad Farrukh Rashid said at a medal parade in Tubmanburg this week.

Local Media – Radio Veritas (News monitored yesterday at 18:45 pm)

Transitional Government Chairman Meets With Lawmakers
- Transitional Government Chairman Charles Gyude Bryant yesterday met with the National Legislative Assembly and reportedly discussed issues of national security and the riot which took place on Sunday at the compound of the Congress for Democratic Change (CDC).
(Also reported on Star Radio)

Police Send Rioters to Court
(Also reported on Star Radio)

UNDP Country Representative Praises School-Going Ex-Combatants
- Speaking at the launching in Monrovia of the Formal Education component of the Rehabilitation and Reintegration Program, United Nations Development Program Country Director Steve Ursino hailed ex-combatants for taking advantage of the program, saying it would prepare them to face the challenges in rebuilding Liberia. He also lauded the international donors for their continuous support to the Program.
(Also reported on Star Radio)

Workers Union Chide Weah Over His Comment
- In a press statement yesterday, Forestry, Logging and Allied Workers Union of Liberia Secretary-General David Sackor said that Mr. Weah’s declaration of himself as President of Liberia was capable of undermining peace and stability in the country, Star Radio said.

Nigerian National Arrested for Printing Counterfeit Banknotes
- The National Security Ministry yesterday said that it was investigating a 35-year-old Nigerian Amos John for allegedly printing counterfeit banknotes of United States and Liberian dollars, security authorities said yesterday.

Complete versions of the UNMIL International Press Clips, UNMIL Daily Liberian Radio Summary and UNMIL Liberian Newspapers Summary are posted each day on the UNMIL Bulletin Board. If you are unable to access the UNMIL Bulletin Board or would like further information on the content of the summaries, please contact Mr. Jendi Armah at armahj@un.org.