Barry Wallace, Chief of Detention (2003 on Bonthe Island) and (2004-2006 in Freetown), leaves the Special Court today.

PRESS CLIPPINGS

Enclosed are clippings of local and international press on the Special Court and related issues obtained by the Press and Public Affairs Office as at:

Wednesday 13 April 2006

The press clips are produced Monday through Friday. Any omission, comment or suggestion please contact Martin Royston -Wright Ext 7217
Local Press

At Special Court… Massacre, Witness Narrates / Exclusive

Taylor To The Hague: He Who Calls The Piper Pays The Tune / Concord Times

International Press

Cold Shoulders For Taylor Hampers Hague Trial Plan / Financial Times

Country sought for Taylor After Trial / Associated Press

Sweden not prepared to imprison former Liberian President / Xinhua

Liberia: Ghankay Taylor, Hero And Time Bomb-Why Countries Wouldn’t Keep Him? / Liberian Times

Former UN Official Backs Use of Regional Courts for Crimes Against Humanity/ Voice of America

Try Charles Taylor in Sierra Leone, Not The Hague, Says NGO / Voice of America

Residents Divided Over Location of Taylor Trial / IRN

UNMIL Public Information Office Media Summary 12 April 2006 / UNMIL
At Special Court...

*Massacre*

*Witness Narrates*

By Mohamed Kal

Special Court witness TF1-159 yesterday disclosed to the court that members of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), murdered a good number of civilians at Mafondu Village in the Bombali District, North of Sierra Leone. The witness told the court that he was captured by the RUF at Mafondu Village in May 2002 and stayed with them for three months. TF1-159 said he was forced by the RUF to pound large

Contd. page 2

From front page

Massacre

quantity of husk rice and to fetch water at the nearby stream in Mafondu Village on routine basis, and that he was later taken to a village called Matebol in Bombali District. “There I saw RUF rebels amputating the limbs of innocent civilians,” he said.

He further disclosed that he saw RUF rebels murdering a good number of civilians in Rosors Village, Bombali District adding that, a significant number of able bodied men including children under the age of fifteen were lined up for combat training. He concluded that Rosors Village was one of the major training camps established by the RUF and that many young girls were also raped and subjected to all forms of inhuman treatment.
Taylor to The Hague: He who pays the piper calls the tune

I have watched with keen interest the chaos of arguments flying back and forth whether Special Court, indictee, Charles Ghankay Taylor should be tried in Sierra Leone or The Hague. The arguments advanced on either side are indeed instructive. Those in favour of trying Taylor in Sierra Leone argue that the trial in The Hague defies the very purpose for which the Special Court was set up at the first place to set a precedent so that for the first time an international court will sit in the country where crimes against humanity and war crimes were committed and also for violating justice done. A civil society activist calls it for “legitimacy” and “outreach.” Statists further argue that trying Taylor in Sierra Leone does not stop his fighters or “conspirators” from perpetrating whatever disaster plans they may have.

So far, the risk of an accident does not stop one from driving. Great arguments abound! Civil society organizations have come strongly in support of a Taylor trial in Sierra Leone. But interestingly, a few of them are against the trial in Freetown. On the other hand, the argument peddled by the International Community is “security reasons.” They say the Special Court’s statute mandates it to sit outside Sierra Leone. Article 10 between the United Nations and the Government of Sierra Leone on the establishment of a Special Court provides: “The Special Court shall have its seat in Sierra Leone. The court may meet away from its seat if it is necessary for the efficient and expeditious administration of justice, and may be relocated outside Sierra Leone if, circumstances require, and subject to the conclusion of an Heads of Agreement between the Secretary General of the United Nations and the Government of Sierra Leone, on the one hand and the government of the alternative seat, on the other.”

But there are those who still think that Taylor is nothing but a Paper Tiger that has been cowed into submission. “Isn’t he so he was tried so far for his life in Calabar? Any man who is brave and has the capacity to wreak havoc would have done so long before his capture,” a friend joked when the arguments of trying Taylor in Freetown sparked widespread views.

But if we could ask ourselves for a minute by looking beyond our noses, why did Charles Taylor ask for his trial in Sierra Leone and not The Hague? What intelligence has Modou Sarr, President of Liberia, got for her to ask that it would be good for Taylor’s trial to be held in The Hague and not Freetown? While pondering these questions, let’s rephrase upon developments that followed Taylor’s arrest both in Liberia and Sierra Leone.

In Liberia, his party loyalists were rounded up and detained for fear that they may stir violence. But that did not deter them from having a press conference immediately after Taylor’s transfer to the Special Court condemning President’s action and pledging to render their unflinching support, morally, financially and other wise to ensure Taylor is free. Back home in Sierra Leone, our government, a signatory to the Special Court agreement has been conspicuously silent. They are not saying a word as to whether they want the trial held here in Freetown or not. This writer called up Minister of Information and Broadcasting, Prof. Jatunma Kabbah for the government position on the matter.

His response, “it is a legal matter.” Opposition leader, Ernest Bai Koroma has refused to grant an interview on the subject saying, “It is also a matter of law.” But why the silence on the part of the opposition and the government? Is anyone’s guess. Yes, the Special Court is guarded by well-trained and tested Mongolian troops from UNMIL that have the capacity to thwart whatever sinister move(s) may aid Taylor’s escape. But raising the odds on the other side, the Mongolian troops do not have the mandate to secure the borders of Sierra Leone from internal or external aggression. This in effect beg the question when our security forces will play. There has been much talk of training by British ISATTIP troops, but you need to talk to the men on the street to know what image the Sierra-Jungos still has. The police have been making statements of assurances to the public that they are on top of security in the country. But looking back a little down the road, one would not fail, with a sensitive memory, to recall that it was the same police and military that gave vague confidence to the civilian populace during the war years that the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) are rag-tagged boys that could be mastered in the twinkle of an eye. But despite these promises, rebels marched into Freetown. The end result, innocent and poor people who cannot afford a plane fare to run away suffered.

Special Court Prosecutor, Desmond De Silva, said during his meeting with civil society organizations very recently that The Hague option is “just an option” and not certain “concrete.” But to many, it was a done deal that already only needed the rubber stamp approval of the UN Security Council. A dual resolution has been passed and only awaiting rubber stamp to be handed over. So why all the fuss? The Special Court is an international court and show that it is funding it is asking that it should be taken to The Hague. No matter what vague reasons they may advance, it is in the views of some schools of thought and it is straight and simple, he who pays the piper calls the tune.

The crucial lesson here for Africans and Sierra Leoneans in particular is that we should graduate now from the donor aid and sympathies from the West. It is my conviction that the Government may want Taylor to be tried in Freetown, but in the situation where President Bility has asked that the trial be moved to The Hague, our government has no alternative but to comply.

That aside, the arrest and trial of Taylor reveals the double standards of the Westerners. It is most shameful that our Parliament has not passed a bill that prevents this country from extraditing American citizens to the International Criminal Court and it is this same parliament that failed to set up the Special Court for Sierra Leone and in doing so, left the country open to the invitation to the Special Court for Sierra Leone. But sadly enough, with one of the greatest leaders in history, it has been boasted that the trial should be transferred to The Hague. Had Taylor been a Liberal, would the American government have asked for his trial in The Hague? If I may ask.

I don’t give a damn so who cares? Taylor is a trial to end all trials and as such, it cannot be disserved. But as for what he did, let it be said that Taylor has already been convicted even before trial, so what’s the fuss?
**Financial Times**  
13 April 2006

**Cold shoulder for Taylor hampers Hague trial plans**  
By Mark Turner at the United Nations

United Nations plans to move the trial of Charles Taylor, the former Liberian president and west African warlord, to The Hague have run into a new obstacle: no one seems ready to accommodate him afterwards, whether he is found guilty or not.

The Dutch government has stipulated it will not host Mr Taylor's trial without arrangements for his eventual transfer to another country. But both Austria and Sweden, which have agreements to incarcerate international criminals and upon which hopes had rested, have indicated they are not able to take him.

A UN Security Council resolution has been held up until the question is resolved.

John Bolton, the US ambassador to the UN, said there were "active discussions going on with other countries". But UN diplomats are now asking whether the Netherlands might show some flexibility by accepting the trial even before a possible prison for Mr Taylor is identified.

Dirk-Jan Vermeij, Dutch foreign ministry spokesman, said finding another country to accommodate Mr Taylor after the verdict remained a firm pre-condition for hosting the trial.

"We can't be the only country which helps; it's got to be a joint venture. The Dutch government thinks it is doing more than its fair share. Others also have a responsibility," he said.

Mr Taylor is being held by the UN-backed Special Court for Sierra Leone in Freetown. The court's statute says convicts should serve their term in Sierra Leone, but "if circumstances so require" they can be transferred to any country that has an agreement with the separate tribunals for Rwanda or the former Yugoslavia.

There are doubts, however, whether Mr Taylor, who has many ties in the region, can be kept securely in Sierra Leone, which prompted the decision to move his trial to Europe in the first place. There are also fears that his presence could be a source of political instability.

The former Liberian leader has escaped in the past, breaking out of US custody in the 1980s and almost eluding justice last month, when he slipped away from his place of exile in southern Nigeria and headed north, before being apprehended at the border with Cameroon.

Even if found not guilty, Mr Taylor is unlikely to be welcome at home, so another country would be needed to offer him exile. That prospect, said Richard Dicker, head of Human Rights Watch's international justice programme, "is hardly an appetising one for any rule-of-law-supporting state".

Harpinder Adwhal, a special assistant to the Sierra Leone court prosecutor, said housing war criminals was one of the "major issues facing international criminal justice at the moment". She would not say which countries had signed agreements to house the Sierra Leone special court's convicts.

Mr Taylor's lawyer has challenged his transfer to The Hague, saying it could compromise chances of a fair hearing. Mr Taylor has pleaded not guilty to 11 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Mr Dicker said it was "imperative that several states come forward and offer their correctional facilities as sites for [Mr Taylor's] potential long-term incarceration. This is an international problem; members of the international community have a responsibility."

Others argue it would be better to try him in the place where he committed his alleged crimes.
Country sought for Taylor after trial

EDITH M. LEDERER
UNITED NATIONS - The United States and Britain said Tuesday that finding a country to take former Liberian President Charles Taylor after a verdict is reached in his war crimes trial was proving difficult.

The U.N.-backed Special Court in Sierra Leone has requested that Taylor's trial be moved out of West Africa for security reasons. The Netherlands has agreed to host it, but wants assurances that Taylor will be transferred out of the country once a verdict is reached.

Austria and Sweden both turned down requests to take him, U.N. Security Council diplomats said.

U.S. Ambassador John Bolton said the council had "active discussions going on with other countries" and hoped to resolve the problem soon so it could approve the transfer of the trial.

"It's important to get that resolved and I don't anticipate this is going to take a lot more time," he said.

Britain's U.N. Ambassador Emyr Jones Parry suggested the council approve the transfer even if a country can't be found shortly to take Taylor. He said the U.N. resolution should be approved "on the basis that thereafter we would sort out what would happen ... were he to be found guilty."

He said he would like to see the resolution adopted this week.

Taylor faces 11 counts of war crimes stemming from his alleged backing of neighboring Sierra Leone's rebels who terrorized victims by chopping off their arms, legs, ears and lips.

He went into exile in Nigeria in August 2003 as part of a deal that helped end Liberia's 14-year civil war. The Nigerian government agreed last month to hand him over to the court, and he was captured by police trying to slip into Cameroon.

He's now in the penitentiary of the court in Freetown, Sierra Leone.

China's U.N. Ambassador Wang Guangya said Security Council members were also discussing financing for the trial and whether the former Liberian leader constitutes a threat to international peace and security.

Jones Parry said funding for the Sierra Leone Court - which will conduct the trial in The Hague - is a problem, but not a Security Council issue. He and Bolton said they did not expect the financing issue to hold up the adoption of the resolution.

A U.N. appeal for $25 million to fund the court's operations this year has received only $9 million in pledges and $6 million in funding, which is expected to run out soon.

The transfer of Taylor to The Hague is expected to add millions of dollars to the court's costs, though no estimate is yet available.
Sweden not prepared to imprison former Liberian President

Sweden has confirmed it is not prepared now to imprison former Liberian President Charles Taylor if he is convicted of war crimes by a UN-backed court, Radio Sweden reported on Wednesday.

The Netherlands had asked Sweden to accept Taylor as a condition of moving his trial from Sierra Leone to the Hague. But the Swedish Foreign Ministry said national laws currently prevent this.

However, later this year the Swedish parliament is due to vote on a proposal to sign an agreement with the International Criminal Court.

Swedish Foreign Ministry Cabinet Secretary Hans Dahlgren said last week that Sweden and other countries have been asked by the United Nations whether they would be willing to have Taylor serve a prison sentence there.

Dahlgren has declined to reveal which other countries had been contacted, or what Sweden's position was, saying only that the request was being reviewed.

Taylor is accused of being behind war crimes during Sierra Leone's 1991-2002 civil war while he was president of neighboring Liberia.
Liberian Times
12 April 2006

Liberia: Ghankay Taylor, Hero And Time Bomb-Why Countries Wouldn’t Keep Him?

by Thomas Kai Toteh / Contributing Writer

It wouldn’t be a smart thing for someone not to figure out why those countries so technologically advanced are refusing to host Charles Taylor. These countries are afraid, point blank. In the first place those countries that are being pressed on to host Taylor after his trial, aware that this man once broke jail and subsequently disappeared from the US. They wonder why the country that he fled from not can take him back.

He was finally arrested and turned over to the UN-backed Special War Crime Tribunal in Sierra Leone. His arrest and subsequent turn over was preceded by successive mysteries, chaos, conspiracies, and deception. Still, the war crimes suspect behind bars seems to be the world’s most worrisome prisoner. The world’s most powerful and influential nations, United States and Britain are the most worried about where to send Charles Taylor after his verdict.

On the issue of changing Taylor’s trial venue, for security reasons, The Netherlands has agreed to host it; on condition that assurances needed that he will be transferred out of the country once a verdict is reached. Earlier Austria and Sweden both turned down requests to take him.

Right now Britain’s UN Ambassador, Emyr Jones Parry is suggesting that the council approve the transfer and later UN will figure out where to send him was he to be found guilty.

According to Associated Press recent report the United States and Britain said that finding a country where to send Charles Taylor after a verdict is proven difficult.

Leaders of West Africa, the UN-backed War Crime Court, and world leaders, including Britain and the US are not comfortable with the trial and detention of Charles Taylor in Sierra Leone for fear of instability in the region. On the other hand, victims of Charles Taylor’s atrocities want him tried in Sierra Leone.

But the questions many people are today asking are: why the whole world is afraid of Charles Taylor? Why nations of great prison walls don’t want to take him in custody? The answers to these questions may be varied and for various reasons. Charles Taylor has proven over the years he is a force to reckon with.

Charles Taylor fled Liberia with approximately US$m to the United States. The United States of America failed to send him back to face charges of embezzlement after Liberian government’s plea. Instead, he was sent to the Plymouth County House of Correction in Boston. He allegedly broke jail and escaped the US mysteriously.

The United States government did not issue his re-arrest until he jumped in the bush in Liberia to stage his armed struggle. He was actually both Liberian and American fugitive, but still ruled Liberia and Sierra Leone with impunity for 14 years.

Charles Taylor ruled Liberia for 14 years amid cries, blood, and tears. The UN-backed War Crime Tribunal was not able to arrest him despite his arrest warrant. But ironically as LURD and
MODEL rebels besieged him in an attempt to capture him, the world, including the US where he should have been wanted as a fugitive, facilitated his ceremonial departure to Nigeria.

Charles Taylor again proved to the world he can not be taken for granted when the day before his turn over to the Liberian government, got on the run, and headed to the Nigerian border with Cameroon. His plan was to travel all the way to Chad where there presently are serious rebel’s activities. Charles Taylor although concerned people are still figuring out how he left his exile home, would have made it again had it not been for the outburst of massive outcry from almost every sector of the world.

It wouldn’t be a smart thing for someone not to figure out why those countries so technologically advanced are refusing to host Charles Taylor. These countries are afraid, point blank. In the first place those countries being prevailed on to host Taylor after his trial are aware that this man once broke jail and subsequently disappeared from the US. They would wonder why the country that he fled from not takes him back.

About the Author:
Thomas Kai Toteh is a free lance journalist and author of African Child: From Wizard to Refugee. He is journalism major and minor in creative writing at the Old Dominion University in Norfolk, VA. Prior to the civil war in, Totëh was a student activist in Liberia.

Thomas Kai Toteh may be contacted at free3siblings@yahoo.com.
“The Special Court for Sierra Leone shows that no one is above the law, and the rule of law is above the rule of the gun.” That’s the view of the former chief prosecutor of the UN-backed court in Sierra Leone, David Crane, who says the regional war crimes tribunals for Sierra Leone and Rwanda complement the International Criminal Court, based in The Hague.

Crane, who signed the indictment against former Liberian leader Charles Taylor, says the existence of the tribunals will deter atrocities against civilians by those in power: “I cannot see that it will not deter other cynical African leaders who are using their citizens for their own personal, political or criminal gain. This will set an example that if you abuse your citizens, you will pay the price.”

Crane was speaking to English to Africa reporter Angel Tabe, who asked him about the criteria for setting up such tribunals. He said the creation of a tribunal is based on a tragic occurrence, a request by a head of state, or concern on the part of the UN Security Council: “For example, the president of Sierra Leone wrote to the UN secretary-general seeking help, and the Security Council authorized the SG to create the world’s first international war crimes tribunal in West Africa, called the Special Court for Sierra Leone, in August 2000.”

Crane says the court has been successful in keeping off the streets those who created and promoted the conditions under which the atrocities took place. “So we now have models with which we can face down the beast of impunity wherever it hits…. We are already seeing that…there’ll have to be another one set up only for Liberia, for what Charles Taylor and his cohorts did to their own people. The international [regional or ad hoc] tribunal could be the court of first resort. The ICC [in the Hague] is the court of last resort.”

Crane says the courts are very flexible and could be “molded” to deal with any atrocities. He says they will be emerging as needed in parts of the world other than Africa.
Try Charles Taylor in Sierra Leone, Not The Hague, Says NGO
By Joe De Capua
Washington

Although it’s looking more likely that former Liberian leader Charles Taylor will be tried in The Hague, there are still calls for him to stand trial in Sierra Leone. Taylor was indicted by the UN-backed Special Court for Sierra Leone on war crimes charges stemming from the country’s civil war.

Valnora Edwin is the coordinator for the NGO Campaign for Good Governance. From Freetown, she told English to Africa reporter Joe De Capua that it does matter where Taylor faces trial:

“Why I feel that it is important that he is tried in Sierra Leone is we feel closer to the process. We feel that we are part of it. We can go there and hope to see him. Witnesses will be able to look him in the face and tell him exactly what he’s been doing…. We’re seeking justice here. But who are we seeking justice for? The people of Sierra Leone. And if it’s taken away from us, who are we actually seeking the process for? Is it just a satisfaction for the international community?”

Edwin says if there’s concern over security, then the international community should beef up security in Sierra Leone and allow the trial to be held there. He says, “The war in Sierra Leone affected every Sierra Leonean. I also personally suffered in the war. My house was completely burned down. I had to run out with my mom and my family and we didn’t take anything out. And since then nothing has been done to say, ‘Let’s help you in what you’re doing.’”

The Campaign for Good Governance coordinator says much remains to be done for the amputees and the victims of rape and sexual assault.

“You have to keep in mind that for the average Sierra Leonean the person we hear about is Charles Taylor. It’s Foday Sankoh (rebel leader). It’s Mosquita (rebel leader). Foday Sankoh and Mosquita are gone. At least we have Charles Taylor. That is something.”
Residents Divided Over Location of Taylor Trial

Ever since former rebel leader and Liberian president Charles Taylor arrived in Freetown in handcuffs, Sierra Leoneans have debated with renewed vigour the merits and disadvantages of the Special Court and whether it should be in on their doorstep at all.

After Taylor's long-awaited arrest and his deportation to the Court in Sierra Leone last month, the ex Liberian leader will become the first former African president to face trial for war crimes before an international court.

Taylor's trial was to have taken place at the UN-backed Special Court for Sierra Leone, which has indicted him for war crimes in the country's 10-year civil war including responsibility for murder, rape, mutilation and enlisting child soldiers.

But in late March Court officials, citing regional concerns that Taylor is a potential security threat and that the trial could take many months and even years, requested that the trial be transferred to facilities at the International Criminal Court in The Hague.

As the international community hammers out a way to transfer the trial, Sierra Leoneans are divided on the move.

"Taylor must be tried here so the people of this country can hear why he fought or allegedly collaborated with others to destabilise Sierra Leone," member of parliament Abu Kongba told his elected peers earlier this month.

Many lawmakers agreed with Kongba, but said the international community would have to beef up security at the Court. UN peacekeeping forces, with substantial early support from British troops, restored security to Sierra Leone wrestling territory from rebels in 1999 and finally clearing the way for elections in 2002. That peacekeeping force has since been wound down, save for some 250 Mongolian soldiers who remain to provide security for the Special Court.

Out on the streets of Freetown where traders hawk plastic imported goods and women carry their shopping home on their heads, residents would rather have Taylor tried elsewhere than see their peace shaken.

"I don't think our country is safe to try such a person. There are so many ex-combatants presently moving around idly, and most of them are waiting for an opportunity to jump into the bush again," said Mohamed Lamin Sesay, a market trader.

"Taylor's arrest and present detention at the Special Court poses a threat to our country's security. The peace we are now enjoying is fragile. Taylor should be taken away," Sesay added.
A few metres away Sento Karim agrees, "We have suffered enough and we don't want to suffer again. Taylor is crafty and he is a very smart man. He can do anything to get his way. He can even be in prison and arrange a coup!"

"If we continue to keep him here we are exposing ourselves to danger. Holland is a very safe place to keep a fugitive like Taylor," Karim said.

Popular talk radio programmes are alive with the Taylor trial debate. Many of the callers say they want to see Taylor on trial in Sierra Leone so he will come face to face with his victims.

A Sierra Leonean human rights group, Forum of Conscience, says not only the Taylor trial but the entire Court should be pulled out of the country, especially given a charged political scene with elections set for next year. The group's chairman, John Caulker, said last week that the Court's request to move the Taylor trial "confirms the views of most Sierra Leones that the continued presence of the Special Court in Sierra Leone is a security threat to the nation particularly as we approach 2007 parliamentary and presidential elections."

But Alhaji Ahmed Jusu Jarka, head of amputees and war wounded association in Sierra Leone said that whether Taylor is tried in Freetown or The Hague, the most important thing is that he is tried at all. "This is what we have been looking forward to - justice for Sierra Leoneans at last," said Jarka.

Jarka, who is a double amputee - he had both of his hands hacked off by rebels from the Revolutionary United Front, the groups that Taylor is accused of supporting - has one request. Wherever the trial takes place, he wants Taylor to come face to face with some of Sierra Leone's war victims.

"It is important that we [victims] are able to attend the trial. I want to stand in front of him and raise my hands and show him, 'Look, this is what you have done to the people of Sierra Leone'."

[ This report does not necessarily reflect the views of the United Nations ]
**International Clips on Liberia**

AP Alert – Crime Date: April 12, 2006

**Sweden says national laws prevent it from accepting Charles Taylor after his trial**

By MATTIAS KAREN

STOCKHOLM, Sweden_ Sweden confirmed Wednesday that it is not prepared to imprison Liberian President Charles Taylor if he is convicted of war crimes by a U.N.-backed court. The Netherlands had asked Sweden to accept Taylor as a condition of moving his trial from Sierra Leone to The Hague. But Foreign Ministry spokesman John Zanchi said Sweden could make no promises because it does not have a legal agreement to accept prisoners convicted by the U.N.-backed special court.

AP DataStream April 12, 2006

**U.S. and Britain say finding a country to take Charles Taylor after his trial is a problem**

By EDITH M. LEDERER

UNITED NATIONS_ The United States and Britain said Tuesday that finding a country to take former Liberian President Charles Taylor after a verdict is reached in his war crimes trial was proving difficult. The U.N.-backed Special Court in Sierra Leone has requested that Taylor’s trial be moved out of West Africa for security reasons. The Netherlands has agreed to host it, but wants assurances that Taylor will be transferred out of the country once a verdict is reached.

**International Clips on West Africa**

Mail & Guardian Online 11 April 2006

'**We want to see justice**'

Katharine Houreld, Freetown

One month after the rebels chopped off both of Abu-Bakr Kargbo’s hands with an axe, his son was born. “I gave him my name,” said the father of four, gesturing towards the young Abu-Bakr with a stump. “I did not expect to live and I wanted my name to carry on.” Seven years later, the family lives in a small three-room house about half an hour outside the Sierra Leonean capital, Freetown.
Local Media – Newspapers

President Blames External Influences for Spread of AIDS in Liberia
(New Democrat, Heritage and National Chronicle)

- Launching the Acceleration of the Initiative for HIV Prevention in Monrovia yesterday, President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf blamed the spread of the disease in Liberia on external influences, including the various peacekeeping missions.
- She said that some peacekeepers come from countries where the HIV infection rate is much higher than in Liberia. The sexual behavior of Liberians and the contribution of the infection of those who come with the peacekeeping forces account for the increase in the incidence of HIV in the country, she added.

Election Commission Qualifies Candidates for By-Election in Rivercess County
(The News and The Informer)

- The National Elections Commission (NEC) yesterday qualified five candidates to contest in the by-election for Rivercess County District No. 1 seat in the House of Representatives on 13 May, according to an NEC press release. Those qualified are Charles Z. Bartee of the New DEAL Movement, Sampson A. Cephas of the Alliance for Peace and Democracy, William T. Knowlden of the National Patriotic Party, Elizabeth P. Williams of the Unity Party and Uriah T. Jallah, an independent candidate.

UNDP and Truth Commission Sign US$600,000 Agreement
(Heritage)

- The UNDP and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) recently signed in Monrovia an agreement under which UNDP will provide US$600,000 to the TRC, a press release said yesterday. Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General Jordan Ryan and TRC Chairman Cllr. Jerome Verdier signed for UNDP and the TRC respectively. Mr. Ryan indicated that the contribution to the TRC was made possible in collaboration with the Bureau for Conflict Prevention and Recovery and the Danish Government.

Radio Veritas to Reduce Workforce
(National Chronicle)

- The Catholic Church-run Radio Veritas is expected to shortly reduce its workforce by 30 percent due to financial constraints facing the station.

Liberian Ex-Fighters Reportedly Enter Sierra Leone
(The News)

- Security forces in Sierra Leone are reportedly investigating a report in the Sierra Leonean newspaper Standard Times that several former fighters of the National Patriotic Front of Liberia had entered the country from neighboring Guinea.
- According to the report, the surreptitious entry into Sierra Leone of former fighters comes in the wake of the disappearance of a large cache of weapons from a garrison in Churue in eastern Sierra Leone. Two police officers are being interrogated in connection with the disappearance of the weapons.

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

President Johnson-Sirleaf Says Poverty Spreads HIV/AIDS

- President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf said that poverty was one of the key causes for the high spread of AIDS with the youth and women being most affected groups in Liberia.
- Launching the “Acceleration of HIV Prevention for 2006” in Monrovia yesterday, President Johnson-Sirleaf urged Liberians to work harder to combat the disease by sharing information on preventive measures.
The Minister of Health Walter Gwenigale has announced HIV/AIDS was spreading among Liberian teenage boys and girls and called on the international community to assist Liberia to eradicate the disease.

World Health Organization Representative for Liberia Dr. Eugene Nyarko said that the virus has affected the whole of Africa adding that required a concerted effort was to stop the disease from threatening the productive population on of the continent.

(Also reported on ELBS Radio and Star Radio)

Taylor Defense Lawyer Wants Taylor Tried in Sierra Leone

According to journalists covering the Special Court for Sierra Leone, the defense counsel for detained former President Charles Taylor has filed with the Court a motion seeking to have Mr. Taylor tried in Sierra Leone instead of The Hague. Lawyer Karim Khan argued that Mr. Taylor does not have the required finances to foot the bills for his defense lawyers in Europe.

(Also reported on ELBS Radio and Star Radio)

Former Liberian Combatants Reportedly Arrive in Sierra Leone

(Also reported on ELBS Radio and Star Radio)

Elections Commission Clears Candidates for Legislative By-Elections

(Also reported on ELBS Radio and Star Radio)

Taylor Loyalist Says Trial Venue Change is Politically Motivated

Addressing a news conference yesterday, the Taylor-family spokesman Sando Johnson said that the possible transfer to The Hague of former President Taylor was politically motivated and intended to deny him access to his witnesses and family members. Mr. Johnson said that Mr. Taylor would be humiliated and incapable of defending himself at The Hague.

(Also reported on ELBS Radio and Star Radio)

Civil Society Group Holds Dialogue on Democracy

A press release issued in Monrovia yesterday said that a local civil society group, the Liberia Democracy Watch, will today launch a series of discussions to enable government, civil society and the political parties to share ideas on key national issues, including the implications and challenges associated with laying off workers under the civil service reform.

(Also reported on ELBS Radio and Star Radio)

STAR RADIO (News culled from website today at 09:00 am)

Development Group to Repair Major Roads in Southeastern Liberia

In an interview with Star Radio yesterday, the Liberia Community Infrastructure Program Chief of Party Michael Corey said that plans were underway to repair the major highway leading to Rivercess and Sinoe counties in Southeastern Liberia as well as the route to Sanniquellie in Nimba County.