SPECIAL COURT FOR SIERRA LEONE
PRESS AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE

The Registrar, being interviewed by the BBC World Service on Thursday, 1 June 2006.

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

Friday, 2 June 2006

Press clips are produced Monday through Friday.
Any omission, comment or suggestion, please contact
Martin Royston -Wright
Ext 7217
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Liberian president searches Europe to jail Taylor

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challenge to get the proceedings under way,” said Johnson-Sirleaf and opined that a European Union state would come forward to jail him if found guilty.

She pointed out that so far, Denmark, Austria and Sweden have rejected requests to jail Taylor and that a search for a country that will appear to take Taylor as prisoner if convicted have stalled.

Story: Ibrahim Seibure

Liberian president Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf during her recent visit to the United Kingdom expressed optimism that European countries should offer to accept former president Charles Taylor as prisoner if convicted by the United Nations backed Special Court for war crimes.

Johnson-Sirleaf who was on an official, three-day visit to Britain stated that Sierra Leone court has, however, asked the Netherlands-based International Criminal Court to host the trial, fearing that Taylor’s trial in an African territory might revive regional instability.

“I think a country will rise to the

Cont. page 3
THE SPECIAL COURT AND ‘ACCOUNTABILITY’

Every international body created to adjudicate crimes of war or crimes against humanity has articulated a goal of achieving “accountability”, as has the Special Court for Sierra Leone. As the trials of the Special Court progress, it is important that we examine this goal and the possible outcomes of the Special Court’s jurisprudence.

The aim of achieving “accountability” has been articulated throughout the history of international criminal justice. It was reflected in the Nuremberg Charter of 1945 and in subsequent developments in international criminal law, such as the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and the enabling statutes for the Criminal Tribunals for Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia. In a criminal law context, accountability usually means identifying a crime, finding its culprit and imposing punishment.

On the surface, this seems quite simple. An examination of the goals of criminal punishment is in order. Punishment is generally thought to have 2 basic aims; retribution and deterrence. Under retribution theories, it is believed that principles of morality or natural law dictate that those who commit crimes deserve to be punished for their acts. This is usually expressed as a matter of right and wrong. It’s not exactly revenge, but it is not that far from it either. A retributive would believe that because the crimes dealt with by the Special Court are so serious, the punishment for those convicted should be equally severe.

WRONG

Deterrence theories are not based on ideas of moral right and wrong. They are utilitarian and aim to impose punishment in order to prevent those convicted (and others) from committing similar crimes in the future.

These two goals will likely play an important role in the punishment that might one day be meted out by the Special Court. However, by themselves, will they be enough to achieve the international community’s often-articulated goal of accountability?

The Merriam-Webster English Dictionary defines accountability as “1. Subject to giving an account; convic ted of the crime. The context of his crime is probably not important to holding him or someone else, subject to account or explaining it.

If he is properly convicted society (and the criminal justice system) is satisfied that accountability was achieved. This would be an easy case. But what about other more complex types of crime? What if a committed during the war did not occur in a vacuum, and were not merely a series of isolated criminal acts. Rather, the conditions that gave rise to the war developed over years; years of grinding poverty and other sources of strife. To achieve the accountability, that is, the goal of the international community, as expressed by its creation of the Special Court, are dealing with those causes not as important as punishment of individual perpetrators? If they are then relying on retribution and deterrence is a serious error in judgment. No act or decision of the Special Court, nor any other body of criminal justice, will aid in the economic development of Sierra Leone or alleviate the oppressive want that provided such a fertile ground for violence.

The international community has high hopes that we will one day achieve accountability through the opinions of the Special Court and this is a valid desire. It is unlikely that any tribunal would ever be able to render the war explicable, since some events may simply be too terrible to be explicable by law, religion or any other doctrine. But there may at least, be a good chance of holding people answerable for their actions. In that sense, deterrence and retribution might be achieved. Yet if one concludes that the conditions that gave rise to the war in Sierra Leone have not changed significantly, as some contend, perhaps the focus of the international community in post-war settings must be re-examined.

Perhaps a more expansive definition of accountability should be adopted which focuses as much on identifying as well as in examining and overcoming the conditions that facilitated the violence, as it does on the punishment of the individuals responsible.

GUEST WRITER/ Nicholas Mitchell

These two goals will likely play an important role in the punishment that might one day be meted out by the Special Court. However, by themselves, will they be enough to achieve the international community’s often-articulated goal of accountability?

ANSWERABLE. 2. capable of being accounted for; EXPLAINABLE.”(Emphasis added).

Wrong

Deterrence theories are not based on ideas of moral right and wrong. They are utilitarian and aim to impose punishment in order to prevent those convicted (and others) from committing similar crimes in the future.
Why the double standard in the judiciary

BY UNISSA BANGURA

The Law Officers Department, the main seat of justice, is been accused of playing double standard in matters brought before court.

According to investigation carried out by Standard Times, many people are complaining that the law officers department is entertaining the provision for a counter reports after an original report has been made by a complainant.

Sources say such counter report has created a lot of cases being extended into several counts with the same charges.

A lawyer who preferred anonymity confided to this paper that matters with original reports should be given preference other than allowing them to be tried simultaneously. He called on the law officers department to revisit such law and find a way for amendment.

Concerns were also raised on the selection of magistrate to which certain state matters were referred.

Court sources say even to distributing cases to the various magistrates is another area of concern. Very recently, the law officers department preferred changes against an American National and three Sierra Leonean for conspiracy to engage in matters that are prejudicial to the interest of the state contrary to law.

In the same charge sheet, the accused persons were also charged for inspecting the entire special court complex, which was described as a prohibited area. The matter was originally mentioned for hearing at the Freetown Magistrate court No.1A, before magistrate Adrian Fisher.

During the first appearance, there was some serious legal argument between the principal state counsel, Mr. Gerald Sagie and defence lawyer Mr. Africandus Sesay on the issue that the accused persons were charged under laws, which are inoperative in our law books.

The argument between the two parties lasted for about two hours until the matter was adjourned for ruling.

In his ruling the other day, magistrate Fisher ruled in favour of the defence, noting that since the law under which the accused persons were not operative in the law books of this country, he has no alternative but to acquit and discharge all the accused persons.

Many people including senior lawyers thought that was the end of the matter, but to the surprise of the court, the accused persons were rearrested and charged to court under the same charges and this time, the accused persons were dragged to the Freetown magistrate court No.1 prosecuted by the law officers department.
NEXT EDITION

Flooding the judiciary with 419 judges, suppressed Tuboku-Metzger of the Law School and forced Gelada King to resign as Appeal Court Judge - Then the problems of the judiciary will be solved. A flawed decision. Read Standard Times Monday Edition for details.
Associated Press
Thursday, 1 June 2006

Sweden OKs Law to Take Liberia's Taylor
Swedish lawmakers approve law that would clear way to imprison Charles Taylor if he's convicted

STOCKHOLM, Sweden, Jun. 1, 2006
By KARL RITTER Associated Press Writer

(AP) Swedish lawmakers have approved a law that makes it possible for the Scandinavian country to imprison former Liberian President Charles Taylor if he is convicted of war crimes by a U.N.-backed tribunal, government officials said Thursday.

The decision by the Swedish Parliament could remove a major obstacle that has stalled the former African warlord's trial in Sierra Leone. Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Nina Ersman said Sweden had not yet officially decided whether it would accept a request to take in Taylor. Such a step would need final approval from the government.

The U.N.-backed court has asked the Netherlands-based International Criminal Court to host the trial, fearing Taylor's trial in Africa might revive regional instability. The Netherlands agreed to the request on condition that a third country agrees to jail Taylor if he is convicted.

Sweden had previously rejected the request to take Taylor, saying Parliament had not approved a special agreement with the Sierra Leone court that would make it possible for him to serve a possible sentence in the Scandinavian country. Besides Sweden, Denmark and Austria had previously rejected requests to accept him.

The legal obstacle in Sweden was removed Wednesday when Parliament approved such an agreement with the court that takes effect July 1. The measure was approved without a vote because nobody opposed it, Parliament spokeswoman Christina Green said. The decision initially went unnoticed.

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

He was transferred into the custody of the Sierra Leone court in late March from exile in Nigeria. While the charges refer only to Sierra Leone, Taylor is accused of fomenting violence in his homeland and elsewhere in West Africa has well.
In London on Wednesday, Liberian President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf told reporters that holding the trial in west Africa would be risky for her fledgling government. Taylor still has supporters in Liberia, some of whom won seats in parliament in elections held at the same time as the presidential vote she won last year.

Sweden has agreements on jailing war criminals with other U.N. courts.

Former Bosnian Serb president Biljana Plavsic, the most senior political figure to be convicted by the U.N. tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, is serving an 11-year sentence in a high-security prison west of Stockholm.

Miroslav Deronjic, the top wartime authority in the eastern Bosnian city of Bratunac during the 1992-1995 Bosnian war, was transferred from The Hague to Sweden last year, and is serving a 10-year sentence for ordering the destruction of a Muslim village.

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Decision on Taylor trial venue rests with head of Special Court

FREETOWN, 1 June (IRIN) - The new president of the UN-backed war crimes court in Sierra Leone, Justice George Gelaga King, is expected in the coming days to make the final call on whether to try former Liberian president Charles Taylor in Sierra Leone or The Hague in the Netherlands.

Taylor faces charges of war crimes in Sierra Leone including murder, rape and providing financial support for Sierra Leone rebel fighters who terrorised civilians, hacking off their hands and feet.

If Justice King decides to follow in the footsteps of his predecessor and push for Taylor's trial to be moved to The Hague, the indictments will still be served under jurisdiction of the Sierra Leone Special Court but will use the high security facilities of the International Criminal Court in The Hague.

Or, King could make an about turn and lobby to keep the landmark trial in Sierra Leone.

This week the Appeals Chamber of the Special Court dismissed a motion forwarded by Taylor's lawyers asking the court president to withdraw his predecessor's request to shift the trial to The Hague. Taylor's lawyers argue that their client will not get a fair trial there.

The Court dismissed the motion ruling that "at this stage of the proceedings, matters relating to the venue of the Taylor trial are exclusively within the administrative and diplomatic mandate of the president".

The location of Taylor's trial has divided Sierra Leoneans. Some are hungry to see an African president brought to justice on African soil, while others fear that his presence could destabilise the country and even the whole sub-region.

Also this week the head of the Nigerian Armed Forces, General Martin-Luther Agwai said the Nigerian army would give evidence against Taylor if invited to do so by the Special Court.
Decision on Taylor trial venue rests with head of Special Court

By AND network .com

AND Africa - The Sierra Leone war crimes court is expected to rule on whether to try former Liberian president Charles Taylor in the country or The Hague within a few days.

The new president of the UN-backed court, Justice George Gelaga King is expected to make the final call. This comes after the Appeals Chamber of the Special Court dismissed Taylor’s application to withdraw his predecessor’s request to shift the trial to The Hague. Taylor faces war crimes charges related to Sierra Leone’s bloody 10 year civil war.

The Nigerian Armed Forces chief, General Martin-Luther Agwai has promised he would give evidence against Taylor if asked to. The Nigerian army was involved in quelling the Sierra Leone civil war under ECOWAS - the very same civil war Taylor is accused of having funded and fuelled in exchange for diamonds.
Liberian leader looks to Europe to jail Taylor

LONDON — Liberian President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf said yesterday that, despite some rejections, she was sure a European state would offer to jail her predecessor if he was convicted of war crimes.

Johnson-Sirleaf is on an official, three-day visit to Britain.

Former Liberian president Charles Taylor is awaiting trial before a United Nations-backed war crimes tribunal in Sierra Leone for allegedly funding rebels that hacked off people’s limbs and burned villages during Sierra Leone’s gruesome 10-year civil war.

The Sierra Leone court has, however, asked the Netherlands-based International Criminal Court to host the trial, fearing Taylor’s trial in African territory might revive regional instability.

The Netherlands has agreed — on condition a third state agrees to jail him if he is convicted.

So far, Denmark, Austria and Sweden have rejected requests to jail Taylor, and the search for a country that will appears to have stalled.

“I think a country will rise to the challenge to get the proceedings under way,” said Johnson-Sirleaf when asked whether she thought a European Union state would come forward to jail him.
The analyst
Thursday, 1 June 2006

Taylor Suffers 3rd Setback

Court Ruled Counsel’s Motion “Inadmissible”
How Many More Obstacles To Justice?

First it was the Special Court in Freetown does not have jurisdiction over a sitting head of state, then it was Taylor
does not recognize the Special Court; now it is Taylor cannot be tried outside Sierra Leone.

The first two contentions were thrown out the window by the Trial Chamber 11 on
grounds that trials for crimes against humanity assume international jurisdiction
and therefore know no borders and political statuses.

Now it is no longer jurisdictional question and the court is arguing about
procedure and the prerogative of its president.

The question many are asking now is, “How much more tussle about procedure
and venue before Taylor’s guilt or innocence is established?”

The Appeals Chamber of the Special Court for Sierra Leone has ruled “inadmissible” against the stay of venue
motion filed by lawyers representing Charles Taylor, supposedly raising the bar for justice once again.

The ruling also raised fears amongst Taylor’s supporters that justice may be sacrificed in the rising cloud of formalism
that ignores building anxiety and raging suspicion of conspiracy.

The Chamber said in its May 29 ruling that at this stage of the proceedings, matters relating to the venue of the
Taylor trial were exclusively within the administrative and diplomatic mandate of the President of the court.

The Chamber noted that prior to a decision being made; any questions relating to the activities of the president of the
court concerning the change of venue should be directed to his office and not to the Trial or Appeals Chamber.

“Ithe Procedures for changing the venue of a trial are set out in the Agreement between the United Nations and the
government of Sierra Leone on the establishment of a Special Court for Sierra Leone and the Rules of Procedure
and Evidence,” the Appeals Chamber said.

It said that without prejudging the appropriate procedure to be followed, it was clear that these procedures
necessarily entail the type of preliminary diplomatic steps taken by the President and reported in the press release.

It then ruled further, “Neither the Statute, nor the Rules authorize a Chamber to intervene in the administrative nor
diplomatic functions entrusted to the President.”

In the opinion of the court even the residual inherent power of the Chambers to ensure the fairness of the trial could
not be invoked to support the declaratory and prospective relief sought by the defense in the instant case.

It noted that this was so because the court did not take any decision that would bring the fairness of the trial or the
right to fair trial into question.

Arguing that the motion of the defense counsels prejudiced the court by suggesting through its action that the
president of the court discriminated against the accused even though no request for stay of venue was brought him,
the Trial Chamber 11 noted that motion raised objections based on lack of jurisdiction pursuant to Rule 72 (b) (i).

“The motion is inadmissible because it seeks to interject the Trial Chamber, and now the Appeals Chamber, into the
administrative and diplomatic functions of the President. Neither the Trial Chamber nor the Appeals Chamber is
authorized to take the actions sought by the defense,” the Chamber said in its ruling.

Ex-Pres. Charles Taylor
Defense Counsel of Taylor, Karim Khan, had filed a motion with the Trial Chamber 11 which was later transferred to the Appeals Chamber seeking that no change of venue from the seat of the Special Court be made to the seat in Freetown without affording the defense for Mr. Taylor the right to be heard.

The defense counsel had also requested that the President of the court withdraw the request to use the ICC facilities in the Netherlands in the trial of Charles Taylor.

The prosecution opposed this motion on ground that the defense counsels committed procedural error by taking to the Trial and then Appeal Chamber issues for decision that lie with the president of the court.

When Taylor was yanked from a Nigerian border village in late March this year and flown handcuffed in a UN helicopter to Freetown, both critics and supporters of Taylor’s trial in Sierra Leone agreed that the point of convergence would be free, fair, transparent, and speedy trial for Taylor.

Critics, following this understanding, believe the trial should have been underway three months after Taylor, considered the biggest quarry for the court, was ringed and arraigned in a trial that drew the attention of the world as the beginning of the eradication of impunity in Africa.

With each passing day, observers say, original skeptics are beginning to see their worst fears emerging especially when issue that were not previously contentious are raising their heads.

“Venue was never an issue. They and supporters first toyed with the idea of moving the case to The Hague apparently to avoid the humiliation of a former Liberian president being tried under Sierra Leonean jurisdiction. There was opposition to that suggestion and for a while, arguments for trial jurisdiction took a large chunk of the debate.

Taylor has since agreed to be tried in Sierra Leone, something the prosecution always wanted. But just then it is the turn of the court to take up the argument of Taylor. Isn’t this suicidal for a court that is cash-starved?” asked Elijah Govah of the Rehab Community of suburban Monrovia.

Govah believes that with each passing day, the argument that the trial would have been speedy was losing steam and that with that not only was despair setting in for Taylor supporter but also that proponents of his trial were losing face.

“How many more hurdles to cross before the trial finally starts?” wondered another observer who is anxious to see Taylor behind bars for crimes against humanity.

While superficially the problem of commencing the trial rests with legal tussle about procedure and jurisdiction, the special court that is supported from voluntary donations seems obsessed with attaining international character through the physique of its base rather than the speed and quality of its opinions.

Court officials in Freetown seem not bothered that time may be a factor in giving credibility to the outcome of the trial which is already disputed before it is decided.

Barely six months after its registrar and prosecutor arrived to take up their assignments, has the Special Court for Sierra Leone moved its registry and administrative branches into its new site in the center of the capital, Freetown.

“The physical building of the court is moving ahead rapidly, particularly the prefabricated offices for the various branches of the Court and the renovations of the buildings that will be the detention facility,” court spokesman David Hecht told IRIN recently.

The court’s facilities were originally situated on a rocky, bushy 11.5 acre area provided by the government in the New England area of the city.

“We are going to be operating in a construction site for the next six months. But we are on our way to becoming an international criminal court on schedule to complete our mandate,” says Court Registrar, Robin Vincent who seemed to care a hint that radicals may use Taylor’s prolonged detention to plunge the subregion in chaos.

The Special Court has a three year mandate with a US$60 million price tag to which no nation is committed. It was created through an agreement between the United Nations and the Government of Sierra Leone.

With a sagging economy, Sierra Leone has since proven incapable of providing support for the court and with just three years to complete its work, the anxiety to get started lest the time expires with more steps to go, needs no
Since their arrival, the top officials of the court had been operating from temporary offices in Freetown with the Registry housed in a Bank of Sierra Leone building and the Prosecutor elsewhere.

Staffs for the two departments are also being installed with the overall number of employees of the Court set to increase from seventy to over two hundred in the coming months.

The final phase of construction will be the Court House. The Registry is currently tendering bids for the design and the building is to be complete mid-2006. It will be the center piece of the Special Court complex and a landmark for the city of Freetown, says Hecht.

Accommodation is however the first challenge the court faces. Anxious Sierra Leoneans quickly want it to commence the lengthy process of bringing to book those believed to have been responsible for atrocities during the war, IRIN has learned.

But officials insist they are moving methodically: “We cannot say when trials start until we have indictments and indictments are not something one usually announces in advance.

Certainly the Prosecutor and his team are conducting investigations but they have not come out with details yet regarding their findings of suspected mass grave or other things,” Hecht told IRIN.

Last September, the court cordoned off a suspected mass murder site, dating back to Sierra Leone’s civil war, around a flooded diamond mining pit in Tombudu, in the eastern district of Kono. Local residents believe that bodies of hundreds of civilians were dumped there after they were killed during an attack on the village in 1998.

At the time Chief of Investigations, Al White, showed reporters bones and other remains at the edge of the pit, which, he said, were clearly human. The site was the first alleged crime scene officially cordoned off by Sierra Leonean and international investigators working for the court.

However there were also signs of alleged atrocities committed elsewhere in the village. White showed reporters a house in the village that contained numerous human skulls and other remains, but said the site had been tampered with and was of limited use to investigators.

Other mass graves and killing sites identified in a preliminary assessment by an Argentine team of forensic experts are in the districts of Kambia, Port Loko, Kailahun and Kono.

The special court judges were sworn in during December, in a high profile event in Freetown. They included eight trial and appeals judges - three appointed by the government of Sierra Leone and five appointed by the UN Secretary General.

They are Renate Winter from Austria, Geoffrey Robertson from England, Pierre Boutet from Canada, Rosolu John Bankole Thompson of Sierra Leone, Benjamin M. Iteo from Cameroon, Hassan B. Jallow of The Gambia, Emmanuel O. Ayoola of Nigeria and George Gelaga King of Sierra Leonean.

Geoffrey Robertson and Bankole Thompson were elected by their colleagues as president of the court and presiding judge of the trial chamber, respectively. Officials say the court is different from the other international tribunals for Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia.

“The Court is located in the country where the crimes took place and its jurisdiction goes beyond international crimes against humanity to also include certain crimes committed under Sierra Leonean law,” the officials said. The court is intended to work side by side with Sierra Leone’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC).

The court’s chief prosecutor, David Crane, said in December that the Court and TRC would operate independently, but both would work towards the ultimate goal of addressing respect for human rights and accountability for those who committed abuse during the war. TRC testimonies, he added, would not be used by the Court.

“While the TRC will function more as a public forum for people to tell their stories and express their grievances without power to punish, the Special Court will run as a tribunal that will seek to punish those most responsible for violations of international,” Crane said.
Not everybody is convinced. Mohammed Bangura, a hotel employee in Freetown said he did not expect “anything much from the Court.”

Officials however countered this. A few members of the national amputees association - a grouping of Sierra Leoneans who suffered amputations during the war - last month also said they would not cooperate with the court.

They argued that they had been ignored by both the government and the international community, hence their decision to denounce the court.

“There is a strong feeling that there has to be some accountability for what happened,” Hecht told IRIN. “Most people are quite aware that the court is not going to be looking at each individual, but rather at those who bear the greatest responsibility.”

However the court does that, the nagging question which is advised by the death of fellow indictee, Foday Sankoh, under the detention of the Special Court is, “When?”
Judge declines Taylor's bid for new venue

Freetown - The Special Court for Sierra Leone has dismissed an application by former Liberian president Charles Taylor challenging a bid to change his trial venue, a court official said on Wednesday.

Taylor's lawyer Karim Khan filed a motion in April asking that the court's president either withdraw his request to transfer the trial to The Hague or that the defence be allowed to comment on the issue before a decision is reached.

The appeals chamber of the United Nations-backed court dismissed the motion on Monday on grounds that it sought to interject the trial and appeals courts into the "administrative and diplomatic functions of the president (of the court)".

The ruling handed down on Monday said the procedure for change of venue is a matter spelt out in an agreement between the United Nations and the Sierra Leone government.

"Neither the statute nor the rules authorise a chamber to intervene in the administrative and diplomatic functions entrusted to the president."

"At this stage of the proceedings, matters relating to the venue of the Taylor trial are exclusively within the administrative and diplomatic mandate of the president," said the ruling, a copy of which was obtained by AFP on Wednesday.

The judge of the appeals court who handed down the ruling, Justice George Gelaga King, is now the president of the Special Court effective last week.

The Special Court for Sierra Leone, established in 2002, has requested that Taylor's trial be moved to the International Criminal Court (ICC) in The Hague on security grounds.

A much-awaited green light from the UN Security Council on the shifting of the trial has been stalled by lack of takers to jail Taylor if he is convicted of war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Austria, Denmark and Sweden have turned down requests to imprison Taylor, who has pleaded innocent.

A court source told AFP that King will decide in the next few days whether to follow through his predecessor's request that the trial be taken to The Hague or order that it be held in Freetown.

Once one of Africa's most feared warlords, Taylor is accused of inflicting some of the worst violence on civilians ever committed on the continent.

The 58-year-old former rebel chief is considered to be the single most powerful figure behind a series of civil wars in Liberia and neighbouring Sierra Leone between 1989 and 2003, which between them left around 400 000 people dead. - Sapa-AFP
Gaddafi slams Nigeria for handing over Taylor

TRIPOLI (Reuters) - Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi assailed Nigeria on Thursday for handing over former Liberian President Charles Taylor for trial, saying the move set an unacceptable precedent that threatened all African leaders.

Nigeria deported Taylor on March 29 to Liberia, which promptly sent him on to Sierra Leone where he awaits trial on 11 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity for backing rebels during Sierra Leone's 1991-2001 civil war.

The United Nations is seeking to move the trial to the International Criminal Court in the Hague amid security fears, but the process has been stalled as no third country has yet volunteered to act as Taylor's jailer if he is convicted.

Gaddafi said handing Taylor to the ICC would undermine Africa's credibility and seriously harm Nigeria, which could no longer be considered a haven.

"This also means that every (African) head of state could meet a similar fate -- this sets a serious precedent," he said.

Gaddafi has sought a leading role in African disputes, trying to mediate a peace deal in Darfur and soothe tensions between Sudan and Chad, and each time fiercely opposing outside intervention in the continent's affairs.

"Taylor must stay in Nigeria without facing any trial and without being handed over to any tribunal because there is absolutely no right for that," the Libyan leader said.

"When I talk about Taylor I might not agree with his policies but a principle should be applied," he added.

Gaddafi was addressing a gathering of heads of state of the Community of Sahel-Saharan States, including Liberia's new President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, who supports moving Taylor's trial to the Hague.

Nigeria had given Taylor asylum in 2003 as part of a deal to end Liberia's own 14-year civil war.

Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo later came under intense international pressure to deport Taylor to Sierra Leone to stand trial, but he insisted he would only hand over Taylor to an elected Liberian government if it made such a request.

Johnson-Sirleaf, Liberia's first elected postwar president, asked Obasanjo in early March to hand over Taylor, but she wanted him sent to Sierra Leone. Nigeria and Liberia were at odds over what to do with Taylor for several weeks.

At the time, human rights activists accused Nigeria of prevaricating, precisely because Obasanjo was reluctant to set a precedent of sending an African head of state to face trial.
In the end, Taylor escaped from his asylum residence in southern Nigeria, in circumstances that have never been explained by the Nigerian authorities, and was captured the following day trying to cross into Cameroon.

Only then did Nigeria fly him to Liberia, where U.N. forces immediately transferred him to Sierra Leone.

Taylor led an uprising in Liberia in 1989 that turned into a civil war that spilled across borders, killed a quarter of a million people and spawned a generation of child soldiers.

Libya backed Taylor and supplied his forces with arms during the 1980s after he escaped from a jail in the United States.

But since then the North African country has abandoned support for revolutionary movements and mended relations with the United States, which restored full diplomatic relations with Libya this month.

(Additional reporting by Estelle Shirbon in Abuja)
New law clears way for Taylor's jailing

STOCKHOLM -- Swedish lawmakers have approved a law that makes it possible for the country to imprison Charles Taylor, former Liberian president, if a UN-backed tribunal convicts him of war crimes, government officials said yesterday.

The decision by the Swedish Parliament could remove a major obstacle that has stalled the former African warlord's trial in Sierra Leone. Nina Ersman, Foreign Ministry spokeswoman, said Sweden had not decided whether it would accept a request to take in Taylor. Such a step would need final approval from the government.

The UN-backed court has asked the Netherlands-based International Criminal Court to host the trial, fearing Taylor's trial in Africa might revive regional instability. The Netherlands agreed to the request on the condition that a third country agrees to jail Taylor if he is convicted.

Sweden rejected the request to take Taylor earlier, saying Parliament had not approved a special agreement with the Sierra Leone court that would make it possible for him to serve a possible sentence in Sweden. Denmark and Austria also rejected requests to accept him.

The legal obstacle in Sweden was removed Wednesday when Parliament approved such an agreement with the court that takes effect July 1. The measure was approved without a vote because nobody opposed it, said Christina Green said, Parliament spokeswoman. The decision initially went unnoticed.

Kerstin Olsson, a spokeswoman for the foreign minister, referred to Sweden's previous rejection of the request, but would not say whether the government would alter its stance because of Parliament's decision.
http://www.douglasfarah.com (Author’s Website)
Thursday, 1 June 2006

Why Gaddafi is so Afraid of Charles Taylor

By Douglas Farahs

It is interesting to see that Libyan dictator Muammar Gaddafi is slamming Nigeria for turning Charles Taylor over to face justice. News reports quote Gadaffi as saying such a move sets a dangerous precedent for the rest of Africa.

“This also means that every (African) head of state could meet a similar fate—this sets a serious precedent,” he said. Indeed it does. If one butcher goes down, others may follow. For Gaddafi, that must be a terrifying prospect, as well as for many others.

Gadaffi, more than any other leader except perhaps Blaise Campoare in Burkina Faso, has good reason to fear Taylor’s testimony. It was Gaddafi who trained not only Taylor and his thugs for Liberia, but also Foday Sankoh and other leaders of the Revolutionary United Front in Sierra Leone, Laurent Kabila in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Campaore’s troops who assassinated president Thomas Sankara in Burkina Faso, and on and on.

But it was not just the training Gaddafi provided. He provided the tons of weapons and ammuniton that stoked the wars that claimed hundreds of thousands of lives and destroyed most of an entire sub-region that is still reeling from his ego-driven destruction.

He established the World Revolutionary Headquarters in the desert where he trained would-be revolutionaries from Latin America, Africa and Asia. The facilities were, in the words of Prof. Stephen Ellis, “the Harvard and Yale of a whole generation of African revolutionaries.”

Gaddafi continued his support of Taylor, to the tune of tens of millions of dollars, when Taylor’s forces were at their most vicious. Taylor would fly to meet with Gaddafi or other senior Libyan leaders two or three times a month, right through the war and his own 1997 election as president.

One of the great shortcomings of the Special Court for Sierra Leone, in my opinion, was that Gaddafi was not indicted along with Taylor on charges of crimes against humanity. They would have been fine cellmates. The Court argued that its mandate was to try those most responsible for atrocities after Taylor’s 1997 election, and that, by then, Gaddafi no longer fit the criteria.

Washington’s decision to take Gaddafi off the list of terrorist sponsors is also hard to understand given his continuing mischief in Africa, from Zimbabwe to Equatorial Guinea.

Perhaps these are legally correct interpretations of the law, but it seems to me both let Gaddafi off too lightly for his role in massive crimes against humanity. It is nice, however, to see him scared enough to defend the indefensible.
UNMIL Public Information Office Media Summary 1 June 2006

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

International Clips on Liberia

THE INDEPENDENT 06/01/2006 01:55:05

Johnson-Sirleaf outlines her hopes for Liberia
Anne Penketh, Diplomatic Editor

It is a country of three million people with no national telephone network, no running water, no electricity grid and no professional army. It has debts of $3.5bn (pounds 1.8bn). Corruption is rife, 85 per cent of the population are unemployed, there are no bookshops and no cinemas. After many years of war and misrule, Liberia, the West African state founded by freed American slaves, is a shattered nation. Its 67-year old president, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, who beat the football star George Weah to become head of state in the first elections since the civil war ended in 2003, admits that she has a tough job on her hands.

International Clips on West Africa

Associated Press 06/01/2006 11:02:09

Ivory Coast rebels, army agree to begin disarming June 8
By SERME LASSINA

YAMOUGOUKRO, Ivory Coast _ Rebel and army commanders in Ivory Coast agreed Thursday to start a long-delayed disarmament campaign on June 8, the defense minister said. Both sides have repeatedly failed to lay down arms in the past, blaming each other for missing previously fixed disarmament dates.

Corruption in Police Recruitment

By Santigie Kamara

May 30, 2006 (Standard Times/All Africa Global Media via COMTEX) -- A large number of successful candidates that sat the Sierra Leone Police Recruitment examination on Saturday 15th April 2006 at the Police Training School in Hastings have expressed dismay over the way and manner in which the interviews were conducted at the OSD headquarters in Freetown. They maintain that even though they passed the exams they were asked to pay a reasonable amount of money for medical and interviews.

Local Media - Newspapers

Press Union of Liberia Says Government Attacks Journalists
(The Inquirer, Daily Observer, The Informer and Liberian Express)
The Press Union of Liberia (PUL) Wednesday complained to President Johnson-Sirleaf, cataloguing series of attacks on its members by State security personnel. The Union said these attacks were creating a growing unfriendly media climate that gives negative signal that the country is gravitating towards a police state.

Labour Minister Lifts Ban on Alien Work Permits
(The News, The Inquirer and The Analyst)

Liberia has lifted the ban imposed on the issuance of temporary work permit to non-Liberians. Addressing a news conference Wednesday, Labour Minister Samuel Kofi Woods said factors that led to the imposition of the ban have been taken care of. He the ban was imposed to re-examine the procedures and legal processes for the issuance of work permit.

Civil Society Group Submits Accounts of Abuses to Legislators
(The News)

A civil society group, the Forum for the Establishment of a War Crimes Court in Liberia, has documented and submitted to the House of Representatives a list of 100 atrocities that were presumably committed by various armed groups in the Liberian civil war. The group, in a letter to House of Representatives Speaker Edwin Snowe, entreated lawmakers to pass a legislation creating a court to prosecute perpetrators of war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Suspended Public Works Comptroller Failed to Appear in Court
(The Analyst and The Telegraph)

Suspended Public Works Comptroller, Emmanuel Erskine, Jr., Wednesday failed to appear in court to answer to criminal charges brought against him by the Government of Liberia.

Mr. Erskine went into hiding since Monday and prompted the government to issue a writ of search warrant for him to search his home for the 30-KVA generator he supposedly bought on account of the ministry without the consent and approval of the minister.

Diseases and Accidents Killed Forty UN Peacekeepers in Liberia
(Liberian Express)

Special Representative of the Secretary-General Alan Doss said 40 UN peacekeepers have died from accidents and diseases since the beginning of the Mission in Liberia in 2003. Mr. Doss and Liberia’s Vice President Joseph Boakai Monday laid wreaths to honor the fallen peacekeepers on UN Peacekeepers Day.

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

Foreign Minister Joins President in London Visit
• Foreign Minister George Wallace yesterday departed the country to join President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf who is currently visiting the United Kingdom.
• According to a Ministry of Foreign Affairs press statement, President Johnson-Sirleaf and Minister Wallace would travel to Tripoli, Libya to attend a summit of African leaders. Minister Wallace would later travel to Greece before returning to Liberia.
(Also reported on ELBS Radio and Star Radio)

**Chinese Urges Liberian Government to Adhere to One China Policy**
• Chinese Embassy Charge d’ Affaires Gou Haodong has urged Liberian and Chinese government, to adhere to the one China policy by abiding by the communiqué they signed to resume diplomatic relations. Mr. Haodong told a news conference yesterday that Liberians and Chinese would not allow the Liberian government to re-establishes ties with Taiwan.
(Also reported on ELBS Radio and Star Radio)

**Civil Society Group Submits Dossier of Atrocities to Lawmakers**
(Also reported on ELBS Radio and Star Radio)

**Ruling Party Candidate Leads in Run-Off By-Election**
• Briefing journalists in Monrovia yesterday, National Elections Commission Chairman James Fromoyan said that Ms. Elizabeth Williams of the Unity Party won the Rivercess County Legislative by-election with 1,852 votes against Charles Bartee of the New Deal Movement who got 1,413 votes from 9,000 registered voters in the area.
(Also reported on ELBS Radio and Star Radio)

**Labour Ministry Lifts Ban on Alien Work Permits**
(Also reported on ELBS Radio and Star Radio)

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

**Police Allegedly Rob UNMIL Contractor**
• A group of Liberian National Police officers assigned at Klay in Bomi County allegedly flogged and stole US$900 from contractor Samuel Bropleh allegedly working for UNMIL. Speaking to a Star Radio correspondent yesterday, Mr. Bropleh said that the police had accused him of carrying counterfeit United States banknotes.

**Liberian Journalists Attend Workshop on Human Rights and Ethics**
• A workshop for 30 rural reporters from 8 community radio stations began in Gbarnga, Bong County focusing on human rights violations and ethical issues in journalism, a facilitator told Star Radio correspondent. The workshop is being held with support from the Press Union of Liberia and the International Federation of Journalists.
**Totota Residents Laud Peacekeepers for Reconditioning Highway**

- The Residents of Totota District in Bong County applauded the Bangladeshi Engineering Battalion of UNMIL for repairing the highway between Bong and Nimba counties. In an interview with Star Radio, the residents said although the Battalion was in the county to keep peace, its decision to repair the road was commendable.