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, 9 May 2007

Press clips are produced Monday through Friday.
Any omission, comment or suggestion, please contact
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Taylor’s trial set for June 4

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Taylor’s trial set for June 4

From front page

Court for Sierra Leone.

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“The very fact that this man is going on trial is a victory over impunity. Taylor’s indictment, apprehension and arrest are a credit to the persistence of the world community, the governments of the region, and above all the courageous people of Sierra Leone.”

“That Charles Taylor will now face justice is the very embodiment of the maxim that no one is above the law.”

Taylor is charged with 11 counts of war crimes, crimes against humanity, and other serious violations of international humanitarian law, including mass murder, mutilations, rape, sexual slavery and the use of child soldiers.

The Prosecution has indicated its intention to present up to 139 core witnesses. Of these, 62 will be predominantly “linkage” witnesses. Proving the connections between Taylor and the atrocities committed in Sierra Leone is a necessary part of the Prosecution’s case.

Witnesses to these connections will include persons with inside knowledge of Taylor’s alleged activities.
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The Spectator
Wednesday, 9 May 2007

[Note: The Spectator is serialising the entire transcript of the Special Court’s press conference in Monrovia. The complete text is available in the ‘Special Court Supplement’ of the press clippings for April 30.]
40 Massacre In Cool Blood

May 8th marks an other sad moment in the history of Sierra Leoneans and the need to put pressure on both the government and the warring factions to see reason and opt for peaceful diplomatic options to end the carnage in the country. Having witnessed serious of ceasefire violation and the insincerity of Foday Sankoh's residence at Spur Loop as a result of a peace rally called by Parliamentarians and Civil Society Movements were brutally killed when they were caught up in an orchestrated cross fire between the West Side Boys, Revolutionary United Front Rebels on the one hand and Operational Security Division and Civil Defence Force on the other.

CONTINUED PAGE 2

As the senseless war engulfed the whole country disrupting developmental programme and creating a state of insecurity even in the Capital city, various organisation devised strategies of calling the International Community’s attention to the plight of Sierra Leon and the need to put pressure on both the government and the warring factions to see reason and opt for peaceful diplomatic options to end the carnage in the country. Having witnessed serious of ceasefire violation and the insincerity of the Revolutionary United Front leader late Corporal Foday Sankoh who had been offered the position of Chairman for the Commission of Minerals and another position equivalent to Vice President, the Civil Society Organisations called on all Sierra Leonians to march on to State House on the 8th May 2000 to seek solution on the need for peace in the country. To most people, the 40 people were among the huge crowd that did not know was the last day they were going to see the sunrise. Prior to this march, the then Chairman of the Peace Council, Rtd. Major Johnny Paul Koroma organised a peace rally at the National Stadium. Among those present were the Okra Hill West Side Boys, the Civil Defence Forces and the Special Security Division (SSD) of the police force where plans were made to actually storm the residence of Foday Sankoh during the peace rally.

As the 'Peace Task Force' joined the crowd with an intent of arresting RUF rebels and their collaborators on the eve of this great day. This witnessed a new set of militia under the command of Johnny Paul Koroma hence contradicting the rule of law. From the 6th to the 8th May 2000, this group listened solely to the command and operations strategy of JP Koroma. There were massive looting of those that were raided or fell victims. Unfortunately, a lot of the arrested suspects were kept at the State Maximum Prison without credibility to the arrest.

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Sankoh on that very day.

Some analysts who foresaw the pending danger behind a huge crowd moving on to a warlord’s lodge gave warning signals of acrimony. As the crowd approached Sankoh's lodge, the innocent civilians from the east who were joined by those from the west realised the dangers and hidden motives of armed men within the group.

Shots and rocket propelled grenades were fired from the crowd into Sankoh residence hence exposing the armless civilians to be caught in cross fire. At this point, shots were exchanged around the environs of Sankoh and the fleeing civilians ran helter skelter which resulted in the death of many people. Others sustained injuries and had to be rushed to the various hospitals. After this incident, RUF members and their families in the city become targets of arrest and up to 180 members were arrested and detained for no just reasons.

To worsen the situation, operation 'catch all men at rounding all RUF suspect and families help to create insecurity situation in the country. Among those arrested, 21 RUF members at the Pademba Road maximum security prison have died while in custody. During this period some top officers of the movement were placed under protected custody. As others who were fortunate to escape the warrant of arrest in the city went to the provinces and the state of terror continued.

The highways leading to the north and east became death traps while those who avoided ambushes travelled by sea and unlucky ones had to encounter sea pirates. Until the timely arrival of the British trained troops the security situation had deteriorated considerably. The rebels under the leadership of Issa Scay finally listened to the cries of many Sierra Leonians to drop their arms and join in the peace building process.

This resulted in the government exercising control over the rest of the country with the holding of democratic elections and the RUF converting into a political party to contest the 2002 elections. Despite all these, most of those families that lost their loved ones during the march for peace organised by the Civil Society movement of Salone have not been adequately compensated as those who carry out the act were accorded a lot of fringe benefits. Today marks the seventh anniversary since Sierra Leone hand the call to march for peace.
Charles Taylor Trial Set to Begin Amid Complaints from Defense

By Kari Barber
Dakar

Prosecutors at the Special Court for Sierra Leone say everything is set for the Charles Taylor case to begin June 4 in The Hague. But the former warlord's lawyers have complained that they need more help. Kari Barber reports from VOA's West Africa bureau in Dakar.

In pre-trial conferences this week, defense lawyers for former Liberian president Charles Taylor told the court they need more experienced counselors on their team to handle the complicated case. Taylor is to be represented by two lawyers who will face a 10-attorney prosecution team.

Taylor is charged with numerous counts of war crimes, crimes against humanity, and other human rights violations, including mass murder, rape, physical mutilation and the use of child soldiers, based on his role in neighboring Sierra Leone's civil war in the 1990s.

The defense also argued that it is difficult to get witnesses to testify because U.N. restrictions still bar many close associates of Taylor from traveling.

Stephen Rapp, the head prosecutor at the Special Court for Sierra Leone, is calling the approaching trial a victory over impunity. He says efforts should be made to ensure that Africans can monitor the proceedings closely, even though the trial is taking place in Europe.

"Our judges from here are going up there, but still supported from here by substantial resources and with us constantly working to make sure the information about that trial reaches the people of Sierra Leone and the region so that they have got as close as possible the same access to those proceedings that they would have had if the proceedings would have remained in Freetown," he said.

Carolyn Norris with the International Crisis Group says that because the trial is to take place in The Hague, there are some in Sierra Leone who would like to go, but will not be able to.

"I think certainly in Sierra Leone there is a feeling of disappointment in a way that he [Charles Taylor] is not going to be tried in the country where those alleged crimes were committed," she said. "But also I think there is also a general feeling of relief among Liberians and Sierra Leoneans that this man is further away from where he caused them problems."

Norris says the Taylor trial will likely have a regional impact, influencing how Liberia handles those accused of war crimes in the country.
"I think once this case, the Charles Taylor case, is under way and it reaches a verdict, I think that will re-open the debate within Liberia as to who should be brought to trial there," she said.

London-based human rights activist Ibrahim Kane says he hopes the trial will lead to more convictions of those responsible for escalating Sierra Leone's brutal civil war.

"They have committed the same atrocities; it was done in the same country, which is Sierra Leone," he said. "It was done by people who had different positions in militia groups. I think if they have been arrested for those atrocities they have to face the same situation, the same rules."

Taylor's trial is being held at the International Criminal Court in The Hague for security reasons. The trial was supposed to begin in April, but was postponed until June to allow the defense more time to prepare.
Taylor Braces for June 4

Following today's Pre-Trial conference in The Hague, opening arguments in the highly anticipated trial of former Liberian President Charles Taylor are set to take place on June 4, a Press Release issued yesterday by the Special Court said.

"Great efforts have been made to bring this case to trial since Mr. Taylor was indicted in March 2003", said Stephen Rapp, Prosecutor of the Special Court for Sierra Leone.

"His arrest and transfer in 2006 were the result of three years of intense diplomacy by many in the sub-region and abroad. Up to now, attention has been on the process. On June 4, all eyes can focus on the trial itself".

"The very fact that this man is going on trial is a victory over impunity. Mr. Taylor's indictment, apprehension and arrest are a credit to the persistence of the world community, the governments of the region, and above all the courageous people of Sierra Leone".

"That Charles Taylor will now face justice is the very embodiment of the maxim that no one is above the law". Mr. Taylor is charged with 11 counts of war crimes, crimes against humanity, and other serious violations of international humanitarian law, including mass murder, mutilations, rape, sexual slavery and the use of child soldiers.

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Proving the connections between Taylor and the atrocities committed in Sierra Leone is a necessary part of the prosecution's case. Witnesses to these connections will include persons with inside knowledge of Taylor's alleged activities.
United Nations  
Tuesday, 8 May 2007  

Highlights of the Noon Briefing, By Michele Montas, Spokesperson for Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon, U.N. Headquarters, New York  

**Trial Date Set for Charles Taylor, Ex-Liberian President**  

The Special Court for Sierra Leone has set the start of the trial of former Liberian president Charles Taylor for June 4th. This was decided yesterday at a pre-trial conference in The Hague.  

Taylor is charged with 11 counts of war crimes, crimes against humanity, and other serious violations of international humanitarian law, including mass murder, mutilations, rape, sexual slavery and the use of child soldiers.  

Meanwhile, the Court’s Prosecutor, Stephen Rapp, has said that he plans to present some 139 key witnesses, including individuals with inside knowledge of Taylor’s alleged activities, in an effort to prove Taylor’s suspected role in the atrocities committed during Sierra Leone’s civil war.
UN-backed court in Sierra Leone unveils start date for trial of former Liberian leader

8 May 2007 – The war crimes trial of Charles Taylor, the notorious former Liberian president, will begin on 4 June with opening arguments, the United Nations-backed Special Court for Sierra Leone announced today following a pre-trial conference in The Hague.

“That Charles Taylor will now face justice is the very embodiment of the maxim that no one is above the law,” Special Court Prosecutor Stephen Rapp said, calling the staging of the trial “a victory over impunity,” according to a press statement released by the Court.

“Taylor’s indictment, apprehension and arrest are a credit to the persistence of the world community, the governments of the region and, above all, the courageous people of Sierra Leone.”

Mr. Taylor faces 11 counts of war crimes, crimes against humanity and other serious violations of international humanitarian law, including mass murder, mutilations, rape, sexual slavery and the use of child soldiers, for his role in the decade-long civil war that engulfed Sierra Leone. He was indicted on those charges in March 2003.

Last June the Security Council authorized the staging of Mr. Taylor’s trial at The Hague in the Netherlands, citing reasons of security and expediency. Prosecutors have indicated they plan to call up to 139 core witnesses and have said previously that the trial could take about 12 to 18 months.

The Special Court was established on 16 January 2002 by an agreement between the Government of Sierra Leone and the UN and is mandated to try “those who bear greatest responsibility” for war crimes and crimes against community committed in the country after 30 November 1996. So far 11 people have been indicted.
International Clips on Liberia
Liberian leader gives final approval to deal with steelmaker giant

MONROVIA, May 7, 2007 (AFP) - Liberian President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf gave a final seal of approval on Monday to an iron ore mining contract between the government and the world's largest steelmaker, Arcelor Mittal.

International Clips on West Africa
Ivory Coast PM in peace call as rebels, army mix

ABIDJAN, May 7, 2007 (AFP) - Ivorian Prime Minister Guillaume Soro, a former rebel leader, sent out a strong message for peace Monday as the divided west African nation looks to heal its wounds after almost years of unrest.

Local Media – Newspaper
Presidency Launches New Website
(Daily Observer)
- The Presidency has launched a new website for the public to access activities of the Government including those of President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, Vice President Joseph Boakai and the cabinet, the Liberian leader’s Deputy Chief of Staff for Public Affairs and Information Technology Amara Kanneh said. He said that the website can be accessed through www.emansion.gov.lr.

Commander-In-Chief Promotes Newly Trained Officers
(The News and Heritage)
- The Commander-In-Chief of the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL), President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf will today, Tuesday, commission 11 officers of the newly trained AFL soldiers and dedicate the newly constructed 23rd Infantry Brigade Headquarters at the Beyan Kesselly Military Barracks, a Defense Ministry Public Affairs statement said in Monrovia.

Liberian Leader Finds Corruption in all Sectors
(The Informer, Heritage and New Vision)
- Correspondents said that President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf has alluded to deeply-rooted corruption in government and urged the public to provide evidence of corruption against any of her officials who she vowed to prosecute.
- She noted that the practice was entrenched in the Liberian society and that it would take some time to eliminate.

President Johnson Sirleaf Endorses Ministry’s Decision to Cancel Exams
• President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf said that she supported the Education Ministry’s decision to annul this year’s exams for 12th Graders due to alleged fraud which she said demonstrated how deeply rooted corruption is in the Liberian society.
• Speaking at a news conference yesterday, the Liberian leader warned some of the 12th Graders who said that they would not re-write the exams, that they will not progress in their academic pursuit if they failed to re-write the tests.

**President Calls on Phone Company to Pay Waived Storage Fees**
(The News)

• Addressing a news conference yesterday, President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf ordered Comium Communications, a mobile phone company to pay over US$100,000 which was waived to it by the Roberts International Airport management, adding that the waiver was inappropriate.

**Local Media – Radio Veritas** (News monitored today at 9:45 am)

**President Says Corruption is Endemic in Government**
(Also reported on ELBS and Star Radio)

**Presidency Backs Cancellation of Exams for Fraud**
(Also reported on ELBS and Star Radio)

**President Orders Phone Company to Pay Waived Storage Fees**
(Also reported on ELBS and Star Radio)

**Police Apprehend Suspected Armed Robber**
• Correspondents said that the Liberia National Police arrested suspected armed robber, Lansana Kamara in Voinjama, Lofa County for his alleged involvement in a US$39,000 armed robbery in September 2006.
(Also reported on ELBS and Star Radio)

**American Medical Delegation Visits Harper, Maryland County**
• A 6-man medical delegation from the United States arrived in the Harper, Maryland County to start an assistance programme at the County’s leading Hospital, J.J. Dossen, rendering dental and pediatric services for 5 days.
(Also reported on ELBS and Star Radio)

**Court Drops Justice of Peace from Judiciary**
• The Supreme Court of Liberia has dropped Justice of the Peace, B.S. Tamba from the Judicial Branch of Government on instruction from President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf. According to a statement issued by the Court, the President ordered Mr. Tamba to turn over all properties of the Government to the Chief Justice.
(Also reported on ELBS and Star Radio)

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. Weah Karpeh at karpeh@un.org.
French judge resigns from International Criminal Court because of poor health

8 May 2007 – The head of the International Criminal Court (ICC) has paid tribute to Judge Claude Jorda of France, whose permanent ill-health has forced him to resign from the body set up under an international treaty to hear trials of individuals charged with acts of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes committed since 2002.

Judge Jorda, whose resignation will take effect on 12 August, was assigned to the Court’s pre-trial division and has been serving as the presiding judge in the case against Thomas Lubango Dyilo, a former militia leader from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) who is charged with war crimes for enlisting child soldiers, in the first such trial for the court.

In a statement issued by the Court in The Hague, ICC President Judge Philippe Kirsch voiced regret at Judge Jorda’s departure and thanked him “for his service and for his commitment to fulfilling his obligations before leaving the Court.”

Established by the Rome Statute of 1998, the ICC can try cases involving individuals charged with war crimes committed since July 2002. The UN Security Council, the ICC Prosecutor or a State Party to the court can initiate any proceedings, and the ICC only acts when countries themselves are unwilling or unable to investigate or prosecute.

The Assembly of States Parties to the ICC, which currently has 104 members, will now elect a judge to fill the vacancy created by Judge Jorda’s resignation.

Before joining the ICC, the Frenchman had served previously as a judge and as the President of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY).