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:
Monday, 4 June 2007

Press clips are produced Monday through Friday.
Any omission, comment or suggestion, please contact
Martin Royston-Wright
Ext 7217
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## International News

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By Betty Milton

Former Liberian President Charles Ghankay Taylor will today start the process of answering to allegations of war crimes, crimes against humanity and serious violations of international humanitarian law. The former Liberian Head of State will face Special Court Prosecutor Stephen Rapp across the floor of the facility in The Hague where Mr Rapp will make his opening statements detailing the alleged crimes which his team have investigated and for which he believes Mr Taylor should be held accountable for.

The trial starts today even though Taylor’s Lawyer Karim Khan has been advocating for more time to prepare his defence.

Mr Taylor is standing trial on 11 count charges for his alleged role in supporting the rebel Revolutionary United Front (RUF) during the 11 year war in Sierra Leone.

The former leader of the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) militia had been offered temporary asylum in Nigeria after an arrangement by African leaders.

He was arrested on March 29th 2007 after allegedly trying to escape from his temporary home in Calabar.

Five days later he made his first appearance where the initial charges were read against him in Court.

Mr Taylor pleaded not guilty.

On the 20th June after “security considerations” Mr Taylor was flown over to The Hague to stand trial.

The eleven count charges include crimes against humanity, violations of Article 3 common to the Geneva Convention and additional protocols, along with terrorizing the civilian population, unlawful killings, sexual violence, physical violence, recruiting child soldiers, abductions, forced labour and looting.
Charles Taylor Goes On Trial

By Jonathan Leigh in Freetown and Teddy Fodey-Musa at the Hague Credit: www.thepatrioticvanguard.com

Libyan President Muammar Gaddafi for war crimes committed during Sierra Leone's 11-year Armed Armed conflict, "sent a strong signal that no one is above the law." Taylor's trial by the Unhanded Special Court for Sierra Leone will provide an important chance for victims to be heard, the Organisation observed.

The trial of a former president associated with human rights abuses across West Africa. The website went on, "It's an opportunity to redemption from the past... And Taylor's trial puts would-be perpetrators on notice.

Human Rights Watch has done and continues to do extensive research on human rights abuses in Sierra Leone and Liberia.

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Taylor’s Trial Begins Today

By A Correspondent

The much awaited trial of the Ex-President of Liberia, Charles Ghakay Taylor is expected to begin at the International War Crimes tribunal in The Hague, Netherlands today, 4th June, 2007.

Taylor was the Liberia leader that was issued the arrest warrant as one of those who bear the greatest responsibility for fueling the rebel war in this country by the UN-backed Special Court in Sierra Leone. It was however considered necessary to transfer the trial to The Hague following security concerns raised by the government of Sierra Leone.

Taylor’s Trial

of key witnesses for both the prosecution and the defense have been flown to The Hague at the expenses of the Special Court while others are to explain their cases by means of satellite television connections between the court in The Hague and the Special Court in Freetown.

The Ex-Liberian President and his accomplices in Sierra Leone are facing a 21-count charge of violation of human rights and crimes against humanity, for their role in the 11 years civil conflict in which Sierra Leone inflicted heavy infrastructural destructions, the loss of thousands of lives and the ruining of the economy.

One outstanding feature of Taylor’s trial is that three principal witnesses who were accused of bearing the greatest responsibility for the rebel war have died. They include the leader of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) Foday Saybana Sankoh, and the head of the Civil Defence Force-Kamajors, Chief Sam Hinga Norman who died while in custody, while General Maskita Sam Bockarie died in Liberia apparently upon the orders of President Charles Taylor in the wake of the rebel uprising in the Ivory Coast.

Charles Taylor is expected to defend himself against charges by witnesses that he was the chief financier and “godfather” of the RUF, and that Foday Sankoh and other, were operating under his instructions.

The issue of “Blood Diamonds” in exchange for weapons to continue the senseless carnage that placed money only in the pockets of few people at the detriment of he entire population, the use of child soldiers in combat are expected to be some of the charges for which Taylor will be cross-examined.
At Last Taylor’s Trial Begins

Liberia/Sierra Leone
At last Taylor’s trial begins

After much pre-trial legal wrangling, the trial of Liberia’s former president, Charles Taylor, begins in The Hague on 4 June. Osei Boateng and Jarlawah Tonpo report.

Charles Gbahay Taylor, the former president of Liberia, has been in pre-trial detention for 15 months, first at the Special Court for Sierra Leone (SCSL) facility in Freetown, and later transferred to the International Criminal Court (ICC) detention centre at Schwerin gen, in The Hague. At 9am on 4 June, he will be brought to court to listen to a four-hour opening statement by the prosecution about the 11 charges preferred against him, all sworn around “helping or supporting” the former Sierra Leonean rebel group, Revolutionary United Front (RUF), to commit:

- Count 1: “acts of terrorism” (burning of villages);
- Count 2: “murder” (unlawful killings during the war);
- Count 3: “violence to life, health and physical or mental well-being of persons, in particular murder”;
- Count 4: “rape”;
- Count 5: “sexual slavery and any other form of sexual violence”;
- Count 6: “outrages upon personal dignity”;
- Count 7: “violence to life, health and physical or mental well-being of persons, in particular cruel treatment”;
- Count 8: “other inhumane acts”;
- Count 9: “consisting or enlisting children under the age of 15 years into armed force or groups, or using them to participate actively in hostilities”;
- Count 10: “endowment”; Count 11: “pillage” (looting). Taylor denies all the charges.

After the prosecution’s opening statement, the court (the SCSL’s Trial Chamber II) will adjourn till 25 June to allow Taylor’s defence team a compensatory 18-day grace lost while the team boycotted pre-trial consultations with Taylor because the ICC (which is hosting the trial) would not remove a surveillance camera in the room where Taylor held privileged consultations with his lawyers.

The camera was installed in the room on 10 November last year, and despite repeated
requests by the defence team led by the British/Pakistani attorney, Karim Khan, and a ruling by Trial Chamber II that the camera be removed, the ICC would not until the defence team staged a protest by boycotting attorney-client consultations with Taylor for 18 days between 5 and 22 March this year.

The defence was outraged about the prejudice caused by its preparations by the ICC’s monitoring of its confidential communications with Taylor and the chilling effect this had on free and frank legal consultations. The team, thus, petitioned the SCSL to move the trial date from 4 June to 3 September to give it enough time to prepare.

But Trial Chamber II, though sympathetic, ruled that since the team had continued legal consultations between 10 November and 4 March despite the camera being there, the trial should start as scheduled on 4 June but will break for 18 days to allow the defence to make up the time lost when it suspended all privileged attorney-client consultations.

When the trial resumes on 25 June, it will adjourn again until 13 August when the court will sit for over 26 hours a week till 14 December and break again for the Christmas recess. The prosecution says it will call up to 159 core witnesses, 62 of whom will be primarily “linkage” witnesses (i.e., people who will try to prove the connections between Taylor and the alleged crimes committed in Sierra Leone).

The trouble with this trial is the “political imperative to convict” which is overshadowing the legal niceties. For example, in March this year, Vincent Nnemehielle, the SCSL’s “principal defender” (in another life he would be the CEO of the court) told a press conference in Monrovia, capital of Taylor’s home country Liberia, that he [Nnemehielle] was “not satisfied” with the manner in which Taylor was transferred to The Hague, but since it was an “international issue” he could not do otherwise.

Nnemehielle revealed: “Mr Taylor was informed about the transfer but he was not informed about the time. I was neither informed about the time but I knew that he would be transferred. So I told him to get prepared at all times by packing his bag and whatever he had, but I was never informed about the transfer nor did I know the main date and this is where I was not satisfied.”

Explaning further, Nnemehielle said: “That night, at about 12 midnight, I was asked by the authorities of the court to give Mr. Taylor’s number but I did not know what was going on, so I inquired why Taylor’s number was needed at that time of the night. But the whole situation is an international issue and so that’s how it works.”

Nnemehielle’s statement sparked public debate in Monrovia about the “international connections” and the “political imperative to convict” which are endangering the free and fair nature of the trial. The consensus in Monrovia was that, “if Taylor’s transfer from Freetown to The Hague was processed at midnight according to the principal defender, than his trial is just a mere formality.”

Another disturbing element is the yawning gap between the preparedness of the prosecution and defence teams. On 7 May, Trial Chamber II held its first pre-trial conference with the prosecution and defence teams to resolve any outstanding procedural matters before the trial starts on 4 June.

When the presiding judge, Justice Julia Sebutinde, asked whether the prosecution team was fully formed, Stephen Rapp, the chief prosecutor, sprang up and cheerily announced: “Yes, Madam President, the prosecution team is fully formed and he proceeded to mention their names: Bena J. Hollis, senior trial attorney from the Bar of Colorado, USA; Wendy van Tongeren, trial attorney from the Bar of Ontario, Canada; Mohamed A. Bangura, trial attorney from the Bar of Sierra Leone; Nicholas Kounjinj, trial attorney from the Bar of the State of California, USA; Ann Sutherland, trial attorney from the Bar of Australia; Shyama Alagendra, trial attorney from the Bar of Malaysia; Alain Werner, trial attorney from the Bar of Geneva, Switzerland; Leigh Lawrie, solicitor from the Bar of England and Wales; and Maja Dimitrova, case manager. Ten in all.

Judge Sebutinde then turned to Karim Khan and asked: “Do you have a full team yet for the defence?” Karim Khan answered: “Your honour, we are working towards it. In fact, [in it] one of the matters [about which] my client had wished to speak to the principal defender, because he has concerns about the level of support and assistance that was given to him by the Registry.”

Karim continued: “Your honour, I will be brief. My client’s view, and if one compares this case in scale and in nature to that of Slobodan Milosevic, he [Milosevic was] granted a queen’s counsel of the English Bar, Steven Kay; a very senior lawyer from Belgrade, Branislav Tapuskovic; a Prof. Michael Wladomiroff of the Dutch Bar, and...
Vincent Naudhaile, the SCSL’s “principal defender” confesses that he was “not satisfied” with the manner in which Taylor was transferred to The Hague, but since it was an “international issue” he could not do otherwise.

a very prominent lawyer; a Prof Timothy McCormack; (and) a co-counsel, Gillian Higgins.

“That was for an accused [Mlosevic] who did not have a legal team that did not have to take instructions from their client, and did not have to support or supervise investigations. Compared to that, the concerns of my client is that he is being short-changed and has simply a legal team of two counsel that have rights of audience... There have been discussions between myself and the Registry. The principal defender has been kept fully informed and there have been quite Supteam efforts on our part to get a co-counsel on board.

“I have approached 12 or 13 senior members of the English Bar. I have approached members of the Canadian Bar. This case, in my view, does merit the most senior member of the Bar... But, your honour, because of these difficulties, I still do not have a full team... At the moment, I do have two legal assistants with me in court. We have a pro bono legal assistant who is working totally free of charge in Liberia. That is the extent of our team. There is currently a co-counsel, Roger Sakota. He is not going to be continu-

“The defence, therefore, finds itself practically in an extremely perilous position on the ground”.

Khan continued: “Now the difficulty for the defence is that numerous individuals, and affidavits are being obtained by my friends, but the individuals are unwilling to speak to the defence, and their stated reason is that they are petrified of having travel bans imposed on them and having their assets frozen by the UN Security Council because they are associated with the defence of Charles Taylor. There are individuals who have been on travel bans for years and years, and they protest that these are totally uncalled for, but the short of it is that this Security Council intervention, which is non-reviewable in a court of law, is having a very severe impact on the ability of the defence to get witnesses in order to investigate this case in the manner required.”

Khan said he would be filing a motion before the court asking it “to grant some form of relief so that those individuals should not be targeted by the Security Council or the powers that be”.

It was all too much even for a long-serving judge like Julia Sebutinde. Before she rose, she told the SCSL Registry: “The defence have expressed some pretty serious concerns regarding the fair trial rights of Mr Taylor, and that is his right to consult the defence office with regard to his representation. Now we feel helpless as a Trial Chamber, we can’t make any orders but we have taken note seriously that there is a bottleneck somewhere. Now, my only concern or our concern is that this bottleneck does not translate into a delay in the trial due to the fact that Mr Taylor’s defence team has not been able to be organised in time, or his co-counsel has not been found due to a delay somewhere, because of someone who has taken certain decisions that have been translated into a denial of Mr Taylor’s rights.

This I want to emphasise: I do not want to hear afterwards that, as a result of some decision taken somewhere, Mr Taylor is not in a position to start trial. This would be very, very unfortunate if it did happen, and I would like you to translate this to the people concerned. I do not know all the facts, but I want the people concerned, to, at the earliest opportunity, ensure that this blockage is unblock, and that the principal defender is able to communicate with Mr Taylor in order to straighten out his defence team...”

It is going to be some trial.
United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL)

UNMIL Public Information Office Media Summary 1 June 2007

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

International Clips on Liberia

06/01/2007 13:03:06

Ireland probes Web video of its troops in Liberia
By Paul Hoskins

DUBLIN, June 1 (Reuters) - Irish military police launched an investigation on Friday after a soldier posted a video on the Internet showing Irish peacekeepers in Liberia pointing machine guns at a crowd. "The soldier who uploaded the video has been questioned today by military police," said Commandant Gavin Young, spokesman for the Irish Defence Forces. 

IRISH INDEPENDENT 06/01/2007 01:28:44

Last peace-keeping unit back home from Liberia

IT was the end of an era last night as the last unit of Ireland's peacekeeping mission in war-worn Liberia returned home to a tearful audience of family and friends. Emotional embraces and tearful welcomes greeted the remaining 83 troops of the 96th Infantry Battalion at Casement Aerodrome, Baldonnel.

International Clips on West Africa

06/01/2007 06:34:03

FEATURE-Untamed corruption tarnishes Sierra Leone recovery
By Nick Tattersall

FREETOWN, June 1 (Reuters) - Sierra Leone is making little progress in tackling corruption and is squandering foreign aid, leaving its most vulnerable citizens as destitute as they were before its civil war ended five years ago, experts say. Since the guns fell silent after more than a decade of conflict, the former British colony -- a country of just 5 million people, rich in diamonds, iron ore and gold -- remains one of the poorest nations on earth.

Green watchdogs warn I. Coast’s tropical forests at risk

ABIDJAN, May 31, 2007 (AFP) - Ivory Coast's rare tropical forests risk vanishing due to excessive exploitation by timber logging firms, environmental watchdogs warned Thursday. "Of the 123 companies in timber exploitation, only two respect the forestry regulations," Jacob N'Zi, head of Ecological Group of Ivory Coast (Geci), told AFP.

Local Media – Newspaper

Legislature and U.S. Congressmen Delegation Hold Joint Session Today
(Daily Observer, New Vision, The Inquirer, National Chronicle and Heritage)

- The visiting U.S. Congressional delegation says it will work with lawmakers to ensure that democracy is entrenched in the country. The delegation is headed by
Congressman, David Price and is in the the country to forge partnership with the National Legislature.

- According to the Congressional team, during the three-day visit they will work with lawmakers to pinpoint some of the weaknesses in the Liberian system and will tour U.S. funded renovation work at the Capitol Building.

Government Lauded for Lifting Ban on Newspaper
(Public Agenda and The Liberian Diaspora)

- Former Information Minister Reginald Goodridge told reporters in Monrovia that the Government’s move to lift the ban it imposed on The Independent newspaper was commendable in that it demonstrated the existence of a good relationship with the independent press. However, the paper’s defence lawyers said that they saw nothing to jubilate about and looked forward to a ruling from the Court regarding the unlawful closure of the paper.

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

Legislature and U.S. Congressional Delegation Hold Joint Session Today

SRSG Doss says those on Travel Ban can Petition Security Council

- Speaking during a special phone-in-programme, the Special Representative of the Secretary General to Liberia, Alan Doss said those under travel restriction have the right to petition the U.N. Security Council to review the action. Mr. Doss said the council has no interest in penalizing any Liberian and said some of those on the travel ban have been removed.

Anti-Malaria Forum on Liberia Opens in the U.S. Tomorrow

- Speaking in an interview, the Executive Director of the U.S. based Liberian History and Education Organization, Dr. Syruwah Somah said a forum to rally support for the fight against malaria in Liberia is expected to open tomorrow in the United States.

Star Radio (News monitored today at 8:35 am)

Liberia-Japan Policy Dialogue Opens in Monrovia

- A policy dialogue to improve bilateral relations between Japan and Liberia has opened in Monrovia and is to identify specific ways Japan could support Liberia in the coming years. Foreign Minister George Wallace opened the dialogue and expressed the hope that it would yield good results. The head of the Japanese delegation, Koji Abe described the dialogue as a great start for the restoration of bilateral ties with Liberia and said his government values the effort of the Liberian government in rebuilding the country and would give its support.

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.