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, 16 January 2008

Press clips are produced Monday through Friday. Any omission, comment or suggestion, please contact Martin Royston-Wright Ext 7217
### Local News
- **Trial of Charles Taylor / Salone Times**  
  Page 3
- **Bringing Ex-combatants in the Spirit of National Reconciliation / For di People**  
  Pages 4-5
- **Human Rights and Human Developments in Sierra Leone / Standard Times**  
  Pages 6-7

### International News
- **Taylor’s Trial Continues / BBC World Service Trust**  
  Pages 8-9
- **Evening Report from Special Court / BBC World Service Trust**  
  Pages 10-11
- **Charles Taylor Trial Witness Tells of RUF Rebels' Atrocities / AFP**  
  Page 12
- **Charles Taylor Trial; Another Day Of Anguish / UN Observer**  
  Page 13
- **Antwerp: Taylor Trial Opens with Industry's Role / RAPAPORT news**  
  Page 14
- **Cross-examination of Prosecution Witness Dennis Koker Continues / Charlestaylortrial.org**  
  Pages 15-31
- **UNMIL Public Information Office Complete Media Summaries / UNMIL**  
  Pages 32-34
- **Liberian Truth and Reconciliation Commission Hears Public Testimony / Voice of America**  
  Pages 35-36
Trial Of
Charles Taylor

Mr. Taylor appeared in court dressed in a black suit, white shirt, black tie spotted with white. He has a gold rim specs on and appeared to be in good health. Present also was his Attorneys Courtemay Griffiths, Terry Munyard and Andrew Cayloy.

The prosecutor, Nicholas Kounjian opened his case with the testimony of Ian Smilie, an expert witness.

The prosecution tendered several video clips in evidence. These included clips about the diamond mining from the days of Stevens onto those showing amputations and testimonies by victims during RUF occupation of Kono. The defense raised objections over some of the clips, saying that the witness is an expert in diamond not history. Justice Julia Sebutinde upheld some but allowed the prosecution to proceed asking him to rephrase his questions to the witness. Also tendered in court was a fax alleging to be an appointment letter by Chief of Defense Staff of the RUF, Major General Sam Bockarie of Mr. Mohamed Hedjazy.

Trafficickng of arms and Diamonds

The witness mentioned that in March 1999 alone there were six flight deliveries of ammunition to Liberia. Photos of the aircraft were marked for identification.

Mr. Taylor had told the panel that Mr. Leonard Menning, the owner of the aircraft had wanted to sell the plane as presidential jet but it was too expensive, according to the witness when they posed the question to Taylor during their visit. The pictures were taken by a crew member at Bobodialasso in Burkina Faso and shows wooden crates said to contain arms and ammunitions.

The Angola Panel of Experts had earlier identified the plane, and the witness verified in Ukraine that the end user certificate was for Burkina Faso. There were also flight logs from Niami in Niger. Antenoff planes owned by Russian Vicor Bout operating in Liberia were also involved in the trafficking of arms, the witness said.

The panel met with Taylor in 2000 and raised the issue of trafficking in diamonds mentioned by US Under Secretary of State Bickering but Taylor said it was untrue. Liberia was exporting large quantities of diamonds than Sierra Leone. He said Jenkins Dunbar, Minister of Mines took them to Pennsville Mines but there were no diggers. Liberia has no known record of exporting large volumes of high quality diamonds, Mr. Smilie said.

The witness gave a history of the diamond trade in Sierra Leone. Smilie said he was a CUSO volunteer teacher in Koidu - Sefaidu in Sierra Leone in 1967.

He has worked with several international Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) such as Care and CUSO. But his in-depth work about the diamond industry started with Africa Canada Partnership. Has written several reports and served as consultant to NGOs and the UN.

Mr. Smilie was part of the meeting that led to the Kimberley Certification Scheme in South Africa in 2003. UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan appointed him member of the UN Panel of Experts. As members of the panel they spoke to the heads of states of Liberia and Sierra Leone, intelligence agents of USA, Britain, France, people in all strata of the diamond industry, civil society, press, military and UNAMSIL.
Bringing Ex-Combatants In The Spirit Of National Reconciliation

I HAVE read a few articles in a few newspapers that are kicking against the integration of former combatants as part of the presidential bodyguard to be trained abroad but this writer welcomes this bold step taken in the name of national integration.

by
NESTA OLOKODO

Most of the critics cite the examples of Leatherboot, Akim Sesay, Kabbah and others who were former soldiers but then defected to the former rebel leader's camp Foday Sankoh and therefore, see no need for their re-integration. This writer begs to differ.

President Ernest Bai Koroma is the first reconciliator of the land and he has already stated that he intends to heal the wounds of the nation and to promote the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission so that not only do we strive not to commit those sins that brought us intolerable woes and tribulations but to reconcile the entire nation.

Absorbing them is like bringing together prodigal sons who still have a role to play in nation-building instead of marginalising them for a war which the TRC didn't attribute to them as causes but rather as victims of a failed state attributed to the very political systems of the APC and SLPP that are responsible for our problems.

Had it not been for our parlous economy, it would've been prudent to screen and re-absorb some of our best soldiers who have learnt a lot from the war so that their experience could be utilised rather than allowed to waste in frustration and poverty.

Infact, what the president is doing now is to show that he needs not fear or push away even those who have been cast aside by the political elite and want them to be destroyed by all means. Under the SLPP government, not only were these soldiers subjected to the worst form of torture but the intention of the government was for them to have died.

It took a lot of campaigning by FDP newspapers before certain groups of soldiers like the Bomblast Group of 15, the Tongos and a few others.

The Leatherboot-Akim group were already at Pademba prisons before the incident at Sankoh's residence at Spur Road on 8 May 2001.

Leatherboot was to be released together with Mike Lamin as nothing was found against him but then he was kept behind bars by former vice-president Solomon Berewa.

Leatherboot had an important role to escape Berewa from imminent death by taking him across the Guinea border disguised as a woman after the coup d'etat of the AFRC-RUF in 1997. His wife is the sister of Berewa's legal secretary Mrs Schlomo. Just towards the end of the SLPP and inorder to nail them further, Leatherboot and the others were accused of planning a coup.

The CID after obtaining statement from former Director of Education, Soluku Bockarie arrested them and had it not been for the exposure of the plot by the National League for Human Rights and FDP newspapers, they might still be languishing at Pademba prisons.

Subsequently, they were all released when Justice Patrick Hamilton discharged and acquitted them after spending six years in jail. Apart from the role they played in saving the life of the presidency during the recent presidential campaign and some of them charged to Court by the SLPP, they have also shown that they can be loyal and what else does a leader need other than loyalty and confidence in his bodyguards?

What happened to the army was indeed a tragedy because of the divisive politics and naked tribalism of the erstwhile government. The army has been politicised since the习可 era and worsened under Momoh's regime who was referred to by Libya's leader Colonel Muammar Gaddafi as a scum. The army was ill-equipped and disciplined and by the start of the war, soldiers had to fight-with rusty rifles and only a few bullets against a well-equipped rebel force backed by troops from Charles Taylor's NPFL fighters.

It was not actually a deliberate act on the part of Momoh but rather a negligent government that had tolerated corruption and mismanagement as its standard bearer.

Those who repelled the rebel attacks and who actually succeeded to bring the rebels under control were the best fighters of the land like Majo Dio who died, Akim Soriba, Mansaray, Hindolo Trye and a few others who bore the brunt of the war.

What actually brought about the coup by about a dozen soldiers with only a few rifles and not the machinations of any of these bodyguards was the marginalisation of the army by the SLPP especially the negative and divisive attitudes of late Kamajor chief-tain and defence chief, Sam Hinga Norman.

The army was subjugated to the Kamajor civil militia.
THE PRESIDENTIAL BODYGUARD

From Page 3

their ration was cut down while the militaries were pampered, those fighting the war complained that they were being attacked by Kamajors and the retaliation by AFRC-Ruf leader Johnny Paul Koroma (who actually had no hands in the 97 coup but freed from prison and installed at Sierra Rufile led to his arrest and subsequently charged with Treason.

In fact, it became common for soldiers of the national army to be slaughtered like hogs, put down from vehicles and hounded in the southeastern part of the country. Brigadier Gabriel Mani, the most senior intelligence officer in the army and best artillery commander (he should be utilised by president Koroma), warned Kabbah about the coup but he was instead humiliated and sidelined. The coupists at the time, later executed after the restoration of the SLPP in 97, for fear that Koroma was to be executed stormed the Pademba prisons and freed him.

Among those who felt the brunt of both Kamajor and rebel attacks was one of the best soldiers in the land in the name of Akim aboe. The Pari at Tonga Fields and other areas.Letterbox, who was appointed Secretary of Labour during the nine months Interregnum later went to the bush with the Westside Boys where he was tortured mercilessly to the point of death. After Benjamin Mende, who was generally seen as an unyielding ally of Sankoh. His elevation to the position of the vice-president at the head of the nation's strategic resources, cleared the way for these military leaders of Sankoh and the illegal because the soldiers are normally assigned to ministers and soldiers and the rebel leader at the time was a minister of the Kabbah government until their arrest and subsequent incarceration on the false allegation that they were at Sankoh's place during the May 8 incident.

The reason for this chapter in the book is to give readers the opportunity to look at the circumstances under which many of our loyal soldiers who actually fought the war become victims of circumstances and this is not to say that we are exonerating them for their roles or passive roles for the consequences of the war and our blighted psyche. It is well-known that those who are killed in combat are hailed as the best in the army and president Koroma has now thought it fit that the wounds of war and bring about those who actually were part of providing this presidential bodyguard. It is not the only truth.

The other question being; on death row after late Justice AB Rasei. A grouping of African statesmen together with the SLPP government, were unable to prove that the government had not produced single evidence to show how the Interregnum government of 1997 did not produce single evidence to show how the coup was in the offing. They were represented interestingly by three lawyers who are staunch APC men-Osby Williams an MP Edward Turay leader of the ruling APC in parliament and Sery Kamall the Attorney-General and Minister of Justice.

Already, Attorney-General Kamall has made a case of non-inclusion recently freed Omrie Koroma and two others similarly charged for treason by president Kabbah and spent about two years at Pademba prisons. It was expected that the soldiers on death row would've received a presidential pardon especially when just before the presidential election in 8 September 2007, the SLPP released all the Ruf fighters serving a 100-year jail term. Perhaps, in the spirit of reconciliation and justice, especially in cognizance of SLPP frame-ups and injustice, consider their release.

In conclusion, president Koroma has again demonstrated that even those who have been marginalised and cast aside have roles to play not only as bodyguards but in other spheres of human endeavor. The only concern is that it should not be intended to create a sort of private army as trappings of dictatorship to have loyalists who answer only to the presidency especially if it so happens that the president would've fallen short of national expectations.
Basic human rights is accepted worldwide and as such, is embodied in various written constitutions throughout the world, in the charter of the United Nations and in other international agreements especially the Helsinki Convention.

Therefore, the basic idea of human development to improve on the lives and freedoms of ordinary Sierra Leoneans is fundamental and has much in common with the concerns expressed by Human Rights activists throughout the country.

Apparently, the promotion of human development and the adherence to human rights in Sierra Leone share in many ways, a common motivation, and reflect a fundamental commitment in the promotion of freedom, well-being and dignity of every peace loving Sierra Leonean irrespective of tribal or regional sentiments.

However, these underlying concerns have been championed in different ways for quite a considerable period. In fact, the French declaration of the rights of man and of the citizen came in 1789, but the recent literatures on human development and on human rights have given new shape to the old aspirations and objectives.

In real context, human beings need to have their necessities of life ranging from food, shelter, education, health and pure drinking water.

Sadly, though, quite a considerable number of urban and rural dwellers in Sierra Leone cannot boast of the necessities of life such as a square meal a day, adequate health facilities and good education.

The idea of human development focuses directly on the improvement on human lives and well-being. It also encompasses the freedoms that make life worth living. Human development is also integrally connected with enabling persons through capacity building to engage in certain economic activities to improve one's living standard.

In actual sense, if people value the freedom of life they will have the opportunity to choose their own fate. Even though capabilities of individuals could vary person to person, the fulfillment in providing food to avoid starvation and malnourishment would have been greatly enhanced. In essence, the human development trend in Sierra Leone is far from being com-
Conclusively, the task ahead of President Ernest Bai Koroma is daunting but for Sierra Leone to be completely free from the doldrums of poverty, his government must take cognizance of human rights and human development for economic prosperity.

Rice, our staple food that is very vital for human sustenance, growth and development is becoming too expensive for the impoverished lot. Research indicates that 60% of the total population in Sierra Leone cannot have a square meal a day. In addition, that less than 15% earn a dollar per day to meet with their social and economic commitments.

Another thorny issue which has created serious set back to the worst of congestion and exposure to diseases adopt illegal means to erect structures in forest areas, which is now resulting to mass deforestation and flooding experienced by slum dwellers.

Indeed, the human development index (HDI) which placed Sierra Leone on the bottom of the ladder incorporates the most elementary parameters, such as living a longer and healthy life, being knowledgeable, enjoying a decent standard of living and the some other indices.

Therefore, when we are talking about human rights we must base our assessment on an overall formula, and not talking about human rights in the context human development cannot actually ignore the importance of political liberties and democratic freedom.

In Sierra Leone today, democratic freedom and civil rights can be extremely important for enhancing the protection of the suffering masses who live less than a dollar per day. This can only be applicable if the suffering masses have strong reason to resist the exploitative and abusive tendencies of their employers and some of the corrupt politicians who are bent on amassing wealth at the detriment of others. A further difference is that politicians in authority receive salaries and incentives thereby rendering them insensitive to the plight of the suffering masses who voted them in.

Recent documents such as the Declaration on the Right to Development and the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, laid more emphasis on economic, social and cultural rights together with that of civil and political rights.

Conclusively, the task ahead of President Ernest Bai Koroma is daunting but for Sierra Leone to be completely free from the doldrums of poverty, his government must take cognizance of human rights and human development for economic prosperity.

According to John Madison, "human rights and human development can indicate the duties of others in the society to enhance human development in one way or another". He added that the invoking of duties come a host of related concerns such as accountability, culpability and responsibility.

In essence, if the government puts in place the necessary mechanisms, Sierra Leone will develop gradually and the suffering masses will in turn breathe a sigh of relief.
Taylor’s Trial Continues

ABDUL RASHID: The Prosecution’s fourth witness, Dennis Coker, testifying before the Special Court of (sic.) Sierra Leone says money and other valuables looted from Sierra Leone were taken to Charles Taylor in Liberia.

COUNSEL: Now you said that this money was to be brought to Kailahun. Is that correct?

COKER: (Through interpreter) Yes, but it was not to stop there as well. To reach Kailahun, go to Buedu, and not stop there, and go to Liberia.

COUNSEL: How did you lean that?

COKER: We met our colleagues in this thing, and they were saying that whatever good, whatever beneficial they had in the war on that end, they will take to Charles Taylor. But God wants the truth: I did not see them discuss that business with Charles Taylor but I used to see them take them to Liberia

ABDUL RASHID: He also said that a Liberian was the Operation Commander in Koidu when RUF and AFRC junta forces captured the area. The witness speaks Mende, so he is being interpreted.

COUNSEL: Now you mentioned Isaac. Do you know who Isaac was?

COKER: I did not know him well. I knew him there. He was a Liberian from what they were saying, and I did not even ask him. But I used to hear him speaking Liberian.

COUNSEL: When you say speaking Liberian, what do you mean?

COKER: Liberian language in West Africa. Whoever comes from West Africa, when a Liberian person speaks you will know that he is a Liberian. There’s a word that they say, “My man, my man”. They have it a lot when they speak. As long as you are a Liberian, you will never say a word without saying “My man”, just like a Sierra Leonean would say “bo”.

[Gap in tape]

Yes, Issa was there, and Superman, Dennis Mingo.

COUNSEL: Who is Dennis Mingo?

COKER: Dennis Mingo was a Liberian. At that time he was the Operation Commander. He was the one who led the attack.

COUNSEL: Attack on where?

COKER: Koidu. He captured Koidu from Kamajors and the Government.

ABDUL RASHID: Coker said he heard Sam Bockarie on his satellite radio ordering Issa Sesay to launch an operation code named “No Living Thing” in Koidu. The former Sierra Leone Army officer told the Court the operation led to the burning of every house in Koidu. He said Johnny Paul Koroma and Issa
Sesay were in Koidu when the operation took place. Coker recalled that the RUF and AFRC forces broke into a bank and took a huge sum of money.


[Transcribed by the Press and Public Affairs Office]
Evening Report from Special Court

By Joseph Cheeseman

The Defence team of Charles Taylor has ended its cross-examination of the Prosecution’s third witness, Varmuyah Sherif, insisting that he received money to testify against his former boss, Charles Taylor. The Defence said Sherif bribed other Liberians to testify against the former Liberian leader. But Mr. Sherif denied the allegation. Sherif told the Court that money he received from the Prosecution was just for costs was [indistinct] for costs incurred when he helped them in their work. However, the Defence said Sherif received a lot of money from the Prosecution to tell lies about the former Liberian president. Courtenay Griffiths cited instances where Sherif and his family received money that he did not deserve.

GRIFFITHS: Then the 21st of April, 20,000 in local currency. And on the 30th of April, a further 20,000 in local currency. Then on the 29th of June a further 146,000 in local currency. Then on the 12th of July, 30,000 in local currency. And during that whole period not a single interview. You’re in it for the money, aren’t you Mr. Sheif.

SHERIF: I don’t know, I have no record of this.

GRIFFITHS: Mr. Sheriff, what I’m suggesting, and I want you to be quite clear about it, once you mentioned diamonds the money started coming in, and that’s what you wanted, wasn’t it?

SHERIF: That is not true.

GRIFFITHS: Can you explain then how it was that immediately following the mention of diamonds, you’re getting all this money, and you’re not being interviewed once? What’s the money for?

SHERIF: Some money did (as heard) that you mentioned here just now. I left from Monrovia with my family to be relocated when my family were under threat in 1st of April 2007. From that time up to the present my allowance has been given to me to the area I’m at. So you measure all that. What would you expect.

The Defence cross-examined Sherif for the third day told the Court that the Guinean government supported the Liberian rebel LURD. But Sherif said the Guinean government supported LURD when Taylor forces began attacking Guinea. The Defence said Sherif went to Sierra Leone to give secret information to LURD and not to get Sam Bockarie. But Sherif told the Court as Assistant Director of the SSS he could not travel out of Monrovia without the president’s permission. On re-examination, Sherif said he once faked his insanity because Taylor wanted him to help attack Guinea and Sierra Leone.

SHERIF: I did not wanted (sic.) to be part of attacking Guinea. Attacking Sierra Leone, attacking Guinea, I would be attacking my family member (sic). So I personally make (sic.) myself stupid so they can forget about me. Other than that, it didn’t take us three or four months and when I’m being called and being given arms and ammunition and to attack as either war in Liberia and somebody come here and attacking in Liberia, then I can defend the government on that. But I can not be part of any war that would attack Sierra Leone. That is my mother home, my great great people migrated from Mali Empire to pass through Guinea to come to Liberia. I can not be part of any force to attack Guinea. So I was not crazy. [I was] up to my sense and know what I was doing.
At the end of Sherif’s testimony, the Prosecution adduced into evidence the photo of a girl amputated during the Sierra Leone civil war. Sherif said former Sierra Leone President Tejan Kabbah took the girl to an ECOWAS meeting in 1999, but the Defence team resisted the admission of the photo into evidence.

GRIFFITHS: In our submission consequently, it’s difficult to see what this photograph is relevant to. If my learned friend can indicate and issue between the Prosecution and the Accused to which this is relevant, then I’d be grateful to be so informed. But in our submission, as things currently stand it has no relevance whatsoever.

JUSTICE SEBUTINDE: The Trial Chamber is of the view that this photograph, MFI 5, is relevant and admissible, and is therefore admitted as Exhibit P-29.

The Prosecution’s fourth witness, former Sierra Leonean Army officer Dennis Coker, took the stand later, but time could not permit him to continue his testimony on Monday. Dennis was originally a protected witness, but he later waived the protected status. He will now testify in open court.

This is Joseph Cheeseman reporting for the BBC World Service Trust and Search for Common Ground, from The Hague.

[Transcribed by the Office of Press and Public Affairs]
Charles Taylor trial witness tells of RUF rebels' atrocities

THE HAGUE (AFP) — A former rebel fighter testified in the war crimes trial of ex-Liberian president Charles Taylor on Tuesday that the RUF in Sierra Leone killed and raped civilians and burned their homes.

Dennis Koker, 39, a fighter for the AFRC rebel group which was aligned to the RUF, told the Special Court for Sierra Leone how RUF rebels "started shooting at people, killing them and setting their houses on fire".

The RUF (Revolutionary United Front) rebels also forced civilians to follow them carrying all the things the rebels had looted, he said.

"It was all civilians, children and adults, men and women ... if they refused saying they weren't able to carry, (the rebels) would shoot (them)," Koker told the trial, which is taking place in The Hague.

Prosecutors here say that Taylor supported and directed the RUF rebels -- who along with the AFRC fought in Sierra Leone's bloody 1991-2001 civil war -- to gain control of the country's diamonds and other natural resources.

Koker was a soldier in the Sierra Leone Army before he joined the military Junta Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC).

When he was fighting with the RUF rebels he took part in a so-called scorched earth campaign known as "Operation No Living Thing".

After being chased out of the Sierra Leone capital of Freetown in February 1998, Koker and 5,000 other AFRC rebels joined the RUF fighters in their retreat to the east of the country.

When the fighters arrived in the town of Koidu in the diamond-rich Kono district "day and night they were burning houses, even concrete houses", according to Koker.

"They would even take the zinc, the roof," he said.

He told the trial that his commander told him Operation No Living Thing was an order from high command.

"So that when government forces (would) come they would not be able to stay in Kono," he explained.

The rebels took children to do household chores and women who were "made wives", meaning they were used as sex slaves.

"It was very common since the start of the war," Koker said.

Sierra Leone's civil war left some 120,000 people dead and thousands mutilated.

Taylor, the first former African head of state to appear before an international tribunal, faces 11 charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity.
It is another day in which the pain, the grief came to the surface, as a witness, Denis Koker, an officer in the Sierra Leone army and who later on joined the RUF rebels, recounted the events he witnessed during the war in Sierra Leone before the Special Court for Sierra Leone at The Hague.

The witness testified how, on the orders of the RUF and Johntas (militias) high command, houses in Kono, Sierra Leone were burned down and that, as Sam Bockarie (also known as “Mosquito”) told the witness he did it in case the government forces came to Kono, they would not be able to stay.

This was named "Operation No Leaving Things" and was conducted day and night.
Antwerp: Taylor Trial Opens with Industry's Role

By Marc Goldstein  Posted

RAPAPORT... While the war crimes trial of former Liberia President Charles Taylor at The Hague is expected to continue through 2009, revelations surfaced during the first two weeks of testimony that link the defendant with Belgium's diamond trade.

Taylor stands accused of 11 counts of war crimes and is blamed for using diamonds from Sierra Leone to fund arms purchases. Several people reportedly involved in Taylor’s diamond trafficking used to live -- and some apparently still live-- in Belgium. It sounds as if Antwerp-based diamantaires in particular were directly and indirectly responsible for Taylor’s fortune and his ability to launder diamonds, according to Belgium press reports.

At this early stage no Belgian diamantaire in particular has been identified, but names from Russia's underground have surfaced.

During the first week the International Court made extensive use of testimony from blood diamond expert Ian Smillie, research coordinator for Partnership Africa Canada. Smillie stated that between 1990 and 1999 Belgium's imports of Liberia rough would have reached 5 million carats per year. (That is 24 times more than Liberia's total national output.) Where did the rest come from? The implication was that stones were smuggled in from abroad.

The Court has also reviewed video testimony of those who have suffered the most horrible crimes against humanity under the direction of Taylor's military. Taylor pleaded innocent to all charges in August 2006.

Antwerp industry organizations are determining how and when to respond to this news.

The story continues to unfold and more extensive coverage of this trial will be published in February's Rapaport Diamond Report.
11:30 Cross-examination of prosecution witness Dennis Koker continues

Posted by Webmaster on January 16, 2008

Court is back in session.

Defense counsel Morris Anyah resumes his cross-examination of prosecution witness Dennis Koker:

Def: Yesterday we were going through some of the events in Koidu. Speaking about Kono District and Operation No Living Thing, you said civilians were captured, including boys and girls.

Wit: Yes.

Def: They were captured to carry loads?

Wit: The adults were carrying loads, not the children.

Def: There were other things you said happened to civilians. Was there a command from above to the foot soldiers to capture civilians?

Wit: What do you mean by commander and ordinary soldiers?

Def: Was there a command from the top people in the RUF or AFRC in Kono to the lower soldiers to capture civilians?

Wit: Yes.

Def: Are you absolutely sure about that?

Wit: I’m sure.

Def: (Referencing a document) You spoke with the prosecution on May 21, 2007 and they took notes of the conversation. It says here: witness said he saw civilians being captured by RUF and AFRC soldiers, men, women and children. Witness states this took place in Kono, in the areas occupied by RUF and AFRC in the first week of Feb 1998. He said they were to be used as labor to carry looted property. He says the capturing was not ordered, but a common practice. That’s what you said, isn’t it?

Wit: Yes.

Def: Yesterday we spoke about events in Masiaka, Tonkolili and Kailahun.

Wit: Yes.
Def: Yesterday you said civilians were forcefully captured.

Wit: Yes.

Def: How far is Masiaka from Makeni?

Wit: I don’t know.

Def: I put it to you that with respect to Kailahun, the capturing of civilians was not caused by any order from any top commander. Do you agree?

Wit: No, I don’t.

Def: Yesterday you said you were an overseer of prisoners of war?

Wit: Yes.

Def: This was in Beudu, Kailahun District?

Wit: Yes.

Def: At one time, Nigerian soldiers were in your custody?

Wit: Yes.

Def: This was shortly after the Lome Agreement of July 1999?

Wit: I don’t know about Lome. I was in the bush.

Def: Did you say that Foday Sankoh came to Beudu in July 1999?

Wit: Yes, he came to Beudu and said no more war.

Def: You saw him?

Wit: Yes.

Def: That was in July 1999?

Wit: At that time I wasn’t using a calendar. But I saw him.

Def: In your statement, I put it to you that you said he came in July 1999.

Wit: It was in the rainy season.

Def: (References a document) In your first statement to the prosecution in March 2003: witness could remember sometime in July 1999 when Sankoh came to Beudu. Johnny Paul was with him. Do you recall?
Wit: It was the rainy season.

Def: You said specifically July. Do you disagree that you said that?

Wit: It was in the rainy season.

Def: If I told you that Sankoh was in jail in July 1999, would I be mistaken?

Wit: I know he came in the rainy season. I don’t know when he was released from jail.

Def: There were 20 ECOMOG soldiers in your custody, were there not?

Wit: There were 21.

Def: At some point a delegation came from Freetown to Beudu to secure their release?

Wit: Yes.

Def: One of the members was S.Y.B. Rogers, now deceased, who was an RUF member.

Wit: I knew him as Pa Rogers.

Def: He came with the delegation from Freetown?

Wit: He did not come to me. He came to my masters.

Def: I was asking whether he came to Beudu.

Wit: People came to Beudu, but I did not see him. I was in the office, not in Mosquito’s house. There was some distance between Mosquito’s house and my office. I was not a member of the council that would receive members of any delegation.

Def: Yesterday you were close enough to Bockarie to be present when arms were delivered?

Wit: Yes, for security reasons, as an MP.

Def: One of the Nigerian soldiers developed tuberculosis while in custody?

Wit: Yes.

Def: I put it to you that you and your MP commander, Tom Sandie, executed him in the dark of night and buried him.

Wit: Are you talking about Tom Sandie or me?
Def: The two of you killed him, true or false?

Wit: I did not do that. I don’t know if Tom Sandie did, I did not do that.

Def: You agree one Nigerian soldier died in your custody?

Wit: He did not die in our hands. He did not die in prison or detention. He was taken to Mosquito. I was not there. It was not in my presence. He was taken from my place and they said he was being taken to Mosquito. I’m talking for myself, not for Tom Sandie. Nobody ever died in that MP house.

Def: Did one of those 21 POW soldiers die?

Wit: Yes.

Def: He was in the custody of the RUF at the time?

Wit: Yes.

Def: You told us yesterday that civilians were mistreated in Masiaka?

Wit: Yes.

Def: We have counted about ten interviews you’ve done with the prosecution. I put to you that in all of these records, at no time did you say that civilians were mistreated in Masiaka until one time, in your last interview before testifying here.

Wit: If any civilian in Masiaka says they were not abused, then I tell a lie.

Def: That wasn’t my question. In nine interviews, you never mentioned mistreatment of civilians in Masiaka. Is that true?

Wit: I did not say it in the first statement. I said it in the last. I already told you, so many things happened.

Def: You said you didn’t mention abuse of civilians in Masiaka in the first statement. I put to you that you also left it out of the next 8 interviews.

Wit: The mistreatment started in Freetown and continued up to Beudu and even to the end of the war. If you want me to explain mistreatment of civilians, you’ll have to write a lot. I didn’t tell it all at one time.

Def: You had 9 different opportunities to tell the prosecution that civilians were mistreated in Masiaka and you failed to do so.

Wit: I told the court in Freetown twice. I know about a lot of mistreatment during the war.
Def: I take it you do not wish to answer the question. Yesterday you testified about events in Beudu. You said you got there in March 1998, correct?

Wit: No.

Def: It was sometime between February and March?

Wit: We went to Kailahun first before Beudu. I was in Kailahun in March. I went to Beudu from Jokebo. I can’t recall the month. It’s a long time now.

Def: How much time passed from when you were in Kailahun Town until you got to Beudu.

Wit: I took a little long. I went to Jokebo first.

Def: It was 1998?

Wit: Yes.

Def: In Beudu, there was RUF, ECOMOG, other peacekeepers - what you would call military observers?

Wit: There were no military observers when I was in Beudu.

Def: Were you there until 2000?

Wit: I was there from 1998-1999. 2000 did not meet me there.

Def: In addition to RUF and ECOMOG, Kamajors were in Beudu when you were there, true?

Wit: It was a rebel zone, not a Kamajor zone. AFRC members were there.

Def: Have you ever heard of ULIMO?

Wit: Yes. I did not care about anything to do with Liberia. I only care about Sierra Leone. I heard the name ULIMO, but I didn’t know what it was.

Def: You do not like Liberia, do you?

Wit: I like Liberians. We’re all West Africans. They should mind their business and we should mind ours in Sierra Leone.

Def: The border area in 1998 was controlled by ULIMO-K, true or false?

Wit: I’m hearing that from you, but I don’t know about that.

Def: In 1998 you were a military man with the RUF. You were aware of all other warring factions near Beudu?
Wit: I was a military man with the RUF. The soldiers in Holland here cannot tell the number of battalions in Sweden.

Def: How far is Beudu from the Liberia border.

Wit: From Beudu to Dawa is seven miles.

Def: So I'm speaking of a distance of 7 miles. Were you aware of ULIMO fighters at that border in 1998?

Wit: There was no ULIMO there. There were Navy Rangers—Charles Taylor's soldiers.

Def: The same Navy Rangers you said yesterday off-loaded trucks?

Wit: They were not ULIMO, but Charles Taylor's people.

Def: Did you say you knew ULIMO to be at the border between SL and Liberia in 1998?

Wit: I did not say so, and I did not know them. I used to know the Navy Rangers. At that time it was Charles Taylor's government.

Def: The same men you said you saw with yellow polo T-shirts with NPFL written on them?

Wit: Yes.

Def: The NPFL was no longer in existence in 1998. Am I mistaken?

Wit: They are the ones I saw. I saw them there.

Def: You did visit the border area between SL and Liberia at that time?

Wit: Yes. I used to go there. I saw Navy Rangers. They did not say they were ULIMO.

Def: Those borders were not closed at that time. People could move back and forth?

Wit: Yes.

Def: Whenever there were conflicts in SL, refugees would move into Liberia, and when there were problems in Liberia, refugees moved to SL?

Wit: Yes.

Def: Liberians did move to SL as refugees?
Wit: Yes.

Def: You said yesterday about the languages in this general area?

Wit: Yes.

Def: Beudu is in Kissi Tongi Chiefdom and the language is Kissi?

Wit: Yes.

Def: On the Liberian side is Lofa County and there are Golas there?

Wit: There’s not just one ethnic group there. (Names a few.)

Def: In that area, Liberian English is spoken frequently?

Wit: We were using Liberian currency in Kailahun in 1998. The Leone had no value there.

Def: Liberian English was spoken frequently in 1998 along the border areas of SL and Liberia?

Wit: Yes.

Def: There were several different crossing points - at Dawa, Baidu?

Wit: Yes.

Def: Also at Sapia?

Wit: I don’t know that.

Def: There was a way to access Guinea too?

Wit: Yes.

Def: So there were different ways people could move back and forth among SL, Liberia and Guinea?

Wit: It’s not like that. There was security there. The border was protected.

Def: At this time there was no Sierra Leonean Army?

Wit: There were SL soldiers there, but not on the Kailahun end.

Def: Was there an organized SL Army in Beudu at the time?

Wit: No, we were all rebels.
Def: There were Liberians within the RUF?

Wit: Yes.

Def: Quite a number of Liberians in senior RUF positions?

Wit: Yes.

Def: One was a brigade commander in Kailahun, Col. Martin George?

Wit: Yes.

Def: At one point a Liberian woman replaced your supervisor, Tom Sandie?

Wit: Yes.

Def: Aside from official border crossing points, there were also footpaths and other unofficial crossing points?

Wit: No. There was no road you would use that was not known by the government. The RUF government protected the border on that side so that no enemy could cross.

Def: The government knew every single crossing and had complete control?

Wit: Kabbah’s government or the RUF government?

Def: There was no point along the SL-Liberian border not controlled by the RUF?

Wit: The RUF controlled it. Security was paramount there.

Def: That’s a forest area?

Wit: Yes.

Def: We’re talking about thick, dense forest?

Wit: Yes.

Def: You know somebody named Foday Kalloh?

Wit: Yes.

Def: Foday Kalloh was a former member of the RUF?

Wit: Yes.

Def: Foday Kalloh, according to you, was killed by Issa Sesay in September 1998?
Wit: Yes. Issa Sesay killed him, but I can’t remember the month.

Def: Because he was alleged to sell arms to ECOMOG?

Wit: They did not say he sold guns. He talked with ECOMOG.

Def: Was he killed for trading with ECOMOG?

Wit: They had no gun business with ECOMOG. They said he went to Guinea to talk to ECOMOG. They just had conversation.

Def: There is a distinction between “trading” and “having a conversation”. (References a document) You told the prosecution on 13 April 2005. You said in about September 1998 I saw Issa shoot Kalloh. The allegation was that Kalloh had traded with ECOMOG. True?

Wit: I said trading but didn’t mention arms. There were no arms.

Def: You’re saying Kalloh was killed for having conversations with ECOMOG?

Wit: Yes.

Def: What you meant by trading was having conversation?

Wit: Yes. He went to talk to them. I wasn’t there. But he told me he went to talk to ECOMOG, that he was then arrested.

Def: Do you recall rumors while you were in Beudu that Ukrainians were bringing arms into SL?

Wit: I can’t recall that. It’s a long time now.

Def: (Referencing a document) You told the prosecution on 13 April 2005 that while the Junta was in power in SL, I heard rumors that Ukrainians were bringing arms into SL. Did you say that to the prosecution?

Wit: Yes. I saw a Ukrainian ship myself in Freetown.

Def: So one source of arms into Sierra Leone was Ukraine?

Wit: Ukrainians would not just bring guns from Ukraine if somebody is not transacting with them.

Def: Do you think that Ukrainian ship brought arms into SL?

Wit: I did not see guns. Maybe there was an agreement between the AFRC government and Ukraine.
Def: Do you agree that Ukrainians were believed to be bringing arms into SL at that time?

Wit: I saw a Ukrainian ship. I did not see them off-load guns.

Def: Yesterday you spoke of off-loading guns from trucks near Bockarie’s place in Beudu. You said you personally assisted in off-loading weapons from Liberia?

Wit: Yes.

Def: In July 1998?

Wit: Yes.

Def: You spoke about how you knew these weapons came from Liberia. One was because the men spoke Liberian English?

Wit: Yes.

Def: You claim the men told you the weapons came from Liberia?

Prosecution objects that defense is mischaracterizing the witness’s prior testimony. Sebutinde allows defense to proceed.

Def: You said the men who brought the weapons told you they brought them from Liberia?

Wit: That is true.

Def: The first event you assisted with had a truck, a car, a jeep, and 7 people from Liberia?

Wit: Yes.

Def: You saw some of them wearing yellow polo T-shirts with the words Navy Ranger NPFL?

Wit: I saw that many times. It was their uniform.

Def: Is that the first time you saw them?

Wit: That T-shirt is a uniform.

Def: Do you agree, yes or no, there were men wearing uniforms that said “NPFL Navy Rangers”?

Wit: Yes.

Def: On the second delivery, you saw 2 big trucks, 2 mini-vans and a Range Rover?
Wit: Yes.

Def: I want to go over your previous statements about arms deliveries from Liberia, as well as your testimony in the AFRC case in July 2005. (References document) This is your statement from March 2003: witness participated about 4 times in off-loading arms from DAF trucks into a store on Gokodu Rd in Beudu. He saw arms and ammunition. He knew the arms were from Liberian because the Liberians spoke Liberian English and wore Liberian uniforms. You said this?

Wit: True.

Def: There’s no mention of the name Charles Taylor?

Wit: It was Charles Taylor’s country. It had come from there.

Def: That statement doesn’t mention T-shirts with the NPFL logo, does it?

Wit: They were Liberian soldiers in Liberian uniforms. They were Taylor’s soldiers. I did not see Taylor there.

Def: I ask again. What I read does not mention Liberian soldiers wearing NPFL t-shirts, does it?

Wit: Yes, they wore uniforms. Some of them wore polo t-shirts under the military jacket. Some had writing on the t-shirt. The jackets had no writing.

Def: Nowhere in that statement does it mention that some of the vehicles were mini-vans or cars, correct?

Wit: The guns that came there did not walk on foot. If you say there weren’t vehicles, then you’re lying. Did they come by magic?

Def: Yesterday you were very specific about the types of vehicles. You were not specific in this statement.

Wit: The guns were in the trucks, not in the jeeps or Range Rovers. The jeeps and Range Rovers carried security personnel for the delivery.

Def: One of the ways you knew the guns came from Liberia was because the men spoke Liberian English?

Wit: Yes.

Def: You also said you knew they came from Liberia because that’s what the men told you?

Wit: Yes, they came from Liberia, not from Guinea.
Def: (Referencing document) You told the prosecution in February 2004: witness saw...

Prosecution interrupts to request that defense portray the statement accurately: they were additions to his previous statement. Judge Sebutinde agrees.

Def: In February 2004 you made additions to a prior statement?

Wit: Yes.

Def: Before this you’d had three prior interviews with the prosecution?

Wit: Yes.

Def: You told them Feb 2004. I saw arms cross at Dawa to come to Beudu. The cars came from Beudu. Tom Sandie also told me they were expecting arms from Liberia.

Wit: Yes.

Def: So you source on this occasion was the direction from which the vehicles came?

Wit: The road they used to come and the briefing from my master, Tom Sandie. That’s how I knew they came from Liberia. And I saw the guns myself. I listed them.

Def: You are not saying you can look at a gun and know it’s from Liberia, are you?

Wit: I can tell you where the gun is produced. I had military training and I know a little about guns.

Def: You can look at a gun and tell us in which country it was manufactured?

Wit: Yes. Berettas are made by Italians. M-16 is licensed. Chinese AKs are licensed. Russian AKs are licensed. I can tell you where they were manufactured.

Def: The guns you saw were automatic weapons?

Wit: Yes.

Def: In July 1998, what automatic weapons were made in Liberia?

Wit: Liberia does not make guns. They get them from the Americans. I know they have M-16s. The guns that were coming were Russian.

Def: The guns you saw were made in Russia?
Wit: Yes. But how did they get to Liberia and to Sierra Leone? That was my surprise.

Def: (Referencing a document) In April 2005, you told the prosecution you saw the trucks arrive at Mosquito’s house. I was asked to provide security. My men told me Liberians came with guns.

Wit: Yes, that’s what I said.

Def: So you were told by your men?

Wit: Yes, they told me they were Taylor’s men.

Def: It says: when in Beudu, Issa Sesay moved back and forth to Liberia to make arrangements with Taylor’s men. I know because Issa went with 18 bags of money to Liberia. When he came back he said it was stolen. you said this?

Wit: Yes.

Def: So another basis of your belief that arms came from Taylor is this incident where Issa Sesay went to Liberia with money?

Wit: I can’t know why he went. I don’t know whether he was buying guns. He came back and said he’d gone with money.

Def: (Referencing a document) You told the prosecution, as reflected in interview notes from May 2007: witness states that relating to the arms shipments in 1998, the Liberians told him that the materials were from Taylor’s place in Liberia and that the materials were given to them to be brought to Beudu. Witness states that this information comes from more than one conversation. That’s what you told the prosecution in May 2007?

Wit: Yes, that is true.

Def: When you made this statement to the prosecution, there is no mention of you off-loading arms from trucks. Correct?

Wit: Yes. I did not off-load guns. I recorded it.

Court is adjourning until 11:30. With the half-hour delay to the media center here at the facilities of the International Criminal Court, our coverage will resume at 12:00 (11:00 in Sierra Leone and Liberia).

Day 8 of witness testimony

Posted by Webmaster on January 16, 2008

Welcome back to the live-blog of the Charles Taylor trial as we enter day 8 of witness testimony. Today the defense will continue to cross-examine prosecution
witness Dennis Koker. Court began at 9:30, and our account will continue at 10:00 (9:00 in Sierra Leone and Liberia) once the audio and video is available in the media center. We attempt to be as accurate as possible, but cannot guarantee accuracy. This is not a full transcript.

**Koker Testifies about “Operation No Living Thing” and Arms Deliveries from Liberia to Sierra Leone; Defense Counsel Begins Koker Cross-Examination**

Posted by Webmaster on January 15, 2008

Prosecution team member Christopher Santora resumed his direct examination of Dennis Koker today. Charles Taylor, wearing his gold-trimmed glasses and dressed in a gray pinstriped suit, sat quietly throughout the proceedings. Santora’s examination of Koker focused on the movement of RUF and Junta forces throughout Sierra Leone; the capture, enslavement and treatment of civilians; and the delivery of arms from Liberia into Sierra Leone. The defense team started its cross-examination of Koker immediately after his direct examination was completed at 2:30 p.m., at the start of the afternoon session.

**Koker Described the RUF Forces’ Movement Through Sierra Leone**

Koker testified that he was born in the Bo District of Sierra Leone and subsequently moved to the Kailahun District in January 1991. Before joining the army, Koker worked as an artist and he used those skills at the Juba Barracks where he served as a sign writer, responsible for logos and decorations on army vehicles. Koker joined the army in 1991 and his first assignment was VIP protection for Army Colonel S. B. Jumo. He held this position until the NPRC Government was overthrown in January 1996 when he was relocated to the Juba Barracks in Freetown to work for the Electrical and Mechanical Engineering Unit.

In February 1998, the AFRC was driven from Freetown by ECOMOG. Koker testified that a large group of 5,000 people, consisting of men, women and children, left the city traveling together on foot — many carrying their property — and in vehicles. He detailed their arrival in Tombo, where they boarded boats to cross the river to Fogbo. When they arrived in Masiaka, there were more people than the town could contain. Koker testified that all of the soldiers from Freetown were present, as well as rebels. Koker identified the rebel commanders that were present in Masiaka, including Eldred Collins, Gummo Jalloh, and Pa Kosiah. He stated that, at the time, Issa Sesay was second in command in the RUF. He also described the treatment of civilians in Masiaka and surrounding villages, reporting that the RUF and Juntas were capturing civilians and forcing them to carry looted property for them.

Koker stated that the group left Masiaka and walked through the night to Makeni. In Makeni, he saw houses being looted and burned. Issa Sesay issued an order to stop the burning, but these orders were only followed when the RUF and Juntas starting shooting the arsonists. Koker also stated that civilians were being captured and women were being forced to become their captor’s wives.
Koker testified that it took his group a week to get to Koidu from Freetown. He identified the commanders who were present in Koidu, including Issa Sesay and Superman — Dennis Mingo, a Liberian operations commander who led the attack on Koidu. He also identified AFRC commanders who were in Koidu, including Alex Tambe Brima, Honorable Sammi, Johnny Paul and Pa Morlai. While in Koidu, Koker testified that he saw Issa Sesay speaking on a satellite phone with Sam Bockarie. He could tell Issa Sesay was speaking with Sam Bockarie because he referred to him as “Master.”

Koker also provided a detailed description of “Operation No Living Thing” that took place while he was in Koidu. Forces were burning all of the houses in the town and surrounding areas at the order of the commanders. This order, carried out by RUF and the Juntas, was designed to scorch the earth and make it impossible for ECOMOG troops to stay in Koidu.

Koker also testified regarding an incident where the RUF and AFRC forces broke into a bank in Koidu and took diamonds and money. He described the large bags of money and testified that he did not want to be responsible for transporting this money. Eldred Collins assigned Koker and Staff Sergeant Saliu Kanneh to deliver the money. Koker believed that following this order would be a disgrace to his family. When he arrived in Baoma, he saw Kanneh who had accompanied the money. He was naked and told Koker that he had been accused of stealing part of the money. Koker testified that the money and diamonds were being taken to Liberia. His colleagues informed him that the money would be taken to Charles Taylor. The witness stated that he did not see the money being handed to Charles Taylor, but he was informed that the money was going to Liberia.

Brutal Treatment of Women and Children

Throughout his direct examination, Koker described the brutal treatment inflicted on civilians. His account was not limited to women and children, as he also described the recruitment of “manpower” for the forces. Koker recalled one instance where he was punished and sent on a mission where he was forced to recruit additional manpower. Major Tom Sandie sent seven military police (“MPs”) to Dodo and Galema. In Galema, the MPs saw two civilians who were fleeing and captured them. The civilians were stripped naked and tied up to keep them from escaping. All of their civilian property was taken and given to one MP. The MPs captured 50 civilians on this mission and brought them back to Beudu where they were forced to clear fields for an airstrip that was being constructed on Gokodu Road.

Koker also testified about his responsibilities as a military police officer, which included watching over prisoners of war. This assignment came directly from Mosquito, Sam Bockarie. When commanders captured civilians, they sent them to Beudu where the conditions for civilians were not good. Koker explained that the civilians were forced to work without pay on the farms of commanders or were forced to carry heavy loads from one town to another for the commanders.
Koker testified about the capturing of women who were turned into the “wives” of the commanders. He likened this occurrence to “having tea to drink” because it was such a common practice. He also testified about the consequences for women who “overlooked” their commander husband. While stationed as a military police officer in Beudu, commanders would bring captured women into the station and state that they had disrespected them. The crying women would explain that they had been captured on the frontline. The commanders would order Koker to detain the women for being disrespectful. Koker described one specific instance where Victor Kallon, a Major in the RUF, brought in a captured woman to the station, stripped her down to her underwear and gave her 50 lashings. The woman explained that Victor Kallon had captured her and turned her into his wife. Koker said he was required to detain these women per the commanding officers’ orders.

Koker also testified about the treatment of children who were separated from their families and forced to fight with guns for the RUF. These children were 12 and 14 years old and Koker would inquire about their age in secret because they were too young to participate. These children were part of the SBU — Small Boys Unit. Koker stated that they were taken from their families and given guns, despite the fact that they were not fit for military work.

**The Delivery of Arms from Liberia into Sierra Leone**

Koker testified about the delivery of arms and ammunition from Liberia into Sierra Leone as well as his participation in the off-loading of arms delivered from Liberia to Sam Bockarie’s home on Dawa Road in Beudu. From Beudu, Dawa Road leads to Foya Tinkia, right across the border in Liberia. Koker testified about four separate occasions where convoys from Liberia brought arms into Sierra Leone via Sam Bockarie’s house. He was personally present for two of the these shipments.

In July 1998, Koker was sent to help off-load a delivery. Koker stated that seven or more people from Liberia arrived in an NGO Land-Cruiser and a red jeep. The individuals in the convoy spoke with a Liberian dialect and wore camouflage and black caps. Some had polo T-shirts that said NPFL Navy Rangers. The shirts, Koker said, were sky blue, navy blue and black mixed camouflaged. They had brought “material”, which was a code name for ammunition, and included: rocket-propelled grenade tubes and bombs, a jet-tracer gun designed to shoot down Alpha jets used by ECOMOG, anti-tank mines, and anti-personnel mines, .50 caliber ammunition, mortars, and TNT. Koker was sent to the ammunition dump where the material was unloaded, listed, and stored.

The second shipment Koker observed involved more vehicles and happened within a month of the previous incident. Koker testified that he was present at Sam Bockarie’s house when the vehicles arrived. Koker stated that he was able to identify the group as Liberians based on the way they talked. Mosquito arrived with the Liberians, including General Fayah. The vehicles in the convoy included land-cruisers, cars, and trucks. Koker stated that he was charged with listing out the materials that arrived and then presenting the list to Tom Sandie, who delivered it
to Mosquito. Koker testified that he saw the materials, which included: AK ammunition, G-3 guns, G-3 ammunition, many RPG tubes and bombs, mines, mortar bombs, heavy machine guns (HMGs) and ammunition. There was also rice on top of the guns in one of the trucks. Koker further stated that some of the Liberians were dressed in military uniforms and carried guns.

**Defense Counsel Commences Cross-examination of Koker**

In the afternoon session, Defense Counsel Morris Anyah began his cross-examination of Koker. Anyah questioned Koker regarding his participation in two other proceedings in Freeport involving Issa Sesay and Alex Tamba Brima. Koker confirmed that he had testified in both proceedings. Anyah also directed Koker through a series of questions highlighting the route Koker took to reach Freeport. Anyah spent much of the cross-examination this afternoon confronting Koker with statements made in the earlier AFRC proceedings and contrasting them to statements made in open court today. Anyah will continue his cross-examination of Koker tomorrow.
Newspaper Summary

International Colloquium on Women Convenes in Monrovia
(The Inquirer, Daily Observer and National Chronicle)

- An international Colloquium on Women’s Empowerment, Leadership Development, International Peace and Security, has opened in Monrovia. Addressing participants Monday at the opening session, President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf lauded the progress made by women throughout the world toward the advancement of women in all aspects of life. An Executive Mansion release issued in Monrovia challenged conference participants to explore practical measures that would enhance the role of women, particularly market women.

President Sirleaf Makes Several Appointments in Government
(Heritage)

- President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf has made several appointments in Government pending confirmation by the Liberian Senate. According to an Executive Mansion release, those appointed are, Dr. Elizabeth Davis Russell, President, William V.S Tubman College of Technology; Mr. Winsley Nanka, Deputy Director, Audits, General Auditing Commission; Ms. Elizabeth Tubman, Deputy Director Administration, General Auditing Commission and Ms. Laurine Johnson, Deputy Minister for Administration, Ministry of Public Works and Comfort Natt, Judge, Debt Court.
- Others are Ms. Angelique Weeks, Deputy Commissioner, Bureau of Maritime Affairs; Dr. S. Jabaru Carlon, Commissioner, Governance Commission; and Mr. Yar Suo Weh Dorliae, Commissioner, Governance Commission. In separate letters of appointment, the President expressed the hope that those appointed will justify the confidence reposed in them.

Lawmakers Split over Bribery Probe
(The Inquirer, Daily Observer, New Democrat, The Informer and Heritage)

- The House Committee Chairman on Executive says the body will not invite any outside force to investigate the bribery allegation hanging over the House. Dr. Kettehkumuehn Murray said the House would not allow any entity to come and probe into the sacred corridors of the body. Dr. Murray said allegations of bribery or any other claims must be investigated and decisions taken by the House itself.
- However, some members disagreed with Dr. Murray and said they would summit to any form of investigation including external probe. Representatives Elijah Seah and Edward Forh said it is important for an outside body to look into the bribery allegation. The Representatives spoke at the formal opening of the Lower House for Legislative duties. Earlier, Speaker Alex Tyler challenged his colleagues never to allow internal warfare and subversive activities to cause disunity among them.

German National in Court for Illegal Possession of Firearms
(National Chronicle, The Informer and Daily Observer)

- A German national, Kai Kubel, who was arrested recently with a nine-millimeter MAC pistol in Tubmanburg, Bomi County, was yesterday sent to court on charges of illegal possession of firearms.
According to the police, defendant Kubel was arrested after he had threatened to disable his ex-wife, Madam Peggy Kromah with the gun for allegedly refusing to give him information on a passport size photo. The police confirmed that suspect Kubel admitted to being in possession of the gun but however denied ever holding Madam Kromah at gun point. The defendant was charged with the illegal possession of fire arm in violation of the revised penal code of Liberia.

More Recount Atrocities at TRC Hearings
(The Inquirer, Daily Observer, New Democrat, The News and National Chronicle)

Hearings at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission continued for the fifth day on Monday with majority of the testimonies coming from perpetrators who said they were forcefully conscripted into the fighting forces. Eugene Gray an ex-SOD and ULIMO fighter recounted how Representative Saah Gbollie then Deputy Police Director for Operations ordered several officers of the defunct Special Operations Division to storm and “disorganizes” a gathering of students at the University of Liberia in 2001. He told the hearings that they flogged the students and took away valuables from them. Earlier, he told the hearings of his involvement in ULIMO in 1996. Also at the hearings, a survivor of the Lutheran Church massacre testified that former President Samuel Doe was among the perpetrators of the massacre.

Radio Summary

President Welcomes Lawmakers Back from Recess

Addressing the opening session of the National Legislature yesterday, President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf said that she was glad that members of the National Legislature have returned to the Capitol Building to resume their work following their recess. She reminded them that there was a huge legislative agenda that needs to be addressed by the Lawmakers and that the Executive Branch of Government looks forward to working with them. Meanwhile, Senate President Pro Temp Isaac Nyenabo announced that some 16 Bills were yet to be acted upon at the House of Senate even though they were read for the first time before the Senate adjourned for their recess last year.
(Also reported on Star Radio, Truth FM, SKY FM and ELBS)

Sub-regional Governments and UNHCR Integrate Refugees

According to a release issued yesterday, the UNHCR and some Governments of West African countries have begun the regional local integration of Liberian and Sierra Leonean refugees who opted not to be repatriated having concluded the repatriation of Sierra Leonean refugees in 2004 and Liberian refugees in 2007.

The release said that a conference would be held to highlight Government’s responsibility in the local integration initiative and would allow stakeholders to come up with commitments, concrete plans and actions to determine the social, economic and legal status of Sierra Leonean refugees who have opted to naturalize or obtain alien citizenship in Liberia.
(Also reported on Star Radio, Truth FM, SKY FM and ELBS)

Police Arrest Paynesville Armed Robbery Suspects

Correspondents said that the Liberia National Police over the weekend arrested suspects Oldpa Tweh, Prince Kennedy, Abu Koroma and Gayflor Kolubah in connection with an armed robbery incident in the Paynesville area. The armed robbers allegedly raped a female resident of the city and stole over US$500 and several cell phones one of which the Police reportedly retrieved.
(Also reported on Star Radio, Truth FM, SKY FM and ELBS)

Church-own Health Centre Commissioned in Monrovia

A new 40-bed health centre owned by the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church was yesterday opened in Monrovia and named in honor of long serving AME Church Missionary Richardson Adams.

Speaking at the dedicatory ceremony, the Centre’s Board Member Dr. Peter Coleman said that the facility is equipped with surgery and other medical facilities to conduct major operations which would help ease the burden on Liberians to have to go abroad to seek
medical treatment due to lack of essential equipment to facilitate major surgery in the Country.

- The Vice President of Liberia Joseph Boakai who attended the ceremony, lauded the Church for being inspired to improve the healthcare delivery system in the Country as their effort was in line with the Government’s commitment to strengthen primary healthcare. He urged the AME Church not to relent in supporting this quest to build more hospitals for the Liberian people.

(Also reported on Star Radio, Truth FM, SKY FM and ELBS)

**Government Workers Train to Collect Health Data**

- A release issued in Monrovia yesterday said that some 70 persons from various government ministries and agencies as well as nongovernmental organizations were being trained at a workshop to learn how to collect data on whether Liberians can afford to pay for medication when nongovernmental organizations which provide free medical services leave Liberia.
- The workshop is being organized by the Liberia Institute for Geo-Information Services (LISGIS), the Ministry of Health and Save The Children/UK and sponsored by UNICEF.
- According to the Director of Social Statistics at LISGIS Daniel Kingsley, the information from survey will inform the Liberian government about whether Liberians can afford to pay for medication in the Country and know the impact created on the Liberian people with the departure of nongovernmental organizations that are offering free medical services in the Country.

(Also reported on Star Radio, Truth FM, SKY FM and ELBS)

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Liberian Truth and Reconciliation Commission Hears Public Testimony

By Naomi Schwarz
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Liberia's Truth and Reconciliation Commission has entered its final phase: public testimonies by victims of civil war and by those they accuse. Many Liberians say airing the crimes will help the country heal from the psychological wounds of war and instability. But others say Liberia should focus on moving forward and not look back. Naomi Schwarz has more from VOA's regional bureau in Dakar.

Liberia's Truth and Reconciliation Commission was created by the accord that ended the civil war in 2003. It has collected more than 20,000 written testimonies covering the period from 1979 when Samuel Doe seized power in a coup, to 2003 when a large force of U.N. peacekeepers arrived in the country. The testimonies tell of widespread rape, massacres, and children forced to be soldiers.

Now victims have begun testifying in public hearings.

James Makor of Liberia's non-governmental organization Save My Future says the public statements still contain surprises.

"One musician around here, I had never knew that he was a general, but during the public hearing we got to know that he was a general," said Makor. "So in that case now, most of his songs he had always won public sympathy that he was victimized, instead people now know that he was one of the guys that had a lot of power to himself."

Makor is referring to Michael David, known as Sundaygar Dearboy. Witnesses have accused David of rapes and beatings. One of Liberia's most popular stars, he sang the campaign song for Liberia's president, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf when she ran for office in 2005.

Makor says it is good for Liberians to know the truth about what happened.

"It is necessary that we get to know some of the people, what they did. For us to have the past information, so we can know how to interact with them," added Makor.

But some Liberians say the information could be dangerous.

Lamii Kpargoi of Liberia's Media Watch says he feels it is too soon to stir up these wounds.

"There are a lot of people walking the streets in Liberia that committed heinous crimes that have never owned up to their mistakes. Hearing some of the testimonies that have come out over the past few days, it may well just make people become rowdy and try taking things off on these people, especially if they come out and they deny these things when everybody knows that they actually did them," said Kpargoi.

He says there is no statute of limitations on war crimes, so the issues can be addressed later.
"I think this TRC thing has come a little bit too soon. I think what Liberia needs presently is to get political and economic stability," he added. "Then when we are stable, then we can go after these people who have committed crimes and try to see how we can best forgive each other and move on."

The Commission will hear from victims first and then allow the accused to respond and apologize. When it finishes hearing testimony, the commission will give its recommendations to the government on how to use the information to foster reconciliation.

This is not enough for some Liberians.

"Crimes against humanity are not pardoned by amnesty or whatsoever form of saying sorry," said Boakai Jalerba, the secretary general of an organization that pushed for a war crimes tribunal, with power to prosecute. He says the country cannot move forward while people who committed atrocities remain free and, sometimes, hold powerful positions.

One man who will likely not face Liberia's TRC or prosecution in Liberia is former president Charles Taylor, whose attempt to overthrow the government in 1989 instigated the worst phase of violence.

Taylor is currently on trial for crimes against humanity in neighboring Sierra Leone's civil war, in which he is said to have participated in exchange for diamond money. The trial, in The Hague in the Netherlands, is being held by a special court for Sierra Leone.

Jalerba says Taylor should be extradited to Liberia and face charges there.

But Steve Marvie, acting chairman of the Youth Empowerment Program, a pro-democracy organization, says most Liberians are content to let the Sierra Leone special court handle that prosecution.

"We, Liberians, we are moving along with our lives, we are generally happy with our situation, and we do not think we want to turned back into our crisis days," said Marvie.

Media Watch's Kpargai says bringing Taylor back to Liberia could lead to greater instability. And Kpargai says, as a former head of state, Taylor benefits from amnesty under Liberian law for any crime committed after he became president.