PRESS CLIPPINGS

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

Wednesday, 9 June 2010

Press clips are produced Monday through Friday. Any omission, comment or suggestion, please contact Martin Royston-Wright Ext 7217
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'ECOMOG mobilized ULIMO to attack RUF rebels'

By Alpha Sesay

Charles Taylor's 18th defence witness commenced his testimony yesterday, telling the Special Court for Sierra Leone judges that Nigerian-led West African peacekeepers mobilized several fighters to attack Taylor's forces in Liberia as well as rebel forces in Sierra Leone during the conflicts in the West African region.

The witness, who is a Liberian by birth with Sierra Leonean parents, is testifying with partial protective measures and therefore identified only by pseudonym number DCT-190. He told the court that he was a member of one of the rebel factions in Liberia - the United Liberation Movement for Democracy in Liberia, loyal to Roosevelt Johnson (ULIMO-J).

According to the witness, sometime in 1998, when skirmishes broke out between ULIMO-J leader Roosevelt-Johnson and Mr. Taylor, Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) peacekeepers provided ULIMO-J leaders with arms, ammunition, and trucks to attack and overthrow Taylor's government in Liberia.

The ULIMO-J fighters, the witness said, were transported from Dualla to Camp Johnson Road in Monrovia to attack Taylor's forces. The witness further stated that the objective of this attack was to attack the Barclay Training Center in Monrovia, secure the safety of the ULIMO-J leader-Johnson, and overthrow Taylor's government.

"The objective was to take Barclay Training Center in Monrovia with a view to obtaining arms and ammunition to overthrow Mr. Taylor," the witness told the court.

Asked by Taylor's defence counsel Courtmey Griffiths whether the mission was successful, the witness told the court that "the mission was a failure, total failure because we were not able to take BTC and the next objective was to escort the leader (Mr. Johnson) to the American Embassy." He said that Johnson was escorted to the United States embassy.

The witness also told the court that within this period, ECOMOG peacekeepers planned to use ULIMO fighters in an operation code named "Operation Eagle," which had a stated aim of capturing Taylor alive in Monrovia. He said the plan was for ULIMO fighters to wear ECOMOG peacekeeping military uniforms and attack Taylor's convoy near the James Spriggs airport in Monrovia. This mission, the witness said, could not succeed because Taylor had an effective intelligence network that detected the plan. The witness said he was one of the ULIMO fighters engaged in implementing this mission.

Taylor in his testimony told the court about ECOMOG's plans with ULIMO fighters to overthrow him while he was president of Liberia. This witness's account corroborated Taylor's testimony.

Yesterday, the witness told the court that in 1997, the government of Sierra Leone and ECOMOG peacekeepers recruited UMILLO ex-combatants and transported them in ECOMOG trucks with a mandate to fight against Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) and Revolutionary United Front (RUF) junta forces, who had overthrown the democratically elected government of Sierra Leone in May 1997. He said the Liberian fighters were fully supported by ECOMOG forces during the attacks against AFRC/RUF forces.

"At the Ricks Institute...we were being fed, taken care of by ECOMOG," the witness told the court.

The witness added that ECOMOG directly provided them with arms and ammunition. Asked by Mr. Griffiths whether they underwent any training, the witness explained that "yes, because they know we were fighters, so basically what they needed was effective command and control on the ground. That was basically what we trained at Ricks Institute."

Taylor, who is on trial for providing support to RUF rebels in Sierra Leone through the supply of arms and ammunition, has told the court that several other players were responsible for the movement of fighting forces between Liberian and Sierra Leone because of the region's volatility due to the conflict.

The witness, in giving the background to the formation of ULIMO, told the court that when Taylor's rebel forces attacked Liberia in 1989, Liberians who ran to Sierra Leone later formed the Liberians United
Former Liberian President, Charles Taylor is accused of funding Sierra Leone’s former rebels, the Revolutionary United Front, the RUF by selling diamonds on their behalf and buying weapons for them. But a Liberian-born Sierra Leonean who fought for the ULIMO-J rebel faction said the West African Peacekeeping Force, ECOMOG engaged in diamond mining in Sierra Leone too.

The Defence 15th witness testifying under anonymity also said former ULIMO-J Leader, Roosevelt Johnson connived with ECOMOG and attacked the government of Former Liberian President, Charles Taylor. John Koffie reports for the BBC World Service Trust on the trial of former president Charles Taylor in The Hague.

The Defence 15th witness only identified as DCT 190 said the West African Peacekeeping Force, ECOMOG mined diamonds in the Sierra Leonean Town of Tongo during the civil war in that country.

Former Liberian Leader, Charles Taylor is the only foreigner accused in collaboration with the RUF in looting the diamonds of Sierra Leone. But a former fighter of the Liberian rebel faction, ULIMO-J testifying in Mr. Taylor’s defence alleged ECOMOG commanded by Major General Maxwell Khobe in Sierra Leone did diamond business with the locals.

The witness further said the Sierra Leone Government and ECOMOG recruited and armed Ex-combatants of both ULIMO-J and ULIMO-K at the Ricks Institute in Liberia. He said the recruits from the Ricks Institute were armed and taken to Sierra Leone by ECOMOG Forces to assist restore the ousted government of Former President Ahmed Tejan Kabbah in 1997.

The witness testified that the Liberian fighters were fully supported by ECOMOG during their attacks against the combined RUF and AFRC forces in Sierra Leone.

The Defence witness also told the court that the African Peacekeepers provided ULIMO-J leader, Roosevelt Johnson with trucks, arms and ammunition to attack and overthrow the government of Charles Taylor in 1998. He said ECOMOG loaded a truck with ULIMO-J fighters from Duala and transported them to Camp Johnson Road to fight the Taylor Government forces.

The witness, a Sierra Leonean partly educated in Liberia, said the primary instruction to ULIMO fighters was to attack the Barclay Training Centre in Monrovia. He told the court that the second instruction was to take Mr. Johnson to safety. According the Defence witness, ECOMOG had further planned to use ULIMO Fighters in an operation code named Operation Eagle to capture Mr. Taylor alive in Monrovia.

The witness said the plan was for ULIMO fighters wearing ECOMOG uniforms to ambush Mr. Taylor’s convoy near the James Sprigs Airfield. But he told the court the plan failed because Mr. Taylor’s intelligence picked up the information.
The Torchlight
Wednesday, 8 June 2010

‘Fambul Tok’ Heals Old Civil War Wounds in Rural Sierra Leone

Fid Thompson | Dugba-yeima, Sierra Leone 07 June 2010

In the remote village of Dugba-yeima, hundreds of people gather around a bonfire for “fambul tok” a special reconciliation ceremony where victims and offenders alike speak openly about the atrocities committed in their community during eleven years of civil war.

Eight years after Sierra Leone’s civil war ended, some communities have yet to come to terms with the destruction, murder and rape committed on them by their own people. Many have never spoken of what happened to them during the war and most have never confessed to the crimes they committed. Until now a unique community healing process is reuniting villages that suffered some of the worst violence of the conflict.

The masked “devils” of the local women’s secret society dance to traditional drums in the tiny village of Dugba-yeima, hidden in the remote hills along Sierra Leone’s eastern border.

As the sun sets, hundreds of people from nearby villages gather around a crackling bonfire to celebrate a unique event.

Eight years after the end of a decade-long civil war, people will talk publicly for the first time of atrocities committed in their communities. Most of these people never witnessed the work of the nation’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Many have never spoken of the atrocities they committed or witnessed during the war.

Massah Jusu, from nearby Baiima village, has come to tell the story of her daughter’s death. He says everyone fled when the rebels came to their village. She and her pregnant daughter were running through the bush when they came upon a group of rebels. They killed her daughter in front of her, she says. Then they slit open her stomach and took out the baby. One rebel called “Devil” chopped the baby in half with a machete. It was then, she said, that she started crying.

Jusu does not know the rebels who killed her daughter, but she is not afraid to speak out in front of her community.

The ceremony is part of a community reconciliation process led by the Sierra Leonean peace-building organization, Fambul Tok.

Fambul Tok, or Family Talk in the local Krio language, draws from traditional mediation and conflict resolution methods. Before the war, many rural communities gathered around a bonfire to tell stories, discuss the day’s events and resolve problems.
Now village committees organize a special bonfire ceremony where witnesses, victims and offenders can attest publicly to atrocities committed. The aim is neither to judge nor to force forgiveness, but rather to foster understanding.

Sierra Leone's Truth and Reconciliation Commission was set up in 2002 to document the human rights abuses committed during the war and foster healing. The commission held public hearings in Sierra Leone's major cities and regional towns, but did not reach remote villages like Dugba-yeima.

Fambul Tok director, John Caulker, believes that Sierra Leone needs a reconciliation model that relies on community dialogue and collective reckoning.

“The aim of Fambul Tok is to provide space for dialogue between victims and offenders in the safe environment which is mostly in the communities. It is different from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission where they bring people to the big towns. But Fambul Tok is organized at the community level, which is the safest space for victims and offenders to tell their stories," he said.

Fambul Tok has helped thousands of people in the war-battered south and east of Sierra Leone come to terms with what happened there over a decade of violent conflict. They recently expanded their interventions to the country’s northern zone.

At the end of 10 years of violent civil war, the Lome Peace Accord gave a blanket amnesty to all fighters except a handful of leaders “who bore the greatest responsibility” for the war crimes committed.

Many of those fighters were children, drugged and forced into murdering and mutilating their own people and sometimes their own families. The United Nations estimates 10,000 children were abducted and forced to fight.

At the bonfire ceremony in Dugba-yeima, Massah Jusu tells the gathering about her daughter’s death. While she is speaking, a young man runs into the middle of the ceremony.

The young man is Jusu’s next door neighbor, Foday Allieu. He confesses to her daughter’s murder and begs her to forgive him.

Like many former rebels, Foday Allieu is both victim and perpetrator of war crimes. He was twelve when the rebel group, the Revolutionary United Front, attacked his village and abducted him and four other boys. He fought with them until the end of the war. For him, the reconciliation process has only just begun.

He did many bad things, he says, but he is asking for forgiveness.

Allieu says he was afraid of speaking to Jusu ever since he returned to the village after the war. But now, he says, if he gets anything, like money, he will give it her to help her forget what happened in the past.

Allieu would like to build a new house for Jusu, but he does not have the means right now.

Jusu says she was tormented when she heard Allieu confess to the killing of her daughter and grandchild. But she has decided to forgive him. No good, she says, can come from holding on to that bitterness.
It now looks as if African countries are no longer chanting the same tune regardless of who is bass or tenor. Though the critical odds are many, it has shown that African leaders at least some of them are no longer cowed into grouping with their peers but ready to walk the stretch when some of their colleagues are out of step.

The Dar issue which is critical to al-Bashir's woes, remains the nerve centre of African politics which should not be allowed to be swept under the carpet. Some African diplomats say the Sudanese leader request that the AU meeting be shifted to another venue would not help sort out the dilemma. Arm twisting and threats have long been expunged from middle level diplomacy and only quiet negotiations are likely to pay off.
In any case, the whole episode remains a test as to whether al-Bashir will ever be able to shake off the international warrant and jet around as he pleases. Perhaps the African proverb that a storm cannot uproot a forest holds true after all.
By John Kollie

NEWS ITEM

A Former Rebel Commander testifying in defence of Charles Taylor alleged on Tuesday that the Guinean Government headed by then President, Lasannah Conteh aided the invasion of Liberia by the rebel group, Liberian United for Reconciliation and Democracy, LURD. The witness who claimed he fought for both ULIMO-J and LURD also alleged that Liberian Journalist, Hassan Bility was engaged in covert operations for LURD against the Taylor Government. John Kollie reports for the BBC World Service Trust...

The witness testifying under anonymity said LURD would have not succeeded in its invasion of Liberia if the Guinean Government had not given its backing.

He said with the approval of the Guinean Government, a group of Liberian fighters attacked Guinea in 2000 in an operation called Mosquito Spray as pretext for the Guinean Government to assist LURD invade Liberia.

The witness gave graphic description of how the Guinean Army assisted the Liberian rebels against the government of Charles Taylor. The Defence 15th witness also testified that Liberian Journalist, Hassan Bility worked for LURD as an undercover agent in Monrovia.

Mr. Bility testified for the Prosecution last year and said he was arrested on numerous occasions and tortured by the Liberian Government for reporting on Mr. Taylor’s alleged support to the Sierra Leone rebels.

But a Former Commander of the LURD rebel group giving testimonies in The Hague has said Mr. Bility provided valuable military information for LURD’s entry into Monrovia.

The cross-examination of Defence Witness DCT 190 was postponed when the Defence concluded its direct examination.

The Prosecution said it could not conduct the cross-examination of the witness because the witness summary provided to them by the Defence was too inadequate.

The Defence 16th witness, a Liberian woman identified as Aletha Hoff has taken the stand. Madam Hoff is testifying to a dispute between her telephone number and that of Mr. Charles Taylor. Madam Hoff started her cross-examination immediately after her direct examination was concluded Tuesday afternoon.
Sierra Leone And Guinea Helped In The Formation of LURD, Former Fighter Says, And Liberian Woman Claims Phone Number Said To Belong To Charles Taylor

Charles Taylor’s defense lawyers presented two witnesses before Special Court for Sierra Leone judges today. One, a former fighter in Liberia and Sierra Leone, told the court that Sierra Leonean and Guinean authorities helped in establishing a rebel group to overthrow Mr. Taylor’s government in Liberia. The next witness, a Liberian business woman, identified a mobile phone number, which according to a 2008 testimony by a prosecution witness belonged to Mr. Taylor. According to the witness, the mobile phone number belongs to her, not Mr. Taylor.

Mr. Taylor’s 15th witness, identified by Pseudonym Number DCT-190, today focused his evidence mainly on the establishment of the rebel group Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD), a rebel group that attacked Liberia with the aim of overthrowing the government of Mr. Taylor around 1999-2000. According to the witness, Sierra Leonean and Guinean authorities provided assistance through supply of manpower and military equipment for the establishment of LURD. The witness said that Liberians opposed to Mr. Taylor, such as LURD leader Sheku Konneh and his wife Isha, received enormous assistance from former Sierra Leonean Vice President Albert Joe Demby and one time Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) commander and later Chief of Defense Staff of the Sierra Leonean Army, the late Nigerian General Maxwell Kobe.

The witness said that recruited fighters for LURD comprised of disarmed fighters of Sierra Leonean factions the Civil Defense Force (CDF), Revolutionary United Front (RUF), and the West Side Boys. Recruitment was done mainly among “former CDF combatants, former RUF, and some West Side Boys who were interested in the mission,” the witness said.

When asked by the Presiding Judge of the Trial Chamber Justice Julia Sebutinde whether Sierra Leone president Ahmed Tejan Kabbah was involved or had knowledge of this exercise, the witness said that “well, I’ll say this clearly, because in the first place, because of international law, no government will come and declare that this is what was happening but they were in the known. The Vice President, Albert Joe Demby, knew very well, General Kobe knew very well.”

“To my knowledge, the presidency was far above me but the Vice President was well in the known, he was involved in all that happened,” the witness added.

The witness explained that the fighters were transported to neighbouring Guinea where the government of the country provided assistance to them through training and provision of arms and ammunition.

Asked by Mr. Taylor’s defense counsel Courtenay Griffiths to tell the court who provided all these assistance to LURD, the witness responded that it was “the Guinean government.”

He added that the LURD fighters ”were trained by the Gendarmarie.” This was a unit of the Guinean security apparatus.

Seeking to tie LURD closer to the Guinean authorities, Mr. Griffiths asked the witness, “Could the operation have been launched without the knowledge of the Guinean government?”

“Impossible,” the witness responded.
The witness said when they attacked Liberia proper, “the Guinean Contingent that was based in Bo [Southern Sierra Leone] would transport arms and ammunition to the border and we’ll attack Liberia.” Guinean forces were based in Sierra Leone as part of the West African peacekeeping presence in the country.

Mr. Taylor has long maintained that LURD rebels had external support and their attack on his government was part of an action by foreign powers to bring his government down.

Today, the witness testifying on Mr. Taylor’s behalf told the court that former Special Court for Sierra Leone Chief Prosecutor David Crane, who announced an indictment against Mr. Taylor in 2003, had contacts with LURD rebels even before Liberia was attacked. The witness said he was part of a meeting in Bo, Southern Sierra Leone where they were informed that they should arrest Mr. Taylor and hand him over for trial.

“Mr. Taylor should be arrested, we shouldn’t kill him because they want to try him,” the witness said.

As the witness concluded his direct-examination, prosecutors asked that the cross-examination of the witness be put on hold because the summary of the witness’s testimony that was disclosed by the defense was inadequate and that the witness’s evidence was at variance with the summary disclosed. After a brief recess, the judges ruled that “the summary is not only inadequate, it is grossly inadequate.”

The judges also stated that the witness’s “evidence was at variance with his summary.”

“The net results of these findings raises more questions than answers,” Justice Subutinde said as she read the ruling.

The judges therefore ordered the immediate disclosure of the witness’s statements and that the cross-examination of the witness be put on hold.

Defense lawyers immediately called their 16th witness, Liberian business woman Aleatha Korto Hoff. The witness’s testimony focused on a mobile telephone number, which a protected prosecution witness in 2008 testified, was Mr. Taylor’s mobile number when he was president of Liberia. According to Mrs. Korto, she has had this number since August 2001, having been given to her by her brother. The witness said that on a date that she could not remember, she received a call from one John Gray, who told her that her number had been called at Mr. Taylor’s trial as the former president’s number. Mr. Gray subsequently arranged for the witness to meet with Mr. Taylor’s defense lawyers.

On cross-examination, prosecution counsel Nicholas Koumjian questioned the witness about her brother Jenkins Dunbar who served as Minister in Mr. Taylor’s government, her niece Dell Dunban who was Director of the Liberian Petroleum Refinery Cooperation, and her sister Fanny Dunbar who was Mr. Taylor’s dietician. As prosecutors attempted to present to the witness a list of persons who were alleged close associates to Mr. Taylor that contained the name of the witness’s brother(s), defense lawyers objected on the ground that the list was new evidence and its prejudicial effect outweighed its probative value. The judges reserved their judgement for tomorrow, after which prosecutors will continue the cross-examination of the witness.
UNMIL Public Information Office Media Summary  
8 June 2010

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

UN News in Liberia

UNMIL was not reported in the news today.

Local News on Liberian issues

President Sirleaf Talks Tough on Corruption
[The Informer, The Inquirer, New Democrat, Daily Observer, National Chronicle, Front Page Africa]

- President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf has instructed her cabinet ministers to carry out mass dismissal of individuals found to be corrupt in Government.
- President Sirleaf mandated the ministers to take what she called the hard decision necessary to root out corruption from Government.
- Madam Sirleaf believes such action would change the public perception that the Unity Party-led Government lacks the political will to fight corruption.
- The President gave the instruction at a Special Cabinet Meeting held Friday following her return from the United States.
- The Liberian leader said from now on, the public shall be accordingly notified about reason that led to the dismissal of a Government official and shall no longer be left to the Justice Ministry to determine.

Over Controversial Threshold Saga: Lawmaker Questions Supreme Court’s Authority
[Heritage]

- Sinoe County Senator Mobutu Vlah Nyenpan has questioned the authority of the Supreme Court regarding the issuance of stay orders on the passage of the controversial Population Threshold Bill.
- According to Senator Nyenpan, the Supreme Court has no authority to stop the Legislature from passing a bill by placing a stay order on a legislation being passed.
- The Supreme Court consistent with Article 66 of the Liberian Constitution is the final arbiter of justice in Liberia.
- But Senator Nyenpan asserted that the constant stay order being issued by the High Court attempts to impede the functions of the Legislature.
- The Sinoe lawmaker said although the matter is debatable, his argument is based on Article 29 of the Liberian Constitution which gives the Legislature the power to pass on all legislations.
- This right, he observed, must not be hindered by the stay orders being issued by the Supreme Court due to lawsuits filed before it against the passage of the Threshold Bill.
- Regarding the passage of the Threshold Bill, Senator Nyenpan stated the Legislature is the only branch of government that has the authority to set the constituency threshold consistent with Article 80d of the Liberian Constitution.

CDC Refutes International Media Reports on Flag Bearer

- The opposition Congress for Democratic Change (CDC) has denied international media reports that its first partisan, Ambassador George Weah was arrested, handcuffed and interrogated by the US Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) during a visit to the United States.
- A letter from Ambassador Weah read by CDC chairperson Geraldine Doe Sheriff also denied reports that the party’s flag bearer was held in custody by agents of the FBI in the State of Maryland.
• In a separate statement at a news conference, Mrs. Sheriff clarified that Ambassador Weah made a stopover visit at his long time friend and partisan of the CDC James Bestman.
• The CDC chairperson explained upon the arrival of Ambassador Weah, Mr. James Bestman was served a warrant by US Government authorities.
• The both statements said the home of Mr. Bestman was not raided as reported in the Liberian media.

FPAL Establishes Sexual Reproductive Health Centres in Two Counties
[The Inquirer]

• The Family Planning Association of Liberia (FPAL) in collaboration with its partners has established four sexual reproductive health centres in two counties.
• According to a release, the centres have been setup in Grand Cape Mount and Grand Bassa Counties.
• The centres will provide free family planning and sexual reproductive health services, psychosocial counselling, free HIV/AIDS testing among others.
• The centres would create awareness on the correct and consistent use of condoms for the prevention of teenage pregnancy, sexual-transmitted infections and HIV/AIDS.

Marylanders Vow Not to Call Off Strike
[Heritage, The Inquirer, New Democrat]

• Hundreds of Marylanders who staged a recent protest against what they call the “cheap death of their colleagues in a recent shipwreck” say they will not call-off their peaceful action until they see the face of President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf.
• They said the president visit will ensure the quick rehabilitation of their road.
• According to them, the bad road condition has led to the usage of alternative routes, mainly the sea.
• The protesters who are mostly women, said their action was intended to draw government’s attention to the continue shipwrecks in the south eastern region of Liberian.
• Recently, upon the return of the President from the US, she extended condolence and constituted a committee to investigate the cause of the recent shipwreck that led to the death of four persons, while others are still attending to medication.

Star Radio (News monitored today at 09:00 am)
President Sirleaf Talks Tough on Corruption
(Also reported Radio Veritas, Sky FM, and ELBC)

More Details Emerge Over ‘US$300,000 Fraudulent Deal’
• More revelations are emerging over the arrest of three employees of the Large Tax Revenue Division of the Finance Ministry by officers of the National Security Agency.
• They include the Division’s Principal Director Dawo Morris, another Director Ms. Brenda King and an analyst Kollie Dogba.
• The three Finance Ministry employees were arrested Monday in connection with accepting bribe to compromise a collection of revenue.
• They are said to have underwritten by fifty percent the taxes of the Cocopa Rubber Plantation in an agreement with an agent of the Company.
• It remains unclear whether the NSA arrested the agent of the Cocopa Rubber Plantation who was also involved in the fraudulent transaction.
• Reports say the revenue collection nearing US$300,000 would have seen the Finance Ministry employees pocketing US$10,000.

Uneasiness Engulfs ‘Shipwreck’ Maryland As Aggrieved Women Issued Caveat
• Normal activities Monday came to a standstill in Harper, Maryland County as a result of a demonstration by hundreds of women.
• The women from several districts paraded the streets of Harper with placards calling on government to speedily rehabilitate roads leading to the county.
• The demonstration is in solidarity with victims of last week’s shipwreck which left four persons including the leader of the Maryland Women Association dead.
• The women claim, bad road condition leaves residents with no option but to travel by sea, which is proving to be very risky.
• The aggrieved women called on their lawmakers to boycott sessions until work begins on the road.
• They have also threatened to boycott any election process if the roads are not rehabilitated to pre-war status by 2011.
Meanwhile Internal Affairs Minister Harrison Karnwea says a government delegation will leave for the county this week to meet with the aggrieved people. Minister Karnwea said flight arrangements are still being concluded.

Lawmaker Calls for Calm in Maryland Protest
- Maryland Senator John Ballout has called on citizens and residents of the county to remain calm and exercise restraint in their response to the shipwreck in the county.
- Senator Ballout informed the protesters government is concerned about the situation and is doing everything to address it.
- The Maryland lawmaker cautioned the protesters against protest actions that could undermine government’s effort.

Montserrado Lawmaker Rejects Citizens’ Claims
- A Montserrado County lawmaker has refuted claims of interference in the affairs of a community in District Number Seven.
- Residents of the 1108 Bassa Town Community recently accused Representative Thomas Fallah of meddling in their community election by suspending the election guidelines.
- But Representative Fallah dismissed the claims and described them as untrue.
- He argued interfering in community election does not determine his re-election in 2011.

Campaign Intensifies for Dual citizenship Law
- A network of Liberians in the Diaspora has intensified campaign for the passage of a dual citizenship bill in Liberia.
- The latest move by the group followed a visit to the Legislature by a delegation of the European Federation of Liberian Associations.
- During the visit the group held discussion with some members of the Senate.
- The President of the group, Mr. John Nimely Brownell said it was important to pass the dual citizenship bill to allow Liberians with dual nationalities to help develop their native homeland.
- Mr. Brownell said the dual citizenship bill will also pave the way for Liberians in other parts of the world to bring investment into their country.

NEC Dashes Hope of Diaspora Liberians
- The National Elections Commission (NEC) says it is not possible for Liberians out of Liberia to vote in the 2011 elections.
- NEC Chairman James Fromayan says the 1986 Liberian constitution confines voting in the presidential and general elections within the country.
- Article 83a of the constitution states voting for the president, vice president, and lawmakers shall be conducted throughout the Republic on the second Tuesday in October, each election year.
- This means, unless this portion is amended or interpreted otherwise by the judiciary, Liberians out of Liberia would not vote in 2011 or other elections.
- The clarity by the NEC chairman comes in response to a request by a six-man delegation from the European Federation of Liberian Associations.
- The delegation headed by John Nimely Brownell met Mr. Fromayan over the weekend and discussed the possibility for Diaspora Liberians to participate in voter’s education and elections observation.

FPAL Establishes Sexual Reproductive Health Centres in Two Counties

Difficulties Reported at Prison in Bomi
- Prison authorities at the Bomi Central Prison have reported difficulties in seeking medical treatment for prisoners who fall sick.
- The authorities said prisoners have to be taken to hospital on motorbikes and go through regular treatment seeking processes.
- They complained, the situation poses security risks as it is possible for prisoners to escape.
- Meanwhile Bomi County Attorney Jumah Karnely says he has written the government hospital in the county to visit the prison weekly to treat prisoners.
International Clips on Liberia

No international clippings on Liberia.

International Clips on West Africa

Guinea

Public Service on Guinea Line Revived

www.railwaysafrica.com

The governments of Guinea and Liberia have agreed to permit BSG Resources (Guinea) Ltd mining joint venture to build a new iron ore export line from the Simandou area of south-east Guinea to Didia on the Liberian coast. In return, the firm has agreed to revive passenger and general freight service on the 662km metre-gauge line of Chemins de fer de Guinée (CFG). Brazilian mining firm Vale announced a $US2.5bn deal in April in terms of which it has acquired a 51% interest in BSG, which holds half the concession rights to significant undeveloped sources of high-grade iron ore that could support a long-term mining project. Though Simandou is in Guinea, the nearest access to the Atlantic is the coast of Liberia. The CFG line connects the capital Conakry on the coast to the Upper Niger and Kankan regions. The first 36km of route out of Conakry has seen occasional use but the remainder has seen no service in 15 years. Additional rights to exploit ore at Simandou are held by Rio Tinto, which signed a “non-binding” memorandum of understanding with Chinalco in March 2010, agreeing to establish a joint venture covering the development and operation of mines plus associated rail and port infrastructure.

Plan to Keep Economic Migrants at Home is Bearing Fruit

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A Three-year project, costing R45m, to help ensure food security in poverty-stricken Guinea in West Africa is showing positive results, says the Department of International Relations and Co-operation. The project, which was started in 2008, is part of SA's strategy to stabilise poor African countries and stem the influx of refugees and economic migrants to SA. Since the end of apartheid in 1994, SA has experienced an influx of immigrants, most notably from neighbouring African countries. Mxolisi Nkosi, the department's deputy director-general for the Africa region, said that "the project was to demonstrate SA's commitment to contribute significantly to food security and skills development" in Guinea. An analyst on Africa's political economy at the Institute for Global Dialogue, Francis Ikome, said: "SA's foreign policy elite are aware that the country's political and economic advances would not be sustainable as long as many countries on the continent continue to be afflicted by poverty, conflict and generalised underdevelopment." Guinea is one of the world's poorest nations, with a per capita gross national income of 420, according to the World Bank. The department had been spearheading a rice and vegetable production project as part of efforts to rehabilitate the peasant farming community and ensure food security in Guinea.

Sierra Leone

'Family Talk' Heals Old Civil War Wounds in Rural Sierra Leone

VOA

Eight years after Sierra Leone's civil war ended, some communities have yet to come to terms with the destruction, murder and rape committed on them by their own people. Many have never spoken of what happened to them during the war and most have never confessed to the crimes they committed. A unique community healing process is reuniting villages that suffered some of the worst violence of the conflict. The masked "devils" of the local women's secret society dance to traditional drums in the tiny village of Dugba-yeima, hidden in the remote hills along Sierra Leone's eastern border. As the sun sets, hundreds of people from nearby villages gather around a crackling bonfire to celebrate a unique event. Eight years after the end of a decade-long civil war, people will talk publicly for the first time of atrocities committed in their communities. Most of these people never witnessed the work of the nation's Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Many have never spoken of the atrocities they committed or witnessed during the war.

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It was one thing to end Sierra Leone's civil war. What to do with the butchers who promulgated it was something else entirely.

**War Don Don**

*Director: Rebecca Richman Cohen*

During the 1990s, a civil war of the kind that has been sadly common in modern Africa shredded the social fabric of the small coastal country of Sierra Leone. One of the more egregiously monstrous groups that fought was the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), whose list of crimes included but were not limited to shanghaiing of child soldiers, and mass rapes and mutilations on a scale that staggers the imagination. In Rebecca Richman Cohen’s film—whose title means “the war is over”—the RUF’s heart of darkness is put under a spotlight but reflects back only a void.

Unlike in some African countries that have been scourged by widespread atrocities, such as Rwanda, Sierra Leone did not go the route of reconciliation committees. Instead, the United Nations helped set up a special war crimes court in a brand-new, highly-fortified, modern building in Freetown. There, Cohen filmed the trial of RUF second-in-command Issa Hassan Sesay. She interviews both the prosecutors who have accused Sesay of responsibility for much of the unbelievable butcheries the RUF was accused of (including shots of amputated victims hobbling on the street, a man whose hands are replaced with hooks) and his defense team. While the film makes a decent effort at giving the defense a chance to make their case, the arguments (Sesay was just one of many, he was only a soldier and not responsible for what his men did, there is little physical evidence of his crimes) don’t hold much water in the end.

This is a shame, because while *War Don Don* is an expressively-shot and often harrowing piece of filmmaking—the courtroom scenes where the disembodied voices of witnesses with protected identities recite their horrific suffering are especially hard to handle—it isn’t able to delve into the deeper issue of war crimes trials and their legality and purpose. Then again, Sesay’s inability to muster much of a defense speaks volumes about the weight of evil that his soldiers unleashed upon the nation.
The U.S. is currently participating in the Review Conference for the International Criminal Court in Kampala, Uganda, at which three amendments are under consideration that would negatively affect U.S. interests if passed.

Regardless of what happens in Kampala, the Obama administration has said that it will not seek ratification of the Rome Statute of the International Court. However, a number of non-governmental organizations ardently support the International Criminal Court and continue to urge the U.S. to join. There are numerous legal and policy objections to such a course of action. However, as a recent story in the New York Times illustrates, there are plenty of other reasons to be cautious about joining the ICC – starting with its peculiar and expansive interpretation of the rights of those accused of crimes against humanity, war crimes and genocide.

The story details the luxurious conditions enjoyed by those incarcerated in The Hague who are undergoing trial or awaiting trial by the ICC (and the other international tribunals based in The Hague – the Special Court for Sierra Leone and the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY). The article observes that “former Congolese warlords, Serbian militia leaders and a former Liberian president accused of instigating murder, rape and enslavement are confined in two detention centers with private cells stocked like college dormitories, with wooden bookcases, television sets and personal computers. Among the other amenities are a gym, a trainer, a spiritual room and a common kitchen.”

Among the other perks of incarceration for the accused:

- Free legal aid at a monthly cost of about $43,000.

- Travel subsidies of tens of thousands of dollars for family visits. According to the story, “The first to tap family travel funds, back in 2006, were the wife and five children of Thomas Lubanga Dyilo, 49, a former rebel leader from the Democratic Republic of Congo, formerly Zaire, who is accused of enslaving child soldiers who were forced to rape, kill and plunder. The court paid more than $16,000 in expenses covering air fare from Kinshasa, two hotel rooms for 15 nights, temporary medical insurance, passport and visa fees and a daily “dignity allowance” of $24 for adults and $12 for children. Court officials also provided winter clothes and a babysitter for the children.” Another Congolese prisoner, Mathieu Ngudjolo Chui, has a travel budget of over $31,000 in 2010.

- The rules permit conjugal visits. As a result, several detainees have become new fathers while incarcerated, including a Serbian general and Charles Taylor, former president of Liberia charged with war crimes by the Sierra Leone court, whose baby girl was born in February.
While the accused should be treated humanely, they are not entitled to luxury. Indeed, a number of countries are questioning why those held by international tribunals – many of whom are charged with the most heinous crimes imaginable – should receive benefits that exceed those provided the accused in their own countries. Specifically, “France, Italy and smaller states [argue] that the nations financing the courts should not be covering benefits that they do not provide in their own prisons — and do not want to. What precedent might be set, they ask, if they contribute to these provisions here?”

The pro-ICC NGOs would have you ignore this embarrassingly poor judgment on the part of the ICC and other international courts. According to the Coalition for an International Criminal Court, “Our message was let’s not make a big deal about this. It’s not a lot of money. It’s part of keeping the detainees happy or, I don’t know the word — managing — the detainees. The court is still very young and the decision was from just one case. It was blown out of proportion.”

Indeed, the cost of these privileges is only a small part of the $124 million ICC budget, but “the dispute is scratching at bigger concerns about costly legal processes that have dragged on, yielded no convictions and put a lot of focus on the benefits at the detention facilities, which some critics mock as the Hague Hilton.”

If the U.S. were to join the ICC, it would likely be expected to pay for 22 percent of the budget of the ICC – the same amount that it pays for the U.N. regular budget – including all of these perks. Meanwhile, the U.S. is already the largest contributor to the Special Court for Sierra Leone which is providing these perks for Charles Taylor.
Proposals threaten International Criminal Court's independence

Amnesty International is today calling on states to reject proposals which could seriously undermine the integrity of the Rome Statute and deeply politicise the International Criminal Court (ICC). The amendments are being considered at the first Review Conference of the Rome Statute which concludes in Kampala this week.

Claudio Cordone, interim Secretary General of Amnesty International, said:

“States must first and foremost ensure that this first Review Conference strengthens the system of international criminal justice. The current negotiations are failing to safeguard the independence of the Court, an independence that was hard fought and won 12 years ago in Rome.”

Delegates appear to be moving towards a compromise that would authorise the United Nations Security Council, a political body, alone to control indefinitely which crimes of aggression the Court could investigate and prosecute.

This outcome would exclude other avenues for bringing a situation involving the crime of aggression before the Court, risks shattering the Court’s independence achieved in Rome and opening the door to the politicisation of its work and attacks against its credibility.

State representatives in Kampala are also seeking to prevent the Court from investigating and prosecuting new crimes by nationals of countries which have not ratified the Rome Statute, or by nationals of states that have ratified the Statute but not accepted the amendment being negotiated in Kampala. This change would apply to the crime of aggression and some war crimes in non-international armed conflicts.

Claudio Cordone said:

“If the Court is prevented from investigating and prosecuting new crimes, by nationals of countries which have not ratified the Rome Statute, it will lead to a two-tier system of justice.

“States that have been amongst the Court’s strongest supporters are now leading negative proposals that would remove the independence of the Court and its ability to decide whether an act of aggression has been committed.”

The meeting in Kampala is also failing to take the opportunity to delete Article 124 of the Rome Statute which allows states to declare that the Court cannot investigate and prosecute war crimes committed by its nationals for the first seven years. This was initially included as a transitional provision in Rome on the condition that it would be reviewed at the Review Conference in Kampala.

Claudio Cordone said:

“A small number of delegates are opposing the deletion of Article 124, widely seen as providing a seven-year licence to kill, going against the very purpose of the Rome Statute – to end impunity for these crimes.

“It must be deleted or, at the very least, the Review Conference must set a date in the very near future when it will expire permanently from the Rome Statute.”

The Review Conference being held in Kampala is due to formally close on 12 June.
Rwanda genocide tribunal lawyers fear for their safety after colleague's arrest

Denial of Peter Erlinder's bail prompts more than 30 defence lawyers to issue joint statement to UN court

American lawyer Peter Erlinder was denied bail in Rwanda yesterday, two weeks after his arrest on charges of denying genocide. Photograph: AP/Marc Hofer

Lawyers defending suspects at the international criminal tribunal for Rwanda say they fear for their safety, after a high profile defence lawyer remained in police custody.

Peter Erlinder, a US lawyer leading the defence case of top genocide suspects, was denied bail today by the Rwanda authorities, two weeks after his arrest on charges of denying genocide.

The arrest has prompted other defence lawyers at the UN tribunal, which sits in Arusha, Tanzania, to refuse to participate in proceedings. In a joint statement to the court and the UN security council, seen by The Guardian, more than 30 defence lawyers have said they fear for their own safety and have demanded Erlinder's immediate release.

"We hereby resolve to postpone all activities, other than those which strictly conserve the interests of our mandates, until such time as the minimum conditions or the normal exercise of our missions have been restored by the removal of threats," the statement says. "[We are] aware of the dangers which immediately and directly threaten most of our number."

The Guardian has learned that the tribunal launched contempt proceedings against another American defence lawyer, Peter Robinson, after he stated his intention to withdraw from the case due to Erlinder's continued detention. The treatment of defence lawyers has prompted widespread international condemnation, with the US government calling for Erlinder's release.

The case is also likely to place pressure on the UK authorities, including the Crown Prosecution Service, which has been providing assistance to Rwanda prosecutors to facilitate the extradition of genocide suspects currently residing in the UK.

Experts say the incident undermines negotiations surrounding the international criminal court, under way in Kampala. "How can international criminal courts operate effectively if defence lawyers are at risk of being arrested for what they say on behalf of their clients?" said Amanda Pinto QC, Bar Council representative at the International Criminal Bar. "This affects all defence lawyers at the ICTR, but the issues are potentially the same for defence counsel anywhere in the international forum."

The case also comes amid increasing concern about freedom of information in Rwanda, after two main opposition newspapers – Umuvugizi and Umuseso – were targeted with a number of libel and privacy cases, and prohibited from publishing until after the coming elections.

The Rwandan government has continued to defend its decision to detain Erlinder. "It is an act of justice," foreign affairs minister Louise Mushikiwabo said in a statement. "Flagrant and orchestrated breaches of our genocide ideology laws will be met with the full force of the law."
Rwanda: ICTR Attorney Charged With Contempt of Court

Kigali — The Trial Chamber III at the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) has filed a suit against defense attorney, Peter Robinson, for contempt of court by persistently refusing to examine a witness.

Robinson deliberately refused to examine a witness claiming that he was protesting the arrest of embattled controversial American attorney, Peter Erlinder, who was recently arrested in Rwanda over crimes of Genocide denial and trivialization the crime.

"The court accused him of obstruction of justice and disobeying a court order, hence initiating a contempt proceeding against him," said the tribunal spokesman, Roland Amoussouga.

He added that the court found Robinson's argument invalid and ordered him to proceed with the examination of the witness, but he continuously refused.

Reports say that the Robinson, a defence attorney to Genocide suspect, Joseph Nzirorera, was told by the court that Erlinder's charges in Rwanda were not in any way connected to his work at the tribunal.

"Refusing to examine the witness created a direct and negative impact on witness's ability to present an effective defence," Amoussouga said.

"Therefore under rule 77(c), the chamber will initiate a contempt proceeding against him and he will appear before the trial chamber on Monday next week".

The tribunal spokesman also pointed out that the judge ordered Robinson to procure legal representation and submit an affidavit and answer why he should not be held in contempt.

If proven guilty, according Amoussouga, Robinson may be charged with a maximum sentence of five years in prison or a fine of $10,000 or both.