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:
Friday, 16 March 2012

Press clips are produced Monday through Friday.
Any omission, comment or suggestion, please contact
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Critical Look at the Liberian / RUF Angle on Our War?

Reflection

BY: ISSA B.M. KAMARA

The Charles Taylor trial seems to have been prolonged to an extent that Sierra Leoneans and Liberians are gradually losing interest and are left to speculate on the outcome. Whether it is the legal procedure in the international Court that it takes decades for justice is anyone's cup of tea.

However, it may be common knowledge that destabilisation and the situation both countries find themselves today will be attributed to the rebel insurgency in both countries. Whether he played an active role or not should have been established. We are very familiar with the adage that 'justice delayed is justice denied.' Well readers let me just take back to something I wrote some time ago:

'I am pretty certain that you may have read some of my articles under this column of the sad period this Nation and its people went through during our rebel war and military rule and then it is clearer to you as to what went wrong especially those activities that moved this Country backwards. Furthermore, you would have had a slight knowledge of certain political mojos that were either misdirected or misplaced to restore sanity and peaceful co-existence. Whatever way you assess the situation, the fact remains that the cumulative effect of those activities and resultant consequences that happened are not only responsible for the state we are today but the Herculean task we face now to rebuild a shattered nation and re-brand the image of a country that had won the admiration of the sub-region in particular and Africa in general. Today, as I write, the task to handle the problems is enormous, yet the awakening reality that no one is to make Sierra Leone for us, but our very selves has not only become crystal clear, but has also raised the awareness that together we stand, divided we fall. All hands must be on deck to restore our past glory.

A glory that will remove our ever dependence on foreign handouts and that will move us from the bottom index of underdevelopment. It is a situation that should be tackled seriously and with a sense of purpose. No half-hazard approaches will suffice. This is the more reason why I keep refreshing you memory of the darkest period of our history, simply for you to comprehend the disaster we went through. However, along the line we also clearly noticed the involvement of a Liberia with a motive that remains anybody's guess. Whether it was to help Sierra Leoneans to defeat the rebels, to make Sierra Leone a base to launch a rebellion in Liberia or for blood diamonds, or revenge by Charles Taylor as he had once promised that we will taste the bitterness of war remains food for thought. Please read on and see what you can make of that.

At the outbreak of war, other problems occurred simply as the result of a familiar pattern of ingrained corruption within the military. Senior and top echelon officers responsible for the disbursement of war funds must bear deep blame for the misappropriation that became public knowledge. Between April and August 1991 a total amount of over Le. 2.6 billion was expended on the military, excluding Le 200 million monthly for salaries.

Despite this massive expenditure, soldiers in battle fronts suffered a variety of shortage of food, fuel, medication and vehicle spare parts.
Critical look at the Liberian/RUF angle on our war!

In the border south-east conbat zone, there were 1,502 troops with 400 civilian volunteers. These were provided with 48 mostly old transport vehicles for which a required monthly supply of fixed 5,000 gallons of diesel and 2,000 gallons of petrol. Actual quantities received in the course of several monthly supplies were 4,000 gallons of diesel and 1,800 gallons of petrol. While much of the rest was sold clandestinely some found its way into the various diamond mining enterprises of military officers.

Meanwhile, in the combat zone, five senior army officers accused of desertion or collusion with the enemy by giving them information on government troop movements, received the light penalty of a simple dismissal from military service.

All those difficulties were the product primarily of neglect, ineptitude and venality in the military. They also came in the wake of a declining economy which compounded the problems.

The rebels were hardly hammering by such problems. Trained in the tactics of insurgency warfare, they operated in a terrain that was similar to what they were accustomed to in Liberia. The first waves of invaders were augmented by Sierra Leone youths who were captured, terrorized, trained and induced into their ranks. Among those they obtained knowledgeable guides for their jungle movements. In their arsenals were brand new AK-47 assault rifles, rocket propelled grenade launchers (RPGs) and heavy machine guns, which in a seemingly inexhaustible supply of ammunition. There was also the 'silencer', a curious device which simulated the sound of intense machine gun fire and exploding mortar bombs. Its use in the initial stages of the war was clearly unnerving to government troops unfamiliar with it.

It created panic and chaotic retreats that often led to casualties.

The entire rebel arsenal was new, supplied from Charles Taylor's stocks in Liberia. In spite of these advantages, government forces rapidly seized the initiative from the rebels pushing them out of many areas they had laid waste and looted. Regarding looting however many government soldiers even yearly in the war, were behaving with comparable disregard.

But there was one factor which made an impressive impact on the success of the Sierra Leone army. This was the ULIMO Factor.

The Liberian war had led to massive influx of refugees into Sierra Leone. Among these were former supporters of the murdered President Doe, his ethnic kins and kin, anti-Taylor elements, members of Doe's national army and ethnic Mandingo's, all severely victimized in the conflict of the NPFL forces.

In early May 1991, a small group of UN was formed in Sierra Leone comprising of Anjan Vsilu, former Assistant Director for intelligence at the National Security Agency in Liberia. He was also Director of Operations and Special Services dealing with espionage. Alhaji G.V. Konneh, former Minister of Information in President Doe's government, as well as former Assistant Professor of Mass Communications at the University of Liberia, James Chelely, Senior from Montserrado County; Major General Albert Karpeh, Ambassador of Liberia to Sierra Leone. This group was to be joined later by Ralph Seekoe and Roosevelt Johnson; Edward E. Kamara, former Minister for Party Political affairs in Sierra Leone acted as the link between the group and President Momoh.

The group which began meeting in March 1991 became known as the Liberian United Defense Force (LUDF). As time went on, the depth of commitments of Konneh, Youah, Karpeh and Johnson to the objectives of liberating Liberia from the grip of the NPFL made them the leading figures in the organization. When the war began in Sierra Leone, they offered to fight the rebels on the understanding that government would provide base facilities for the force they were training to fight the NPFL.
they were training to fight the NPFL in Liberia afterwards. To this the government of President Momoh gave its consent.

On 6th April 1991, following the training of the first 150 Liberians in Kenema, the LUDF which later changed its name to the United Liberation Movement of Liberia (ULIMO), commenced operations. The first engagement was in Gofur, eleven miles from Kenema town, from where government troops had retreated in the face of heavy rebel attacks. ULIMO troops engaged the rebels there in a three-hour battle and succeeded in pushing them back to Joni, where another five-hour battle was fought with rebels sustaining heavy casualties. ULIMO soldiers, fighting under the command of Arma Youlo, sustained no casualties. A second engagement between ULIMO and the rebels was in Gorahun Tunka in Kenema district where 22 Ulimo soldiers under the command of the late Lieutenant Solomon Kamara, a Krath from Kacala in Liberia, and the late Warrant Officer Freetiakar successfully defeated the rebels.

Following these successful engagements, ULIMO became a significant factor in the war against the insurgents who had by this time swelled their ranks with a considerable number of forcibly recruited Sierra Leoneans. Other engagements took place in several towns in Kailahun and Kenema districts where ULIMO front line commanders like J.
The fall of Manowa was a blow to the military, and it sent shock waves to the Bunumbu community and nearby towns. The Principal of the college sought urgent military protection for the college from the army garrison in Kenema but to no avail. The security of Bunumbu was raised in cabinet as information reached Freetown of an imminent attack.

The town and the college possessed massive stocks of private and government property and thus a tempting target for bandits.

The casual military response to the potential danger facing Bunumbu convinced the Principal of the urgent necessity to evacuate the staff, their families and students. On 22nd April, the precipitate flight from Bunumbu began and completed on the 28th. Four days later on 2nd May, the rebels struck.

The attack on Bunumbu conformed to a now familiar pattern.

A small rebel group entered the town to reconnoitre for the presence of government troops and to preach the evils of the APC Party and their determination to rescue the people from oppression. Their fear drove them to leave, and they evaded the temptation to flee. Meanwhile some of the rebels made a complete study of the geography of the town.

Shortly after, about 100 rebels descended on Bunumbu and quickly and methodically surrounded the town and rounded up the entire population. All radios were confiscated and the rebels threatened to shoot anyone trying to escape. Machine gun emplacements were arranged at strategic points around the town. Bunumbu was now gripped in fear. But the nightmare had just begun.

For several days afterwards, the systematic looting of the town and the college was carried out.

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**Critical look at the Liberian/RUF angle on our war!**

**FROM PAGE 19**

Everything that could be easily removed was taken away through jungle roads across to Liberia. Haunting reports by those who had beenDetails of the recent events and the new situation in the country will be...
UNICEF
Wednesday, 14 March 2012

Press release

UNICEF applauds landmark ruling on war crimes against children

UNICEF today applauded the International Criminal Court’s conviction of Thomas Lubanga of war crimes for recruiting children into his armed movement in the Democratic Republic of Congo DRC.

As a result of today’s landmark ruling, Lubanga is the first warlord to face international justice for using children as weapons of war.

“This is a pivotal victory for the protection of children in conflict,” said Anthony Lake, UNICEF Executive Director. “The conviction of Thomas Lubanga by the International Criminal Court sends a clear message to all armed groups that enslave and brutalize children: Impunity will not be tolerated.”

Thomas Lubanga Dyilo, the former president of the Unions des Patriotes Congolaise, was found guilty of conscripting and enlisting children under the age of 15 and using them as active participants in the conflict in the DRC in 2002 and 2003. Thousands of children, some as young as seven, were recruited and used as fighters, as well as other roles such as porters, cooks and sex slaves, by all sides.

UNICEF noted that the recruitment and use of children in hostilities is a war crime. Often it is the most vulnerable children who are exploited – orphans, and children who have been separated from their families and communities because of violence. UNICEF has repeatedly called for the prosecution of those who commit this crime.

“The exploitation of children by armed groups does more than violate their rights; it robs them of their childhood,” said Lake. “UNICEF is heartened that ICC Prosecutor Luis Moreno-Ocampo emphasised the plight of children recruited or used by armed forces or armed groups in his successful prosecution.”

Tens of thousands of children are still victims of these grave violations in at least 15 armed conflicts around the world. UNICEF will continue efforts to rescue these children and rehabilitate them.

UNICEF has been working intensively in several countries, including in the DRC, to help children caught up in conflict – building education and skills training in communities and especially women and girls. Since 2005, at least 35,000 children have been released or escaped from armed forces or armed groups in the DRC alone and have received support from UNICEF and partners to reintegrate into their communities and families.

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About UNICEF
UNICEF works in 190 countries and territories to help children survive and thrive, from early childhood through adolescence. The world’s largest provider of vaccines for developing countries, UNICEF supports child health and nutrition, good water and sanitation, quality basic education for all boys and girls, and the protection of children from violence, exploitation, and AIDS. UNICEF is funded entirely by the voluntary contributions of individuals, businesses, foundations and governments. For more information about UNICEF and its work visit: www.unicef.org
One warlord down, plenty more where he came from

By: Roger Boyes

ONE warlord down, two dozen to go? The verdict against Thomas Lubanga has raised hopes that the International Criminal Court can at least deter the more savage warlords of Africa, if not stamp them out entirely.

Coming up next in The Hague is former Liberian president Charles Taylor, who will appear on April 26 at the Special Court for Sierra Leone. Dozens of witnesses have testified to his criminal undertakings as a warlord, including the setting up of a Small Boys Unit - orphaned child soldiers, eyes glazed with amphetamines, trained to kill in the wars of the 1990s.

Also waiting for his moment in the dock is former Ivory Coast president Laurent Gbagbo, who is charged with crimes against humanity, including murder and rape.

Top of the wanted list, however, is President al-Bashir of Sudan, accused of orchestrating the mass killings in the Darfur region. The ICC has issued arrest warrants - the first against a sitting head of state - for crimes against humanity and genocide.

Not on the ICC list is Joshua Milton Blahyi, dubbed General Butt Naked because he would often fight in Liberia's 14-year civil war wearing only a pair of combat boots. He publicly claimed to have killed 20,000 people. He has since converted to Christianity and, as an evangelist preacher, has been touring the country asking for forgiveness. Other warlords, such as Prince Johnson of Liberia, also claim to have hung up their Kalashnikovs. Damning video footage shows him sipping a beer while his fighters torture and mutilate ousted president Samuel Doe.

Now a senator, Prince Johnson described the clip as "unfortunate".
Cambodia’s Ethnic Vietnamese Seek Tribunal Justice

Daniel Phan

Unable to own land, vote, or open a bank account, and subjected to regular discrimination, Ly Sokphhoung is an outsider in her own country.

Like most Yuon floating villagers living on Cambodia’s Tonle Sap lake, Ly, whose grandparents arrived from Vietnam during the French colonial era, leads an uncertain life and struggles daily with the realities of a stateless existence.

Still her hope of the United Nations-backed Khmer Rouge Tribunal hearing the Maoist regime’s genocidal crimes against ethnic Vietnamese has not waned, in spite of the age of the three elderly defendants: Nuon Chea, 85, Ieng Sary, 87, and Khieu Samphan, 80.

“We’ve had it tough for so long and while there’s relative peace now, some things haven’t changed. Local authorities still discriminate and make things like obtaining nationality harder for ethnic Vietnamese,” said Ly, who lost 36 members of her family under the Khmer Rouge regime.

Without nationality, many ethnic Vietnamese living on the margins of society in Kampong Chhnang province, like Ly, are unable move to the land, denied access to financial and state health services and face paying arbitrary taxes, in addition to regular harassment and discrimination from local authorities.

Due to past displacement, many lack the relevant documentation to prove their ancestral links to Cambodia.

“You must buy it,” Ly, 62, said of acquiring nationality, which she hopes the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia will assist her with.

“For a family, it’s around $500, or $1,000 if you want to hasten the process.

“I thought that when the Khmer Rouge were ousted they would at least provide Cambodian nationality to those who returned, but after coming home life has turned out to be one without freedom and liberties.”

After the Cambodian communists seized power in 1975, Ly spent two months in a labor camp before she found herself among 150,000 Vietnamese-Cambodians forcibly evicted in exchange for much-needed basics. She returned to her birth nation in 1983, four years after Vietnamese communist forces, triumphant from their reunification of North and South Vietnam and prompted by bloody border skirmishes in 1977, overthrew the Khmer Rouge.

Elimination

Official demographic reports show that the Khmer Rouge successfully eliminated the remaining 20,000 Vietnamese in Cambodia between 1975 and 1979, although accounts are uncertain as some tried to hide their identity.

In seeking to “smash and sweep cleanly away Yuon enemies,” the Khmer Rouge deported them en masse before
going after those who remained, which included killing children of ethnically mixed marriages. The Khmer Krom, indigenous to southern Vietnam, were also targeted for perceived association with the Yuon.

Lyma Nguyen, representing 43 ethnic Vietnamese civil parties in Case 002, said she is confident that, despite the legal complexities, there is ample evidence to convict the accused of waging genocide against the Vietnamese — charges they have denied.

“As a group, they were specifically singled out and a different crime was committed against them; the elimination of the group. The legal definition of genocide,” Nguyen said.

“They were deported en masse and some of them have seen mass executions of their families, and there are stories of the raping of Vietnamese girls, used as a punishment for just being Vietnamese,” she said.

“If the Vietnamese person in the relationship was a women, then all the children were ordered to be killed because there was this idea that the ‘Vietnamese-ness’ in a person is derived through the women because she carried their umbilical chord.”

An official radio broadcast in 1978 rallying Cambodians to exterminate the Vietnamese race and a number of equally vehement state publications attest to the regime’s intentions. But genocide, under the 1948 Geneva Convention, is notoriously difficult to prove.

And with no clear schedule as to when — or if — the tribunal will hear the charges, lawyers are managing their clients’ expectations should the court lose the race against time to pass judgement.

Transcending a verdict

Owing to the lengthy judicial process, the ECCC has so far delivered only one verdict since 2006, with the sentencing of Kaing Guek Eav (better known as Comrade Duch), whose initial commuted 19-year sentence was extended to life.

The controversy-prone tribunal, which has cost Phnom Penh and international donors about $200 million to date, has been dogged by claims of political interference. The Cambodian government, which is fiercely opposed to the potential Cases 002 and 003/004, has refused to endorse Swiss Laurent Kasper-Ansermet as the international co-investigating judge.

Lyma Nguyen, however, said she believed the ECCC could help repair race relations between Khmer and Vietnamese, in addition to finding justice for millions affected by the Khmer Rouge’s murderous rule.

The desired “longer-term outcome is that there is some understanding and appreciation from the mainstream society of the victim status of the Vietnamese” during the Khmer Rouge years, Nguyen said. “And I don’t expect that this would happen through the ECCC solely, but I think it’s one forum where this will be raised and have some positive outcomes.”

Cambodia has changed considerably since Ly Sokphhoung’s return. The scars of the past and the beleaguered social status of the ethnic Vietnamese have driven her to seek understanding.

“Wherever you live, you must develop affinity with its people, see eye-to-eye. Unfortunately, many of Khmer hardly treat us Vietnamese with any affection,” Ly said.

“But human emotions don’t discriminate: whether to a Vietnamese, Khmer or Cham. We’re all people. I never distinguish people by their ethnicity. I try to explain this to those I work for; they mostly understand me,” she added.

“Everyone accepts that if we continue fighting then this planet will one day be left with no one.”