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TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION OF LIBERIA

DIASPORA PROJECT

PUBLIC HEARING

HAMLIN UNIVERSITY

June 12, 2008

St. Paul, Minnesota

TESTIMONY OF

AMBASSADOR HERMAN J. COHEN

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Vice Chairperson Dede Dolopei
Oumu Syllah
Sheikh Kafumba Konneh
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1 (The following proceedings were had and made of
2 record, commencing at approximately 9:23 a.m.:)

3 PASTOR TEAYAH: Good morning ladies and gentlemen.
4 We want to say thank you for coming, and welcome to the
5 fourth day of the TRC Diaspora Hearing.

6 To begin this morning, I'll ask that you can all
7 stand for a few moment of silence. Please stand with us.

8 (All standing for moment of silence)

9 PASTOR TEAYAH: Thank you very much. Please be
10 seated. Sorry, I will just ask you quickly to remain
11 standing and administer the oath.

12 THE WITNESS: I, Herman J. Cohen, do promise that
13 my testimony I have come to give to the TRC of Liberia is the
14 truth and nothing but the truth, so help me God.

15 PASTOR TEAYAH: Please be seated.

16 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Good morning.

17 THE WITNESS: Good morning.

18 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: We want to welcome you
19 on behalf of the Commission to these public hearings of the
20 Liberian Truth and Reconciliation Commission. We appreciate
21 very much that you took of your time to share your thoughts,
22 experience and expectation with us.

23 These forums are intended to retrospect on the
24 history of Liberia, past developments, as a way of
25 understanding the conflict and, at the same time, so that

1 Liberians finally will move forward. And issues very
2 abruptly has come about relating to Liberian-U.S.
3 relationships, especially during a period of the conflict and
4 the rule of international that was played, what contributions
5 had been made either to assist us in obtaining the peace we
6 now have or what could have gone better in all of that.

7 U.S.-Liberia relationship is always focus because
8 of the longstanding traditional relationship we have had with
9 the United States. And you at some point in time during the
10 enemies of the government, sometime between '70 and '93, and
11 you were the under secretary, and it is in that capacity I
12 appreciate that you have come to share your experience during
13 these times, perhaps to throw light on some of the things
14 that happen, what role the U.S. play, how they were thinking
15 about, whatever information could assist us in understanding
16 the past.

17 And just for a minute I will take time to
18 introduce members of the Commission, and then we ask some
19 preliminary questions on who you are and some of these
20 questions.

21 I'm very sorry, Ambassador, I hope you understood
22 me. I'll introduce members of the Commission at this time,
23 and then we'll move into your testimony. Sitting at your
24 right is Commissioner Sheikh Kafumba Konneh, next to him is
25 Commissioner Pearl Brown Bull, next to her is Commissioner

1 Gerald Coleman, and immediately at my left is Commissioner
2 Dede Dolopei, immediate at my right is Commissioner Massa
3 Washington, Commissioner John Stewart, and Commissioner Oumu
4 Syllah. I'm Jerome Verdier. We say welcome and thanks.

5 Can you kindly repeat the name.

6 THE WITNESS: Herman J. Cohen.

7 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Current residence,
8 please.

9 THE WITNESS: Washington, D.C.

10 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Can you confirm that you
11 were Under Secretary of State for African Affairs?

12 THE WITNESS: Yes, I was, from 1989 to 1993.

13 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: 1989 to 1983.

14 COMMISSIONER DEDE DOLOPEI: 1993.

15 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: 1993. During that
16 period it was -- did you visit Liberia at any point in time?

17 THE WITNESS: I visited several times, yes.

18 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Several times.

19 THE WITNESS: I was also Director for Africa in
20 the White House from 1987 to 1989, and I also visited at that
21 time.

22 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Okay. Thank you, sir.
23 That is sufficient for now. You may kindly proceed with your
24 testimony.

25 THE WITNESS: Okay. I thank you for this

1 opportunity to give testimony, and I hope it -- I'm hoping it
2 will be useful. It's from a different perspective; it's from
3 a policy perspective as opposed to a direct involvement with
4 the events on the ground.

5 I joined the White House staff in January 1987. I
6 was working for President Reagan as his Africa advisor, and
7 within one week I was -- I went to Africa with Secretary of
8 State George Shultz.

9 Our first stop was Liberia, and we met several
10 times with President Doe. And I was present at all of these
11 meetings, and we found President Doe to be very upset with
12 the U.S. He felt that we weren't helping Liberia enough, we
13 weren't supporting him, and he said that he was America's
14 best friend in Africa, and, therefore, he thought we were not
15 recognizing this.

16 Secretary Shultz's main objective was to persuade
17 President Doe that they needed some sort of improvements in
18 their budgetary systems, in their fiscal systems, in their
19 management, otherwise we would not be able to give aid to
20 Liberia. You know, U.S. aid has to be accounted for, it has
21 to be audited, and what have you, and there were absolutely
22 no systems. So he persuaded President Doe to accept a group
23 of American experts to come and help set up an accounting
24 system for the government, and then we left.

25 It was all a very friendly visit. Secretary

1 Shultz was robed as a chief and what have you.

2 Experts came, and after six months the U.S.
3 ambassador asked me to come over and talk to President Doe
4 because he was not cooperating with these experts. And so I
5 went over, I saw President Doe. I said in order to have a
6 good relationship and to get U.S. assistance, he should
7 accept the advice of these -- of these experts who had come
8 and help set up all of these accounting systems. But it
9 didn't work out, so the U.S. Ambassador sent the experts
10 home.

11 So there was really no change in the relationship;
12 it was friendly, but we really weren't doing much. I think
13 most of what we were doing was help through the army. We had
14 a military assistance team there. We were providing
15 uniforms, vehicles, and what have you. So I did not pay that
16 much attention to Liberia while I was working in the White
17 House.

18 And then President Bush came into office and he
19 asked me to be Under Secretary for African Affairs, which I
20 assumed those duties in April of 1989. And I immediately
21 plunged into some active conflicts going on, Sudan, Ethiopia,
22 Angola, Mozambique, and I was not doing much with Liberia at
23 the time.

24 But on Christmas Eve of 1989, there was -- a group
25 of guerrillas came in to Nimba County from neighboring

1 Cote d'Ivoire and started shooting and trying to proclaim
2 that they were coming in to get rid of Samuel Doe. We knew
3 that these guerilla fighters had been trained in Libya and
4 that their arms had come from Burkina Faso and they were
5 getting full support from Ivory Coast. So they had full
6 access to the territory of Ivory Coast and they were using
7 that as a base, and they were coming in to attack the
8 government of Samuel Doe.

9 Our first reports were that the Liberian army was
10 trying to counter these guerrillas and that they were using a
11 very unfortunate tactic, which was wherever guerillas were
12 spotted, they would -- in a village, they would go in and
13 burn down the whole village and kill all the people there,
14 fellow Liberians. And this got us very upset. So we decided
15 to send U.S. military people out with the Liberian
16 army--these were people from the U.S. military assistance
17 mission--to help them deal with this conflict without killing
18 innocent people and committing human rights violations.

19 We did that, we sent people out, but when this
20 became known in the United States, there was a lot of
21 objection posed by people in the United States, especially
22 people from the Liberian Diaspora, who said that we were
23 helping the government of Doe fight the guerillas, and the
24 guerillas were trying to get rid of Doe, so, therefore, we
25 should not do that. There appeared to be a great deal of

1 opposition to Doe within the Diaspora, and they were calling
2 their congressmen and what have you. So as a result of that,
3 we withdrew the advisors from the Liberian army, and,
4 therefore, the atrocities continued against villages that had
5 guerillas operating in them.

6 Because the Liberian army atrocities of the
7 incoming guerrillas led by Charles Taylor were able to gather
8 a lot of support from young people who were saying, "They're
9 killing our people in the villages," so they joined Charles
10 Taylor's guerrilla force, and it expanded -- and it started
11 to expand. So by -- I would say by the middle of April of
12 1990 they expanded and had taken over a great deal of
13 Liberian territory.

14 We tried to engage in diplomatic mediation. The
15 government of Samuel Doe sent a team over to Washington, led
16 by Winston Tubman, to talk about what could be done, and we
17 also had a representative of Charles Taylor who was living in
18 New Jersey at the time, Mr. Woewiyu--I'm not pronouncing it
19 right--he was living in New Jersey, and he came to Washington
20 representing Charles Taylor, and we were discussing Taylor's
21 demands, that Doe step down and that there be a new election.
22 And Taylor's demand was, "As soon as Doe steps down, resigns,
23 we will stop fighting and we'll just go for an election."

24 We tried to persuade Doe to accept an early
25 election. He said that The Constitution called for an

1 election to be held, I believe, in 1993, I believe, when his
2 mandate was up. I'm not sure if that date is accurate. So
3 we said, "Well, move up the election to an early date." And
4 we started bargaining with Doe, and he said, "Okay, we'll
5 have it six months from now," what have you. And in the
6 meantime, the guerrilla forces were moving closer and closer
7 to Monrovia, and the army was falling back and not doing a
8 very good job in defending against these guerrilla factions.

9 The talks sort of broke down and no results I
10 think around March or April, so we came up with a plan. We
11 saw that the guerrillas were really winning the war. They
12 were coming very close to Monrovia, and the Liberian army was
13 really falling back to Monrovia, and that's all that was left
14 for Doe.

15 So we said that the main objective was to stop the
16 fighting, because a lot of innocent people were suffering
17 from that. And Monrovia itself was becoming a very, very
18 dangerous place. A lot of refugees had come into Monrovia.
19 There was a lot of ethnic violence, people -- ethnic groups
20 that were considered to be supporting Charles Taylor. The
21 Gio and the Mano, they were being treated very badly in
22 Monrovia by the government. And on the other side, within
23 Taylor's area of control, the Mandingo and the Krahn were
24 being treated very badly. There was a sanitation problem in
25 Monrovia, there was disease breaking out. So we said, "We

1 have to do something to stop the fighting."

2 And we started talking to Doe about leaving --
3 leaving Liberia and going into exile. And we had long
4 discussions with him through our ambassador and finally
5 persuaded him that it was time for him to go, and we were
6 willing to provide transportation. Of course, the
7 understanding was that if he left, Charles Taylor would come
8 in and take power.

9 Charles Taylor was unable to take power by force
10 because he could not defeat the army inside Monrovia. He
11 just never was able to do it. We were talking to him by
12 satellite phone, and he kept saying, "Next week I'll be
13 capturing Monrovia." And he never did. The Liberian army
14 was unable to fight outside of Monrovia, but with inside
15 Monrovia, they just prevented Taylor from coming in.

16 While he kept promising to capture Monrovia, the
17 situation inside Monrovia was very bad. People were dying of
18 disease, hunger, what have you, ethnic violence was taking
19 place. So we persuaded Doe to accept the idea of leaving. I
20 personally called up President Eyadema of Togo and asked if
21 he would accept Doe and his family, and Eyadema said, yes, he
22 would do that. And we started planning to take Doe out.

23 We talked to Taylor about opening up a corridor to
24 Sierra Leone so that troops from the army of Liberia could
25 escape. They felt that they had to fight to the death

1 because they would be killed if Taylor came in, so we wanted
2 to give them a way of getting out. And Taylor said he would
3 agree to that, and so they left open a corridor. But this
4 was defeated because Prince Johnson broke away from Taylor,
5 and he blocked the corridor. So it was very hard for the
6 Liberian troops to get out. But, anyway, we continued with
7 our scheme to send an airplane to Liberia to get Taylor [sic]
8 and his family out of the country.

9 At this point, when we were about to send our
10 aircraft to Europe to pick up -- to pick up Doe, I received a
11 word from the White House that we should cease all activities
12 dealing with the Liberian conflict, just stop doing anything.
13 I was not given any explanation for that. So all of our
14 plans were just halted right there. And so Doe was not taken
15 out of the country, and the war continued.

16 Since we decided not to follow up on our plans,
17 the responsibility for doing anything to stop the fighting
18 was passed, in effect, to the West Africa governments. Now,
19 you must remember that the training, equipping and financing
20 of the Taylor guerrillas came from Burkina Faso and
21 Cote d'Ivoire and Libya. So they were part of the
22 West Africa community. Libya was not, but Burkina Faso and
23 Cote d'Ivoire were a part of the community.

24 So there were meetings of the West Africa economic
25 community known as ECOWAS. And the Nigerians and Ghanaians

1 were very upset about what was going on in Monrovia. They
2 had a large number of their nationals living in Monrovia
3 caught up in the fighting. Sierra Leone was also upset about
4 that. So they had a discussion, and the Nigerians,
5 Ghanaians, Sierra Leonians and the Republic of Guinea said
6 that they must send an intervention force to stop the
7 fighting in Liberia.

8 Burkina Faso and Cote d'Ivoire were opposed
9 because they were supporting Charles Taylor, and they wanted
10 Charles Taylor to win. They did not want to stop the war
11 until Charles Taylor was victorious. But against the
12 opposition of Cote d'Ivoire and Burkina Faso, a peacekeeping
13 force was raised by the West Africans, and they landed in the
14 Monrovia area.

15 We supported this because we were very worried
16 about the conditions in Monrovia. We were unable to get any
17 aid into Monrovia. The port was blocked. Charles Taylor's
18 forces were shelling the port. We could not send ships in
19 there.

20 So the West African ECOWAS forces known as ECOMOG
21 landed in Monrovia--I forgot which month, I believe it was
22 April--and immediately pushed back Charles Taylor from
23 Monrovia and relieved the situation inside Monrovia. So we
24 were able to bring medical supplies, food, whatever was
25 needed to relieve the humanitarian situation.

1 So at that point the United States Government,
2 essentially, was not doing anything. Our only responsibility
3 at that point was to worry about U.S. citizens in Liberia,
4 and we sent a naval task force offshore to help evacuate any
5 U.S. citizen who wanted to leave. And at some point we sent
6 Marines into the center of Monrovia to help gather these
7 people and bring them out to the ships. I don't remember how
8 many actually came out, but we estimated there were 5000 U.S.
9 citizens living in Liberia, and I think maybe several hundred
10 did come out.

11 So, basically, the issue was one for the
12 West African countries. They said that they were there to
13 keep the peace and they wanted to have an election and all
14 that, but Charles Taylor did not trust them. He felt that
15 they were coming in to keep Doe in power. So he started a
16 war with the West African forces.

17 In August the White House asked me to go out to
18 West Africa to survey the situation and talk to everyone. I
19 started with the president of Guinea in Conakry, who told me
20 the whole problem, "We must blame the president of
21 Cote d'Ivoire, he orchestrated the whole thing,
22 Houphouet-Boigny, and he was totally at fault. There would
23 never have been any fighting, any guerrilla forces without
24 his money, his training, and his support for Charles Taylor."

25 I then went to Sierra Leone and I got the same

1 story from President Momo, "It's all the fault of
2 Houphouet-Boigny."

3 I then flew from Freetown to Monrovia. There was
4 fighting in the streets, so I landed in a helicopter on the
5 grounds of the U.S. Embassy, and I stayed for -- I didn't
6 stay 24 hours. I stayed less than 24 hours. And I met at
7 the embassy with Prince Johnson. I was unable to meet with
8 President Doe. I met with Prince Johnson. I found him to be
9 rather -- how shall we say, very emotional, very wild in his
10 discussions. I had the feeling he may have been taking drugs
11 at the time. But he was really a very incoherent person, so
12 I didn't get much out of him.

13 I flew from Monrovia to Abidjan, and I met with
14 President Houphouet and I said, "What can you tell me about
15 this war in Liberia?"

16 And he said, "I don't know anything about it. I
17 never met Charles Taylor. I have no knowledge of anything,"
18 against the background of all these other presidents telling
19 me that Houphouet started the whole thing. And he said, "I'm
20 sorry, I can't help you. I don't know anything."

21 And so I said, "Okay, Mr. President. But you're
22 very influential, you're the elder statesman of this region.
23 What can you do to help bring about peace in Liberia?"

24 He said, "I'll do my best."

25 So this started these various Yamoussoukro

1 meetings that he was calling to help bring about peace.

2 I flew from -- this was in August, by the way, of
3 1990. And I flew from Abidjan to Man, M-A-N, which is on the
4 border of Liberia. And I went inside Liberia with the U.S.
5 ambassador to Abidjan and I met with Charles Taylor in his
6 camp, which was about 20 kilometers inside the border in
7 Liberia. And he was surrounded by young boys, I would say 12
8 to 14 years old, carrying these very heavy machine guns,
9 Kalashnikovs and what have you. It was very frightening to
10 go in there.

11 And we met with Charles Taylor. He was sitting
12 in, sort of like, a throne, and behind him was a picture of
13 President Kennedy and Mrs. Kennedy. So it sounded like
14 Kennedy was his role model.

15 But, anyway, he was very cordial. We had a nice
16 discussion. And he kept repeating, saying the same thing, he
17 said, "I just want Doe to leave. Once he leaves, I'll go
18 back, and we'll just have an election. My personal interest
19 is not having power, it's just to get rid of Samuel Doe,
20 because Liberia needs to get rid of him. Otherwise there
21 will be no progress."

22 I said, "Well, if that's the case, would you
23 accept a cease-fire between you and ECOMOG?"

24 And he said, "Yes, I would."

25 And I said, "The Marines are here."

1 He said, "Send the Marines, and we'll surrender to
2 the Marines."

3 I said, "Do you really mean that?"

4 He said, "Yes, I'll surrender to the Marines. We
5 all trust the U.S. Marines."

6 And so I reported this to Washington, and
7 Washington got very upset with me, saying, "We gave you
8 strict instructions not to get involved with ending the war,
9 doing anything about the war, so you must stop doing that."

10 Anyway, I went back to Washington, and our main
11 concern after I got back was making sure that all Liberian --
12 Americans living in Liberia got out, and that all -- we did
13 all we could to alleviate humanitarian concerns inside
14 Liberia by sending in relief supplies. And we gave support
15 to ECOMOG and we provided money and we provided supplies to
16 ECOMOG.

17 After President Doe was assassinated, we just
18 continued to play a behind-the-scenes role with the
19 West African governments in the lead. There were discussions
20 in Freetown between representatives of Taylor and an interim
21 government that had been set up by the West Africans, and we
22 were observers at that, we helped promote it. I think the
23 talks were held at the U.S. Embassy in Sierra Leone. But
24 beyond that, we really didn't do much to try to end the
25 hostilities and the fighting.

1 So throughout my time, I left office in 1993, that
2 was about our role in Liberia. We supported the Yamoussoukro
3 meetings, but we didn't play an active role in trying to
4 bring about peace in Liberia. This only took place later,
5 after I left office during the Clinton administration, where
6 the United States Government became more active in helping to
7 do mediation and to bring about a solution to the problem.
8 What else can I say about that? I think that's about the
9 main thing that I observed.

10 One of the main points I wanted to make for this
11 Commission is that some of the greatest tragedies in Africa
12 have come about through what I call surrogate war. Surrogate
13 war. Now, sometimes you have a situation in an African
14 country that is so bad that the people feel justified in
15 rising up against a ruler. Look at Zimbabwe today, for
16 example. It's so bad that they're totally justified. The
17 situation in Angola was similar.

18 But sometimes there's no reason to have a war, and
19 sometimes these wars are started by outside powers who want
20 to change the regime for their own purposes. And this is the
21 case of Liberia.

22 Now, a lot of people were opposed to Samuel Doe,
23 they felt he should go, a lot of Liberians, both inside
24 Liberia and outside Liberia. And I agree that I think he was
25 not a suitable president for that country. They needed a

1 free and fair election to get the right people in office.
2 But that did not justify a war which totally destroyed the
3 whole country.

4 I remember talking to Taylor on a satellite phone
5 and I said, "One thing I want you to do, promise me, is you
6 will not destroy the infrastructure. You have a dam which
7 supplies electricity to Monrovia and you have all sorts of
8 things. You have all sorts of communication stations."

9 And he said, "I will not touch the
10 infrastructure."

11 But by the time the war was over, the
12 infrastructure was totally destroyed. There's no electricity
13 in Monrovia because the dam, it doesn't exist anymore.

14 So why did these outside countries start this war?
15 There would not have been a war in Liberia without these
16 outside powers. I asked Houphouet, and he said, "I never
17 heard of it." But he's the one who financed it and provided
18 all the training and selected Charles Taylor.

19 In 1991, I went to the first Sullivan Summit in
20 Abidjan, and I met with the president of Burkina Faso and I
21 said, "Well, I understand you supplied arms to Charles Taylor
22 and helped him start this war."

23 He said, "Yes, I did."

24 And I said, "Why did you do that?"

25 And he said, "Well, he was a horrible leader. He

1 was corrupt. He was stealing everything. He had to go."

2 I said, "But look what happened, the country was
3 destroyed."

4 He said, "Well, we expected the war to be over in
5 30 days, Charles Taylor would take power, and that would be
6 it, and Liberia would see a new day."

7 And I said, "Well, it didn't work out that way.
8 The war is still going on, and it's terrible."

9 And he said, "Yes. I'm sorry I did it. I really
10 am sorry I did it."

11 And I said, "Well, at least now," you know, two
12 years later, "will you stop supplying arms to Charles Taylor
13 so that ECOMOG can bring about a peacekeeping operation and
14 bring about elections?"

15 He said, "Yes, I will stop sending arms."

16 But he never did stop. He kept going because he
17 had an investment in Charles Taylor, and he wanted absolutely
18 for Charles Taylor to win, and he did not trust the West
19 African forces because he opposed the operation. And
20 Houphouet never openly discussed it with me, because he said,
21 "I never heard of this." But he wanted to work for peace.

22 A couple of years later, I believe it was in 1992,
23 we had a State visit from the president of Senegal, Abdou
24 Diouf, came to Washington. And at that time the problem with
25 the negotiations at Yamoussoukro and other places between

1 Taylor and the West Africans were continuing, and one of the
2 demands of Charles Taylor was that he didn't want Nigerian
3 and Ghanaian troops there, because they were the enemy. He
4 didn't trust them. But he wanted someone not connected with
5 the war, a neutral party, to send troops.

6 So when Abdou Diouf came in to Washington, we
7 said, "Would you be willing to send Senegalese troops to be a
8 neutral group to help bring about trust so that the war could
9 end?"

10 And Abdou said, "I'd be glad to do it, but I will
11 need help. We'll need equipment and we'll need
12 transportation."

13 So President Bush agreed to provide that. And we
14 did manage to send a battalion of Senegalese troops to be
15 part of the peacekeeping operation. And Taylor had promised
16 that if we sent a neutral force, that they would be respected
17 and they would be working with them to bring about peace.

18 So what happened on the first occasion, Taylor's
19 people ambushed a Senegalese patrol and killed everybody.
20 Here were these neutral forces came in, and Taylor's people
21 just killed them all. And needless to say, the Senegalese
22 were rather upset about that, and they withdrew their troops.
23 So that is about the story of U.S. involvement. And it did
24 not. . .

25 Now, why did the U.S. -- did the White House

1 overrule me in stopping the scenario where we're going to
2 take Doe out with a U.S. Air Force plane and allow Taylor to
3 come in? Why did that happen? Well, there was never any
4 real explanation until years later, when General Scowcroft
5 was interviewed. He was the national security advisor to
6 President Bush. He said, "Well, we knew that if we had done
7 that, we would be totally responsible for Liberia from then
8 on." In other words, we would be responsible for just taking
9 care of Liberia, which I thought was not a good analysis.
10 They should have asked me; I would have told them that that
11 would not be the case. But, anyway, that was why the
12 decision was made to overrule me.

13 Now, you might ask, well, what would have been
14 good if Taylor came in, who turned out to be pretty bad
15 president? Well, at least if he had come in at that time, in
16 early 1990, the country would not have been destroyed and all
17 of this humanitarian disaster would not have happened. He
18 would have turned out to be not a nice dictator, but at least
19 he would have avoided this total destruction of a country.
20 So I thought that -- I was very sorry that we did not go
21 through with that plan in early 1990.

22 Later, after I retired, when Taylor became
23 president in the first election, he asked me to come over to
24 see what advice I could give. He actually hired me as a
25 consultant for three months. And I went over there, and I

1 saw that the vice minister of finance at that time, whose
2 name I can't remember, had been working with the World Bank
3 and had developed a very, very competent economic plan to
4 bring about economic recovery, but it would have involved all
5 sorts of reforms; transparency in the accounting, making sure
6 that all revenues coming in from the state-owned companies
7 would go into the budget, and what have you. And it was an
8 excellent plan.

9 And I recommended to President Taylor that he
10 adopt the plan and sign an agreement with the World Bank. He
11 thanked me for my advice, but he never implemented that. He
12 preferred to work outside the World Bank and run the country
13 according to his own criteria. So after that point, I had no
14 longer any contact with him or with Liberia in any fashion.

15 And, by the way, I wrote much of this in a book
16 that I wrote about my work in conflict in Africa, and one
17 chapter is devoted to Liberia, so you're welcome to consult
18 that. It's called Intervening in Africa. And I give a lot
19 of these details about our work and the policy level. So
20 I'll stop there now.

21 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Thank you very much,
22 Ambassador. We appreciate you sharing --

23 THE WITNESS: Yes.

24 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: -- your experiences with
25 us reflecting the period of 1983 up to 2000 -- 1987 up to

1 1993 and even beyond when you were in active public service.

2 We want to say we Liberians have always had second
3 thoughts about what America did, what America didn't do, what
4 America should have done, even during the conflict and
5 beyond, and these have been overwhelming concerns. We are
6 happy that you have come in to provide a lot of information
7 which, up to now, has not been made public and has been the
8 subject of conjectures and speculations and rumors and all of
9 that. So we thank you very much. And commissioners at this
10 time will ask some questions.

11 Sheikh.

12 COMMISSIONER SHEIKH KAFUMBA KONNEH: Thank you
13 very much, Ambassador Cohen, for your frank statement. As
14 you may know, I became involved in the peace process of
15 Liberia through the Inter-Faith Mediation Committee, which
16 you are familiar with.

17 If I may ask, can you tell this Commission and,
18 through this Commission, the people of the Republic of
19 Liberia, Africa, and the world when, how and where
20 America-Liberian relations began?

21 THE WITNESS: When did they begin?

22 COMMISSIONER SHEIKH KAFUMBA KONNEH: Yeah. How,
23 when and where.

24 THE WITNESS: Well, this is a historic question.
25 I may not be that expert on it, but as you know, the origin

1 of the colonization of the Liberian coast I believe began in
2 the 1820s, which some people in the United States felt that
3 slaves who had been freed would really be incompatible with
4 life in the United States, and, therefore, it would be much
5 better -- it would be better both for the United States and
6 for them to go back to their country -- their area of origin,
7 which is West Africa. So this was the beginning of
8 colonization of the Liberian coast.

9 Now, when Liberia became an actual republic, I
10 don't remember the exact date, but from that time on, I
11 believe it was in the 1840s, the United States established
12 diplomatic relations with Liberia. So it was an opportunity
13 for the United States to have a colony like the British and
14 the French had. It was unfortunate that Liberia did not
15 become a U.S. colony, because the countries around Liberia,
16 Sierra Leone, Guinea, French Guinea and Ivory Coast, all had
17 much more development as a result of colonization. They had
18 roads, they had health services, they had education services,
19 which Liberia lacked. They did not have the resources to
20 have that because they were not a colony; it was an
21 independent republic.

22 So U.S.-Liberian relations were quite normal
23 throughout the 19th century right up to the Second World War.
24 If Liberia had been a colony, it would have been a bigger
25 country, because the British and the French were snipping off

1 parts of Liberia and getting away with it, there was no one
2 stopping them. So I think the experience, the U.S. probably
3 -- both Liberia and the U.S. would have been better off if it
4 had been a U.S. colony like the Philippines. The Philippines
5 was set free right after the Second World War.

6 Well, I'm doing some research now on the history
7 of U.S. policy in Africa, and I came across a conversation
8 between President Roosevelt in 1945 and some African-American
9 journalists, and they said, "Well, the war is about to be
10 ending. What are you going to do about Africa?"

11 And Roosevelt had never even thought about Africa,
12 so he said, "Go over there, come back and give me your
13 recommendations."

14 So they went to Liberia, they went to Guinea,
15 Sierra Leone, the Ivory Coast, and they came back and saw
16 Roosevelt, and he said, "What did you find?"

17 And they said, "Liberia is a disgrace to the
18 United States. All these other countries are wealthy;
19 Liberia is very poor."

20 So Roosevelt wrote a memo saying, "Let's do
21 something for Liberia." And what they did was build up the
22 port of Monrovia, which was the beginning of the port of
23 Monrovia.

24 Now, of course, Roberts Field was built because of
25 the Second World War, where we needed this field for sending

1 our forces through to the Middle East and beyond, who my own
2 brother, who was old enough to be in the war, landed at
3 Roberts Field, and then he went on to India when he was in
4 the U.S. Army.

5 So the whole history of U.S.-Liberian relations
6 was one of good relations but keeping Liberia at arm's
7 length. Well, the whole reason for Liberia's existence was
8 to send freed slaves away from the U.S. So, therefore, we
9 wanted to keep them away. We didn't want to keep them close,
10 you see. So that was framing the whole relationship.

11 And I sympathized with Samuel Doe in his meeting
12 with Shultz when he said, "You know, we're doing everything
13 for you. We're your best friend in Africa. Whenever there's
14 a vote in the U.N., we're with you. We defend you all the
15 time. And what are you doing for us? Not much."

16 When the U.S. invaded Panama, there was a vote in
17 the U.N. to condemn the U.S. for invading a sovereign
18 country. And the vote was something like 160 to 3 against
19 the U.S. Now, who were the three who voted to support the
20 U.S.? Israel, Liberia and the U.S. were the three votes.

21 So Liberia was -- we could always count on
22 Liberia. When we needed the airfield, we could have it. We
23 didn't even have to ask permission. We had these antenna
24 fields for the CIA and the Voice of America, it was all
25 there. And, yet, the U.S. took Liberia for granted. And I'm

1 just giving you my personal opinion there.

2 But what really troubled me is that I was not
3 allowed to go with this scheme to get Doe out and bring
4 Taylor to power, which have averted the total war.

5 And, also, I learned a lesson as a diplomat, that
6 we should not tolerate surrogate wars. I don't think the
7 people of Liberia were ready for a war against Doe. They may
8 have disapproved of him, were unhappy with him, but I don't
9 think they wanted a civil war where tribes would be killing
10 each other. But it was brought about by outsiders. It was
11 brought about by outsiders. It was totally unjustified.

12 And I think this should be brought to the light of
13 day, because surrogate wars continue in Africa today.
14 They're continuing. The war in Rwanda was like that. The
15 war in Darfur is a surrogate war. And I think it's time for
16 blame to be pointed at those people outside the countries who
17 start these things. The president of Burkina Faso told me he
18 was sorry. But, you know, thanks a lot.

19 COMMISSIONER SHEIKH KAFUMBA KONNEH: Thank you for
20 that response.

21 Do we then conclude from the response you have
22 just given, taking into account how Liberia was established,
23 America being initiator, and coupled with the fights that
24 during the Second World War Liberia had risked its national
25 sovereignty to declare the war against Hitler, and during the

1 United Nation election at a time of establishing Asia and
2 Liberia broke the tie, was it justifiable, logical and
3 grateful for that relationship, in time of distrust, of war,
4 to just dangle that and, in your own statement, to say
5 Liberian has no more interest -- I mean that America has no
6 more interest in Liberia?

7 THE WITNESS: Well, the U.S. has always been
8 interested in Liberia, but after the Bush administration
9 left, I think the Clinton administration became much more
10 active. I was not part of that. But they became much more
11 active in trying to bring about an end to the war in Liberia.
12 I think the Clinton administration provided quite a lot of
13 money, both for humanitarian relief, support for
14 peacekeepers, and what have you.

15 So there was an interest, and I think part of the
16 reason for that is the great support that Liberia's always
17 had from the Diaspora. I mean, it's hard for the U.S.
18 Government to ignore the Diaspora; they vote, they write
19 letters to Congressmen, and what have you.

20 So the United States has always taken an interest
21 in Liberia, but whether it was enough and whether they did
22 enough, that's something to be discussed. I think we took
23 Liberia for granted. I think finally, now, maybe that will
24 be at an end. I think now we'll be paying much more
25 attention to Liberia.

1 COMMISSIONER SHEIKH KAFUMBA KONNEH: Can you tell
2 us, if you know, knowing the security system of America, how
3 Mr. Taylor escaped from prison?

4 THE WITNESS: Oh, when he was in Massachusetts?

5 COMMISSIONER SHEIKH KAFUMBA KONNEH: Yeah.

6 THE WITNESS: I don't know how he escaped.

7 Let me give you some background there. He was
8 under -- he was head of the General Services department,
9 right? And he was being pursued by the Liberian government
10 for investigation of corruption, fraud, stealing money, and
11 he was in Massachusetts, and on the request of the Liberian
12 government, he was arrested, pending extradition. Pending
13 extradition, which is a normal procedure. There is an
14 extradition treaty between the U.S. and Liberia.

15 So he was being held by the State of
16 Massachusetts. And what was needed was a -- documentation
17 that could be given to the judge in Massachusetts that would
18 have enabled the judge to decide whether he should be
19 extradited to Liberia for trial.

20 After his arrest, a long period of time went by
21 and there were no documents supplied. Nothing came in from
22 Monrovia in support of this extradition. So he was sitting
23 in jail waiting to be dealt with through the judicial system,
24 but nothing happened while they were waiting for these
25 documents. And he escaped. I think he had been in prison

1 something like six months.

2 Now, how he escaped, I don't know. I have no
3 knowledge. I have, actually, suspicions; that some people
4 were tired of feeding him. And since he had not committed
5 any crimes in the U.S., he was not accused of any crimes in
6 the U.S., why continue feeding this gentleman? And if he's
7 wanted so badly in Liberia, why didn't they get this
8 paperwork in, you see. So you can draw your own conclusions
9 from that.

10 COMMISSIONER SHEIKH KAFUMBA KONNEH: My last
11 question. Before the starting of the war, there were many
12 outcries in Liberia concerning human right violations and
13 dictatorships, but in hearing your testimony, you said you
14 and the Secretary of State, Shultz, visited Liberia, wanted
15 to discuss with the Doe government budgetary adjustments
16 because you felt that they were mismanaging. Do we then
17 understand from that statement that the interests of the
18 United States was never centered around human rights,
19 democracy and justice, but budgetary system?

20 THE WITNESS: Well, let me put it this way, until
21 1990, there were no democracies in Africa. Maybe you can
22 consider Senegal and Botswana semi-democracies at that time,
23 but all of African countries were one-party states and one-
24 party dictatorships. All of Africa was like that, and all of
25 them had various degrees of human rights abuses; corruption,

1 rigged elections, and what have you. So U.S. policy, up
2 until 1990, was really, Well, this is the way Africa is, and
3 we're not in a position to tell Africa what to do.

4 Where there were really egregious human rights
5 violations, we really took action, and we had the annual
6 Human Rights Report which pointed all this out. But we did
7 not have an aggressive policy to promote democracy until
8 President Bush announced this in early 1990 and we started
9 spending money to promote democracy. And the main thing is
10 that Africans themselves were starting to put the pressure on
11 their own governments to democratize. So then you had the
12 vast -- the beginning of multiparty democracy.

13 But until 1990, our policy was more attuned toward
14 the Cold War and economic development. We really had no
15 emphasis on these other issues. So we weren't treating
16 Liberia differently from any other African country at the
17 time. That's the way Africa was.

18 COMMISSIONER SHEIKH KAFUMBA KONNEH: Thank you
19 very much.

20 COMMISSIONER PEARL BROWN BULL: Thank you,
21 Mr. Former Secretary of State for African Affairs, Ambassador
22 Cohen, for your candid personal opinion and also what you
23 know with working within the government, United States
24 Government international affairs area.

25 In light of the last question asked by

1 Commissioner Cohen about America being more concerned about
2 the economic interest and other things, there are rumors that
3 United States aided the overthrow of Tolbert's government.
4 Do you have any information or clarification on this, because
5 that's the rumors that have been circulating. In fact, we've
6 been reading about it in books.

7 THE WITNESS: I have no personal knowledge of
8 that. At the time it was 1980.

9 COMMISSIONER PEARL BROWN BULL: '80, yes.

10 THE WITNESS: 1980 I was director of Intelligence
11 and Research for the State Department, and I think if the
12 U.S. had been involved, I would have known about it. I would
13 have known about it. So I can state with almost certainty
14 that the U.S. was not involved in that. It was a surprise.

15 COMMISSIONER PEARL BROWN BULL: Yes. And you
16 haven't read about it anywhere like I have? You have not
17 read about that?

18 THE WITNESS: I've not read about it, but I think
19 I would have been in a position to know.

20 COMMISSIONER PEARL BROWN BULL: Okay.

21 THE WITNESS: All U.S. intelligence activities
22 have to go through the State Department, and in 1980 to 1984
23 I was in charge of intelligence for the State Department, and
24 I can guarantee you, nothing like that came across my desk.

25 COMMISSIONER PEARL BROWN BULL: Thank you for that

1 clarification.

2 You stated that initially America did play a role
3 in trying to get involved with this "surrogate war" in
4 Liberia, and all of a sudden you've got this instruction to
5 halt the discussion. Was that because of the Persian Gulf at
6 that time and America was more concerned about raising an
7 interest in that? But perhaps you don't know the reason,
8 because you said you didn't know the reason. Could we just
9 assume, or could you give us some assumption, some reason, do
10 you think?

11 THE WITNESS: I don't think the Persian Gulf
12 operation -- You're quite right to ask that question, because
13 the Persian Gulf War started in '90, and we were heavily
14 involved -- I know I was heavily involved in trying to get
15 support in the Security Council from the African members, who
16 were Zaire, Ethiopia and Ivory Coast. But I don't think that
17 distracted us from what was going on in Liberia.

18 We did take ships away from the Persian Gulf to
19 put them offshore Liberia for the purpose of helping U.S.
20 citizens get out. So that we did -- we did deprive the U.S.
21 forces of some ships. But I didn't think it had any
22 relationship -- The decisions made, that we knew later, were
23 not given to me immediately, was that there was this feeling
24 that we didn't want to have Liberia become a ward of the
25 United States. This was the interpretation. If they had

1 asked me, I would have said, "This is nonsense. Liberia
2 would not become a ward of the United States." But that was
3 higher-level decision making.

4 COMMISSIONER PEARL BROWN BULL: Coming back again
5 to this human right violation in the manner in which
6 President Doe was killed and died, from your statement,
7 America had agreed to let President Doe leave, and President
8 Eyadema had agreed. So who could say now in the manner in
9 which he died? Because perhaps he still felt that going to
10 the port was a way of him escaping -- some medium of escape
11 had been made for him, not really realizing that there was
12 some reason to halt this decision. Are you aware, within
13 your knowledge, whether he knew that the United States had
14 decided to pull their hand away from giving him the safe
15 passage? Do you know whether he was aware?

16 THE WITNESS: Yeah, he was aware of that. Our
17 ambassador told him that. He was assassinated in ECOMOG
18 headquarters.

19 COMMISSIONER PEARL BROWN BULL: Yeah.

20 THE WITNESS: So I think the questions that I
21 would ask if I was in your spot was: Did ECOMOG have
22 anything to do with his assassination? But I have no
23 knowledge -- I can assure you that he knew that we were no
24 longer going to offer to take him out by air travel.

25 COMMISSIONER PEARL BROWN BULL: Refreshing my

1 memory, did you go to Liberia in 1989 or the early part of
2 1990?

3 THE WITNESS: I went in '89 -- no, I did not go in
4 '89. My last visit had been in late '87, when we were
5 talking to Doe about implementing these reforms.

6 COMMISSIONER PEARL BROWN BULL: I don't know
7 whether you recall, because it was then, just like in 2003,
8 when the women of Liberia play an important role in stopping
9 this for a comprehensive peace accord. And because of the
10 situation with President Doe at that time, the women of
11 Liberia met secretly with you at your U.S. Embassy. I
12 remember they were -- I remember back when Grace Minor,
13 Teetee Bare, Teetee Glapper, Edith Dennis, the late -- they
14 had a cross-section of women, but we had to meet secretly,
15 and we all signed a petition with more than 2000 names and
16 giving you the view of the women of Liberia and talking about
17 the human rights abuses and acts in the United States to
18 intervene. In fact, you were trying to help us --

19 THE WITNESS: When was that? What --

20 COMMISSIONER PEARL BROWN BULL: It must have been
21 '87. It was the last time when --

22 THE WITNESS: '87, yes.

23 COMMISSIONER PEARL BROWN BULL: Yes.

24 THE WITNESS: I'm sorry.

25 COMMISSIONER PEARL BROWN BULL: And although you

1 saw Doe and the other people, but the women did give you a
2 petition --

3 THE WITNESS: I remember that now.

4 COMMISSIONER PEARL BROWN BULL: -- and it was
5 recorded, because during the 1990s when some of the women
6 came trying to get their TPS, and so when you call their
7 name, they refer to that document.

8 So I want to say truly you did try to -- you
9 attempted to champion a peace and change the situation in a
10 country, using as best as you can, taking into consideration
11 the United States diplomacy, how you feel about maybe their
12 special interests versus the interests of others. We want to
13 say thank you. And that's why at this time in our history we
14 couldn't leave you out, that by coming to participate with
15 this process to give us what you know will help us, and
16 history will judge you kindly. Thank you.

17 THE WITNESS: Thanks.

18 COMMISSIONER REV. GERALD COLEMAN: Thank you very
19 much for your support of this process. First all, I'm very
20 happy and honored to hear your testimony. I felt, as I
21 listened to you, that you gave us a very sincere expression
22 of your heart, even though some of the things were delicate
23 to say. And that will always be respected.

24 But then I hope that you can also bear with us, as
25 I may have four questions to ask you that may be delicate,

1 but, again, it's in the interest of world peace and trying to
2 understand how we can go forward in our country.

3 The first one, I'm concerned about the '70s. In
4 the '70s of Liberia, we were asked, in the Commission, to
5 look into the root causes of our problems. And, as you know,
6 the coup of 1980 is like a root kickoff element, like an
7 opening of a Pandora's box issue. So for us it's very
8 important to clearly understand what happened during that
9 time.

10 So as I looked into some areas of research, I
11 realize that during that time an American ambassador,
12 Mr. Whitfield, was killed in Liberia. I noticed also during
13 that time the Communist fight, Cold War battle, was very
14 strong, but, yet, our president tended to take a non-aligned
15 posture, which could even be considered moving to the other
16 side.

17 And when I put all of this together with the fact
18 that we had young Liberians here, which became later known to
19 us as Progressives, who wanted a change in the system, I was
20 wondering whether you could shed any light on whether America
21 could have assisted in any way this process during the '70s
22 in Liberia with regards to the issue of 1980? Just to clear
23 the record, that's all. That would be the first question.

24 THE WITNESS: You know, that's a very important
25 question to ask. I must admit that I was involved with other

1 countries as a younger diplomat in the '70s. I was
2 ambassador in Senegal in the '70s, so I didn't pay much
3 attention to Liberia at the time. Before that, I was in
4 Paris. And in Paris, of course, you spend a lot of time with
5 French-speaking countries rather than English-speaking.

6 But I think the history of Liberia is not
7 dissimilar to other countries. I think what you had there
8 was minority rule, basically. And one of the big problems --
9 or big reasons for instability in a number of countries is
10 minority rule, where the majority feels excluded, where
11 resources are concentrated within the minority, privileges,
12 education, what have you, was one the problems in Rwanda and
13 Burundi, where 15 percent of the people had all of the
14 control. And I think this is what happened in Liberia.

15 And over the years pressure kept building up that
16 this was unjust and it had to be changed. The manner of
17 changing was rather unfortunate, the killing of Tolbert and
18 what have you. But I think that's the reason you had this
19 feeling that there was a need for justice in Liberia.

20 I remember visiting, I think it was in '87, the
21 visit, there was a cocktail party at the Ambassador's and I
22 was meeting with some Liberian businessmen, and I said,
23 "Well, how do you feel about the business situation under
24 Doe?"

25 He said, "Well, we're more comfortable with Doe

1 than with Tolbert. Doe leaves us alone. He's corrupt; he
2 steals from the state oil company and what have you, but he
3 leaves us alone. Tolbert, every businessman had to have
4 Tolbert as his partner, you see. The only way you can go
5 into business was to be a partner of Tolbert."

6 So some people felt more freedom under Doe than
7 others. But I believe that the fundamental issue in Liberia
8 was minority rule. And there should have been a transition
9 to majority rule, but there wasn't, and it came about by this
10 unfortunate business in 1980.

11 I remember the U.S. ambassador at the time I think
12 was Perkins. Was it Perkins or was it Swing? I forget which
13 one of them.

14 COMMISSIONER PEARL BROWN BULL: Swing.

15 THE WITNESS: It was Swing.

16 And I asked Swing, "Well, what was the impact of
17 1980?"

18 And he said, "Well, it was popular." He says, "A
19 country boy had come to power representing the majority. So
20 the United States said, 'Well, if it's popular, we're going
21 to join it.'" But, of course, there was dissolution that
22 came up, happened later when Doe was just as much a minority
23 ruler as Tolbert was.

24 COMMISSIONER REV. GERALD COLEMAN: Thank you. So,
25 in summary, you're saying that you don't think there was any

1 American involvement in that process; it was just a natural
2 thing that happened?

3 THE WITNESS: It was a natural thing. I'm quite
4 sure that the U.S. did not orchestrate --

5 COMMISSIONER REV. GERALD COLEMAN: Okay.

6 THE WITNESS: -- the events of 1980.

7 COMMISSIONER REV. GERALD COLEMAN: Okay. Thank
8 you.

9 My second concern was, you mentioned that when you
10 talked to Doe and Taylor about opening this corridor of
11 opportunity where Doe could probably escape. Now, I was
12 wondering, what time did that conversation take place, that
13 discussion, just to get some clarity?

14 THE WITNESS: Well, it was the time we were trying
15 to organize Doe's departure. And we knew -- some people were
16 saying -- some people we trusted were saying that if Doe
17 left -- if Doe tried to leave, his own men would go against
18 him, because here he would have been abandoning his own
19 troops, you see, and he would be abandoning them to Taylor's
20 coming in and killing them, because the emotions were so
21 high. So our idea was let the troops escape so that Taylor
22 -- so that Doe could escape, you see.

23 So we talked to Taylor and we said, "Look, you're
24 not capturing Monrovia. You've been telling us you're going
25 to capture Monrovia for three months now. You never do it.

1 It's always 'Next week. Next week.' So the way to do it is
2 to walk in -- let Doe leave and walk in and let the troops
3 leave. So open this corridor."

4 So he said, "Yes, I'll do that."

5 And he actually did; he stopped the blockade of
6 the road going to Sierra Leone. But then Prince Johnson came
7 along and messed everything up, you see.

8 COMMISSIONER REV. GERALD COLEMAN: Yeah. The
9 question, you felt -- Actually, the question at the time was,
10 it seemed coincidental that Prince Johnson's decision to
11 break away from Doe [sic] coincided with your headquarters
12 giving you order of hands-off for Liberia, or was there a
13 difference in time?

14 THE WITNESS: I can't --

15 COMMISSIONER REV. GERALD COLEMAN: And, also,
16 Liberia in the Diaspora influencing the situation. So I was
17 trying to see whether there was a relationship in there.

18 THE WITNESS: I'm not -- My recollection of the
19 exact time -- It was all happening, more or less, at the same
20 time, but I don't think Prince Johnson had anything -- any
21 relationship to this. I think Prince Johnson got fed up with
22 Taylor, who was, you know, executing people -- summarily
23 executing people, and he didn't -- I think he risked being
24 executed himself if he didn't break away.

25 COMMISSIONER REV. GERALD COLEMAN: Thank you.

1 The third one was, you mentioned about this
2 situation where General Scott -- or Scowcroft--I'm sorry, I
3 didn't catch the exact name--made a statement to you that
4 America had lost interest in Liberia in the sense it wasn't
5 important enough and they didn't want to, sort of, take
6 responsibility for Liberia as a whole. I hope I've got that
7 point clear.

8 THE WITNESS: Well, General Scowcroft --

9 COMMISSIONER REV. GERALD COLEMAN: Scowcroft,
10 mm-hmm.

11 THE WITNESS: -- was the national security advisor
12 to President Bush, a highly respected -- a highly respected
13 national security expert. He didn't tell this to me. I got
14 no explanation at the time, just, "Stop doing it."

15 COMMISSIONER REV. GERALD COLEMAN: Okay.

16 THE WITNESS: Later he gave an interview to a
17 journalist, a couple years later, and he said, "We didn't
18 want to bear the responsibility of taking care of Liberia."

19 You know, it was the same reason given why the
20 U.S. did not overthrow Saddam Hussein in the first Gulf War.
21 If we had done that, Iraq would be under our responsibility
22 for many, many years.

23 COMMISSIONER REV. GERALD COLEMAN: That was my
24 exact question I was going to ask.

25 THE WITNESS: So it was the same reason, and it

1 was happening at the same time, you see. We don't want to
2 take care of Iraq forever, and we don't want to take care of
3 Liberia forever. It was the same reasoning. But I was not
4 given that as assistant secretary, I was just told, "Stop
5 doing it."

6 Now, if they had given me the reason, I would have
7 argued against that.

8 COMMISSIONER REV. GERALD COLEMAN: Okay.

9 THE WITNESS: I would have said, "There's no
10 reason to think we'd have to take care of Liberia for the
11 rest of their lives. They would just go on with their lives
12 as before." You see. But I was not asked my opinion on
13 that.

14 COMMISSIONER REV. GERALD COLEMAN: Again, I'm
15 sorry that you have to deal with these questions, but it's
16 just that you're here. The question comes to me because I
17 notice later now you did go into Iraq --

18 THE WITNESS: Yes.

19 COMMISSIONER REV. GERALD COLEMAN: -- so I assume
20 that the interest there was not to help Iraq, but it became
21 more of a self-interest. And then I think about Liberia's
22 historical relationship had to do with America and how that
23 decision was to leave Liberia alone. And so I wonder somehow
24 how this can be resolved as we are trying to create a world
25 community of peace --

1 THE WITNESS: Yeah.

2 COMMISSIONER REV. GERALD COLEMAN: -- whether
3 there is anything being done in the new global paradigm to
4 change from that self-interest politics issue and go towards
5 really try to find solutions to real problems.

6 For example, the situation in Africa for the past
7 couple of years where Rwanda, Liberia, et cetera, the world
8 sits and watches these things happening, and we just realized
9 that the only solution is for the bigger brothers, those who
10 have the authority, the strength, to find a way to prevent
11 things quickly. Because if you leave it to the ground forces
12 to do it, their method is very destructive --

13 THE WITNESS: Sure.

14 COMMISSIONER REV. GERALD COLEMAN: -- and destroys
15 a lot of human rights and lives, et cetera. So I don't know
16 whether you want to just share a little bit about this role.

17 THE WITNESS: I think it's an excellent point. By
18 the way, they went into Iraq because Iraq had invaded Kuwait.
19 So that was an idea to -- This was an illegal invasion of
20 Kuwait, so they wanted to liberate Kuwait. Now, after that
21 was done people said, "Well, now you must get rid of Saddam
22 Hussein, this evil dictator."

23 But Bush said, "No. That was not my mission. My
24 mission was to free Kuwait. And if I go in and get rid of
25 Saddam Hussein, we'll be taking care of Iraq for many years."

1 Which is the same reason they gave for Liberia, which was
2 probably, in the case of Iraq, a sound reason. We're
3 suffering from that now.

4 But I think the world has changed a lot since
5 those days. Right now, look at all the U.N. peacekeeping
6 operations around Africa and around the world. There's a
7 tremendous amount of them.

8 I remember when the U.N. peacekeeping budget in
9 the U.S. Congress was about 30 million a year, when we sent
10 peacekeepers to Namibia for Namibian independence. Now it's
11 3 billion a year for peacekeeping, just the U.S. share of
12 that, which is 60 percent. And there's a lot of nation
13 building going on; Kosovo, Macedonia, Bosnia.

14 So there is a hands-on approach. Now, it's not
15 very efficient, it doesn't always work, but it's much better
16 now. I think if Liberia happened now, you would have
17 peacekeepers, you'd have police trainers, you'd have all
18 sorts of reconstruction teams out there. But in those days
19 it wasn't -- it hadn't happened yet, you see.

20 But I think the situation has improved from what
21 you're -- I understand your concern. I think the situation
22 is much better now than it was in those days, but still not
23 perfect.

24 COMMISSIONER REV. GERALD COLEMAN: Well, thank you
25 very much.

1 VICE CHAIRPERSON DEDE DOLOPEI: Thank you. Thank
2 you so much for coming and for sharing your own experience
3 you had with our situation.

4 You said at one point you had stopped from going
5 into negotiations to stop the war. My question is, if you
6 had not been stopped by Washington, would you have been
7 successful in stopping the war in Liberia at that time?

8 THE WITNESS: You mean if we had been allowed to
9 continue?

10 VICE CHAIRPERSON DEDE DOLOPEI: Yes, with the
11 negotiations.

12 THE WITNESS: Well, it's hard to say, but I think
13 our scenario seemed to be pretty -- working pretty well; Doe
14 would leave, his army would escape through the corridor, and
15 Charles Taylor would walk in and take power. Now, this was
16 before ECOMOG came in. This was all before ECOMOG came in.

17 And then, of course, the question would be, how
18 would Taylor rule the country? His later experience of
19 ruling the country was not too good. But at that point, it
20 may have been a different Charles Taylor. You know, he would
21 not have had to fight his way in and what have you. But at
22 least the country would have been spared the total
23 destruction of infrastructure and agriculture and what have
24 you.

25 So I think it would have worked well, and then

1 maybe diplomacy could have persuaded Taylor to do the right
2 thing in terms of being a good leader rather than a bad
3 leader. But, you know, it may not have worked. But I
4 think -- I think everyone was so anxious to end this problem,
5 that it probably would have worked out.

6 VICE CHAIRPERSON DEDE DOLOPEI: And the second one
7 is --

8 THE WITNESS: By the way, I was going to go on the
9 plane with Doe. I was ready to fly to Monrovia and accompany
10 him to Lomai when I was told. So I came that close. It was
11 very close.

12 VICE CHAIRPERSON DEDE DOLOPEI: Okay. You keep
13 saying "taking care of Liberia." You said that America did
14 not want to end up taking care of Liberia if they had come in
15 to stop it, and so they decided to withdraw. I just want to
16 understand what it entailed, taking care of Liberia.

17 THE WITNESS: What does that mean?

18 VICE CHAIRPERSON DEDE DOLOPEI: What it entailed.

19 THE WITNESS: Excuse me?

20 VICE CHAIRPERSON DEDE DOLOPEI: What it entails.

21 THE WITNESS: What is entailed --

22 VICE CHAIRPERSON DEDE DOLOPEI: Yeah.

23 THE WITNESS: -- in taking care of Liberia?

24 VICE CHAIRPERSON DEDE DOLOPEI: Yeah.

25 THE WITNESS: Look at Iraq today. The U.S. is

1 spending billions there trying to reconstruct that country.
2 So the idea is that if we had done that, we would have been
3 morally obligated to reconstruct Liberia. This was the
4 thinking of people, you see. I don't think that was true.
5 But this was the analysis that was given. And, in effect,
6 Liberia would become a post-colonial colony of the United
7 States, which I think would have been a good thing.

8 VICE CHAIRPERSON DEDE DOLOPEI: And compared to
9 the amount of atrocities that were committed, I'm looking at
10 taking care and then the amount of people who died and what
11 happened here --

12 THE WITNESS: Sure, it was --

13 COMMISSIONER DEDE DOLOPEI: -- if you compared it
14 to --

15 THE WITNESS: It was bad, because the war went on
16 for seven years, I believe. And certainly the comparison is
17 totally undecided. We made a big mistake at that time, yeah,
18 I would agree with that.

19 VICE CHAIRPERSON DEDE DOLOPEI: And another thing
20 I wanted to ask, with your knowledge and your experience,
21 when you talk about democracy, we find out that in America --
22 you said in Africa at that time, in the '70s, we had, like, a
23 one-party system. That was not democracy. And so when you
24 talk about democracy, you talk about everyone coming in to
25 see or to have their own ideas as to what to do and people

1 accepting them for what they are. And so you find out in
2 America you have only two parties, which is the Democrat and
3 the Republican.

4 So I want to ask, democracy has been preached for
5 a very long time by the U.S., and we find out you have only
6 two parties. In Africa, since we started practicing
7 democracy, we find out that when we have elections, we have a
8 whole line of parties. Like, Liberia this last election was
9 how many? Almost 30.

10 THE WITNESS: How many parties?

11 VICE CHAIRPERSON DEDE DOLOPEI: Almost 30 parties.

12 THE WITNESS: 30 parties?

13 VICE CHAIRPERSON DEDE DOLOPEI: Yes. So I just
14 want to know, which form do you think is the best way of
15 practicing democracy to stop all of these atrocities?
16 Because as I sit here and listen, you know, to the role that
17 America actually played in the Liberian War is something
18 that's very touching to me --

19 THE WITNESS: Sure.

20 VICE CHAIRPERSON DEDE DOLOPEI: -- because we know
21 what really happened with America in Liberia, and to hear
22 even that "I do not want to take care of Liberia, and so
23 stop" --

24 THE WITNESS: Yeah.

25 COMMISSIONER DEDE DOLOPEI: -- is something that's

1 touching to me.

2 THE WITNESS: Sure. Well, we --

3 VICE CHAIRPERSON DEDE DOLOPEI: And so I want to
4 know, how can we stop this? How can we stop people from
5 going at each other? How can we stop a small country like
6 Liberia from having 30 parties and a big country like America
7 has only two. And so you have election in this country; you
8 have no problems.

9 THE WITNESS: Well, that's a very interesting
10 point. There are a lot of experts on democracy who are
11 available to give advice.

12 Look at France. France is a pretty good
13 democracy. They have ten parties. So they manage to work it
14 out pretty well. The U.K. has three.

15 My feeling is that the proliferation of parties is
16 a problem for Africa, because so often some of these parties
17 are just one family, so they just want to participate.

18 But there are a lot of techniques. For example,
19 Germany has a very good system, where they say, if you don't
20 get 5 percent of the vote, then you can't get into
21 Parliament. So that automatically eliminates a lot of these
22 smaller parties.

23 There are all sorts of constitutional methodology
24 to narrow it down to the parties that are truly
25 representative of large -- large segments of the population,

1 and I'm sure that there are a lot of American experts who
2 would be happy to go to Liberia to advise on the
3 constitutional ways, not of forcing people, but to make it so
4 that the smallest, the least popular are eliminated early if
5 they don't -- if they don't get enough votes. So it's quite
6 possible to work it out.

7 I remember in 1991 I went to see President Mobutu
8 of Zaire. I said, "Look, everyone's doing democracy now.
9 You better do it, too, because otherwise you'll be swept away
10 by the forces of history."

11 He said, "Well, you're right."

12 Okay, so he went out and he announced that there
13 would be multi-party democracy, and the people cheered. So
14 what did he do? He took a lot of money and he created
15 parties. He says, "You want democracy? I'll give you plenty
16 of it." So he created all these parties, and his party was
17 always winning because all these other little parties were,
18 you know, destroying each other.

19 So there are constitutional ways. But I think
20 there's enough experience out there so that you can set up a
21 system where the parties can exist. You can't stop people
22 from forming parties, but you could eliminate them early if
23 they don't show support.

24 VICE CHAIRPERSON DEDE DOLOPEI: And my question
25 is, because most of the time you find people wanting to have

1 a place or even to have an identity is what causes most of
2 the problems we experience as human beings, and so people
3 wanting to be a part of the system, you have a one-party
4 system and everybody want to be a part of it. And so we
5 really need -- As African coming into something that is
6 strange to us that we do not know about but that other people
7 have been participating for many years, we need someone to
8 really come and guide us, because most of the time, if you
9 are not guided properly, you find yourself going into these
10 kind of problem that we experience.

11 THE WITNESS: That's right, yeah. Democracy is
12 not easy; it's very difficult. But, still, it's the least
13 bad of all systems.

14 VICE CHAIRPERSON DEDE DOLOPEI: Okay. Thank you
15 very much.

16 THE WITNESS: Right.

17 COMMISSIONER MASSA WASHINGTON: Thank you,
18 Mr. Witness. Let me join my colleagues in expressing thanks
19 to you, again, for taking time off your busy schedule to come
20 and share with us your own experiences in the Liberia
21 situation. Thank you very much.

22 In 1980, of course, there's an open secret we
23 have, the military coup staged by our now late president,
24 Samuel Doe. That coup was very bloody. A lot of people got
25 killed, including the president. And only ten days later, 13

1 of his government officials were put on poles and executed.
2 And too many years between 1980 to '85, it was well
3 established that Doe was incapable of ruling Liberia or of
4 being its president. Human rights violation reach an all
5 high and was very common; opposition leaders were often in
6 prison, including student leaders; people were getting
7 missing; there was a suspension of The Constitution; and he
8 rigged the 1985 election and so forth.

9 But notwithstanding, within the same period the
10 United States Government, under President Reagan, gave a lot
11 of support to the government of President Doe at the time, up
12 to the tune of more than a billion dollars, and you just
13 stated in your comment to us that the government at the time
14 supported Mr. Doe basically militarily.

15 My question here is, why did the U.S. Government
16 think it was necessary to pump all that kind of money of
17 taxpayers' resources into a government that was clearly
18 tyranic and despotic?

19 THE WITNESS: That's a very good question. First
20 of all, as I said before, virtually every African country was
21 in a similar situation; despotic, corrupt, totally absent of
22 democracy, political prisoners. This was true all over
23 Africa. So Liberia -- we could not consider Liberia to be a
24 special case. It was -- We had relations with the
25 government, and they were very cooperative with us, and they

1 were more cooperative with the United States than any other
2 African government. When Doe said, "We were your best friend
3 in Africa," he was right, Liberia was.

4 So you can go back and with historic hindsight and
5 say, "Well, we should not have done that, because it was a
6 bad regime," but then, at the same time, we would have
7 stopped giving assistance to 80 percent of African regimes if
8 we had the same attitude. At that time we were not basing
9 our policies on the absence of democracy. We were not. It
10 started later. Maybe we should have, but that was it. So
11 Liberia was not different, you see.

12 If all the countries were democracies and suddenly
13 Doe came in and did what he did, it would have been a
14 different story, but it is the same as all other countries.
15 What was different about Liberia was the total incompetence
16 of Doe. He was not -- He didn't have the slightest inkling
17 of how to manage anything, you see. And that should have
18 been a signal to us that it was not a good thing. But since
19 his ability -- his willingness to support the United States
20 in anything we wanted, it was very hard for us to put that
21 aside; Roberts Field, CIA antenna field, Voice of America
22 antenna field, tracking station for satellites, transatlantic
23 navigation station, it was all there.

24 One thing I did that I thought would have been a
25 little gesture, is I increased the rent that we were paying.

1 The rent we were paying was so low. I said, "This is
2 ridiculous." So at least we increased the rent. But
3 otherwise, the whole issue of democracy was not on the table
4 in those days.

5 COMMISSIONER MASSA WASHINGTON: Just to follow up
6 to my question, we know the U.S. has a track record for
7 preaching human rights and for promoting and supporting the
8 value of human rights throughout the world. From what you
9 just stated, can one rightly assume, then, that the U.S.
10 policy on maybe Africa or other countries when it comes to
11 its interests were varied? For example, you stated that even
12 Doe -- Samuel Doe had a track record for doing the wrong
13 things, but because he was a friend of the U.S., so the U.S.
14 would protect him at a time.

15 THE WITNESS: I didn't quite understand what you
16 said.

17 COMMISSIONER MASSA WASHINGTON: Okay. Let me see
18 if I can rephrase the question. From the response you just
19 gave, is it rightful, then, to assume that even though one
20 may have a huge human rights record, but if he's a friend of
21 the U.S., then he gets supported? Because you said at that
22 time a lot of African countries, like 90 percent, had issue
23 of lack of democracy and everything, but that was in your
24 focus. You supported Samuel -- Your government supported
25 Samuel Doe at the time because Samuel Doe was a friend of the

1 U.S. and he cooperated with the U.S., even though he had this
2 chill of human rights abuses at home.

3 THE WITNESS: Well, as I said before, we did not
4 consider the Samuel Doe government to be much different from
5 all the others; they all had human rights abuses. Actually,
6 the Samuel Doe government human rights record was not as bad
7 as a lot of other countries. For example, Idi Amin in
8 Uganda, this was so bad that we had no relations with them.
9 We couldn't even keep an embassy there. So there was various
10 degrees.

11 But we did not see the Samuel Doe government's
12 record on human rights as being that different from the
13 others, so we had no grounds for really treating Liberia
14 differently. Plus, as you say, the fact that we had such
15 tremendous support from Doe, this was an element in our
16 thinking. But I don't think we would have been negative
17 toward Doe even without all of that support. It was just
18 part of the same pattern that we had in Africa.

19 Now, the U.S. was not going around Africa telling
20 people, "You've got to change. You've got to do this." We
21 did not want to be accused of neo-colonialism.

22 I was talking to the president of the Congo on May
23 the 3rd, and he said to me, "Will Obama be good for Africa?"

24 I said, "Be careful." I said, "We white people,
25 we couldn't say a lot of things to you, you'd accuse us of

1 being neo-colonialists, but Obama is going to be tough. He
2 could say things to you that you're going have to listen."

3 So we did not want to get into this business of
4 telling Africans what to do. Later we got into that, you
5 see. But even then we were very careful. But in those days
6 we just did not tell Africans what to do. In fact, even on
7 economic things we were so worried about telling Africans
8 what to do, that we found somebody else to do it. We found a
9 bad cop to go in there. It was the World Bank. The World
10 Bank went in there and shook the Africans and said, "You've
11 got to change." We were not doing that because of our
12 sensitivity. And that was the same thing with Liberia.

13 COMMISSIONER MASSA WASHINGTON: Okay, my second
14 question borders around a comment of yours during the time of
15 the Liberian crisis. In September of 1990, just after the
16 late President Samuel Doe was captured and literally killed
17 by Prince Johnson at the time, and when Liberia was in a
18 state of chaos and you were -- you rightly stated, you were
19 working very hard behind the scene negotiating in between the
20 various factions and speaking with the various players to end
21 the war, but then you also. . .

22 On Taylor's territory -- Some of us were actually
23 in Taylor's territory. We were hiding. I went to jail. It
24 was at a time I was hiding with a group of reporters for fear
25 of our lives, and we lived by the radio, had a transistor

1 radio, and we lived to listen to BBC, which we thought was
2 more accurate in its news and also to what the Americans were
3 saying about the war, because at that time all Liberians
4 were -- were hopeful that Americans would step in to do
5 something about the war. And there was just death
6 everywhere, all around us. People were completely hopeless.

7 And after one of your meetings with -- with
8 Mr. Taylor, you gave an interview over the BBC, and in that
9 interview you stated that Charles Taylor was a man that the
10 United States could do business with. And I guess that
11 comment bordered around the fact that Doe was already dead
12 and Taylor had the largest force, or whatsoever. But the
13 comment was a bit -- a bit disturbing. We were very
14 frightened in Taylor territory and seeing all of the chaos
15 and all of the killings and everything.

16 So my question here is: Why did the U.S.--because
17 you were an official member of the U.S. government at the
18 time--in the midst of all of the chaos and everything that
19 Taylor was doing, executing people all over the place, why
20 did the U.S. think that Taylor was a man to do business with
21 at the time?

22 THE WITNESS: Well, at that point we believed that
23 this was, kind of, the only solution. Our main concern was
24 getting the war over with. So if it meant dealing with
25 Taylor, we thought it was a good -- the best possible -- the

1 least bad arrangement. We had no illusions about Taylor;
2 although, he got a lot worse later, after he became
3 president. But the whole idea was to stop the war.

4 COMMISSIONER MASSA WASHINGTON: My last question.
5 President Jimmy Carter was also very instrumental in trying
6 to stop the Liberian war, especially in earliest -- in its
7 earliest stage, and he was back and forth in Liberia trying
8 to negotiate when ECOMOG was there. And he was accused by,
9 you know, sometimes other sides of Liberians as having been
10 biased towards Mr. Taylor. And one of the accusation center
11 around the fact that in 199-- '85-- in 1995 he met with
12 Mr. Taylor, tried to get him to agree to disarm to ECOMOG and
13 agree for elections in 1997. And President Carter went to
14 meet with Mr. Taylor in Greater Liberia. It was covered by
15 international media and also Liberian journalists who were
16 brave enough to go to Mr. Taylor's territory.

17 And after President Carter left from Greater
18 Liberia--he came back to Liberia to meet with an interim
19 government at the time--he thought that Mr. Taylor was ready
20 to end the war, and he had encouraged the ECOMOG government
21 forces at the time to reduce its concentration of soldiers
22 that they had around the buffer zone area bordering Taylor's
23 territory and ECOMOG in interim government territory. And
24 that advice was taken into consideration. The West African
25 peacekeeping force reduced its forces from around Taylor's

1 area, and only to know that Taylor was actually preparing for
2 war, what we now refer to as the April 6, 1986, War.

3 My question here is: You also dealt with
4 Mr. Taylor extensively. Do you think -- Do you now feel --
5 From where you sit now, do you think Mr. Taylor actually
6 deceived the United States?

7 THE WITNESS: Well, you spoke about, earlier, his
8 promises to Carter, correct?

9 COMMISSIONER MASSA WASHINGTON: Yes, his promises
10 to -- his promises to Carter. He made a couple of promises
11 to the U.S. Government; he was going to disarm, he was going
12 to go to elections, and none of these things happen.
13 President Carter met with him. In all honesty, he encouraged
14 him to allow the risk of the peacekeeping troops to reduce
15 their forces around this area, he was going to disarm, he was
16 going to go to elections, and right after that we went into
17 full-scale war.

18 THE WITNESS: Right. Well, my recollection is
19 that Taylor signed many agreements. He went to Yamoussoukro
20 I think about eight times, and each time he signed an
21 agreement, and none of them did he implement. So if he
22 didn't implement those agreements, his lying to Carter was
23 part of the pattern. He just did not trust ECOMOG, he felt
24 they were out to get him, and then his only solution was to
25 get rid of ECOMOG and allow him to take over.

1 Now, what point did he finally give in?
2 President Abacha of Nigeria had a conversation with him, and
3 for some miraculous reason Taylor accepted the solution. I'm
4 sorry Abacha is dead. I'd like to interview him and find out
5 what his magic was to cause Taylor to finally agree to
6 something.

7 But he failed to implement every agreement that he
8 signed up until that point, including Carter.

9 COMMISSIONER JOHN H.T. STEWART: Thank you, Your
10 Excellency, for coming and providing us the opportunity to
11 together explore the history of Liberia-U.S. relationships
12 and how those relationships have impacted mutually on each of
13 us.

14 In your presentation you tried to -- you give an
15 outline of the longstanding ties between the U.S. and
16 Liberia, and perhaps, as I will, let me just provide some
17 further background. You recall that during the United States
18 1787 Constitutional Convention the issue of equality was
19 raised on whether the slaves back at the time were to be
20 considered equal to whites, and it was unanimously agreed
21 that that issue would be deferred for at least 20 years.
22 That was 1787.

23 In 1808 -- 1897, we saw the creation of the United
24 States agency for recaptured Africans that eventually led
25 Captain Robert Stockton, who later on became a congressman in

1 the U.S., aboard his ship, the USS Alligator, that landed at
2 the shores of Monrovia, pointed a pistol to the head of
3 King George, King Peter and others, and forcing an agreement
4 to seize a portion of land that today is known as the
5 Republic of Liberia.

6 Further on we saw, in the -- and, as a matter of
7 fact, despite that, the revolution of Liberia did not come
8 until way about 1865, during the United States Civil War;
9 although, Liberia was a creation of United States interest
10 and United States policy.

11 In the 1800s we saw the recruitment of thousands
12 of Liberians to work the -- at the -- for the building of the
13 Panama Canal. One of my great-grand-uncles -- great-great-
14 grand-uncles, as the story goes, went for one of those
15 recruited to work on the Panama Canal, and no one saw him
16 again.

17 Then, of course, in the 1900s, in 1917, at the
18 behest of the United States, Liberia declared war against
19 Germany and lost relationship with a major trading partner,
20 Germany. And, again, in the 1940s, 19-- yeah, Liberia
21 declared war against Germany in the Second World War.

22 Through the '60s, Monrovia, Liberia, was the
23 headquarters of the CIA in Africa. During the Angolan Civil
24 War, Roberts Field was used for the lifting of arms to UNITA
25 and FNLA.

1 As my colleague said, the casting -- the deciding
2 vote for the creation of Israel was cast by Liberia, it
3 supported the U.S. So we have quite a long history. And our
4 history is inextricably linked to yours. And. . .

5 So coming to 1990, the Liberian Civil War, I
6 recall when the war began, I was a Red Cross volunteer going
7 to the front lines. And sometime thereabout, in January, I
8 had occasion to meet Colonel Richard Stanley, who was the
9 U.S. military advisor with the Liberian troops on the front
10 line. And there were all the reports of atrocities being
11 committed by the Liberian army, which was trained by U.S.
12 military experts and being directed by U.S. military experts.
13 And there were these reports that were coming in as he sat
14 along with other Liberian commanders, including the defense
15 minister at headquarters, that atrocities were being
16 committed by the Liberian army, as he rightly said, like a
17 scorched earth policy. I was visiting when we saw the
18 massive looting and all of that. And we did not hear a
19 whimper of protest by the United States as to the conduct of
20 Liberian forces in continuing the Liberian incursion.

21 The situation deteriorated rapidly, and the work
22 of the Red Cross was interrupted. I briefly fled to
23 Sierra Leone. But in the 19-- in the same year, September, I
24 came back doing an assessment of the humanitarian situation.
25 And at the time Liberia was divided, Monrovia's population

1 had dwindled to over 80,000. The United States had 10 to 15
2 tons of food in the warehouses in Monrovia. Starvation was
3 everywhere --

4 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Get to your question.

5 COMMISSIONER JOHN H.T. STEWART: The ambassador
6 didn't jump to the (unintelligible), refused. It's my
7 feelings that this food be delivered to lactating mothers and
8 pregnant women. But right by Harbel there was food
9 distribution going on.

10 So why was this policy of biasness towards Taylor
11 so manifest, to the point that thousands of Liberians died as
12 a result of such callous indifference to thousands of
13 Liberians? That's the first question.

14 And then, of course, we saw the presence of U.S.
15 Marines that came in briefly, put a cordon around the
16 Mamba Point area, evacuated people, lifting -- raised a lot
17 of hopes that the U.S. was going to intervene, and suddenly
18 they vanished and the atrocities continued.

19 During the period after Octopus, there was still
20 this slant -- U.S. foreign policy slant towards Taylor as
21 compared to the greater interest of Liberia. And, of course,
22 during the Doe regime, as my colleague said, close to a
23 billion dollars worth of aid was provided to Liberian
24 government mainly for the acquisition of military equipment.

25 So my question is, as a former official of the

1 United States Government, would you support those who hold
2 the opinion that the United States Government does have a
3 moral obligation to pay reparation to Liberia as a
4 consequence of the destructive war and as a consequence of
5 the United States' indifference to a situation which they
6 could have averted? Do you share this opinion? Would you
7 support those who make this call?

8 THE WITNESS: I do not share that opinion. I
9 think if you're looking for reparations, you should go to
10 Burkina Faso and Cote d'Ivoire. The war would never have
11 occurred if Charles Taylor and his men had not been trained
12 in Libya, sent to Burkina Faso, where they were given all
13 this equipment, transported to Cote d'Ivoire, where they were
14 given vehicles to take them inside Liberia to start the war.
15 It would never have happened.

16 The United States had nothing to do with starting
17 the war. Perhaps U.S. conduct in -- Failure to pursue peace,
18 and vigorously, is not grounds for reparation. We could have
19 done more, but we had nothing to do with the war existing and
20 taking place.

21 But Burkina Faso and Cote d'Ivoire are the ones
22 who did it. You should go to them and say, "Look, why did
23 you do it? Give us reparations." These are the guilty
24 people.

25 COMMISSIONER JOHN H.T. STEWART: But does that --

1 does that interpret to mean that the U.S. had no leverage
2 over countries like Cote d'Ivoire, and it was well known that
3 Libya was training and Libya was a principal enemy of the
4 United States at the time and Libya was providing support,
5 arms were coming from Libya, does that suggest. . . We saw
6 sanctions against several other countries by the U.S. So are
7 you suggesting that the U.S. had no leverage at all over
8 Cote d'Ivoire and Burkina Faso, to the point where they did
9 not even raise a voice of protest or even threaten sanctions
10 or something, that they could have done nothing at all?

11 THE WITNESS: Well, I think we did make a mistake
12 in not putting pressure on them at the time. But we really
13 didn't have that much leverage. Cote d'Ivoire is,
14 essentially, strongly related to France, and France is giving
15 them aid. France didn't give a damn about Liberia. In fact,
16 when we talked to the French about putting pressure on the
17 Cote d'Ivoire. They said, "It's an American problem."

18 COMMISSIONER JOHN H.T. STEWART: But, yet, at the
19 same time Firestone was operating and as a major U.S. company
20 and deriving millions of dollars in profit. So,
21 correspondingly, would you not think there was some measure
22 of -- or there was some degree of obligation that the U.S.
23 owes to Liberia in this respect?

24 THE WITNESS: Well, obligation is -- you can argue
25 that word, but I think the key people who owe Liberia

1 reparations are Burkina Faso and Cote d'Ivoire, these are the
2 ones. The United States perhaps didn't do a good job in
3 trying to bring about the end of the war, I will agree to
4 that, but that doesn't give the U.S. responsibility for
5 paying reparations to the Liberian people.

6 The U.S. spent quite a lot of money on that war.
7 I mean, both the Bush administration and the Clinton
8 administration spent hundreds of millions of dollars for
9 humanitarian assistance to help the Liberian people during
10 the war, the biggest amount anybody gave. So there's been a
11 lot of money paid by the U.S. taxpayer as a result of that
12 war.

13 But in terms of taking responsibility for all of
14 the bad things that happened, it's Burkina Faso and
15 Cote d'Ivoire. Go there.

16 COMMISSIONER JOHN H.T. STEWART: But don't you --
17 don't you think that such huge amounts of money that you say
18 that's been spent would pale in comparison to -- to what --
19 trusting, as you said, send in the Marines? Opportunity --
20 If you look at the opportunity of cost, don't you think such
21 huge expenses on humanitarian aid would certainly pale in
22 comparison to a few thousand U.S. troops coming on the ground
23 and stopping the war --

24 THE WITNESS: Sure.

25 COMMISSIONER JOHN H.T. STEWART: -- and the

1 destruction of infrastructures and human lives, that's --

2 THE WITNESS: Yeah. These were -- these were
3 errors which I would acknowledge that should have not
4 happened, but that doesn't make the U.S. responsible for
5 everything that happened -- all the bad things that happened
6 in Liberia.

7 What we did not do -- There's a lot of countries
8 that bad things are happening where we do not intervene all
9 over the world, including today. Kosovo today, we're not
10 intervening. We're trying to get U.N. troops in there, but
11 we're not sending any U.S. troops. So you can't say that the
12 U.S. has obligations to pay reparations to Sudan's people
13 because we're not intervening.

14 Not intervening is not grounds for paying
15 reparations; intervening with the -- with the intent of
16 causing trouble is grounds for reparations. Burkina Faso and
17 Cote d'Ivoire are the ones who did that.

18 COMMISSIONER JOHN H.T. STEWART: I'm talking about
19 moral responsibility. Don't you think the U.S. has the moral
20 responsibility in this regard?

21 THE WITNESS: I'm not sure I know the definition
22 of that.

23 COMMISSIONER JOHN H.T. STEWART: Thank you very
24 much.

25 COMMISSIONER OUMU SYLLAH: Thank you very much for

1 agreeing to come to this Commission to give some
2 clarification as to what the U.S. role was during the time of
3 our conflict. And also thank you so much for everything you
4 did at that time, wanting to stop the war or the hostility,
5 though it didn't happen.

6 My question is actually a follow-up question as to
7 what really happened in 1980. It's a popular belief that
8 during 1980 it would not have been possible for the 17
9 elisted men to overthrow the government. But based on what
10 you just said, that as security advisor at that time, you
11 never came across any information as to the U.S. involvement
12 in Liberia; yet, after the coup there was increased aid to
13 Liberian government at that time. And then after that we
14 notice -- or we saw ten days after the ex-official of the
15 government were killed and close relatives of the former
16 president in the former government were denied entry to the
17 U.S. Can you comment on that?

18 THE WITNESS: I'm sorry, I cannot comment, because
19 I was not involved with policy at that time. I'm not trying
20 to evade the question, I just don't know what the policy
21 considerations were. The only thing I can tell you is that
22 the ambassador at the time told me later that the coup was
23 considered to be a popular -- the people of Liberia were
24 happy at the time. That's the only thing I've learned. But
25 in terms of these decisions about aid and visas and what have

1 you, I have no knowledge of that.

2 COMMISSIONER OUMU SYLLAH: My last question is, in
3 the negotiation process, you were talking to Taylor and you
4 talked to the former President Doe at the time. There was
5 some form of consensus that we open our corridor in
6 Sierra Leone for the government of the armed forces of
7 Liberia to leave, but this was aborted because Prince Johnson
8 broke away.

9 When you visited Liberia, you talked -- you met
10 Prince Johnson. Can you tell us what the discussion was,
11 when he wasn't able to beat former President Doe, why he
12 didn't meet the president at that time?

13 THE WITNESS: Well, my discussion with Prince
14 Johnson was not -- was not terribly useful. He was -- he was
15 constantly on his radio, incidents were going -- were
16 happening all the time. He was constantly wanting to rush
17 off. So we really didn't get into much discussion. He just
18 tried to tell us how much he was opposed to Taylor and he was
19 going to defeat Taylor, and what have you.

20 But in terms of trying to get him to do the right
21 thing, there was no basis for talking. I think he was -- he
22 was, basically, a hysterical person. It was impossible to
23 talk to him. He was just totally obsessed with getting rid
24 of Taylor. So it was hard to talk to him about solving
25 problems. I couldn't do that. And he had to rush out

1 quickly because someone telephoned and said, "They're
2 attacking here. We need help." So he ran out. So it was
3 really not a very productive discussion.

4 COMMISSIONER OUMU SYLLAH: And then did you make
5 any effort at that time to meet with President Doe? Because
6 you already were in Monrovia.

7 THE WITNESS: Yes. The ambassador tried to get me
8 to see President Doe, but it didn't work out. Whether he
9 refused to see me or there's some other reason, we never
10 knew. But we could not get an appointment with him at that
11 time. I had -- And earlier I had been rather -- I had been
12 rather tough with Doe when we were talking about the reforms.
13 So maybe he didn't want to see me for that reason.

14 COMMISSIONER OUMU SYLLAH: Thank you very much for
15 coming.

16 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Thank you,
17 Mr. Ambassador, once more, for coming to share these moments
18 with us. I want to ask, do you think the establishment of
19 Liberia has eventually turned out to be an embarrassment for
20 the U.S. and a foreign policy headache, given all we have
21 discussed of what you have said, yet it's a very close fine
22 line, but, yet, the hands-off policy has been retained over
23 the years?

24 THE WITNESS: I didn't quite get the question.
25 I'm sorry.

1 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Has Liberia become a
2 foreign policy headache for the U.S. and perhaps an
3 embarrassment?

4 THE WITNESS: Has Liberia become an embarrassment
5 for the U.S.? No. Actually, it's one of the ironies of
6 history. My superior said we should not pursue peace
7 operations in Liberia because we would have to take care of
8 Liberia. I think right now what has happened is we're taking
9 care of Liberia. After all those years, we're finally taking
10 care of Liberia.

11 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Putting U.S. foreign
12 policy in in relationship to Liberian context, how would you
13 describe the relationship between Washington and Monrovia on
14 the leadership of President Tolbert, where foreign assistance
15 -- technical assistance were virtually non-existent, if not
16 low, as compared to that of the military leader Samuel Doe,
17 where there was a significant leap in foreign military and
18 other assistance, to the point of a little more than half a
19 billion dollars in less than three to four years?

20 THE WITNESS: Well, Doe clearly was a military
21 person. He wanted to enhance the military, he wanted better
22 barracks, and what have you. So it was one way of keeping
23 his friendship, was to provide military assistance. There
24 was no basis for economic assistance, because Liberia, under
25 his administration, was unable to deal with it, to manage it

1 or to absorb it. But the military was something that he --
2 that kept his loyalty.

3 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Was it for Tolbert?

4 THE WITNESS: Tolbert, we didn't need it. Tolbert
5 was just very happy with his -- with the relationship. There
6 was no need for any special -- special assistance. I regret
7 now, historically, I think we should have given military
8 assistance to Tolbert to, say, build up the morale of the
9 army so there would not have been a coup.

10 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: During the war in '89 up
11 to 2003, was military intervention ever an option?

12 THE WITNESS: Never. Never.

13 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Never an option?

14 THE WITNESS: No.

15 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Okay. We want to say
16 thanks very much --

17 THE WITNESS: Okay.

18 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: -- for taking up your
19 time and sharing these moments with us. We assure you that
20 you have contributed immensely for this session for our
21 country for redemption, healing, and national reconciliation.
22 Thank you very much.

23 THE WITNESS: You're welcome.

24 (Following the next witness, Ambassador Cohen
25 requests of the Commission to make another statement.)

1 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: We've just been informed
2 that Ambassador Cohen wants to make a brief statement before
3 he leaves.

4 THE WITNESS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

5 In the category of things unsaid in my previous
6 testimony, I just wanted to say that when the -- when the
7 White House made the decision that we would not continue to
8 work on the Liberia problem and so all of my efforts were
9 stopped, a lot of people felt good when the West African
10 community came in and started to operate. They said, "Well,
11 if we're not doing it, at least these people are."

12 But my own personal feelings were that the U.S.
13 had a very special capability there to really come in and do
14 it fast. I was very impressed when Charles Taylor said to
15 me, "If you send in a company of Marines, we'll all
16 surrender." I know that Charles Taylor often didn't tell the
17 truth, but I think there he was telling the truth. And when
18 the U.S. offshore forces sent the message that they were
19 sending Marines to the center of Monrovia to bring in
20 citizens, everybody stopped fighting immediately.

21 So I knew in my own heart that the U.S. had the
22 special capability because of the historical relationship.
23 So I personally am very sorry that we did not intervene and
24 that we didn't do it, because we could have. But decisions
25 to send troops are made at a very high level based on

1 political considerations, what will the American people say,
2 and all of that. That was above my level. But I personally
3 felt that we could have done it, and I'm very sorry we
4 didn't.

5 That's my last statement. Thank you.

6 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Thank you very much,
7 Mr. Ambassador.

8 Well, I'm sure those comments of the Ambassador
9 could put down a way that Liberians could have followed the
10 process and thought that America could have done much more
11 than was actually done.

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DATED: July 4, 2008.

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