

TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION OF LIBERIA
DIASPORA PROJECT

PUBLIC HEARING
HAMLINE UNIVERSITY
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St. Paul, Minnesota

TESTIMONY OF
KERPER DWANYEN

TRC Commissioners:

Chairman Jerome Verdier
Vice Chairperson Dede Dolopei
Oumu Syllah
Sheikh Kafumba Konneh
Pearl Brown Bull
Rev. Gerald Coleman
John H.T. Stewart
Massa Washington

Court Reporter: Vikki L. Thompson

The following proceedings were had and made of record, commencing at approximately 9:30 a.m.

AHMED SIRLEAF: Good morning, everyone. Again we say welcome to the TRC Hearings. Today our program will be two phases. We have the individual hearings followed by institutional hearings. So to start this morning I will ask that you all stand and observe a few moments of silence.

(A few moments of silence observed.)

AHMED SIRLEAF: Thank you very much. Please be seated.

I'll ask that you please stand.

KERPER DWANYEN,

being first duly sworn to tell the truth, testified as follows:

TESTIMONY OF KERPER DWANYEN

AHMED SIRLEAF: Please be seated.

CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Mr. Witness, good morning.

THE WITNESS: Good morning.

CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: And a healthy welcome from us of the TRC. We are happy that you have come to share your experience and perspectives with the TRC.

As you know, this forum is meant to help us out of the tragedies of the past, the trauma, and the negative experiences to understand how it has impacted our nation and the people to find the root causes of the conflict and then advance recommendations that we have secured for the future for posterity. So we are delighted and say thanks for coming.

I will use this time to introduce the Commissioners following which you will move into your testimony. To your right is Commissioner Sheikh Kafumba Konneh, Pearl Brown-Bull, Gerald Coleman, Dede Dolopei, Massa Washington, John H.T. Stewart, and Oumu Syllah. I'm Jerome Verdier.

Can we begin by restating your name for the record?

THE WITNESS: Kerper Dwanyen.

CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Where are you currently residing?

THE WITNESS: I reside in Minnesota in Brooklyn Center.

CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Your current occupation?

THE WITNESS: I own a mortgage business.

CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Mortgage?

THE WITNESS: Yes.

CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: That is a bad business these days.

THE WITNESS: Yes. Sometimes it's better to be unemployed.

CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: When did you migrate to the US?

THE WITNESS: I first came to the US in 1978.

CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: First came. And when did you second come?

THE WITNESS: I've always gone back and forth to Liberia.

CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: 1978 --

THE WITNESS: 1978, yes.

CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Okay. Your date of birth, please?

THE WITNESS: June 10, 1959.

CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: June 10th.

THE WITNESS: My birthday was on Tuesday.

CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: A few days ago.

THE WITNESS: I'm 49.

CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: 1949?

THE WITNESS: '59, five nine.

CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Okay, sir, the stage is all yours.

THE WITNESS: Thank you. Before I begin, I just

want to clarify something. If you read an article on MPR, they described some skepticism on my part to this process, I want to say that's completely not the case. The MPR reporter interviewed me as a leader of this community and she asked about the community sentiments, how the community was anticipating this event and just as I stated during the opening ceremonies that there was a mix of reactions and skepticism was one of those reactions. So it wasn't a personal reaction. I want to say that I've been deeply supportive of this effort. I was in Liberia in 2005, early 2005, I took my time to meet with Commissioner Coleman, that was when he was -- the office was (unintelligible). I offered a hand of support and I think what you're doing is very necessary for our country. My own preference would have been for something stronger, a war crimes tribunal, but this is what we have and we are looking forward to supporting this and making sure that you succeed in your mission. I just wanted to put that in.

CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Thank you very much. The reservation we appreciate it and skepticism are now common in this line of work. Thank you.

THE WITNESS: Thank you.

When I first became aware of the Comprehensive Peace Accord in our project which lead to the birth of this commission and noted that you were mandated to

review the period between 1979 and 2003, I thought that that was a major mistake, that that period only represents a symptom of a long-running conflict which goes back to the beginning of our country, and if we are to truly understand the causes of our conflict and as the result of that reconcile ourselves to a better future we have to take into account the entire picture. So I will begin by talking about the period prior to 1979 in our history, then I will talk about the periods after 1979 and talk about the effect those -- what I know about those who orchestrated the war, how it impacted my family, how it's impacted me in the Diaspora. I will talk about the Nimba Redemption Council and then I will offer some recommendations that I think will help us to move our country forward.

Liberia since its beginning, and I say that leaving out the period after 2005 because that's a chapter that is still being written, but from the beginning of Liberia the country -- the management of the country was characterized by a political and economic hegemony in which those that founded the country came into a situation where prior to the arrival all of the tribes in Liberia lived as a nation. They did not live in a cohesive country called Liberia. The Gios lived as a nation, the Bellehs, the Mandingos, everybody had their own, you know, ethnic structure.

Then came in the settlers and throughout the period of settler rule you saw them manage the country in that same manner. They dominated the politics of the country. When I was growing up, there used to be this statement, it was probably a myth, maybe a reality, but in practice that's what was said. It said behind the president's chair never forget the pioneer's children. That hegemony also dominated the economy of the country and the development of Liberia was centered around Monrovia primarily and the coastal cities that they occupied. And the settlers that ruled the country constituted about 5 percent of the population. And in order for 5 percent to rule 95 percent there has to be a lot of tactics that can sometimes be distasteful. Those tactics consisted of systemic violations of the constitution. Liberia was set up as a republic with three equal branches of government, but in my lifetime those branches did not exhibit equality. The Senate and the House of Representatives were composed of people who were hand picked by the president so that they couldn't challenge his authority. The judiciary was subservant to the president. My father -- I was listening to Dr. Wesley yesterday speaking about the first Grebo persons that became a member of the House of Representatives from Maryland. As a child I witnessed my father go through three elections where he won all of them,

but Tubman and Tolbert decided that that was not who they wanted. The same was that the people of Nimba want to but who do we want. And the elections were fraudulent and to support this structure they formed a military which was not really groomed into a professional military. Starting with the Liberian frontier force, that Army was basically a goon force to enforce their rule and the soldiers would -- their mantra was: Government gave me gun, they didn't give me English. And in Liberian language, government give me gun, not give me English meaning don't try to engage me in dialogue, that's not why I'm here. I have a gun, you do what I say. And that was the manifestation of the dictatorship. And part of their tactics in tax collections, they would go into the village, grab the chief and demand that everybody pay their tax. If you didn't pay, they made you lay in the sun with your face facing the sun and if you didn't pay you stayed there.

And so the brutality, the systematic brutality of the Liberian Army, and we saw that throughout the years, created a culture of violence where the idea that a soldier is a gentleman is foreign to Liberia. And as you can see, and we'll talk about this later, when the young men and women took up arms to fight against the government at the time, they simply exhibited the programming that they had been conditioned to. And the roots of this behavior has

to go back to how the government socialized and indoctrinated the military that was supposed to serve and protect.

Because of all these abuses at the time I was coming of age in high school, Tolbert had come into power, he promised total involvement in open society, students had begun to challenge the system. I was one of those. John Stewart here, we were at the university and we were clamoring for change because we thought that -- you know, we read the books about democracy and we believed it and we thought that it should come to our country. What we were advocating for was multiparty democracy, respect for the rule of law, and respect for human rights and equitable distribution of the resources of the country. We are now blaming some quarters as the ones who brought about this crisis. What we did was to challenge the system that was deeply inequitable. No one in the student movement, no one in the progressive movement anticipated or encouraged or asked the military to go in and kill the president. That was not a part of the plans that we had, that was not what we were advocating for. That was a derailment of the struggle for justice and equality that we were a part of. The wave of multiparty democracy that you see across Africa today started in Liberia when I was a student advocating for that.

Tolbert did a lot to try to bring about change, but then he also became a tragic figure because he got torn between serving the proverbial two masters. While he wanted -- he saw the injustices of the system and wanted to bring change, he was unable to persuade the old guard of the True Whig Party, the conservative guard to go along with this change. And because he did not impose that change we saw a situation that created mistrust, a political vacuum that was exploited by the military.

I listened to the former VP Bennie Warner when he spoke about the fact that -- how he was selected as vice president and he noted that Jackson Doe was on the short list. Jackson Doe was a close friend of my father. At the time of his consideration, we knew that he had been considered to be the vice president. According to the story, President Tolbert had called in Richard Harris and said, I want to make Jackson Doe vice president. At that time, Mack Dashiell was out of the country who was the grandmaster of the masons and that secret society that governed Liberia behind the walls of the Masonic Temple. So Richard Harris said, Let Mack come back and we'll talk. And when Mack came back what we heard is they went to Tolbert, because those were the two old guys that in -- you know, in cahoots with each other they felt powerful. So what do you want to do, do you want to through the country away and give

it to the country people. It was my first time listening to former Vice President Warner to know that he was Bassa man. In those days he had the character, the identity that self-promoted as an Americo-Liberian, and we saw that this glass ceiling was going to remain there and it cost a lot of mistrust for Tolbert because on one hand he's advocating change, but on the other hand he's perpetuating this system that we all deeply resented. And as a result he lost the trust of the people and the 1979 Rice Riot was actually very sound economic policy, but because he had lost the trust of the people you had the children of rice farmers who stood to benefit from that policy riding against it, demonstrating against it because they had been persuaded that this was in Tolbert's self-interest as a rice dealer as opposed to in the national interest.

So, you know, these conditions brought about this vacuum that the military stepped in and took over. Now, one thing I want to talk about this military situation is that I don't believe for one minute that Samuel Doe and Wesseh and Quiwonkpa and the rest of them had the means and the capacity to plan and execute that coup. So it is your task also to try to dig deeper to find out who was really behind this coup, who was intended to be president of Liberia. We've heard that Major Jebo was a commander and somehow they got dislocated because what I've heard was

there was two groups of soldiers deployed that night. Since Tolbert regularly slept in Bentol, that's where they expected him. Jebo lead the lead the group that was leading the ambush on the Bentol Highway. And Doe and Quiwonkpa and the rest of them were stationed to attack the mansion as plan B. I've also heard that they never went to the mansion with any arms, that they had inside help where the (unintelligible) was in charge of armory and distributed the weapons to them which they used to carry out the assault.

During the years of the military the abuses became -- it multiplied. I can't put a numerical quantification to it, but it was seriously exacerbated. They killed each other at random. They killed civilians. There was a lot of summary executions. The military had promised to turn the country over in 1985, but a few years into their rule people began to encourage Samuel Doe to perpetuate himself, that if you leave power you will be killed. And that was the genesis of the conflict between Doe and Quiwonkpa. I've heard people characterize this as a Gio Mano versus Krahn conflict, that is incorrect. The Gio Mano component is another symptom which I'll get into a little bit here, but there is a philosophical difference between Doe and Quiwonkpa. Quiwonkpa thought that the soldiers should honor their promise and turn over power. And Doe wanted to perpetuate himself in power, so people

began to take sides. And as a part of our social fabric which comes from this, you know, situation of the tribes living as nations, the ethnicity began to manifest itself where the Gios and Monos began to support Quiwonkpa and the Krahn began to support Doe, but it wasn't just a hundred percent. There were Krahns who were supporting Quiwonkpa and there were Gios and Manos who were supporting Doe. But by and large that's how the ethnic groups began to take sides behind these two powers in the TRC.

Doe eventually won out in that conflict, but as part of what was happening he began to systematically target the people of Nimba. And we've seen this memo that was leaked to the press by John Ramsey that he had to eliminate the people of Nimba if he was to remain in power and he began to execute that plan.

In 1983 Samuel Dokie went up to Yekepa, and this is one of the most diabolical figures in this whole situation, and for some reason they claim he went to rob the bank in Yekepa to get money, Yekepa is in Nimba, to get money to carry out the coup, but they wound up at the home of Charles Julu killing his son and his driver. Doe reacted to that with swift violence. Dokie had led across the border, but he went and started to kill innocent -- his soldiers went and started killing innocent people in the country and it deepened the conflict. And then we saw in

1985 Doe actually eventually ran for president and he declared himself a winner, but I have to say that election was a fraud. That was not the election, that was not the multi-party democracy that I and others advocated for in the '70s. The election was characterized by the banning of political parties, by intimidation and outright fraud when in the midst of counting the ballots they changed the elections commission and created a new commission to count the ballots. Bags of ballots were burned, they were strewn across the highways and Doe declared himself winner by 50.3 percent, just enough to avoid a runoff. That was a very frustrating moment in our own quest for democracy. Quiwonkpa took the opportunity then to come and stage a coup which failed. In the aftermath of that the soldiers went to Nimba County again and created even more terror. And this is sad because this idea of guilt by association has dragged our country down the drain. Instead of holding individuals accountable for their behavior, we hold the ethnic groups and the associates responsible for their behavior when they know nothing about it. And this has been done by all parties, has been done by all parties and it has been a very tragic situation for our country.

And so then because of the violence, because of the egregious abuses of human rights a lot of Liberians fled the country. They were of all ethnic groups. At that

time, people began to think that the only way Doe is going to leave power is by violence. And a number of forces came together to bring about the civil war that we saw exploding in 1989 throughout 1990 and for the 14 years.

The first component I've talked about is the Liberians who had fled the country and felt that the only way they were going to return is to move Doe by the force of violence. Then you had the countries that facilitated their action. First was the Ivory Coast and Houphuet Boigny was a close friend of Tolbert. His son A.B. Tolbert married to -- I mean Tolbert's son was married to the daughter of Houphuet and he resented the fact that Doe would kill his friend and the son-in-law. And the daughter that was married to A.B. Tolbert subsequently married Brace Compari (phonetic) of Burkina Faso. But before that Brace Compari (phonetic) was the number 2 to Thomas Sankara. And the information that I have is that Charles Taylor when during the training facilitated the killing of Thomas Sankara with his men. And so Brace (phonetic) now had this loyalty to Taylor. Then comes in Muammar Kadafi. Kadafi and Doe had this rivalry where Doe -- Kadafi was trying to expand his influence in Africa and Doe was the American ally resisting Kadafi very forcefully as talked about at an OAU Conference, they almost came to blows. And Muammar Kadafi had a plan to create a union of Arab states where he would be the

overlord. The United States was able to rebuff that using the influence with moderate Arab states like Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Omar, Kakata, Egypt and so Kadafi felt like he had to continue this fight with America. And so since he could not bring the fight to America shores Liberia became the proxy ground for this fight. And so Kadafi provided the financing and the training base in Libya for, you know, the Taylor group. I've heard stories that Prince Johnson was actually in Libya before Taylor brought his men and so Prince never really felt that Taylor was his boss which explains how they eventually wound up splitting up.

So they trained in Libya and the transit point of arms and men was from Libya through Burkina Faso to the Ivory Coast. And they started this war by launching cross border hit-and-run raids. They were hit in Liberia and run back into the Ivory Coast and received sanctuary. And rather than the Liberian army fighting the rebels they began to systematically again target the people of Nimba County. That created a huge wave of refugees across the border. They would go into the towns, just shoot indiscriminately. They would tie people up in a house and burn them to death. And those who escaped were deeply angry and it provided a breeding ground for recruits for the MPFL. And I believe that Taylor did this deliberately and diabolically knowing fully well that if he did anything in

Nimba County Doe was going to go in to burn the ground.

And so they carried this out and unfortunately we've seen the damage that was done to the country. During the war -- I don't know any Liberian that didn't lose family members. I had a cousin, Peter Langer, who was at the Lutheran church among those that it were massacred. My own father was killed by Charles Taylor and uncle, Robert Wang, who was killed by the government soldiers in Bong. The MPFL looted substantial property from us. My father was in the rubber business and at the time they had a stockpile of rubber that was valued at about \$60,000, they looted that and sold it to LAC. They looted his Pajero jeep. They looted a Pajoke (phonetic) 504, they looted a Toyota truck that was used on the farm for transporting the rubber, and they looted the equipment that they had in the logging business.

But the assassination of my father was no accident. In June of 1990 I got a call from my uncle who was in Detroit. He said if you know where your father is tell him not to go near Charles Taylor. They had received a hit list that somebody smuggled out that had a listing of people that Charles Taylor wanted dead, my father was on that list. And everybody whose name was on that list, the only ones that survived were those who did not enter Charles Taylor's territory. Giva Polair (phonetic) was on that

list, Jackson Doe was on that list, Steven Yackerson (phonetic) was on that list, David Toweh, my uncle was on that list. The other day Sekou Conneh and I were talking and he was now reading some of what had happened in Bonju in the -- I believe that was the September conference that elected the interim government. The reason Taylor wanted these people dead was because he didn't want to compete against a political capital. And others have shared this with me that my father along with Jackson Doe at the time there was a search for an interim president when they decided that they were going to have this interim governess arrangement that would lead the country for one year disarm everybody and go to the elections, he was on the short list to be selected as president. And everybody said, well, it's not a wise thing to do because all these people are in Taylor's territory. If you select them and announce their names, they will be killed. By the time that discussion was going on, they had already been killed. The incident of his attack was relayed to me by James Zotaa who is now a judge in Liberia. Zotaa then was the minister of state in the Taylor government, the MPRAG as they called it.

My father had left his home because it had been overrun by the war and he was among the 17,000 people displaced at the Omega Towers. The general manager for Omega was a good friend of his and he had given him his

office that was his living quarters. So this day was July 6, 1990, a group of soldiers came in, the death squad soldiers called Border Patrol, I'm sure you've heard this name before, he also goes by the name Mendin was the one who lead the people that came in. They didn't know him personally, so they asked is David here, then he came outside. And as soon as he came outside they pounced on him and started to attack him with their gun butts. And James Zotaa immediately when he saw what was happening he rushed in and told them and screamed at them and they left. But he had to leave, when he left, they came back. And again somebody intervened and they left. So my father was taken to Bong Mines Hospital. While at Bong Mines Hospital this very Border Patrol lead another group of soldiers who came in and demanded that he and two other prisoners -- I forget the name -- two other prominent patients be taken out of the hospital. This was narrated to me by Brian Yima (phonetic) who lives here in Minnesota. And according to Brian the chief medical officer at the clinic was so upset he said if you take any patients from here I will stop treating you guys. And so he drove off and as the result when they brought their wounded soldiers he refused to go and treat them.

So this killing was not accidental. It was a targeted assassination to eliminate people that Taylor

considered political competition. My father had built a very strong reputation in the country being a leader that advocated the aspirations of the Liberian people. Before the 1985 elections he was approached by many of the political parties to be the stand-up there. He thought that the military was not serious about elections and he was not prepared to put his family through the turmoil, so he did not. So that's what happened to him. I was able to evacuate my mother and my youngest siblings out of the country and brought them out to safety.

We followed the various peace accords with a lot of hope and anticipation. We all felt that the leadership of our country should not be reward to somebody because they have the biggest gun, it should be awarded to them because they won the mandate of the people through the ballot box. Taylor signed on to all of these agreements, but systematically broke them just as he signed them. The first agreements were done in Bonju. He claimed that he didn't trust President Donna Juara (phonetic), so he didn't attend those conferences. He decided to move the conferences to the Ivory Coast to the home of his God father and there were four conferences held in Yamasoku. All four of those agreements which he signed on to have the same theme, disarm, demobilize have an interim government that would be headed by no leader of a war faction and then you

go to elections. He would sign on and then back away from it.

In late 1992, there began to be whispers and rumors that Taylor was planning to attack Monrovia. It seemed quite absurd given that we had a peacekeeping contingent that had at the time I think 10,000 soldiers. Many of those countries, Nigeria, Ghana, Guinea, Senegal, Liberia cannot militarily defeat, you know, alone so imagine seven are here and there is just talk that Taylor is going to attack them. It didn't make sense, but I guess a lot of things that happened in this war didn't make sense either.

And so I had returned to Monrovia on -- by that time I was doing business in the country, bringing cars, bringing, you know, toiletries and clothing and other commodities. I had arrived in Monrovia on August -- October 14th, brought in a container. The very morning where I awoke to the sound of artillery fire, loud explosions coming from Mount Barkley, and that was Operation Octopus. It shattered a lot of hopes. By then before Octopus the Liberian currency used to trade before the war at 2 point 3 to 1, prior to between 1990 and Octopus it was trading at 7 to 1. Times were hard but people were still managing somewhat to make it. The following morning of Octopus that currency went from 7 to 1 versus the US dollar to 50 to 1. That was an overnight 85 percent depreciation

of the wealth of people that were already struggling. And the hardships were extreme and there was a lot of killing on the outskirts of the city and so, you know, the rebels had penetrated through Kagwa. There was this plot between Taylor and Prince Johnson. Prince Johnson thought that he would invite Taylor to Kagwa and capture him. He failed to realize that the whole world saw him play that same trick with Doe and it wasn't possible for Taylor to fall in that trap. Anyway, he had thousands of Taylor's men in the Kagwa Base and they eventually all ran in and did a lot of damage in the Kagwa, Banersville, Banersville area.

And so in -- this was October. By December I was in my store and I got an invitation from Joseph Guannu who was then Minister of State for presidential affairs and we went into a meeting, they invited me to a meeting in the Ducor. And Guannu (phonetic), Kianu Congu (phonetic), Johnson Greco (phonetic), Yarsuo Weh-Dorliae, Harry Yuan, Johnson, Joseph Dahn Kuan and most of the Nimba leaders who were in the interim government were in that meeting. And Guannu said, Listen, ECOMOG has a plan to launch an attack on Taylor from the border with Guinea to attack him in the rear and cut off his supply routes and they would prefer that we help them so that they're not -- they don't meet resistance that will be devastating to lives and property, that we can mitigate the damages if the Nimba people can

help them to do two things; one, provide them with scouts who knew the terrain who could help them fight; two, create an information campaign to persuade the people of Nimba that ECOMOG is a friendly force, not a hostile force, don't resist them.

I'll go back to the 1990 when Taylor first resisted the deployment of ECOMOG. President Bamagita (phonetic) gave the command they should drive him to the border with -- drive him to Harper. And so they began that offensive and then Taylor began this propaganda that they were killing civilians, air raids were bombing civilians. And so Sawyer got on the air and said to ECOMOG to stop the bombing, and that undermined ECOMOG's ability to pursue Taylor, so they stopped. That was the biggest tactical mistake by Sawyer. I've spoken to people who were, for example, in Bomi Hills. Peuri Reed (phonetic) is in this community and he said, listen, all those bodies, NPFL soldiers did not wear uniforms. And at the time no civilians were allowed to own cars. They even looted cars from the UN and not governmental organizations. So any truckloads of cars that were going was typically NPFL soldiers going to the war front. Civilians were not in trucks in mass heading towards Monrovia. If they were in trucks, they were heading away from Monrovia. So if a truckload of people was coming towards Monrovia it was NPFL

soldiers. When they displayed the bodies they would remove the weapons and display the bodies and they would be wearing jeans and civilian clothes, they say they're killing civilians.

But what Peuri Reed (phonetic) also said to me is that all those areas all these soldiers when the air raids would go on they say, Listen, we're done, we're out of here. So had that continued, the NPFL would have been defeated in a matter of weeks if not a few months. Sawyer realized that he had made this tactical mistake once, he realized that Taylor was not negotiating in good faith and launched operation Octopus.

So the idea of the Nimba Redemption Council was sort of reawakening this policy going from -- at first from peacekeeping, they arrived as peacekeepers, then went to peace enforcement, then went back to peacekeepers and now they were going back into peace enforcement. So we discussed the idea and it was basically, Listen, we're going to do this, if you help us it will be better for all parties. And many of us deeply resented what was happening in the country with Taylor, and we had come to the result that the only language he was going to understand was -- you know, was military action. So we supported the action of what ECOMOG was contemplating and resolved to support them. I was asked to be the political spokesman for the project

to, you know, travel around different capitals, to persuade countries who may have not fully understood that this is necessary, to also persuade the people of Nimba County to please support ECOMOG, allow this deployment, this is good for the country, abandon Charles Taylor. And so they -- Guannu drafted a statement, a position statement, a release that I was going to circulate at the onset of the ECOMOG deployment. Him and I left Monrovia in January of 1993. We traveled to the Ivory Coast and met with the liaison at the time and there were probably three to five thousand young men who had previously fought for Taylor but became disaffected and left him and were straddling the border between the Ivory Coast and Guinea, the Liberian Ivory Coast/Guinea border. And many of them wanted to return, they knew they couldn't return and were anxious to be a part of this. So we went, we met with the leaders in the Ivory Coast and I left Guannu there. This was something that was run from the Ministry of State and Guannu called the shots. I left him there and came to the states. And I had meetings with people in various Nimba communities here, the State Department and things like that, but before, you know, the meetings were after -- there was some meetings that were not public, prior to the launching of the effort it wasn't public, so we were expecting the troops to be deployed to the Guinea border. At the time the satellite that was

providing telephone service to Monrovia got destroyed during Octopus, so there was a special satellite hookup that was bought to Telecom (phonetic) that was providing telephone service from I believe Ducor and the mansion and telephone in a few places. It was quite difficult to communicate by phone to Liberia then. When I was calling from here it was costing something like 15 dollars per minute and you could barely get through.

Yarsuo Weh-Dorliae went to Guinea to be a part of the staging, but him and I could not communicate. He called me once, but the telephone connection was very poor. We had very little communication, but what I did gather from him was that they were waiting for the ECOMOG troops to be positioned. And so I kept waiting and I kept asking what's going on, when are they going to get there, when they get there, let me know that. The idea was that we would circulate the statements coinciding with their deployment. So on one morning I got a call from a Harry Yuan to say, Listen, the ECOMOG troops are in position, there are three battalions there and you need to release a statement. Prior to that I thought Harry Yuan walked on water. I had no reason to dispute anything that he said. So I released a statement and went on the BBC, you know, announcing the Nimba Redemption Council and calling and supporting the deployment, calling for and supporting

the deployment of ECOMOG. And that statement went out, I gave a few interviews, I traveled the country, and then left and I flew to Nigeria and traveled across various capitals in West Africa carrying out the diplomatic portion of what I was expected to do.

It turned out that the ECOMOG soldiers were not in place. It turned out that Nigeria had borne too heavy of burden and we found these way after the fact that Nigeria had borne a heavy burden for the ECOMOG effort in Liberia. And in order for them to deploy the troops, they would have to move a lot of conventional weapons, tanks, artillery from Conakry to Sinkor which is I believe is about 6 or 7 hundred miles and the road was largely unpaved with not so friendly, you know, terrain.

So they made a decision against it, that they were not prepared to commit those resources. What I've also found out is that Sawyer and Guannu and Harry Yuan prevailed upon ECOMOG saying, ECOMOG give us the money, we have people who can handle this. This information did not filter down to me or any of the people involved. We found this out when I got back to Monrovia. I came to Monrovia I believe late March or very early April. At that time because of the announcement that was made in February, the NPFL, of course, the cat got let out of the bag and they went after and got information, said these people, Nimba Redemption Council

people, so there was some combat. Amos Koukou who is in Philadelphia now was there. He tells me that there was combat along the border there for about seven days and said eight of the young men who were part of the team waiting for ECOMOG got killed as the result of this. When we got to Monrovia, I got to find out from the ECOMOG commander that was then General Farngalo that they didn't attempt to deploy anymore, that, you know, it wasn't -- they are taking the option off the table. And at that point I was really furious and a lot of us were furious because this was not what we signed on to. What we signed on to was to see that the peacekeepers would be deployed with our help to minimize the resistance from the Taylor fighters. They selected me because they thought that, you know, my voice would bring about a certain degree of creditability and influence that would lead to success. People who were in Nimba County have told me when I went on BBC Taylor basically surrendered and moved all of his heavy artillery across the border to Bong County. Then he realized that there was nothing going on here, and so he came back with vengeance. When he came back, he started to target people who he suspected would be sympathizers of the Nimba Redemption Council. And that was a very tragic situation and it's what breaks my heart the most about this. To all of those people and their families this is the one thing that I'm deeply sorry about the most.

There is a gentleman here, Edwin Kurat (phonetic) and he told me about how his brother got [tied|tide], had no knowledge, nothing of what was going on, but his brother got [tied|tide] and got killed. And that was a very, very disappointing effect of what had happened and the deceit that we all experienced.

I was not in Liberia during any of this time when the actual combat took place at the border. I had no responsibility for that. The late General Joseph Farngalo who was military advisor to Sawyer, he wasn't really responsible for that. These guys were recruited to work along with ECOMOG. They had put together their own leadership structure and the idea was that they would be there with ECOMOG, ECOMOG was going to be deploying and they would be there. My job was to persuade our people to cooperate and to persuade the international community that this was in the best interest of Liberia and moving the peace process forward. And when we found out that that was not the case, that ECOMOG was not going to be deployed, that was the end of my involvement with the Nimba Redemption Council. After the (unintelligible) and -- that effort by the way had the result of the motivating Taylor to call for the peace talks that then went to Cotonou. So that's when the concept of the five-man government was ushered in. And since then we've had no involvement or support or likeness

for, you know, anything military that's strictly involved Liberians. I've been of the view that Liberians had not been properly socialized to engage in military combat. So I always -- you know, I was not going to be a part of anything that just involved recruiting Liberians and sending them in. There were many -- I received a lot of proposals at the time of the formation of the Liberia Peace Council to help, I said no. The Liberian Peace Council was actually on the AFL slash Liberian peace council. George Boley was living in the barracks in the home of General Karmely who was the force behind the Peace Council. The government was supportive of that effort. When they attacked Gbarnga they came after me, We need you to join us. I said, No. I've always stayed out of that. They were throwing the hints, you know, we'll form the government, and we'll divide the ministries. That's not how I wanted to be a minister in Liberia, so we stayed away from that and that's been -- so that's the extent of my involvement and what I know about the key elements of this conflict.

I came back in -- when Taylor got elected as president after 1996, the April 6th war, I was in Liberia at that time also. I left out I didn't go back to Liberia again throughout the time that Taylor was president, so for the past -- well, I went back in 2005, so for about 9 years I didn't go back to Liberia.

I want to talk about what's happened to me also as the result of being in a Diaspora displaced by this war. When I came to the country in 1978, my plan was I would be here for school, six, seven years, get a master's degree, go back home. And, you know, in those days with an American degree you were pretty much guaranteed a decent life. But because of all of this turmoil that was in the country my father thought it was not a good idea for me to go back to Liberia, so I've stayed. It's been a mix of on the one hand I feel blessed and fortunate that a lot of the terrible things that happened in my country I was blessed and fortunate to be sheltered away from it. There is also a sense of guilt that my friends, my colleagues paid the ultimate price, you know, in this conflict. There is also a degree of being homesick. My friend Wilford Harrison of Atlanta always jokes that we are the generation whose crops the locals ate.

At my age, when my father was at my age, he had already built 28 schools in the country. He was -- you know, he had lead the county, built a lot of roads, had two homes, and had a rubber farm that was up and coming and thriving and had made a lot of personal progress in the country that he wanted to make the progress in. This is where I wanted to live and make my progress, but all of this conflict has constrained me from being a part of that, from

living my adulthood in the environment that I dreamed to live in. I still do hope to achieve that dream.

The other thing that's happened which I've noticed is that people who may have even participated in this war or didn't are fighting this war in America using some very dishonest approaches. I've been a community leader since I was in this country, two years or three years after I got here I was elected to the board of directors of the organization Liberians of Minnesota -- I mean Liberian Association of Michigan. Sorry. At the age of 23 I became president of that organization. It was a proud moment for me because we had people in their forties. I ran against two other candidates who were much older, much more experienced, but I won that election. I've always been involved in the Liberian community. I've been on the relief committee in Michigan during the war and we raised relief supplies and sent them to Liberia, did the same, distributed it in Liberia. But, you know, since this war I've noticed here that people tend to use it to whip their friends in ways that really undermine our ability to reconcile as a community, come together and thrive as a people. When I was running for president of this community last year, a lot of people had come to me and said, Listen, we have a lot of challenges. We think that you can help, you know, to move this community forward and we would like you to run. I say,

No, I would like to be returning to Liberia shortly and I don't know if this is the commitment, but they prevailed and prevailed and I decided to do so. When even before I could publicly announce that I would be running for president, the Internet began to show images of me, superimposed images from Rwanda, Dalfour, Ethiopia, claiming that these were the victims of the Nimba Redemption Council, these were my victims, I was this humungous abuse of human rights, that I should not lead this community. If you're running for president of the United States and people decide to (unintelligible) vote you, you know, it's somewhat easier to understand because the stakes are high, but when you're trying to lead your community on a volunteer basis and people engaged in these tactics it's somewhat befuddling. For me it was like grabbing my father and killing him right before me once again. That was the most painful part of it. That was the very painful part of it. And then even after I won the elections beating my closest competitor by a two-to-one margin they didn't stop. They went to the media. Before that Wynford Russell one of the candidates had called the publisher of the (unintelligible) to say, Listen, I just got off the phone with -- just came from (unintelligible), she said to beg me, I must please win this election because this (unintelligible) what he did, all her brothers got killed in Nimba County, so please. So he called me to get

my reaction to the story so I immediately gave him Tyler's (phonetic) phone number. What Russell didn't understand is that Tyler Kooumpa (phonetic) is not from Nimba. She's a cruel woman who grew up in Monrovia. She had no brothers in Nimba, she married to Kooumpa (phonetic) from Nimba. And then, you know, they went to the media and Emmanuel Tolbert who wrote a book on ethnicity, I helped him to write the book, I pointed out sources of resource for him, he gave me credit in the book, made allegations to the reporter that I was this huge abuse of human rights which he did not make in his book. Even the media stepped in and caused pain where Randy First (phonetic) who was the Free -- Star Tribune reporter, we both noted that he had a copy of Dola's (phonetic) book and we both noted that Dola (phonetic) didn't make these accusations in the book, that he chose to quote Dola (phonetic), but he did not quote over 10 to 12 different people who gave him information to the contrary. He spoke to somebody who was living in Nimba at the time of the Nimba Redemption Council, the leader of the Nimba youth of Minnesota who would have been able to be the most credible person as to what really happened in Nimba. Then the Mashad (phonetic) newspaper, they had the story quoting a lady who said that they saw me in a park and recognized me, I was in the border area, she saw me in the border during the attack and I was giving commands for people to be

killed. And he called me to interview me and he told me directly that the lady was not credible, she was inconsistent, but he chose to quote her. When I asked him about it, he said she didn't -- she withheld her name, they withheld her name. She said she was afraid for her life. So I was going to now kill her when her name got exposed. The last time I was at the border of Ivory Coast and Liberia and the one and only time was I believe 1972 or 1973 when I went along with my father to dedicate a highway because the Betu area wasn't accessible by road during this leadership of the county was when that road got built, 1973, the one and only time I have ever been to that border. At that time, the bridge -- I believe there is a bridge there, the bridge had not been built across the river.

And it's sad what we are doing to each other here in this Diaspora, fighting this war in ways which are very, very unhealthy and very, very unhelpful to our country. And that's something that I think is very important for you to take into account and the saddest thing is one of the people, the person putting up all of this stuff on the Internet was a pastor for Prince Johnson (unintelligible). As Prince Johnson would kill people he would go there and pray over him. And he said that he was the spiritual advisor and is somebody this commission needs to talk to because they will they have -- will have a lot of

information about what actually happened at Caldwell Base.

So, you know, we have a huge task ahead of us. Where do we go from here? I think in order for us to truly reconcile this country there has to be a degree of accountability. Two hundred and fifty thousand people cannot die in vain and we say let bygones be bygones. We have to know that we have to honor those victims, we can never ever forget. I think we use the word forget in a different way. You can forgive and move on, but that's different from forgetting. We must always remember this, keep it in our consciousness so that we never ever repeat the mistakes of the past. Those with the greatest degree of responsibility for the atrocities need to be prosecuted. I know it is not practical to go and prosecute ten thousand people or whatever number of people you may find that actually were responsible for the killings, but those who had command and control, those who were responsible should be held accountable before a court of law.

We also need to take a serious look at the way our country is structured. We have to decentralize political power in Liberia. We have to decentralize economic power because all of this is a fight for state power to protect oneself and in some cases to enrich themselves. This war was not a revolution, it was a giant armed robbery, that's all it was. That was people's way to

wealth. And the reason that we have this situation is that the monopolization of political power and economic power in Liberia has created so few other avenues for people to gain economic status that the only place they need to know how to rush to is to get a government job and steal. And the only way we can stop that is to decentralize that power. Let the people of Lofa County elect their superintendent and not just elect them and say okay, Mr. Superintendent, we want you to (unintelligible) to Monrovia for money to finance your operations. Lofa County is rich in timber, diamonds, and iron ore. A portion of those revenues should go to them by contractual agreements, shouldn't have to go to Monrovia to beg for it. It's their money.

Nimba County produced before the war 37 percent of the foreign exchange in Liberia, and there was no development in exchange for that. That type of concentration of power is a prescription for trouble.

We need to prioritize education. When people are educated they have a greater propensity to stay away from the types of things that we've seen, and let me qualify this. Education is not just the accumulation of knowledge in textbooks, it's also a socialization process, a socialization process that will create citizens that are empathetic, that are honest and that are credible. Because we also saw that a lot of educated people did a lot of very

evil things in Liberia because they lack empathy. So our educational system must embrace these concepts and they must embrace the concept that we Liberians have one common patrimony and a common destiny. Without that we will continue to have the situation where people live as tribal nation states. It has not been good for this country. I don't think it will ever be good for this country. We have to also take seriously the socialization and conditioning and training of our military forces, be it police or the Army. We cannot give them guns and unleash them without the proper indoctrination. Human rights, respect for the rule of law, respect for civilian authority has to be deeply engrained in the mind-set.

There has been so much hurt in this conflict, so many people have lost everything, we have to do more than say sorry, man. We have to put in a system for reparations. As we do that, let me be the first to say that I lost quite a lot. Besides my family I lost a lot economically. We lost a lot economically, but I can take care of myself. I can take care of myself. Someone like me if I should even be considered should be at the back of the line. But let's look at that lady who had a small market that had maybe \$200 worth of goods, she turn over maybe \$20 a day, \$10 of profit, that's what the family ate and that's how they sustain themselves. And maybe the husband worked for the

government and maybe made \$100, and that's how they sustain themselves. She lost her husband, she lost her home, she's lost that business. We have to do something for her, we have to.

We also need to memorialize the victims of this crisis. The victims of 1980, including our president, the victims of the '80s and the victims of the '90s and the 2000s. We should have a discussion on how we do this, whether we have separate memorials or one memorial. I think that's a national discussion that we need to have as a part of the healing process that people can understand that their loved ones did not die in vain, that their loved ones are not forgotten. As the result of the conflict that we've had since 1979, the symptoms of this long-running crisis many, many Liberians have spent a very large part of their lives outside of the country. Two-thirds of my life has been spent outside of Liberia. We have many citizens who have taken up citizenship in other countries. I have maintained my Liberia citizenship because of my desire to return to Liberia, but we have many of our compatriots who are now American citizens but still love Liberia very deeply and would love to make a contribution to Liberia and are making a contribution to Liberia today, building homes, sending money to family members, building businesses. We need to seriously incorporate the ideal dual citizenship so that our

people in the Diaspora can be able to live and continue the lives that they live but not be disenfranchised from the country. Because people in the Diaspora are doing so much to hold Liberia up, it is unfair to say send us money but don't get involved in our decision-making. That is not healthy for reconciliation as well.

So you have a big task ahead of you and I personally look forward to helping you in any other way that I can. I want to thank you for this opportunity. It has been something that I've looked forward to for a very, very long time and I want to thank you for your time.

CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Thank you very much, Mr. Witness, for coming up and sharing your thoughts, your experience, and convictions with the Commission. We extend to you our sympathy for the death of your relatives, your father, your cousin, and your uncle during this process. You presented a testimony that brings deep insights into how things happen, why they happen, and thereby tighten the loose ends as far as understanding the root causes of the conflict that we appreciate also. The Commissioners will be asking you questions. I'm sure most of them will be very pointed and going to most of what you have testified against.

I would ask to what extent is it true that Liberians in the Diaspora encouraged, supported and

finalized the (unintelligible) return to Liberia and then eventually (unintelligible).

THE WITNESS: That's something that I was going to be talking about in the organizational statement later on today, but it is a component of this crisis. I know that when Talla (phonetic) Quiwonkpa shared this with us at a meeting of the Nimba organization. The year of the elections 2005 that Harry Yuan was the one who convinced her husband to leave Baltimore to go to Sierra Leone. I know that it would not it be -- I don't know any other individuals besides that, but it would not be implausible to think that Liberians in the Diaspora actually did encourage it because we have people who were here from -- who have fled Liberia from after the fall of the Tolbert government, they were very deeply resentful of the Doe government and in fact these same people did participate in funding the MPFL as well. So I would believe that they were part of encouraging Quiwonkpa to go. That's not something that I've looked into as opposed to the 1989 war, but I would -- I'm inclined to believe that. In fact, I have information on a limited basis that that happened. People in the Diaspora have been a part of this. What we have to understand is that Diaspora Liberians beginning from the '70s have been at the forefront of advocating for human rights in Liberia speaking out against the ills of the society throughout.

Then we have the component in the Diaspora who felt like dialogue was not the answer, military action is the answer. And maybe people shift that, you know, into different schools of thought at different points in time based on their experiences, but people in the Diaspora have been a part of funding these various (unintelligible). I know that as the result of the atrocities against the people of Nimba the Nimba organization in this country did raise money to give to the MPFL.

After the fall of Doe, the Krahn and Mandingo organizations raised money to give to (unintelligible) and raised money to fund LPC and LURD and MODEL. But that's one component but the Diaspora community has also been actively involved in resolving the conflict. The 1990 Banjul Conference was brought about because people in the Diaspora lobbied along with people in Liberia, I don't want to have people in the Diaspora take total credit for this, but Diaspora Liberians have been a part of finding solutions to the conflict. Ironically, some of the same people who have been involved in looking for solutions have been involved in instigating the crisis as well.

CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: (Unintelligible.)

THE WITNESS: What?

CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: I said that's the logical way to see it, right.

THE WITNESS: That's the reality. That's the reality. Take for example you know Amos Sawyer, Sawyer was the founding member of the Association for Constitutional Democracy in Liberia, the ACDL, which is, you know, linked to the MPFL, raising money to fund the MPFL. Sawyer took part in the Banjul Accord. Just to name one person, but we can name dozens.

CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: That's what we're looking for.

THE WITNESS: Do you have time now to name the dozens?

CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Of course.

COMMISSIONER PEARL BROWN BULL: (Unintelligible).

THE WITNESS: Dolee, he's asking the questions, so I'm answering. I do intend -- we're supposed to be giving a state on this afternoon.

CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: So you want us to defer further response to that question to --

THE WITNESS: Yeah, let's do that.

CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Okay.

VICE CHAIRPERSON DEDE DOLOPEI: (Unintelligible) we don't understand presentation he's making is his personal presentation or is it (unintelligible) because I thought (unintelligible).

CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: He's sharing his

personal experience. We defer the question for the afternoon. You speak on behalf of the (unintelligible).

COMMISSIONER SHEIKH KAFUMBA KONNEH: Thank you, Mr. Dwanyen, for sharing your personal experience on the war and for also making some revelations some of which try to confirm and affirm what we have been told and some of which can be considered as new revelations. In your opening testimony you said before 1922 there were tribal and (unintelligible) nations in Liberia and when the pioneers came they were initiated it was to the insistence of governments. My question to you is that if this was the case, at the time we have our own tradition and culture that unites us that solidify our (unintelligible) what happened to those (unintelligible), what can you say?

THE WITNESS: Thank you, sir. Before I answer your question, let me go back to his question and say also in addition to the Nimba and the Mandingos raising money the American Liberian community was also involved in raising money as an ethnic group, so to clear that up.

To your question, the whole concept of the nation psyche that was brought to bear in Liberia was that we were expected to be the deAfricanized during the '70s, '60s. If you dressed like Commissioner Brown Bull, you would be categorized -- or as Commissioner Dolopei, you would be categorized as a native woman, a degrading characterization.

When you spoke your language, you had to say, excuse me. And I don't consider the Liberian language to be dialects as it's called. Gio is a language. Vai is (unintelligible), Bassa is a language. Mandingo is a language. A language is a means of communication common to a people of a common culture and heritage. A dialect is a variation of the language. Among the Gio we have those from the border who speak their language as more closely related to their dialect (unintelligible). So within the languages you have different areas. I say this to point out the degradation of the African culture that was systematically instituted. So as the result of this, the more western you were, the more human you were, the better off you were. So we went to school not just to learn two plus two equals four, but to shed ourselves of the African culture. As a result of that, parents, uneducated parents fell victim to that psychology. So when their children began to read and write they looked upon those children as their superiors. Many of my cousins, because my father was the only person in his family that got an education, a college education. By the time I was growing up he had one sister and extended relatives. The way they spoke to their parents because they could read and write if I ever dare to use one of those words I would have no teeth today.

So the customs got degraded, the value system

got corrupted. People wanted to be western without truly understanding what's good about what you are leaving, what's bad about what you are adopting. So it's created this confused psychology of who we are and what we are and that plays a role today. If you look at Liberian institutions sometimes you wonder why are people so cantankerous.

Imagine somebody who grew up and has been pushing their parents around from the time they were 10 years old, 12 years old, could read and write. How do you engage that person to compromise? How do you encourage that person to be subservient to the proper authority? It's a difficult challenge for us as a society. That's my understanding of really what's happening to our culture, has been demonized. We had to shed it, as the result of shedding it we grabbed on to concepts and ideas that we may not even fully understand or are not appropriate or disposed of some very valuable philosophies.

COMMISSIONER SHEIKH KAFUMBA KONNEH: Revolution is a process. After some indigenous Liberians at significant numbers, including yourself, got some western education and discover that our culture or tradition had been demonized, what do you think should have been your first objective (unintelligible) refine what has been demonized unified the minds and the hearts of those who claim to be indigenous people before entering political

leadership and don't you also think that because that was not taken into consideration this is where the so-called indigenous government die disgracefully?

THE WITNESS: Well, I think we have to put that in the proper perspective because political leadership in Liberia in a country where the government is so dominant plays a role in whether or not you can even achieve the ends that you speak of. When the president controls the national media because what you're speaking about is a socialization process which has to be done in the media, in the schools, and various places. And freedom of speech is suppressed when the government controls the media, monopolizes the media. When you have all these other issues, and let's go to Masos's (phonetic) hierarchy of motivation. When you have security concerns, when you have basic concerns, what you're speaking about is a higher level motivation which one cannot pay attention to until you really can focus on the lower level concerns of security and those issues. We've had the distractions of these of needing to meet these needs throughout this period that we speak of. So there are those among us that have taken the initiative to do certain things to accentuate the value of the culture. There was a time in Liberia if you played African music you were belittled, if you play African music, wear African clothes (unintelligible). I'm proud of my culture. I demonstrate

that everywhere I go. But in order for us to effectively address the cultural revolution we speak of, we need to address some basic lower level needs as is human psychology. You can't get somebody paying attention to cultural issues when they're running away, someone is trying to grab them and cut their necks off.

COMMISSIONER SHEIKH KAFUMBA KONNEH: As someone who had these ideas in the back of his mind, why did you agree to be a spokesman of an entity that tend to suggest separation of your struggle for (unintelligible)? I'm saying when Nimba Redemption Council from what you say the ideas was a message by two ethnic groups. One, the civil conflict has affected every segment, every tribe, every person in Liberia, and that effort would find a way how to bring to our end this war. Even in the country where you have five ethnic groups you did not involve these people in the creation and the birth of the council. Why did you agree to become part and parcel that would compound divisions and separation and segregation?

THE WITNESS: First of all, the Nimba Redemption Council was not envisioned by people from Nimba. As I said, we were called in by the IGNU government. Guannu served as Minister of State. He was carrying on a policy based upon a request from the peacekeepers to help to facilitate their mission. They chose Nimba territory because of several

reasons. Sierra Leone was not accessible to them as a staging ground for deployment because of what was going in Sierra Leone and RUF and all of that. The Ivory Coast was obviously not available as a staging ground for their operation. What they wanted to do -- the only place that politically would be available was Guinea because Guinea was a member of the ECOMOG coalition. The other objective was to cut off Charles Taylor's supply routes from the Ivory Coast. At the time we were speaking about he had lost -- the MPFL had lost most of Lofa so their objective was to cut off the corridor. So using Nimba County territory was their decision as the enter point into Liberia and they felt that since there was substantial number of Gios and Manos who were fighting with Taylor that if we could reach them and persuade them to switch their loyalties it would help tremendously in facilitating the deployment of ECOMOG and therefore the peace process. Why we didn't include the Mandingos and the Krahns and the other ethnic groups, that was something that if you look at the time we're talking about because of the ethnic manipulations that took place during the war and during 1980 going on to 1990 the Krahns and the Mandingos on the one hand versus the Gios and the Manos on the other hand have been a loggerhead in a situation that turned violent. In the absence of reconciling those issues, I don't think it would have been a

healthy thing to do to try to go from fighting each other and immediately go into a relationship of this nature. I totally don't think that that would have been helpful and the most important component of this is twofold. The peacekeepers wanted to use Nimba territory because it was strategic, we wanted to reach our compatriots, the Gios and the Manos who were fighting for Taylor. Taylor didn't have many Mandingos and Krahs fighting with him, so there was not a major need to persuade them to leave from it. As we espouse a united front as various ethnic groups, I think it's also important to understand that we have to deal with the realities as they are today or as they were then. And that reality was that we needed to reach the hearts and minds of the people from the Gio and Mano ethnic groups who had given their support to Taylor and felt trapped that no one else would accept them.

COMMISSIONER SHEIKH KAFUMBA KONNEH: My last question is that why it is true that in 1985 the elections was reached but there has been said that that what facilitated by the behavior of the full political parties that participated in the election in that Doe claimed to have won 50 point 3 percent, as you said, Unity Party claimed to have won the election, Lab (phonetic) claimed to have won the election and Luke (phonetic) also claimed to have won the same election, and in Liberia you have only

seat for one president. Don't you think that it would have been in the best interest of the nation for the three political parties to say I did not win but this party won so as to give an opportunity to challenge the Doe declaration of winning the election when there were clear-cut evidences of how it was arranged including setting aside the commission itself and creating the 50 new commission to count but each and every one of them claimed to have won the presidential election. What is your view about it?

THE WITNESS: Well, I'm in agreement with you that the conduct was not very helpful and I have to take it one step back to go prior to the elections. Doe was a military strongman. If you look around the world, anytime military strongmen have been defeated in elections it has been with a strong political alliance. And the failure of our Liberia politicians to form an alliance to rally behind one candidate, the failure to put their egos aside is a contributing factor to empowering Doe to do what he did, but it still does not excuse the fact that rigging the election was not the helpful thing for the country. The election was rigged, period. I do believe that one of those four you speak of won the majority of the votes. The fact that we did not have the opportunity to transparently know the results is something that is the responsibility of the government and we cannot shift that blame to the opposition

as much as we may be disappointed in the inability to unite, the historical fact must be recognized.

COMMISSIONER SHEIKH KAFUMBA KONNEH: Thank you.

COMMISSIONER PEARL BROWN BULL: Mr. Witness, first from your statements all given I thought you were also speaking on behalf of the Liberian coup here in your capacity, but I can see second portion that you were talking was explanation and (unintelligible) yourself or clarity on what was in the newspaper. So sitting there I want to get a clarification. I knew your father very well. I knew him because when we came to the United States in the '80s, '85 he was the Minister of Commerce.

THE WITNESS: That was '83.

COMMISSIONER PEARL BROWN BULL: '83 he was Minister of Commerce and I came on a dedication with him. I think we met you, student. I see from what I gather you seemed to be sitting there now as a victim of the civil war and also as an (unintelligible) perpetrator of the alleged perpetrator from the allegations of force and as a survivor of the civil war and the Liberian war continued to want to work towards the development, involvement, politically, socially, economically for Liberia; am I correct?

THE WITNESS: Except to qualify the (unintelligible) because to be given credibility let the allegations come from someone who is a direct victim, not

someone who is using an allegation to score political points to say he did this and this. I can stand here and tell you directly who is responsible for the atrocities that were emitted against me and my family. Let someone come and say Kerper Dwanyen is responsible for this particular action to me, to my brother, to my friend so that can be given credence.

COMMISSIONER PEARL BROWN BULL: Thank you very much. You came -- you were born 1959 and you came to the United States 1978. You stated that you were involved with the UL -- United -- I'm talking about in LU, when you were at LU because you pointed to one of our commissioners that you were at LU during that time and trying to create maybe the consciousness of how the youth or the young people felt about the government at that time which happened to be Tolbert's government, but you came 1978 to the United States of America so, therefore, you were not there for the Rice Riot 1979, April 14; am I correct?

THE WITNESS: You're correct.

COMMISSIONER PEARL BROWN BULL: Okay. Thank you. You came at 19 years old to the United States. Who pay your way to come? Did you come on the scholarship or your parents.

THE WITNESS: My parents.

COMMISSIONER PEARL BROWN BULL: Thank you. Thank

you very much. Sorry for the death of your families and thank you for clarifying. When you decide to be a leader criticisms will come, but I want to advise you the harder those blows -- is just like the wind in a tree, the harder the wind, the stronger the tree. So continue to do what you want to do in the interest of your country. One more question at last. What's your ethnic group, your ethnic background?

THE WITNESS: Gio.

COMMISSIONER PEARL BROWN BULL: Gio. You've been in the United States since 1978; do you have any children born here?

THE WITNESS: Yes.

COMMISSIONER PEARL BROWN BULL: How many?

THE WITNESS: I have three children born here.

COMMISSIONER PEARL BROWN BULL: What would you consider them now if somebody would ask because now we are writing history and a myth in our history and we want to classify these children because since I have -- I'm the chairman for writing the history, I want to make sure I get the recommendations from the Liberians so it won't be my personal view. What will you classify your children as?

THE WITNESS: The reality is that all of us who have had children in this country were those children to go to Liberia they would be of a separate demographic

characteristic. You could almost call them the second coming of the people from America. They are not -- you know, if my son was to go home now and some old man come to him and say, Son, can you give me \$5, he would be shot.

COMMISSIONER PEARL BROWN BULL: Would we call them Americo-Liberians?

THE WITNESS: It would be a characterization that fits those who came before, and that would be accurate, yeah.

COMMISSIONER PEARL BROWN BULL: Thank you very much.

THE WITNESS: Before we take the (unintelligible) I'd like to address a statement by Commissioner Brown Bull on the issue of the accusations that have been made. One of the things that has created a lot of instability in our country is this tendency to make any wild accusation about somebody in the political sphere. We saw it particularly during the Tubman years when the PRO -- they would just look at somebody and just say anything without proof, without a shred of evidence. That is a contributing factor to conflict in our society, and that is the reason why I thought it was important to share that with this commission because I was asked to also share my Diaspora experience. And I'm relating that because it was something that we've done back home and we brought along with us as to say you

can take the man from the bush but you can't always take the bush out of him.

COMMISSIONER PEARL BROWN BULL: Thank you very much. I'm not interrupting because I know you will be coming back for the second time and we need time to enable you to come back. So I'm finished with my questions and the next commissioner may proceed.

COMMISSIONER REV. GERALD COLEMAN: Thank you. Mr. Dwanyen, thank you very much for your presentation. I was very inspired by the frankness I could feel from what you were telling us. So my questions are in three levels. Particularly I'm concerned about three periods of our history and you seem to have been someone connected to all three of them based on the presentation you made. I'm concerned about the root cause of this crisis we had in Liberia. So looking at the first phase, the '79 to '80 phase, you mentioned that you don't believe that Doe's group was really the source of that incident and I tend to share that view, but you also mentioned that the progressives did not have a platform of violence as a means to bring social justice to Liberia, but yet it seems that this became the reality. So our research now tells us where do we go, what was the source of this root violence? So can you give us any hint? You did mention some Jebo as somebody who was an alternative person to have carried out a revolutionary

activity, maybe he has a hint that could tell us a little bit more or do you have anything else you want to hint to guide us in what was the root of that violence at the very beginning? I know you have to protect all of your reality, so do it in a way best, if you think it has to be done confidentially, then you can give it to us later.

THE WITNESS: No, no --

COMMISSIONER REV. GERALD COLEMAN: Second -- do you want me to give you all three or just one at a time?

THE WITNESS: Let's do it one at a time, please. When I said that the progressive did not have a platform for violence to bring about social justice, I was referring to the period leading up to the coup. Okay? Because approaching the 1990 war many of those who were in the progressive movement did actually embrace a platform of violence. The Major Jebo was that -- he's dead, by the way, so you can't ask him. But he, I've been told, was the commander of Doe and Quiwonkpa and all these guys, he trained them and that he was the military leader of the coup who got separated to a different posting at the time and Doe and them actually carried out the coup and then the elephant killer became the elephant owner. That is a trait of our society, by the way, which also undermines, you know, peace and security and peaceful coexistence. So Jebo got killed and that's what I know. Even I don't know if Jebo --

because when you have a coup there is someone that's intended to be the president, and there are a group of people who have the planning capacities who have the financing capacity who build the network to make it possible. And I don't know what the extent is and who all what there is, it's sad that most of the people involved of the 17 are dead, but Jeffrey Bactu (phonetic) is still alive. There are a few of them that are still alive. Those are people that if you speak to maybe they have information that can shed light. You know, after Tolbert was killed who was going to be the president? Was it Jebo, was it somebody else? And that was what I was referring to.

COMMISSIONER REV. GERALD COLEMAN: Thank you. The second phase is the '85 phase where had Doe kept that promise to not run for power there could have been a free and fair election and a new righteous leader could have come forth to lead the country. Suddenly you said there was a change and somebody influenced him. Can you give us a hint as to how this influence took place because this influence and that decision has now become a root cause of the problems after that. Because a way of responding to the Gio attack, making it a tribalistic issue instead of keeping a presidential profile and protecting this country led to a bunch of compounded situations. So can you give me any light on that?

THE WITNESS: Well, I can't give you light as to many individuals who were responsible for influencing him in that direction. The memo that we saw from John Ramsey --

COMMISSIONER REV. GERALD COLEMAN: Do you have a copy of that memo?

THE WITNESS: No, I don't. Leads me to believe that he would be one of those because at the time the conflict that he was trying to deal with in strategizing for Doe to win was this conflict over the basic question of should the military give power to the civilians or not. So it's easy to conclude that he was in favor of Doe perpetuating himself and therefore in order for you to do so you have to defeat your arch rival Quiwonkpa in the order to defeating this is what you have to do.

COMMISSIONER REV. GERALD COLEMAN: Okay. Thank you. Then the third one, the next window of opportunity that we had as a nation to change things was 1997 with the election, but the Liberian people chose to put Charles Taylor into power, a man who had been a root factor from 1990 up to 1997. Then the same people decided to remove him by the same technique of military violence having already seen the past experience. So the question that comes to my mind is: How could this happen? You know, and what can be our lessons now to protect against the repetition? Should we make reforms in our constitution that give qualification

to leaders because presently our constitution has no specific qualification for leadership, just a certain age and a Liberian, but your nature of thinking, your past background, it doesn't care. So could you comment on that from your perspective?

THE WITNESS: I mean one of the fundamental tenants of democracy is that from time to time we may not like but have to uphold and respect is that the people have a right to be wrong. There is nothing we can do or should do to prevent them from being wrong other than giving them information. The situation of the Taylor victory is a very complex one. I've even heard that he won in the BTC precinct. Just a year earlier he was trying to annihilate them. I think there are a number of reasons for that. One factor is that the Liberian people were war fatigued. They believed that if Taylor did not win, the war would continue, so they thought that by giving him victory they will have peace. The other factor is that his opposition, not necessarily political opposition in the campaign but during the war did many things to belittle themselves in the eyes of the public that lead the public to believe that Taylor was this strong man who could bring all of them into the fold. After the Akosombo Accord the ULIMO faction with Roosevelt Johnson and company gave Charles Taylor everything he wanted including the Minister of Justice, the Director of

Police, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Minister of Internal Affairs. They created a situation where the police director who ordered the arrest of the Justice Minister was justified. The Foreign Minister would justify to the international community and the Internal Affairs Minister would justify to the country. So they put themselves in a box and everybody knew that they were selling out to Taylor. When Alhaji Kromah joined forces with Taylor to wage war on Monrovia in April of 1996 it told the country that Taylor is the boss of all of these guys, so that's making Taylor control the rest of them. And, you know, the war that came in 2003, it would be inaccurate to say the same people that voted for Taylor actually carried out the war. It doesn't take a majority to start a war. I think something like 25 people started this war in 1991 when it came across the border. So it doesn't take a majority. So I don't believe that the majority opted for war to remove Taylor. It was brought upon by those who thought the only way back to Liberia is through military action and this is one of the central themes throughout this conflict. The people who started the war in 1989, Charles Taylor, Moses Blah, Prince Johnson, all of these people, they were people who knew if they walked down the streets of Monrovia there would be dead bodies. The people who started the war against Taylor were people that knew that if they walked down the streets of

Monrovia there would be dead bodies. And so they were able to form alliances with countries and individuals who supplied them with weapons. You know, people you say they collect money to buy weapons, people don't have the ability to collect money to buy weapons. The money they collect is only goodwill money. Countries support them with the arms and ammunition that they need.

COMMISSIONER REV. GERALD COLEMAN: In the case of Liberia, who would be some of those countries that you would say helped us?

THE WITNESS: Well, definitely with the Taylor war, you know, that help came from Libya, through Burkina Faso on the Ivory Coast. You can typically tell who is supporting the war by which territory they're using to wage the war. In the case of the other war, they came from Guinea without the complicity of the Guinean government, I don't think those weapons could find their way to Liberia. They were not dropping from planes and fighting, they were coming through territories. And the fact of the matter is that Taylor also created a situation where the countries surrounding Liberia had a self-preservation need to see him defeated. The reason ECOMOG moved into Liberia in 1990 was because it was discovered that Taylor had dissidents from most of the west African countries. And the plan that Muammar Kadafi had was take Liberia, establish a beachhead

and we'll move to these other countries and we started manifesting Sierra Leone. He had Mohammed Turi (phonetic) the son of the late secretary with him as one and the plan was to destabilize Guinea and they actually did attempt that a few times. So the Guinean government had a self-preservation interest in dethroning Taylor.

And so a central theme to this whole conflict is that the foreign policies of Doe and Taylor as it relates to our neighbors created insecurity for them. We remember back in the '80s when Doe sent troops to the Sierra Leone border in response to a newspaper article. So we have to be serious about good relations with our neighbors.

COMMISSIONER REV. GERALD COLEMAN: So in the final conclusion, in this case this is still impunity to the law, so would you recommend that such things be left alone in the case that the other country was defending itself in this perception of what our bad motivation ordered or should TRC seek some kind of reparation or other situation from those countries that brought attack orders? In the case, for example, Doe, he was a legitimately elected president but yet countries united together to support his overthrow. In the case of Taylor he was a legitimately elected president yet countries abroad put money and support together to support the overthrow. So in analyzing it as we look and say they were defending their perceptions, is it

right, is it wrong, you know, what would be your thinking and feeling as a Liberian leader here?

THE WITNESS: I think we have to be practical in the case of the Guinean government, there was provocation. Taylor forces did attack Guinean villages at one time. In the case of Libya there was no provocation. In the case of the Ivory Coast there was no provocation. In the case of Burkina Faso there was no provocation.

And before I forget, I'm going to mention France. The French component of this -- the iron mine in Nimba, in the (unintelligible) days he wanted any (unintelligible) who would extract that ore to build a train track to Kanapee (phonetic) such a long ways and said, No, listen, it's a railroad from here to Buchanan. It's not feasible for us to build this railroad, so we'll have to take it through Liberia. He didn't want to do it, but Lasina Contu (phonetic) finally agreed to do it and formed this venture called Nufergie (phonetic). And France wanted the iron ore, so they thought by investing in Taylor it would give them access to the ore and throughout they provided diplomatic political and military cover for Taylor at the same time they were taking out the blood diamonds, they were taking logs from Liberia, the iron ore was being shipped to France and France did everything to give Taylor cover. In fact, even at some point a French journalist also got involved

because there is a link from Ashanz (phonetic) France international which is their version of the AP or the UPI in which they quote that eyewitnesses said that the Nimba Redemption Council people committed atrocities, that reporter was based in Senegal and as eyewitnesses were quite likely you also uncovered where MPFL cause witnesses led the public to believe that the AFL committed the Kadica Camp (phonetic) massacre when now it's come out that these witnesses are now free to speak, that it was actually done by the MPFL. So the French have been collaborators giving him political cover, public relations cover and trying to demonize anyone that went against them.

COMMISSIONER REV. GERALD COLEMAN: So then you're recommending to us that for those that have no alibi in a sense or justification we should seek reparation for the Liberian people from those nations?

THE WITNESS: Yes.

COMMISSIONER REV. GERALD COLEMAN: Thank you very much.

VICE CHAIR DOLOPEI: Thank you for your presentation. In your explanation you said two-thirds of your life was in -- you said two-thirds of your life was spent in the States; am I correct?

THE WITNESS: Yeah.

VICE CHAIR DOLOPEI: And you came to the States

in 1978; how was your life before you came here?

THE WITNESS: Well, I mean, relative to the rest of the country I had a very good life. My father was educated, he was industrious, he was a lawyer, he made a decent living for us. It could have been much better had it not been for a lot of oppression, both economic and political. This is a man who spent a lot of resources running for the senate three times, one of three times, but the position was given to someone else who the government felt comfortable with. He lost his job as superintendent of the county because he disagreed with Tolbert on some policy matters. The first one was when the Delanpo (phonetic) strike in 1973. The Justice Minister went into Nimba County and sent to the barracks for soldiers to crush the strike. And the commander came to him because as superintendent of the county he was the commanding chief of the forces and he said, First of all, I don't take orders from the Justice Minister, I take them directly from the president or the minister of Local Government. And, secondly, I don't see the justification for sending soldiers to war and crush a labor dispute and Lanpo (phonetic) has not told us that there is any crime or violence going on.

So then after he lost his job they suppressed him economically. He started a logging company and first before he started a logging company he leased land to

(unintelligible) company which was, you know, operated -- Ed Padmore who was a nephew of Tolbert from his wife's side one of the owners and operators, so he leased the land and Tolbert's lumber company never paid a dime and he chased after them for ages. It wasn't possible for him to collect that. I remember one time he was going after \$25,000, and in 1974, 25,000 was a lot of money. Then he joined with an Italian to start his own company and as soon as they got their first assignment they went and Tolbert's lumber company filed a protest that my father's company trespassed on their land. Imagine a man who was politically unpopular, has a falling out with the president, has his own forest but he leaves that to go and trespass on the president's nephew's forest. So the forestry development people came into investigate and the finding was that no, he didn't trespass, but the trees are all Tolbert's lumber company's concession. Basic translation is you own the land, you don't own the trees. There is no such thing in Liberia. If you own the land, you own everything from six feet below and up. It is the mineral rights six feet and deeper that you don't own. So there was a lot of that economic oppression that caused our lifestyle to not be what it was in terms of truly achieving the potential. That's why I spoke of economic and political decentralization of power.

VICE CHAIR DOLOPEI: So you had a fairly

comfortable life?

THE WITNESS: Yes.

VICE CHAIR DOLOPEI: And if you worked hard in Liberia at that time you could live that kind of life?

THE WITNESS: Yes.

VICE CHAIR DOLOPEI: Okay. Then you came to the States in 1978. At what point did you start to get involved in the situation in Liberia in the States?

THE WITNESS: I've always been deeply interested in what's happened in my country. In the early '80s, I started an import/export business. I used to go to Liberia and do business. I've always been a frequent -- I've always been deeply interested as an observer and as a community activist as far as the issues in Liberia. The component of the agitation of the war in the '80s was something that I did not participate in, didn't feel it was the right thing to do. In fact, most people who actually participated in those things did it in secrecy, it was after the fact. When the war was launched a lot of this information began to be revealed to me.

VICE CHAIR DOLOPEI: So at what point did you start to get involved?

THE WITNESS: In what way? When you say get involved, I've always been involved.

VICE CHAIR DOLOPEI: Like you said, in 1980 you

were not involved in the -- 1980 you were not involved in that?

THE WITNESS: No.

VICE CHAIR DOLOPEI: Okay. So which one were you involved with?

THE WITNESS: Are you talking about -- there were several levels of involvement, so please --

VICE CHAIR DOLOPEI: The different (unintelligible). We first had a Rice Riot, were you in any way involved in that?

THE WITNESS: No. I was here then.

VICE CHAIR DOLOPEI: You were here?

THE WITNESS: Yes.

VICE CHAIR DOLOPEI: Then they had an associate year that had people taken from (unintelligible) carried to Liberia and they were part of that Rice Riots.

THE WITNESS: Okay.

VICE CHAIR DOLOPEI: Were you a part also of that organization at that time?

THE WITNESS: No. I was in Michigan then and our organization was not an affiliate at that time.

VICE CHAIR DOLOPEI: Okay. And then we came to the coup which you said the military leader was Jebo; am I right?

THE WITNESS: Yes, you're right.

VICE CHAIR DOLOPEI: Were you involved in that?

THE WITNESS: No.

VICE CHAIR DOLOPEI: Then we came to the wars, the different wars, were you involved in any of those?

THE WITNESS: No. The only involvement I had is what I explained to you with the Nimba Redemption Council.

VICE CHAIR DOLOPEI: Nimba Redemption Council was one of those fighting forces, they were a fighting force that also committed atrocities in the country, so I want to repeat one question that Commissioner Bull asked. As you sit here, can you consider yourself by the fact that you supported by agreeing to be this picker for that council supported that into the country you can be known as a perpetrator?

THE WITNESS: I did not have command or control responsibilities. I can take responsibility if someone was affected, that an organization that was affected that I was affiliated with caused that impact and I can, you know, definitely take responsibility for that affiliation, but the command and control of that organization rested with the government, the interim government. The purpose of that association of that organization was to launch along with ECOMOG, that's what we were told, that's what I believed, that's why I signed on, that we would be supporting a deployment of ECOMOG. The fact that ECOMOG did not deploy

was not known to me at the time I made those statements. I was here outside of all of the spheres of what happened at the time the actions actually did happen and our views of what should have been done was misled. So I don't know if that answers your question.

VICE CHAIR DOLOPEI: Okay. You said that most of the (unintelligible) were activities in the country were supported first by maybe the Nimba organizations here, then the Mandingo's organizations here and then the Congo; did you in any way support any one of those organizations?

THE WITNESS: Besides the Nimba Redemption Council, no.

VICE CHAIR DOLOPEI: Thank you so much.

COMMISSIONER JOHN H.T. STEWART: Thank you very much, Mr. Dwanyen. As you will be able to understand this is an exercise intended to provide clarity, emanate the truth, and expose whatever inconsistencies, fallacies that are contained in the narratives of our history. In that regard, I would like to ask you what did the command structure, the command and control structure of the NRC, Nimba Redemption Council, what did it look like, who were the top commanders, where exactly in Liberia it operated, if it did operate at all, and -- yeah, stop there for now.

THE WITNESS: There was a board which was a sort of decision-making body that had Joseph Guannu, Johnson,

Harry Yuan, Taro Yungo (phonetic), and late General Farngalo. We then had an executive committee that was chaired by Joseph Dahn Kuan. You had -- you had Peter Kerbay, Yarsuo Weh -- Dorliae, Johnson Gwaikolo, and there were a few others whose names are not coming to mind right now. Those were the -- the prominent actors and I was on that committee as well reporting to the board. On the military side the person who was to coordinate them to work with ECOMOG was Cooper Karkor.

COMMISSIONER JOHN H.T. STEWART: Cooper?

THE WITNESS: Cooper.

COMMISSIONER JOHN H.T. STEWART: Full name?

THE WITNESS: Cooper is the first name and
Karkor,

K-A-R-K-O-R.

COMMISSIONER JOHN H.T. STEWART: He was the field commander?

THE WITNESS: Yeah, he was the leader of -- yeah.

COMMISSIONER JOHN H.T. STEWART: The military ring?

THE WITNESS: Yeah, and then you have Lombe, L-O-M-B-E-I, and the last name is Bher, B-H-E-R, he was a deputy to him.

COMMISSIONER JOHN H.T. STEWART: The last name you say?

THE WITNESS: B-E-H-R. And the second -- you had two part question, right?

COMMISSIONER JOHN H.T. STEWART: Yeah.

THE WITNESS: They were straddled along the border in the forest awaiting the arrival of ECOMOG so that they could link up with the ECOMOG deployment, and when the announcement was made and there was no ECOMOG, they began to fish them out and the positions were discovered is what I've been told. And so that's when they were engaged in the combat with the --

COMMISSIONER JOHN H.T. STEWART: MPFL?

THE WITNESS: With the MPFL, yeah. And most of that happened around the Dula area in the forest behind Yickaba (phonetic) and places like that.

COMMISSIONER JOHN H.T. STEWART: Where did this body get the training?

THE WITNESS: They were ex-fighters from the MPFL, they all were ex-fighters. Some of them had trained with the MPFL in Libya.

COMMISSIONER JOHN H.T. STEWART: Where did they get the arms and ammunition?

THE WITNESS: They really didn't have any. They were waiting for ECOMOG deployment, as I said.

COMMISSIONER JOHN H.T. STEWART: So how were they able to engage the MPFL in combat?

THE WITNESS: I think they had a few single battles and things like that, but in terms of military hardware, heavy weapons and stuff like that, they didn't have it. They bought a few pieces from Taylor's forces who came onto the side, but they were very lightly armed. They were not prepared for combat at all.

COMMISSIONER JOHN H.T. STEWART: What would you say was their strength?

THE WITNESS: I don't have any direct hold on the number that would -- I think the ones that had arms might not have been more than a dozen.

COMMISSIONER JOHN H.T. STEWART: And --

THE WITNESS: Amos Koukou would be a good person to ask that question. Amos Koukou or Zylus Wigulan (phonetic) those were two people who I know were sent from Monrovia along with Yasura Balu (phonetic).

VICE CHAIR DOLOPEI: (Inaudible.)

THE WITNESS: It's spelled Z-U-A-G-E-L-E, I think, yeah.

COMMISSIONER JOHN H.T. STEWART: You say the operations were along the -- was in the Dula area along the Liberian Guinean border?

THE WITNESS: I think Dula is probably closer to the -- to the (unintelligible) yeah.

COMMISSIONER JOHN H.T. STEWART: And what would

you say was the extent to which they were able to capture, if I may say so, territory in Liberia and for how long did they hold on to such territory?

THE WITNESS: I don't know that they captured any territory to hold on to really. That has not been the information that has come to me.

COMMISSIONER JOHN H.T. STEWART: Did they take any prisoners?

THE WITNESS: Not that I know of.

COMMISSIONER JOHN H.T. STEWART: In the area operated did they capture any village or towns?

THE WITNESS: When they -- when they were attacked, I think they did launch a counterattack on Dula, you know, that part I know about Dula, but I don't know that they captured or held it. Because from what Amos is saying that the engagement lasted for about a week and then they felt they couldn't stand it and took off and they fled.

COMMISSIONER JOHN H.T. STEWART: How long would you say they were operational until they petered out?

THE WITNESS: About a week.

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

COMMISSIONER OUMU SYLLAH: Thank you very much for your testimony. Your disengagement with the MPRC, at what point did that come about --

THE WITNESS: You mean --

COMMISSIONER OUMU SYLLAH: Nimba Redemption Council, NRC I mean.

THE WITNESS: Shortly after my arrival in Monrovia about late March. I think it was sometime in April or May when we found out for sure there would be no deployment. We were asked to -- we were sort of given some sense that it was possible to continue the effort for the deployment of ECOMOG and so Guannu and I took the trip to Guinea to sort of continue that dialogue and see if it was still possible to have the ECOMOG deployment take place. So in terms of that, shortly after that period when we were convinced ECOMOG was not going to take that initiative which was -- that decision was made clear right around the Kotinu (phonetic) Peace Accords.

COMMISSIONER OUMU SYLLAH: In your testimony you also said that Guannu and Sawyer asked ECOMOG to give some money --

THE WITNESS: That's what I was told.

COMMISSIONER OUMU SYLLAH: -- and they were going to handle the situation. Is that why ECOMOG didn't collaborate with the Nimba Redemption Council?

THE WITNESS: No. What I found after the fact is that when ECOMOG had changed their mind that they couldn't do it because of the logistical reasons, then they came up

and said we have plan B and this is our plan B.

COMMISSIONER OUMU SYLLAH: You also talked about Border Patrol, the death squad that was used during Taylor regime; do you remember the commander or the name of some of the people on Border Patrol.

THE WITNESS: It was the one person that that name stood out and that was named and my understanding is it came with about 15 to 20 people that he had in his entourage when they did the attack.

COMMISSIONER OUMU SYLLAH: What was the name of that person?

THE WITNESS: Who?

COMMISSIONER OUMU SYLLAH: The name, the one person name.

THE WITNESS: The Border Patrol.

COMMISSIONER OUMU SYLLAH: The individual.

THE WITNESS: Border Patrol is an individual, that's his fighting name. That's his fighting name is Border Patrol. His real name is Mendi. If you say Border Patrol, people will know who you're talking about.

VICE CHAIR DOLOPEI: (Inaudible.)

THE WITNESS: Yeah, there was an individual who was a leader, one of the leaders of Taylor's death squad. If you heard the name Paul Vaye, but I was not told that Paul Vaye was in this group. I was told that Border Patrol,

Mendi, a/k/a Border Patrol was the leader of the group that did the attack. M-E-N-D-I, I think that's --

COMMISSIONER OUMU SYLLAH: So he never had a real name anyway?

THE WITNESS: When people talk about, everybody that knows him knows him as Border Patrol.

COMMISSIONER OUMU SYLLAH: Thank you very much for coming.

CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Thank you very much (unintelligible). Did we gather from you that the NRC was the creation of the IGNU Government?

THE WITNESS: Yes.

CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: So the funding came also from the IGNU Government?

THE WITNESS: Yes.

CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: How convinced were you that ECOMOG has signed onto this arrangement and decided to support it?

THE WITNESS: At the time we had that meeting in December after the time I left Liberia I was convinced, I didn't have any reason to dispute what they had told me.

CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: What convinced you?

THE WITNESS: We saw enough to convince us that -- we saw sufficient evidence that ECOMOG was involved. We have a number of countries, a lot of these things are

what you consider classified information and I think it would not be in the interest of Liberia's relationships with these countries and my own to say I spoke to this person, that person, that person. I was convinced. Let's say we were convinced this was a plan that --

CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: In other words, you had direct engagement with the brass of the peacekeeping force at the time.

THE WITNESS: I'm not going to comment on that.

VICE CHAIR DOLOPEI: Can you give that (unintelligible).

CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: You don't have to answer that. Okay, Mr. Witness, thank you very much for coming and sharing these moments of reflections and perspectives with us. Again, we extend to you sympathy for the death of your father and close relatives. Before you leave, is there anything else you finally want to say?

THE WITNESS: Yes. I want to first thank all of those that have made this possible, you, the Commission, the Advocates for Human Rights. I want to say that our country has experienced a terrible ordeal in which it's hard to find a person who has not been victimized. Even some of the worst characters that we can think of were at some point also victimized, especially the child soldiers. We want to say that in order for us to move forward we have to be

serious about accountability. There is no question of allowing this culture of impunity to continue. We stand and anticipate your recommendations and I hope that each and every one of you when you do your recommendations, I hope that each and every one of you would also make it a personal passion to see that those recommendations are implemented. Our country depends on it. This is the best vehicle we've been given. We have to make it work, but the centerpiece has to be accountability. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Thank you very much.

REPORTER'S CERTIFICATE

I, Vikki L. Thompson, Court Reporter, do hereby certify that the foregoing pages of typewritten material constitute an accurate verbatim stenographic record taken by me of the proceedings aforementioned before the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Liberia on the 14th day of June, 2008, at the time and place specified.

DATED: July 31, 2008

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