

**FBI/DSS Deployment to Freetown, Sierra Leone & Monrovia, Liberia
RE: Allegations of Possible al Qaeda Involvement in Conflict Diamond Trade**

Background: As a result of their continuing investigation into war crimes and atrocities committed in the course of the civil war in Sierra Leone, investigators for the Special Court for Sierra Leone (SCSL) were made aware, during interviews, of information related to al Qaeda involvement in the "conflict diamond" trade. Specifically, these allegations related to presence of al Qaeda operatives in Monrovia, Liberia and the Kono diamond region in Sierra Leone. These allegations were previously addressed through an extensive FBI review of previous reporting and an investigation conducted in the region during the first half of 2003.

In late 2003, the SCSL again raised concerns about the possibility of al Qaeda presence in Monrovia, Liberia. Investigators for the court advised previously unavailable information pertaining to al Qaeda presence may now be accessible in Monrovia in light of the ouster of CHARLES TAYLOR's regime. As a result of congressional interest in these allegations, the FBI, in conjunction with the Diplomatic Security Service (DSS) sent a team led by the FBI Counterterrorism Division's Fly Team to the region from February 1 to February 17, 2004, to investigate these allegations.

- I. Upon its arrival in Freetown, Sierra Leone, the team interviewed key personnel.
 - A. At Amembassy Freetown, the team interviewed the Ambassador, Deputy Chief of Mission, Defense Attache, Regional Affairs Officer, and Regional Security Officer. All of the individuals were aware of the allegations, but none believed them to be factual, and none were aware of any information substantiating them.
 - B. The team interviewed the Commissioner of the Sierra Leone Police Force and the Chief of the Intelligence Unit for Sierra Leone. Both men were aware of the allegations, and both believed them to be without merit.
- II. The team then met with investigators for the SCSL.
 - A. The Chief Investigator, ALAN WHITE, was deployed to Monrovia, Liberia and was initially unavailable.
 - B. The team met with WHITE's deputy, GILBERT MORISSETTE, and the Senior Criminal Intelligence Analyst, WAYNE BASTIN.
 1. They advised they had no personnel available for interview with relevant information, however, they provided written documentation of information provided by key witnesses for the SCSL. This documentation provided no new information pertaining to the investigation.
- III. The team met with WHITE upon his return from Monrovia.
 - A. WHITE advised he had interviewed five individuals at the Royal Hotel in Monrovia, all of whom identified individuals they had seen in the hotel with photos he showed them taken from the FBI's Top 22 Terrorist web page, and the wanted posters for these individuals also taken from the FBI web site.
 1. The Royal Hotel was previously doing business as the Hotel Boulevard, and was alleged to be used by the TAYLOR regime as a site for illicit

diamond traffic.

- B. WHITE advised he did not feel the FBI could properly investigate the allegations without traveling to Monrovia.
 - C. WHITE also made available another SCSL witness WHITE believed may have had information pertaining to al Qaeda presence in Liberia and Sierra Leone.
 - 1. This individual was interviewed and identified a photo of Top 22 Terrorist SHEIKH AHMED SALIM SWEDAN in a photo spread. When questioned about this identification, the individual responded it looked like someone he had seen before, but denied ever seeing the photo before, or having been shown any photos by SCSL investigators. However, WHITE advised he had shown the individual the same photograph minutes before being interviewed by the team.
- IV. Based on WHITE's information, the team traveled to Monrovia on February 10, 2004.
- A. At Amembassy Monrovia, the team again interviewed key staff, including the Deputy Chief of Mission, Defense Attache, Regional Affairs Officer, and Assistant Regional Security Officer. The Ambassador and Regional Security Officer were TDY. All of these individuals were also aware of the allegations, but again none believed them to be factual, and none were aware of any information substantiating them.
 - B. The team interviewed the embassy's local guard force commander, a retired U.S. Marine Corps Lt. Colonel who had been in Monrovia for nine years. He was aware of rumors about al Qaeda presence, but advised they were simply unsubstantiated rumors that his over 300 local employees put no stock in. Additionally, he advised CHARLES TAYLOR was well known to be strongly against any outside influence over his control of the illicit diamond trade in Liberia.
 - C. The team was introduced to a senior member of the Lebanese community in Monrovia. On condition of strict anonymity, this individual advised that the Lebanese community had heard rumors of al Qaeda presence in Monrovia, but these rumors were circular, and unsubstantiated. The individual was shown photo spreads containing photos of the al Qaeda operatives alleged to have been in Monrovia, with negative results.
 - D. The team then interviewed the five individuals WHITE had interviewed at the Royal Hotel.
 - 1. Three of these individuals recognized photos in the photo spreads shown by the team, and identified them as being the same photos they had been shown by WHITE. They stated WHITE had described the photos he had shown them of the Top 22 Terrorists as people the SCSL was looking for in relation to the civil war. Therefore, the hotel staff associated the individuals in the photos as being former rebels, not international terrorists.
 - 2. The other two individuals interviewed did not identify any of the Top 22 Terrorist photos in the photo spreads.
 - 3. The team also interviewed the Head of Housekeeping, who had been

employed by the hotel since 1996. She had not been previously interviewed by WHITE, and recognized none of the individuals in the photo spreads as people she had ever seen in the hotel. 4. None of the personnel interviewed believed there had ever been any terrorist presence in the hotel, and associated the photos shown by WHITE not with terrorists in general, or al Qaeda in particular, but with former Sierra Leonean or Liberian rebels.

The FBI's Fly Team will finalize all documentation related to this investigation and ensure it is filed with the appropriate operational units.