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Continental News

Libya's Haftar 'leaves' Moscow talks without deal

Libya's Gen Khalifa Haftar, whose forces are fighting the UN-backed government in the capital Tripoli, has left talks in Moscow without signing a deal, according to media reports. Meetings involving Gen Haftar and the Government of National Accord (NA) began on Monday.

Both Russia, which backs Gen Haftar, and Turkey, which supports the GNA, were behind efforts to reach a truce. The deal was aimed at ending nine months of fighting around the capital.

The violence began in April when Gen Haftar announced an offensive to seize the city from the UN-backed authorities. Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has warned his country would "teach a lesson" to Gen Khalifa Haftar if he resumed his attacks on GNA forces in Tripoli. The role of international actors in the Libyan conflict has come into focus in recent months, with Turkey passing a controversial law to deploy troops to help GNA forces fighting in Tripoli.

Lesotho's first lady wanted by police

Police in Lesotho are looking for Maesaiah Thabane, the wife of the prime minister, for questioning in connection to the killing of his estranged wife two years ago.

Mystery surrounds Ms Thabane's whereabouts since Friday when a court issued a warrant for her arrest after she failed to appear for questioning. She was given until end of Monday to

Meanwhile, Gen Haftar is also backed by Egypt, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and Jordan, raising fears that oil-rich Libya could become the theatre of a regional conflict.

Over the weekend, German Chancellor Angela Merkel said that Berlin would host another round of Libyan peace talks to build on the efforts by Turkey and Russia later in January. A ceasefire between Gen

Haftar's LNA and forces loyal to the UN-backed government in Tripoli was announced on Sunday, although they later traded blame over reported breaches. Leaders from both sides then travelled to Moscow for talks with Russian and Turkish intermediaries on Monday, aimed at reaching a longer term agreement.

GNA head Fayed al-Sarraj signed the agreement on Monday, while Gen Haftar requested more time to review



present herself to police.

Armed police, who went to search for her at the official residence of Prime Minister Thomas Thabane on Friday, did not find her there.

Government spokesperson Nthakeng Selinyane has told the BBC's Focus on Africa programme that the police are ready to ask for international help to find her.

Lipolelo Thabane was shot dead while travelling home

with a friend, two days before the inauguration of her husband in June 2017.

She and Mr Thabane had been living separately since 2012 and were going through a prolonged divorce.

Police chief Holomo Molibeli has alleged in court papers that a mobile number belonging to the prime minister was called from the site of her murder, linking him to the killing. BBC



Copyrights: Getty Images: First Lady Maesaiah Thabane

the deal.

He left Moscow without signing the deal, Russian news agency TASS quoted a Foreign Ministry statement as saying.

Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu responded by saying that Gen Haftar's actions showed "who wants war and who wants peace". To some, the speed of developments over the last few days for the prospect of an open-ended ceasefire between Libya's warring factions indicated that something was amiss in Moscow. There were many questions after a fragile ceasefire came into force on Sunday: how would it translate into a longer-term one, what was it based on, and could

Presidents Erdogan and Putin successfully pull off what Europe had arguably failed to do, as it idly stood by and floundered over the objectives of a long-delayed conference to be held in Berlin later this month? In the end, Libya's eastern general, who is backed by Russia, walked away from the agreement. Time and again, with Libya's multiple "small wars" over the years, those leading its military and political conflicts have demonstrated that forced deals by regional proxies and the international community are either rarely agreed or adhered to. The eastern general appears to be betting on his other allies in the region - but with an angry Putin left at the altar, one wonders if he has overplayed his hand.

Burundi uncovers 4,000 mass graves

More than 4,000 mass graves have been found in Burundi following an investigation by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission into conflicts since independence in 1962.

The commission, set up in December 2018 to shed light on ethnic tensions that have plagued the nation for decades, said it had identified the names of 142,505 people killed since independence.

Infamous massacres took

forgiveness between the perpetrators and the families of the victims to "forge a peaceful future for Burundi's generations", he added.

On Monday, a mass grave, with up 270 bodies, was opened to the public in the main city of Bujumbura.

It is believed to contain the remains of those killed in clashes following the assassination of Melchior Ndayaye, the country's first



CVR Image caption: One of the mass graves was opened to public on Monday

place in 1965, 1969, 1972, 1988 and 1993 when politicians are accused of inflaming tensions, turning the minority Tutsi and majority Hutu communities against each other. "Many more mass graves are yet to be found because people who know about them are afraid to talk or are traumatised," commission chair Pierre-Claver Ndayicariye said, when he presented the report to parliament.

Finding out the truth of what happened would lead to

elected Hutu president, in 1993.

His killing triggered a brutal civil war between the Tutsi-dominated army and mainly Hutu rebel groups. More than 300,000 people died in the 12-year war.

Some people visiting the grave in Bujumbura were able to identify people they knew from the clothes and IDs found.

"People were crying, there was shock," commission deputy chair Noah Clément Ninziza told the BBC.

EDITORIAL

GoL should come clear on demonstrations

A JOINT STATEMENT of the Ambassadors of ECOWAS, the European Union, the United States, and the UN Resident Coordinator in Liberia issued here over the weekend on Liberia's National Discourse in the New Year following the 06 January peaceful assemble on Capitol Hill stresses the need for the Government of Liberia to urgently clarify a comprehensive notification or application process for large demonstrations, including what qualifies as individual, small, or large group protests, timelines, permissible locations, restrictions on what can be brought to events, etc.

THE JOINT STATEMENT notes that multiple recent requests by large citizen groups in the country seeking to demonstrate in central Monrovia underscore the need for such direct clarity from the government, it emphasizes that transparent notification or application procedures for permits to hold large demonstrations, coupled with apolitical and content-neutral adjudications of said applications, can ensure that future events, which are normal and healthy in a democracy, efficiently allow protestors to gather, express grievances, and present petitions to the government.

HOWEVER, IT CAUTIONS that any restrictions on the right of peaceful assembly should be consistent with the Constitution of Liberia and Article 21 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which states "The right of peaceful assembly shall be recognized. No restrictions may be placed on the exercise of this right other than that imposed in conformity with the law and which are necessary in a democratic society in the interests of national security or public safety, public order, the protection of public health, or morals or the protection of the rights and freedoms of others."

WE BELIEVE THESE concerns raised in the joint statement by the foreign ambassadors are very important in not just strengthening civil liberty, free speech and democracy in Liberia, but enhancing our governing system.

WHEN PEOPLE ARE aggrieved about the state of affairs, they should be allowed to call their leaders to attention, and one way of doing so is by peaceful protest or assembly as guaranteed in the Constitution.

THE JOINT STATEMENT continues, "We note with regret for all present on Capitol Hill on 6 January, that a protest ended abruptly after a day in which approximately 2,000 demonstrators had peacefully assembled and security forces had displayed commendable professionalism in executing their duties. While it is understandable why the Liberian government would find it untenable for a large group of demonstrators to block the primary route through the government quarter endlessly, to disperse the crowd without reasonable audible warning increased the risk of harm to citizens."

IT ALSO UNDERSCORES the importance for individuals in all democracies to be able to exercise their freedoms of expression, petition, and peaceful assembly, saying, "We note that, if individuals in Liberia believe that their rights have been abridged, there are possible judicial remedies accessible under Liberian law. Review of administrative decisions by the courts can serve as an important mechanism in a democratic society to refine and clarify the interpretation of domestic laws and Constitutional rights. Citizens should also feel that their concerns can be heard and deliberated through their elected representatives in the legislature."

RATHER THAN JUST denying citizens' requests to peacefully assemble and protest to petition their leaders, we call on the Weah administration thru the Ministry of Justice to say in clear terms what it would require to protest in the country, including timelines and specific locations for protesters to assemble.

WE HOPE THAT the authorities would pay heed to the call from the foreign diplomats to save the country from future embarrassment and calamity. It is unhealthy for a democratically-elected government and its aggrieved citizens to always haul and pull on matters that affect their peace and happiness.



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COMMENTARY

Trump's Near Miss with Iran

The drone strike that killed Qassem Suleimani not only brought the US and Iran to the brink of war; it exposed for all to see the disarray of US foreign policymaking under President Donald Trump. A majority of Americans think the episode has left the US less safe, and the incompetence displayed by Trump's team suggests they may be right.

WASHINGTON, DC - The recent tense, dangerous exchanges between the United States and Iran have revealed a great deal about US President Donald Trump's management of his foreign policy. The main conclusion is that he doesn't have one. Weighty decisions are made on the basis of gut reactions and often-contradictory impulses - for example, simultaneously seeking agreement and threatening the use of force. If there is any overarching vision or philosophy, it is that he wants to avoid another long, costly war. And yet he almost blundered into one anyway.

When he campaigned for president, Trump promised to bring US troops home. He has sometimes declined to respond to provocations, particularly by Iran-backed groups around the Middle East. This lulled the Iranians - and almost everyone else - into thinking that he would continue to turn the other cheek. Eventually, some on the right wing of his Republican Party, and, most important, Fox News commentators, were calling him weak. This is a dangerous thing to say about Trump: his presidency shows why an insecure person should not be elected to that office.

Another characteristic of Trump's conduct of foreign policy is that he is currently surrounded by a coterie of mediocrities. There is not a far-ranging mind, creative strategic thinker, or independent spirit among them. Trump is now on his fourth national security adviser in three years, his second secretary of defense, and second secretary of state; numerous other key foreign-policy jobs remain open. The lesson for others is clear: the only way to last with Trump is not to challenge him. This expectation of blind deference is all the more problematic when the president knows little and lacks curiosity.

Mike Pompeo, the bumptious secretary of state, is widely viewed as the most accomplished sycophant among Trump's top advisers. Pompeo, a former member of the US House of Representatives, is also a talkative alumnus of the Iran "regime change" caucus in Congress. We learned after the fact that Pompeo had been pressing Trump for some time to order the assassination of Qassem Suleimani, the commander of Iran's Quds Force, which the US has designated a foreign terrorist organization. According to one report, when Trump finally did decide to order the killing of Iran's second-most-important political leader on January 3, "The new team was cohesive and less inclined than its predecessors to push back against the president's wishes."

In the absence of a declaration of war against Iran, the killing of a foreign official - by a drone strike on Iraqi territory - was possibly illegal. But such niceties do not perturb Trump. The evidence is that Trump's decision was taken without consideration of the possible consequences. The national security system established under Dwight D. Eisenhower, designed to prevent such reckless measures, is

broken to non-existent, with ever-greater power placed in the hands of the president. If that president is unstable, the entire world has a very serious problem.

In fact, all-out war with Iran was narrowly avoided because the Iranian leaders were shrewder than Trump. The greatest loss of life in this dangerous episode was caused by the tragic downing of a Ukrainian civilian flight that had just taken off from Tehran's airport, killing all 176 people on board. The plane had been allowed by Iranian air authorities to depart about three hours after Iran had fired missiles at Iraqi military bases housing US troops. This carefully targeted retaliation - no one was killed - for Suleimani's death, plus back-channel messages carried by the Swiss, signaled that the Iranians wanted to stop the dangerous escalation. They would lose a war with the US, but would almost certainly inflict serious damage on US assets, including through cyber attacks. A relieved Trump accepted the Iranians' message and followed suit.

A rattled Congress demanded administration briefings on the rationale for killing Suleimani, and the lack of a clear one backfired on Trump and his national security officials. Conflicting and shifting rationales were offered, and the administration failed to persuade lawmakers that an "imminent" threat had forced the president's hand. That, coupled with the administration's characteristic contempt for Congress and its members' constitutional duty to hold the executive branch accountable and the legislature's sole constitutional authority to declare war, led to a new congressional movement to curb the president's war-making powers in the case of Iran. But the House and the Senate (which is controlled by Trump's Republican allies) are unlikely to agree on an approach, much less devise a measure that would survive a presidential veto.

Meanwhile, the relationship between the US and Iran is worse than ever, with the US having lost more since killing Suleimani. Iran announced that it would no longer observe limits on its nuclear program, lowering the estimated time it would take to develop a warhead from almost 15 years when Trump took office to just five months. The US is coming under increasing pressure to withdraw its troops from Iraq - Suleimani's longtime goal. The US military's training of Iraqi forces to fight the Islamic State - the reason the US was invited back into Iraq during Barack Obama's presidency - is now on hold. Instead of withdrawing troops from the Middle East, as he promised, Trump has now committed thousands more to the region.

Meanwhile, inevitably, Trump and his acolytes are claiming victory and accusing critics of being sympathetic to Iran and even partial to the vicious Suleimani. Currently, there are signs that the public isn't buying it. A majority thinks the episode has left the US less safe, and they may be right: though the hostilities between the US and Iran - as well as its numerous proxies - have subsided, few believe the lull will last.

O-PED

By Barry Eichengreen

Democratizing the ECB

Recent tensions within the European Central Bank's Governing Council have underscored the need to manage disagreement better. The status quo, whereby the president presents a policy decision as a consensus, after which one or more Governing Council members may issue a dissenting statement, makes everyone look silly.

AMSTERDAM - The European Central Bank is undergoing a changing of the guard: a new president, a new chief economist, and two new Executive Board members. And the ECB's new leadership is facing a contentious year in 2020.

For starters, former ECB President Mario Draghi's last policy meeting was marked by disputes over quantitative easing and the president's role in decision-making, underscoring disagreement within the Governing Council (comprising the Executive Board and national central bank governors) about monetary strategy. Should the ECB retain its point target for inflation but make that target symmetrical, in contrast to the present "below but close to 2%"? Or should it abandon all hope of coming close to 2% and settle for 1.5%?

Then there is the assertion by Draghi's successor, Christine Lagarde, that the ECB should focus on climate change, even though the issue is not part of the central bank's mandate (and even though monetary policy is not an obvious instrument for tackling it).

It is timely, therefore, that the ECB has launched a comprehensive review of its policy strategy. Frank discussion of alternatives, buttressed by systematic staff analysis, can only help. But while pondering alternatives is all well and good, the idea that a strategic review should produce a consensus on targets, instruments, and strategies is misguided. Even well-informed people can disagree about the nuances of policy, because, as often happens, they weight different variables differently. Consensus can reflect groupthink, and groupthink can cause policy committees, which are strengthened by a diversity of views, to overlook important risks.

The question is how to manage disagreements. The status quo, whereby the president holds a press conference and presents the policy decision as a consensus, after which one or more Governing Council members may issue a dissenting statement, makes everyone look silly. It undermines the legitimacy of policy, because the ECB provides only partial and conflicting information about decision-makers' views and the rationales underlying them.

Recently, Ignazio Visco, the governor of the Bank of Italy, proposed that the Governing Council should vote on consequential decisions and announce the results. The Fed, the Bank of England, the Bank of Japan, and the Sveriges Riksbank, among others, already do so. Dissent, when it occurs, shows that policymakers are engaged in a healthy exchange of ideas. When their votes are announced, they feel pressure to explain why they have chosen to side with the majority or dissent from it.

Central bank independence is tenable only when policymakers are accountable for their actions. And they will be accountable only if they are compelled to defend their decisions in the court of public opinion. If transparency is essential for accountability, then the release of votes, together with minutes - and, with a delay, transcripts - is the ultimate form of transparency. Today, with central bank independence under threat, it is all the more essential.

Moreover, announcing votes has other advantages. It helps to signal future monetary policy. In other words, it acts as a sort of forward guidance, which is an essential tool in a low-interest-rate environment. Votes are also a source of information about policymakers' macroeconomic outlook, which is helpful for investors.

The argument against releasing votes is that the ECB's Governing Council is numerically dominated by central bank governors who are appointed nationally, and who thus will feel pressure to support policies that are in the national interest, rather than that of the eurozone. This is different from the situation of other central banks. In the United States, Reserve Bank presidents are selected by directors residing in their districts. But some of those directors are appointed by the Federal Reserve Board - that is to say, nationally. Since the enactment of the Banking Act of 1935, which reformed the Fed, it has been understood that members of the Federal Open Market Committee vote with the interests of the entire US economy, not their home region, in mind.

Evidently, this is not the attitude of Europe's national leaders, who worry that ECB policy affects different countries differently. Were their votes released, Governing Council members would be more likely to cater to narrow national priorities. Otherwise, they would risk replacement by more pliable lackeys.

Such cynicism underestimates Europe's central bankers. They may have made mistakes, but they have not shown a readiness to bend to popular opinion in order to retain their jobs. As important as their vote, moreover, is their ability to convince their colleagues of the validity and integrity of their arguments. Blindly obedient central bankers who lack this integrity will be unable to persuade their colleagues. They will find themselves isolated and consistently in the minority.¹

Voting, it is said, is a duty in a democracy. Unlike in democratic elections, however, those who set the ECB's monetary policy should not only vote, but also reveal how they cast their ballots.

OPINION

By Hanan Morsy

Addressing Africa's Skills Mismatch

Africa's youth bulge is a major asset, with the potential to drive growth and development for decades to come. But if the continent's young people are unable to find jobs suited to their education and skills, it could become a serious liability.

ABIDJAN - While much of the world struggles with rapid population aging, Africa is experiencing the opposite trend. With 60% of the continent's population under the age of 25, African leaders must ensure not only that a sufficient number of quality jobs are available, but also that young people receive the education and training necessary to fill these positions. And when it comes to the latter imperative, much action is needed.

Mismatches between available jobs and the skills and qualifications of the workforce are widespread across Africa. According to a recent African Development Bank study of ten countries - Benin, Republic of Congo, Egypt, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda, and Zambia - a majority of young Africans are undereducated for their jobs, and nearly one-third are under-skilled. Moreover, young people who are over-skilled or overeducated for their current positions are underpaid and frustrated by their limited career opportunities and wasted or deteriorating talents.

Undereducated youth do enjoy a wage premium, but it comes at the cost of job satisfaction. The underskilled suffer from the pressure of trying to keep up with the requirements of their job, and from the constant fear of losing it. Eventually, underskilled youth suffer "scarring," or lasting damage to their economic circumstances and prospects. They accept mismatched jobs out of desperation rather than waiting, unemployed, for more suitable positions that may never come.

Given the magnitude and persistence of job-skill mismatches, and their adverse effects on individuals and economies, reducing them should be a top priority for African governments. The first step is to improve access to education.

Though many African countries have made significant progress in boosting education rates in recent years, many young people, especially girls and rural dwellers, receive only limited schooling, or none at all. Furthermore, even 38% of employed youth never attended school for economic reasons, and another 12% because there was no school nearby.

Governments can make a difference by investing in educational infrastructure: building new schools and renovating old ones, improving working conditions for teachers, and upgrading school equipment, including information and computer technology. At the same time, they should eliminate primary-school fees, limit the costs of secondary and tertiary education, and finance scholarship programs.

African governments must also do a better job of supporting young people in their transition from education to employment. As it stands, very few young Africans, employed or not, receive job-seeking advice from the government or employment agencies.

To improve young workers' prospects, governments should help to disseminate information on available jobs, and create incentives (such as tax breaks or subsidies) for firms to offer internships and apprenticeships to graduates. Where such arrangements already exist, governments should strengthen their impact by broadening their reach and mandate, advertising them more widely, and investing in monitoring and impact measurement.

Finally, for such programs to work, young graduates need the knowledge and skills that the labor market demands. African employers often complain about the difficulty of finding candidates with specialized training in the so-called STEM disciplines (science, technology, engineering, and math), as well as complex problem-solving and communication skills. And nearly 40% of those surveyed did not consider their education useful in finding employment.

The African Development Bank has taken the lead in creating opportunities for African youth in ICT by providing financing to Carnegie Mellon University Africa in Rwanda, which was established in 2011 to serve as a center of excellence and a regional ICT hub for East Africa. This institution, in collaboration with the Rwandan government, has established an innovation incubator to help students create their own businesses.

Addressing the mismatch problem will require African governments to foster more demand-driven, forward-looking education and skills training. For example, they can create forums for companies to communicate their needs regularly to educational and training institutions, which would then adapt curricula accordingly. The result would be a new generation of attractive local candidates, thereby mitigating a severe constraint on firms' ability to expand output and create jobs.

Africa's youth bulge is a major asset, with the potential to drive economic growth and development for decades to come. But if the continent's young people are unproductive, frustrated, and desperate, it could become a major liability that undermines economic prosperity, social progress, and even political stability. The outcome in the coming years will depend on the policies that African governments adopt now.

ARTICLE

ARTICLE

From Up To Down After 24 Months – Does Vice President Jewel Howard-Taylor Have A Future In CDC?

By Martin K. N. Kollie

Activist and Columnist, martinkerkula1989@yahoo.com

Two high-ranking officials of CDC, Bong County Superintendent Esther Walker and CDC Chairman MulbahMorlu, are on record for narrating through leaked audios about a hardcore conspiracy or sinister plot to remove H.E. Jewel Howard-Taylor as Vice Standard Bearer of CDC and Vice President of Liberia. Does this billboard of an impending CDC Retreat substantiate or validate such startling revelation?

The Congress for Democratic Change (CDC) was birthed in 2004 and certificated by NEC as a political party in July 2005. Ambassador George M. Weah agreed to lead CDC as its political leader while pronouncing his candidature for 2005 presidential election at Monrovia City Hall in Sinkor on November 24, 2004.

After losing two (2) successive democratic elections in 2005 and 2011, CDC knew it could not come to power if it stood alone in 2017 general and presidential elections. Conceiving a convenient political marriage with NPP and LPDP was its last option and best strategy to guarantee victory. And it worked so perfectly for them under a grand coalition (CDC, NPP, and LPDP). After 11 years in opposition, a tripartite coalition dubbed and styled “Coalition for Democratic Change - CDC” was born on November 2, 2016 and accredited by NEC on December 19, 2016.

On December 28, 2016, Senator George M. Weah of Montserrado County was elected as Standard Bearer of this grand Coalition and he picked Senator Jewel Howard-Taylor of Bong County as his running mate. The Coalition (CDC, NPP, and LPDP) had three (3) major objectives for coming together, namely:

- 1) To deliver Liberia and Liberians from a failed Unity Party (UP) led Government;
- 2) To respond to the cries of Liberians by reducing the number of political parties;
- 3) To merge shared values and similar political philosophies or ideologies.

In order to ensure a more cordial collaboration and guarantee a glorious future for this new Coalition, a Governing Council was formed by LAW. According to “The Article of Collaboration”, the Governing Council is the highest decision-making body in the absence of Convention whilst an Executive Committee runs the day to day affairs of the Coalition:

A) Structure of the Governing Council:

- 1) CDC - Standard Bearer George M. Weah (1st in command)
- 2) NPP - Vice Standard Bearer Jewel Howard-Taylor (2nd in command)
- 3) LPDP - Political Leader Alex Tyler (3rd in command)
- 4) Three Chairmen of CDC, NPP, and LPDP
- 5) Three Secretary Generals of CDC, NPP, and LPDP
- 6) Three Eminent Members from each Collaborating Party

Even though VP Howard-Taylor sits #2 at the level of the Governing Council, but the photos of LPDP Political Leader Alex Tyler and CDC Chairman MulbahMorlu are bigger and placed or positioned above her on this Retreat Billboard.

Before 2017 elections, VP Jewel Howard-Taylor’s photo was placed neck-to-neck with President George M. Weah on almost all campaign billboards. What has changed in 24 months? It seems like the Congress for Democratic Change (CDC) of Pres. George Weah has forgotten so soon that it took the Jewel’s factor to secure victory in 2017 elections.

The new billboard for CDC Retreat has further confirmed public speculation of a prolonged impasse between Weah and Howard-Taylor. It has somehow validated past revelations of a grand conspiracy to axe JHT as VSB of



CDC and VP of Liberia. The latest revelation from MulbahMorlu via a leaked audio coupled with this new billboard says a lot. I wonder why Morlu is not being called in for investigation or why an impeachment proceeding has not even begun for President Weah up to now? But this is what happens when a nation has a rubber-stamped and compromised Legislature.

A few questions to ponder over:

a. Even though NPP is second in command of this Coalition, why place LPDP Political Leader Alex Tyler and Chairman MulbahMorlu’s photos above Vice Standard Bearer and Vice President Jewel Howard-Taylor’s photo?

b. Why make CDC Political Leader George M. Weah, LPDP Political Leader Alex Tyler and CDC Chairman MulbahMorlu’s photos far bigger than NPP Political Leader Jewel Howard-Taylor’s photo this time around when this was never the case in 2017?

c. During 2017 Campaign, Jewel was up, neck-to-neck with Weah on almost all campaign billboards, banners, flyers, stickers, etc. What has brought her down especially below Tyler and Morlu on CDC’s new billboard? Isn’t this an affront or a disdain to VP Howard-Taylor?

d. The theme of this impending retreat is “Celebrating the President for sustaining the peace for 2 years while undertaking massive developmental initiatives”. Why celebrate only the president and not the vice president too or even the entire government since it is teamwork? Why not choose this theme “Celebrating the CDC-led Government...” which covers everybody?

The theme suggests that everything and all things evolve with and revolve around ex-Soccer Star George M. Weah. This is a glaring semblance of FASCISM. Is President Weah a black fascist? The theme of this retreat coupled with his statues built or being built has made us to believe so. How can President Weah even be celebrated for 2 years of peace when hardship, corruption, and bad governance remain increasingly prevalent under his administration?

Thousands of Liberians recently protested against these vices on September 24, 2018, June 7, 2019, and January 6, 2020. In 2014, UN officials said, “Peace means dignity, well-being for all, and not just absence of war”. Former UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon said, “Peace means access to education, healthcare and essential services for all.” What kind of PEACE will CDC be ‘celebrating’ President Weah for sustaining’ when over 70,000 civil servants are yet to be paid for months and US\$25m cannot be accounted for?

President Weah cannot be a champion of peace when he has hypocritically refused to guarantee JUSTICE for over 250,000 innocent Liberians who lost their lives during Liberia’s brutal civil carnage. How can President Weah be an Ambassador of Peace when he is playing politics with the establishment of a War and Economic Crimes Court? The entire CDC Retreat slated for February 14-15, 2020 is just another political gimmick and fiasco. I think CDC should be celebrating Weah for increased hip

hardship - high inflation - high unemployment - zero foreign direct investment - liquidity crisis - drop in enrollment as a result of hike in tuition and fees - food insecurity - depreciation of local currency - high tariffs on imports - lack of donors’ confidence - violation of our constitution - abuse of women, girls, children and minorities - mysterious deaths - police brutality - crackdown on critics through thuggish groups - patronage and partisanship - lack of basic social services - plan to remove VP Taylor - etc.

The crises confronting CDC and George Weah are just too far from ending. Key among those is how Pres. Weah and his closest confidants, including Min. Samuel D. Tweah, Min. Nathaniel McGill and NPA Boss Bill Tweakway, have hatched a plot to oust VP Taylor. JHT has become a major target of repression, ostracization and censorship. Credible information says she has even been denied a huge portion of her budgetary appropriation and other incentives since last fiscal year (2018/2019). The Executive Committee, the Diaspora Chapter, and the Bong County Chapter of NPP have all raised alarm against such mistreatment.

Inside sources privy to information confided in me and said, “H. E. Chief ‘Ponofalo’ Dr. Jewel Cianeh Howard-Taylor has not been going to work and attending major governmental functions for 3 weeks now due to due to high threat levels and inadequate support such as: No official armored vehicle for almost a year - Default or non-payment of leased property - Delay in processing checks and non-remittance of budgetary appropriation - Refusal to consult her before critical decisions are made or taken - and Lack of respect and courtesy to her office from especially from fanatics of CDC and pro-Weah protégés.

VP Jewel Howard-Taylor has really been playing her cool in past times. She has not even been attending CDC political rallies (e.g. campaign rallies of 2019 Montserrado Senatorial and Representative By-elections). The feud in CDC seems to be deepening as Liberia’s economic crisis worsens. Is NPP’s Jewel a packed car or more than a packed car? The latter would suffice.

Beyond this end, does Chief ‘Ponofalo’ Dr. Jewel Howard-Taylor really have a future in CDC ahead of 2023 elections? It is likely that the Coalition for Democratic Change may severely crack if she is ousted. History is not too far from documenting this CRACK which puts the Liberian people in a better position of reclaiming their socio-economic and political destiny. It will be more advantageous for Liberia and Liberians if CDC crumbles under its own weight ahead of 2020 and 2023 elections. The struggle to redeem Liberia and Liberians remain unabated.

About The Author: Martin K. N. Kollie is a Liberian activist, columnist, and an emerging economist who hails from Bong County. He is a former student leader at UL and former standard bearer of SUP. He currently lives in exile and can be reached via martinkerkula1989@yahoo.com

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MORE HEADLINE NEWS

Audit the legislature

-Sen. Dillon writes plenary



By E. J. Nathaniel Daygbor

Montserrado County Senator Abraham Darious Dillon writes the plenary of the Liberian Senate, calling for a forensic audit of the entire Liberian Legislature.

A communication dated January 13, read in plenary inside the chambers, on Tuesday, January 14, under the signature of Sen. Dillon says the financial history of the first branch of government should be audited.

"I extend my compliments and have the honor to request the endorsement of plenary to institute a comprehensive

audit of the Liberian Legislature. There is no history to the best of my recollection of this body been audited, since 2006 up to date," Dillon asserts in his communication addressed to the President Pro-Tempore of the Liberian Senate, Albert Chie.

According to him, in order to ensure fiscal probity, a sound financial system, accountability and transparency at the legislature, it is the ardent hope that, that body will give his request due consideration and institute said audit.

The call for audit is an old choral by new lawmakers

entering the Liberian Legislature; on May 19, 2019, some lawmakers stressed the importance of protest, including Representatives Vincent S. T. Willie (Independent) of Grand Bassa County District #4), Francis S. Dopoh of Unity Party, River Gee County District #3, Robert FlomoWomba of UP, (Bong County District #4), Lawrence Morris (Independent, Montserrado District #1) and Cebee C.D. Barshell (Unity Party, Montserrado District #3).

They stated that auditing the House of Representatives is not just to promote accountability and transparency, but to place the House in a better position to ably exercise its oversight responsibility by holding the Executive and other sectors accountable.

"I support the issue of auditing the House because that will not only bring improvement in our economy but will give a clear understanding as of the workings of the House and the way forward," said Rep. Barshell.

"For over a year now, I still don't have a clear understanding, concerning [the] benefits and salaries of this House because there is no much understanding."

Also on January 16, 2014, Maryland County Representative, Bhofal

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CoP objects to oil blocks sale

By Ben P. Wese

Plan by the Weah administration to sell nine oil blocks in the country risks encountering stiff opposition here as the pressure group, Council of Patriots (CoP) organizers of the January 6, 2020 protest vows to mobilize Liberians against the sale.

CoP Chairman Henry Costa alleges that President George MannehWeah has 50 percent share in each of the blocks that could raise serious issue of conflict of interest.

He made the allegation in Monrovia on Sunday, January 12, in a news conference, while responding to claim by the Liberia Immigration Services (LIS) that he forged his travel documents to enter Liberia from abroad.

The talk show host says in coming weeks, the CoP will start a door-to-door campaign to educate Liberians about the planned deal by the government.

Recently, the Government

of Liberia through the Liberia Petroleum Regulatory Authority (LPRA) announced sale of several oil blocks, beginning next licensing round.

A statement from the LPRA says the decision followed an unsuccessful ratification of

negotiated petroleum sharing contracts in 2014, which climaxed the last round of bidding process.

The LPRA discloses the next round of bidding, expected to commence in April 2020, will

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LEC under pressure

...As citizens threaten actions

By Ben P. Wese

The Liberia Electricity Corporation (LEC) seems to be under serious pressure from Liberians here for some alleged bad deeds and theft allegedly carried out in various communities around Montserrado County by individuals believed to be employees of the corporation.

During a talk show held on local broadcaster Truth FM Tuesday, 14 January, a lot of the callers on the show expressed frustration at the way field workers of the Corporation allegedly collect money from community dwellers without providing electricity for them over a long period.

Some of the callers claim they have written communications to authorities at the LEC, seeking solutions to problems on their power supply lines, but the corporation would not send its team in the communities to address residents' problems.

Out frustration, some callers have threatened to take action against the Corporation if he continues to do business as usual, as many of them go without power.

They lament that rather than addressing their problems, some employees of LEC would go into their communities whenever there, collect monies and leave without providing them with the service that they paid for.

Abraham Konnah, a resident of Jacob Town Community in Paynesville narrates that for the past months, his community has been out of electricity.

Konnah explains further that they have written series of letters to the management of the Corporation before it sent a team into the community.

He continues that upon the arrival of the LEC team in the community, residents were allegedly told to pay the amount of US\$300, noting that the head of the community took the responsibility to collect the money from each of the houses within the community.

"Since we collected the money and gave it to the team headed by a guy only identify as Bobby. The guys told us they were going to bring the

transformer the next day, it has been two months now these guys are yet to bring the transformer we paid for," Konnah alleges.

He adds that every time the community people call the number left by the alleged LEC workers, somebody would answer and insult the callers.

Mr. Wolor from Johnsonville Community also called in, narrating that residents of his community had problem with their power line before the Christmas season.

According to him, they decided to inform the LEC management about the problem facing the community, following which a team of LEC personnel arrived in the community and did their usual checking and left.

He explains that it was realized that all meters that were on the poles that the guys from the LEC had climbed on got missing, lamenting that since that time, nobody else has gone back to fix their line.

"Let me be real to you guys in studio and the LEC management, we the members of our community have already resolved to chase and seize any LEC properties that enter our community because every day you hear on the radio power theft but these same LEC guys are the real criminals that [are] causing serious problem for us the Liberian people," Mr. Wolor, an elder of the Johnsonville community disclosed.

For his part, Montserrado County District 6 Representative Samuel Enders notes that from the look of things, it seems that things will not materialize anytime soon for the power project for which grounds have been broken in his district.

He notes that the power project supposed to run from ELWA Junction to the Roberts International Airport.

But Representative Enders notes that he will write a formal communication to the House Plenary in order for the House to summon the LEC management to explain why its employees are carrying on these bad deeds within various communities, promising to make that communication public.—Edited by Winston W. Parley

MORE HEADLINE NEWS

Mansion sees flaw in INCHR's report

By Winston W. Parley

The Executive Mansion here has denounced a report by the Independent Human Rights Commission (INCHR) which claims that state securities' allegedly used excessive force against peaceful protesters that assembled on 6 January on Capitol Hill in follow up of prior demands made to President George Manneh Weah's government.

Presidental Press Secretary Isaac Solo Kelgbeh told a regular press briefing Tuesday, 14 January in Monrovia that some people only write something that their sponsors want to hear, as he insists that using teargas and water cannon following failed negotiation with protesters could not amount to excessive force.

"... You report exactly what your reporter in the field sends to you. So if the INCHR or whatever you want to call it, were not privileged to have a decent person giving them report from the field, they were being misled. And when they are misled, they are held accountable for their own action," he says.

Mr. Kelgbeh notes that there was negotiation with the protesters both by the very human rights organization and the state securities in finding way for them to relocate their cooking from the corridor



between the Capitol and Executive Mansion to the back of the Ministry of Gender.

He notes that using teargas and water cannon was the only thing that the police could have done following failure of the negotiation.

Mr. kelgbeh adds that "some of our people" only do the kind of report that their sponsors would want for their survival.

"Look, some our people they only write something for the report their sponsors want to hear. So if your sponsors want to hear negative things, every time you only try to look at the negative aspect and that's how they get something, that's how they survive, so it's not strange,"

he says.

Kelgbeh explains that besides subsidy that government gives the human rights organization, it writes projects to get the support of its sponsors.

He notes that other countries are flourishing while Liberia still lacks behind due to undermining others since the country's founding.

"If you want this country to progress, if you want this country to grow, do not work with George Weah because he's George Weah; but work with him as the president of Liberia - somebody who wants to develop this country," he says.

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Save the Children donates to Dawah Ummah of Liberia

The charity Save the Children International (SCI) Liberia identifies with the United DawahUmmah of Liberia, donating assortment of food and non-food items valued US\$22,608.00 after last year's fire disaster at the institute that left 27 persons

predominantly children dead.

The victims were Muslim children studying Arabic at the Bassa Town Quranic Recitation Center in Paynesville in September 2019.

Two survivors from the disaster were taken to John F. Kennedy Hospital in Monrovia

where they were treated and subsequently discharged.

Making the presentation recently on behalf of SCI at the United DawahUmmah of Liberia Mosque in Sinkor, Monrovia Health Coordinator, Jacob F. Tengbeh expressed sympathy to the bereaved families for the death of their children and relatives.

He said Save the Children recognizes the importance of child protection for which it has provided fire prevention and first aid training to students of the United DawahUmmah of Liberia besides the donation. Tengbeh believes that students, who benefitted from the training, would serve as ambassadors in fire prevention.

The two days exercise was conducted in collaboration with the Liberia National Fire Service and Liberia National Red Cross Society.

Receiving the items, Sheikh Mohammed Mustapha Bold,



MORE HEADLINE NEWS

Cop objects

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affect blocks within Harper Basin, Maryland County, southeast Liberia.

The 2019 amendment to the New Petroleum Law triggered a re-demarcation process, resorting into nine (9) blocks within the Harper Basin and 24 blocks within the entire Liberia Basin. The Harper Basin, which covers nine blocks from LB-25 to LB33, will be tendered during the 2020 licensing round.

The statement says this is a watershed moment for Liberia and the LPRA is excited to reach an agreement with all parties, including TGS and NOCAL in promoting Liberia's offshore average and attracting investments that would support for the Pro-Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development (PAPD) under the leadership of President George Manneh Weah.

It notes the Government of Liberia made a shrewd and progressive decision, through a robust reform process to provide efficient institutional governance system, maximize revenue from potential petroleum resources, and promote citizens' participation.

The LPRA continues that the reform, besides slump in oil prices and the Ebola crisis, resorted to temporary

dormancy within the sector. But after the passage of the New Petroleum and Reform Law of 2014, and the setting up of the LPRA, Government is now in a position to proceed with the tendering process.

In a meeting held between the bankrupt National Oil Company of Liberia or NOCAL, LPRA and TGS (the geophysical company hosting Liberia's offshore seismic data and rendering technical support), it was unanimously agreed that all parties have established the need for capabilities and internal mechanisms to ensure Government conducts a successful bid round to attract investors.

Meanwhile, a formal announcement on the actual licensing data in 2020 will be made shortly by President Weah, based on recommendation from the LPRA, working in concert with NOCAL and TGS.

Liberia had sold several oil blocks during the former Sirleaf administration but the ex-regime said deposits found did not meet commercial value, and the NOCAL became insolvent under Mr. Robert Sirleaf, son of Madam Sirleaf, and she took full responsibility under her watch. -Editing by Jonathan Browne

Audit the legislature

Cont'd from page 6

Chambers, requested the General Auditing Commission (GAC) to audit the National Legislature in order to account for resources allotted to that august body over the years.

The intent, Dr. Chambers said, is to provide a high degree of transparency and accountability in the operations of the first branch of the Liberian government.

According to him, since the inception of the former Ellen Johnson Sirleaf-led government at the time, no agencies had been able to conduct audits on money and goods used by the Legislature.

Chief Imam of the United DawahUmmah of Liberia, lauded SCI for the gesture. He said the foundation, which manages four centers here, is intended to educate children.

Sheikh Bold noted that it is part of his group's role to contribute to the development of Liberia through education.

Items donated include 104 bags of 25kg rice, 52 cartons of washing soap, 51 cartons of vegetable oil (20 liter), 40 bags of children used clothes, 25 pieces of first aid kits, 25

As such, "it is pivotal that a holistic audit is carried out in order to change public perception about lawmakers [and the Capitol Building]."

Chambers, now Speaker of the House, had maintained that auditing the Legislature would encourage other spending agencies of government to conform to the tendency of being accountable to the state, but these calls fell on deaf ears, as the leaderships on Capitol Hill both past and present seem not willing to submit to financial best practices. -Editing by Jonathan Browne

pieces of fire extinguishers (4kg), 40 pads, 40 cartons of copybooks, 40 packs of HB Pencils and 10 pieces of rechargeable solar lights, among others.

Save the Children International is the world's leading independent organization for children with a mission to inspire breakthroughs in the way the world treats children, and to achieve immediate and lasting change in their lives.

Français

Mme Taylor aurait boycotté la séance d'ouverture ?

Il semble que les relations entre le président George Manneh Weah et la vice-présidente Jewel Howard Taylor sont loin de s'améliorer, à en juger par l'absence lundi 13 janvier de la vice-présidente à l'ouverture de la 3e session ordinaire du parlement libérien, en dépit de sa qualité de présidente du Sénat libérien.

Les relations entre les deux dirigeants n'ont jamais été au beau fixe depuis leur prise du pouvoir il y a deux ans, le président Weah étant plaint de ce que Mme Taylor aurait voyagé à l'étranger à son insu, sur fond de rumeurs non authentifiées selon lesquelles l'ancienne première dame aurait l'ambition de devenir présidente du Libéria. Mme Taylor a maintes fois démenti ces rumeurs, les qualifiant d'infondées.

Cependant, à la fin de l'année 2019, la vice-présidente Taylor n'a pas fait mystère de sa colère face à la réduction considérable de son budget annuel par le pouvoir exécutif.

C'est avec stupéfaction

que le public a constaté lundi l'absence de la vice-présidente lors de la session conjointe du parlement qui portait ouverture officielle de la 3e session ordinaire de la 54e législature, où le président Weah s'est adressé aux membres de la Chambre des représentants et du Sénat.

Conformément à l'exigence constitutionnelle qui veut que l'Assemblée législative reprenne ses

travaux le deuxième lundi du mois de janvier de chaque année, la direction du Capitole, sous la houlette du président de la chambre des représentants, B. H. F. A. Chambers, et du président temporaire du Sénat, Albert Chie, et les membres du parlement se sont réunis en présence des chefs des missions étrangères, des partenaires au développement

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Le patron de CT Com Liberia s'en prend au ministre de l'Information

Le président-directeur général (PDG) de Kool FM et CT Com Liberia Inc., M. Christopher Hayes Onanuga, s'est dit choqué de constater que « le ministère de l'Information ne fait pas grand-chose pour résoudre les problèmes croissants auxquels il est confronté, à part lancer une campagne de

diffamation contre de sérieuses institutions médiatiques ».

Le bureau du ministre Nagbe a été contacté, mais le personnel s'est refusé à tout commentaire, comme quoi le ministre n'était pas disponible.

M. Christopher Hayes Onanuga a récemment

déclaré lors d'une conférence de presse à Paynesville que le ministre de l'Information, Lenn Eugene Nagbe, et son ministère ont délibérément décidé de ralentir le traitement des dossiers de certaines maisons de presse afin de les empêcher de se faire agréer à temps.

Il a affirmé que « la campagne de diffamation » du ministre Nagbe est dirigée contre certaines institutions crédibles qui sont considérées à tort ou à raison comme des critiques du régime actuel.

M. Onanuga, en sa qualité d'homme d'affaires et responsable des médias au Libéria, a fait part de son intention de dénoncer tous les maux qui gangrènent le régime actuel et le ministère de l'Information, qui, selon lui, s'est transformé « en ministère réactionnaire ».

M. Onanuga a saisi l'occasion pour démentir certaines allégations selon lesquelles il serait en possession de biens appartenant au gouvernement, il serait



Min. Lenn Eugene Nagbe

Weah exhorte les législateurs à faire de l'année 2020 une année productive

Le président George Weah a exhorté les législateurs, qui sont de retour de congé, à venir avec une vigueur renouvelée, une forte détermination, un engagement sans relâche et un esprit dévoué pour faire le travail du peuple libérien. "Alors que vous revenez pour commencer cette 3e session, j'espère ardemment que vous reviendrez avec une vigueur renouvelée, une ferme détermination, un engagement implacable et un esprit dévoué pour faire le travail du peuple libérien", a-

lesquelles les relations entre les deux personnalités ne sont pas bonnes.

Il s'est félicité des parlementaires pour avoir accepté de revoir leurs salaires à la baisse. "Pour la toute première fois dans l'histoire du pouvoir législatif, vous avez fait preuve de courage, de sagesse et de détermination en réduisant la masse salariale du gouvernement, et nous vous en félicitons", a déclaré le président Weah.

Le président Weah a indiqué



t-il déclaré lundi 13 janvier au début de la 3e session de la 54e législature.

« Vous aurez besoin de toutes ces caractéristiques pour faire de 2020 l'année la plus productive depuis que la 54e législature a commencé ses fonctions », a-t-il ajouté.

Bien que sa vice-présidente, Jewel Howard Taylor, qui est la présidente du Sénat, n'ait pas fait le déplacement pour prendre part à la cérémonie d'ouverture de la 3e session ordinaire du parlement, M. Weah n'en a pas fait mention dans son discours. Il n'a même pas prononcé son nom, ce, sur fond de rumeurs selon

qu'il reste néanmoins encore quelques projets de loi qui nécessitent leur attention et leur action urgentes, afin que le gouvernement puisse continuer à progresser.

« De mon point de vue, cette année 2020, qui marque le tournant de la décennie, est l'année la plus critique de mon mandat. C'est l'année où nous consoliderons nos gains et lancerons le Libéria vers le haut et vers l'avant sur une plate-forme solide de politiques et de programmes pratiques qui commenceront à redresser notre économie », a poursuivi le président Weah.

impliqués dans le blanchiment d'argent et aurait privé l'Etat de certaines recettes. Il a qualifié ces accusations de mensongères.

Selon lui, le ministre Nagbél aurait accusé de certaines choses sans aucune preuve. Il s'est demandé pourquoi il n'a pas été arrêté depuis son retour au pays s'il était vraiment impliqué dans le blanchiment d'argent ou d'autres actes, comme le prétend le ministre.

Il a exhorté le ministre Nagbél à se concentrer plutôt sur la façon dont il peut

propager adéquatement les politiques du gouvernement et de cesser de fournir de fausses informations sur son institution qui est une entreprise dument agrée.

A.M. Onanuga a soutenu en outre que le ministre Nagbél n'a rien fait de bon en tant ministre de l'Information depuis sa nomination. Il a indiqué que, le moment venu, il prendrait les mesures appropriées « contre le ministre Nagbél si il ne parvient pas à prouver ses informations fausses ».

Français

Mme Taylor aurait boycotté

et des membres du gouvernement Weahpour assister à l'événement historique qui marquait l'ouverture de la session ordinaire. Pourtant, la vice-présidente, qui devrait, elle, prononcer un discours lors de la cérémonie, était totalement absente. Pour certains, il s'agit là d'une protestation de la part de l'ancienne première dame contre la réduction de son budget.

C'est après avoir attendu longtemps et vainement la vice-présidente avant la montée officielle du drapeau national dans l'enceinte du Capitole lors de la cérémonie lundi que les membres des deux chambres du parlement se sont rendu compte que le numéro deux du régime en place ne serait pas de la partie.

A en croire les spéculations qui s'en sont suivies au sein



de la maison du parlement parmi les législateurs et certains hauts fonctionnaires influents, la vice-présidenteJewel Howard Taylor aurait délibérément boycotté la session en guise de protestation contre la réduction de son allocation budgétaire.

Contacté au téléphone par ce quotidien, le secrétaire du bureau de presse de la vice-présidente, Richmond Neufville, a expliqué que sa patronne avait adressé un courrier au président temporaire du Sénat pour lui faire part de son indisponibilité.

M. Neufville a fait savoir qu'il serait préférable que le président temporaire du sénat en parle, car lui-même n'a pas été autorisé de discuter du contenu de la communication avec les médias.

Interrogé également sur

l'état de santé de la vice-présidente et à la question de savoir si elle était en déplacement, le chef du bureau de presse de la vice-présidence a répondu que la vice-présidente Taylor se portait bien et quelle était dans le pays.

A noter que lors de la cérémonie, le sénateur Albert Chie a révélé que « la vice-présidenteJewel Howard Taylor ne pouvait pas assister à la cérémonie en raison de problèmes d'urgence ».

Mais concernant la prétendue communication de la vice-présidente, le bureau du président temporaire du sénat s'est refusé à tout commentaire. Le chef du personnel s'est contenté de dire que son patron était indisponible car il était en train de déjeuner avec le chef de l'Etat dans la rotonde du Capitole. Il a aussi promis qu'il mettrait à la disposition

de ce quotidien une copie de la communication.

Selon certaines informations, depuis environ cinq mois, le personnel du vice-président n'a pas touché son salaire.

Depuis l'ascension au pouvoir de la Coalition pour le changement démocratique, les relations entre le vice-président Taylor et le président Weah n'ont pas été bonnes.

La Coalition pour le changement démocratique est une alliance de trois partis politiques dont le Congrès pour le changement démocratique du président George MannehWeah, le Parti national patriotique de la vice-présidente Jewel Howard Taylor et du Parti Démocratique du Peuple de l'ancien président de la chambre des représentants, Alex Tyler.

COMMENTAIRE

Trump échappe de justesse à une collision avec l'Iran

Par Elizabeth Drew

WASHINGTON, DC - Les récents échanges tendus et périlleux entre les États-Unis et l'Iran en disent long sur la gestion de politique étrangère du président américain Donald Trump. La principale conclusion, c'est que cette gestion n'existe pas. Les décisions les plus lourdes de conséquences sont prises sur la base de réactions instinctives et de pulsions souvent contradictoires, qui consistent parfois à rechercher un accord tout en menaçant d'user de la force. Seule vision ou philosophie globale de Trump, il s'agit d'éviter une nouvelle guerre longue et coûteuse. Or, le président américain et sa maladresse ne sont pas passés loin d'en déclencher une tout récemment.

Lors de sa campagne présidentielle, Trump a promis de ramener les troupes américaines à la maison. Il a parfois refusé de répondre à des provocations, notamment de la part de groupes soutenus par l'Iran au Moyen-Orient. Ceci a donné aux Iraniens - comme à beaucoup de monde - la fausse impression que Trump continuerait de tendre l'autre joue. Finalement, plusieurs acteurs du Parti républicain, et plus important encore certains commentateurs de Fox News, ont commencé à parler d'un président faible. Qu'il est dangereux d'affirmer cela de Trump : sa présidence démontre combien une personne aussi peu sûre d'elle ne devrait jamais être élue à la tête du pays.

Autre caractéristique de la conduite de Trump en politique étrangère, le président est aujourd'hui entouré d'une équipe de médiocres, qui ne compte aucun esprit visionnaire, aucun penseur stratégique créatif, ni aucun cerveau un tant soit peu indépendant. Trump est désormais à son quatrième conseiller à la sécurité nationale en seulement trois ans, à son deuxième secrétaire de la Défense, et à son deuxième secrétaire d'État, sachant par ailleurs que nombre de postes majeurs de politique étrangère demeurent vacants. La leçon à tirer par autrui est claire : le seul moyen de durer aux côtés de Trump consiste à ne pas s'opposer à lui. Ce besoin de déférence aveugle est d'autant plus problématique de la part d'un président chez qui la curiosité manque, voire n'existe pas.

Mike Pompeo, secrétaire d'État très sûr de lui-même, est largement considéré comme le laquais le plus accompli de toute l'équipe des hauts conseillers de Trump. Ancien membre de la Chambre des représentants américains, Pompeo est également au sein du Congrès un partisan affirmé du « changement de régime » en Iran, lui qui depuis un certain temps œuvrait auprès de Trump pour que le président ordonne l'assassinat de Qassem Soleimani, commandant de la force iranienne Al-Quds, que les États-Unis ont désignée comme une organisation étrangère terroriste. Un rapport révèle que Trump aurait finalement décidé d'ordonner l'élimination du numéro deux politique de l'Iran le 3 janvier, en présence d'une « nouvelle équipe à la plus grande cohésion, moins encline que les précédentes à s'opposer aux souhaits du président ».

En l'absence de déclaration de guerre contre l'Iran, l'assassinat d'un dirigeant étranger - via une frappe de drone en territoire irakien - est possiblement illégale. Mais les subtilités de ce genre ne perturbent pas Trump. À l'évidence, sa décision a été prise sans considération pour les conséquences potentielles. Le système de sécurité nationale établi sous Dwight D. Eisenhower pour empêcher les mesures trop imprudentes en est aujourd'hui réduit à peau de chagrin, un pouvoir sans cesse croissant étant placé entre les mains du président. Or, lorsque le président est instable, le

monde entier rencontre un très sérieux problème.

En réalité, si une guerre totale avec l'Iran a été évitée de justesse, c'est parce que les dirigeants iraniens se sont montrés un peu plus malins que Trump. Dans cet épisode périlleux, les pertes de vies humaines les plus conséquentes découlent du tir de missile tragique sur un avion civil ukrainien, qui venait de décoller de l'aéroport de Téhéran, et dans lequel sont mortes 176 personnes. L'appareil avait été autorisé à décoller par les autorités aériennes iraniennes environ trois heures après que l'Iran ait lancé ses missiles sur des installations militaires irakiennes abritant potentiellement des troupes américaines. Destinées à venger la mort de Soleimani, ces représailles soigneusement ciblées, qui n'ont fait aucune victime, tout comme les messages secrets de Téhéran transmis par les Suisses, illustraient combien les Iraniens entendaient cesser une escalade dangereuse. L'Iran perdrat certainement la guerre contre les États-Unis, mais pas avant d'avoir infligé de sérieux dommages aux installations américaines, y compris via des cyberattaques. C'est donc un Trump soulagé qui a accepté le message des Iraniens, et qui leur a emboîté le pas.

Secoué par les événements, le Congrès a demandé à l'administration de lui fournir une synthèse du raisonnement ayant fondé l'assassinat de Soleimani. Le manque de clarté du gouvernement à cet égard s'est retourné contre Trump et ses responsables à la sécurité nationale. Formulant des raisonnements contradictoires et changeants, l'administration n'a pas su convaincre le législateur qu'une menace « imminente » avait forcé la main du président. Ce manquement, ainsi que le mépris habituel de l'administration à l'égard du Congrès et de ses membres, qui ont pour devoir constitutionnel d'exiger des comptes de l'exécutif, et qui sont constitutionnellement les seuls à pouvoir déclarer un guerre, ont conduit à une nouvelle dynamique parlementaire de limitation des pouvoirs de guerre du président s'agissant de l'Iran. Il est toutefois peu probable que la Chambre et le Sénat (lequel est contrôlé par les alliés républicains de Trump) s'entendent sur une approche précise, et encore moins qu'ils produisent une mesure susceptible de survivre au veto présidentiel.

Pendant ce temps, la relation entre les États-Unis et l'Iran se trouve plus dégradée que jamais, l'Amérique ayant beaucoup perdu en assassinant Soleimani. Téhéran a en effet annoncé que l'Iran ne se conformera plus aux limites convenues pour son programme nucléaire, ce qui fait passer d'environ 15 ans (lorsque Trump est arrivé au pouvoir) à seulement cinq mois le délai estimé nécessaire à la conception d'une tête nucléaire. Les États-Unis sont de plus en plus vivement invités à retirer leurs troupes d'Irak - objectif de longue date du général Soleimani. Raison pour laquelle l'Amérique a été de nouveau sollicitée en Irak pendant la présidence Obama, la formation militaire américaine des forces irakiennes est désormais suspendue. Et loin de retirer ses troupes du Moyen-Orient, comme il l'avait promis, Trump engage désormais plusieurs milliers de soldats dans la région.

Pourtant, comme l'on pouvait s'y attendre, Trump et ses acolytes crient victoire, et accusent leurs détracteurs de sympathie à l'égard de l'Iran, voire de partialité à l'endroit du vicieux Soleimani. Actuellement, plusieurs signaux démontrent que l'opinion publique n'est pas dupe. La plupart de Américains considèrent en effet que l'épisode récent fait des États-Unis un pays moins sûr, sans doute à raison. Car si les hostilités entre l'Amérique et l'Iran (ainsi que ses nombreux intermédiaires) semble s'apaiser, il est peu probable aux yeux du plus grand nombre que l'accalmie dure bien longtemps.

PERSPECTIVES PERSPECTIVES

Public Policy. Economics. Democratic Politics. Political/Economic Decentralization. Public Dishonesty. Dual Citizenship

LIBERIA'S HEALTHCARE SYSTEM IS NATIONAL DISGRACE US EMBASSY CONSULAR SECTION FRUSTRATES APPLICATION FOR NON-IMMIGRANT VISA FOR TRAVEL TO USA:THE CASE OF A RECENT APPLICANT

With Bai M. Gbala, Sr. January 10, 2020

Indeed, the entire socio-cultural, economic and political structure of Liberia, managed, controlled and dominated by the Ruling Political Class had been, and is, a continuing quagmire, during the century and three quarters in which the Republic has been the sovereign State, since 1847.

Moreover, we, Liberians have been, and are unable, to produce Rice and cooking Oil (our national staples) to feed ourselves; we have and, are being, held hostages by foreign-owned and managed Rice and cooking Oil Cartel and other tropical food products imported from distant lands, in collusion with the political rulers, although Liberia is endowed with more fertile land than people.

But my immediate concerns, dating back to several years of socio-economic and political indignities include our Healthcare System in which there had been, and is, glaring absence of medical service-treatment of curable disease in our country. Patients, mostly the wealthy Liberians and foreign nationals, politicians of the political rulers and the politically-connected Liberians are flown, regularly, out of the country for medical service abroad.

An elderly senior citizen with some of the illnesses for which there are no treatment in Liberia, I applied, through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, to the US Embassy Consular Section for Non-Immigrant Visa for travel to the USA and was requested, through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, to submit a latest report of my medical condition, which I did in early October, 2019 with the identity (address and telephone numbers) of the desired US hospital.

?t my Visa Interview on November 25, 2019 with the US Consular Section, US Embassy, Monrovia, the list of questions given to me, included "Cost of Treatment" (to be provided by the US Hospital) and "Evidence of the ability" to pay the cost of treatment which, also, will be based on the response by the US hospital. But this not happen; so, I emailed a copy of my medical report to my family member, USA, with request that she submit the report to the US Hospital.

Unfortunately, the US Hospital gave January 28, 2020 appointment to receive the report and act on the request for cost of treatment, etc., some three months from November 25, 2019. Now, I am asked by the US Consular Section, Monrovia, "to send a copy of your surgery/medical appointment for January 28, 2020. Additionally, email us any medical reports you may have from the US hospital", while I am still in Liberia.

Now, in all of this, reasonably - the administration of the Visa Application Process - I submit that Law is based, primarily, on Reason, human reason; and that Law's Powerful Punch or its major power/support is drawn from and based upon Reason:

- That it is very important NOT to Admit Criminals - terrorists, anarchists, human rights violators or individuals known or to be anti-the democratic process - into the USA.

- That I have answered, successfully, all of the US Consul's political and economic questions asked of me regarding the Visa application and that there are no criminal charges against me, here in Liberia or anywhere, worldwide;

- That, indeed, I am an honorable, eternal political animal, well-known in Liberia, with open, clear, clean public record and a proven democrat



under the rule of law;

- That I am US-educated, pro-USA, lived, worked in the USA for a decade and married US citizen with 2 grown children who, now, live in the Chicago, Illinois area;

- That my application for the Visa is not intended and should not be confused with or interpreted as design for US citizenship; for, I could have achieved that status, easily, long ago, but did not apply for it because Dual US-Liberia citizenship or Dual Nationality violates the main, basic requirements for citizenship - loyalty, Nationalism and patriotism - including the historical convention that "no one may be citizen of two sovereign states at the same time" and, also, the historical adage that "no servant can serve two masters at the same time", the so-called "modern socio-political conditions notwithstanding"; and

- That, most importantly, dual nationality is illegal in Liberia and that I applied for the Non-Immigrant Visa to save my life; to eliminate constant, daily pain and for peaceful, painless elderly life, because there are no medical services-treatment for such illnesses as prostate (Urology), kidney (Dialysis), ear (Audiology), neck, throat skin/itching, etc. in our country.

The most important reason for granting this Visa to me and other Liberians so qualified is that it harms no one, in terms of placing anyone in danger of terrorism/security risk, both USA and Liberia. On the contrary, granting this Visa to me at this time, is in

fact, continuation of the historical US-Liberia friendship, solidarity and US political, economic support, particularly, humanitarian support provided over the years. Indeed, grant of this Visa for medical treatment to save my life means continuation, also, of social, cultural, economic and political support for Liberian families, including my family of 10 children with a multitude of grand, great-grandchildren and the critical future of Liberia.

On The Issue of Visa Refusals under Section 221(g)
I am in agreement, reasonably, with the US Department of State that has acknowledged, also, reasonably, that Section "221(g) refusals happen too often and may be subject to overuse" and possible abuse. According to US Visa Office, "in fiscal year 2008, there were 589,418 nonimmigrant visa refusals under Section 221(g). Of those, 510,549 were successfully overcome and visas issued, a success rate of 87%."

Accordingly, granting my visa application or successful overcome of visa refusals will improve the success rate of 87%!!

Meanwhile, as indicated earlier that prostate, kidney and hearing loss deceases, etc., untreated overtime, deteriorate, while prostate and kidney may be fatal!!

Therefore, I repeat - ask, request and appeal, most respectfully, with the consent, support and cooperation of the average Liberians that the US Consular Service grant me this Visa based upon the foregoing, reasonable, truthful analysis.

Grant the Visa and Save a Life. The US Law, Section 221(g), demands it!!

VP Taylor's blood boils

By Ethel A. Tweh

The leadership of the Liberian Senate says it has taken siege of a communication from the office of Vice President Jewel Howard - Taylor regarding her absence from the opening of the 3rd Session of the 54th Legislature.

On Tuesday, 14 January, Senator Abraham Darius Dillon of Monsterrado County raised the concern of the VP's absence and requested that it

strained relationship between she and President George Manneh Weah is far from being resolved.

Both leaders have been far apart at official public functions in the past two years of the administration with President Weah being on record of frowning at Mrs. Taylor for making travels abroad without his knowledge amid unauthenticated rumors that the former First Lady has

the 54th Legislature without the presence of the Vice President.

In fulfillment of constitutional requirement that the Legislature shall resume work on second Monday of each year, the leadership of the Capitol, including Speaker Bhofal Chambers, Senate President Pro-Tempore Albert Chie, heads of foreign missions, development partners, members of the judiciary and the cabinet gathered to witness the historic event.

However, the vice president, who was expected to deliver a speech at the ceremony, was conspicuously absent, something, that has been described as an apparent protest to the slicing of her allotment in the National Budget.

Formal hosting of the national flag on the grounds of the Capitol during the ceremony on Monday delayed unusually only to discover that the leadership of the both houses waited aimlessly for VP Taylor's arrival.

Speculation gathered from the grounds of the Capitol among lawmakers and some influential senior staffers hinted this paper that Vice President Jewel Howard Taylor had reportedly boycotted on grounds that her budgetary allocation for 2019/20 was deeply cut by officials of the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning.

When the Office of Vice President Taylor was contacted on the allegation, the Press Secretary to the Vice President, Richmond Neufville explained that his boss had written Senate President Pro-Tempore Chie about her absence.—*Edited by Winston W. Parley*



be placed on the agenda for discussion as it is a matter of national concern.

But Senator Albert T. Chie, President Pro Tempore of the Liberian Senate says the Senate has received a communication from the office of the vice president and they will investigate the matter.

The conspicuous absence of the Vice President during commencement of the 3rd Session of the Legislature on Monday appears to demonstrate that the

ambition to become President of Liberia.

Mrs. Taylor has dismissed such speculations as unfounded. However, at the close of 2019, Vice President Taylor publicly complained over decision by the Executive to grossly slice her budget for the fiscal period.

Public attention grew here Monday, when President Weah addressed members of both the House of Representatives and the Liberian Senate in joint session for formal opening of the 3rd session of

Liberia's image slumps

By E. J. Nathaniel Daygbor

River Gee County Senator Conmany Wesseh says Liberia's image internationally is slumping speedily, but expresses confidence that the country can regain its image this 2020.

He notes that the downward trend of the country's governance process is attributed hugely to all branches of government including; the executive, the legislative and judiciary, saying, they have failed to actively serve the people.

Senator Wesseh says specifically the security sector under the executive is weak and has developed lapses over the period of time, especially, under the Weah administration.



He further laments that the manner and form the Coalition for Democratic Change-led administration handled the reported 'missing

billions' and the US\$25 million mop up exercise created serious dark spots on the country's image and had many international partners and

Mansion sees flaw

Cont'd from page 7

"But because you want Mr. X and Mr. X is not there so you will undermine this government, you are undermining yourself, you are undermining the development of our country. This is why since 1847, all of the small, small countries that gained independence in 1960s, 1980, they are flourishing. It's because most of them didn't have this crab mentality," he adds.

The press secretary pleads with the media to put the human rights organization on record, if they know that they saw something differently at the protest scene from what the human rights group has reported.

He notes that everybody has their own motives, including radio stations and television stations, saying they stand for what they want.

Meanwhile, Mr. Kelgeh has distanced President Weah from claims that he might be responsible for immigration officials to conduct investigation on his critic and talk show host Henry P. Costa's travel documents.

Costa, the head of the Council of Patriots (COP)

which has staged two massive protests in less than a year to demand reforms in government, is going through immigration investigation surrounding his travel documents.

The investigation came while attempting to leave the country, days after staging the latest protest here supported by thousands of Liberians.

But Press Secretary Kelgeh says President Weah is not interested in stopping anybody from travelling, noting that things should be done properly.

"The president has no interest in stopping any Liberian from travelling, from leaving this country if you want to leave the country. But it should be done properly and the president has no specific interest in stopping anybody," Mr. Kelgeh says.

Mr. Kelgeh continues that the actual story is that Mr. Costa is going through investigation from the Liberia Immigration Service (LIS) regarding how he acquired "what they say is a forged laissez-passer," and how he came into the country without his passport.

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friendly nations wondering what is happening to Liberia.

"We were questions many times because the dissemination of information was not coordinated well. Now, who will want to bring investment here with the information of missing billions and President Weah at a point in time saying, people want to kill him?" He asks.

Speaking to this paper in Monrovia recently, Senator Wesseh observes one of the major challenges this administration faces has do with distribution of justice, pointing to the impeachment of Associate Justice Kabineh Ja'neh, which many have termed as purely political, lacking legal foundation.

Sen. Wesseh, also a former ambassador-at-large under former President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, blames bad governance being experienced under the Weah administration to failure of the Liberian Legislature to act accordingly.

"Our country's image is in the pit and is slumping on a daily basis from the international scene that's worrisome. Issues that came up during the early days of this administration and the way they were handled created the slumping grounds."

According to him, Liberia is experiencing the worse form of bad governance and the Legislature is contributing

hugely towards said negative state.

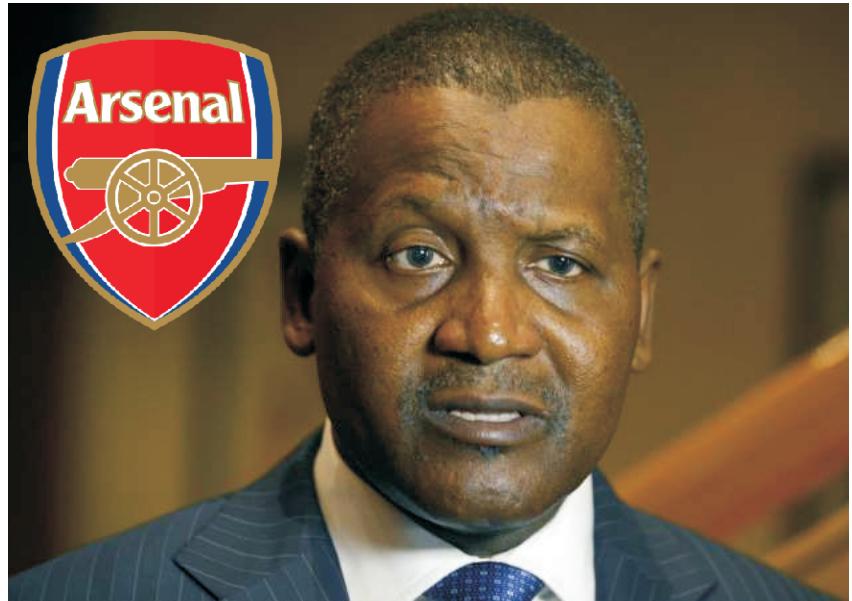
Wesseh continues that in the confirmation of nominees from the executive branch, many senators in their minds knew very well that some of the nominees were not qualified, but due to personal interest, those unqualified nominees were confirmed by the plenary of the Liberian Senate.

He laments that decision of confirming unqualified individuals to key positions in government is producing the result of underperforming and bad governance, poor justice system, corruption, and poor performance internationally.

The one time student leader and ranking stalwart of the Movement for Justice in Africa, (MOJA) reflects that while President George Manneh Weah presides over the entire governance process and the country, members of the Legislature should put their house in order to helping the country move in the right direction, stressing the need to sharpen the justice system, reduce corruption practices and prioritize needs of the people as well as adhering to international best practice.

He calls on fellow senators to rise up to the occasion in order to rescue the country that is falling so speedily in its structure and performance. - *Editing by Jonathan Browne*

Dangote plots Arsenal takeover



Nigerian businessman Aliko Dangote has hinted he could buy Arsenal in 2021, if a number of multi-billion dollar projects for his company are completed on time.

The 62-year-old founded the Dangote Group - the largest conglomerate in West Africa - in 1981, which deals with the manufacturing and production of a number of consumer goods including sugar, cement, rice, flour and

fisheries.

Dangote has a net worth of more than £8.5 billion (\$11 billion) and has been heavily linked with a takeover at Arsenal in the past, with the club currently owned by Kroenke Sports & Entertainment.

Stan Kroenke is the majority shareholder at Emirates Stadium, but Dangote could be in a position to buy him out by next year, with his company set to begin

the production of the largest single-train refinery in the world later this year in Lekki, Lagos State.

Africa's richest man is concentrating on that business venture at the moment, but says he plans to buy Arsenal when the Dangote refinery is finished.

"It is a team that, yes, I would like to buy someday, but what I keep saying is we have \$20 billion (£15 billion) worth of projects and that's what I really want to concentrate on," Dangote told the David Rubenstein Show.

"I'm trying to finish building the company and then, after we finish, maybe sometime in 2021 we can."

"I'm not buying Arsenal right now, I'm buying Arsenal when I finish all these projects because I'm trying to take the company to the next level."

The Gunners are very much in the middle of a transitional period at the moment, with the 2019-20 campaign disrupted by significant changes in the dugout.



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Aston Villa sign Reina on loan from AC Milan

Aston Villa announced on Monday they had signed former Liverpool goalkeeper Pepe Reina on loan from AC Milan for the rest of the season.

Villa boss Dean Smith moved for Reina after the struggling Premier League club's first-choice keeper Tom Heaton was ruled out for the rest of the campaign.

Heaton suffered a knee injury against Burnley on New Year's Day and Jed Steer, who featured during Villa's

promotion from the Championship last season, is also out through injury.

"We've managed to secure a player in Pepe who has a wealth of Premier League experience," Smith told Villa's website.

"At the start of the summer we were looking for an experienced goalkeeper and brought in Tom Heaton.

"Unfortunately, his injury has ruled him out for the rest of the season but Pepe fits our criteria not just because of



his experience but also because of his leadership qualities."

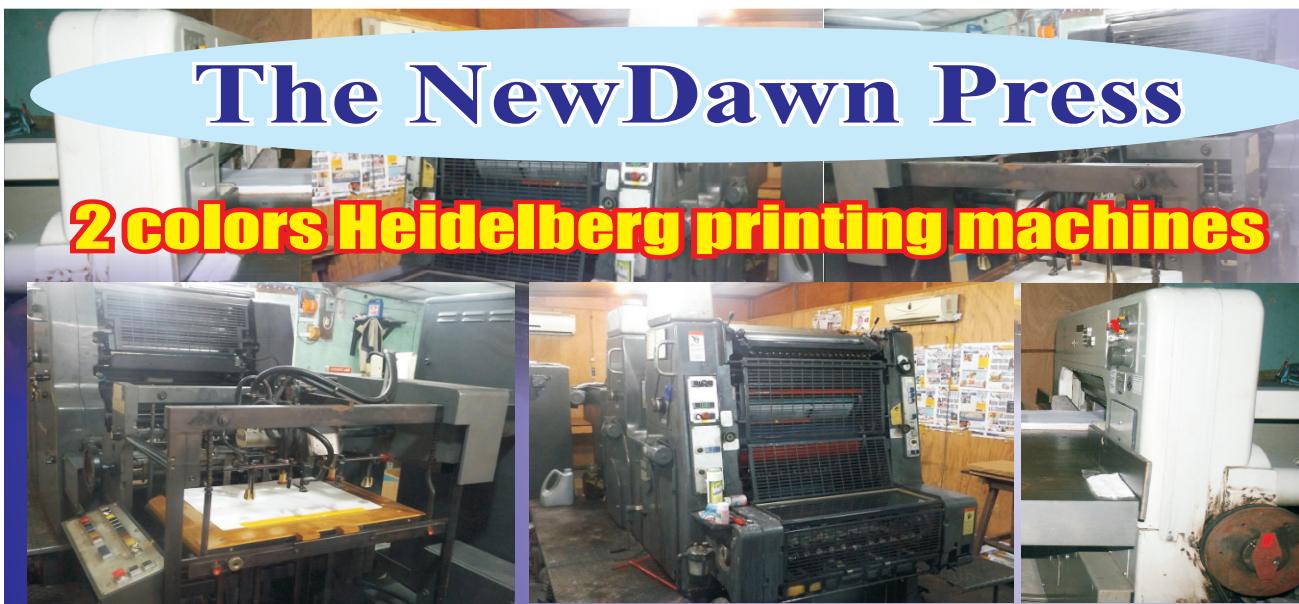
Reina, who has been capped 36 times by Spain, made 394 appearances for Liverpool between 2005 and 2013 before moving to Bayern Munich after a loan spell with Italian club Napoli.

The 37-year-old could make his Villa debut in Saturday's trip to Brighton.

With Orjan Nyland in goal, Villa were thrashed 6-1 by Manchester City on Sunday to

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