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A web of conflict

Like arms traffickers and smugglers of conflict diamonds, West Africa's wars are crossing frontiers. We trace how the now beleaguered warlord President Charles Taylor and his allies set the region on fire.

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Accra has become the centre for both peace talks and peacekeeping in Liberia – to the benefit of President John Kufuor's government. Kufuor wants to leverage more US support for another intervention.

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LIBERIA

Meltdown in Monrovia

Sending peacekeepers into the capital without a political plan could cause yet more chaos and killing

Next week, the first component of 1,000 West African peacekeepers is due in Liberia to enforce a fragile ceasefire between President **Charles Taylor**'s crumbling government and his rebel opponents. However, there is no political plan. No one knows whether Taylor will take up **Nigeria**'s offer of asylum, thus removing himself and the pretext for the continuing conflict. Few people know the intentions of the rebel groups – the Liberians United for Reconstruction and Democracy (LURD) and the Movement for Democracy in Liberia (Model). Will they emulate their forerunner militias, which in 1990 after ousting President **Samuel Kanyon Doe** tortured him to death and then began a seven-year war among themselves? Then a force of West African peacekeepers was sent in to stem the chaos with minimal support from outside the region.

This time, United Nations Secretary General **Kofi Annan** wants to bring in a broader-based force, with substantial logistical help – and perhaps some marines – from the **United States**. The latest peacekeeping plan was worked out between Annan and senior African officials meeting in Maputo, **Mozambique**, on 9 July, ahead of the African Union (AU) summit. It follows weeks of peace talks in **Ghana** and crisis talks in Washington as pressure mounted on President **George Bush**'s government to help Liberia, just as he embarked on his 7-12 July tour of Africa. As in **Congo-Kinshasa**, Annan has acceded to US pressure and appointed a senior US diplomat, **Jacques Paul Klein**, as his Special Envoy to Liberia in the hope that this might persuade Washington to give serious backing to a joint UN-AU peacekeeping operation. Klein has high-level military experience: he was formerly Political Advisor to the Commander-in-Chief of the US European Command. After appointing Klein on 8 July, Annan ordered senior UN officials back to Monrovia to prepare for a humanitarian relief operation.

Charles Taylor draws his road map

President Taylor had hoped to spend his retirement as a cocoa and coffee farmer near Gbarnga, revered as the 'Grandaddy of Liberian politics'. According to his envoy to the international community, the Minister of State for Economic and Financial Affairs, **Samuel Jackson**, he dreams of converting his Congo Town residence into a presidential library. He may be the only one who has a plan for what happens next in Liberia. The international community tried ignoring him when he was a rebel leader, then it tried letting him win an election and engaging with him as head of state. Neither of those worked and now, having set up the Special Court in **Sierra Leone**, some Western ambassadors to the UN Security Council have suggested that the indictment against Taylor need not stand (AC Vol 44 No 13). Taylor insists that he will accept a proposal of exile in Nigeria rather than tough it out in Liberia. He's hardly likely to get a better offer. The UN Security Council appears to prefer to leave West African leaders to decide Taylor's fate for themselves, the better to ensure the necessary fudge.

Taylor wants to hand over to an incoming peacekeeping force but the USA has said that it would prefer him out of the way before any intervention. Yet despite all the calls for the USA to lead a military intervention, it's no simple matter. When **British** troops went into Sierra Leone and **French** troops went into **Côte d'Ivoire**, they were supporting elected governments – in Liberia they face a power vacuum. Hence the growing interest in Washington in a role for Taylor's long-time political rival, **Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf**, Liberia's iron lady. This time, the last thing anyone wants is to prop up Taylor, even though his 1997 election victory received the endorsement of his apparent role model, former US President **Jimmy Carter**, another farming ex-leader with a presidential library.

In Washington, the overstretched Pentagon is reluctant to get involved in Liberia's war while 146,000 American soldiers are in **Iraq** and 10,000 are in **Afghanistan**, except perhaps to send an additional 30 men to secure the Embassy and other locations, and increase evacuation capabilities. A number of Africa experts, however, among them former Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs **Chester Crocker**, think it possible that up to 2,000 US troops might be sent for a limited period. Meanwhile, White House Spokesperson **Ari Fleischer** has said he 'would not rule it out'.

There is a tendency with this White House for the President to become enamoured with causes and this case is a strong one, especially following the French and UK interventions in two neighbouring countries.

SENEGAL

Pop: 9.5 million, GNI: $4.7bn, Debt: $3.4bn

Armed forces: 9,400 (8,000 army, 600 navy, 800 air force, with a further 5,800 paramilitaries in the gendarmerie)

President Abdoulaye Wade won multi-party elections in 2000 on the Parti Démocratique Sénégalais ticket after 4 unsuccessful attempts; his PDS also has a big majority in the National Assembly. The main internal problem is the guerrilla war in the south waged by the Casamance separatist Mouvement des Forces Democratiques de Casamance, which rumbles on despite attempted negotiation. The MFDC has had diplomatic and military backing from neighbouring Gambia, whose President Yahya Jammeh's Jola people are related to the Casamançais, and from elements in Guinea-Bissau's army. Revenue from smuggled diamonds (often routed through Gambia but frequently originating from Liberia and Sierra Leone) helps finance the MFDC, as does local marijuana trafficking. Senegal's military is one of the most professional in the region, having participated in several UN peacekeeping missions and sub-regional deployments by the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (Ecomog) in Liberia and Sierra Leone.

GAMBIA

Pop: 1.3 million, GNI: $440m, Debt: $471m

Armed forces: 800 (2 infantry battalions, 1 Presidential Guard company, 1 engineering squadron)

President Yahya Jammeh seized power in a coup in July 1994 and has held on to power after two disputed presidential elections in 1996 and 2000. The military and security services are dominated by Jola people. Jammeh has purged the military of most Mandinka senior officers whom he suspected of supporting ousted President Dawda Jawara. Keeping to power by rigged elections and political repression, the regime has presided over the criminalisation of the economy: Banjul has become a trading centre for conflict diamonds (from Sierra Leone, Liberia and Guinea), arms and drugs. Almost all foreign aid has stopped because of government corruption. Jammeh and his security officers have close ties to Liberian Pres. Charles Taylor's officers, many of them trained in Libya in the late 80s and early 90s.

GUINEA-BISSAU

Pop: 1.2 million, GNI: $217m, Debt: $942m

Armed forces: 9,250 (6,800 army, 350 navy, 100 air force, plus 2,000 gendarmerie)

President Kumba Yala won the 2000 election after years in opposition. He is more secure since a shoot-out between security forces and dissident General Ansoumane Mane in 2000. Instability in the military dates back to 1998's battle for Bissau when army insurrectionists (many linked to Casamance separatists) tried to topple the government. They were helped by the same pool of mercenaries fighting beside militias in Casamance, Liberia and Guinea.

GUINEA

Pop: 7.4 million, GNI: $3.3bn, Debt: $3.4bn

Armed forces: 9,700 (8,500 army, 400 navy, 800 air force, plus 2,600 in the paramilitary gendarmerie and Republican Guard)

President Lansana Conté seized power in a coup after founding President Ahmed Sékou Touré's death in 1984 and has since held disputed elections in 1994 and 1998. From the minority Sousou group, Conté has suppressed and harassed opposition parties drawn from the Peuhl and Malinké. He has accused the most popular opposition leader, Alpha Condé, and his Rassemblement du Peuple de Guinée of ties to President Charles Taylor's regime in Liberia. Condé was gaoled in 1998 and he and some supporters were tortured and released in 2002 only after intervention by French President Jacques Chirac. The Guinean army has several effective, professional units and has served in - international and sub-regional peacekeeping but has a reputation for brutality, particularly in the 2001 border war with Liberia. Guinea's military has received over $10m in aid from the United States and European Union, ostensibly to improve border security. Because of this and Conakry's military support for Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD), Taylor accuses Western powers of backing the war against him. Most logistical support and arms for LURD operations in Liberia flows in from Guinea.

Source for military figures: *The Military Balance 2002-2003*, The International Institute for Strategic Studies, London, 2002

MAURITANIA

Pop: 2.7 million, GNI: $978m, Debt: $2.5m

Armed forces: 15,750 of which 15,000 in the army, 500 in the navy, 250 in the air force. There are a further 5,000 in the gendarmerie and national guard (both under Interior Ministry control).

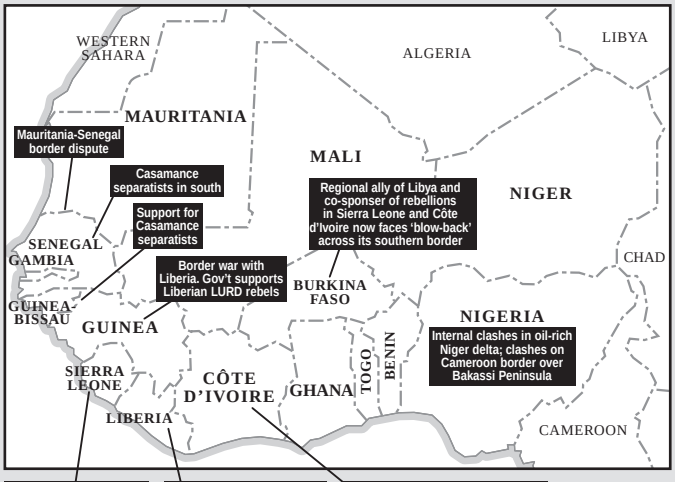
President Maaouiya Ould Sid Ahmed Taya took power in a coup in 1984 and won disputed presidential elections in 1992 and 1997. Troops loyal to Ould Taya defeated an attempted coup in May. The putschists' motives are unclear but alternative theories are:

i) residual supporters of Baath party (originally affiliated to Baath parties in Iraq and Syria but banned in Mauritania since 1995);

ii) Islamist groupings opposed to the government's diplomatic ties with Israel;

iii) local opposition mobilising against the government's authoritarian methods.

Mauritania fought a border war against Senegal in 1989 though bilateral relations have since improved. Mauritania un-energetically supports Polisario's claims to an independent state in Western Sahara (the Saharawi Arab Democratic Republic, which is recognised by the African Union) which stymies relations with Morocco.



SIERRA LEONE

Pop: 5.0 million, GNI: $647bn, Debt: $1.3bn

Armed forces: new British-trained national army has initial strength of 14-15,000, though over 45,000 former combatants registered for military retraining. Some 13,000 UN peacekeepers remain.

President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah won elections in 1997 and 2002, although an alliance between the Liberian and Burkinabè-backed Revolutionary United Front ousted his first government May 1997-March 1998. The RUF then concentrated operations in eastern Sierra Leone's diamond fields: it used mining to enrich its leadership and senior officials in Burkina Faso and Liberia and pay for arms, flown in from those sponsor countries. Kabbah's government says it refuses to support militias such as LURD and Model fighting Pres. Taylor. Independent sources agree there has been little or no recent official backing in Freetown for Liberian rebel groups but these groups use Sierra Leone to launch operations without official involvement.

LIBERIA

Pop: 3.1 million, GNI: $2.8bn, Debt: $2.1bn

Armed forces: 11-15,000 mobilised soldiers in several distinct, even competing, units

Charles Ghankay Taylor emerged as President after 1997's disputed poll, having launched a rebellion against Samuel Doe's regime in 1990. Taylor used western Côte d'Ivoire as rear base and supply route. He was supported by its founding President Félix Houphouët-Boigny, who wanted to avenge Doe's murder of his in-law, former Liberian President William Tolbert, in 1980. West African leaders agreed on a Ghanaian-Nigerian led intervention force in Liberia, Ecomog, to evacuate civilians and then keep warring factions apart. The factions proliferated - such as the United Liberation Movement of Liberia (Ulimo) and Liberian Peace Council, each seeking sponsorship from governments in the region and so further compromising Ecomog's role. LURD, which started as a shadowy force operating near the Guinean border in north-west Liberia, has proved among the most effective militarily. Attacking from the east, apparently sponsored by Côte d'Ivoire, is the Movement for a Democratic Liberia (Model).

BURKINA FASO

Pop: 11.3 million, GNI: $2.4bn, Debt: $1.3bn

Armed forces: 10,200 (army 5,800, air force 200). Paramilitary forces include 4,200 in the Gendarmerie, 250 in a security company, and some 45,000 trained fighters in government-controlled people's militias.

President Blaise Compaoré came to power after killing his boyhood friend, the popular military leader Thomas Sankara, for which he is widely reviled. A combination of his grip on the security services, electoral rigging and repression of opposition parties won him electoral victory but little legitimacy, regionally or internally. Yet he has largely escaped censure for his regional demobilisation campaigns in league with Charles Taylor, mainly because of strong support from France. Following reports of Compaoré's support for the northern rebellion in Côte d'Ivoire, Paris has become more critical of Ouagadougou. Sensing growing problems, Compaoré has tried to distance himself from Taylor and there have been fewer reports of their collusion on trafficking arms or conflict diamonds. But few believe his new stance will last: he may be the new regional rebel sponsor-in-chief if his ally Taylor loses power soon in Monrovia.

CÔTE D'IVOIRE

Pop: 16 million, GNI: $9.6bn, Debt: $12.1bn

Armed forces: 17,000 (Army 6,500, Navy 900, Air Force 700, Presidential Guard 1,350, Gendarmerie 7,600)

President Laurent Gbagbo and his Front Populaire Ivoirien emerged winners of the 2000 elections after military candidate General Robert Gueï tried to rig the polls and failed. Gbagbo's supporters, in alliance with the northern-based opposition Rassemblement des Républicains, faced down the military and Gbagbo's electoral victory was widely recognised. But his xenophobic Ivoirité policies split the alliance with the RDR. Tensions mounted when Gueï, accused of preparing a rebellion in the west, was shot dead in Abidjan. Weeks later a north-south split opened in the army and a new autonomous northern government was set up in Bouaké. A political wing – Mouvement Patriotique de la Côte d'Ivoire – was set up in Bouaké and some weeks later a movement, broadly supporting the late Gueï, emerged in the west, Mouvement Populaire Ivoirien du Grand-Ouest (MPIGO). By late 2002 Gbagbo's beleaguered government was fighting on two fronts and his relations with Paris had declined dramatically. But France deployed 3,000 peacekeepers to support an uneasy north-south ceasefire and sponsored lengthy negotiations between the three sides. An agreement to set up a power-sharing government underpinned a series of ceasefires, the latest of which signed in May appears to be holding, broadly.

BENIN

Pop: 6.3 million, GNI: $2.3bn, Debt: $1.4bn

Armed forces: 4,550 (army 4,300, navy 100, air force 150). There are 2,500 gendarmes.

President Mathieu Kérékou ran a professedly Marxist single party dictatorship from 1972 till he was ousted by pro-democracy protests. Multi-party elections saw technocrat Nicéphore Soglo become President, only for Kérékou to be elected under multi-party rules in 1996. A new generation awaits as both Kérékou and Soglo will be over 70 at the next poll, thus ineligible to stand. Until then Kérékou will endeavour to maintain good relations with neighbour Nigeria, whose recent oil strike seriously hit Benin's economy which did well out of smuggled supplies of cheap Nigeria petrol.

MALI

Pop: 10.8 million, GNI: $2.6bn, Debt: $3.0bn

Armed forces: about 7,350 (army), 400 (air force), 50 (navy). Paramilitaries number some 4,800 (1,800 Gendarmerie, 2,000 Republican Guard, 1,000 national police).

President Amadou Toumani Touré's election victory in May 2002 has been followed by heavy economic pressures from the war in Côte d'Ivoire and his own local difficulties with fractious political alliances. Relations with Senegal are testy, more a matter of personal rivalry between ATT and President Wade but with no prospect of serious conflict. Both see themselves as regional mediators and diplomats, a more credible claim in ATT's case. He has been kept out of mediation in the Ivorian crisis because of the interests of the many Malians in the country.

NIGER

Pop: 10.8 million, GNI: $1.9bn, Debt: $1.6bn

Armed forces: 5,300 (5,200 army, 100 air force). Paramilitary forces 5,400, including 1,400 gendarmes, 2,500 Republican Guards, 1,500 national police.

President Mamadou Tandja's convincing win in November 1999 elections helped stabilise the country after several military regimes and the rumbling Tuareg-Toubou rebellion. Most of the 1995 peace accord between Tuareg and government have been implemented. But a lacklustre economy has given Tandja little room to manoeuvre and problems are growing in the government's relations with the military following an attempted putsch last year. That and the effects of drought promise a difficult election campaign for Tandja in 2004.

NIGERIA

Pop: 126.9 million, GNI: $32.7bn, Debt: $34.1bn

Armed forces: 78,500 (62,000 army, 7,000 navy, 9,000 air force)

Former military leader and now twice elected civilian politician, President Olusegun Obasanjo's image as a unifier gave his 1999 election victory some credibility despite numerous irregularities. April's election was widely criticised across the country but has not provoked a national protest campaign or difficult questions by Western trading partners. Instead trades unionists organised a national strike against higher fuel prices this month and nearly brought the formal economy to a halt. Two major flashpoints threaten internal stability: the growing militancy in the Niger Delta and increasing disenchantment with the government in the north-west, where local politicians led the movement to adopt the Islamic (Sharia) criminal code, which was followed by religious clashes in 2001 and 2002. Northern politicians warn that the current calm in the region should not be mistaken for quiescence towards the government. President Obasanjo's second term is likely to be more focused on pressing domestic issues which may reduce the government's capacity for foreign intervention. Nigeria kept its distance from involvement in Côte d'Ivoire's crisis and Abuja was happy to leave the difficult mediating job in the Liberia talks to Ghana. Only now as the West African peacekeeping force is being prepared has the Nigerian military fully engaged in a crisis it had hoped was solved in 1997.

TOGO

Pop: 4.5 million, GNI: $1.3bn, Debt: $1.4bn

Armed forces: some 9,450 (9,000 army, 200 navy, 250 air force). Paramilitary forces include 750 gendarmes.

President Gnassingbé Eyadéma's declaration of his third election victory this June was as flawed as his first two, achieved by excluding the most popular opposition candidate, Gilchrist Olympio, intimidating other oppositionists and rigging the ballots. This time the EU refused to send an observer mission and the aid boycott will continue. Eyadéma is tolerated and occasionally allowed to chair unsuccessful peace talks.

GHANA

Pop: 19.3 million, GNI: $6.6bn, Debt: $6.7bn

Armed forces: 7,000 (5,000 army, 1,000 navy, 1,000 air force. With Senegal's, Ghana's military is regarded as the most professional in the region and, like Senegal's, well represented in international peacekeeping.

President John Kufuor's landslide victory in free and fair multi-party elections in January 2001 won him legitimacy and kudos for the country. Running a pro-West government implementing standard World Bank economic reform programmes, he has failed to generate much more growth but has maintained internal security, apart from a violent chieftaincy dispute in the north. Attempting to run a non-aligned (in regional terms) foreign policy, the government has emerged as key mediating point in the Liberian crisis and is set to be a major contributor of troops to the 3,000-strong West African peacekeeping mission.

The factors affecting President Bush's decision will be public opinion – whether the news media have a quiet week and closely follow African news and his African trip – and whether any of the five African leaders Bush meets can persuade him of the benefits of intervening. Bush's 7-12 July visit includes stops in **Botswana**, Nigeria, **Senegal**, **South Africa** and **Uganda**. His past African experience has not been extensive, though on a trip to **Gambia** in 1990 his security was assured by a young army officer named **Yahya Jammeh**, who became President in a 1994 coup.

News that the USA was sending military advisors to review the situation in Liberia recalled the US interventions in Central America of the 1970s, when many of today's senior government figures were cutting their foreign policy teeth. Cooperating with Paris will send a good signal after the rift over Iraq and with elections due next year, saving an African country that looks to the USA as its role model can only go down well. The US experience in **Somalia**, where 18 US troops were killed in 1993, was not encouraging but the links made to the 'war on terrorism' have encouraged Washington to see Somalia more as part of the Middle East than Africa.

Bush's 26 June address to the Corporate Council on Africa's US-Africa Business Summit in the run-up to the trip was very idealistic and not the practical speech that the business audience expected, so he may be receptive to grand ideas and principles of the sort that a leader such as Nigerian President **Olusegun Obasanjo** can undoubtedly conjure up. The complexity of the likely mandate is a big disincentive for the military but the Economic Community of West African States' (Ecowas) offer of 3,000 troops for a US-led force is in line with US attempts to foster African peacekeeping. Defence analysts say 2,000 men – an airlifted light infantry battalion or a ship-based Marine Expeditionary Unit – can be found; not all are committed in Iraq or elsewhere.

Soft on Conté

The UN Security Council mission to West Africa led by Britain's UN Ambassador Sir **Jeremy Greenstock** has tough messages for most leaders in the region but gave **Guinean** President **Lansana Conté** an easy ride, following Guinea's key role as a Council member during the debates on war against Iraq. The mission's programme included a press conference on arrival in Conakry but none on departure. As part of its efforts to contain Taylor, the USA has given border security training to 800 Guinean commandos at Kindia and has supplied the military with communications equipment to a value of $400,000.

The mid-June offensive in Monrovia by the rebel LURD showed they are getting fresh supplies via Guinea but a LURD victory is hardly an enticing prospect, either. Guinea is no fan of Taylor and is keen to see him put on trial. A recent Ecowas mission led by Executive Secretary **Mohamed ibn Chambas** and **Ghanaian** Foreign Minister **Nana Akufo-Addo**, which visited Conakry seeking support for a negotiated settlement, was received by the essentially powerless Prime Minister **Lamine Sidimé** rather than Conté, who although in poor health still wields absolute power. At this stage, Guinea is reluctant to say whether it would commit troops to a peacekeeping force as it did in the 1990s.

Sierra Leone's security is largely the result of 13,000 UN troops deployed in the country and may not last for ever, though Taylor's forces have withdrawn from areas along the border. The main country at risk from further Liberian fallout is likely to be Côte d'Ivoire, itself highly unstable. Troops have been reported moving heavy weapons back to Taylor's stronghold in Bong County around Gbarnga, where he has plenty of grassroots support. While the LURD could easily take Monrovia, it would be unwise to launch attacks into Bong and Nimba counties.

The border region of western Côte d'Ivoire has been made more secure by a deployment of French and West African peacekeepers since late May. They are policing a 200 x 50 kilometre '*zone de confiance*' cleared of loyalist and rebel fighters, where people are returning to their homes. In other words, what little regional security there is currently depends on the presence of 18,000 international peacekeepers in Côte d'Ivoire, without any yet being sent to Liberia. The biggest risk faced by the West African peacekeepers shipping into Liberia is that embattled President Charles Taylor looks like the only man with a plan.

GHANA

Diplomacy central

President Kufuor's government is reaping new benefits from its regional security role

Accra has become the centre for the inchoate efforts to end **Liberia**'s civil war after weeks of hosting inconclusive peace talks and now, planeloads of foreign military planners. President **John Kufuor**'s government is determined to turn this role (which might help the **United States** out of a difficult diplomatic if not military predicament) to its advantage. This was the point that Kufuor was meant to convey when he met President **George W. Bush**, along with six other West African leaders, in Dakar on 8 July.

Ghana's argument is that West African leaders can better run the diplomacy and negotiate a political agreement if they are assured of strong international (especially US) support for a joint African Union and United Nations peacekeeping force capable of enforcing a ceasefire and delivering aid fast to the sick and wounded people suffering in Liberia's war.

Ghanaian Foreign Affairs Minister **Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo** agreed on this position with his **French** counterpart, **Dominique Galouzeau de Villepin**, whose visit to Accra immediately preceded that of the UN Security Council ambassadors led by **British** envoy Sir **Jeremy Greenstock**. While Greenstock maintains that there can be no place in the proposed transitional government for the rebels of the Liberians United for Reconstruction and Development (LURD) and the Movement for Democracy in Liberia (Model), a **Nigerian** former military leader and now the Liberia mediator, General **Abdulsalami Abubakar**, may have to accept many of the rebels' demands for Liberian reconstruction.

Taylor's security men loom

These include a census; judicial and constitutional reform; and demobilisation and restructuring of the Liberian Armed Forces, an area where the West African peacekeeping force of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Monitoring Group (Ecomog) failed in 1996, leaving Taylor's formidable security apparatus in a dominant position ahead of national elections. Predictably, his security forces made sure he won.

Kufuor can draw on the experience of ECOWAS Executive Secretary **Mohamed ibn Chambas**, Minister of Education under the **Jerry Rawlings** government, and Presidential Secretary **Daniel Kufuor Osei**, who was Ghana's Ambassador to **Guinea** during Liberia's first civil war. Few Ghanaians have criticised the government for failing to arrest Taylor after receiving an indictment for him from **Sierra Leone**'s Special Court ahead of Taylor's arrival in Accra for peace talks. Most of the 60,000-strong Liberian refugee community are desperate for an

end to the war and the numbers fleeing **Côte d'Ivoire** continue to rise. Chambas wants better enforcement of embargoes in the region, specifically against small arms traffickers and foreign mercenaries in the employ of Taylor and others.

Akufo-Addo's legal defence of Ghana's failure to enforce the indictment was that it was not issued under a UN Chapter VII mandate (like the tribunals set up to try war crime suspects in **Rwanda** and former **Yugoslavia**). There is no obligation of cooperation with the Special Court under international law: such cooperation is governed by bilateral treaties of mutual assistance which do not recognise hybrid courts such as that sitting in Freetown.

This loophole, which gives primacy to a state's domestic law on immunity for sitting presidents, may be the key to Nigeria's offer of asylum to Taylor. Under present conditions, lawyers argue, he could not be extradited from Nigeria. Yet if the Sierra Leone Special Court secures the Chapter VII mandate, all that could change. Taylor is the first sitting president to have been indicted for war crimes by an international court.

Ghana has kept onside with the Pentagon over immunity for US troops from prosecution by the International Criminal Court. In return for supporting US exemptions under the American Service Members Protection Act, Ghana was one of eleven African countries granted Article 98 waivers exempting them from a suspension of US military assistance. Other sub-regional beneficiaries include **Senegal** – Bush's first stop on his African tour – **Gabon**, **Gambia**, Nigeria and Sierra Leone.

Accra calls up the cavalry

Akufo-Addo has described US participation alongside the planned 3,000-strong ECOWAS peacekeeping force as 'inevitable'; Ghana hopes that the USA will make a substantial contribution to the more than US$100 million needed to sustain the force through the six months before elections are due to be held in Liberia. An additional $100 mn. is required to support a sub-regional force in Côte d'Ivoire through to the next election and Akufo-Addo led the delegation of eight West African foreign ministers who travelled to Europe and the USA seeking financial pledges. Ghana also wants to protect its bilateral US development aid, which was $50 mn. last year.

US military planners maintain enough men and materiel in Ghana to deploy a small rapid expeditionary force. Some 200 soldiers and four US Air Force planes used Ghana as a 'staging area' last September to evacuate trapped American citizens from **Côte d'Ivoire**. Moreover, there is a rotating force of 60 Marines stationed in Ghana.

Military links between Accra and Washington are to deepen with the construction of the **German**-funded **Kofi Annan** Peacekeeping Training Centre, which is nearing completion adjacent to the Ghana Armed Forces Command and Staff College at Teshie. The Centre is designed to become a Regional Centre for Security Studies, training executive level military officers and civilian counterparts on security policy-making.

Joint training began in 1998 with the visit of President **Bill Clinton**, under the African Crisis Response Initiative, which attempted to transfer responsibility for regional security to local armed forces. ACRI's first target was to train up to twelve infantry battalions and six special companies to conduct contingency operations, and 60-strong teams from the US Third Special Forces Group (Airborne) were deployed from bases in Germany for two-month tours in Ghana. ACRI was a State Department initiative to compete with France's *Renforcement des Capacités Africaines de Maintien de la Paix* (Recamp). Recent developments have encouraged more cooperation in West African peacekeeping following the successful deployment of UK forces in Sierra Leone and of French forces in Côte d'Ivoire.

The Pentagon is providing logistical support to the Ghanaian contingent in Côte d'Ivoire. Ghana's role may grow if Bush limits US involvement in Liberia to a small humanitarian mission rather than joining an intervention or peace enforcement force. The 32-strong US military assessment team which landed in Monrovia on Monday was welcomed by war-weary Liberians. Its presence provoked a loud pro-American/anti-government demonstration the next day.

Team leaders stress that the mission is to assess the security environment rather than the military situation. The assessment team is part of the US European Command, responsible for all US military operations in Africa, whose deputy commander, Gen. **Charles F. Wald**, visited Accra in early June, as the peace talks opened, bringing an additional $4 mn. in support for Ghana's peacekeeping efforts.

ECOWAS estimates that some 5,000 troops will be needed in Liberia and hopes that some 2,000 troops from outside the region will be drawn from the USA, **South Africa** and **Morocco** (whose King **Mohamed** VI initiated the stillborn Casablanca peace talks which brought Taylor face to face with some of his neighbours: Sierra Leone's President **Ahmad Tejan Kabbah** and Guinea's President **Lansana Conté**.

UN Secretary General Annan has been encouraging the closer US-Ghana relationship in the hope it will yield a more effective intervention force. No one wants a repeat of the early UN disasters in Sierra Leone's civil war. Even Taylor claims he wants US involvement, arguing that a strong American component would ensure that the force operates 'from a position of neutrality'. That looks to be an uncertain straw for that drowning man to grasp at.

CONGO-KINSHASA

The nearly government

The latest political deal holds out a hope of stabilising the east after five years of horror

The politicians missed the 30 June deadline for a new national government and army. However (under heavy United Nations' pressure) they stitched up a last-minute deal and the presidents are to be sworn in on 17 July. The **Belgian**, **British** and **French** foreign ministers, plus European Union High Representative **Javier Solana** and **Aldo Ajello**, EU Special Representative to the Great Lakes, are expected. The armed forces chief is to be sworn in first, on 14 July, the government is to meet for the first time on 19 July and parliament is to hold its first session on 19 July.

The deal carves up the main posts among the armed factions and leaves out many awkward details (AC Vol 44 No 13). It is far from being workable, especially for the armed forces, but at least (say the exhausted negotiators) it exists. Each agreed post is balanced by one or more deputies from other parties.

Sewing up the hierarchy

The top five government jobs are sewn up: President (since 26 January 2001) **Joseph Kabila**; the Vice-Presidents: **Arthur Zahidi N'goma** (civilian opposition); **Yerodia Abdoulaye Ndombasi** (government); **Jean-Pierre Bemba** (*Mouvement pour la Libération du Congo*); **Azarias Ruberwa** (*Rassemblement Congolais pour la Démocratie-Goma*).

The present government, the RCD-Goma, MLC and the civilian opposition each gets seven ministries. Militia commanders appointed

include **Jean-Pierre Ondekane** (RCD-Goma, Defence Minister), **Roger Lumbala** (RCD-*National* at Foreign Trade); and **Enoch Mbusa Nyamwisi** (RCD-*Mouvement de Libération*, Regional Cooperation). This angers human rights campaigners, who want a Truth and Reconciliation Commission on war crimes and an investigation into how both government and rebels paid for their wars by exploiting mineral and other natural resources.

The key resource and economic ministries have been restructured, with separate ones for Energy and for Mining. **Jean-Louis Nkulu Kitshunku** will no longer run both sectors. Mining goes to **Eugène Diomi Ndongala** from Bas-Congo, a civilian opposition figure allied to the government who was a deputy Finance Minister under the late President **Mobutu Sese Seko**. His deputy at Mining is the ousted Kitshunku, who thus keeps his finger in the pie. Energy goes to **Kalema Lusona** from the government's side. A two-year-old public enterprise, the *Centre d'Evaluation, d'Expertise et de Certification* (CEEC), which was made a parastatal three months ago, headed by **Victor Kasongo**, will continue to evaluate official exports of diamonds, coltan, gold and other minerals; it recently asked Diamonds International **Canada** (Dican) to act as valuers.

Bemba drags his feet

MLC rebel ministers-designate are already in Kinshasa and the RCD-N delegation has arrived. Bemba has not; like Ruberwa, he is due in now on15 July: he has been dragging his feet because he wanted to see a neutral force of 3,000 men in place first. General **Mountaga Diallo** of the UN monitoring force, *Mission des Nations Unies en République Démocratique du Congo*, went to Goma to try to persuade them and we hear that Monuc staff are preparing the necessary accommodation. **Moïse Nyarugabu**, RCD-Goma representative for the follow-up committee, has said the timetable will be respected.

The military is the big headache. The new deal is based on a memorandum worked out in Pretoria on 29 March, when the government made concessions on the top posts: Chief of Staff goes to the government. Head of Ground Forces goes to RCD-Goma, which proposes its own Gen. **Sylvain Buki** from Katanga; one deputy CoS is from the MLC, one from the government. The Navy Commander is from the MLC, with an RCD-Goma deputy. The Air Force Commander is government, his deputy, MLC.

The Military Operations Directorate, determining where and how forces will be used, goes to the MLC with a government deputy; Intelligence goes to the government with an RCD-ML deputy. Administration (finance, law, staff) goes to the MLC with an RCD-N deputy; Logistics (supply, health, policies and planning) to the RCD-Goma, with a MaiMai deputy. No names have been agreed for these commands, whose areas may overlap and which do not directly control any troops. Meanwhile, command of the ten military regions, with their strategic bases – three Air Force, four Naval – is undecided; the government suggests it take six, leaving four to share out between the MLC, RCD-Goma and MaiMai.

At the same time, the RCD-ML is fighting an alliance of small MaiMai factions in the east, claiming RCD-Goma has recently armed them. RCD-Goma is dragging its feet on the troop withdrawal deal it struck in Bujumbura last month and missed a scheduled meeting with the government, RCD-ML and Monuc, which was supposed to verify that all parties were pulling back. The first phase of withdrawal is complete, with two more to go. RCD-Goma has named its senators and members of parliament, several of them from the Kivus, including security chief **Bizima Karaha**; its former boss, **Adolphe Onusumba Yemba**, is one of its eight MPs for Eastern Kasaï.

In Mbuji-Mayi, supporters of the *Union pour la Démocratie et le Progrès Social* have clashed, though relatively mildly, with their opponents. In Bunia, **Thomas Lubanga** organised a demonstration against the new government because it had no place for his *Union des Patriotes Congolais*; **Pétronille Vaweka** of the Ituri Pacification Commission (now renamed the *Assemblée Spéciale Intermédiaire d'Ituri*) has been proposed for parliament by Kabila on the government list and the ASII will presumably help the government to get its tentacles into Ituri.

Swing in Bunia

Foreign interest in Congo's agony has ratcheted up a notch following the UN Security Council trip to the region and the visit to Bunia by the UN's new Special Representative **Bill Swing** on 7 July. Swing said that 3,800 UN peacekeepers would be deployed to Ituri to replace the French-led force scheduled to leave on 1 September. A **United States**' former diplomat, Swing is expected to lobby more effectively for an expansion of the Monuc force than his **Cameroonian** predecessor, **Namanga Ngongi**. The new Monuc contingent would include troops from **Bangladesh** (due to start deploying on 14 July), **Indonesia** and **Nepal**, Swing said.

Tougher action is being urged against the sponsors and beneficiaries of the Congo war. **Rwanda**, **Uganda** and the Kinshasa government are accused in a Human Rights Watch report this week of fuelling the war in Ituri at a cost of 50,000 lives since 1998. Calling for sanctions against foreign powers which arm and supply militias in Congo, the HRW report is sceptical that the latest political deal can work without outside pressure on the combatants. 'Agreements between governments don't do much when the government armies are just passing their guns on to local militias', said HRW's senior Africa Advisor, **Alison DesForges**.

CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

Leaving the door open

The latest strongman needs democratic frontmen to bring aid and recognition

It is a measure of the uncertainty and wariness surrounding the Central African Republic's new government that the **Mozambican** leader explained to the world on 6 July that Bangui was not invited to the African Union summit 'because we did not know who to invite'. President **Joaquim Chissano** attempted to leave the door open but compounded the doubts by adding, 'We are going to wait and see if there is any change in that country by the 10 July'. Major General **François Bozizé**, who seized power in March (AC Vol 44 No 6) but has said he will not stand for President after the transition in 2005, is now seeking to dispel the doubts, largely by surrounding himself with politicians with democratic track-records. The AU officially rejects governments which have seized power by force but has already made plenty of exceptions, so Bozizé can expect to attend the next summit.

One of the more conspicuous of these civilians is **Nicolas Tiangaye**, a 50-year-old lawyer and Chairman of the *Ligue Centrafricaine des Droits de l'Homme*, the national branch of the Paris-based human rights federation, the *Fédération des Ligues des Droits de l'Homme*. He now presides over the transitional parliament, the *Conseil National de Transition*. A campaigner for democracy, he has also recently been a defence lawyer at the International Tribunal on **Rwanda** in **Tanzania**. Many moons earlier, he was on the legal team that defended the disgraced former 'Emperor' **Jean-Bedel Bokassa** (head of state 1966-

79), then became legal advisor to a certain Gen. Bozizé, who was gaoled under the military dictator **André Kolingba** (1981-1993).

As Tiangaye was winning transitional approval in Bangui, the Prime Minister, Professor **Abel Goumba** (70), was in Brussels, sounding out the European Union on the chances of resuming aid. Goumba has a solid record of opposition to Bokassa, to Gen. Kolingba and to President **Ange-Félix Patassé**, whom Bozizé overthrew. However, unlike his predecessors, Patassé was twice elected in reasonably credible polls, the latest just three years ago. He was certainly ineffectual and had dubious financial connections but neither the EU nor the International Monetary Fund and World Bank can seem to condone the coup which overthrew him.

Immediately after his coup, Bozizé named Goumba as Premier, hoping to exploit his credibility both as a genuine opposition leader and as a member of the Socialist International with good contacts in **France**. There, Patassé has long been heartily disliked. His latest offence was to form an alliance with **Jean-Pierre Bemba**, leader of the *Mouvement pour la Libération du **Congo*** and a bitter opponent of both Congo-Kinshasa's President **Joseph Kabila** and President **Idriss Déby** of **Chad**. Déby helped to overthrow Patassé because he had given refuge to southern Chadian rebels (including **Abdoulaye Miskine**). Déby's troops were the main force in Bozizé's successful rebellion: we hear Ndjamena's *Garde Présidentielle* dispatched some 2,000 troops, well supplied with arms and vehicles. Early last month, **Sudan**'s National Islamic Front government also sent weapons to shore up Bozizé, we understand. Khartoum has long used the CAR for its rear bases against the Sudan People's Liberation Army. Now it hopes to use its neighbour as a launch pad against the Sudan Liberation Army in Darfur. It is also competing with Chad and a joint security agreement among the three governments was announced last week.

Bad relations between Chad and CAR over border security, with each country denying responsibility for the attacks on the other's frontier villages, have moved up the strategic agenda, given Chad's growing importance as a regional oil economy. As difficulties between the two powers are likely to become more acute as Chad's economy booms with its sudden oil income and CAR remains dependent on a problematic deal with Western donors to prevent economic collapse and more instability. Ousted President Patassé had embarked on enough halting economic reforms to bring in a donor lifeline. Now with Africa's own political club, the African Union, censoring Bozizé's violent seizure of power, any substantive donor support looks improbable.

Brazzaville bonus

Without more orthodox financial and technical help from outside, donors worry that CAR is at risk of 'collapse'. The horror of Congo-K could spread, they fear. CAR's borders are impossible to defend, especially where they divide groups of people who share the same language and culture. Azande-speaking people live on both sides of parts of the Sudan-CAR border – not the part Khartoum controls – and trade in food, fighters, weapons and cannabis flows freely across it. Further north, in much of eastern CAR, the local Sango language is rapidly being replaced by Sudanese languages from Darfur. The Ubangi River forms much of the border with Congo-K, on both banks of which live the Gbandji and Gbaka people among whom Bemba's MLC draws its support.

Congo-Brazzaville is also affected because, under Patassé, supporters of Congolese ex-President **Pascal Lissouba** (including **Victor Tamba-Tamba**, **Norbert Moungounga Nguila Kombo** and Colonel **Ibala**) used the CAR forest towns of Boda and Nola as bases for infiltrating against President **Denis Sassou-Nguesso**'s forces around Oyo. Patassé's election campaign in 1999 was partly financed by President **Paul Biya** of **Cameroon**, with discreet backing from France. A key figure in these manoeuvres was Col. **Hamadi Guerandi**, a refugee in Ouagadougou carrying a **Libyan** passport.

Cross-border complications explain why the *Communauté Economique et Monétaire de l'Afrique Centrale* (CEMAC), whose current Chairman is Congo-B President Sassou-Nguesso, held an emergency meeting in Libreville, **Gabon**, in early June. Despite the AU's anti-coup resolution of the year 2000, CEMAC members agreed to recognise the new regime in Bangui and to extend it an emergency loan of 5 billion CFA francs (US$8.6 million), approved by French Minister for Cooperation **Pierre-André Wiltzer**.

Paris reckoned that an embargo on CAR would make matters worse, that Patassé had survived for so long thanks only to armed backing from Bemba and a group of French mercenaries under **Paul Barril** and that the uprising against him could be described as a 'people's insurrection', not a *coup d'état*. (French external intelligence, the *Direction Générale de la Sécurité Extérieure*, attributes the overthrow of Patassé to foreign mercenaries backed by Chad and believes that only about 100 of the men were CAR citizens). In fact the military strength of the rising was provided by at least 300 rebel soldiers of CAR's army, commanded by Bozizé, with support from Chad.

Paris and Bozizé

Paris does not wholly approve of Bozizé. In March, after the coup, Presidents **Jacques Chirac** of France and **Omar Bongo** of Gabon at first wanted to expel him from Bangui but Sassou and Déby argued strongly for recognising him as ruler – especially since the people of the capital happily celebrated Patassé's overthrow. Now the governments of Chad, Gabon and France hope to win international recognition of the new regime by using Goumba as its acceptable face. He promises that the constitution will come into force again within two years and an elected president will replace Bozizé, a soldier who has never been elected to anything.

Bozizé comes from Ouham in the north (as did Patassé's first wife, **Lucienne**). He was a logistics officer under Bokassa and Defence Minister under his successor, Kolingba, until, in a broadcast in 1982, he called for Kolingba's overthrow on tribal grounds. Under protection from France and Chad, he went into a succession of exiles in France, Libya, **Benin**, Congo-B and **Burkina Faso**, until armed mercenaries kidnapped him in Benin in 1989 and took him to his own country. He was saved from execution thanks to Tiangaye and the present Foreign Minister, **Abdou Karim Meckassoua**, then came bottom of the poll in the 1993 election, which Patassé won.

In 1997 Patassé, under attack by southern Yakoma soldiers loyal to Kolingba, appealed to Bozizé to rescue the people of the northern plains and made him Chief of Staff. In September 2001, another coup against Patassé failed and Bozizé was suspected of organising it. Again he went into exile, only to return for his latest adventure.

Nobody knows whether Bozizé, CAR's real ruler despite the democratic trappings, will encourage the transition to democracy or hold on to power for himself. The fact that he stood for the presidency a decade ago suggests that he's not averse to the notion of running the country. The governments in Ndjamena and Brazzaville (both originally the products of military coups) would probably prefer him to stay on as military ruler. In **Belgium**, EU officials are reluctant to accept his assurances of a democratic transition. In Bangui, people expect that if a presidential election is held in 2005, the candidates would be all too familiar: Goumba, ex-Presidents **David Dacko** (1966-79, 1979-81) and Kolingba, ex-Prime Minister **Jean-Paul Ngoupandé** and Bozizé himself – with the power and resources of the state behind him.

BOTSWANA

Mogae plays the Khama card

Traditional leadership and diamond money keep a stable democracy going

Botswana's democratic reputation rests on its constitution, whereby the president is chosen by the governing Botswana Democratic Party and duly voted into office by the elected parliament. Thanks to a recent constitutional amendment, the vice-president, also picked by the BDP, automatically succeeds if anything happens to the top man, so is strongly placed to become president himself at the end of the incumbent's two five-year terms. The present team, President **Festus Gontebanye Mogae** and the Vice-President, Lieutenant General **Seretse Ian Khama**, will use the BDP congress in Gantsi on 20-21 July to entrench their position against their party critics.

The leading critics are the BDP's Chairman, **Ponatshego Kedikilwe**, who resigned from the cabinet shortly after the 1999 elections, and its Secretary General, **Daniel Kwelagobe**, who controls the party apparatus. Kedikilwe resented being passed over for the vice-presidency in favour of Ian Khama when Mogae succeeded Sir **Quett Ketumile Masire** as President in 1998.

After five years of feuding the party bosses and the presidential team are at odds and the pro-Mogae faction – headed by the Foreign Affairs Minister, Lt. Gen. (Retired) **Mompati Merafhe**, and Commerce and Industry Minister **Jacob Nkate** – thinks the way to close the gap is by Khama replacing Kedikilwe as head of the BDP. However, if Kedikilwe can now defeat the Mogae-Khama team in a party vote, he would be in full control of the party during the legislative elections in October 2004 and he'd be pretty sure of the presidency.

Diamond axis

Meanwhile Mogae's government is strengthening its ties with the **United States** and President **George W. Bush** will call at Gaborone during his first African tour, on 7-12 July – when he also visits **Nigeria**, **Senegal**, **South Africa** and **Uganda** (AC Vol 44 No 11). Bush did Botswana a favour in April, by speedily signing into law the Clean Diamond Trade Act. Botswana is the world's biggest gem-stone producer and the USA the biggest customer for the stones; the new act ensures implementation of the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme intended to keep 'conflict diamonds' which are war booty off the official market. The Debswana Diamond Company (Debswana), a 50:50 joint venture between the government and the De Beers group, runs a public relations campaign under the slogan 'Diamonds for Development'. It earned more than 80 per cent of the country's total exports (worth US$2.4 billion) in 2002.

In exchange for the diamond favour, the US is said to have an active presence at a large military base completed north of Gaborone by the Botswana Defence Force (BDF) in the mid-1990s. There are reports that the base is part of a covert US regional monitoring operation and **Nathan Shamuyarira**, Publicity Secretary of **Zimbabwe**'s ruling Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front apparently told a rally in Bulawayo that the USA was planning to use Botswana to effect 'regime change' in Zimbabwe. (Zimbabwe's High Commissioner in Gaborone, **Phelekezela Mphoko**, made an unprovoked assault on the Botswana journalist who reported the claim.) Mogae's government openly hopes that President **Robert Mugabe**'s regime will be replaced by a representative government that includes the opposition Movement for Democratic Change.

Yet foreign relations play no part in the BDP's internal wrangling. Mogae recently told the BDP women's wing that he fully supported Khama's decision to challenge Kedikilwe but believed the party leadership poll could be carried out in a dignified and comradely fashion. His wish may not be granted. Mogae is seen overseas as corruption-free and competent but at home he is seen as remote and lacking in charisma.

Khama is a far more intriguing figure. Two years ago he took a mysterious one-year sabbatical, during which his job as Presidential Affairs and Public Administration Minister was filled by Kwelagobe, now his adversary. Khama has not since then shown much political skill or gained much open support in the governing party but relies on his name and inheritance as the only son of the late, revered first head of state, Sir **Seretse Khama**, and his English wife **Ruth**. From Seretse he inherited the paramount chieftaincy of the largest Tswana group, the Bamangwato, whose area in north-central Botswana covers about half of the 40 constituencies in the National Assembly. Some traditionalists question his position as Bamangwato leader, though, as he has no children and says he is unlikely to marry.

Khama's urban appeal is less evident, especially since the voting age was lowered from 21 to 18 at the last elections; most voters are too young to remember Sir Seretse, who died in 1980. Yet big business is expected to pour money into the Khama campaign and his victory would do wonders for the BDP's funds.

Stalking horse

The Kedikiliwe-Kwelagobe faction has an alternative strategy, which is to create a new post of BDP vice-president for Kedikilwe, who would then withdraw his challenge for the chair. Supporters of Mogae and Khama oppose this, seeing that it would give their opponents the decisive say in selecting party candidates for the Assembly.

Whatever happens, the BDP congress will overshadow the rival congress the same month at Letlhakeng, held by the main opposition party, the Botswana National Front. **Otswoletse Moupo**, who took over as BNF President two years ago, has made little impact; a faction in the party still supports his predecessor, **Kenneth Koma**, and Moupo has not negotiated any deal with the Botswana Congress Party of **Michael Dingake**, who split from the BNF in 1998 because of disagreements with Koma. In 1999, the BNF took 26 per cent of the vote but only six seats, including three of the four in Gaborone; senior party figures are now struggling to be nominated for constituencies in the capital, where they stand at least some chance of election.

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Pointers

USA/MALAWI

Kidnapped I

Churches, the governing United Democratic Front, the United States' Save the Children Fund and the Muslim Association of Malawi were early casualties of Malawi's 'war on terrorism'. Muslim crowds attacked them after police arrested five foreign citizens and handed them to US officials, who claimed they were linked to *Al Qaida*. Two days later on 23 June, the five were apparently flown to US facilities in **Botswana** (see Pointer).

The High Court had ordered Director of Public Prosecutions **Fahad Assani** to bring the suspects on 25 July. 'Who can I produce in court now, their ghosts? These people are out of reach. The Americans know where they are', said Assani, a Muslim; he said Malawi had no case against them.

Many Muslims blame the Muslim Association of Malawi (MAM) for failing to protect its guests: **Mahmud Sardar Issa**, **Sudanese**, head, Zakat Fund Trust in Blantyre; **Fahad Ral Bahli**, **Saudi Arabian**, local Director, Prince **Sultan bin Abdul Aziz** Special Committee on Relief; **Khalifa Abdi Hassan**, **Kenyan**, an Islamic scholar employed by the MAM; and two **Turkish** nationals, **Arif Ulusam**, a Blantyre restaurant owner, and **Ibrahim Itabaci**, a director of Bedir International School. The MAM Secretary General, **Ronald Mangani**, said that when he heard of the arrests, he promptly rushed to the police, then hired the legal team which obtained the High Court injunction.

President **Bakili Muluzi**, a Muslim with core support among his co-religionists (some eight per cent of Malawians), ordered the arrest of anyone instigating religious violence. Police Inspector General **Joseph Aironi**, a Muslim, said his men had arrested at least eleven people, most of them acting in ignorance: 'They do not know what happened in Nairobi, Kenya and Dar es Salaam in **Tanzania** and we will not tolerate any terrorist elements to use the country as a hiding place', he said referring to Islamist bombings of US and **Israeli** targets which killed mainly Africans.

The suspects' lead lawyer, **Shabir Latif**, is usually a staunch Muluzi supporter. He said the government had violated its own constitution by failing to obey the High Court order. Amnesty International said: 'Once again it seems that the US may have been involved in a transfer which circumvents basic human rights protections and national law'. Yet Muluzi's government cannot afford to join others (including **Britain**'s) which complain that their citizens in US custody should enjoy the full protection of the law, whatever crimes they are suspected of.

USA/BOTSWANA

Kidnapped II

Just in time for President **George W. Bush**'s visit to Gaberone on 10 July, a row has blow up over allegations that five suspected supporters of *Al Qaida* were kidnapped in **Malawi** by US security agents after being handed over by Malawian security on 21 June and flown to Botswana for questioning. They are expected to be taken to the Guantanamo Bay detention centre, say US sources.

The five detainees, who are said to include a two-star general in the **Saudi Arabian** army with close ties to a senior member of the Riyadh government, were being held at the Botswana Defence Force's air base at Molepolole, some 130 kilometres north-west of Gaborone. The Molepolole air base has been mired in controversy since *Africa Confidential* reported in 1992 on plans for its construction, known as 'Operation Eagle, and on bilateral access agreements with the USA. It cost about 1 billion Pula (US$200 million) with **South African** and **French** contractors doing most of the work, finishing it in 1993-94.

Then the Molepolole base was described as a key listening and staging post for US officials monitoring South Africa's transition to majority rule. Such claims were explicitly denied by US officials in correspondence with *Africa Confidential*. In April, Assistant Secretary of State for Africa **Walter Kansteiner** III visited Gaborone, partly to prepare for the Bush visit and also, it is said, to renew an access agreement to the Molepolole base for US forces.

The claim that the five *Al Qaida* suspects were spirited from Malawi to Botswana was first made by BBC reporter **Raphael Tenthani** but has been vigorously denied by President **Festus Mogae** himself. Denying there was any US base in Botswana, a government spokesperson said Mogae had complained that the story 'emanates from a single journalist's alleged conversation with an undisclosed intelligence official'.

Zimbabwean intelligence agents have seized on the story as evidence of an unholy alliance between Mogae's government (which has been openly critical of President **Robert Mugabe**) and **British**/US forces trying to destabilise the Harare government. President Bush's visit to Gaborone will do nothing to diminish the furore.

ZAMBIA

The Fund's no fun

President **Levy Mwanawasa**'s government agreed a budget for 2003 with the International Monetary Fund and overspent it by 612 billion kwacha; the IMF's man in Lusaka, **Mark Ellyne**, says it therefore will not release the US$100 million conditionally pledged to support the agreed deficit. Deputy Finance Minister **Mbita Chitala** said the Fund was trying to create instability; it was already rushing the government to privatise the Zambia Electricity Supply Corporation and the Zambia National Commercial Bank (ZNCB), with help from the World Bank's soft-loan subsidiary, the International Finance Corporation.

A month after sacking his last Finance Minister, **Emmanuel Kasonde** (AC Vol 44 No 12), Mwanawasa has picked **N'gandu Peter Magande**, who accompanied him on a recent visit to Washington and is said to disapprove of the Bank and Fund. Magande served in the Finance Ministry under ex-President **Kenneth Kaunda**, then as permanent secretary in various other ministries, before becoming managing director of the now-controversial ZNCB and finally Secretary General of the African Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) states. In 2000, he apparently retired, at the age of 53. He may regret being recalled to duty.

ZIMBABWE

Get a move on

'It's the clock. The time for me is up... it's time to move on'. Thus **Charles Utete** explained his retirement in April. President **Robert Mugabe**, who at 79 is 15 years older, said his departure left 'an acute sense of anxiety, wistfulness, ending, loss, emptiness and even desertion'. On 25 February 1981, under the then Prime Minister Mugabe, Utete became Cabinet Secretary; in 1987, Mugabe became Executive President and Utete became Chief Secretary to the President and Cabinet. Utete rarely appeared at party functions or public events. His discretion won respect and some hoped his retirement would be a sign to other public servants – and to his political master – that time was up. With a master's degree from the **United States** and a doctorate from **Canada**, he was regarded as a perfectionist, drafting solid speeches and understanding Mugabe's mind.

Now Utete has been given his retirement job – chairing the Land Review Commission. Three months ago, a junior minister responsible for land reform, **Flora Buka**, presented a land audit report which alleged that officials had benefited from the reform programme. The job of Utete's Commission is 'unearthing existing inconsistencies and anomalies and recommending corrective action', looking at multiple farm ownership, maximum farm size, land swaps and the thorny issue of farms seized from **South African** citizens, who have complained to their own government. Mugabe has pledged that land acquired irregularly would be repossessed. Onlookers remember that Utete is closely related to President Mugabe's wife, **Grace Marufu**.