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16:01:32 10

WITNESS: TF1-579 [Resworn]

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PRESIDING JUDGE: Mr Griffiths, I think you will be
12 cross-examining this witness. Is that correct?

13

MR GRIFFITHS: Yes, I will be cross-examining this witness,
14 your Honour.

16:02:48 15

PRESIDING JUDGE: Please proceed.

16

CROSS-EXAMINATION BY MR GRIFFITHS:

17

Q. Mr Witness, you will not have seen me before, but I am
18 asking you questions on behalf of your former President, Charles
19 Taylor. Do you appreciate that?

16:03:14 20

A. Yes.

21

Q. Now, as I understand it, you were born in July 1972,
22 weren't you?

23

A. Yes.

24

Q. It means that at the start of the conflict in Liberia you
25 would have been 17/18?

16:03:37 25

26

A. I was at the age of 18.

27

Q. Now, your family had had cause to flee to the Ivory Coast,
28 hadn't they?

29

A. Yes, because of the war.

1 Q. Now, because of your position in the Ivory Coast, and as a
2 result of what you were told, you made a decision to join the
3 NPFL, didn't you?

16:04:28

4 A. Yes, I made that decision to join the NPFL because of a
5 reason.

6 Q. Now, you would have been 18 when you made that decision.
7 Is that right?

8 A. Yes.

16:04:50

9 Q. And prior to that, if I understand what you told the Court
10 on the transcript, you had attended school up to 10th grade,
11 hadn't you?

12 A. Yes, I was promoted to 10th.

13 Q. And no doubt you were promoted because you showed great
14 promise whilst at school?

16:05:17

15 A. Say that again.

16 Q. No doubt you were promoted because you showed great promise
17 at school?

18 A. Yes.

16:05:41

19 Q. And to have reached the 10th grade in the late 1980s in
20 Liberia was quite an achievement, wasn't it?

21 A. Yes.

22 Q. You would have been part of a minority in the country who
23 had had such a benefit, am I right?

24 A. Such benefit?

16:06:05

25 Q. Such a benefit of being educated to the 10th grade?

26 A. Yes, yes.

27 Q. And so just so that we understand, the person who made that
28 decision in 1990 to join the NPFL, firstly did so quite
29 willingly. Is that right?

1 A. Oh, yes, I just stated it that I joined the NPFL because of
2 a reason.

3 Q. And not only did that person join willingly, the person who
4 made that conscious decision was, by Liberian standards, fairly
16:06:57 5 well-educated, am I right?

6 A. Yes.

7 Q. Because your father had been an official under the Doe
8 regime, hadn't he?

9 A. Yes, my father was an immigration in the Doe regime.

16:07:23 10 Q. I don't understand that. What do you mean by your father
11 was an immigration?

12 A. Yes, you asked if he was an official. I said he was at
13 immigration working with the Doe government.

14 Q. All right. And in what capacity within the immigration
16:07:46 15 department?

16 MR KOU MJIAN: Excuse me, your Honour. This was one area I
17 believe we wanted to cover in private session on that particular
18 question. It may be unique.

19 PRESIDING JUDGE: So what is your application, Mr Koumjian?
16:08:07 20 The matter has already been asked and answered.

21 MR KOU MJIAN: No, it has not been answered, I don't
22 believe. The question was in what capacity.

23 PRESIDING JUDGE: I see. It is that rather than the line
24 of questioning.

16:08:19 25 MR KOU MJIAN: Yes, I leave it to counsel whether he wants
26 to go into private session now or save it for later, whatever he
27 prefers.

28 MR GRIFFITHS: I will save it for later. Thank you.

29 Q. In any event, your father was a Gio, wasn't he?

1 A. Yes.

2 Q. And the Doe government was dominated by Krahn's, wasn't it?

3 A. Yes.

16:08:49 4 Q. And the Doe government favoured the Krahn's over other
5 ethnic groups in Liberia, didn't it?

6 A. Yes.

7 Q. And also, that hatred generated by the Doe government was
8 made worse by certain things they did in Nimba County following a
9 failed coup, am I right?

16:09:19 10 A. Yes.

11 Q. What did they do in Nimba County?

12 A. They killed a whole lot of Nimbanians, the Krahn group.

13 Q. And the people from Nimba who were killed, were they from a
14 particular tribe?

16:09:48 15 A. Yes. In Nimba County we had the Gio and the Mano and it
16 was the Gio and Mano that were affected.

17 Q. And your father's position, as a civil servant in a
18 government dominated by Krahn's, but Gio by ethnicity, did that
19 cause him difficulty?

16:10:19 20 A. Yes, it caused him difficulties.

21 Q. And did it cause you personally difficulties?

22 A. Yes.

23 Q. So it is against that background, is it, that we should
24 look at your decision to volunteer to join the NPFL, am I right?

16:10:50 25 A. Yes.

26 Q. Now, when you volunteered to join the NPFL, you knew that
27 it was a military organisation, didn't you?

28 A. Yes. From my statement at the beginning I told the Court
29 that I was - I was really enthused and the people encouraged me,

1 the Special Forces encouraged us in the Ivory Coast before we
2 would go to Gborplay to join. That was what I said in my
3 statement.

16:11:35 4 Q. I am perfectly aware of that, and I am grateful for you for
5 repeating it, but what I am anxious to know about is this: You
6 knew, when you joined the NPFL, that it was a military
7 organisation you were joining, didn't you?

8 A. Yes, it was a rebel.

16:11:53 9 Q. And you knew, by the very nature of that organisation, that
10 there was a possibility that you might lose your life?

11 A. Of course, yes.

12 Q. So when you joined the NPFL you joined it voluntarily,
13 knowing that there was a real possibility of you being killed in
14 that cause, am I right?

16:12:20 15 A. Well, when you say voluntarily, I continued to say that I
16 was encouraged by the Special Forces who came to the Ivory Coast.
17 They were the ones who encouraged us to go and join and we knew
18 that we were going on battle.

16:12:40 19 Q. But the point I am making is this: Did anyone, please tell
20 us, hold a gun to your head and force you to walk to the training
21 camp to be trained? Did anyone do that?

22 A. No, no, I was not forced from Ivory Coast to go to the
23 base.

16:13:00 24 Q. So can I take it that the Special Forces who spoke to you
25 were very persuasive in explaining to you the cause for which
26 they were fighting and why you ought to join?

27 A. Yes, they came at the - to the area where we stayed and
28 they encouraged us that the Krahn had been embarrassing the Gios
29 and the Manos, so for that reason we had to fight for our right.

1 So many of us were able to go to the base at that time.

2 Q. And you thought that it was a cause worth fighting for and
3 possibly even dying for, is that right?

16:13:45

4 THE INTERPRETER: Your Honours, can counsel kindly repeat
5 his question, please.

6 THE WITNESS: I have not got that.

7 PRESIDING JUDGE: Just pause, Mr Witness, please.

8 Mr Griffiths, you have heard the interpreter's request.

9 MR GRIFFITHS: I will repeat the question:

16:13:55

10 Q. My question is this: And when you listened to those
11 Special Forces officers who persuaded you, you thought that the
12 cause you were joining was a good cause and one worth dying for.
13 Am I right?

16:14:18

14 A. Yes, yes, at this time I knew that it was a very good cause
15 for me because my people had been killed and I was going to fight
16 for my right too.

17 Q. Because that regime you were now pledged to overthrow was a
18 brutal and wicked regime, wasn't it, the Doe regime?

19 A. Yes.

16:14:47

20 Q. Now can you remind me, please, of the name of the training
21 camp to which you were taken?

22 A. Yes, Gborplay.

23 Q. And for how long were you trained at that camp?

24 A. I was on the base for three months.

16:15:16

25 Q. And I think you have told us that one of your training
26 commanders was one Benjamin Yeaten.

27 A. Yes, Benjamin trained me in an area. He was one of the
28 training commanders in a special training which they called
29 halaka.

1 Q. What's that?

2 A. It's something that they built with rocks and with sand in
3 it. You go in there and run round it for more than four hours.
4 That's what they called halaka. Benjamin Yeaten specialised in
16:16:03 5 that at the base.

6 PRESIDING JUDGE: Can I say for purposes of record that the
7 witness has made a circular indication with his hand when
8 referring to how halaka was built.

9 MR GRIFFITHS: Defining a circle. I fully agree with that.

16:16:18 10 JUDGE SEBUTINDE: Mr Interpreter, was that racks or rocks?

11 THE WITNESS: Rocks. It was built with rocks, big rocks.
12 They put it round and they put barbed wire around it. That
13 barbed wire was put around it and sand in the centre. People had
14 to run inside it.

16:16:39 15 MR GRIFFITHS:

16 Q. And help me. Roughly how many recruits were at that camp
17 when you were there?

18 A. No, no, no, we were many. I do not know the total.

19 Q. Are we talking about 100, 200, or what?

16:16:58 20 A. More than that.

21 Q. Perhaps a thousand?

22 A. Yes, but I do not know the number. We were many on the
23 base at that time. I do not know the total number of recruits.

24 Q. And would it be fair to say that the vast majority of the
16:17:16 25 recruits were drawn from the Gio and Mano ethnic groups?

26 A. It was - at that time there were some Ivorians there, Gios,
27 Mano and they had some Gambians like my instructor, the late
28 Domingo, Lami ni ^ , the late Jack the Rebel and even the late
29 Mayo Putu ^ . Many of them.

1 Q. And as far as you were aware, those recruits undergoing
2 training at that camp, were they all volunteers like yourself?

3 A. No, I only knew about myself. Some of them who came to the
4 base at that time from the Ivory Coast, the SBUs, the small
16:18:15 5 children that came at the base, I did not know whether they
6 forced them or not.

7 Q. Let's leave SBUs out of the picture. The other adults that
8 you met on the base, were they all volunteers?

9 A. That is what I am telling you. I know about myself, but I
16:18:42 10 did not know about the other people. Because during the training
11 we had platoons, we had a company, we were in different sections,
12 so I did not know about the other people, whether they forced
13 them or not. I do not know.

14 Q. Let me just ask you about the ones in your platoon then.
16:18:59 15 Were they forced?

16 A. During the training I was --

17 THE INTERPRETER: Your Honours, can he kindly repeat this
18 answer.

19 PRESIDING JUDGE: Mr Witness, the interpreter is trying to
16:19:09 20 keep up with you and he needs you to repeat your answer where you
21 said, "During the training I was --" Please continue from there.

22 THE WITNESS. I said during the training in my platoon at
23 that time nobody could ask his friend whether he was forced or
24 not. We only focused on the training.

16:19:37 25 MR GRIFFITHS:

26 Q. Why couldn't you ask?

27 A. Everybody was busy thinking about himself. Nobody could
28 ask whether he was forced or not.

29 Q. But wouldn't you agree with me that it would be a natural

1 and very human enquiry to make?

2 A. That is what I keep telling you. At that time I only
3 focused on my training.

4 Q. Now, at that time whilst you were in that camp being
16:20:15 5 trained, did you hear of another training place called Camp
6 Naama?

7 A. I only heard about Camp Naama when I left Gborplay.

8 Q. When did you first hear of Camp Naama?

9 A. I heard about Camp Naama in Bomi Hills.

16:20:55 10 Q. How long after your training was that?

11 A. After my training - after my training it took me about a
12 month before I could hear about Camp Naama.

13 Q. Would I be right that that would mean that you knew about
14 Camp Naama in 1990?

16:21:29 15 A. Yes, yes.

16 Q. And when you then heard about Camp Naama, what did you
17 hear?

18 A. I heard about a troop standing by. A troop that had
19 already been trained standing by to go to Sierra Leone to fight.

16:22:12 20 Q. Yes, and what did that troop have to do with Camp Naama?

21 A. Repeat the question.

22 Q. Yes. What did Camp Naama have to do with that troop?

23 A. Yes, that was where they were trained and they were
24 standing by.

16:22:42 25 Q. And those troops who had been trained at Camp Naama, from
26 which country had they come?

27 A. Most of them that I knew at that time were all Liberians.

28 Q. So as you understood it in 1990, Camp Naama was a training
29 camp for Liberians. Is that right?

1 A. Yes.

2 Q. Now, following your training you then became a bodyguard,
3 didn't you?

4 A. Yes.

16:23:52 5 Q. And you became a bodyguard to a senior soldier in the NPFL.
6 Is that right? I am deliberately not calling his name. Have you
7 noticed that?

8 A. Yes, yes.

9 Q. And following your assignment as a bodyguard to that man
16:24:16 10 you were sent to Bomi Hills, weren't you?

11 A. Yes, I went with him.

12 Q. From Bomi Hills, just to trace your movements, you were
13 then assigned to Buchanan, weren't you?

14 A. No, from Buchanan to Bomi Hills.

16:24:41 15 Q. Okay. And then from Bomi Hills to Gbarnga, is that right?

16 A. From Bomi Hills to Maryland.

17 Q. From Maryland to where?

18 A. From Maryland to Gbarnga.

19 Q. And you spent somewhere in the region of five years in
16:25:07 20 Gbarnga, didn't you? Between 1992 to 1997, am I right?

21 A. Yes, yes.

22 Q. And during all your time in Buchanan, in Bomi Hills, in
23 Gbarnga, you were a bodyguard, weren't you?

24 A. Yes.

16:25:38 25 JUDGE SEBUTINDE: Mr Griffiths, could you kindly repeat the
26 years that were not recorded, please.

27 MR GRIFFITHS:

28 Q. You spent 1992 to 1997, those five years, in Gbarnga,
29 didn't you?

1 A. Yes.

2 Q. And throughout that time you were a bodyguard, weren't you?

3 A. Yes.

4 Q. And for all of that time you were a bodyguard at the

16:26:15 5 Executive Mansion in Gbarnga, weren't you?

6 A. Yes, first in Gbarnga I was with --

7 THE INTERPRETER: Your Honours, can I repeat the name?

8 PRESIDING JUDGE: The interpreter has indicated that a name
9 has been mentioned. Mr Koumjian?

16:26:39 10 MR KOUMJIAN: I don't believe the name of anyone that he
11 was a bodyguard is necessary to put into private session. We did
12 not do that in the direct examination. There was one position -
13 particular position - within that, the first assignment, that was
14 unique and we put that into private session only.

16:26:56 15 PRESIDING JUDGE: Very well. Mr Interpreter, please repeat
16 the name and that will be on the record.

17 THE INTERPRETER: Your Honours, can he then repeat his
18 answer.

19 PRESIDING JUDGE: Mr Witness, please repeat your answer.

16:27:09 20 You have heard the question. Do you need the question repeated?

21 THE WITNESS: I said in Gbarnga I first took assignment
22 with General Yeaten before going for training.

23 MR GRIFFITHS:

24 Q. And after training you were assigned to the Executive
16:27:29 25 Mansion, weren't you?

26 A. Yes.

27 Q. Until the elections in 1997 brought Charles Taylor to power
28 in a landslide victory as President of Liberia. Is that right?

29 A. Yes. When I was assigned to the mansion, I came back to

1 General Yeaten before going to Monrovia.

2 Q. And whilst in Monrovia, from the time of the election which
3 we know to be roughly July 1997, through until the end of 1999,
4 for the most part you were attached to the presidential
16:28:19 5 motorcade, weren't you?

6 A. Yes. When we came to Monrovia at the time, when Mr Taylor
7 became president, I took up assignment with the presidential
8 motorcade.

9 Q. And you remained with the presidential motorcade until in
16:28:46 10 late 1999 you were assigned as bodyguard to another man who came
11 from Sierra Leone. Is that right?

12 A. I was not with the motorcade throughout. I was not with
13 the motorcade throughout. Later, General Yeaten called for me
14 again to be with him and I was with him until that particular
16:29:10 15 gentleman you are talking about in '99 arrived in Monrovia.

16 Q. And whilst with Mr Yeaten, you were a bodyguard to him,
17 were you?

18 A. Yes.

19 Q. And you were a bodyguard to this other man who I mentioned,
16:29:31 20 yes?

21 A. Yes, I became bodyguard to him when he crossed and came to
22 Liberia before Yeaten sent me to take assignment with him.

23 Q. Thank you very much. So the very last question I want to
24 ask this afternoon is this: I am asking questions of a man who,
16:29:53 25 from when he joined the NPFL until into the year 2003, throughout
26 his military career was always a bodyguard. That is right, isn't
27 it?

28 A. Say that?

29 Q. The man I am talking to was a bodyguard throughout his

1 military career, is that right?

2 A. Yes, bodyguard and also a fighter and security.

3 Q. But your title throughout that period was bodyguard, is
4 that right?

16:30:39 5 A. Up to 1993 I was not a bodyguard. I was in control of a
6 certain area in '93.

7 Q. Did you do any other job apart from bodyguard for something
8 like 13 years?

9 A. No.

16:31:11 10 MR GRIFFITHS: Thank you. Is that a convenient point,
11 Madam President?

12 PRESIDING JUDGE: It is, Mr Griffiths. We are just up to
13 our normal finishing time and we have been alerted about the
14 tape.

16:31:20 15 Mr Witness, we are going to adjourn for the rest of the
16 day. We will be resuming court at 9.30 tomorrow. I will remind
17 you that you are now under oath and you must not discuss your
18 evidence with any other person. You recall this warning before?

19 I just note that when we reopened court at lunchtime today
16:31:43 20 and I mentioned the passing of the late Justice Fernando we were
21 in private session. That of course is matter for public record
22 and if that particular small snippet could be made public I think
23 it would be appropriate.

24 MR GRIFFITHS: I respectfully agree, Madam President.

16:32:01 25 PRESIDING JUDGE: Thank you. Please adjourn court.

26 [Whereupon the hearing adjourned at 4.32 p.m.
27 to be reconvened on Tuesday, 25 November 2008
28 at 9.30 a.m.]

29