

Military

LIBERIA

Arms Embargo Defied

A Dutch arms dealer is imprisoned for selling weapons to the Taylor regime.

A Dutch court sent a businessman to prison for eight years on June 7th for defying a UN arms embargo on the regime of the former Liberian president, **Charles Taylor**, in another warning that merchants who deal with pariah states will be held accountable for war profiteering.

The man, **Guus Kouwenhoven**, 64, traded guns for logging rights and used his lumber company to smuggle weapons that were used by militias to commit atrocities against civilians in West Africa; the court in The Hague ruled. "These proceedings are setting the international legal precedent that exposes the role played by some businessmen in armed conflicts," said Alex Yearsley of the group **Global Witness**, which helped bring the Kouwenhoven case to the attention of Dutch authorities.

The presiding judge, Roel van Rossum, said Kouwenhoven "contributed significantly to violations of international peace and to the destabilisation and danger in the region around Liberia" which led to "countless victims".

Kouwenhoven "acted only with regard to his financial interests" the judge said, "even though he knew about the embargo".

The ruling said Kouwenhoven imported **AK-47** rifles and rocket-propelled grenades through the port of Buchanan, using the **Oriental Timber Company**, in which he held a 35% stake.

The ruling found he cooperated closely with Taylor, who received 50% of the company's proceeds. Taylor's regime was embargoed by the United Nations in 2001, and Kouwenhoven appeared on a UN travel ban for trading with him.

Prosecutors sought a 20-year sentence, and a spokeswoman, Digna van Boetzelaer, said they also were considering an appeal. They had argued that by providing militias with weapons used to slaughter and maim civilians, Kouwenhoven shared in the guilt for war crimes.

But the court found that Kouwenhoven's links with the crimes were too

far removed, and that witness testimony was unreliable. "The evidence was insufficient to show factual involvement and knowledge" by Kouwenhoven in the commission of war crimes, the court ruled. (AP 8/6) **Arms trade p. 16661**

NIGERIA

Israeli Contract Row

There are complaints about the lack of open bidding.

The row over a \$200m contract won by Israel's **Aeronautics Ventures** to supply aerial drones for use in the Niger Delta coincides with the early June's sacking of National Security Advisor General **Aliyu Mohammed Gusau** by President **Olusegun Obasanjo**. Having quietly launched his own campaign for the 2007 presidential elections, Gusau, a long-time intelligence chief, was seen as unsympathetic to Obasanjo's third-term project (pp. 16642C, 16657C).

Although Israel's **Haaretz** newspaper named former military leader Gen. **Ibrahim Babangida** as "helpful" in persuading his friend Gusau of the merits of the Israeli deal, Gusau strenuously denied any involvement. Relations between Obasanjo and Gusau have deteriorated. Perhaps someone wants to damage Gusau's campaign?

The deal, Israel's biggest with Nigeria, is also unpopular with Israel's ally, the **United States**, whose officials have complained to Nigerian Defence Minister **Rabiu Kwankwaso** about the lack of an open tender. Aeronautics will build six aerial land and sea surveillance systems. They are designed to protect oil rigs and pipelines from Delta militants and could track the illegal bunkering of oil.

Aeronautics beat other more established competitors partly due to its executive board, which includes the ex-Director of the **Whin Bet** intelligence service, **Avigdor (Yanush) Ben Gal**; former directors include the ex-chief of the Israeli Defence Force, **Ammon Lipkin-Shahak**, and another former **Shin Bet** head, **Yaakov Parry**. Aeronautics used well connected Israelis, such as **Alon Nelken**, who worked for the **Solel Boneh** construction company in Nigeria for many years, and is a big investor in Lagos' Mega Plaza shopping mall. Controversially,

Aeronautics sold drones to the **Ivorian** army in 2005; **French** soldiers in Cote d'Ivoire destroyed them. (Africa Confidential 9/6)

SOUTH AFRICA

Technology Spin-Offs

Denel hopes to make money from other hi-tech industries.

The hoped-for Rooivalk gunship deal with **Turkey** may demonstrate that South African arms maker Denel is worth saving for the profits it brings. But a weightier reason may be the long-term benefits that accrue from a core node of military technology with numerous hi-tech industrial spin-offs.

The **ANC** government has been keen not to lose the skills base developed during the conflict-ridden last decades of the apartheid era and has sought to deter top military technicians from going abroad.

Already this is paying off. The rocketry and satellite technology developed at Denel's Houwteq facility in the Southern Cape, where missiles were tested at sea in the 1980s, is to become the basis of a South African Space Agency.

Science and Technology Minister Mosibudi Mangena told MPs on May 26th that space science and astronomy would generate billions of Rands in foreign investment. South Africa's second satellite would be launched in 2006 in a R26bn project, and South Africa is in discussions with **Algeria** and **Nigeria** to develop a cluster of satellites, to be known as the African Resource Management Constellation.

In addition to its well-publicised Sutherland telescope in the Karoo, South Africa is bidding to host the R41.5bn international Square Kilometre Array (SKA) radio telescope, Mangena said. This could translate into foreign investment of R9bn. Once completed, the SKA will be the largest radio telescope in the world.

South Africa had also signed bilateral agreements with the **Russian** Space Agency, which may launch satellites from South Africa. It has also signed partnership and co-operation agreements with the European Space Agency and NASA (The National Aeronautics and Space Administration) in the US.

South Africa's missile technology was developed in alliance with **Israel** and in May it was finally confirmed that the two countries had carried out a joint nuclear test in 1979 in the northern Antarctic. At the time, the Jimmy