

Beat: Politics

Former Liberian President Moses Blah dead at 65

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USPA News - Moses Blah, who served as Liberia's president for about two months after leader Charles Taylor stepped down to seek exile in Nigeria, died Monday in the capital Monrovia, a presidential spokesperson confirmed on Tuesday. He was 65 years old.

Blah had been receiving treatment at John F. Kennedy Medical Center in Monrovia for an undisclosed medical condition, reported to be either a lung illness or heart problems. He was pronounced dead just after 7 a.m. local time on Monday after suffering cardiac arrest, a hospital spokesperson said. A spokesperson for the office of Liberian President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf confirmed Blah's death in a brief e-mail. "It's confirm (sic) that he is dead," the spokesperson said in response to an inquiry, giving no other details. The country's Ministry of Information, Culture & Tourism did not respond to repeated requests. Following the death of Vice President Enoch Dogolea in June 2000, Taylor appointed the relatively unknown Blah as his deputy. Taylor, after being indicted for war crimes and crimes against humanity by the UN-backed Special Court for Sierra Leone (SCSL), eventually accepted an exile offer from then-Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo. Taylor announced his resignation on national television in August 2003 and handed power to Blah, who had been relieved of his post as vice president just months earlier after allegations arose that he intended to seize power through the influence of the U.S. Embassy. He denied the allegations and was eventually reinstated. Blah served as Liberia's president for about two months before handing over power to Gyude Bryant, who led a transitional government. In April 2012, Taylor was convicted on all counts of an 11-count indictment which alleged that he was responsible for crimes committed by rebel forces during Sierra Leone's ten-year-long civil war. He was sentenced to 50 years in prison.

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Editorial program service of General News Agency:

United Press Association, Inc.
3651 Lindell Road, Suite D168
Las Vegas, NV 89103, USA
(702) 943.0321 Local
(702) 943.0233 Facsimile
info@unitedpressassociation.org
info@gna24.com
www.gna24.com