

LIBERIA: UNEVEN PROGRESS IN SECURITY SECTOR REFORM

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LIBERIA: UNEVEN PROGRESS IN SECURITY SECTOR REFORM

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Since independence and for fourteen years of war, Liberia's army, police and other security agencies have mostly been sources of insecurity and misery for a destitute people. The internationally driven attempt to radically reform the security sector since the war's end in 2003 is a major chance to put this right and prevent new destabilisation. Security sector reform (SSR) programs have been unprecedented in ambition but with mixed results. Army reform, entailing complete disbanding of existing forces, has made significant progress despite lack of proper oversight of private military companies (PMCs) and of consensus on strategic objectives. But police and other security reforms are much less satisfactory. The bold approach to army reform was possible due to strong national consensus and the presence of a large, liberally mandated UN presence. Government and donors must sustain their support to maintain hard-won momentum in army reform and, once clear benchmarks are set, give a floundering police force more resources. The drawdown of the UN force, begun in the second half of 2008, underlines the urgency.

SSR began in 2004 with the first reforms by the UN peacekeeping mission (UNMIL) of the Liberian National Police (LNP) and exploratory missions by U.S. officials and private military contractors, one of which, DynCorp International, was subsequently awarded the army contract. Specific planning for army reform began with a calculation of what was economically viable (the number of soldiers to whom Liberia could afford to pay monthly salaries) and moved forward from there. While such an approach had obvious limitations, it made sense in the context of the post-war transitional government. Much donor money and Liberian revenues were being lost, and few actors appeared committed to the country's long-term stability and well-being. There was little trust between donors and government representatives, many of whom were subsequently indicted for stealing government funds.

Even under such difficult circumstances, economic discipline should have been considered in tandem with a thorough assessment of the probable threats to which the security forces would have to respond. The lack of clear strategic vision is most evident in the confusion

surrounding the biggest security threat to the nation: there is no consensus about who, if anyone, would respond to any new outbreak of insurgency warfare. Such an insurgency could arise from discontented groups, possibly drawing on support from outside Liberia, as has occurred in the past, or from a spread of unrest with numerous root causes, including land disputes and violent crime. The newly formed paramilitary police Emergency Response Unit (ERU) may be best placed to take on this task, but recruitment and training continues to be delayed, and its role is still not fully clarified. Better strategic planning and clear division of roles and principles for communication between different intelligence and security bodies is vital.

Private military companies are key players. They have been subcontracted by the U.S. government to train and vet the new military as well as the ERU. The Liberian experience is instructive about both the advantages and disadvantages of using PMCs for such work. The oversight structures employed by the U.S. State Department have been shoddy, but the results so far have generally been good. One explanation is that a few key oversight personnel have been able to exercise inordinate influence to keep the relatively small SSR project on course.

Army reform appears to be a provisional success. Liberia now has a pool of nearly 2,000 rigorously vetted and well-trained privates. The vetting process in particular has been a notable success – the best, several experts said, they had witnessed anywhere in the world. The challenges ahead, however, could prove overwhelming for an army that presently has only 110 officers (98 Liberian and twelve from other Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) countries). The new soldiers are trained only at individual and small unit levels and will not be prepared to act as unified companies, much less a brigade, until late 2010. There is still much to be done (including specialist, company and brigade-level training) before the army can work together. The development of a capable managerial and leadership core within the military is an organic process that must be nurtured by both the Liberian government and its international partners.

More worrying, the police are still widely considered ineffective and corrupt. Both ordinary citizens and President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf have blamed a recent spate of armed robberies on their poor performance. They have been recruited, vetted and trained to a far lower standard than the army. Training of the paramilitary ERU may address some problems, but others have more to do with basic issues of poor management, lack of equipment and dismal community relations. There also appears to be inadequate realisation that successful police reform can only be sustained if it is linked to an effective judiciary that enforces the rule of law fairly and effectively to protect individual rights and assure citizen security.

This has led to the growth of vigilantism and disrespect of police in Monrovia and elsewhere. The police desperately need a combination of managerial expertise, strategic vision and (only then) a major increase in budget. The challenge facing the government and donors is the transition from external partner to sovereign state responsibilities. To this point, the Johnson-Sirleaf government has been largely happy to leave the reform of its army and police to others, occupied as it is with economic recovery. Domestic ownership of the reforms has become urgent, but it must not entail the overly hasty exit of international partners. Unless in particular U.S. and UN efforts to make Liberia more secure and stable are sustained over the next few years, the investment made since the end of the war could easily unravel.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To the Government of Liberia:

1. Clarify the division of roles between the newly reformed security bodies, define the principles and rules for their interaction, including information exchange, and define strategies to deal with the full range of security issues, including low-level criminality, organised crime and insurgency.
2. Rein in abusive and unprofessional behaviour by the Special Security Service (SSS).
3. Deploy the Liberian National Police (LNP) over the entire national territory, imposing sanctions against officers who do not report for duty at appointed places and times; hold those within its hierarchy fully accountable for management deficiencies and infractions of law when adequate management structures are in place; dedicate money and morale-boosting attention to it and improve human resource management, including for recruitment.
4. Clarify issues surrounding the feeding of army personnel, now being paid for temporarily by the U.S.;

work with U.S. personnel and Liberian civil society to ensure recruits receive adequate gender-sensitive human rights and rule-of-law education; and work with the U.S. and other partners to ensure that the good practices established in army vetting are continued, preferably through a thorough vetting training program.

5. Take concrete action to ensure proper civilian oversight of the new military and national security policy, including building capacity in the defence ministry and creating civil-military district oversight committees involving local community and women's organisations, as in neighbouring Sierra Leone, or similar structures appropriate to the Liberian context.

To the Government of the United States:

6. Eliminate indefinite delivery, indefinite quantity (IDIQ) contracts for security support to the State Department and make bidding for security-related contracts as transparent as the U.S. and other donors have required Liberia to be via the Governance and Economic Management Assistance Program (GEMAP).
7. Develop comprehensive budgetary and management oversight training for all State and Defense Department personnel likely to oversee any aspect of PMC activities and develop a comprehensive strategy for the transition from PMC training to uniformed military mentoring.
8. Commit, if requested by the Liberian government, to long-term mentoring of the army by embedding uniformed U.S. military personnel in the army and defence ministry.
9. Commit to providing gender-sensitive human rights and rule-of-law instruction for all army recruits trained by DynCorp and fund the DynCorp vetting team's training of a Liberian inter-agency team to carry on the vetting work with future army, police and other recruits.
10. Allocate the necessary funds for completing the training of 500 ERU personnel as soon as possible, both to address pressing law-and-order issues and to help boost police morale.

To the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL):

11. Maintain sufficient numbers of peacekeepers on the ground to ensure adequate security until the Liberian forces are able to take over the responsibility.
12. Expedite the publication and dissemination of the recently completed Liberian National Police Duty

Manual in conjunction with LNP officials and ensure that its provisions, especially those relating to evaluation, promotion and review of officers, are properly enforced.

13. Coordinate and increase donor funding for police logistics, infrastructure and communications equipment – with other international partners and in support of the new LNP strategic plan – but only when clear benchmarks for its use and management are forthcoming.

To the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS):

14. Facilitate training and exchange opportunities for Liberian officers, non-commissioned officers and

army specialists in member state militaries and at the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre in Accra, Ghana.

15. Enter into dialogue with the government of Liberia with a view to providing comprehensive, ongoing support to the security sector, possibly including, in liaison with other partners, an “over the horizon” emergency guarantee, and seek a U.S. commitment to provide financial, logistical, airlift and intelligence support for any such guarantee.

Dakar/Brussels, 13 January 2009

LIBERIA: UNEVEN PROGRESS IN SECURITY SECTOR REFORM

I. INTRODUCTION

Little more than five years ago, Liberia was emerging from fourteen years of brutal war and pillage that had left it in ruins. Today, it has a democratically elected president, and the security sector is experiencing reforms that are unprecedented not only in the country, but in the world. Under cover of a 15,000-strong UN peace-keeping force, it drew down both its army and defence ministry to zero, in order to recruit, vet and train the personnel for these institutions from the ground up. Such “root and branch” security sector reform (SSR) was bold. But, given the many abuses perpetrated by the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL) both before and during the civil war, the vast majority of Liberians supported it.

There are, of course, many aspects to post-conflict development. Poor economic governance or failure to reform the justice system can still tip the scale away from peace.¹ Progress has been considerable on the former, but unsatisfactory on the latter. However, security issues must be at the forefront of the government’s considerations, for a breakdown in that sector would jeopardise all gains. This report consequently concentrates on the SSR experience since the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in August 2003.²

If, in five to ten years, the Liberian security sector provides the basis for personal safety and economic

development without back-up by UN peacekeepers, the process will have been an unqualified success, but much remains to be done. An adviser to the president said, “we are about 40 per cent of the way there with the police and 55 per cent with the army”.³ But a look at the process already provides many lessons learned or unlearned for consideration by the UN, the U.S. government and other international actors.

¹See Crisis Group Africa Report N°87, *Liberia and Sierra Leone: Rebuilding Failed States*, 8 December 2004, for analysis of the ways attempts to turn those states into vehicles for economic pillage contributed to the conflict in both, as well as why economic governance was a central security variable. See Crisis Group Africa Report N°107, *Liberia: Resurrecting the Justice System*, 6 April 2006, for analysis of the challenges facing the police, prisons, statutory courts and magistrate and customary courts.

²The full text of the “Comprehensive Peace Agreement between the government of Liberia and the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) and the Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL) and Political Parties”, Accra, 18 August 2003, is available at www.usip.org/library/pa/liberia/liberia_08182003_toc.html.

³Crisis Group interview, adviser to President Johnson-Sirleaf, Monrovia, 19 June 2008.

II. THE HISTORICAL FAILURE OF THE SECURITY SECTOR

Liberia, like many countries that have lived through civil conflict, suffered decades of abuse by its security forces before it finally fell into full-scale war. Retracing some of this history is important, especially because, from the early twentieth century, the problem of Liberian security forces abusing civilians has been intimately linked to interventions by other governments, including those of the U.S., the UK, France and Israel. It is also important because the ultimate aim of the country's security sector reform must be to avoid a repetition of its tragic past.

A. THE LIBERIAN FRONTIER FORCE

After 25 years of settlement by U.S. "free people of colour" under the auspices of the American Colonization Society, Liberia declared its independence in 1847. Until 1908, its major armed force was the colonial militia, which defended the interests of the African-American colonisers against the indigenous Africans. In the last decade of the nineteenth century, the Americo-Liberian colonisers began to move inland and assert claims over a broadening swathe of territory.

At the same time, the French and British colonisers were also expanding their territorial claims in the new colonies of Guinea, Côte d'Ivoire and Sierra Leone. An 1892 treaty with France fixed Liberia's northern boundary (and Guinea's southern one) along the climatic border between forest and savannah, running roughly west-east between Kissidougou and Kérouané in present day Guinea. Over the next fifteen years, however, it became clear to the French and British that Liberia exercised even less effective control over its inland territory than they did. Basing their actions on the colonial principle that effective control was a condition of sovereignty, British and French forces conducted a series of encroachments, pushing the border to a line further south, where it lies today.⁴

In 1908, under direct pressure from Paris and London, which were concerned with maintaining order at the new frontier, Liberia transformed its colonial militia

into the Liberian Frontier Force. That force, which combined police and military functions, bears a resemblance to the new paramilitary Emergency Response Unit (ERU) currently being trained within the Liberian National Police (LNP). Moreover, it was initially recruited, trained and led by a captain, two other officers and ten sergeants, all British. This foreign "security sector reform" team was expelled a year later for meddling in internal politics by, among other things, recruiting more than one quarter of the new army's soldiers from Sierra Leone.⁵

After this false start, the Frontier Force began its career as Liberia's modern military. Its structure was much like the rest of society in the 1910-1960 period. Most rank-and-file soldiers were from the interior. Clan and paramount chiefs in each locality organised recruitment and were supported by the Frontier Force in collecting taxes and rounding up local men for forced labour on public works projects. Loma and Kpelle speakers from the centre and north were disproportionately represented in the ranks. Officers were typically from the settler Americo-Liberian elite, leading a Liberian scholar to write: "The Liberian military was itself a patrimonial organisation linked to both the Monrovia-based oligarchy as well as the indigenous social order".⁶ An adviser to President Johnson-Sirleaf said, "the army has always been unprofessional. In the past, its officer corps was seen as the dumping ground for the wayward sons of the elite. It was a form of punishment for those who did not do well in school".⁷

The Frontier Force was advised and led by African-American soldiers, some of them seconded from the U.S. army.⁸ Colonel Elwood Davis, a private and medic who had fought under General Pershing in Mexico and later in the Philippines, emigrated to Liberia where he led the Frontier Force's infamous campaign to "pacify" the Kru coast in the south east, earning the nickname "Dictator of Grand Bassa". His biography, if not methods, bears a resemblance to that of some ex-U.S. army private contractors who are training the Liberian army today.

⁴The difference between the 1892 Guinea-Liberia border and the one finally agreed in 1911 can be seen from the positions of Kissidougou and Kérouané on the map of Guinea at Appendix B below. This history, taught to all Liberian schoolchildren, was the basis of Charles Taylor's claim he would reconquer "greater Liberia". That militant patriotism was a real, still under-explored reason for his popularity in the late 1990s.

⁵For more on development of military institutions and their interaction with national and regional politics, see H.O. Akingbade, "The role of the military in the history of Liberia 1822-1947", unpublished PhD dissertation, Howard University (1977); Stephen Ellis, *The Mask of Anarchy* (New York, 1999); J. Levitt, *The Evolution of Deadly Conflict in Liberia: From 'Paternalism' to State Collapse* (Durham, 2005); and A. Sawyer, *Beyond Plunder: Toward Democratic Governance in Liberia* (Boulder, 2005).

⁶Sawyer, *op. cit.*

⁷Crisis Group interview, adviser to President Johnson-Sirleaf, Monrovia, 19 June 2008.

⁸Ellis, *op. cit.*, p. 46.

It was from this period that the armed forces traced a kind of ethnicised geography of violence. The Frontier Force, led by the less accomplished members of the Monrovia elite and staffed by soldiers mostly from the centre and north west of the country, visited considerable violence on the south-eastern Kru, Glebo, Bassa and Krahn-speaking regions. Ethnic tensions were created and exacerbated, as people from some areas were disproportionately recruited and others were excluded. Provincial officials and chiefs mainly in the central areas that cooperated with the government were rewarded with positions in the hinterland administration and the Frontier Force. Those elsewhere who resisted were subjected to military repression and less likely to find positions for their sons in the administrative and military institutions. Gola, Vai and Dei from the west were scarcely represented in the military.

Aside from feeding certain inter-ethnic antagonisms, the Frontier Force was irregularly paid and encouraged to “pay itself”. An author has written:

The Liberian system of indirect rule bore the stamp of the military means used to establish it in the early twentieth century. It was first established by the Liberian army, which had a reputation for brutality and for looting, since its troops largely lived off the land. In 1910 some chiefs in the south east of the country complained of the activities of the Liberian Frontier Force, which they termed “this execrable force”, and said was, “entirely demoralised, and wherever they have been sent throughout the country – whether to River Cess or in the hinterland – their custom has been to plunder the towns through which they pass and rape their women”.⁹

B. INCOMPLETE PROFESSIONALISATION AND CIVIL WAR

The Frontier Force changed its name to the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL) in 1962 and in the late 1960s established a military academy. Hinterland chiefs were no longer allowed to hand-pick young men from their villages, and recruitment began to resemble that in other modern armies. Recruits were required to have some formal schooling, and induction and training were based on a U.S. army model. The officer corps continued to be dominated by men of settler background until Samuel Doe’s coup on 12 April 1980. Doe, a non-commissioned officer (NCO), not only killed President William Tolbert, his family and other

members of the government, but also overturned the 70-year hierarchy that placed Americo-Liberians in the officer corps and relegated “country people” to the ranks and NCO grades. The new government, the People’s Redemption Council, elevated the former NCOs to majors, colonels and generals and gave military rank to civilian ministers.

The official merging of military and government ended in name in July 1984, when a constitution approved by referendum reinstated civilian control. This was short-lived, however, as Doe’s clumsy theft of the October 1985 presidential elections sparked a coup attempt the next month by his former brother-in-arms, Thomas Quiwonkpa, an ethnic Dan from Nimba County. When it failed, Quiwonkpa was killed along with 2,000 to 3,000 Mano and Dan people in Nimba. The effect was to short-circuit any move towards civilian control of the army, which was turned into a praetorian guard protecting Doe’s power and stocked at an accelerating rate with his fellow Krahn (indeed, often family members), thus ethnicising the institution. While this resembled past ethnicisations, it raised the profile of soldiers and officers from the south east, who had been relatively absent in Frontier Force days.

This period, too, saw a great deal of foreign training and support for the security forces. An observer wrote: “The AFL was formidably well-equipped. Throughout the 1980s the force had received massive supplies of weapons and extensive training from U.S. personnel, while its Special Anti-Terrorist Unit was Israeli-trained”.¹⁰

All these factors fed into the civil wars of 1989-1996 and 1999-2003. Charles Taylor entered Nimba County from Côte d’Ivoire on 24 December 1989 with only 120 or so fighters trained in Muammar Qaddafi’s Benghazi camp for African revolutionaries and in Burkina Faso. Nimba civilians, the victims of retributive attacks by Doe’s now Krahn-majority army in 1985, were receptive to Taylor’s anti-Doe message, allowing him to quickly recruit some 5,000 young fighters. Doe was killed in August 1990, and the AFL collapsed soon after.

As a Nigerian-led West African force defended Monrovia against Taylor, there was some settling of scores between ethnic groups. Krahn and Mandingo were

⁹ Ibid, p. 209, quoting a letter from King Gyude and the Grebo chiefs to the American Colonization Society, 15 February 1910.

¹⁰ Ibid, op. cit., p. 110. The Anti-Terrorist Unit (ATU) provided many fighters for the short-lived, ironically misnamed Liberian Peace Council (LPC), a rebel splinter group in the first civil war. Although most of its fighting was between 1993 and 1996, recent surveys of human rights abuses during the two wars placed the LPC second only to Taylor’s National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) for number of atrocities. Crisis Group interview, human rights specialist, Monrovia, 4 June 2008.

targeted as perceived Doe allies. However, much of the war was essentially characterised by the “pay yourself” practices of the old Frontier Force, though soldiers were now armed with AK-47s and rocket propelled grenade launchers rather than cutlasses and conducted propaganda campaigns by calling the BBC on satellite phones. By the end of the first civil war, the Doe-era AFL had been defeated and scattered, mostly around Monrovia and the south east. Although never officially disbanded, it was confined to barracks for much of that conflict. As early as 1992, the interim president, Amos Sawyer, had set up a parallel military structure, the 1,000-strong Black Berets, a paramilitary group trained in Guinea with the blessing of other members of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).¹¹

Taylor’s 1997 election was accompanied by chants of “You killed my Ma, you killed my Pa, I don’t wanna hear about it, I’ll still vote for you!” This was an implicit mandate to fix what he and his men had so badly broken. However, the “pay yourself” practices continued, and civil war soon restarted. Taylor’s fighters, though still bearing some stamp of the early Mano and Dan support from Nimba County, were ethnically heterogeneous, their opponents less so. The Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) and the Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL) rebel groups that ultimately toppled Taylor in 2003 grew out of the Mandingo and Krahn-dominated United Liberation Movement of Liberia for Democracy (ULIMO) factions of the first war that had formed in part in response to attacks targeted at the two groups.

The armed forces of the Taylor era consisted of a combination of elite elements, including the Anti-Terrorist Unit (ATU), the Special Security Service (SSS) and other small groups of well-paid fighters, mostly from Taylor’s 1989-1996 insurgency. Members of the Krahn-dominated AFL from before the civil war were completely marginalised and unpaid, though not officially

demobilised. The police were typically not paid at all and, like other government employees, their officers were encouraged to extort bribes from civilians.

This history gives some sense of the challenges in Liberia’s security sector reform. The abuse of civilians has gone hand in hand with implicit administrative licence in the context of a decentralised, self-supporting military system. Ethnic tensions have been either created, exacerbated or mirrored by the composition and behaviour of military units. Civilian control was turned on its head from 1980 onwards. Perhaps most sobering for those looking hard at today’s SSR, foreign military trainers were involved during nearly every stage of this inglorious history.

¹¹ The Black Berets were headed by the current defence minister, Brownie Samukai, and trained by the current head of the National Security Agency, Fombah Sirleaf, among others. They were a paramilitary police unit in Monrovia (the only part of Liberia controlled by the Interim Government of National Unity), a role for which the Nigerian-led Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) peacekeeping forces were not mandated. They also fought beside ECOMOG forces, notably during Taylor’s 1992 attack on Monrovia (Operation Octopus). They and the AFL were accused of killing some 600 civilians in the June 1993 Carter Camp massacre, which, testimony at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) has indicated, was perpetrated by Taylor’s NPFL fighters, who may have orchestrated it to put blame on the AFL. See www.trcofliberia.org.

III. CURRENT SECURITY THREATS

The history of security provision in Liberia and its failures gives an indication of the kind of threats the country faces and what is needed to combat them. It shows that the most important longer-term requirement is to avoid politicisation of security forces by insecure leaders. That can lead to their involvement in abuse of civilians, use as a praetorian guard for presidents with little legitimacy and ultimately disintegration into warring militias. When ordinary Liberians are asked about their own security, some point to the lack of street lights (due to the absence of an electrical power grid in most of the capital), which favours armed robbery and sexual assault. While some argue that the police should be armed, others insist they are in league with armed robbers and only interested in extortion, so must never again carry weapons. Civil servants and intellectuals point to high unemployment as a root cause of insecurity. Any sustainable SSR program needs to take all these aspects into account.

The (possibly apocryphal) story circulates in Monrovia that in 2005 U.S. Ambassador John Blaney, at lunch with Transitional Government Chairman Gyude Bryant, came up with the number of soldiers Liberia could afford to pay regularly by making a quick calculation on a napkin of the government's probable revenues and budget and the cost of army salaries. He thus decided 2,000 was the cap on what it would be responsible for the U.S. to train.

Because the army reform was planned with economic considerations in the forefront, strategic issues were only addressed well after Washington had determined how much it was willing to put up and how much the Liberian government could pay monthly in salaries.¹² It was primarily the RAND Corporation report the two governments commissioned that laid out systematically the strategic objectives and mission of the security forces. This report, finished in 2006 but not published until 2007, was followed by the Liberian government's own National Security Strategy paper, which was finalised only in late 2008 and, while widely available in official circles in Monrovia, has still not been launched publicly.

¹²The Liberian government pays the salaries of soldiers and officers once inducted or commissioned. Problems have already emerged (see Section IV below) between the U.S. and the ministry of defence (MoD) over who should feed inducted soldiers during follow-on training and about whether the MoD has funds to pay increased salaries to soldiers who have qualified for promotion as non-commissioned officers.

This section gives Crisis Group's own estimate of the leading security threats in Liberia, now and for several years into the future. The most serious is probably unemployment. Until the entire economy begins to expand, however, measures such as those in the Landmine Action reintegration program (see Appendix D) are probably the most consequential one can hope for to encourage and enable young men to make a living without a gun.

A. POLITICAL THREATS

1. Ex-combatants

Unemployed youths remain a major security worry.¹³ Unlike disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) processes in other countries, recruitment into the new army was not used to absorb ex-combatants. This led to high levels of unemployment and frustration. The crime rate and periodic threats of violence have subsequently posed major problems for the police and UN peacekeepers (UNMIL), who have had to contain large, violent uprisings in December 2003, October 2004 and December 2005, as well as many smaller ones.¹⁴

In Monrovia, many expatriates and some Liberians describe the continuing existence of rebel group command and control structures as a problem. The RAND Corporation report stated that "rebel group structures and command chains have not been eradicated and remain a concern".¹⁵ Villagers offer a more mixed view. Those living near the Guthrie rubber plantation when it was under the control of mostly LURD-affiliated ex-combatants had a variety of complaints, including theft, rape with impunity, the beating of village elders to cow them into silence and the luring of some young men into criminal behaviour. Yet, in most provincial towns, civilians live peacefully beside young ex-combatants and use their services.

The former fighters in those towns drive motorcycle taxis known as "pan-pan" (for the horns' tinny sound).¹⁶ Such

¹³There is room for more creative thinking about them and their role in Liberia's progress towards greater stability. Appendix D below analyses how failed disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) set the scene for later SSR challenges.

¹⁴These uprisings stem from anger over non-payment of demobilisation allowances and, in some cases, of pensions for ex-combatants or former members of the armed forces.

¹⁵David Gompert et al., "Making Liberia Safe: Transformation of the National Security Sector", RAND Corporation, 2007.

¹⁶These vehicles are often owned by the drivers' former commanders. The same pattern arose in Sierra Leone towns like Kenema and Bo, where the motorcycle taxis go by the same

groups form economic units for rubber tapping and artisanal diamond and gold mining. Continuing contact and relative lawlessness might contribute to reactivation of ex-combatant units in Liberia or a neighbouring country,¹⁷ but that is not the likeliest scenario. Their entrenchment in local economies may also be a key factor in the choice not to engage in further armed violence. Indeed one author argued that:

Guaranteeing these [ex-combatants] some control over local resources and integrating their local organisations into official channels would give them a stake in using their influence to see that the state performs well...Including them would also incorporate some elements of wartime organisation into the apparatus of governance.¹⁸

The need to facilitate durable insertion of ex-combatants into social and economic networks, even when insertion may seem threatening, is all the more important in light of a recent study from the region that suggests donor-funded DDR programs had little effect on reintegration.¹⁹ On the other hand, there is evidence from a long-term program for hardcore Guthrie Plantation ex-combatants that illustrates the desire of communities to reintegrate former fighters. When program representatives went to the villages chosen by ex-combatants for their resettlement, they found to their surprise that locals were willing to accept the young men back.²⁰

2. Insurgency and external attack

The greatest specific risk of armed conflict would come from the formation or re-formation of an armed group resembling the defunct National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL), LURD or MODEL. It might form around the real or perceived sense that an ethnic, regional or other interest group had not been given sufficient stake in the new democratic dispensation. The most plausible (though unlikely) scenario would

be a re-formed LURD, because some ethnic Mandingos (the bulk of that militia) feel they have been made second-class citizens. They would have a ready rear base in Guinea's forest region, one of West Africa's most lawless and unstable zones.²¹

Liberians hope that if an insurgency overwhelmed UNMIL or emerged after the peacekeepers left, the U.S. would quash it. Such an "over the horizon" guarantee has been given to Sierra Leone by the UK, the lead nation there in security, development and governance matters. If history is a guide, however, an expectation that the U.S. would come to Liberia's rescue is misplaced. Several times over the last two decades Washington has refused to put its own troops at risk there, when a small intervention might plausibly have stopped the civil war in its tracks.²²

Foreign attack is often treated as improbable, because the situation in the region is calm, but that could change. Côte d'Ivoire is slated for hotly contested elections in 2009.²³ The winners are likely to shove the losers as far from the political centre as possible and reconcentrate power in their hands, and the result could be further insecurity. The consequences of the December 2008 coup in Guinea upon the death of Lansana Conté are uncertain. Conflicts in either country would not likely spill over directly, but dense forest, porous borders and a pool of experienced fighters could make Liberia an attractive rear base for rebels and so attract cross-border attacks into Liberia. Preventing misuse of Liberian territory should remain an army and UNMIL priority for the foreseeable future.

Yoruba term as in Nigeria, "okada". Between 2005 and 2007 many cheap Chinese 100cc motorcycles came into the region, mostly through Guinea, selling for \$300-\$350. In 2008, the price jumped to \$600-\$700, slowing the rapid increase in demand.

¹⁷ See "Youth, Poverty and Blood: The Lethal Legacy of West Africa's Regional Warriors", Human Rights Watch, April 2005.

¹⁸ W. Reno, "Anti-corruption Efforts in Liberia: Are they Aimed at the Right Target?", *International Peacekeeping*, vol. 15, no. 3 (2008), pp. 387-404.

¹⁹ Macarten Humphries and Jeremy Weinstein, "Demobilization and Reintegration", *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, vol. 51, no. 4 (2007), pp. 531-567. The paper studied Sierra Leone ex-combatants demographically similar to the Liberian ex-combatants and who experienced a similar DDR process.

²⁰ See Appendix D below.

²¹ The UN Panel of Experts and others reported that former LURD commanders and some fighters went to Guinea during the tumultuous demonstrations of January-February 2007, some straight to their patron, Aisha Keita, in Conakry; others remained in the forest region, presumably waiting to see what opportunities would develop. See Blundell et al., "Report of Panel of Experts to United Nations Security Council", S/2007/340, 7 June 2007, pp. 33-34; and F. Momou, "Politique: A COSA et ENCO 5, l'armée et la population pourchassent les miliciens de l'ULIMO", *GuinéeNews*, 12 February 2007.

²² In 1993, for example, former U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Africa Herman Cohen said of the decision not to deploy 2,000 marines anchored just off the Liberian coast three years earlier, "we missed an opportunity in Liberia...A modest intervention at that point to end the fighting in Monrovia could have avoided the prolonged fighting". "Africa Notes", CSIS no. 147, April 1993.

²³ See Crisis Group Africa Report N°139, *Côte d'Ivoire: Ensuring Credible Elections*, 22 April 2008.

B. ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL THREATS

1. Food riots

Commodity market fluctuations have put Liberia in a precarious situation, because it imports much of its staple food, rice. Liberians are unanimous in considering this a security threat,²⁴ not least because the rice riots of 1979 are widely seen as the event that opened the path to Samuel Doe's coup, the disastrous decade of his rule and the fourteen years of violence that followed.²⁵ President Johnson-Sirleaf, however, has welcomed the food crunch as an opportunity for Liberia to work where it has a competitive advantage. In the long term this may be true, but West African countries from Cameroon to Mauritania had food riots in 2008, and the risk of this in Liberia is not lost on her. She said, "if we do not have availability and to a certain extent affordability of our basic staples, you will get a lot of tensions in society. That's a security issue".²⁶

The inability of ordinary Liberians to afford basic commodities will likely be magnified by an anticipated decline in remittances provided by Liberian workers overseas to their family and friends at home. These remittances, which totalled \$163 million in 2006 (25.8 per cent of GDP), are expected to decline as a result of the global financial crisis and the slowdown of economic growth in countries with large Liberian expatriate communities, including the U.S. and Nigeria.²⁷

The risk with sporadic violence surrounding food shortages is similar to that around vigilantism and even land disputes: escalation of violence in a fragile security context. That can serve as a pretext or springboard for other forms of violence, including major looting, and tempt ex-combatants to become involved again in organised pillage. It could also ignite tensions between police and civilians, between members of different clans or ethnic groups or between members of different religions.

2. Violent crime and vigilantism

The most discussed threat to everyday security, especially in Monrovia's poorer neighbourhoods – Paynesville, Red Light and on Bushrod Island – is of armed robberies, which sometimes result in murder. A rising crime rate in a post-war environment of high unemployment is not unique to Liberia, but the question is whether it also poses a threat to national security.

An individual with access to intelligence on the subject suggested there were some signs the rash of robberies might be linked to a coordinated attempt to destabilise the government and prompt violent mass reactions. There are some indications that truckloads of young men have been transported between Kakata and central Monrovia to become involved in the crime spree.²⁸ There is also growing concern about large-scale cultivation of marijuana in the interior, especially in Nimba County. A police officer said, "the robbers spend the day smoking marijuana, and so at night they need to find the money to pay for more".²⁹

Fears thus centre on the perception that the level of organisation behind armed robbery and other crimes may be increasing. In addition, there is worry that the public, in the face of police ineffectiveness, has started to take matters into its own hands. Citizens, angry at police and justice sector failures, stormed or burned down police stations in Lofa and Maryland Counties in early 2008. In Monrovia, many neighbourhoods have organised self-defence patrols, with orders to kill thieves when they catch them.³⁰ Examples in West Africa and elsewhere show such vigilantism may become a security threat in its own right. In Nigeria for instance, groups such as the Bakassi Boys and the Odua People's Congress that began as law-and-order vigilantes, sometimes with a measure of ethnic nationalist politics, have become criminal elements, preying on ordinary citizens and serving as judge, jury and executioner to those who run afoul of them.

Rape is of particular concern, as it was a weapon of war during the fourteen-year conflict and a feature of many individual abuses of power. President Johnson-Sirleaf has made dealing with it and its legacy a top priority.³¹ The 2008 law designating rape a criminal offence is welcome, if tardy. However, some Liberi-

²⁴ Crisis Group interviews, President Johnson-Sirleaf, Monrovia, 18 June 2008, among others.

²⁵ The 1979 rice riots were used as the starting date for the investigations of the Liberian Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

²⁶ Natalie Pearson, "Africa Looks for Silver Lining in Food Crisis", *Wall Street Journal Europe*, 20-22 June 2008.

²⁷ See the International Fund for Agricultural Development website at www.ifad.org/events/remittances/maps/africa.htm. 2006 is the latest year for which statistics are available.

²⁸ Crisis Group interview, security specialist, Monrovia, 20 June 2008.

²⁹ Crisis Group interview, police officer, Monrovia, 20 June 2008.

³⁰ Crisis Group interviews, Monrovia, Lofa County, June 2008.

³¹ This concern notably featured in her inaugural speech of 16 January 2006.

ans believe sexual violence has not declined.³² The public commitment to ensuring a substantial female component in the police is one way in which this has been addressed, but further measures and training are needed in the police and the whole justice sector. Instruction in gender issues should form a significant part of the human rights and rule-of-law training for the new army, as detailed below.

3. Land disputes

Finally, the most explosive issue in Liberia today is disputes over land. These take myriad forms and may be about who has the right to build on a given plot or reclaim land vacated at some point during the war; or be between subsistence farmers and owners of plantations or between subsistence farmers themselves. The disputes tend to mirror historical tensions and so are susceptible to escalation. Among the most recent:

- In June 2008, as many as nineteen men were massacred in Margibi County in clashes between day labourers working for two rival claimants of a plantation,³³ one formerly close to Charles Taylor the other an ex-LURD spokesman, who also had a family dispute. The killers are alleged to have used machetes, shotguns and AK-47s.
- On 8-9 May 2008, two died when the chiefdoms of Rock Town and Wetchokeh in Maryland County clashed over disputed land. Most Wetchokeh residents have claimed that the county administrative positions are controlled by those from Rock Town chiefdom.³⁴
- In April 2008, a clash in Sanoyeah, Bong County resulted in three villages (Dankpansue, Konlonta and Vuku) burned down, one person killed, several severely wounded (by bullets or battery acid³⁵) and others beaten. The violence developed when a Monrovia-based man who owned title to 2,200 acres

that he had not cultivated for years sent workers to cut down palm trees in order to plant rubber trees.³⁶

- Throughout 2008, Mandingoes were expelled from the commercial area of Ganta, Nimba County. When prosperous Mandingoes fled the area during the war, local Mano and Gio residents reclaimed the land to which they had customary irrevocable claim but may have sold or rented. Mandingo buildings were either destroyed in fighting or simply seized. Mandingoes no longer own any shops on the main street of Ganta. Some remaining Mandingoes have vowed to take the property back by force.³⁷

Violent conflicts over land in Liberia are a symptom, not the cause, of a variety of disputes.³⁸ As such they will not have a common solution, but their tendency to escalate over time toward large-scale clashes indicates that interventions by administrative and police officials are often inadequate. The slow pace of consultation and decisions about land policy at the national level has also contributed to this problem.

This review of threats reveals a variety of interlinked potential sources of destabilisation, each susceptible to escalation, particularly in combination. As Liberia takes full responsibility for its own security, all should be carefully considered in the sector's architecture.

³² Crisis Group cannot verify this, as crime statistics are unreliable or lacking. Rape in particular often goes unreported and is dealt with through compensation payments. See also Crisis Group Report, *Liberia: Resurrecting the Justice System*, op. cit.

³³ See "Seventeenth progress report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in Liberia", 15 August 2008 (S/2008/553).

³⁴ Email communication from NGO worker in Harper, 4 June 2008.

³⁵ Many robbers and attackers in Monrovia and elsewhere reportedly used acid as a weapon in 2007-2008.

³⁶ Interviews and documentation provided by NGO workers, Ganta and Monrovia, June 2008.

³⁷ Crisis Group interviews, Mano and Mandingo residents of Ganta, June 2005 and June 2008.

³⁸ The same can be said of so-called ethnic conflicts in Liberia. Examined carefully, many such conflicts are seen to have had other causes, like access to scarce resources, an old schism between families or competition between politicians. When justifying themselves to a wider audience (or attempting to recruit allies in a growing conflict), the protagonists often emphasise ethnic or religious difference. However, even in Nimba County, where the perception of conflict between Mandingos and Mano or Dan people is most pronounced, an NGO working to resolve land disputes noted that the largest number of its cases by far was between ethnic Mano. Crisis Group interviews, Ganta and Monrovia, June 2008.

IV. REFORMING THE ARMY

The SSR program, in particular army reform, is a provisional success.³⁹ The achievements to date in the demobilisation of the ex-AFL and the recruitment, vetting and training of the new force have largely been due to individual goodwill and hard work and in spite rather than because of the structures in place. But they could evaporate if insufficient attention is paid to training and mentoring the officer corps and the army institution as a whole.

Because it was decided to build an army from scratch, lack of “middle management” – upper-level non-commissioned officers (NCOs), captains and majors – will be a concern for at least a decade. The moment the U.S. embassy and contractors hand over the newly-trained force to the ministry will mark the beginning, not end of the process of creating a law-abiding institution responsive to civilian control and dealing alone with security threats.

A. DELAYS AND LACK OF STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

The August 2003 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) called for restructuring of the AFL and requested the U.S. to lead the process. The first class of new recruits finally began basic training only in August 2006. This slow start can be put down to a number of factors. The nature of the State Department’s contracting system, a lack of funds, the need

³⁹This does not detract from the limitations underlined in this section nor the serious questions surrounding use of private military companies (PMCs) in SSR (see Appendix E). The analysis there focuses on whether PMCs are more cost-efficient than uniformed militaries; legal, managerial and contract oversight mechanisms meet the challenges in peace mission support; and what specific actions PMCs are likely or not to perform well. The prognosis is mixed. PMCs may be excellent for particular tasks within a larger strategic framework. Though it is unlikely they offer systematic cost savings (the opposite may be true), they give the hiring government increased flexibility. The formula that would most likely put them to best use would involve specific roles beside or with uniformed military, with clear responsibilities and timeline. This has not been the case in Liberia. Oversight from the chief of the U.S. Office of Defense Cooperation (ODC) and the State Department has been inadequately resourced, in some cases left to people without necessary experience. The contractual documents lay out responsibilities with inadequate detail. The ODC chief, typically a colonel, directly oversees PMC work and acts as intermediary with the MoD and the U.S. embassy.

to deal with unexpected and sometimes politically delicate obstacles and indecisiveness on the part of the Liberian government have all caused delays. Complex dynamics between Liberian and international actors have hampered smooth collaboration. Different basic viewpoints and a lack of national government ownership continue to stall the making of clear strategy.

In spring 2004, the U.S. military, the State Department and DynCorp, a private company, conducted an exploratory mission to assess what was needed to reform the military. There was already a strong in-country constituency for dissolving the army and starting afresh. As outlined above, both Doe’s Krahn-dominated AFL and the Taylor-era semi-autonomous militias formed from his rebel army had been abusive and unrepresentative of the diverse population. Taylor’s fighters could hardly be considered members of a professional army. More senior members of the Doe-era army had been largely out of commission since 1990 or 1991 and were nearing retirement age.⁴⁰

The U.S. marines, who were already assigned to do basic infantry training with units in Chad and Niger as part of the Pan-Sahel Initiative’s counter-terrorism program, initially expected to take responsibility for at least part of the Liberian training.⁴¹ Probably because of U.S. over-extension worldwide, however, the job was put up for bidding between contractors, DynCorp and Pacific Architects and Engineers (PAE).⁴² DynCorp won the contract in autumn 2004, while PAE gained a separate contract that year to refurbish the Camp Schiefflin military base and received a second for officer training, when the lack of any provision for this was recognised as a gap in the SSR plan. DynCorp, which already provided the contractors who made up the American contingent within UNMIL’s

⁴⁰The context is important for understanding U.S. willingness to undertake complete rebuilding of the army. In particular, the disbanding of the security forces aligned with the Baath party in Iraq was not at that point considered a failure.

⁴¹Crisis Group interviews, Stuttgart, 30 January 2004.

⁴²In one example, PAE, which still specialised in logistics and construction, presented a bid that put forward Military Professional Resources Incorporated (MPRI) as its subcontractor. MPRI has trained and mentored in Nigeria. This particular bid failed, but it indicated the perverse consequences of the bidding system. As described in Appendix E, DynCorp and PAE have a five-year monopoly contract for all State Department security-related services in Africa. Such indefinite delivery, indefinite quantity (IDIQ) contracts are meant to streamline bidding, but in this case one company was unable to do the type of work required, so others had to be brought in as subcontractors to one of the monopoly companies. It is hard to see how such a system is administratively or financially efficient.

civilian police unit, began setting up its SSR operation in August 2005. As detailed below, the first class of 110 trainees began their basic training in August 2006 and graduated three months later.

The straightforward initial DynCorp proposal consisted in its essentials of putting 2,000 men through boot camp and supplementing their training with a significant rule-of-law and human rights component emphasising such things as respect for international humanitarian law and the law of war, separation of army and police responsibilities and the centrality of civilian control of the military.⁴³ Before DynCorp could even begin training the new army, however, it found had to go through multiple steps. These included demobilising the former AFL and the defence ministry (MoD), building a training base, refurbishing the Barclay Training Centre and constructing and refurbishing barracks and a mess hall.

One of the most challenging aspects of this preliminary work was demobilisation of the AFL and MoD. This had not been envisioned in the original plan,⁴⁴ but much of DynCorp's work through 2006 consisted of arranging the demobilisation payments for all 13,770 AFL soldiers and more than 400 ministry employees. Many of the AFL and their families were living at Camp Schiefflin. Clearing the area to prepare for the arrival of the freshly-trained soldiers was another unexpected and politically delicate task. The operation was eventually successful, but the ex-AFL took everything with them, including the roofs of the barracks.⁴⁵

A further delay was introduced by government indecisiveness over the training site's final location. As late as April 2006, Crisis Group accompanied DynCorp personnel to the defunct Voice of America transmitter site,⁴⁶ where they planned provisionally to put rifle and grenade ranges and an obstacle course. Construction could not begin without a final decision on land for the training centre. By July 2006, however, the site was assigned, and the UNMIL peacekeepers barracked there had moved out, allowing its renovation.⁴⁷

While these issues held up SSR at different stages, the complex relationships between government, military and international community created considerable challenges from the beginning. The first problem was a combined failure to ensure the process would encompass all security agencies. As agreed in 2003 at the time of the peace accords and shortly after, the UN took responsibility for police reform and the U.S. for army reform, but no one did so for at least ten other agencies with duties ranging from collection of customs duties to intelligence analysis.⁴⁸

Secondly, Liberia did not have money to fund the process. Consequently, the transitional government had limited leverage to impose its priorities. The malfeasance and lack of interest exhibited by most of its members further widened this power imbalance. That donors were paying and the government enjoyed inadequate legitimacy initially justified strong outside control but also created tensions, made worse in some cases by the adversarial attitude of those who held the purse strings. The international partners were quick to acknowledge that the Johnson-Sirleaf government, which came into office in January 2006, was qualitatively different, but it first had to tackle the criminal habits which had flourished under previous administrations.

Thirdly, SSR has been hindered by differences of outlook between the civilian government and those directly involved in the process. Johnson-Sirleaf and many of her closest advisers and colleagues are from the 1970s generation of student and civil society activists. Many were jailed and abused by the Tolbert, Doe and/or Taylor governments.⁴⁹ As a result of these experiences and their commitment to turning away from the violence that has wracked Liberia, they have emphasised consultation, study and respect for procedure and the law, but some have also been deeply suspicious of the security forces.

The military professionals involved in training the new forces often preferred to treat SSR as a technical and logistical challenge, rather than a social and political one with much historical baggage. The clash of civilian and military cultures was best exemplified by the quite different national security strategies the Govern-

⁴³ DynCorp won the contract, a source said, because it innovatively placed this human security paradigm at the centre of its proposal. Crisis Group interview, Washington DC, 5 August 2008.

⁴⁴ The May 2005 memorandum of understanding between the U.S. embassy and the transitional government defined AFL demobilisation as the latter's responsibility.

⁴⁵ The rebuilding of Camp Schiefflin was contracted to PAE.

⁴⁶ Upon completion of its refurbishment, the Liberian government renamed the base Camp Sandee Ware.

⁴⁷ The delay in securing a training site was problematic, because recruitment for the new army began in January 2006,

immediately after the inauguration of President Johnson-Sirleaf. There was thus a seven-month gap between the start of recruiting and training, during which recruits were left waiting with virtually no information about the process.

⁴⁸ Section VI below discusses how well this gap has since been bridged and what remains to be done.

⁴⁹ The Doe government imprisoned Johnson-Sirleaf; Taylor's forces jailed and tortured the current solicitor general, Tia-wan Gongloe.

ance Commission and the MoD drafted.⁵⁰ The former focused on human security, human rights and civilian control of the military; the latter stressed military doctrine, standard operating procedures and command and control structures. More than halfway through Johnson-Sirleaf's term, the official national security strategy has yet to be made public, though a supposedly final version is circulating among Liberian and international officials.

Strong donor control and the government's difficulty in reconciling its approach with the military's have significantly retarded efforts to adapt SSR to what Liberians see as their specific needs. With the departure of the U.S. and the PMCs approaching, it is increasingly urgent that the government take ownership of its security forces. It should begin by delineating clear strategic priorities and a better sense of how short-, medium- and long-term policies designed to "grow" a new civilian-controlled security apparatus will work. Signs of such ownership and strategic initiative will be needed to convince donors to continue supporting SSR. Without competent, democratic, civilian control, training programs cannot guarantee the ultimate conduct of the new army and police.

B. SUCCESSFUL TECHNICAL PROCESS

1. Recruitment and vetting

The recruitment and vetting of new soldiers has displayed a rigour that has satisfied observers at home and abroad. Recruiters have taken the expensive yet necessary steps to ensure the process is both transparent and geographically and ethnically inclusive. Targets for recruitment of women have not been met, but there seems to be high-level commitment to do so. Though vetting has been thorough, success can only be truly measured in how the new army fares. But the process made a good start by earning the confidence of Liberia's leadership and its people.

Recruiting standards were strict and uniformly applied. To be eligible for basic training, recruits had to be at least eighteen, pass a written high school proficiency test⁵¹ and an initial physical test (one-mile run, sit-ups and push-ups) and be screened for HIV, tuberculosis and illegal drug use. The rejection rate was 82 per cent, 52 per cent at the initial reading exam. Though 90 per

cent of trainees were taken from Monrovia, a mobile recruiting team visited all fifteen counties, and every ethnic group and county is said to be represented in the new force.⁵² The requirement for high-school equivalency made it virtually inevitable that most recruits were found in the capital, but the imbalance was less than it seemed, since some recruits from elsewhere applied there, especially before the mobile recruiting process began. An individual close to the training process said mobile recruitment, which cost more than \$200,000, was not cost effective in economic terms but was politically important.⁵³

The MoD should continue this process in future, not so much because it will uncover hidden talent in the provinces, but because it sends a message of inclusiveness, transparency and the extension of state capacity to all regions of the country. The army's important progress relative to the police in turning around old perceptions of ethnic exclusivity and the related problem of politicisation of the institution can be directly traced to these up-country missions. MoD officials noted particular difficulty in recruiting from ethnic groups without much history of joining the armed forces (Glebo, Kru, Bassa, Vai).⁵⁴ It is important that when the government has full responsibility and faces budgetary constraints, it remain committed to continuing countrywide and ethnically inclusive recruitment.

President Johnson-Sirleaf set a goal of 20 per cent women in the new army, but the current figure is under 5 per cent.⁵⁵ Although male commentators have suggested the target might be arbitrary or even token,⁵⁶ it is clearly part of the government's commitment to mainstreaming gender in all its policies, including SSR.⁵⁷

⁵² Crisis Group interview, international security adviser, Monrovia, September 2008.

⁵³ Crisis Group interview, Monrovia, June 2008. The economy is two-track; most Liberians use Liberian dollars for daily expenses, while donors, humanitarian workers and the government operate almost exclusively with U.S. dollars. The exchange rate – 1:1 before the civil war – is now 64 Liberian dollars to one U.S. dollar.

⁵⁴ Crisis Group interview, Monrovia, 12 June 2008.

⁵⁵ As of the end of the fourth training class, there were only 58 women, 3.5 per cent of the 1,634 total trained.

⁵⁶ A question has been raised about morale and even respect for female recruits, who may not have been held to the same standards as male recruits in the army and police. Mark Malan, "U.S. civil-military imbalance for global engagement: lessons from the operational level in Africa", Refugees International, July 2008.

⁵⁷ The cornerstone of this initiative was to make rape a crime for the first time, as noted above. Disseminating information about the law and enforcing it remain big challenges. Most Liberians still tend to treat rape as a civil affair, in which damages are paid by one man to another for damage to the

⁵⁰ The Governance Commission was set up at the end of the transition to advise the emerging institutions. It is headed by Amos Sawyer, an academic and former interim president.

⁵¹ The initial benchmark, that all recruits should hold a high school diploma, could not be met.

Since the end of the civil war, women government officials and civil society leaders have been at the forefront of efforts to encourage female recruiting and to communicate to the public that security forces need not be feared as they have been in the past. This is particularly germane given the history of rape as a weapon of terror used by all combatant forces from 1989.

The practical challenges for increasing the percentage of women in the army are great, since only a limited number of the relatively few female high school graduates might want a military career. Not a single woman was among the twenty to 25 participants in the 11 June 2008 meeting of the Joint Personnel Board (JPB) – the committee in charge of recruitment – that Crisis Group attended, but there was clear consensus on working toward meeting the president's goal. The government, in conjunction with external partners, needs to reinstate programs like that for the Reserved Officer Training Corps (ROTC) that encourage men and women to enter security sector careers and give greater consideration to the many reasons for the paucity of female applicants for positions in all security sectors. Recruitment could be bolstered and the diversity of candidates improved by removing unnecessary physical criteria for administrative jobs in the security forces.

The average age of recruits, initially 27.5, came down over the course of the process to 26.1. MoD officials attributed this to the fact that as the schools turned out more graduates, the army was receiving more and younger qualified candidates.

Australian, Gambian, U.S., UK, Ghanaian and Liberian researchers vetted every applicant, interviewing them, visiting their home villages or neighbourhoods and schools and talking with family members and acquaintances. They also distributed posters with applicants' photographs and a call-in number where people could anonymously lodge accusations of wrongdoing. This most likely caused many potentially tainted applicants to avoid the process. A person familiar with the process said that at the beginning, the hotline received many spurious complaints. Each was investigated, and when it became clear false accusations were being uncovered, such calls diminished.⁵⁸

woman "belonging" to him. For more on gender aspects of customary versus statutory law, see Crisis Group Report, *Resurrecting the Justice System*, op. cit.

⁵⁸A person familiar with the process said DynCorp was pushed to increase numbers vetted from two or three to five per vetter per week, the maximum responsible rate. UNMIL vetters did five per day. Crisis Group interview, Monrovia, June 2008.

Recruitment decisions are finalised at regular JPB meetings co-chaired by the defence minister, the U.S. chief of the Office of Defense Cooperation (ODC) and, as a civil society representative, Counsellor Jallah, the dean of the University of Liberia Law School. At the 11 June 2008 session participants debated difficult cases and discussed the need to increase representation of women and recruits from outside Monrovia. DynCorp staff circulated the dossiers of recruits who had both passed and not passed the vetting process. An example of the latter involved a man who had been demobilised with a combatant group from the 1999-2003 war, had handed in an AK-47 rifle but was unwilling to discuss his recruitment into the group or his responsibilities and activities in it.

One measure of the success of the vetting process is that a built-in safeguard – that each recruit serve a one-year probationary period and can be dropped immediately if any discrepancy is subsequently discovered – has only been used once. It is possible that others may have slipped through with falsified histories, but Liberians, from those on the street to the president and her security advisers, seem pleased with the process and consider it comprehensive. Crisis Group agrees. Two international SSR experts interviewed as it got underway called the vetting process the best they had seen anywhere in the world.⁵⁹

2. Training

Basic training appears to have been successful, but because of significant delays, including a wasteful lag between recruitment and its commencement, it was a close run thing. The process picked up pace only in mid-2007 and then by postponing human rights and rule-of-law training. These sacrifices suggest that the PMC contractors are backsliding somewhat from their initial concept, with human security at its centre. It is vital not to allow these components to fall by the wayside.

The delay in designating a training site adversely affected the schedule. At the beginning of 2006, DynCorp had sent a team of trainers, all former U.S. army or marine drill sergeants. As the cumulative figures below show, however, no training took place until April of the following year.⁶⁰

- January 2005-April 2007, none trained;
- as of June 2007, 102 trained;

⁵⁹Crisis Group interview, international SSR experts, Monrovia, 26 March 2006.

⁶⁰Crisis Group interviews, Monrovia, June 2008.

- as of September 2007, 639 trained;
- as of January 2008, 1,124 trained;
- as of April 2008, 1,634 trained; and
- as of September 2008, 2,113 trained.

Part of the lag between recruitment and training was unavoidable given the need for vetting. However, the delay was much longer than would normally have been required, and as a result, a significant portion of the SSR budget was used for paying DynCorp staff who were unable to do their jobs. Although the time lag was not necessarily the contractor's fault, greater transparency around the contract might have encouraged further discussion of the fact that DynCorp salaries vastly outstripped those of both Liberian and uniformed U.S. military personnel. As discussed in Appendix E, the high salary structure of PMCs can work when their employees come in and get out in a timely manner, bringing to bear their expertise when and where needed. But the unanticipated delays that characterise programming in post-conflict settings mean PMCs may often spend a large portion of their budget to retain expatriate staff who spend much time waiting for things to fall into place rather than training.

Basic training, known as Initial Entry Training (IET), consists of eight weeks of marksmanship with AK-47s as well as use of hand grenades, physical, hygiene and first aid training, map reading and drills. A typical week involves 96 hours of work, starting with an 0500 wake-up call and lights out at 2100. Recruits must pass basic rifle marksmanship and physical fitness tests. Trainers also look for leadership aptitude. In the fifth IET class, which finished in April 2008, 510 of 525 recruits passed. Six each failed marksmanship and physical fitness, and three were dropped for "failure to adapt".⁶¹ Successful trainees go directly to Advanced Individual Training (AIT), where they learn use of GP25 grenade launchers and light and heavy machine guns as well as small unit infantry tactics, and continue with physical fitness. In the fourth class (December 2007-January 2008), 506 of 510 trainees were successful. Two failed physical fitness, one went absent without leave and one failed a drugs test.

Soldiers selected for leadership potential from the AIT graduates are eligible to enter the four-week basic NCO course, modelled on the U.S. army's Warrior Leader

Course. By the end of June 2008, DynCorp had conducted four NCO courses, training 227 candidates, but only 33 had been commissioned. The government had reportedly not allocated the extra money needed to pay the increased salaries of the remaining candidates.⁶² Recruits who have successfully completed IET, AIT and the basic NCO course and also have a college degree are eligible for Officer Candidate School (OCS). As of July 2008, the army had only 27 Liberian officers. The number reached 98 at the end of the year, of which only eight were at the rank of captain or above.⁶³ This falls 40 short of the current target of 138 officers of all ranks, due to lack of qualified applicants.⁶⁴

Two thousand rank-and-file soldiers have received individual and squad-level basic training, but much remains to be done. PAE is responsible for military occupational specialty training at the EBK base (formerly Camp Schiefflin). The army has a 40-member band, and PAE and a U.S. air force medic are training a team of nineteen medics.⁶⁵ PAE is also organising training for 105 military police, an engineering brigade (with assistance from U.S. navy Seabees) and a 162-member brigade training corps that is to handle new recruits in the future. This train-the-trainers work is critical for sustaining the army. As with other elements of the late-starting reform, however, it will take some time to evaluate. PAE is further responsible for platoon and company-level training as well as overseeing the officer mentoring program, which incorporates eight uniformed U.S. military and PAE staff.

By late 2009 or early 2010, the army is to undergo the Army Readiness Training and Evaluation Program (ARTEP), to test its ability to function as an integrated brigade. Once it passes this evaluation, the U.S.-funded training by DynCorp and PAE will be finished, and in principle the MoD will take full responsibility.

Had this report been written a year earlier, it would have evaluated the training program as deeply unsatisfactory. As of August 2007, only 105 soldiers had been processed, and NCO and officer training had barely started. The irregular flow of U.S. funding impacted on the availability of resources,⁶⁶ and the

⁶¹ This was the best completion rate, and trainers noted that the attrition rate was significantly lower than in the U.S. military. The third class, in which 485 of 523 successfully completed the IET training, had an attrition rate closer to that of the U.S. Crisis Group interview, DynCorp staff, Camp Ware, 9 June 2008.

⁶² Crisis Group interviews, security sector advisers, Monrovia, 7 and 10 June 2008.

⁶³ The army also has twelve officers from ECOWAS countries. Crisis Group interviews, June and September 2008.

⁶⁴ Crisis Group email communications, December 2008.

⁶⁵ Malan, *op. cit.*, p. 35.

⁶⁶ In the course of partisan clashes with the opposition- (Democratic-) controlled Congress over fiscal policy, the Bush administration sought much of its funding for Liberia through supplemental emergency requests that would not count against the regular budget ceiling.

Liberian government's delay in allocating space was a further proximate cause. DynCorp was burning through its budget while not yet doing much training. The recent story has been quite different, but there are several questions surrounding the steps taken to increase speed. Initial basic training was reduced from fifteen to eight weeks, with a major cut, as noted, being 120 hours of human rights and rule-of-law courses. U.S. officials insisted that the hours would be reinstated "at the back end" (during platoon and company training),⁶⁷ but Crisis Group was not able to identify concrete plans.

In a November 2005 meeting, contractors overseeing SSR told Crisis Group that rather than introduce human rights and rule-of-law materials as a separate unit during which "trainees could just tune out", DynCorp was committed to integrating the materials into every module of their training. Even if training in civilian control of the military, division of responsibilities between police and army and other such matters is ultimately done "at the back end", it would be a significant retreat from the original concept, and it seems possible this aspect may fall completely out of the program as money becomes tight.

This brings up the issue of whether a private contractor should be used for the kind of work DynCorp has undertaken. Faced with irregular funding from Washington and unexpected delays, it laid off Liberian staff and cut out rule-of-law training. This was perhaps logical from its point of view. Liberian staff were, in principle, easily replaced at low cost, while sending home highly-qualified expatriate staff would not only cost extra money for air fares and the like but also return personnel who had amassed local knowledge and experience to the general pool of sought-after trainers. When DynCorp needed them again, they might be in Iraq, Afghanistan, Haiti or elsewhere. By contrast, professional militaries are well placed to absorb the costs of unexpected delays such as those that plagued the Liberia program.

The U.S. embassy should ensure that this training is carried out as per the contractual obligations of DynCorp; if such obligations are not in the DynCorp contract, the Congress should appropriate the necessary money so that human rights and rule-of-law training is not lost.⁶⁸ Furthermore, in order to ensure that gender-sensitive human rights and rule of law training addresses prevention of sexual violence, female training experts

should be recruited by all PMCs involved in SSR work. It is clearly important that all involved in similar SSR programs in future give careful thought to the specific limitations of PMCs.

Soldiers like those training the new Liberian army have faith that proper training and indoctrination can transform recruits. Young people come out of boot camp qualitatively different – psychologically, socially and even morally. This belief has a certain parallel in Liberia with the practice of initiations through which adolescents enter adult society. But such faith can be misplaced. Boot camp, like initiation, can be a rite of passage, but its effects can be short-lived if the surrounding political context and day-to-day practice do not reinforce lessons learned. SSR in Liberia as so far conceived has been rather too oriented towards training, which is a necessary start, but only a start.

3. Equipment and logistics

A freshly trained, scrupulously vetted Liberian private earns \$84 per month after taxes and medical insurance. A lieutenant who has passed basic training, NCO training and Officer Candidate School and has a university degree earns \$200. By contrast, an UNMIL driver earns some \$600. Serving in the army only makes sense in the context of the sacrifices that accompany a commitment to serving one's country. Crisis Group found many NCO candidates who are thoughtful and articulate on this point.

It has, of course, helped that there are not enough jobs in the general economy to employ all the bright and ambitious recent high school and university graduates. However, it is important to remember that the new army is making sacrifices for the national good. Its members deserve to be repaid with an organisational structure, infrastructure and equipment that contribute to high morale. This is also a vital investment in stability. The failure to do any of this for the police is a large part of the story of that institution's progressive degradation.

There is a pressing need for more officer and NCO housing at brigade headquarters but no clear plan to build it. Otherwise, the quarters at EBK and the Barclay Training Centre are in good condition, including hygienic barracks, mess halls and offices. Other logistical gaps have generally been bridged without major problems. PAE's Freetown depot has been used, and ECOWAS has provided trucks. Romania has contrib-

⁶⁷ Crisis Group interviews, U.S. SSR officials, Monrovia, June 2008.

⁶⁸ As detailed in Appendix E, Crisis Group has not been able to obtain a copy of the contract between the U.S. government and DynCorp.

uted most of the weapons: Soviet-style AK-47s, RPG-7 grenade launchers and 81mm mortars.⁶⁹

One plan that remains embryonic is creation of a coast-guard. This would recreate a pre-war arm of the military that could aid in patrolling both Monrovia port and territorial waters, where millions of dollars are lost annually to illegal trawling. Patrolling of territorial waters would be especially helpful in the south east, where the lack of roads means that much regional transport is by sea. More broadly, such a capacity would be a useful contribution to the international effort to stem illegal smuggling along the coast of West Africa, including of narcotics.

4. Management and strategy

Management of the army SSR process has been far from perfect but the efforts of individuals in key coordinating roles and the ability of the U.S. to take on extra responsibilities have in large part kept the program on course. Of greater concern is what will happen when all responsibility is handed over to the Liberian government. The MoD has already displayed weakness in dealing with the expectations of the fledgling army. It needs to take full advantage of the PMCs' expertise before they leave, strengthen army middle management and in the long term imbue the institution with the doctrines of civilian control and rule-of-law. Experience, however, can only come with time. Donors, the U.S. in particular, and regional partners should be far-sighted in guaranteeing financial and military support for at least the next decade, while the army finds its feet.

If the army SSR program has even come close to catching up with its original timeline, it is largely because of the hard work of the American ODC chief who served from mid-2006 to mid-2008. Several observers commented that his predecessor had been significantly less dynamic and did not drive the contractors as hard. But his personal contribution highlights structural deficiencies.⁷⁰ DynCorp and PAE have had ups and downs, with some staff sent home before their contracts expired. But they will be gone before long, and a recent evaluation found that the MoD, all of whose 100 staff received a sixteen-week DynCorp training course in parallel to the first class of army recruits:

... still lacks basic management capacity and is hard-pressed to administer the salaries and see to the welfare of the 105 soldiers and 525 recruits currently

on its payroll. Salaries have been paid late, and the payroll and administrative burden will increase dramatically as the current accession of recruits graduate, and the new class is inducted into the AFL.⁷¹

One among many examples of managerial weakness was the minor controversy that developed around the feeding of NCO candidates during training. Although, according to the ODC chief, it had been agreed that the U.S. would provide food only during basic training, and thereafter trainees would have to buy meals or cook, the MoD sided with some unhappy trainees demanding to be fed during their NCO course, too. The U.S. agreed to a meal program that phased out at the end of 2008, and the MoD must now respond to soldiers' complaints.

This incident raises questions about the ministry's ability to manage personnel issues and expectations. It is relatively easy for now to push misunderstandings and management problems to the Americans, who are likely to take temporary responsibility because they want SSR to succeed. However, the U.S. will soon diminish its role. The MoD needs to be ready to take over, which means coordinating budgeting, procurement and management systems so as to deal with both day-to-day crises and medium- and long-term strategic planning. There is already talk within the government that the army should grow to 4,000 or 5,000. There may be sound justifications, but the test will be whether the government can manage the initial 2,000, including proper feeding, equipping and paying.

The biggest medium-term challenge for the MoD is to build a solid middle management core. Liberia will have to walk a fine line between promoting new officers and NCOs too fast and leaning too heavily on foreign officers and advisers. The latter will by definition encourage dependence on outside military advice. This is uncharted territory, and the Johnson-Sirleaf government, the government that succeeds hers and Liberia's security partners will all have to improvise as they go. Improvisation, however, need not mean lack of structure. In fact in such a context it will be all the more important to agree upon benchmarks to ensure a structured, staggered handover of responsibilities.

UNMIL's military drawdown should also be linked to these benchmarks. It would be foolhardy to consider the training of 2,000 privates, or even the Army Readiness Training and Evaluation Program (ARTEP) evaluation exercise at the brigade level, as the indication of operational readiness to cope with genuine military threats. Officers and NCOs will have to gain experi-

⁶⁹The decision to use such weapons rather than U.S. ones was due to their durability and use by other ECOWAS armies.

⁷⁰See Appendix E below.

⁷¹Malan, op. cit., p. 43.

ence that can only come with time. In the meantime consideration needs to be given to an “over the horizon” military guarantee on the part of the international community.

Such contingency planning is essential if Liberia is to respond quickly and effectively to an insurgency threat. The other piece of that planning must be a clear doctrinal division of labour specifying which forces within the security apparatus would respond to internal insurgency attack. The police’s paramilitary Emergency Response Unit (ERU) would seem the obvious organisation, but the plans remain vague.

If the U.S. will not give the above guarantee, it is also probably reasonable to envision a small but well-trained military presence (commando or quick reaction unit) remaining in Liberia for as much as a decade after the drawdown of most UNMIL forces. The most likely candidates would be ECOWAS soldiers, preferably under a UN mandate. They have shown themselves among the most aggressive and effective peace imposition troops in the world, albeit at the cost of many casualties in the past two decades. Some in Liberia may have concerns related to past abuses by Nigerian forces serving in the country in the 1990s,⁷² but this record has to be seen in a context of poor performance by UN forces there and in neighbouring countries.⁷³

A final question concerns the training of an inter-agency vetting team to work with the army’s Brigade Training Corps. The highly effective group put together by DynCorp is too expensive for Liberia to use in future. However, it would be money well spent to fund DynCorp vettors to train an inter-agency Liberian vetting team, which should be some combination of civilians already doing vetting, police, army and possibly defence and justice ministry staff. This would allow Liberia to continue its “best practices” model rather than lose the expertise and experience gained during the SSR process when DynCorp leaves. All these proposals will require a far-sighted approach by funders. All the money and effort so far invested in reforming the army could be lost if substantial follow-up is not built into donor plans, particularly by the U.S.

The greatest long-term challenge for the MoD and associated ministries is to do more with less. As the U.S. gradually disengages from army SSR, managerial and financial responsibilities will mount rapidly. The response must be both political and technical, with civilian control established and political manipulation avoided.

All countries face the paradox that an army trained to act only under civilian control can be manipulated by those very civilian politicians to act against the national interests. Liberia confronts the problem more acutely because of its post-conflict fragility. Only strong legislative input and oversight and activism from civil society and the press can provide the checks to prevent this. It is important that the military have clear doctrine for these matters and that all soldiers – from privates to generals – be well versed in it. This is why it may have been ill-advised to cut the human rights and rule-of-law component from basic training in an effort to save money and accelerate the process.

However, not all the fault lies with the training program, as there is little doctrine to teach. It has taken too long to develop the national security strategy and the implementation plan to accompany it. Crisis Group agrees with arguments, originating especially from the Governance Commission, that Liberia must commit to extensive, inevitably time-consuming public consultation. It also recognises the government must grapple with a multitude of similar tasks at the same time, for example in regard to judicial reform, decentralisation and land issues. However, the process has moved too slowly, to the point where many important decisions of both a technical and a political nature are piling up behind the delayed national security strategy.⁷⁴

The centrality of the U.S. in funding and driving the army SSR program has sometimes created friction, but in the next chapter of the army’s history, many different actors will be offering advice, senior officers will come from a number of countries, and soldiers will also be trained in Nigeria, China and elsewhere. This greatly increased complexity could create relative chaos – like that characterising the Liberian National Police – unless the government has a clear vision of its short-, medium- and long-term objectives for the army.

⁷² See Ellis, *op. cit.*, pp. 172-178.

⁷³ UN peacekeepers have been accused of sexual abuse and have not always been able to defend civilians or prevent disorder. The single biggest complaint in a 2006 survey of Liberians about UNMIL was rape and/or “causing our girls to prostitute themselves”. J. Krasno, “Public opinion survey of UNMIL’s work in Liberia”, 2006, at www.peacekeepingbestpractices.unlb.org/PBPS/Pages/Public/viewdocument.aspx?docid=749.

⁷⁴ The new army, for instance, needs leave and promotion policies.

V. REFORMING THE POLICE AND OTHER SECURITY AGENCIES

A. THE POLICE

While army reform became a U.S. responsibility, the 2003 peace accords put UNMIL in charge of police reform, which got underway almost as soon as the peacekeepers established basic security in Monrovia.⁷⁵ The ERU only started training in 2008, but it is already beginning to assume primary responsibility for situations of civil unrest and may in time become the front line response unit for dealing with internal insurgency.

Unlike the “root and branch” attempt to build the institution of an army from the ground up, police reform built upon existing personnel, often from other security forces. The peace accords specified that paramilitary, police-like forces at the two airports, the National Port Authority, the Liberian Telecommunications Corporation and the Liberian Petroleum Refining Company, as well as other Taylor-era militias such as the Anti-Terrorist Unit and the LNP’s own Special Operations Division should all be disbanded, with some functions taken on by the new force. In line with RAND’s 2006 recommendations, the Drug Enforcement Agency and the National Bureau of Investigation will also be dissolved into the LNP.

All these initiatives will contribute to the LNP’s eventual strength and coherence, provided they are well executed, and the various elements of the force are well managed and coordinated. However, this is a great deal to expect from an institution that has serious management deficiencies, few working vehicles and scant communications equipment, often lacks even handcuffs or torches and still suffers from a widespread perception of malpractice.⁷⁶

⁷⁵ Bilateral donors, including Germany, the U.S. and Norway, also contributed funding to police reform; the U.S. and Ireland have been the lead donors for ERU training and equipment. This aid has still gone through UNPOL, though ERU training was more explicitly negotiated between the Liberian government, UNPOL and the U.S. embassy.

⁷⁶ “While many noted that security had improved since the war, participants in the county consultations identified several common internal security concerns. The most frequently cited were sexual violence and rape, drugs, and theft. County discussions also revealed widespread dissatisfaction with the security and police apparatus. In particular, Liberians noted a shortage of qualified security and police personnel, incidents of police corruption, and low levels of public confidence and trust in the police”. “Main public consultation messages from

The Secretary-General’s request to the Security Council in August 2008 for an increase in UN Formed Police Units (FPU) to handle crowd control and the overall number of UN police at a time when a decrease had been planned gives an indication of the problems.⁷⁷ The request was appropriate, since mobs have been burning down police stations to lynch alleged criminals they believe will escape justice. Reforms will have to be quick and comprehensive.

1. Recruitment and vetting

While the army vetting process is considered by many an international best practices standard, UNMIL’s human rights and protection unit called the police version a failure as early as 2005.⁷⁸ Subsequent evaluations have varied. An UNMIL representative staunchly defended police vetting.⁷⁹ Others said the mission had done what it could under difficult circumstances, and vetting would remain a priority. Liberian officials and ordinary citizens alike regularly castigated the process, but for varied reasons. Some said not enough corrupt officials had been eliminated originally, while a senior adviser to the president suggested the opposite: UNMIL had been too mistrustful of the old hierarchy and had removed too many,⁸⁰ so was unable to benefit from the expertise of honest, experienced officers who could have identified problem cases that slipped through the initial vetting. Anyway, a specialist suggested, requiring a vetter to handle five dossiers per day had been too much. One dossier per day was the maximum average for serious vetting such as done by DynCorp for army recruits.⁸¹

Dealing with the consequences of this recruitment process will be a continuing challenge. Many Crisis Group interlocutors spoke of the danger of “contamination”, namely that veteran officers might show new recruits the old dubious practices.⁸² However, unlike the new army, the police at least has an officer corps. If the dual processes of streamlining and training specialist units succeed and are matched by increased resources, the force could quickly become far more effective.

the counties”, 2008 Republic of Liberia Poverty Reduction Strategy, p. 46.

⁷⁷ “Seventeenth progress report”, op. cit.

⁷⁸ Crisis Group interview, UNMIL human rights and protection unit, Monrovia, 12 October 2005.

⁷⁹ Crisis Group interview, Monrovia, 25 September 2008.

⁸⁰ Crisis Group interview, Monrovia, June 2008.

⁸¹ See fn. 58 above.

⁸² Crisis Group interviews, Monrovia, June 2008.

2. Training

Regular police. UNMIL has trained 3,661 officers, including 344 women. An all-female class of 110 will soon graduate, making women 12 per cent of the force. More than 1,000 officers have received specialised training. The United Nations Police (UNPOL) helped the LNP set up a Professional Services Unit (PSU) and sent 300 officers for crowd control training to Nigeria in 2005.⁸³ They are meant to become the first line of response to civil unrest, including riots and mob or vigilante violence around a crime scene. Rapid attrition, however, has reduced their numbers from 400 to approximately 100.⁸⁴ This is blamed by most observers on poor morale, though a police adviser noted that when the 300 trainees returned from Nigeria, they were split up rather than kept in a single unit, suggesting the decrease in PSU numbers may have been due less to attrition than poor management or a conscious decision of police leadership to dismantle the unit.

The present force received a general 29-week training course (thirteen weeks at the academy and sixteen in-service). This has now been extended to a year's course.⁸⁵ The urgent need for supervising officers has led to the training of sergeants, inspectors, superintendents and commissioners – positions now filled by UNPOL personnel – in order to give the LNP the effective Liberian command and control structure it has lacked.

Emergency Response Unit (ERU). In June 2008, Crisis Group heard the ERU variously described as like an American SWAT⁸⁶ unit, the Quick Reaction Units that were part of UNMIL during its first years and a European gendarmerie, as well as the first line of counter-insurgency defence and crowd control specialists. This confusion is indicative of the lack of a coherent security architecture vision. The strategic role of this force, the only police unit that will be routinely armed, should be clarified as soon as possible, since this will have significant ramifications for training. The UNMIL press release that accompanied the 3 October 2008 graduation ceremony of the first two classes (138 men, one woman) stated:

The ERU will deal with crime situations which may require the use of firearms in the arrest of armed criminals, hostage situations and violent crimes in progress, as well as armed terrorist activities. The unit will additionally handle riot control, anti-crime

patrol in high crime areas and will provide assistance in major disaster situations. ERU personnel are not to be used or deployed as personal security for individuals; nor are they to be used for routine patrol or as a first response to crime.⁸⁷

Significantly, nothing was said about possible use in countering large-scale armed threats. As the army has been publicly ruled out for that responsibility, the most credible threat for toppling a Liberian government is left unaccounted for. This must be corrected in connection with the release of the national security strategy.

The numbers to be trained are also in question. The program, funded with \$5 million from the U.S. and \$1.4 million from Ireland and the recipient of three new buildings from Norway, was originally to train 500 officers. Crisis Group was told in Monrovia in June 2008 that this might be reduced to 300, but in the present environment of high crime rates and unrest it is unlikely that 300 ERU trainees will be sufficient.⁸⁸ The original plan was to have 200 ERU in Monrovia, and 300 up-country. This should be a minimum, especially if the army is not expected to do counter-insurgency or crowd control.

Crisis Group visited the ERU training site at the National Police Academy in Monrovia in June 2008. PAE contractors paid by the U.S. have been seconded to UNPOL and are working with it in the training. All ERU applicants have been re-vetted and will reportedly have to undergo polygraph tests. Trainees practise kidnapping and carjacking rescues, close quarter combat, hand-to-hand defensive tactics and public order training (using batons, helmets and shields). Crisis Group witnessed armed patrol drills using plastic replicas of assault rifles.

The first group of 90 trainees shrank to 76 as it awaited the arrival of weapons which required waivers from ECOWAS and the Security Council to the arms embargo that still applies to Liberia.⁸⁹ U.S.-made Smith & Wesson 9mm pistols and Bushmaster M-4 rifles arrived in

⁸³ Crisis Group interview, New York, 16 July 2008.

⁸⁴ Crisis Group interviews, Monrovia and New York, June-July 2008.

⁸⁵ Crisis Group interviews, Monrovia, June 2008.

⁸⁶ The acronym stands for Special Weapons and Tactics.

⁸⁷ "New Liberian armed police told to uphold international human rights standards in carrying out duties", UNMIL press release, 4 October 2008.

⁸⁸ In fact, UNMIL had to request an increase in police presence at a point in the mission's life when police numbers were to be reduced. Each FPU has between 605 and 845 personnel, somewhat larger than the ERU.

⁸⁹ Though few West African countries observe it, ECOWAS's moratorium on small arms and light weapons requires all weapons imports by a member state to be reported to it.

late August to enable the first two ERU classes to finish training in October 2008.⁹⁰

While much of the Irish money is for vehicles, the U.S. is funding refurbishment of the headquarters, as well as communications and tactical equipment, weapons, ammunition and salaries for five PAE trainers. Once weapons are fully available, ERU training might be able to make the same kind of rapid progress that army training did. Reaching the full complement of 500 ERU is currently held up by a lack of adequately qualified candidates. It is vital that when candidates are found, the U.S. Congress appropriates the money necessary to train them.

3. Equipment and logistics

Almost every description of police problems begins with a list of what officers lack: cellular telephones and walkie-talkies; raincoats; generators to light stations; vehicles; fuel in the rare case that vehicles or generators are at hand; toilets in stations; even torches. Police have neither the equipment nor training to do much crime scene investigation (fingerprints are rarely taken, for instance), let alone forensics. This long list gives a sense of how far the police will have to come on many fronts at once.

Money is urgently needed to do much simultaneously, as observed by the Secretary-General in recent reports to the Security Council. As noted below, however, it is not clear that the LNP's upper management is prepared to use new resources to their full advantage. The UN is investing significant funds in rebuilding police stations and equipping the LNP, and Germany has donated €1 million for training. Still, a May 2008 joint security assessment conducted by the Liberian government, UNMIL and the UN country team found that most Liberians felt their security was more precarious than at any time since the war ended and that police presence in the counties was negligible. Crisis Group recently saw almost no sign of the police in Margibi, Bong, Nimba and Lofa Counties, other than around their stations. Officers need to be more visible and effective, and when they are, they should receive targeted donor support.

The finalisation of the LNP strategic development plan in December 2008 and the completion of the police duty manual in the same month are welcome achievements. While several years late, the latter's rapid dissemina-

tion may help deal with issues of morale and especially absenteeism, which many observers say is most pronounced among pre-2004 officers. Unambiguous rules regarding penalties for such behaviour should make it easier for the officers to adapt or be dismissed. Clear guidelines are needed for supervisors to evaluate their charges and for a promotion, review and appeal process that can help ensure a non-politicised force. Nepotism has in the past undermined the professionalism of the police as of other parts of the security sector, so rigorous promotion procedures are vital.⁹¹

4. Management

The most troubling issues regarding the LNP's ability to build for the future relate to upper management. While opinions regarding Inspector General Beatrice Munah Sieh vary widely,⁹² there was consistent criticism of those just below her. Deficiencies in human resources management, accounting and budgeting, procurement and logistics were described as "serious" and "dire".⁹³ Many in Monrovia suggested there was reluctance within the police hierarchy and at the higher levels of government to address these problems sequentially.

Donors need to provide more resources for training and reform, but it would be valuable to set clear benchmarks in order to test political will first. Until these are agreed by all partners, donors should avoid funding the sector. One obvious benchmark should be a plan for integrating equipment maintenance as well as sustained support for recruitment, vetting and training into the government budget. This was a prerequisite for the army SSR project but has been left ambiguous for the police.

⁹¹The Liberia National Law Enforcement Association (LINLEA), an NGO, in particular expressed desire for written evaluation and promotion criteria and an appeals process. Its reasons were the pre-2004 period, when some officers received no explanation for non-promotion (none was required), while others were promoted, they believed, due to nepotism or other reasons not related to performance. Crisis Group interview, Monrovia, 6 June 2008. Others pointed to the LNP as an institution in which some officers appeared to be "untouchable" despite exhibiting poor judgment or breaking the law, for instance by carrying firearms.

⁹²Sieh was put on three-month probation and sent for leadership courses in China and the U.S. after provoking a gun battle between LNP and Seaport Police in July 2007. President Johnson-Sirleaf rejected a board of inquiry recommendation for her dismissal. Some felt Sieh returned with stronger management skills. Crisis Group interviews, Monrovia, June 2008.

⁹³Crisis Group interviews, security specialists, Monrovia, June 2008, New York, July 2008.

⁹⁰A reason given for the difference in weapons from those used by the new army was that it would be easier in case of illegal discharge or other malfeasance to trace the force to which the weapon belonged.

A problem beyond the scope of this report but with palpable effect on police work is the continuing dysfunction of the wider justice sector. In 2006 Crisis Group pointed to the need to address the dualism of customary and statutory law, access to justice and expeditious criminal case management, as well as the urgency of prison reform.⁹⁴ Subsequent reports of the UN Secretary-General and others have consistently concluded that the justice sector has made less progress than almost any other and that this not least risks sabotaging the security sector.⁹⁵

Liberians have stormed police stations to mete out mob justice, because they see known criminals being returned to the street. As described above, such civil unrest is dangerous, in part because it may cover destabilising violence by groups opposed to the government and also lead to growth of parallel organisations (vigilante groups or civil militias) that could become more powerful than the security forces. The 23 June 2008 law imposing the death penalty for armed robbery resulting in a death and more importantly making armed robbery non-bailable may help. It should reduce instances of offenders being freed a few days after arrest, while those accused of misdemeanours but too poor to pay bail languish in pre-trial detention longer than the maximum sentence of the crimes for which they are accused. But as UNPOL draws down, the ERU will be tasked with containing such violent unrest. If the regular police and the justice sector do not do their jobs effectively, it may find itself spending most of its time extracting suspects and beleaguered police from angry crowds and thus less able to deter internal insurgent actions.

B. OTHER SECURITY AGENCIES

Even while negotiating an end to the second civil war, those involved recognised that there were many more dysfunctional security agencies than the army and police. The sheer proliferation of forces was itself a serious problem.⁹⁶ Ten or more additional security-

related agencies had thousands of employees and overlapping functions.⁹⁷ Both effective policing and early detection and management of internal or external attempts at destabilisation rely on those that complement the army and police, including the intelligence services, the Bureau of Immigration and Naturalisation and the Customs Agency. As the peace accords did not specify who was to be responsible, there have been significant delays in the reforms. For the most part, these have been largely consensual and carried out by the government and UNMIL, the latter being involved due to its role in reforming the police, which are absorbing many of the functions of the other agencies.

1. Intelligence, customs and immigration

The biggest point of contention surrounding intelligence is that of consolidation versus corroboration. Some emphasise separating parts of the system to be able to check the reliability of information and analysis; others stress avoidance of redundant structures when resources are tight. RAND's report recommended all redundant elements in the intelligence apparatus be done away with. Such an approach yields a streamlined management organigram and spreadsheet savings, but the political cost/benefit analysis is more complex. A veteran Liberian politician said, "we don't want a situation where just one person has the ear of the president on intelligence matters. The idea of an 'intelligence czar' is not new in Liberia. In the past, it was abused so dangerously that it contributed to the war".⁹⁸

If there is such a czar today, it is the president's stepson, Fombah Sirleaf, who was trained at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point and heads the National Security Agency. Although he enjoys a good personal and professional relationship with the president and is widely respected, many Liberian officials want to set

⁹⁴ Crisis Group Report, *Resurrecting the Justice System*, op. cit.

⁹⁵ "Sixteenth progress report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in Liberia", 19 March 2008 (S/2008/183); "Seventeenth progress report", op. cit.

⁹⁶ The CPA of 2003 states that: "There shall be an immediate restructuring of the National Police Force, the Immigration Force, Special Security Service (SSS), custom security guards and such other statutory security units. [They] shall adopt a professional orientation that emphasises democratic values and respect for human rights, a non-partisan approach to duty and the avoidance of corrupt practices... The Special Security Units including the Anti-Terrorist Unit, the Special Operations Division (SOD) of the Liberian National Police

Force and such paramilitary groups that operate within organisations as the National Ports Authority (NPA), the Liberian Telecommunications Corporation (NTC), the Liberian Refining Corporation (LPRC) and the Airports shall be disarmed and restructured". The 2006 RAND report recommended that these agencies be streamlined.

⁹⁷ These agencies included the Drug Enforcement Agency, the National Bureau of Investigation, the Special Security Service, the National Security Agency, the Bureau of Naturalisation and Immigration, the Customs Agency, the Liberian Port Authority police, Roberts Field airport security and the security forces of the Forestry Development Authority and the Liberian Petroleum Refinery Company.

⁹⁸ Crisis Group interview, Liberian government official, Monrovia, 11 June 2008. The RAND report acknowledged that "wealthy countries often have complex and even inefficient structures to provide insurance and redundancy", but argued it was a luxury Liberia cannot afford.

up a structure that will continue to work effectively as personnel changes over time. Against the background of state collapse and after the poor practices of the transitional government, the president has understandably picked close confidants she trusts, but this trust needs to be institutionalised if it is to endure. The suggestion that there be a “corroborating” intelligence function within the government has been accepted, though it is not entirely clear how it will be made operational. The most likely solution will be for the LNP to have an intelligence unit, some of whose staff will probably come from the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI), which has employed 200 to 300 people since the end of the war and is now being folded into the police.

Collection, analysis and operational use of crime fighting intelligence have been police weaknesses. Bringing NBI officers into the LNP may help to address these but will likely require more training and management expertise to define their duties. So as to ensure a smooth transition and avoid fragmentation of the institution, former NBI employees should be assigned to different parts of the police and so forced to collaborate with their new colleagues. The national security ministry, which is now without a minister, is in the process of being integrated into the National Security Agency. Reassignment of its 96 employees should be on the same basis.

There was rare unanimity among the civilian and security sides of the Johnson-Sirleaf administration as well as diplomats that the customs and immigration services should keep their form, answering to the finance and justice ministries respectively. This is reasonable, but it is important to get the architecture right and clearly define roles, because these institutions have done much to plunder the state in the past. A Crisis Group researcher who has worked in Liberia since early 2004 recently travelled widely for the first time without being shaken down at one of the Bureau of Immigration and Naturalisation (BIN) checkpoints (of dubious utility) in the interior. BIN has said it needs \$2.7 million in demobilisation payments for 501 of its 1,228 officers who do not meet basic eligibility requirements.⁹⁹

2. The Special Security Service

The only organisation that drew harsher criticism than the LNP during recent Crisis Group research was the Special Security Service (SSS) that like the U.S. Secret Service, escorts and protects the president and other dignitaries. Charles Taylor stocked it with many of his fiercest fighters. Many members of Samuel Doe’s SSS

were trained in the U.S., yet had a reputation for aggressiveness and bullying civilians.

During the transitional government, the SSS underwent the same weak vetting process as the police,¹⁰⁰ and it has maintained its bad reputation. Numerous residents of the capital described experiences (often multiple) of being recklessly forced off the road by SSS personnel who drove their vehicles into them and typically cursed and pointed weapons at them. The passage of the president or vice president through Monrovia inspires dread in everyone not part of the motorcade. In one case, an SSS officer, enraged because he did not think an UNMIL vehicle had pulled over quickly enough, got out of his vehicle and punctured a tyre of the other vehicle with a spike. Another SSS officer allegedly was arrested with 750 kilograms of marijuana in his possession but was not imprisoned.¹⁰¹

Despite the strong perception of the SSS as a rogue organisation answering only to the president’s office, some Liberian officials insist that “serious restructuring is going on”, and many personnel have been fired for “factional loyalty” to the Taylor regime.¹⁰² In mid-2007, 867 SSS officers were made redundant when the UK provided £2 million for police and SSS demobilisation payments.¹⁰³ A new three-year training program, funded at \$5 million by the U.S., focuses on tactics, professionalisation, restructuring the service and identifying leaders.

⁹⁹ Crisis Group interview, Monrovia, June 2008.

¹⁰⁰ Crisis Group interview, Monrovia, 6 June 2008.

¹⁰¹ Crisis Group interview, diplomat, Monrovia, 11 June 2006.

¹⁰² Crisis Group interview, government official, Monrovia, 19 June 2008.

¹⁰³ Crisis Group has not been able to ascertain with any certainty the exact original number of SSS officers, but it is likely the majority were made redundant.

VI. CONCLUSION

Many aspects of Liberia's post-conflict reconstruction are bold. This has been possible because there was no clear winner of the civil war, and donors enjoyed strong influence over a non-elected transitional government, thus providing an opportunity to rebuild parts of the security sector from scratch and avoid some past mistakes. But this has also made the risk of failure higher than it would have been if Liberia, as many other post-conflict countries have done, had simply tried to muddle through. Though that risk has been mitigated by the huge international presence since 2003, the challenges for the government will grow as it gradually takes responsibility for each part of the security sector. Disappointed expectations are too often expressed through mob justice today. The most effective way to address the dissatisfaction is through strong, ongoing support for the newly reformed security sector and clear oversight and division of roles, as well as reform, for the justice sector.

Army reform is part of an overarching set of post-conflict, donor-driven reforms, including reintegration of ex-combatants and the highly intrusive economic changes imposed by the Government and Economic Management Assistance Program (GEMAP).¹⁰⁴ Given the 2003 start point, the imbalance between donor influence and the government's role was understandable, and the fresh start has gone reasonably well. The greatest risks, however, lie ahead. The government, the U.S., UN and ECOWAS need to work in tandem to ensure that the army is supported for the generation it can take to grow a new officer corps able to properly lead well-vetted and trained soldiers.

SSR must also address the police dysfunctions. The new ERU could solve some of the problems, but the most important gaps are at the doctrinal and strategic level, namely the lack of a clear plan for fighting possible future insurgencies. The day-to-day work of fighting crime will still fall to the ordinary police, who remain woefully inadequate. They require further training, much more equipment and possibly additional vetting, or at least stricter imposition of procedures and rules that allow removal of incompetent or rogue officers. They also need professional management that will be ready to lead the force as international actors depart. Likewise, clear evidence of progress on closely-related justice sector reform, particularly enforcement of the criminal law, is necessary to give the population con-

fidence that if thugs are apprehended by the police, a corrupt system will not quickly return them to the streets.

The SSR process has coped with limited budgets, inflated expectations, and lack of equipment and infrastructure and still advanced. Strong individuals have plugged many of the gaps left by poor U.S. mechanisms for oversight of the army process, but this cannot be counted on indefinitely. The State Department, therefore, should radically revamp its oversight system. For the Liberian government and UNMIL, the greatest challenges will continue to be doing more with limited money and balancing sometimes contradictory short-, medium- and long-term priorities.

Dakar/Brussels, 13 January 2009

¹⁰⁴ On GEMAP, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°98, *Liberia's Elections: Necessary but Not Sufficient*, 7 September 2005.

APPENDIX A

MAP OF LIBERIA



APPENDIX B

MAP OF GUINEA



APPENDIX C

GLOSSARY OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AFL	Armed Forces of Liberia
AIT	Advanced Individual Training, the second stage of military training for new recruits in the army SSR program
ATU	Anti-Terrorist Unit, elite militia employed by Charles Taylor during his rule
AU	African Union
ARTEP	Army Readiness Training and Evaluation Program, scheduled for late 2009 or early 2010, this will test the new Liberian army's ability to function as an integrated brigade
BIN	Bureau of Immigration and Naturalisation
BNCOC	Basic Non-commissioned Officer Course, military course offered to AIT graduates
CPA	Comprehensive Peace Agreement, signed August 2003 in Accra between the Government of Liberia and the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) and the Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL) and political parties
DDR(R)	Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (and Rehabilitation), process that began in December 2003 in Liberia
DoD	Department of Defence
EBK	Edward Binyah Kesseleh army brigade headquarters, formerly known as Camp Schiefflin
EC	European Commission
ECOMOG	Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group, Nigerian-led peacekeeping force that defended Monrovia against takeover by Charles Taylor in 1992
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
ERU	Emergency Response Unit, paramilitary unit of the Liberian National Police
GAO	Government Accountability Office, part of the U.S. government which is, among other things, responsible for the auditing of PMC contracting
GEMAP	Governance and Economic Management Assistance Program, partnership between the Liberian government and international partners aimed at improving the former's fiscal management
IDIQ	Indefinite delivery, indefinite quantity, describes the sort of contract that grants the companies in question a quasi-monopoly on future work, regardless of the outcomes of their current work
IET	Initial Entry Training, the first stage of military training for new recruits in the army SSR program
JPB	Joint Personnel Board, military oversight committee for the army
LMA	Landmine Action, a British-based NGO
LNP	Liberian National Police
LPC	Liberia Peace Council, rebel splinter group that participated in the first civil war under the leadership of George Boley

LURD	Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy, mostly Mandingo rebel group which grew out of ULIMO and was active from 1999 to 2003 under the leadership of Sekou Conneh
MPRI	Military Professional Resources Incorporated, a private military company
MODEL	Movement for Democracy in Liberia, rebel group that grew out of ULIMO and was active in 2003 under the leadership of Thomas Nimely
NBI	National Bureau of Investigation, government agency that will be dissolved into the Liberian National Police
NCO	non-commissioned officer
NEPI	National Ex-combatant Peace Initiative, organisation providing psycho-social counselling to ex-combatants
NGO	non-governmental organisation
NPFL	National Patriotic Front of Liberia, rebel group that participated in the first civil war under the leadership of Charles Taylor
NSA	National Security Agency, government agency led by the president's stepson, Fombah Sirleaf
NTGL	National Transitional Government of Liberia, 2003-2006 post-war government chaired by Charles Gyude Bryant
OCS	Officer Candidate School, military course in the army SSR program
ODC	Office of Defense Cooperation, the chief of this U.S. body directly oversees the PMCs implementing SSR in Liberia and acts as intermediary with the Liberian MoD and U.S. embassy
PAE	Pacific Architects and Engineers, private military company with a five-year monopoly contract for all U.S. State Department security-related services in Africa
PMC	private military company (or contractor)
PSC	private security company (or contractor)
PSU	Professional Services Unit, crowd control unit of Liberian National Police
SRSR	Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General
SSS	Special Security Service, security force dedicated to the protection of the president
SSR	Security Sector Reform
SWAT	Special Weapons and Tactics
ULIMO	United Liberation Movement of Liberia for Democracy, Krahn-dominated rebel group that participated in the Liberian civil war
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNDPKO	United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations
UNMIL	United Nations Mission in Liberia
UNPOL	United Nations Police
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

APPENDIX D

EX-COMBATANT REINTEGRATION AND SSR

1. DDR in Liberia: successes and failures

Some of the nascent threats to the restoration of security in Liberia were already evident in the flawed Disarmament, Demobilisation, Reintegration and Rehabilitation (DDRR)¹⁰⁵ process that began in December 2003.¹⁰⁶ This appendix analyses its deficiencies and some of the problems it has created in terms of expectations of those who have been through it, both important elements of the current security context.

DDR and SSR are typically treated as separate matters in post-conflict reconstruction. One reason is that DDR typically comes at the front end of reconstruction efforts, while SSR can only take place once basic security has been restored, thus in the middle to late stages of those efforts. DDR is also usually much shorter than SSR. Another important factor is that the international staff dealing with DDR normally consists of civilians specialised in peacekeeping, who work with regional or other peacekeepers. SSR specialists are more typically military personnel or retired military working as security contractors or private contractors. Jargon, methods and analysis within these two communities of “experts” differ, and they rarely speak of DDR and SSR as related problems.

However, from the viewpoint of ex-combatants and their communities, elements of DDR and SSR are inextricably connected. If the ultimate goal in Liberia is to prevent new armed violence, the greatest challenge is

to give young men alternatives to making their living through illegal use of force. This implies that the reintegration aspect of DDR (largely considered a failure in Liberia) and the SSR process are complementary, sometimes overlapping mechanisms for occupying unemployed youths and minimising illegal use of weapons.

2. Exaggerated demobilisation numbers and lack of assessed budget for reintegration

The DDR mechanisms created significant problems for subsequent SSR efforts. The former civil war commanders and combatants considered the program, which started in 2003, yet another rent to be exploited to the maximum, just as their former warlord leaders were pillaging the state under National Transitional Government auspices. UNMIL came to DDR from a different angle. Liberia was still an unstable and scary place, and DDR had the potential to placate the fighters, at least temporarily, and collect some of their weapons. Both sides thus had reasons to maximise the numbers on the Disarmament and Demobilisation rolls. Having estimated combatants at about 17,000, UNMIL doubled that number to 34,000 in its preparations in order to accommodate more war-affected people, including some fraudulent claimants. There was also an effort to increase participation of women and war-affected youths in DDR (few had been part of the Sierra Leone process), so women and anyone under eighteen could enter the program without turning over weapons or ammunition.

After a botched start in December 2003, DDR got underway in spring 2004. The results were surprising: almost 104,000 entered the program. They received \$150 initially and were eligible for another \$150 in their settlement area. Crisis Group talked with people entering the DDR site in Voinjama, northern Liberia, as well as civil society actors and UN personnel. All said many who entered had not fought but had had business ties with commanders who gave them the 150 rounds of ammunition to hand over in return for a portion of their DDR payment. “With over 100,000 registered combatants”, an analyst asked, “where are all the guns?”¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁵ Though Liberia’s program added rehabilitation, it is not clear that this translated into qualitatively different activities. An analyst stated: “The rehabilitation facet of the national program was (and is) ill-defined, marginally incorporated and virtually unfunded”. James Pugel, “The DDRR Process in Liberia”, in “Post-Conflict Peacebuilding in Liberia: Much Remains to Be Done”, Zentrum für Internationale Friedenssätze, report of the Third ZIF/KAIPTC seminar, Accra, 1-3 November 2007, pp. 40-43. When referring to the process in general, this appendix uses the more familiar “DDR” acronym.

¹⁰⁶ Liberia’s process demobilised 103,912 people, of whom 24 per cent were women and 11 per cent children (9,042 boys and 2,738 girls). Ruth Caesar, *ibid.*, pp. 31-39. Rehabilitation of children is generally perceived as successful. UNICEF estimated that 99 per cent were reunited with their families. Few aspects of the program catered to women, however. The deputy executive director of the National Commission for DDRR said “women were largely treated like men during the DD process”. Caesar, *op.cit.*

¹⁰⁷ Pugel, *op. cit.*, pp. 40-43. This helps explain why relatively few weapons were collected. In Lofa County (LURD headquarters) only 17 per cent of the demobilised turned in weapons. The national average was less than one per three

This mechanism served a specific purpose at a specific time, namely to “buy peace” by paying off factions, but it led to important differences of interpretation. UNMIL seemed to mistake a combination of economic self-interest and a symbolic gesture of willingness to *consider* reintegration to civilian life for something more substantial. This is understood by DDR specialists, at least today, four years after the Liberian demobilisation. A UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) official said she was “uncomfortable” with a quantitative focus on demobilisation and emphasised: “One shouldn’t confuse DDR with a reduction of military activity”.¹⁰⁸

This may seem like history but the dynamic it set in motion, and the expectations it created, generated contempt between ex-combatants and peacekeeping and humanitarian personnel. The internationals saw the ex-combatants as greedy and dangerous, ready to threaten violence to coerce as much money from the operation as possible. Many ex-combatants were happy to play the role, considering that the internationals wanted only to buy them as cheaply as possible and leave before the failure to address the conflict’s root causes became evident through new fighting.¹⁰⁹

While the UNMIL mission claimed its bloated DD rolls as a success,¹¹⁰ there are at least two reasons why more was not necessarily better. First, the mistrust between ex-combatants and the peacekeepers that grew from the process had a much longer lifespan and created problems for reorienting ex-combatants towards civilian life. Secondly, the bloated process squandered one of the mission’s great successes, which was to demand, and get, an assessed budget for DDR. The falloff in funding for peacekeeping often jeopardises early advances.¹¹¹ In Liberia, the payment of \$300 demobilisation packages to too many people with dubious claims meant little was left for reintegration. The easy demobilisation money reinforced ex-combatants’ views that the threat or use of violence was a viable way to make a living. The work of countering that

view fell to an under-funded patchwork of reintegration programs.

What has developed has been a well-articulated attitude of entitlement. Several commentators have noted that the DDR process’ dangerous mix of ambitious promises and slow, sometimes inept execution fostered an environment in which perceived entitlement and broken promises led to the recurrent use of threats. In the words of an ex-fighter: “You have to satisfy the ex-combatants”.¹¹² The blame should not be laid solely on UNMIL. Former AFL soldiers, for example, have several times turned to violent protest to demand more benefits.

This has had direct SSR consequences. When recruiting for the new army began, SSR specialists were surprised to find potential soldiers who saw entry and training not as a stepping stone to advancement, but as another entitlement to be turned to short-term advantage. The difficulties became clear as the contractors and government tried to clear Camp Schiefflin, the main AFL base, once troops and their families had received demobilisation payments. Having lost free housing they considered a right, they took everything from the barracks as they left, including zinc roofing. This slowed the process of preparing the site for the new army and added to its expense.

In future cases, UNDPKO and bilateral actors involved in SSR should respect the importance of ensuring that short-term gains (eg, “buying peace” with demobilisation payments) do not undercut medium- and long-term institutional reconstruction. An ex-combatant said, “even if you give [an ex-combatant] \$1 million, he will not manage it. He will spend it fast and look for more [military] missions”.¹¹³ This points to giving benefits in kind, not cash, if possible, and to phased disbursement. The Liberian experience also argues strongly that while assessed disarmament and demobilisation funding is important for peacekeeping, there should also be a robust, separate assessed budget for reintegration. Effective reintegration work does not yield dramatic (if misleading) numbers and takes longer but is more important for durably and peacefully occupying ex-fighters and other war-affected people.

demobilised combatants. UNICEF officials and NGOs working with children complained many were pulled from special psycho-social reintegration facilities by commanders anxious for money. Crisis Group interviews, Monrovia, August-September 2004.

¹⁰⁸Crisis Group interview, DPKO official, New York, 16 July 2008.

¹⁰⁹Crisis Group interviews, ex-combatants, Monrovia, Zwedru, Ganta, Voinjama, 2004-2005.

¹¹⁰See Jennings, “The Struggle to Satisfy: DDR through the Eyes of Ex-combatants in Liberia”, *International Peacekeeping*, vol. 14, no. 2 (2007), pp. 204-218.

¹¹¹See Crisis Group Report, *Liberia and Sierra Leone*, op. cit.

¹¹²Jennings, op. cit. See also W. Paes, “Eyewitness: The Challenges of Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration in Liberia”, *International Peacekeeping*, vol. 12, no. 2 (2005), pp. 253-261.

¹¹³Crisis Group interview, ex-combatant, Salala, 18 June 2008.

3. A new approach to reintegration

The evidence that effective reintegration programs can set the scene for medium- to long-term socio-economic transformation and improved security is on display. A UK-based NGO, Landmine Action (LMA), conducts a program serving some of the toughest ex-combatants: those who avoided the traditional DDR program and continued as armed gangs based in the Guthrie Rubber Plantation.¹¹⁴ Mostly but not exclusively from the LURD faction, they controlled the Guthrie territory, preying upon the civilian communities in and around the plantation. After several years of entreaties,¹¹⁵ UNMIL cleared the plantation in 2007 and reasserted civilian and state control.

These Guthrie ex-combatants are now being reintegrated at a centre in Salala District, Bong County, run by LMA. The first innovation of the reintegration plan is that it is intensive and medium-term. The ex-combatants participate in a nine-month program. Another innovation is that they receive psycho-social counselling while at the centre, provided by other ex-combatants who have been trained for this and are part of the National Ex-Combatant Peace Initiative (NEPI). A third difference is that the program involves the local community. The LMA first hired local workers to build and refurbish the quarters where trainees would live and study and where livestock would be kept. Then it mixed 50 Salala villagers with the 400 Guthrie ex-combatants for the training.

Finally, the training focuses on agriculture, a radical departure from the initial reintegration program, when 55 per cent opted for vocational and skills training, 41 per cent for formal education and only 2 per cent for agriculture. Crisis Group has argued since 2004 that agriculture should be at the centre of all initiatives to reintegrate Liberian fighters and jump start the economy.¹¹⁶ The usual argument by urban Liberian and expatriate elites overseeing such programs has been that ex-combatants were not interested. A reason why agricultural programs did not immediately attract many ex-combatants is that they tended to offer little beyond what the ex-combatants already knew and did not address root issues like the precarious access to land characteristic for young Liberians even in the best

of times. But the elite objections seem mainly a projection of their own preferences, since hardcore ex-fighters like those at Guthrie and Sinoe plantations have been making livings in rural areas for five years since the war's end, just as many others tap rubber, grow marijuana and dig for diamonds and gold elsewhere.

The LMA reintegration program works with 400 ex-combatants at a time.¹¹⁷ Each group receives literacy training and courses in agronomy in the afternoons. Mornings are spent on a large agricultural complex of swamp rice paddies, rubber and oil palm plantations, vegetable gardens and an animal husbandry centre. Each trainee is asked where he or she would like to settle at the end of the program. Staff then go to each village and attempt to negotiate a welcome and land to cultivate for the trainee. Somewhat surprisingly given the rough character of the clients, the large majority of villages were pleased to welcome back their prodigals, and land was rarely an issue.

LMA also builds in follow-up visits to help solve problems as they arise. As a trainer said, "if we just drop them off with some seeds and tools, or with a few small pigs and never go back, ... most of them will fail for one reason or another. With follow-up, we know some will still fail, but we hope to bring that percentage down significantly".¹¹⁸

It is too early to call the LMA program a success, but it is a comprehensive, thoughtful program that takes account of the local context, including the problem of stable access to land for young people in a society where in principle all land is revocable by land-owning elders. It also takes seriously that many ex-combatants feel they cannot settle differences other than through violence,¹¹⁹ and it recognises that the short-term outlook of most affects their agricultural practices. Thus, it teaches sustainable rubber tapping techniques to replace the "death tapping" that yields a quick but unsustainable harvest. This involves both an agronomy lesson and, more importantly, an attitudinal shift

¹¹⁴ Some ex-fighters were excluded from DDR by commanders; others did not want to abandon their lifestyle. Commanders often preferred to give ammunition to civilians because they were easier to control or intimidate, a factor that amplified the deficiencies of the DDR program.

¹¹⁵ See, for instance, Crisis Group Africa Report N°98, *Liberia's Elections: Necessary but Not Sufficient*, 7 September 2005, p. 16.

¹¹⁶ See Crisis Group Report, *Liberia and Sierra Leone*, op. cit.

¹¹⁷ It will thus take three cycles of nine months to reintegrate all 1,200 Guthrie ex-combatants.

¹¹⁸ Crisis Group interview, Landmine Action trainer, Salala, 18 June 2008.

¹¹⁹ NEPI counsellors explained how they focused on teaching trainees skills for working out problems non-violently. Starting with almost daily fistfights and several near riots, at the three-month mark when Crisis Group visited, there had not been a fight for three weeks.

toward planning for bigger benefits over a longer and more stable future¹²⁰.

Such a program is probably not warranted for all ex-combatants. DDR specialists disagree on several fundamental issues. The prevailing view at the World Bank, for instance, is that reintegration should be short, offering some funds for bridging the gap between war and peace economies. After a brief period, in this model, the focus should quickly shift to development. It may be true that a long-term reintegration program for all demobilised people would create as many problems as it would solve.¹²¹ Others, however, argue that reintegration should be long-term in order to provide the sort of follow-up needed to prevent a return to violence.

The likely answer is that it is important to disaggregate the groups affected by war. They will range from civilians who never left their home areas; to refugees or internally displaced persons; to those who fought only briefly, perhaps to protect their communities or under coercive conditions; to hardcore fighters, who may have been involved in several countries over long periods.¹²² Each group is further differentiated internally by age, gender and, among fighters, by rank. It seems clear, however, that a longer-term program like LMA's should operate for the most hardened ex-combatants in tandem with short-term programs. The natural con-

sequence would be that reintegration for others should be quicker and make fewer distinctions between combatants and civilians.

4. What constitutes successful reintegration?

This raises the question of what a successful reintegration program should achieve, and how. Part of the answer is that basic security and legal protection will help integrate ex-combatants in the same measure that they are good for the population as a whole. Peacekeepers create the conditions for successful reintegration of the former to the extent they can impose and maintain a modicum of personal security for most citizens most of the time and credibly deter major violence. UNMIL has done this, for example when it contained the October 2004 riots. However, complaints of rape, armed robbery and land disputes became more prevalent in 2008 than any time since 2004. To the extent the government and UNMIL can restore basic legal protections for those hoping to start businesses or farm, they provide the conditions for reintegrating ex-combatants. Here, however, results have been poor. There has been no clear land access and tenure policy and only meagre results in repairing the broken justice system.

The best way to ensure former fighters do not fight again is to enmesh them in the benefits and responsibilities of raising families and work that provides a living wage. Liberia's wars ended five years ago, and there are diminishing opportunities for those who wish to continue the warrior vocation in Sierra Leone, Guinea, and Côte d'Ivoire. As time goes by, those who fought the prior wars will become less of a worry, and the structural problem of unemployed youth – those in the generation behind those who fought – will move to the forefront.

That said, the proportion of people who fail to take advantage of the opportunities is likely to be high. Whether victims, perpetrators or witnesses of the horrific violence of the two civil wars, many have been debilitated in a variety of ways, at the same time that many were simultaneously robbed of access to decent education and health care. The Landmine Action reintegration program's psycho-social component, though expensive, should be a template for programming oriented toward populations ranging from youth at risk to survivors of sexual assault. As those affected by the worst abuses of the war falter in post-conflict Liberia, others who experienced the war could help support them and share techniques by which they moved forward. Such programs would both employ ex-combatants and civilians and provide an outreach mechanism for those most affected by the war.

¹²⁰ LMA is currently preparing further programs for hard core ex-combatants in Sinoe, with initial funding from the German government.

¹²¹ Jennings, op. cit., suggested DDR programs with loose entry criteria like Liberia's create demands to play the role of "ex-combatant", causing resentment among civilians who did not choose that role and so lost the chance to claim benefits. Some civilians who play the role finish by acting in many of the same short-sighted, self-destructive ways as "real" ex-combatants.

¹²² In a recent article based on research among ex-combatants in Monrovia, Morten Bøas and Anne Hatløy argued that their sample was demographically indistinguishable from the general population; reported overwhelmingly having fought for the "security" of their communities and only for one combatant group. The authors suggested this shows that portrayals of "regional warriors" like those in the 2005 Human Rights Watch report, "Youth, Poverty and Blood: The Lethal Legacy of West Africa's Regional Warriors", are probably exaggerated. The simplest explanation of the different results is that the researchers described different aspects of a highly differentiated situation in which a small number of "professional" or "hardcore" fighters coexisted among a much larger body of "ordinary people" who fought briefly or intermittently. Morten Bøas and Anne Hatløy, "Getting in, getting out: militia membership and prospects for re-integration in post-war Liberia", *Journal of Modern African Studies*, vol. 46, no. 1 (2008), pp. 33–55.

APPENDIX E

THE “DOGS OF PEACE”? PRIVATE COMPANIES IN SSR

Over a decade before the U.S. contracted re-creation of the Liberian army to a private military company (PMC) in 2004, West Africa was a key area where modern PMCs were invented. One of the first, Executive Outcomes, formed of apartheid-era South African soldiers, cut its teeth in Sierra Leone. Although companies like DynCorp would disavow any kinship with such organisations, Executive Outcomes was among the first to bridge the distance between Cold War-era soldiers of fortune¹²³ and the structure of a modern corporation. It was especially good at offering a package of services, bundling combat, communications, logistics and even medical services. When governments like Sierra Leone's and Angola's were short on cash, it was ready to bring in its own mining operations to pay itself. Other PMCs, including U.S.-based International Charter Incorporated (ICI) and PAE, and UK-based Sandline, were all involved in Liberia and Sierra Leone in the 1990s.

A number of studies have addressed the emergence of PMCs and their use in security sector reform.¹²⁴ This appendix looks at the specifics of the Liberian case but necessarily touches on questions relating to the potential and pitfalls of PMC use elsewhere. Because many of the actors, including the PMCs themselves, are transnational, the analysis will also occasionally touch upon relevant material from other parts of the world.

¹²³ Executive Outcomes conducted offensive combat operations as classic mercenaries would and many PMCs now decline to do.

¹²⁴ The most comprehensive studies of private military/security companies are Peter Singer, *Corporate Warriors: The Rise of the Privatized Military Industry* (Ithaca, 2003); and Deborah Avant, *The Market for Force: The Consequences of Privatizing Security* (New York, 2005). On their use in SSR see Francesco Mancini, *In Good Company? The Role of Business in Security Sector Reform* (London, 2005); and James Cockayne, “Commercial Security in Humanitarian and Post-Conflict Settings: An Exploratory Study”, International Peace Academy, 2006. The trade organisation, International Peace Operations Association (IPOA) lobbies for PMC/PSC use in humanitarian and SSR operations. See, for instance, Eirin Mobekk, “Post Conflict Civilian Police Training: The Key to Sustainable Post-Conflict Stability”, *Journal of International Peace Operations*, vol. 4, no. 1 (2008), pp. 11-12.

1. PMCs vs. national armies vs. multilateral forces

A fundamental question in Liberia's SSR process is whether democratic institutions responsive to civilian oversight can be built by private contractors and in an atmosphere of at least partial secrecy. The problem touches a paradox at the centre of much of the SSR process. The perceived PMC efficiency was intertwined with lack of consultation of the government whose army was being trained. If the U.S. military had been doing the training, the relationship would have been typically bilateral. Washington would not have claimed proprietary information in a contract prevented it from disclosing details of the training, its costs or its implementation either to the client government or the public. This is not a matter of ill intentions, but the distinction is important: governmental and security sector secrecy and lack of consultation were among the causes of the war from which Liberia seeks to recover.

Some analysts have been quite critical of the use of PMCs: “In a country and region where recent history has been shaped by warlords and mercenaries, the U.S. Department of State has shown remarkable insensitivity by sending in contractors to shape the new army”.¹²⁵ Crisis Group is more agnostic. While full consultation and transparency and the use of uniformed military trainers are ideal, three considerations weigh against them:

- ❑ The U.S. military is overstretched; finding uniformed military personnel for the job may have been impossible.¹²⁶
- ❑ When the program began, Liberian interlocutors did not appear overly concerned about these issues. Given the transitional government's reputation for venality, there may have been a well-founded fear that transparency on SSR modalities would expose the program to attempts at profit-seeking rather than discussion of human rights and rule of law issues.

¹²⁵ Malan, op. cit.

¹²⁶ Active and retired U.S. military have consistently asserted this to Crisis Group, even while some have privately expressed concern about the use of PMCs for such work.

- Channelling funds through PMCs is opaque to the U.S. taxpayer. PMC scholar Peter Singer pointed out that use of such contractors has become a central strategy of civil servants asked to do as much or more with shrinking budgets. By using PMCs, the executive branch can often undertake work that would be impossible as ordinary budgeted expenditures. Without PMCs, the more than \$200 million the U.S. is spending between 2004 and 2009 on SSR might never have materialised.¹²⁷

In many unfavourable reviews of PMC use in SSR, the implicit contrast is with national governments. This is well founded to the extent that PMCs are structurally not organised to take a long-term view of the institutions they are building. In fragile political settings where many things can go wrong, PMCs risk minimal damage to their reputations if units they train later prove to be unprofessional or abusive. As discussed below, this is all the truer in the context of indefinite delivery, indefinite quantity (IDIQ) contracts, where the companies in question have been granted a quasi-monopoly on future work, regardless of the outcome of current work.

National governments, however, have a continuing institutional existence, even as personnel and projects come and go. If the U.S. military had trained the Liberian army, the incentives would have been much stronger for them to stay engaged in mentoring and exchanges to ensure the long-term success of the mission and their own institution's reputation. They would, in other words, have been "on the hook" for the outcome.¹²⁸ This is probably part of why the use of PMCs can appear so attractive.

In Liberia, the more relevant comparison may be between training by a PMC and by a multilateral organisation like the UN, ECOWAS or NATO. At least some involved in SSR prefer a lead-country approach, even carried out by contractors.¹²⁹ A Liberian security spe-

cialist described the different ways UN reform of the police and U.S.-funded reform of the army deal with unsavoury interlocutors. The UN attitude, he said, is, "while we're here getting our salaries, we'll work with anybody. Tomorrow we'll be in the Congo or Darfur". But the U.S. "is not comfortable with some whom they see as showmen....the U.S. is serving its own strategic interests, so takes a longer view".¹³⁰

2. Are PMCs less expensive for donors?

A central justifications for using PMCs in Liberia or anywhere else is that they are less expensive than uniformed soldiers. The reality is more complicated. Studies of relative cost are hard to find and do not necessarily factor in all the possible costs. For instance, a contractor who finds Liberia too hot or dangerous may forfeit pay, but not freedom, if he or she breaks the contract to go home early. A U.S. soldier who did the same could face court martial.

One of the few studies on comparative cost attempted to factor in all direct and indirect costs, including vacation time, pension funds and the like, comparing the salaries of contractors and government employees who worked side by side and did the same jobs. It found that the U.S. army paid up to 26 per cent more for contractors than for government employees. In reality it is difficult to measure the cost comparison, not least because so much contract detail is confidential. Crisis Group was told, however, that the contractors were paid two to three times the salary they would make for doing the same job in the military.¹³¹

A series of studies undertaken by Washington's Government Accountability Office (GAO) and typically focused on Iraq and Afghanistan yielded consistent results.¹³² Although PMC supporters asserted the cost

¹²⁷ Those funds have only come in spurts, seriously jeopardising the SSR program. Some of the biggest influxes of U.S. money have been in "supplementals" used to finance the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan off-budget. Supplemental funding cannot be used to hire permanent U.S. government staff.

¹²⁸ Many Liberians still blame the U.S. for training the Doe-era army. The former interim president and head of the Governance Commission, Amos Sawyer, said, "every armed group that plundered Liberia over the past 25 years had its core in these US-trained AFL soldiers". See Mark Malan, "Security Sector Reform in Liberia: mixed results from humble beginnings", U.S. Army Strategic Studies Institute, 2008.

¹²⁹ While arguing for a multilateral approach, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon emphasises the need for lead nations. "Securing peace and development: the role of the United Na-

tions in supporting security sector reform", Report of the Secretary-General, 23 January 2008.

¹³⁰ Crisis Group interview, Liberian security expert, Monrovia, 19 June 2008.

¹³¹ See "DOD's increased reliance on service contractors exacerbates long-standing challenges", GAO statement, 23 January 2008. While all interviewed on this by Crisis Group agreed contractors tend to offer more flexibility, even those who argued for their necessity said that they were paid significantly more than they could earn in the military was a reason there were too few uniformed military to do the same jobs. If so, it is hard to see how contractors save taxpayers money, even with lower overhead.

¹³² See "Rebuilding Iraq: actions needed to improve use of private security providers", U.S. Government Accountability Office (GOA), July 2005; and "Rebuilding Iraq: actions still needed to improve use of private security providers", GOA, 13 June 2006.

savings achieved through contractors, there is little if any empirical evidence. In fact, modest but consistent evidence suggests they can be more expensive. As mentioned, the utility of contractors may be less that they are cheaper, but that in the context of neo-liberal preferences for small government, they give bureaucrats the means to accomplish what they must or would like to do, but do not have the means to accomplish using full-time staff.¹³³

3. Who is the client?

One reason cited to explain the lack of transparency in contractors' work is that they work for the U.S. rather than the Liberian government. DynCorp and PAE are under no legal obligation to provide information to the latter. What they do provide is by their choice and with U.S. approval, as a courtesy. The notion that the U.S. would hand over a finished army, working like a well-oiled machine, to the Liberian MoD seems to have been attractive to some of the Americans involved, especially early on.¹³⁴ This was partly due to the perceived lack of credibility of their interlocutors in the transitional government. It also went hand-in-hand with intrusive donor programs such as GEMAP, which initially paid little attention to capacity building and ownership on the Liberian side.

The Johnson-Sirleaf government quickly demanded more inclusion in decision-making processes. The Americans involved in the negotiations and other observers have expressed unanimous pleasure at this, several times commenting: "This is what should be happening with a responsible government".¹³⁵ This productive tension emerged, however, after the U.S.-led process was far-advanced, and many decisions (such as troop levels and length of basic training) were already difficult to renegotiate.

This dynamic suggests a familiar problem, namely that the U.S.-led army SSR process has operated according to a logic inimical to the desired outcome. If the

Liberian security apparatus is perceived to have been abusive and unprofessional, then turning even the best trained soldiers over to a ministry that had no hand in their training would not solve the problem. The moment the U.S. embassy and contractors "hand over the keys" of the new army will mark the beginning, not the end of the process of creating a law-abiding institution responsive to civilian control. There may be actors on both sides who would prefer to treat that moment as a culmination, but that would be a mistake. The two governments should begin negotiations now to plan the kind of cooperative mentoring and training agreement that would be mutually acceptable over at least ten years from when the army is operational.

4. Financial and management oversight

When asked by Crisis Group whether she was satisfied with the U.S.-funded SSR, President Johnson-Sirleaf immediately responded, "no". Although she emphasised that she felt the new recruits had been well trained and responsibly vetted, she was explicit in identifying the aspect she found unacceptable: "A lot of money has been spent. We do not know what on. There's simply not enough transparency and accountability in the way this money is spent".¹³⁶ This was echoed by other officials as well as ordinary Liberians and non-U.S. expatriates in Liberia.

Johnson-Sirleaf, an American-trained professional who has worked for the UN and Citicorp Bank, was forced to accept the intrusive GEMAP economic oversight mechanism, which impinged painfully on the prerogatives of her democratically elected government. Because of the criminal malfeasance that had preceded her arrival in the executive mansion, this was necessary for aid money to continue flowing. It is paradoxical that the DynCorp and PAE contracts should be among the only ones not subject to public scrutiny.¹³⁷ Given the long history of secrecy and intrigue surrounding the security forces (of which Johnson-Sirleaf and others in her government were themselves victims), this is

¹³³ The contractors are, of course, aware of the financial and administrative environment government officials operate in and know how to work it to their advantage. A PMC researcher described the flow of information between recently-retired U.S. officers now working for PMCs and their still active military colleagues: "The job for these guys is to put the proposal on the desk of the procurement officer one day before his boss tells him that there's a need for the service that's just been offered". Crisis Group interview, Washington DC, 28 November 2005.

¹³⁴ Crisis Group interviews, American SSR officials, Monrovia, January, March 2006.

¹³⁵ Crisis Group interviews, American SSR officials, Monrovia, June 2008.

¹³⁶ Crisis Group interview, President Johnson-Sirleaf, Monrovia, 18 June 2008.

¹³⁷ As regards commercial contracts in other areas, the CPA states that the Contracts and Monopolies Commission has responsibility for, "publishing all tenders in the media and on its own website to ensure maximum competition and transparency. The Commission shall also publish on its website the result of tenders as well as a record of all commercial entities that have participated and succeeded in reviewing contracts". The Public Procurement and Concessions Commission regularly publishes information about bids for public contracts.

likely to remain a sore point, even while the government may remain grateful for the service being provided by the U.S.

For three years, Crisis Group has attempted to gain access to the contract defining DynCorp's work in Liberia. Four people who have read it have indicated in interviews that the description of the work is approximately three pages but vague.¹³⁸ Two expressed shock in particular at what they said was a desultory description of the SSR assignment, reportedly written by a U.S. army colonel seconded to the State Department. In effect, they said, it authorised DynCorp to conduct the training as it saw fit.¹³⁹

Crisis Group did gain access to the 17 May 2005 memorandum of understanding between the U.S. ambassador and the transitional government chairman, Gyude Bryant. It was mostly concerned with setting up four oversight committees: a Joint Defence Advisory Committee, a Joint Personnel Board, a Joint Defence Training Review Board and a Joint Defence Budget Review Board.¹⁴⁰ However laudable these goals, there were virtually no details how to achieve them.¹⁴¹ Most significantly, while recruiting and training were mentioned, there was no reference (this is in mid-2005) to vetting recruits or training officers or NCOs.

The lack of attention to the need for officer training was corroborated when Crisis Group asked the DynCorp project director in October 2005 who would train them (and NCOs). He replied that he did not know, but it was not part of DynCorp's work.¹⁴² While this oversight has been rectified, it is indicative of the ways that contract-driven SSR work can lack the necessary strategic planning.

While it is worth noting that the work undertaken in Liberia is in many ways unprecedented and thus difficult to define, it is also important to note the analysis of the U.S. government itself of the problems encountered with PMCs. The GAO has issued a series of reports documenting them, noting, for instance, that

many contracts build in incentives for meeting or exceeding agreed deadlines. But bonuses are frequently paid even when contractors have missed deadlines. According to one report:

The lack of sound business practices – poorly defined requirements, inadequate competition, the lack of comprehensive guidance and visibility on contractors supporting deployed forces, inadequate monitoring of contractor performance, and inappropriate use of other agencies' contracts and contracting services – expose DOD to unnecessary risk, waste resources, and complicate efforts to hold contractors accountable for poor service acquisition outcomes.¹⁴³

Although that report (like most U.S. government studies of the contractor oversight issue) was focussed on Pentagon contracting, these issues apply equally to the situation of State Department contractors in Liberia. Some even suggest the problem is significantly worse on that side. A State Department employee said, "we've downsized ourselves to the point where we don't have the capacity to oversee these things... We have few contracting officers at State. They can get two to three times the money at DynCorp".¹⁴⁴ This is complementary to President Johnson-Sirleaf's critique of the lack of transparency surrounding the financial aspects of the army SSR contract.

The 2007 Gansler Report,¹⁴⁵ commissioned by the army secretary, begins: "The acquisition failures in expeditionary operations require a systemic fix of the army acquisition system". The problems cited include, but are not limited to, those encountered with PMCs. Although the report is technical and focused on the needs of the army during overseas combat, some of its key recommendations certainly apply to situations such as SSR and other parts of government such as the State Department. Its four main recommendations are:

- increase stature, quantity and career development of contracting personnel;
- restructure organisation and restore responsibility to facilitate contracting and contract management;

¹³⁸ Crisis Group interviews, Monrovia, Washington DC, 2005, 2006, 2008. One interviewee specified that many pages of pro forma contract language followed the project description.

¹³⁹ Crisis Group interviews, Monrovia, 18 June 2008, Washington DC, 4 August 2008.

¹⁴⁰ See "Arrangement between the Government of the United States of America and the National Transitional Government of Liberia concerning security sector reform in the Republic of Liberia", 17 May 2005.

¹⁴¹ For example, recruiting and training are cited without mention of vetting recruits or training officers and NCOs.

¹⁴² Crisis Group interview, DynCorp project director, Monrovia, 15 October 2005.

¹⁴³ "Improved management and oversight needed to better control DOD's acquisition of services", GAO, 10 May 2007.

¹⁴⁴ Crisis Group interview, State Department employee, Washington DC, August 2008.

¹⁴⁵ The report's official title is "Urgent reform required: army expeditionary contracting. An independent assessment: report of the commission on army acquisition and program management in expeditionary operations", 31 October 2007.

- ❑ provide training and tools for overall contracting activities in expeditionary operations overseas; and
- ❑ obtain legislative, regulatory and policy assistance to enable contracting effectiveness in expeditionary operations.

The first and fourth recommendations appear especially applicable to Liberian SSR. A GAO specialist on PMC contracting emphasised to Crisis Group that successful results from using contractors usually only come when there is an explicit, well-crafted contract and subsequent vigorous monitoring.¹⁴⁶ In Liberia there appears to have been a weak contract, but aggressive oversight has helped to compensate for its vague terms of reference.

Another question surrounding State Department contracting of PMCs is the use of indefinite delivery, indefinite quantity (IDIQ) contracts. These contracts, opened for bidding once every five years, gave DynCorp and PAE monopolies for all peacekeeping-related work in Africa. Known as Africap, they were advertised for new bids in February 2008. Though the award was to have been made by mid-2008, it has been postponed several times, and Africap projects continue under the original IDIQ contract.¹⁴⁷ During the five-year time span, the State Department requests specific projects through “task orders”, on which one or both companies can bid.

Crisis Group asked a State Department employee involved with overseeing Liberian SSR contracts the advantages of such documents, as they directly contradict one of the justifications given for using PMCs, namely that open competition allows the government to provide the same or better services for less money through the private sector. The only answer offered was that it reduced bureaucratic “red tape”.¹⁴⁸

When the pages of specific contract language can be counted in single digits, this is not convincing. This is all the more evident in the case of the Liberian SSR task order, where the failed PAE bid (against its only official competitor, DynCorp) was actually a proposal to subcontract to Military Professional Resources Incorporated (MPRI), another PMC that has done training and mentoring work in Nigeria, but was not included in the IDIQ contract. If such companies are bidding as subcontractors in areas where they have expertise, forcing them to bid as subcontractors only

adds cost for the government, since the IDIQ bidder ultimately acts as intermediary and gatekeeper and will seek its own profit on top of the subcontractor’s.

If the day-to-day practices of PMC contracting contradict their given *raison d’être* can there be another explanation for them? One, already given, is that U.S. government involvement in undertakings like Liberian SSR might never happen if the contractor option did not offer a kind of “openly clandestine” approach to doing diplomatic and military work overseas. A GAO official described the reason for using IDIQ contracts as a combination of creating potential economies of scale and the “convenience and ease of working with a known quantity”.¹⁴⁹ PMC specialist Peter Singer suggested yet another explanation:

A trend seems to be developing that when the U.S. government finally decides to support peacekeeping in Africa – be it in Liberia or now Sudan – it increasingly avoids a firm political commitment by avoiding using [official] U.S. government means. There are obvious reasons for this, but we need to take the measure of the advantages and disadvantages of this in the policy debate as well.¹⁵⁰

If the U.S. is sacrificing a degree of transparency to buy some flexibility in its engagement with Liberian SSR, that is unfortunate. The opposite – transparency and long-term commitment – is needed for a successful program.

¹⁴⁶ Crisis Group interview, GAO staff member, 5 August 2008.

¹⁴⁷ The equivalent (\$26 billion) contract in the Middle East is known as Logcap, and went to Kellogg, Brown and Root.

¹⁴⁸ Crisis Group interview, State Department official, Washington DC, 30 November 2005.

¹⁴⁹ Crisis Group interview, GAO official, Washington DC, 5 August 2008.

¹⁵⁰ Singer, *op. cit.*