

STOPPING GUINEA'S SLIDE

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STOPPING GUINEA'S SLIDE

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Guinea risks becoming West Africa's next failed state. Its economy is faltering, the government has nearly ceased to provide services, and in 2004, there were isolated uprisings in at least eight towns and cities in all regions of the country. Getting it wrong in Guinea now could have disastrous consequences. Getting it right will require a greater engagement by both the Guinean population and the diplomatic and donor communities, including a focus much more on reforming institutions than on the immediate personnel issues involved in the succession to the ailing and dictatorial president, Lansana Conté.

As if the situation were not already precarious enough, Guinea faces a series of potential external threats. Over the past fifteen years, it fuelled almost all the region's wars, and the mayhem it sowed is starting to rebound. Resentment is growing in Sierra Leone over Guinean incursions; Liberian ex-combatants have been recruited to fight both for and against the Conté government; LURD fighters recruited and trained in Guinea are returning dissatisfied from Liberia; and raids and infiltration across the Ivorian border are rendering life insecure for Guineans living in that area.

There is preoccupation with Conté's health, which does appear to be poor but it is important to depersonalise Guinean politics. The steps the country must take in the next months are the same whether the president recovers or not. The package of political and economic reforms recently agreed by the government require the people of Guinea to assume a new level of responsibility for their own governance. The emphasis should be placed not on personalities but on institutions and checks on personal power, a concept foreign to Guinean politics.

A crucial first step is to ensure successful municipal elections scheduled for the fall of 2005. They will largely determine the quality of Guinean democracy. If they fail, the presidential succession will likely be disastrous. In order to make these elections credible, key reforms must include a thoroughly revised electoral list, opening the airwaves to the opposition, and a truly independent electoral commission. The government has already agreed to these reforms, but they need to be in place before the vote.

Reform will be difficult because of the entrenched financial interests of those around Conté and because of the lack of coherent leadership policies. Guinea is being pulled in two directions at once. The president's poor health and the disorder that accompanies it are driving the country towards anarchy, while the prime minister, with Conté's explicit backing, is attempting to implement sweeping and constructive changes. Because it is unknown how far the president is willing to let such efforts go, however, African regional organisations, other international institutions, donors and diplomats need to give the reform program all possible support.

Should Conté fail to serve his full term (until 2010), and especially should he leave office soon, there is little chance of the constitution being followed regarding succession, and a military coup is a strong possibility. Yet, if reform is to occur, it is essential that the institutions of government be allowed to develop. Government, opposition and international community should, therefore, agree to delay the new presidential election called for by the constitution within 60 days of a vacancy to allow prior implementation of the above reforms, including, preferably, prior municipal elections. During the interim period, the constitutional succession to the president of the national assembly should be followed.

Such an approach would help Guinea avoid the pitfalls of Togo's flawed succession, in which the short constitutionally-mandated period between vacancy and election played into the hands of the presidential clique. To support this process, the international community needs to begin making clear now that a transition from dictatorship to dictatorship "lite" would not be acceptable.

Such an approach will be resisted in several quarters, especially the military and those who have benefited from Conté's transformation of the state into little more than a machine for pillage and self-enrichment. Of particular concern are members of his political party, the Parti de l'Unité et du Progrès (PUP), which is likely to begin disintegrating once he is no longer there. The handful of businessmen who have achieved tremendous wealth from the president's favour will also seek to thwart transition toward a new, more transparent politics.

However, bold steps are needed to avoid another crisis in West Africa. The reforms agreed to by its government give Guinea its best chance for leaving behind decades of personalised rule -- if the promises can be converted into reality.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To the Government of Guinea:

1. Implement key electoral reforms by mid-July 2005 so that fair elections (municipal and, if necessary, presidential) can be held before the end of the year, including:
 - (a) creating an independent electoral commission;
 - (b) finishing revision of electoral lists and giving opposition parties and individual voters opportunity to examine them; and
 - (c) launching a public information campaign explaining the process of voter registration and the forthcoming municipal elections.
2. Open the airwaves to private radio and television, assure access to the airwaves by opposition parties during campaigns, and guarantee freedom of movement and association for all political parties.
3. Implement promptly economic and security reforms, including:
 - (a) eliminating special tax exemptions to businessmen working closely with the president;
 - (b) withdrawing all members of the armed forces from Sierra Leone territory;
 - (c) addressing salary and promotion issues for the military in order to give its members a stake in political-economic reforms and reducing justifications for extortion; and
 - (d) eliminating the roadblocks previously banned by a presidential decree but which have recently reappeared all around the country.
4. Cease all involvement in the regional arms trade and abide by the arms embargoes on Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire.

To the Opposition Parties:

5. Participate fully in preparations for the municipal elections and press the government to respect its promises of freedom of movement, freedom of association and access to television and radio for campaigning.

To the International Community:

6. Begin signalling now that any attempted military takeover would be met with immediate consequences, such as suspension of aid and targeted sanctions against the usurpers.
7. Agree that if the presidency becomes vacant, the constitutionally-mandated 60-day period for a new election should be extended to enable prior implementation of the above reforms and ideally the municipal elections as well.

To the African Union (AU):

8. Take the lead in giving technical support to electoral reform, particularly the revision of electoral lists and creation of an independent electoral commission.
9. If the presidency becomes vacant, appoint an independent arbitrator to ensure that political reforms are implemented fully and consensually before a new election is held.

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

10. Emphasise Guinea's commitments to respect the ECOWAS moratorium on small arms.

To the UN Panels of Experts on Arms Embargoes on Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire:

11. Monitor Guinea's compliance.

To the United Nations:

12. Support the AU by providing immediate technical assistance on electoral reform and contribute to peacebuilding in Guinea in the following areas:
 - (a) reforestation projects in the Forest Region (Guinée Forestière), which received most refugees during the 1990s;
 - (b) reinsertion programs for "Young Volunteer" militia recruits and other ex-combatants from regional wars; and
 - (c) inter-communal peacebuilding, especially on both sides of the Guinea-Liberia border.

To the EU, the IMF, the World Bank, France, Japan, the U.S. and other Donors:

13. Continue to support development and humanitarian activities, focusing on infrastructure and basic services, closely monitor the government's use of funds and freeze disbursements if it fails to meet macroeconomic benchmarks set by the IMF.

Dakar/Brussels, 14 June 2005

STOPPING GUINEA'S SLIDE

I. INTRODUCTION

Life in Guinea has been anarchic for several years and is deteriorating. Most observers expect a period of violence in Conakry immediately after President Conté's death. Some have even implied that this might be encouraged by those hoping to justify swift and total imposition of military authority.

The political scene is dominated by one figure, General and President Lansana Conté. After seizing power with a group of other military officers in an April 1984 coup d'état, he gradually consolidated his control, purging a first set of competitors the following year and beginning the process of writing a new constitution in 1990. Under significant donor and diplomatic pressure, Conté presided over the installation of some outward trappings of democracy, holding elections in 1993 and in 1998, which, however, were widely considered to be rigged. A 2001 referendum -- judged the same way -- changed the constitution to allow him to run for a third term two years later in an election that the opposition boycotted.

Guinea is not just a West African nation but a post-socialist one. Indeed, it may be more post-socialist than West African. Guineans lived through 26 years (1958-1984) of socialist rule under the country's first president, Sékou Touré. During that time they developed strategies and social relations well-suited to coping with the vagaries of a socialist state: the command economy, secret police, state monopoly on the media used as a propaganda tool and governance by decree even while the population was coerced into pretending unanimity.

The socialist hangover in Guinea is thus not so different from that experienced in parts of Eastern Europe. The parallel networks that allowed people to acquire goods they needed but clunky state structures could not provide have come to dominate the economy. Smuggling, evasion of customs or taxes, and counterfeiting are commonplace. Formerly state-owned companies (water, electricity, import-export) have been sold to oligarchs close to the regime who use them for self-enrichment without providing reliable services to customers. Authoritarian reflexes lead to muzzling of the press and brutal repression of dissent.

Post-socialist Guinea has tended toward a politics of identity after the collapse of an imposed class-based solidarity. Guinean democracy has been characterised to a great extent by parties imagined by many of their supporters as representing the ethnic group. Nevertheless, Guinea is not headed down the path of Yugoslavia after Tito. Strong tendencies oppose the ethnicisation of politics, largely the result of the sense of national unity forged during the difficult socialist period. Casual observers of the scene who presume that politics are organised around ethnic rivalries are the same ones baffled by the fact that the country has yet to come apart at the seams.

Though President Conté, some opposition leaders like Alpha Condé, and even outside actors (including many of the adversaries in the Liberian civil war) have pushed Guinean politics in this direction, ordinary citizens have seen what such politics has yielded in neighbouring countries like Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire. Ethnic tensions exist among ordinary Guineans, especially in the Forest Region and towns like Kindia and Conakry where Sosso and Fulbe people often compete for increasingly scarce resources. However, Guineans are generally allergic to such an approach to politics and are likely to move away from it quickly if some of today's extreme social and economic pressures ease.

Guinea is also very much a West African country, with all the challenges this implies, foremost among which is poverty. Life expectancy, child mortality, literacy rates and per capita income place it 160th out of 177 countries surveyed by the UN.¹ But those who wonder why Guineans do not rise up against their suffering should remember that in the 1980's and early 1990's, it was among the five poorest countries in the world according to the same criteria.

Nevertheless, Guinea does not need to remain this poor. It has one third of the world's bauxite reserves, as well as some of the richest iron reserves. Every major West

¹ UN Development Programme (UNDP) Human Development Index Report, 2004. This is a drop of three places from the previous year.

African river begins there, rain is plentiful² and the soil relatively good. The country also possesses diamonds, gold and other minerals. Human capital is rich. In the 1960's and 1970's, the Touré government decimated the intelligentsia, killing many but exiling even more. This meant that Guineans became a particularly cosmopolitan people. Many are in Western and Eastern Europe, the U.S. and Canada. Guineans in New York City alone are estimated at 10,000.³

Proximity to Liberia and Sierra Leone has meant difficulties. The wars of those countries pushed hundreds of thousands of refugees across its borders for twelve years from 1990. As discussed in section V below, Guinea was actively involved in all these wars, and in many respects its population paid the price for decisions taken by the political and military elite. External factors have been involved in many of Guinea's other difficulties, ranging from mining companies attempting to expatriate maximum profits, to the floods of 2002. However, the large majority of Guinea's problems are created by those running the country. Corruption, poor governance and the willingness to sabotage medium to long-term prospects for relatively minor short-term benefits have resulted in a disastrous situation.

Many non-Guineans resident in the country ask how much longer the status quo can hold. They express disbelief at local attitudes, sometimes characterised as fatalistic, other times as cowardly. Guineans' ability to hold up under difficulty has more to do with history than disposition, however. As bad as the situation is today, it is in many respects better than it was under either French colonial rule or Touré. Despite this, and although phones and internet only work in the capital and then only some of the time, Guineans are more connected than ever before to the world. They are aware that what they are experiencing is not acceptable, and they appear very close to their breaking point.

The year 2004 saw violent events in Conakry and isolated uprisings in towns in every region: Coyah, Fria, Télimélé, Pita, Faranah, Kankan, Dabola and N'Zérékoré. Rumours that the country was on the verge of collapse continue to circulate. While the story may be apocryphal, a Guinean political figure recently described young men moving into the Dixinn neighbourhood of Conakry near the home of business magnate and Conté associate El Hadj Mamadou

Sylla. They were members of the city's petty criminal element and wanted to be near the action when the administration collapsed. They had purportedly already divided up claims to the various vehicles belonging to Guinea's most powerful businessman.⁴ As the pre-positioning of young thugs in Conakry indicates, everyone in Guinea is waiting -- whether with trepidation or anticipation -- for the moment when day-to-day anarchy and isolated battles converge in a generalised conflagration. Avoiding this requires the concerted effort of multiple actors, inside and outside the country.

² Conakry is one of the rainiest places on earth, receiving over four metres of rain each year on average.

³ Because it is part of an international, post-socialist network, many Guineans have studied and worked in places like Cuba, China, Romania and Russia. There have long been citizens of these countries in Guinea. See section IV D below on Chinese economic activity in Guinea.

⁴ Crisis Group interview, Conakry, 13 April 2004.

II. POLITICAL REFORMS: HOW REAL?

A. DIPLOMATIC OPTIMISM, POPULAR PESSIMISM

There is a curious gap in Conakry today between the reading most diplomats and almost all Guineans have of the situation. The latter see matters becoming worse and worse. Electricity and water are scarce, the roads are ripped up, and construction seems to be progressing slowly, while basic items like rice and kerosene increasingly become unobtainable. These are the indicators that ordinary Guineans watch, and the indicators continue to get worse.

The opinion of the diplomats ranges from "guarded optimism" to unreserved praise for a system that one might be led to believe was operating as transparently as a Scandinavian democracy. It may be that the diplomats (at least the more reserved ones) and the taxi drivers are both right, despite the apparent contradiction. As one diplomat put it, "Guineans may be able to hear the music, even though they can't see the band".⁵ In other words, reforms that are in the pipeline will not be felt for some time. In this view, an administration that is beginning to curtail some of the greatest excesses of the past decade, in which everything from the import-export trade to the Central Bank itself became the personal property of a few individuals close to the president, is putting the economy back on the road to health.

Guinean intellectuals have a different basis for challenging such optimism. When certain they are speaking confidentially, virtually all those not part of the governing structure of the ruling party, the Parti de l'Unité et du Progrès (PUP), as well as some who are, are sceptical that the reforms are more than an attempt to "*ouvrir les robinets*" (turn on the faucets) of foreign aid. As one asked, "What makes them [Western diplomats] think that this is anything other than a bit of dust in their eyes?" (*de la poudre aux yeux*).⁶

Time may be short, and there are two aspects of the reforms that are of capital importance. First, it appears that President Conté, a man not given much to compromise, has recognised that some reforms are necessary if donor cooperation is to ease ordinary citizens' suffering and thus reduce the possibility of a generalised uprising. By all accounts, the support he gave to Prime Minister Cellou Dalein Diallo to implement reforms has been sincere, even if it may have limits. Conté publicly

reiterated this support on the day of an armed attack on his motorcade, 19 January 2005. It is Diallo's only hope for success, and so far it appears to be holding.

The second aspect is that if Conté is unable to function normally, the reforms are challenged in two ways at once: because so much power is concentrated around the president, if he is not able to take decisions, there are few means of doing state business. At the same time, the spoilers, who do not want to see reforms go through, are likely to take advantage of perceived weakness or inattention in order to block them and maintain their own privileges.

Consequently, weight falls on opposition leaders, the press, diplomats, donor representatives, and civil society to signal quickly if reforms are veering off track. Donor funding must be tied to a quarterly reporting schedule. Government failure to meet IMF macroeconomic benchmarks should result in immediate suspension. Such a system would detract substantially from the flexibility and perhaps even the efficiency of aid programming, but these inconveniences would be counterbalanced by the advantages of strict accountability and the likelihood that a greater percentage of aid would reach its intended destination. To be successful, the reporting requirements would necessitate a high level of diplomatic engagement, but they could be crucial in supporting reformers and identifying spoilers.

B. THE MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS

The reforms of the political sphere proposed by the Conté government coincide with preparations for municipal elections. Both have been proposed by donors, especially the European Union (EU), who until April 2005 had blocked aid money on the basis of Article 96 of the Cotonou Accords.⁷ The primary reforms, which are the foundation of the process for putting Guinean politics on the path toward a functioning, democratic system, are:

- ❑ revision of electoral lists;
- ❑ creation of Guinea's first independent electoral commission;
- ❑ private radio and television stations;
- ❑ access for opposition parties to *Radio-Télévision Guinéenne* (RTG), the state radio and television; and

⁵ Crisis Group interview, Conakry, 12 April 2004.

⁶ Crisis Group interview, Conakry, 14 April 2005.

⁷ The Cotonou Accords regulate relations, including economic assistance, between the European Union and the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) nations. Article 96 ties disbursement of European Development Fund monies to minimal good governance and human rights criteria.

- freedom of movement and assembly for opposition party leaders and members.

Revision of electoral lists is beginning, with 50 members of the Commissions for the Exceptional Revision of Electoral Lists having received training in Conakry on 26-27 April 2005. The procedure is aimed at adding new voters, such as those who have recently reached the legal age, and subtracting others, such as those who have recently died.⁸ Most important is the guarantee that individuals will be allowed to check their own information on the lists to ensure they are properly recorded and will not be prevented from voting. Given opposition claims that electoral lists are inflated by as many as 1.5 million names, party representatives should also have the right to scrutinise them for phantom voters.

The municipal elections are part of a broader plan to decentralise government, a process organised by the ministry of territorial administration and decentralisation.⁹ They are to help elect new municipal and communal councils that will form the local base of governance. The EU has offered €1.5 million to finance the elections under condition that they are organised by an independent commission. Because all these activities are just starting, the proposed June 2005 date for the elections has been moved into the last third of the year.¹⁰

Minister of Territorial Administration and Decentralisation Kiridi Bangoura, who is in charge of organisation, is one of the two most powerful members of the government, along with Prime Minister Diallo. Only 42, he holds a doctorate in sociology and represents a new generation of Guinean leaders. Because of his close ties to the president and his privileged role with the donor and diplomatic communities, he has quickly become a key player in national politics. He was rumoured to be under consideration as prime minister when Diallo got that job but he was judged to be too young.

Bangoura is for the moment an ally of the prime minister.¹¹ He appears to have decided that his political career will be best served by playing the role of reformer and reliable partner of the donors, and this is probably an astute judgement. His support for the reform program is essential on two fronts: first, his ministry is called upon for much of the implementation, from revision of electoral lists to managing decentralisation; secondly, as the leading reformer within the mostly Sosso circles that have

regular access to the president, his voice is a necessary complement to Diallo's, who is seen by some close to Conté as a threat because of his Fulbe ethnicity.

Some observers consider Bangoura part of the Sosso "hard core" that surrounds Conté and has been led by ex-Minister of Security Moussa Sampil and minister and secretary general of the presidential office, Fodé Bangoura.¹² However, he has shown himself to be more supple than that and able to adapt his position to circumstances, unlike Sampil who was sacked for the second time in a decade because in the aftermath of the attack on the president's motorcade, he was capable only of two approaches: repressive and more repressive.¹³

C. THE OPPOSITION

The opposition boycotted the 11 November 2001 referendum that amended the constitution to extend the presidential term from five to seven years, remove the age limit on presidential candidates, allow unlimited terms, and authorise the president to nominate supreme court judges. It also boycotted the 21 December 2003 presidential elections.¹⁴ It is vital that it re-engage for the municipal elections. Opting out again would cost it legitimacy.

The Guinean press often refers to the opposition parties -- grouped together as the Front républicain pour l'alternance démocratique (FRAD) -- as the "radical opposition". Others call them "irresponsible". It is difficult to see how the opposition, faced with imprisonment of its leaders and use of security forces to break up party meetings, and barred from access to the media could be "responsible". However, the present moment is one in which concerted effort is vital. While many citizens are understandably sceptical of the government's promises, the opposition, diplomats and donors need to hold it to those promises. Concerted engagement by even the most sceptical is the only way forward.

⁸ T. Camara, "Report des élections communales et communautaires en Guinée", boubah.com, 29 April 2005.

⁹ The equivalent of a ministry of the interior.

¹⁰ T. Camara, op. cit.

¹¹ Crisis Group interview, Conakry, 15 April 2005. The same source stated, "He is on board, but this does not mean he is not a competitor".

¹² The office of the head of state known as the *Présidence*. Bangoura is essentially Conté's chief of staff.

¹³ The Guinean press, often abused by Sampil's security forces, was delighted at his sacking. The bar had gone on strike, protesting the arrest of lawyer Paul Yomba Kourouma. A well-informed source suggested Conté may have fired Sampil primarily because he suspected his involvement in the 19 January 2005 armed attack on his motorcade.

¹⁴ In those elections, Mamadou Bhoie Barry was encouraged by the PUP to stand against Conté and provide a democratic veneer. A parliamentarian for the PUP-linked Union for National Progress (UPN), he has returned to his prior anonymity.

While preparations for the municipal elections can be seen as a dress rehearsal for future national votes,¹⁵ they are also important in themselves. They are an opportunity for all parties to campaign, activate their electoral bases, and present their programs to voters.

The landscape of Guinea's opposition is qualitatively different from what it was in December 2003. A long-time leader, Siradiou Diallo, died in Paris on 14 March 2005.¹⁶ Sidya Touré, the former prime minister and leader of the Union des Forces Republicaines (UFR), and Mamadou Bâ, President of the Union des Forces Démocratiques en Guinée (UFDG), were barred from flying to Senegal in April, 2004. On 29-30 March, senior officials of Touré's party and Colonel Mamadouba "Toto" Camara were arrested for allegedly plotting a coup.¹⁷ On state television on 22 April, Security Minister Sampil said three UFR members had been arrested and charged with organising a "subversive dinner" in Paris to discuss assassination of the head of state and dissolution of state institutions. The FRAD dismissed the allegations as a sham. Touré was questioned but released. Police used truncheons to disperse hundreds of his supporters gathered at the police station where he was being questioned.

In May 2004, Touré was arrested on charges of plotting a coup. He and three party members were held until an appeals court cleared them on 22 July. The authorities' decision to drop charges followed the start of fresh negotiations between the government and the European Commission on the release of aid which had been held up since 2002. However, the arrests revived memories of the politically-motivated arrests and show trials of Alpha Condé in 1998¹⁸ and of several dozen military officers in

November 2003, immediately before the last presidential elections. As if to sabotage the prime minister's January 2005 announcement of a dialogue with the opposition, Sampil arrested a former Condé ally, Antoine Soromou, as he crossed into Guinea from Côte d'Ivoire.¹⁹

The opposition has rightly decried these attempts at blatant intimidation but local representatives of the government are also effectively blocking politics outside the capital. A high-ranking Guinean official said:

We may be making reforms here in the capital but that is not going to affect the behaviour of officials in the interior right away. We are now organising regular meetings of the regional governors with ministers every 30 days and between prefects and sub-prefects every 30 days. If we give the order to allow free circulation of opposition party members, this doesn't mean that every local official is going to understand what he is supposed to do in consequence of these orders.²⁰

This was precisely the problem that an opposition leader complained of in discussions with Crisis Group. When he tried to go beyond a village close to the Liberian border, he said, the non-commissioned officer guarding the roadblock refused to let him pass. He returned to the seat of the sub-prefecture²¹ and got the sub-prefect's approval to proceed but the soldier still refused to let him pass. The politician commented, "whether in Conakry or outside it, it's anarchy. Every man is a law unto himself, especially if he has a gun".²² Similar problems have arisen elsewhere: a European diplomat, traveling with his wife in the interior and taking photographs had his car stopped and his camera confiscated by a military officer.

¹⁵ Legislative elections are scheduled for 2007, a presidential election for 2010, if Conté's departure does not require an earlier date.

¹⁶ Siradiou Diallo was a staunch opponent of Guinea's first president, Sékou Touré, and former editor-in-chief and later vice president of the pan-African weekly magazine *Jeune Afrique*. Many of his detractors accused him of having been instrumental in the 22 November 1970 attack on Conakry by mercenaries and Guinean dissidents. With the advent of multiparty democracy in Guinea in the 1990's, he founded the Parti pour le renouveau et le progrès (PRP). After an unsuccessful attempt at the presidency in 1993, he founded pour le progrès et le renouveau (UPR), which he headed until his death.

¹⁷ One of those arrested was Mme Rougui Barry Kaba, a former PUP leader and mayor of the Matam Commune of Conakry.

¹⁸ Condé, the head of the Rassemblement du peuple de Guinée (RPG) opposition party, was arrested in December 1998 along with Antoine Soromou. They were accused of seeking to cross the border from Lola Prefecture into Côte d'Ivoire, ostensibly to recruit insurgents to overthrow the government. Soromou, then mayor of Lola town, now leads the small, RPG-linked Alliance Nationale pour le Développement (AND).

¹⁹ Soromou was arrested on charges that he entered Guinea with a national identity card and not a passport. This is not an infraction in Guinea, which, as a member state of ECOWAS, promises to protect the freedom of movement of citizens of all ECOWAS states and to allow them to travel without visas or passports as long as they hold valid identity cards. According to another version, Soromou was accused of assisting a Malian national, Moussa Touré, to get a Guinean national identity card, allegedly as part of a broader plan to infiltrate Guinea with 2,500 mercenaries. See O. Bah, "Antoine Soromou en fuite?", *Guinée News*, 24 January 2005. Soromou was arrested on 6 January 2005, released on 13 January, and disappeared again after 19 January.

²⁰ Crisis Group interview, Conakry, 14 January 2005.

²¹ Rural Guinea is administratively split into prefectures (*Préfectures*) roughly equivalent to counties, and governed by prefects (*Préfets*); sub-prefectures (*Sous-Préfectures*) with sub-prefects; districts and rural development communes (*Communautés Rurales du Développement*, CRDs).

²² Crisis Group interview, Conakry, 12 January 2005.

The opposition's challenge is to participate in the lead-up to municipal elections, putting aside prior disappointments and abuses, and holding the government to its promises. This process is the only one that will lead Guinea forward, and the opposition needs to seize the opening that exists. This is also the time for major donors, including the IMF, World Bank, EU, France and the U.S., to press the government to respect its engagements, and for the UN, AU and ECOWAS to signal that they are closely following how the reforms are implemented.

III. THE PRESIDENT'S HEALTH AND SUCCESSION QUESTIONS

Since President Conté's health again took a turn for the worse around the middle of March 2005, there have been reports that a combination of ailments, including high blood pressure and diabetes, and perhaps leukaemia, have led to a serious degradation of his condition.²³ Talk in Conakry in April revolved around periods of unconsciousness that some called comas and others not, and questions such as: does he travel at all times with one or two doctors? Are they French or German? Is he going for treatment to Cuba or Belgium? Who is able to see him in his natal village, Wawa? Does he follow the treatments recommended by his Western doctors, his African healers, his *Marabouts*,²⁴ or all three?

The obsession with such questions reveals the extent to which power in Guinea is concentrated in a single man. This tendency is so exaggerated that many observers seem to treat the parallel sickening of the state (which will survive Conté no matter how long he lives) as normal. There are, nevertheless, questions of genuine substance about Conté's health and the dynamics that surround his increasing inability to control the day-to-day operations of government. While many of these were addressed in Crisis Group's first report on Guinea,²⁵ there have been some changes. As one connoisseur of Guinean politics put it, "after three years of worrying about the president's health, people have achieved a degree of serenity about the question of succession".²⁶ This wasn't the case even a year ago.

A. THREE SCENARIOS

There are three possible scenarios for the president's health: that he recovers, that there is a rapid downturn and he leaves power, or that his illness slowly proceeds to the point where it becomes incapacitating. Although he does appear to have taken a turn for the worse, it is quite possible that he will again recover and return to full control of the state. Given the history of dire predictions and his remarkable recuperative powers, this ought to be

²³ See Cheikh Yerim Seck, "Le pouvoir à l'agonie", *Jeune Afrique L'Intelligent*, No. 2311, 24 April 2005.

²⁴ A *Marabout* is a West African religious figure often combining Muslim and African pre-Islamic practices in order to heal clients or bring them success.

²⁵ Crisis Group Africa Report N°74, *Guinea: Uncertainties at the End of an Era*, 19 December 2003.

²⁶ Crisis Group interview, Conakry, 13 April 2005.

the starting point for all plans until there is ironclad evidence to the contrary.²⁷

However, it is certainly possible that he will leave the scene quickly, either by retirement, coup, or because his illness progresses rapidly. Few believe Conté is interested in retiring. The risk is that his departure comes before reforms have progressed sufficiently for them to stand on their own. The likelihood is that power struggles in a post-Conté situation will be guided by an all-or-nothing approach inimical to political liberalisation. This is both a reason for avoiding a military takeover and for the international community's immediate and unanimous response to any backsliding on reforms. Regional organisations such as the AU and ECOWAS and donors should make it clear that there would be significant costs for abandoning the government's current engagements.

In the case of a rapid deterioration in the President's health, the chances of a coup are also diminished. Despite the eagerness of some officers to take over power, it appears that there has long been a solemn oath between Conté and his military that they will not move while he is still on the scene. There is ample room for scepticism here, if only because there were attempts at military takeovers in 1985 and 1996 and other more ambiguous events in November 2003 and January 2005. The lack of unanimity within the armed forces also works against such a scenario. None of the four generals has an obvious advantage. General Arafane Camara has often been spoken of as the closest thing Conté has to a chosen successor but he has a diminished support base because he is Maninka and the lower and middle ranks have been purged of many (but not all) Maninka officers.

The possibility of a coup becomes much more real in the third scenario: a lingering illness that leaves Conté alive but unable to fulfil his functions. This could give the greatest justification for a coup and is by far the most dangerous scenario for Guinea. The chief justice of the supreme court would have to declare the President incompetent but Chief Justice Alphonse Aboly was killed in a traffic accident between Conakry and Boffa on 23 March 2005. According to the constitution, Conté must name his successor but he has not. If he reaches a point where he cannot, the country would enter a state of constitutionally suspended animation.

Some observers surmise that Conté is already at this stage.²⁸ Persistent rumours circulate that he loses

consciousness and fails to recognise even family members. In a system that concentrates so much power in the hands of the president, his incapacitation could be disastrous. Along with a situation in which Conté's death is followed by civil unrest, this scenario is the most likely to produce a military takeover. The international community should react the same way in either situation, as described in section III D below.

B. THE COMPETITORS

The essential elements of the competition for power have changed little since Crisis Group last reported on Guinea. The main players continue to be the military, several powerful businessmen close to the president, and the opposition leaders.

Within the military, the fracture lines are generational first and ethnic second. The two are linked by the fact that while among the generals there is considerable ethnic heterogeneity,²⁹ the next rung down, the graduates of the "first to third promotion"³⁰ who have risen to major and colonel, is predominantly Sosso. The lower ranking officers are either the youngest or have seen their progression blocked, often because they are not Sosso. Ousmane Arafane Camara, a Maninka in his late 40's from Faranah (also home to Sékou Touré), has been spoken of as an adopted son to Conté in the past. As deputy chief of the Guinean armed forces, he is well placed but his constituency has been limited by purges that have eliminated lower-ranking Maninka officers. Kerfala Camara, a Sosso and the chief of armed forces, has the most obvious grip on power but is considered by many to be old and on his way out. Bailo Diallo could muster surprising support. As an instructor at the officers' academy, he knows almost every officer in the army and is said to be well-liked. Former Minister of Defence³¹ Abdourhamane Diallo was, like Kerfala, one of those who took power in 1984 as part of the Comité Militaire pour le Redressement National (CMRN).

Among the colonels, Mamadouba "Toto" Camara, St Cyr³² graduate and former army number two, is among the most prominent. Accused of plotting a coup with Sidya Touré in March 2004, he was under arrest for five months, then re-arrested on 25 February 2005 after the attack on the Conté motorcade.

²⁷ In April 2005, as rumours circulated in European capitals that Conté had experienced a series of comas or had been in a continuous coma for five days, he was seen several times driving around Conakry, visiting two of his four wives.

²⁸ See especially Seck, "Le pouvoir à l'agonie", op. cit.

²⁹ Two are Fulbe and one each is Sosso and Maninka.

³⁰ These are the first three classes of officers to graduate after the 1984 death of Sékou Touré.

³¹ This function is now filled by President Conté.

³² St. Cyr is the French military academy.

Parallel to this system are several special units, particularly the some 400-strong Bataillon Autonome de la Sécurité Présidentielle (Presidential Guard), the "Berets Rouges", and the Rangers. There are two groups of the latter, one of 700 to 800 that was trained by American Special Forces between 2000 and 2002, the other smaller and trained by the Chinese in 2003. The American-trained Rangers are based in N'Zerekore, the Chinese-trained ones in Kankan. Both the Berets Rouges and the Rangers are predominantly Sosso, and in fact many come from Conté's own village and extended family.³³ They are considered highly loyal to him. An observer said, "not only are many of them related to Conté, they also know that if there is a change of power, they could be disbanded and lose everything".³⁴ Conté is said to have driven unexpectedly into the interior recently to tell the commanders of both groups of Rangers not to take any orders that did not come directly from him.

Among the opposition leaders, Sidya Touré is the clear frontrunner. As a member of the Diahanke ethnic group, he stands somewhat outside the ethnic calculus that has dominated the strategies of Bah Mamadou (courting a Fulbe electorate) and Alpha Condé (Maninka). Jean Marie Doré, the other long-time opposition candidate, suffers from the fact that his regional electoral base in the Forest Region has never been strongly disposed to vote along ethnic lines. In fact it voted overwhelmingly for Conté in 1993 and 1998.³⁵ Touré's advantage is that he has strong support in Conakry, both because he is from the coast, and because his tenure as prime minister is remembered as one of the only times the government provided services like running water and electricity with any regularity to the capital.

³³ This is, however, no protection from the president's wrath. The former head of the Presidential Guard, Colonel Seny Camara, has reportedly been sacked for abusive and high-handed treatment of other members of the armed forces and government. See P. Diawara, "Le général Conté fait le ménage: La chute du Colonel Seny Camara, Commandant de la garde présidentielle", Aminata.com, 25 May 2005.

³⁴ Crisis Group interview, Conakry, 14 April 2005.

³⁵ This was largely due to the good will Conté gained by ending the two most hated policies of the Sékou Touré government: the ban on ceremonies related to the Forest Region's ancestral religions, and revocation of the abusive system by which the state confiscated between 50 and 80 per cent of farm production. Conté lost nearly all this good will during the 2000-2001 cross border attacks from Liberia and Sierra Leone, which local citizens rightly blamed on Guinea's support for the ULIMO-K and later LURD militias. The government responded to criticism by assassinating a number of professionals originally from the Forest Region in the Conakry neighbourhood of Cosa in October 2000 and denying that ULIMO or LURD were in Guinea. It is not clear, however, that Doré has picked up the support Conté has lost.

A new addition to the opposition is François Lonsény Fall, former foreign minister and, for two months, prime minister. His prestige rose by becoming only the second minister in 21 years to resign rather than be sacked by the president, but others criticize him for not having tried longer. His expatriate status, now to be prolonged by appointment as UN Secretary General Kofi Annan's Special Representative to Somalia, will not work in his favour.

The opposition is faced not only with the military as a competitor for power, but also with the politicians who are part of the PUP machinery and will attempt to hold on. Chief among these is Aboubacar Somparé, president of the national assembly and the constitutionally mandated successor should Conté leave office before 2010. Not one person consulted by Crisis Group expressed the desire for Somparé to take over. Once an ardent member of Sékou Touré's PDG party, he is often described as a Touré-era holdover, useful to the PUP primarily because of his tendency toward demagoguery and authoritarianism.

Among the businessmen, the two best known are certainly El Hadj Mamadou Sylla and Guido Santullo. Sylla's fortunes have risen and fallen over the last eighteen months. In 2004, he received from the president the approval to transport Guinean pilgrims to Mecca for the annual Haj, but failed in the effort, losing considerable prestige. A few months later, the national airline, which he had bought in 2002, ceased to function when creditors repossessed one of his planes, sent to be repaired in France; his pilots crashed the other in Freetown on 11 August 2004. Although Sylla recently stated that this difficult period would soon be over,³⁶ it is likely the country will be without internal flights for a year.

These setbacks could not have been more embarrassing in a country 85 per cent Muslim and fiercely patriotic. Because Sylla's meteoric rise to wealth has been so directly linked not just to his government ties but to his relationship with Conté, an embarrassment for him is an embarrassment for the president as well. Nevertheless, Sylla seems to be on the rebound. He recently began another term as the "*patron des patrons*", head of the Guinean national counsel of employers, with seven ministers and the resident coordinator of the UN in attendance at the ceremony.³⁷ Conté reportedly visited

³⁶ Y. Sylla, "Futurelec Holding: Où sommes-nous avec les deux avions d'Air Guinée Express?", *Guinée News*, 4 May 2005.

³⁷ The ministers were Kiridi Bangoura; Madikaba Camara (finance); Alpha Ibrahima Kéira (employment and civil service); Aliou Condé (transport); Hadja Djènè Saran Camara (commerce); Hadja Mariama Aribot (social affairs); and Hadja Koumba Diakité (tourism). See P. Diawara,

him the same day, as he had on 19 January 2005, the day the president escaped the apparent attempt on his life. Sylla's comeback will undoubtedly complicate the reform process but if he loses his patron, he may lose his influence as well.

C. IMPLICATIONS FOR REFORM

When the president leaves office, two conflicting tendencies will be in play. Many expect the PUP to collapse quickly. This is what happened to Sékou Touré's PDG. The fate of dozens of ministers in Conté's ever-revolving governments is an indication of what may then happen to many. As a Guinean remarked, "look at (former Interior Minister) Moussa Solano. He was rich, feared and powerful. Of course he abused his power. The day after he was chucked out of the government, nobody even greeted him any more on the street".³⁸

Those who have most benefited from their relations to the PUP and Conté will not willingly give up the money and power they have enjoyed. Yet, no individual has been allowed to feed off the system indefinitely. Conté's strategy for 21 years has been constantly to rotate people in and out of proximity to the state's riches. While the military as an institution has been his constant partner in this undertaking, successive reshuffling, purges and a tactic of pitting individuals against one another so that they do not threaten him have denied a clear advantage or even constituency to anyone.

It is precisely this tactic that has produced the lack of subtlety displayed by many of Conté's ministers and military associates over the years as they strove to take as much as possible before losing their chance. But such a system is based on the logic of smash and grab, not power politics as usually practiced, where individuals have to build constituencies, cultivate allies, and work in blocs. While there has certainly been a Sosso clique both encouraged by and gravitating around the president, observers are often too quick to see Guinean politics as a game of ethnicised competition. This is only partly true. The military, as noted above, is relatively heterogeneous. A considerable number of ministers are Fulbe or Maninka, while two of 28 are from minority Forest Region groups. Many of the most powerful businessmen have been Fulbe, while the closest competition for Mamadou Sylla (a Sosso) comes from Guido Santullo -- an Italian.

Conté's canny play of his collaborators against each other means the system can be dismantled after his departure, since no one has much independent power. More difficult will be finding a way to get the security forces to participate in reforms that will begin by removing some of their economic advantages and whose logical endpoint will be to reinstate civil authority over the military.³⁹ There is no easy solution to this, and the progression will have to be gradual. As some of the older officers who benefit most from the current system begin to retire, one of the greatest incentives for those who remain will be a more transparent system of promotion.

D. A WAY FORWARD

The key to moving forward is a unified approach by actors both inside and outside the country that should be based on three principles: holding the government to commitments it has already made regarding political reforms; extending the constitutionally-mandated 60-day period for elections to allow for prior implementation of reforms and holding of municipal elections; and making clear the international community will not tolerate a military takeover and what the costs will be if one is attempted.

1. Political reforms and sovereignty

First and most important is to hold the government to the engagements President Conté and his prime minister have made on revising electoral lists, opening access to those lists to both opposition parties and individuals, constituting an independent electoral commission, opening the airwaves to private broadcasters and opposition parties, assuring freedom of movement and assembly to opposition parties, their leaders, and their members, and holding municipal elections in the last quarter of 2005.

If there is further dissolution of the president's authority, and especially if this is accompanied by generalised violence, there likely will be a quick move by those presently close to power to abrogate those commitments. The arguments are likely to be based on the need for public order and a claim that the commitments impinge on Guinean sovereignty. The AU, ECOWAS, the broader international community, the opposition, and those within the government committed to reform must respond with one voice: the engagements were freely

"Elections du haut patronat de Guinée: Mamadou Sylla succède à lui-même !", Aminata.com, 7 April 2005.

³⁸ Crisis Group interview, Conakry, 12 January 2005. Other Guineans have made similar comments to Crisis Group researchers regarding the former minister of security, Moussa Sampil.

³⁹ For more on the complex evolution from the revolutionary army of the socialist period to today's political-economic-military institution, see M. Camara, "From Military Politicisation to Militarisation of Power in Guinea-Conakry", *Journal of Political and Military Sociology*, Winter 2000, 28, pp. 311-376.

entered into by the government, and there is nothing about them to indicate they were dependent upon the continued authority of specific individuals.

This last point needs to be emphasised. Power in Guinea has been so personalised over the last 47 years that the notion of the state as an institution that has engagements and relationships with other states and other institutions is not generally part of the political vocabulary. The prevailing context is one in which people believe that Cellou Dalein Diallo convinced Conté it was necessary for him to make commitments on reform with outside institutions but that these promises can be nullified if Conté leaves the scene.

2. The timetable for succession

The problem of personalised power extends as well to questions about succession in the case of a presidential vacancy. Many focus on the man designated by the constitution -- national assembly President Somparé -- and declare that he must never be allowed to assume the office either because the Assembly as presently constituted is illegitimate, or because they feel he would use the position to monopolise power. Those seeking Guinea's best interests, both inside and outside the country, must bear in mind that a constitution can only endure so much manipulation before it is disregarded altogether. The most important variable is not the individual who presides over the transition -- as important as that is, and admitting that Somparé could indeed be difficult -- but the constitutionally-defined 60-day period for holding new elections. Following a different timetable can and should be justified by the fact that the electoral reforms already agreed by the government cannot at present be instituted in so short a period.⁴⁰

Because the last Assembly elections were boycotted by most of the opposition (Jean Marie Doré's Union pour le Progrès de la Guinée, UPG, being a notable exception), that body is primarily a forum for cheering on the presidential party, and neither the institution nor its president have much legitimacy in the eyes of most Guineans. Consequently, virtually all observers appear

ready to ignore this part of the constitution, and most of the scenarios they consider presume that the military, not Somparé, will take over.

Guinea needs, however, to begin moving away now from the politics of personality and to make an even more radical break the minute Conté leaves the scene. Ordinary citizens are ready for this, having experienced two very different styles of personalised rule -- socialist demagoguery and military dictatorship -- that yielded broadly similar results. Whether the opposition, which tends to see a post-Conté scramble for power as an all-or-nothing affair, or the diplomatic community, which is reluctant to take on Guinean politicians who readily accuse them of imperialism and racism, have changed their minds is another matter.

There is good reason for selective adherence to the constitutionally-mandated succession procedure but actors inside and outside Guinea need to reflect carefully on which exceptions are most important under the circumstances. The number of permissible deviations is limited before ill-intentioned actors can reasonably claim the need to do away with the document and its guarantees altogether. One argument against Somparé's accession is that he has had his eye on permanent occupancy of the office. However, like Conté, he has serious health concerns, and several figures close to the political scene indicate that he may no longer entertain such hopes.⁴¹

But this is of secondary importance. There are figures within the military, the opposition, civil society and probably the press and the judiciary who also have their eyes on the presidency. The issue at hand is putting in place sufficiently strong and coherent mechanisms so that no one can steal the election. This means Somparé should be allowed to succeed Conté as stipulated by the constitution. Emphasis should rather be placed on ensuring that political reforms already agreed by the government are put in place, in a transparent and consensual manner.

3. Avoiding a Togolese scenario

Although few Guineans recognise any similarity between a post-Conté situation and the recent succession in Togo, many outsiders see a close resemblance. Other than a designated successor as there was in Lomé, the key elements are there: the first concern is whether the military takes over, and if it does, the reaction of the international community. Given the Togolese precedent, it is hard to imagine that even if they wanted to, ECOWAS, the AU, the UN, and others could countenance a military coup in

⁴⁰ A recent memorandum from the FRAD opposition coalition proposes a transitional period of no more than twelve months but insists a neutral figure lead it, a national council replace the national assembly, and a high tribunal replace the supreme court. It is likely that arguments surrounding the consensual reconstitution of all three arms of government would take more than the allotted year. In practice, the two plans would probably have many similarities. However, Crisis Group would accept the necessarily imperfect nature of the transition and focus on specific goals such as forming a national electoral commission. See "Mémorandum Additif au Plan de Sortie de Crise du 14 juillet 2004", 3 May 2005.

⁴¹ Crisis Group interviews, Conakry, January-April 2005.

Guinea.⁴² The second set of concerns involve whether the international community would demand an election in form or in substance.

The resemblances between the two situations concern all the issues presently being addressed by Guinea's political reforms: the electoral lists, which the Guinean opposition claims are inflated by 1.5 million voters⁴³ (the EU says the Togolese rolls were inflated by 900,000⁴⁴), the formation of an independent electoral commission, and the opposition's access to electronic media and its ability to circulate freely around the country.

It is in this context that the 60-day period for preparing new presidential elections could be a tool for Somparé, or other groups including the PUP, the military, and the Sosso hard core around the president or some combination of these. The only circumstance under which such a short period should be accepted is if the political reforms have already been put in place in a consensual manner, municipal elections have been held under conditions considered by the AU, ECOWAS, the EU and others to have been generally transparent, and if these and other organisations can provide technical support and monitoring function within such a short timeframe. These criteria are not likely to be met.

The Togolese drama showed that just as slow elections can be dangerous because they allow the interim leader or group to entrench themselves, elections held too quickly can be even more dangerous. This is especially true where the political system, as in Guinea and Togo, has never functioned transparently, and significant structural changes are necessary for fair elections. Rather than limiting the interim to 60 days, as per the constitution, the period should be measured against the expeditious completion of the political reforms.

Because of the likelihood that the opposition and those in power will not agree on the point at which the reforms have been completed, such a process would probably require the good offices of an independent arbitrator. Because of Guinean sensitivity to non-African interference

⁴² Some have argued for guarded acceptance of a coup on the basis of Guinea's purported "exceptionalism". Guinea's 1958 "No" vote to De Gaulle's offer of partial sovereignty was indeed exceptional (it was the only francophone nation to opt for total independence). Unfortunately, there has been little exceptional about its political trajectory since then. Many other countries have been decimated by dictatorship and financial mismanagement. In this regard Guinea's experience is quite close to Togo's.

⁴³ Crisis Group interviews with opposition leaders, January, April 2005.

⁴⁴ See "Notes rédigées par la Délégation de l'Union Européenne au Togo", *Le Togolais.com*, 6 May 2005.

and the special relationship the country has always had with the regional governing body, the AU would be best suited for this job.⁴⁵ An AU-appointed mediator would, however, require the full support of ECOWAS, the UN, the EU, the U.S. and France in order to succeed. Even such an African-led, consensual approach would be unprecedented in Guinea, whose leaders have been no more hesitant to accuse fellow Africans of being imperialists than Europeans and Americans.

4. The role of the armed forces

Provided it is well thought-out, respectful, and broadly supported by the international community, such an approach should be accepted by Guinea's political class and ordinary citizens. The same can not be said with certainty of the military, which would have much to lose and little to gain from more transparent and responsible governance. The approach to this key institution must address this reality frankly: the military is, and for years to come will remain, the principal potential spoiler for democratisation and good governance. Its leaders must somehow find their own interest in the process. The threat of targeted sanctions if they prove recalcitrant could perhaps help change their calculation of where their interests lie. In short, if the security forces sign on to the process, it will likely succeed. If they do not, democracy will be exceptionally fragile.

A recent UN IRIN report stated, "Most diplomats and ordinary Guineans envisage a transitional period of military rule when Conté eventually goes, and some would welcome such a prospect if it ensured continued stability". The position of most in the diplomatic community has been that the transition envisaged by the constitution (with the president of the national assembly taking over and organising elections within 60 days) is unworkable, that Somparé has very little support even in his own party, and there is no way that Guinea could organise credible elections in the 60-day time-frame. In the face of its myriad problems, they believe that there is a tacit consensus about Guinea's immediate future, and though nobody actually welcomes the idea of military rule, a negotiated military take-over is not only a quasi-certainty, but also less bad than either of the only two other options: anarchy or brutal military rule.

Such an approach, however, is unlikely to lead to any of the goals desired by either the diplomats, the opposition, or most ordinary Guineans. The notion of a short, surgical military takeover that leads seamlessly into transparent elections and a handover to civilian control is a fantasy.

⁴⁵ The first president of the Organisation for African Unity (OAU), the AU's predecessor, was Guinean diplomat Telli Diallo, later tortured and killed in Sékou Touré's Camp Boiro.

While those who argue for military transition imagine a scenario like that which took place in Mali in 1991,⁴⁶ it is more likely to resemble Côte d'Ivoire's 1999 military takeover. There, General Robert Gueï announced himself "the sweeper", promising to clean up politics and then retire but instead decided he enjoyed the power and ran for president, attempting to steal the election. Indeed, this is roughly the path Conté followed in 1984. There is little reason to believe his military colleagues would act differently.

What could those seeking to dispossess the military of its current advantages offer in exchange? A primary attraction of a change of government for many officers would be a return to relative meritocracy. This is not to say that favouritism on the basis of ethnicity or family would cease, but a transparent civilian government should be able to prepare the way for a more transparent promotions policy.

The advantages senior officers have grown accustomed to are significant, and this, too, must be borne in mind. As described below, regional arms deals and various forms of cross-border trade are believed to have put millions of dollars into their pockets. The AU and ECOWAS should begin sending clear signals to the military elite that leaving the political process in the hands of civilians is a requirement, not an option.

Moreover, diplomats and donors should make clear what they would do to prevent a military takeover. Given that Guinea has spent decades in self-enforced isolation, it will be a challenge to make the threat credible, but targeted sanctions against the leaders of any military coup as well as suspension of all aid should help convince those responsible that the costs no longer justify opposition to reform and democracy. Refusal by neighbouring countries and others to recognise a military government would add another level of pressure. An arms embargo would hurt few ordinary Guineans but would put a significant crimp in the style of senior officers. Given Guinea's recent history of fuelling the region's wars,⁴⁷ this would be a salutary act in itself. Although companies operating in Guinea would certainly resist it, the most devastating potential sanction would be an embargo on Guinean bauxite exports.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ In June 1991, the military, led by Amadou Toumani Touré, stopped President Moussa Traoré's violent suppression of a student uprising, removed him and turned the government back to civilian authority the following year. After retiring from the military, Touré was easily elected president of Mali in 2002.

⁴⁷ See Section V.A below.

⁴⁸ Such an embargo might be more enforceable than those imposed on diamonds in other parts of West Africa since bauxite is too voluminous to be moved clandestinely.

IV. THE ECONOMY

A. ECONOMIC REFORMS AND THE RESUMPTION OF AID

If implementing a political agenda leading to credible elections is a challenge, implementing economic reforms is far more difficult. The favours and privileges that have accrued to those close to the president are monumental, though as with political reform, the situation is made easier by the fact that the networks are so personalised that they have little solid institutional base. However, those benefiting from the system will do everything possible to maintain their advantages.

Although the representatives of the international financial institutions treat Guinea's economic performance as a purely technical matter, its economic problems are in fact profoundly political. The relationship between the two was made patently clear during the short-lived premiership of François Lonsény Fall. When he resigned as prime minister on 24 April 2004,⁴⁹ he had served only two months. He later said, "My nomination took place at a moment of urgent need for the country. The state coffers were empty, our IMF program was blocked, we were not paying our debts, and our partners had abandoned us".⁵⁰ Fall had been brought in to restore sufficient order to get the money flowing again. However, he was faced with a dilemma: putting economic affairs in order would mean taking rich privileges and benefits away from the most powerful politicians, officers and businessmen in the country.

The situation was dire. Guinea was in arrears to the IMF, the World Bank, the African Development Bank and the Islamic Development Bank, which all suspended their programs in 2003. The EU and France had done the same, and the state had no money. Government receipts went from \$438 million in 1996 to \$383 million in 2002,⁵¹ and are said to have dropped significantly since. According to one source, the Guinean government is now bringing in an average of \$5 million each month, while spending \$13 million.⁵² The treasury's debt to the central bank went from the equivalent of \$62 million in 1996 to \$500 million in 2004.⁵³

⁴⁹ His letter did not arrive in Conakry until 29 April.

⁵⁰ M. Ben Yahmed, "François Lonsény Fall: Pourquoi je démissionne", *Jeune Afrique L'intelligent* no. 2260, 2 May 2004.

⁵¹ "L'Etat de l'Afrique", *Jeune Afrique L'intelligent*, 2005, p. 181. All figures denoted in dollars (\$) in this report are in U.S. dollars.

⁵² Crisis Group interview, Conakry, 8 February 2005.

⁵³ "L'Etat de l'Afrique", op. cit.

Guinea's attitude toward the donors has been a mixture of defiant nationalism, left over from the Sekou Touré years, and lackadaisical disorganisation. In April 2004, the government had scheduled a meeting in Brussels to discuss resumption of the EU aid package but its delegation failed to show up. The EU was nonplussed. Such a thing had never happened before.⁵⁴ For the rescheduled meeting in July, the Guinean delegation, led by Kiridi Bangoura, had been slipped a list of the questions it would be asked and had prepared written responses. Ten minutes into the meeting, it informed the Europeans it was useless to continue and simply pushed a prepared set of responses across the table. The Europeans were again left speechless. During the recent visit to Conakry of an IMF team, the director of the central bank, Mohammed Daffé, was out of the country. Prime Minister Diallo, trying to put forward an image of reform to attract funding, sought to explain this as a misunderstanding.

Donors cannot be blamed too much for overlooking such behaviour. Their interest is ultimately to improve the lot of ordinary Guineans, who pay the price for their leaders' contempt. But anyone who knows how allergic Guinea has been to outside interference can understand how bitter it is to have to go hat in hand, prepared to promise any and all reforms. Bangoura, who led the delegation to Brussels, is said to be fiercely nationalistic and not particularly fond of Europeans, despite his obvious skill in speaking a language they find convincing. The real danger is that the Guineans, more out of pride than greed, take the money and institute none of the promised reforms.

The practice of sabotaging foreign aid as a form of nationalism goes back to the socialist period. As one agronomist described, "we had some excellent agricultural projects in Guinea in the 1970s and 1980s, for instance some funded by the Canadians. As members of the party and functionaries of the state, a lot of us felt a kind of duty to see them fail, whether by neglect or active sabotage".⁵⁵ This kind of perverted pride (well-understood, but almost never discussed by Guineans) could well short-circuit current programs, as if the pillage of the state by others, motivated by greed, were not a great enough challenge.

This was only a part of what Fall faced in his quest to restore a level of fiscal and monetary responsibility in early 2004. More difficult still was the struggle to break through the carapace of personalised favours and deals that gave the president and his associates a stranglehold

on the economy. Fall was charged with eliminating tax exemptions of the small group of individuals close to the President who monopolised much of the import and export business. The heart of his economic reform project was dissolution of the société guinéenne d'exportation des produits agricoles et miniers (SOGEPAM), which held a monopoly on the export of coffee and cocoa, and the elimination of non-competitive (*gré à gré*) state contracts, mostly benefiting Conté associates.

As a result of the interventions of those businessmen close to the president, Fall found himself blocked in the application of the very reforms he had been asked to institute:

Conté calls Fall to his office. On arrival, the Prime Minister finds Sylla, accompanied by several of his friends, standing beside the "Vieux" [Conté]. In front of everyone, Conté gives the order, "not to touch SOGEPAM" in the most direct terms. At that moment, he [Fall] realises how complicated his task really is.⁵⁶

In light of such interventions, Fall resigned.

More than seven months later, Conté named Cellou Dalein Diallo prime minister. Diallo is 52, Fulbe, trained as an economist and has been a close collaborator in Conté's government over a nine-year period. He was able to build upon what Fall started. Indeed, Fall's tell-all article in *Jeune Afrique* (that issue, like several others over the past year, was confiscated on arrival in Conakry's airport, yet still circulated in photocopied form) may have done more to help Diallo gain Conté's approval for pushing ahead with reforms than anything else. The president, a consummate realist and political survivor, realised that people like Sylla had begun to be more trouble than they were worth and that the reforms were necessary after all.

But can Diallo go much further than Fall? This remains to be seen. In principle, SOGEPAM's monopoly was legally done away with on 29 December 2004.⁵⁷ There is still the possibility that it will operate in a less open manner. Again, non-competitive contracts have been abandoned in name, but it is not yet clear how much real competition will ensue. Diallo's greatest challenge will be to revoke certain operators' tax-free privileges.

Diallo has managed to convince the World Bank and IMF that he is sincere, and has support from Conté. After the visit of its managing director, Shengman Zhang, the Bank put some pressure on the IMF to jump-start discussions

⁵⁴ In his description of the reasons why he resigned, Fall says that on 12 April 2004, four days before the scheduled meeting, President Conté simply called him and said, "I don't want to negotiate with the EU". "Pourquoi je démissionne", op. cit.

⁵⁵ Crisis Group interview with Guinean agronomist, Seredou, July 2000.

⁵⁶ "Pourquoi je démissionne", op. cit.

⁵⁷ See K. Kourouma "Rencontre Cellou Dalein Diallo et opérateurs économiques: Les nouvelles mesures du nouveau premier ministre!", Aminata.com, 30 December 2004.

with the government. These came to fruition during Diallo's visit to Washington for the Bretton Woods Institutions' spring meetings, 16-17 April 2005, in a Staff Monitoring Program of indeterminate length. The IMF will observe the introduction of macroeconomic reforms and recommend whether Guinea qualifies for "on-track" status.⁵⁸ That will be a kind of green, yellow, or red light to other creditors and largely determine prospects for loans, debt relief and other forms of aid over the next year.

B. INFLATION

Guinea is entering an inflationary spiral that threatens to become disastrous, especially given the frozen salary levels of civil servants. Estimates of monetary growth run at 40 per cent per annum, and sources indicate that the government is ordering container loads of francs to be printed by Britain's Royal Mint and shipped to Conakry.⁵⁹ The consequences are evident: in June 2004, the black market exchange rate in the capital was \$1 = 2,600 Guinean francs; in April 2005, it was \$1 = 3,580 Guinean francs, a 38 per cent depreciation against a dollar that was itself diminishing in value, cutting into citizens' ability to afford imports.

The official inflation rate was 28 per cent in 2004, the fourth worst in Africa after Zimbabwe, Eritrea and Zambia.⁶⁰ The projected rate for 2005 is 22.6 per cent, less only than Zimbabwe.⁶¹ The reality felt by ordinary Guineans is more dramatic than that suggested by these figures: The cost of meat has recently risen from 8,000 to 9,000 GF/kilo. A 50kg bag of rice that cost only 35,000 GF in March 2004 costs between 75,000 and 100,000 GF in Conakry and 100,000 GF or more outside it. In May, petrol prices rose from 2,500 GF/ litre to 3,800 GF/litre, which has pushed up all transport costs and thus the cost of consumer goods in the interior. In a country where an average primary school teacher or policeman is paid about 125,000 GF (\$34)/month and a doctor or university professor about 250,000 GF (\$68)/month, and where civil servants' salaries have not risen since 1996, these price rises are devastating.

⁵⁸ Diallo was pushing hard for a six-month period before IMF money could begin flowing through programs like the Heavily Indebted Poor Country (HIPC) assistance program, while the Fund preferred a twelve-month period. After the meeting, no timetable was announced, ostensibly leaving it open to further negotiation. One requirement the Guinean government must meet is to revoke tax and customs exemptions given illegally as part of its program to increase state receipts.

⁵⁹ Crisis Group interviews, Conakry, February, April 2005.

⁶⁰ IMF, "World Economic Outlook", April 2005.

⁶¹ Ibid.

C. GENERALISED PILLAGE

An important part of every Guinean's education is to learn the stories about how French colonial administrators, angry that they had been asked to leave the country in 1958, pulled out the telephone lines, burned documents, and even broke the light bulbs in their offices. This story now has a modern variant that will be equally shocking to future generations: the Conté associates whose theft went so far as to empty the central bank of its hard currency.

Stories abound of functionaries who, upon being dismissed from their jobs, take all computers, furniture and other office items. Former central bank vice president Fodé Soumah is accused of handing over \$22 million to a Conté associate and businessman.⁶² He left his position at the central bank but was promoted minister of youth, sports and culture.⁶³ In Conakry today, the government plays cat-and-mouse with the ambulant black-market money changers who have dollars and euros. Every few months, their work is decried, and a few are thrown in jail overnight; but when the government requires foreign exchange, it has to go to them.⁶⁴

When, at the end of December 2004, it was announced that the Swiss company Société Generale de Surveillance did not have its contract renewed to manage Conakry's port and collect customs receipts, customs officers were reported to have celebrated their imminent access to government money.⁶⁵ Although corrupt officials have already emptied the state coffers, there is still opportunity for pillage. Iron reserves have not yet been exploited, and tropical hardwoods in the Forest Region are being cut at a dramatic rate and are slated for exploitation even in protected forest reserves, as described below.

D. THE ASIAN DYNAMIC

Crisis Group interlocutors have repeatedly noted the meteoric rise of Chinese business interests in Guinea. Two companies -- one Chinese, the other Senegalese -- received contracts to refurbish the autoroute that runs the

⁶² P. Diawara "Affaire des bons de caisse de la BCRG", Aminata.com, 3 May 2005. This article notes that the businessman in question claims to be owed even more by the state than he owes to it. The accounting is murky, and the case has not been made in public. Soumah's defence has been that he was told to hand over the \$22 million by his superiors.

⁶³ For more on Soumah, see Crisis Group Report, *Uncertainties at the End of an Era*, op. cit.

⁶⁴ Crisis Group interviews with money changers, businessmen, Conakry.

⁶⁵ Crisis Group interview, Conakry, 11 January 2005.

length of the Conakry peninsula. It appears that all the work is being done by the Chinese, via a subcontracting arrangement with the Chinese working for the Senegalese. The Chinese-owned logging company, Forêt Forte,⁶⁶ has the main contract for logging in the Forest Region, including inside the Diecke and Ziama reserves.⁶⁷ Several sources mentioned the appearance of brothels in Conakry staffed entirely by Chinese prostitutes.

Guinea has much to interest the world's fastest-growing economy, especially bauxite, iron and tropical hardwoods. Much bauxite is already being mined by either the *Compagnie de Bauxite de Guinée* (CBG), an American-Canadian-Guinean conglomerate, or Rousski Alumini, a Russian company. A new project, proposed by GlobalAlumina, would invest \$2 billion to \$2.5 billion in a mining/processing complex to convert bauxite to alumina. Although it is based in Canada, the biggest investors in this company are Japanese, who are reportedly most interested in developing privileged access to the Chinese market.⁶⁸

Some worry that, "the Chinese businessmen in Africa seem to operate according to other rules, or none at all".⁶⁹ In many ways, Chinese money has no strings. As a diplomat with long years of Guinea experience said, "The Chinese, Japanese and Koreans know they will be durable economic partners in Guinea. The Guineans appreciate the Chinese because of all they did here during the socialist years. They built the *Palais du Peuple* and the *Palais des Nations*, and never asked for anything in return".⁷⁰ In contrast to the EU, which explicitly ties development aid to human rights and governance criteria, Chinese businessmen capitalise on the good will their government built over the years, and simply seek profit. This may be a much more attractive relationship for Guinean politicians who do not care to have foreign donors poking into the prevalent corruption.

V. THE FOREST REGION AND RELATIONS WITH NEIGHBOURS

A. WAR IS MORE LUCRATIVE THAN PEACE

The military, too, has entrenched interests in pillage. Allowing -- or even encouraging -- it to become involved in such activities has been central to Conté's strategy of pushing problems outward toward the borders. Military officers have been enriched by working various angles of the regional wars and do not complain about low pay, unfair promotions, or poor living conditions. In the context of the conflicts in Sierra Leone, Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire, they have also been allowed to become involved in cross border trade. This has even led to incursions into Sierra Leone and expropriation of land. The military has also been heavily involved in regional arms flows, ranging from the supply of ammunition as part of the cross border trade to large deals in heavy weaponry and light arms. All this is highly lucrative and keeps officers busy. It also leaves a bad taste in neighbours' mouths and develops criminal-military networks that may come back to haunt Guinea, especially as rents dry up.

Guinea has taken a keen interest in the affairs of neighbouring states, with the military central to the effort. Elite troops (like the U.S. and Chinese-trained Rangers) are sent to patrol the borders furthest from the capital. Other troops have been sent on peacekeeping missions in Sierra Leone and Liberia as part of the ECOMOG contingents. In other cases (Guinea Bissau, 1999 and Sierra Leone, 2001), they have been sent as combatants, with orders to defeat one party in a neighbour's war.

The motivations have not been just cynical economic calculation or an attempt to keep potential coup-plotters busy. For instance, Conté's friendship with former Guinea Bissau President João Bernardo "Nino" Vieira has been behind several interventions. Guinea actively supported the Guinea Bissau struggle for independence from Portugal and offered its coastal area as a rear base for the independence fighters. Conté, part of whose family came from Guinea Bissau, met Vieira in the 1960s, when he was commandant of the military camp in Boké which Vieira used to regroup his fighters.⁷¹ In 1999, Conté and Senegalese President Abdou Diouf sent troops to Guinea Bissau to support Vieira's government against an attempted military takeover. Most recently, Vieira landed in Bissau on 7 April 2005 in a Guinean military helicopter. Even here, the links of friendship, economic interest and

⁶⁶ One of Forêt Forte's other principals is Guido Santullo. See, "Mission Parlementaire à N'Zérékoré", *Le Legislatateur, Hebdomadaire d'information de l'Assemblée Nationale*, no. 016, 20 December 2004.

⁶⁷ Diecke is in Yomou Préfecture, close to the Liberian border and the town of Ganta. Ziama is in Macenta Préfecture.

⁶⁸ "Guinea: Japanese-backed company signs deal to build \$2 billion alumina plant", IRIN, 20 October 2004.

⁶⁹ Crisis Group interview, Conakry, 14 April 2005.

⁷⁰ Crisis Group interview, Conakry, 14 April 2005.

⁷¹ See C. Boisbouvier, "Le retour des ex", *Jeune Afrique L'intelligent*, 24 April 2005.

militarism are difficult to disentangle. According to at least one source, Vieira and Conté are partners in Futurelec Holdings, the company nominally headed by Mamadou Sylla that controls Air Guinée Express, and SOGEPAM.⁷²

Regional war has paid well for many in Guinea, and as peace has begun creeping back into countries like Sierra Leone and Liberia, individuals within the political and military hierarchies have lost important rents. Among them are:

- ❑ profits attached to being a major regional arms dealer;
- ❑ profits to be derived from taking a percentage of emergency aid funds;
- ❑ cross-border trade in goods looted by rebel groups;
- ❑ money collected by shaking people down at roadblocks whose existence is justified by the prevailing state of insecurity; and
- ❑ the flow of development and emergency aid money despite lack of transparency and poor economic performance, on the basis of Guinea's role as a refugee host and haven of relative peace.

As these rents have begun to disappear, complaints by military personnel have focused on the government, a dangerous situation for Conté. This tends to result in inconsistent policy decisions. An example is that of roadblocks. As in Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia, roadblocks became a primary means for rank-and-file soldiers and non-commissioned officers to pay themselves. Rather than providing security, they undercut it in two ways. As mechanisms of extortion, they contributed to the criminalisation of society and its impoverishment, as the movement of goods and people was increasingly restricted, and businessmen and women were forced to operate in arbitrary conditions. Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, the roadblocks typically facilitated, rather than blocked, passage of illegal goods, whether weapons, drugs, or contraband. They invariably ended up putting a price on virtually everything, whether citizens with or without papers, refugees, or traders with wares on the way to market.

Under international pressure, Conté banished the roadblocks in early 2003. After decades as part of the experience of every Guinean on the move, they disappeared overnight. However, they have recently returned. A humanitarian worker reported passing through ten between Conakry and Guekedou in the Forest Region, in April 2005.⁷³ While some attribute this to the departure of Security Minister Sampil, others surmise that the loss

of income for soldiers was simply exerting too much pressure on the military hierarchy.⁷⁴ Guinea should again eliminate these roadblocks.⁷⁵

B. GUINEA'S ROLE AS A REGIONAL ARMS MERCHANT

Surprising as it may seem, a mid-level functionary in the agriculture ministry, who worked in conjunction with European arms dealers, was responsible for issuing 80 per cent of the documentation for illicit arms fuelling West Africa's regional war in the 1990's.⁷⁶ Could this have taken place without the involvement, or at least the complicity, of Guinea's security forces? Almost certainly not. At least one source has pointed to a former senior figure in the ministry of defence.⁷⁷ Whoever was involved was indirectly responsible for the deaths and maiming of tens of thousands of civilians.

There is documentary and eyewitness evidence that the ministry of defence organised the delivery of small arms ammunition and the mortar rounds used by the LURD insurgency that killed many Liberian civilians in Monrovia in July 2003. This activity was in contravention not only of the UN Security Council's arms embargo regarding Liberia (Resolutions 1343 and 1478), but also of the 1998 ECOWAS moratorium on small arms, which was signed by President Conté, adopted in 1998 and renewed in 2001.⁷⁸

Specialists on the trade in arms that fuels conflicts like the one that has decimated Sierra Leone and Liberia say that only about 10 per cent of clandestine weapons deals are illegal, in the sense that they have no documentation and no justification. The other 90 per cent are classified as illicit, meaning they have documentation but it is

⁷⁴ Crisis Group interview, Conakry, 11 April 2005.

⁷⁵ A possible exception is the roadblock which controls access to the Conakry peninsula, known as the Km 36 checkpoint. It was never banned, ostensibly because it was part of the last line of defence of the Conakry peninsula.

⁷⁶ Crisis Group interview with expert on illicit arms traffic in West Africa, Stuttgart, 26 February 2004.

⁷⁷ Crisis Group interview with expert on West African security issues, Washington, November 2004. See also below references to explicit links asserted between the Guinean ministry of defence and orders, receipt and delivery of arms subsequently transhipped to the LURD militia in Liberia in violation of Security Council Resolutions 1343 and 1478, embargoing arms to Liberia.

⁷⁸ "Declaration of a Moratorium on Importation, Exportation and Manufacture of Light Weapons in West Africa", Economic Community of West African States, 21st ordinary session of the Authority of Heads of State and Government, Abuja, 30-31 October, 1998.

⁷² Crisis Group interview, Dakar, 28 May 2004.

⁷³ Crisis Group interview, Conakry, 13 April 2005.

falsified.⁷⁹ For arms sales by a weapon-producing country to be legal, the seller must receive an end-user certificate. Such a document normally comes from a defence ministry and verifies that the armed forces of a sovereign country have contracted to buy arms for their own use and will neither divert nor resell them.

Once a state or company selling weapons has the end-user certificate, its responsibility for seeing that the arms go where they are supposed to and are used for the purposes specified becomes rather murky. Verifying that the certificate is not a fake and that the arms ordered are the only items put on the delivery plane is typically enough to provide legal cover for the seller. Some states or companies will put a monitor on the plane to ensure that the arms arrive at the proper airport and are unloaded by the proper officials, but this is exceptional. Countries like Ukraine, Moldova, and Kyrgyzstan, all named by the UN Panel of Experts for having sold weapons to fuel the Liberian and Sierra Leonean wars,⁸⁰ have historically done the minimum necessary. The UN Panels of Experts should monitor Guinea closely because of its history of providing arms to combatant groups in neighbouring countries.

Slovakia arrested a man named Peter Jusko in 2001. He ran several Slovak companies that specialised in illicit arms deals, including one called "Joy Slovakia".⁸¹ He was implicated in sales of arms headed not only to Liberia but also to Angola.⁸² According to the UN Panel of Experts, all of his end user certificates came from Guinea, issued by a front company, the Pecos Company, run by Mohamed Yansané, a Guinean agricultural engineer who had met Jusko while a student in Eastern Europe during Guinea's socialist period. The two reportedly became friends, and years later went into business together. Yansané was also reportedly in business with Alexander Islamov, also charged by Slovakia for his role in the

illegal sale of arms, and Viktor Bout, the most notorious illicit arms dealer and shipper in Africa.

Yansané and Jusko found ways to facilitate the shipment of weapons that would fetch a high price in places like embargoed Liberia. In one instance, they reportedly used a loophole in Slovakia's laws for repair of fighter aircraft, which required neither a license nor that the Slovakian company return the aircraft, in this case a helicopter, to the country of origin. The UN Panel of Experts' specialists surmised that weeks later, the helicopter was delivered somewhere in Africa, thanks to Pecos paperwork and officials willing not to ask too many questions.⁸³

The UN Panel of Experts' April 2002 report notes that, "an investigation in Guinea, subsequent to the publication of the report of the Panel, had led to the official removal on 30 November 2001 of Pecos from the register of corporations". Yet, illicit arms dealing does not seem to have stopped in Guinea with the demise of Pecos.

Investigations by the UN Panel of Experts and Human Rights Watch into the final assault by LURD on Monrovia in July 2003, traced with precision the lines of supply for mortar shells that killed scores and wounded hundreds. These shells were supplied by a company named KATEX Mines, with the majority coming from Iran and flown by a Ukrainian airline to Conakry.⁸⁴ The UN Panel of Experts documented seven flights from Iran to Conakry, including three in March, one in June, and one in August. Air waybills identified cargo as mostly "detergent" and "technical equipment", the latter term often used as a euphemism for illegal or illicit arms deliveries.⁸⁵ Human Rights Watch interviewed eyewitnesses to the unloading of the June and August flights who confirmed that the cargo was 7.62 mm bullets and 60 mm mortar rounds and that the contents of at least the June flight were quickly

⁷⁹ Crisis Group interview with expert on illicit arms traffic in West Africa, Stuttgart, 26 February 2004.

⁸⁰ See "Report of the Panel of Experts Appointed Pursuant to Security Council Resolution 1395 (2002)", S/2002/470, 19 April 2002, "Report of the Panel of Experts Appointed Pursuant to Paragraph 4 of Security Council Resolution 1458 (2003)", S/2003/498, 24 April 2003, and "Report of the Panel of Experts Appointed Pursuant to Paragraph 25 of Security Council Resolution 1478 (2003)", 2 October 2003.

⁸¹ "No Questions Asked: The Eastern Europe Arms Pipeline to Liberia", Human Rights Watch Briefing Paper, 15 November 2001, and "Report of the Panel of Experts Appointed Pursuant to Security Council Resolution 1395 (2002)", S/2002/470, 19 April 2002.

⁸² See "No Questions Asked", op. cit., and "Report of the Panel of Experts Appointed Pursuant to Security Council Resolution 1395 (2002)", S/2002/470, 19 April 2002.

⁸³ See "No Questions Asked", op. cit.

⁸⁴ See "Report of the Panel of Experts Appointed Pursuant to Paragraph 25 of Security Council Resolution 1478 (2003)", presented 2 October 2003, and Human Rights Watch, "Weapons Sanctions, Military Supplies, and Human Suffering: Illegal Arms Flows to Liberia and the June-July 2003 Shelling of Monrovia", 3 November 2003. See also "Report of the Panel of Experts Appointed Pursuant to Paragraph 4 of Security Council Resolution 1458 (2003)", S/2003/498, 24 April 2003. Further, "Report of the Panel of Experts Appointed Pursuant to Security Council Resolution 1408 (2002)", S/2002/1115, 25 October 2002, which details prior shipments of mortar shells from the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to Guinea's ministry of defence (documented and verified by the UAE government). Some of these shells were subsequently captured by Liberian government forces from the LURD in Lofa County, Liberia.

⁸⁵ See "Report of the Panel of Experts", 2 October 2003, op. cit., and Human Rights Watch, "Weapons Sanctions, Military Supplies, and Human Suffering", op. cit.

delivered by the Guinean armed forces to LURD in northern Liberia.⁸⁶

Despite the end of the Liberian war in 2003 and the consequent end to the arming of LURD, it is not clear that Guinea has cut ties with KATEX Mines. A document on KATEX letterhead obtained by Crisis Group, dated and signed 29 March 2004, lists offices in Conakry, Kiev, and Tehran, and demands payment of over \$19 million owed by the ministry of defence for "*Munition et Poudrière*" already delivered, and another \$21.5 million for munitions to be delivered in September 2004. It threatens: "We are now experiencing serious problems with our suppliers and as you know, with contracts like this we cannot allow any such delay, otherwise, we will find ourselves before European courts, and these discreet contracts could be revealed to the UN".

More recently still, a helicopter destroyed by the French air force in Yamoussoukro, Côte d'Ivoire on 6 November 2004 was Guinean.⁸⁷ This gives some sense of the links between the governments of Presidents Conté and Gbagbo. Multiple sources indicate that the Guinean government was at least transshipping arms for the Gbagbo government until the imposition of the arms embargo imposed by UN Security Council Resolution 1572 on 15 November 2004.⁸⁸ Since that time, Crisis Group has no evidence of Guinea breaking the embargo. However, according to several sources, attack helicopters were delivered from Ukraine in March 2005 and were likely Ivorian property just passing some time in Guinea.⁸⁹ These helicopters were delivered to KATEX, ostensibly for repair in Conakry. An expert consulted by Crisis Group doubted that the facilities for this existed in the country. This appears to be an attempt to use the helicopter repair loophole mentioned above.

⁸⁶ "Weapons Sanctions, Military Supplies, and Human Suffering", op. cit. The Guinean military and LURD organised earlier deliveries of munitions by using Liberian civilians seeking asylum in Guinea as forced labourers to carry ammunition from the Guinean border to LURD camps in Lofa County. Crisis Group interviews, August 2002. See also Human Rights Watch, "Liberian Refugees in Guinea: Refoulement, Militarisation of Camps, and Other Protection Concerns, 25 November 2002.

⁸⁷ Crisis Group interview, Conakry, 15 January 2005. French planes on that date destroyed most of Côte d'Ivoire's small air force after Ivorian Sukhoi jets piloted by mercenaries bombed a French base in Bouake, killing nine French soldiers and a U.S. civilian.

⁸⁸ Crisis Group interviews, Conakry, Abidjan, N'Zerekore, January-April 2005.

⁸⁹ Crisis Group interview, Conakry, 15 April 2005. Another source knew about and had seen the helicopters but said they belonged to the Guinean military.

The end of the wars in Sierra Leone and Liberia has diminished the demand for weapons, and if Guinea respects the arms embargo on Côte d'Ivoire, these practices may cease. However, that arms embargo holds the potential for great profit. The Guinean government, with assistance from international institutions including the UN Panel of Experts, should stop all involvement by its citizens in the illegal and illicit arms trade in Africa.

C. SIERRA LEONE AND SOLDIERS' CLAIMS ON THE STATE

Guinea was intimately involved in the war in Sierra Leone, through both the supply of weapons and the participation of its soldiers in the ECOMOG peacekeeping contingent. In addition, Guinea used *Kamajors*⁹⁰ and recruits from Sierra Leone refugee camps in Guinea to fight off incursions by pro-Taylor/RUF insurgents in 2000-2001.⁹¹ Lastly, the army took an active role in the final stages of the Sierra Leone war, entering RUF-held territory with both ground troops and attack helicopters in 2001.

Because of the role it played in defeating the RUF and the fact that Guinea hosted some 300,000 Sierra Leoneans throughout much of the 1990s, the Guinean military seems to have developed a somewhat abusive attitude toward Sierra Leoneans. Harassment and shakedowns have taken place repeatedly along the border. In one case, naval officers stopped four fishing vessels in Sierra Leone waters and brought them back to Conakry.⁹²

In another instance, Guinean soldiers arrested UN peacekeepers in Sierra Leone. On 26 March 2005, a UNAMSIL reconnaissance party was detained at the disputed village of Yenga, near Kailahun, for about six hours. When the UN troops snapped some photographs for UN records, Guinean soldiers demanded their cameras. The situation worsened when the Guinean soldiers forcibly detained and beat a Sierra Leone civilian who tried to leave the area. The UN party intervened to stop this and

⁹⁰ *Kamajor* is the Mende term for "hunter" used to describe the members of the Civil Defence Forces mobilised to fight the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) rebels during the Sierra Leone civil war. Some *Kamajors* have subsequently fought in both Guinea and Liberia.

⁹¹ See M. McGovern, "Conflit régional et rhétorique de la contre-insurgence: Guinéens et réfugiés en septembre 2000", *Politique Africaine*, no. 88:84-102, and J. Milner and A. Christofferson-Deb, "The Militarisation and Demilitarisation of refugee camps and settlements in Guinea: 1999 -- 2004", in N. Florquin and E. Berman (eds.) *Armed and Aimless: Armed Groups, Guns, and Human Security in the ECOWAS Region* (Geneva, Small Arms Survey, 2005).

⁹² Crisis Group interview with security source, Freetown, April 2005.

also attempted to leave but were prevented from doing so. Finally, the Guinean commander, after consulting his chain of command, returned all the cameras but one, which had gone missing, and permitted the party to depart.⁹³

This incident took place not in Guinea but in Sierra Leone, along the border, where the Guinean army operates with almost total impunity. President Kabbah of Sierra Leone is said to remain grateful for the help Guinea gave in defeating the RUF. Although some human rights organisations accused its army of pursuing a scorched earth policy and so killing many civilians,⁹⁴ Kabbah kept quiet and appeared happy to have an ally willing to take the offensive against the insurgents, something the UN blue helmets were not doing.

The Guineans seem to consider Yenga a reward for the help they offered Sierra Leone in ending a ten-year civil war.⁹⁵ Guinean soldiers and civilians farm on the Sierra Leone side, and there has been discussion about fishing rights in the river that forms the border and about alluvial diamond mining. In this area, far from either capital, even small economic rents can be significant, which may explain the military's unwillingness to vacate the area, even though Conté has publicly acknowledged that the territory belongs to Sierra Leone. Regardless, the government seems willing to placate its soldiers and lower-ranking officers with these benefits.

Guinea should pull back from Yenga and all other Sierra Leone territory to facilitate good relations and avoid further political problems for President Kabbah. Though Sierra Leoneans are little given to nationalistic rhetoric, the Yenga dispute (combined with the abusive behaviour toward civilians) has sparked considerable resentment in Freetown and could eventually cause bilateral difficulties.

D. COTE D'IVOIRE AND CROSS-BORDER TRADE IN WARTIME

Côte d'Ivoire is the most active conflict in the region and the new centre of illicit cross-border activity. Officially, the border is sealed. In fact, there is passage for both persons and goods, with a lively trade between Côte d'Ivoire insurgent (Forces Nouvelles, FN) elements based

around Danane and Man and the Guinean customs and military forces controlling the other side of the border.⁹⁶ Rice prices in Guinée Forestière have been pushed up by the scarcity created by this trade.⁹⁷ A large proportion of the coffee and some of the cocoa grown in FN-controlled territory is brought across the border into Guinea and sold from Conakry.⁹⁸ Some small attacks by uncontrolled FN elements, including one on Kokota village on 6 April 2005, appear to have been oriented primarily toward securing food.

As with roadblocks and the cross-border trade with the RUF, such relationships can begin out of simple economic interest but develop into real security problems for the state. In a recent incident, Guinean forces arrested fourteen FN soldiers who claimed to be loyal to Ibrahim "IB" Coulibaly, leader of one of the FN factions. These soldiers were said to have entered Guinea's Mandiana Prefecture from Mali,⁹⁹ and then to have moved south until arrested in Sinko, a major market town serving Guinea, Côte d'Ivoire, and even Mali and Liberia. Sinko is said to hold significant arms caches, as does neighbouring Beyla, most of them originating from ex-LURD combatants.¹⁰⁰ Because Sinko is simultaneously very difficult to reach by motor vehicle and yet the site of a thriving market every Wednesday, it would be a perfect spot for consultation among regional warriors.

⁹³ Crisis Group interview, Freetown, 2 April 2005.

⁹⁴ See Human Rights Watch, "Guinean Forces Kill, Wound Civilians in Sierra Leone", 28 February 2001.

⁹⁵ Yenga is the most publicised of many such instances. Guineans -- often a combination of soldiers and civilians -- have reportedly made incursions of 50 to 500 metres into Sierra Leone in some 50 different places along the border. Crisis Group interview with security source, Freetown, 16 February 2005.

⁹⁶ Crisis Group interviews with humanitarian and government sources, N'Zerekore and Conakry, January-April 2005.

⁹⁷ Crisis Group interviews with merchants, N'Zerekore, 18 January 2005.

⁹⁸ Crisis Group interview with cocoa expert, Abidjan, June 2004.

⁹⁹ The Guinean military has been nervous about the Mali border since early 2004. According to a source, "The most significant seizures of small arms in 2004 have occurred on the border with Mali. From February to September 2004, small shipments of small arms -- typically six to twelve AK-47s -- have been seized en route to Bamako". Between February and April 2004, the government refused passage to hundreds of Liberian refugees who arrived at the Guinea-Mali border on their way from Ghana to Liberia. Of 338 persons in 22 buses, including Togolese, Burkinabe, and Ghanaian citizens as well as Liberians, ten were subsequently arrested by Malian authorities for carrying weapons, while the rest were flown to Liberia by the UN Mission in that country. See Milner and Christofferson-Deb "The Militarization and Demilitarization of refugee camps and settlements in Guinea", op. cit., "Returning Liberian Refugees Stranded at Guinea-Mali Border", Agence France-Presse, 3 April 2005, and UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), "Humanitarian Situation Report, March-April 2004".

¹⁰⁰ Crisis Group interviews, Conakry, N'Zerekore, Macenta, July 2004 and January 2005.

The fourteen were captured on 6 April 2005, such a market day.¹⁰¹

Guinea has taken such cross-border issues seriously, and is clearly beginning to recognise that the risks insurgents might cross the border to destabilise the country are real. It has positioned its best troops, the U.S. and Chinese-trained Rangers, all along the border with Côte d'Ivoire and part of the borders with Liberia and Mali -- from Yomou to Mandiana Prefectures. Conversely, FN troops near the border have been arresting young men crossing into Côte d'Ivoire from Guinea on suspicion that they might intend to fight against the FN.¹⁰²

E. LIBERIA, THE LURD AND GUINEA'S FOREST REGION

For some time, both Guineans and Guinea-watchers have been worried that a conflagration in the Forest Region could spark a generalised meltdown throughout the country. This was nearly stimulated in late 2000 and early 2001 by the Charles Taylor-RUF organised "Laspan" insurgency.¹⁰³ The area is awash in weapons, impatient ex-combatants, and significant social problems, including an AIDS rate that is estimated at two to three times the national average.¹⁰⁴ Yet for now, the area appears relatively quiet. Many of these problems have been discussed in recent publications by the UN IRIN and Human Rights Watch.¹⁰⁵ This section adds several elements to those analyses.

1. Refugees, ethnicity and repatriation

A troubling element of the cross-border relations between Guinea's Forest Region and northern Liberia is the situation of refugees who remain in Guinea. According to UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) officials, approximately 80 per cent of the Liberians still in camps at the beginning of 2005 were of Mandingo ethnicity. Although the UNHCR in Liberia announced

that some of the more unstable counties like Nimba, Lofa and Grand Gedeh were "ready to receive refugees", some humanitarian staff working with the refugees noted that this phrase has no significance within the UNHCR mandate to protect refugees. It was in their view a way of fudging the fact that these counties could not yet be called "safe" for returning refugees.

Multiple actors from the humanitarian community and the UN system expressed misgivings about the pressure from Geneva to repatriate these refugees. Many felt that the home counties of these refugees were not fully secured, repatriation was being imposed with impossibly short delays for political reasons, and even that UN employees were in some cases making unrealistic promises to refugees in order to lure them back to Liberia.¹⁰⁶ While it would be good, within the limits of what can be done safely, to get as many refugees back to Liberia as possible, this is no excuse for what amounts to a subtle form of refoulement, precisely what the UNHCR was created to protect refugees against. One person working with refugees said, "The order came down from Ruud Lubbers that we had to start repatriating people by October. There was just no way, so there was just a kind of symbolic convoy".¹⁰⁷

However worried humanitarian staff might have been about the UNHCR policies, refugees are not fooled by such symbolism, and they are unlikely to conform to anyone else's timetable. They send individuals ahead to reconnoiter, and when they decide it is time to go, most return without waiting for a free ride. For refugees trying to remake their lives, knowing they will be secure, getting to their villages in time to plant crops for the coming year, and having access to seed for those crops are the significant factors.

It is in this context that the fact that 80 per cent of those remaining in Guinea are Mandingoes is significant. It appears that most other ethnic groups feel it is safe to go home. But the very concept of "home" is problematic for Mandingoes in Liberia. They are not the majority in any of its fifteen counties, and in some, especially Nimba, many non-Mandingoes have made it clear they are no longer welcome where they used to live. This issue is tied into broader ones involving citizenship and belonging that go beyond the scope of the present report.¹⁰⁸ However, it should be noted that the fate of the Mandingo population of Liberia -- some 10 to 15 per cent of the whole -- is closely tied to the politics of Guinea's Forest Region.

¹⁰¹ One source indicated that at least one man may have been killed in this incident. Crisis Group interview with security specialists, Dakar, 15 May 2005.

¹⁰² Crisis Group interview, Abidjan, June 2004.

¹⁰³ "Youth, Poverty and Blood: The Lethal Legacy of West Africa's Regional Warriors", Human Rights Watch, vol. 17, no. 5(A), 13 April 2005.

¹⁰⁴ "Estimates from a ministry of health survey conducted in 2002 indicated that 2.8 per cent of the country's 8.5 million population was HIV-positive, and the combined prevalence rate for southeast Guinea's main towns in the Forest Region stood at 7 per cent", "Guinea: Little Action as Refugees Fuel AIDS", IRIN, 27 July 2004.

¹⁰⁵ "Youth, Poverty and Blood", op. cit.; and "Guinea: Living on the Edge", IRIN, 15 January 2005.

¹⁰⁶ Crisis Group interviews with humanitarian and UN staff, N'Zerekore, Macenta, Conakry, January-April 2005.

¹⁰⁷ Crisis Group interview, Conakry, April 2005.

¹⁰⁸ For more on this, see the section on "Interethnic Tensions" in Crisis Group Africa Report N°87, *Liberia and Sierra Leone: Rebuilding Failed States*, 8 December 2004.

By the terms of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement that set up the transitional government, LURD currently has a piece of Liberia's political pie. However, the attitude of many Liberians toward Mandingo involvement in Liberian politics is that they are strangers who can come to work but should not be involved in politics. A similar dynamic exists in Guinea, primarily in Macenta and N'Zerekore prefectures, where tensions between Forestier peoples, who consider themselves the original settlers, and Mandingoes, who are considered strangers, as in Liberia, are very high.

2. LURD and the lost Mandé Empire

The LURD militia was born in Sierra Leone but has always been operationally based in Guinea. Its membership largely carried over from that of the ULIMO-K, led by El Haji Kromah, who lived for some years in Conakry before moving to the U.S. LURD's leadership has been in the hands of the estranged couple, Sekou Damateh Conneh and Aisha Keita Conneh, who have resided for long periods in Conakry and now head the two wings of the organisation. Aisha, who is also a diviner, predicted the February 1996 coup attempt against Conté, thus gaining great standing with him. She now lives in Conakry's Dixinn quarter and recently visited Monrovia but has not been very visible in either Guinea or Liberia over the last six months. Before that (as described below) she was vying for the leadership of LURD and recruiting Liberian ex-combatants to defend Conté's government.

Many LURD ex-combatants are drifting back into Guinea. The Forest Region, like the adjoining sections of Sierra Leone, Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire, is subject to the movements and whims of a class of young warriors like the region experienced around the turn of the last century. At that time, warriors called "sofa" who had fought for the warlord-emperor Samory Touré (many after having been abducted) roamed the region, troubling civilians.¹⁰⁹ Samory had been captured in 1898 and died in exile in 1899. The French, English and Americo-Liberians, who were scrambling toward the areas that became Macenta and N'Zerekore (in Guinea), Eastern District (in Sierra Leone) and Lofa County and Nimba County (in Liberia), did not even claim to control these areas until some time between 1905 and 1915. In the first decade of the century, these unemployed fighters thus menaced the same area now hosting ex-LURD, ex-CDF and ex-RUF fighters.

Of all these young men, it is the LURD (still known as "ULIMO" in Guinea) ex-fighters who have the most

highly developed sense of this history. Like Samory's empire, the LURD militia emerged along the forest-savannah frontier in Macenta and Beyla Prefectures, Guinea. Both were made up primarily of people from the southern fringes of the Mandé world that stretches all the way into Mali. Maninka as a broad group have a highly developed sense of their historical legacy of having ruled over a large swathe of West Africa from the thirteenth to the fifteenth centuries. These fighters sometimes talk about their longer-term mission being the restitution of a glorious Mandingo empire. This is the reverse side of the situation of Mandingo refugees who refuse to leave their refugee camps in Guinea to face an uncertain future and potentially hostile neighbours back in Liberia.

Although LURD's base has always been in Guinea, the government still denies this. LURD fighters trained at the Kankan and Macenta military bases and were armed by the government from 1999 if not 1998. At first they conducted cross-border attacks from Macenta Prefecture into Lofa County, but after the Taylor-RUF organised attacks on Guinea from Liberia and Sierra Leone in 2000-2001, Guinean support became more active. This led to the push from 2001 to 2003 on Monrovia that ultimately unseated Taylor.

3. Ex-combatant recruitment and the threat to Guinea

In Liberia as in Sierra Leone, Guinea backed the winner. However, its implication in the Liberian conflict was deeper and longer-lasting, with the effect of situating the two countries as allies to the other's internal enemies. Even though Charles Taylor, the main target of Guinea and its backers, has left, Liberia remains home to individuals and groups who would like to see the Conté government fall. These range from former Taylor associates to Guinean dissidents who have found safe haven in such places as Monrovia and Ouagadougou.

Guinea's insertion into the regional violence since late 1989 has been eloquently described in a recent report by Human Rights Watch.¹¹⁰ Guinea, like its neighbours, was both victim and perpetrator in this nomadic war. Having supported the ULIMO-K and LURD factions in the Liberian wars of 1989-1997 and 1999-2003, it found itself attacked from Sierra Leone and Liberia between September 2000 and March 2001.¹¹¹ Crisis Group research in Liberia confirms that since June 2004, there has been active recruiting of ex-combatants in Monrovia, Bong

¹⁰⁹ See Y. Person, *Samori: une révolution dyula* (Dakar, IFAN, 1968) and S. Holsoe, "Slavery and economic response among the Vai (Liberia and Sierra Leone)", in *Slavery in Africa* (1977), pp. 287-303.

¹¹⁰ "Youth, Poverty and Blood", Human Rights Watch, op. cit.

¹¹¹ See McGovern, op. cit., and Crisis Group Report, *Uncertainties at the End of an Era*, op. cit.

County and Nimba County for both pro- and anti-Guinean forces.¹¹²

By all accounts, it has been GOL (ex-Taylor government) commanders who have recruited fighters to attack Guinea, and Aisha Keita Conneh,¹¹³ the leader of one LURD wing, who has recruited fighters to defend Guinea against the first group. Both parties were recruiting broadly among all the ex-combatants -- MODEL, GOL and LURD -- and it was reported that fighters were readily crossing the lines from one side to the other. Aisha, who styled herself the "mother of all ex-combatants", was said to be feeding a mixed group of young men in her Monrovia courtyard in September 2004, cooking 100 50-kg sacks of rice, and slaughtering four or five bulls a week.

Although reports continue of both recruitment and infiltration of Guinea's Forest Region via Nimba and Lofa Counties,¹¹⁴ no attacks have yet materialised, and it is difficult to know why. Guinean vigilance there is presently at the highest possible level, and an uptick in fighting in Côte d'Ivoire has also drawn a fair number of fighters across that border since October 2004.¹¹⁵ After the recent Pretoria accords that seem to presage a new round of regional disarmament, it is possible a fair number of these fighters are waiting for their chance to cash in on the generous \$900 Ivorian payout -- three times what the Liberian DDR program paid.

The best way to deal with this problem will be to implement reintegration programs in Guinea's Forest Region of the type attached to DDR programs in other post-conflict countries. There are some plans to do exactly this with Guinea's "Young Volunteers", young men who volunteered to join civilian militias at the time of the 2000-2001 cross border attacks into Guinea. Many turned to criminality, only a fraction returned their weapons to the state, and they are widely perceived as posing the same kind of menace as ex-combatants in Sierra Leone and Liberia.¹¹⁶ Reintegration programs in Guinea should accept participants on the basis of their residence, not their nationality.

¹¹² Crisis Group interviews with Liberian ex-combatants, September 2004.

¹¹³ Her estranged husband, Sekou Dammateh Conneh, was the head of the LURD rebel militia and is now a presidential candidate in Monrovia.

¹¹⁴ Crisis Group interviews with security and humanitarian sources, Monrovia and Ganta, May 2005.

¹¹⁵ See "Youth, Poverty and Blood", Human Rights Watch, *op. cit.*

¹¹⁶ Such programs are already being planned and/or implemented by the Mano River Union Women's Peace Network and the American Refugee Committee but the work needs to operate at a significantly higher level and with more funding.

4. The 19 January 2005 attack: Taylor's revenge?

According to some observers, the animosities from the Conté-Taylor feud go so deep that Taylor plotted a failed assassination attempt against Conté several months ago. On 19 January 2005, several armed men shot at Conté's motorcade as it passed through the outer neighbourhoods of Conakry. They escaped after wounding a bodyguard. In the immediate wake of the attack, security forces arrested some 100 people, mostly men present in the neighbourhood at the time. All were subsequently released, though one Imam from a local mosque died of a heart attack while in custody.

There have been myriad theories about the authors of the attack and their intentions. The government initially announced that a gunfight between gendarmes and a local gang broke out as the President drove by but later referred to "those who receive orders from abroad". Others claimed that residents of the neighbourhood had either made insulting gestures or thrown rocks at the presidential cortège, his bodyguards fired back, and individuals in the crowd (who happened to be armed) returned fire. The two leading theories are that either some of those close to the president wanted to signal their displeasure with the direction under the new, Fulbe prime minister, or this was an attempt masterminded by Charles Taylor as part of his plan to destabilise the region. Some have advanced the theory that Taylor planned to assassinate Conté both in revenge for his role in forcing him into exile and to use Guinea as a base from which to reconquer Liberia. The latter motivation is implausible as neither Taylor nor any proxy would likely be welcome in Guinea.

Some sources offer strong circumstantial evidence of Taylor's involvement via certain proxies.¹¹⁷ Among these are several of the leading officers involved in the 2-3 February 1996 coup attempt, including Colonel Gbago Zoumanigi and Commandant Kader Doumbouya. Zoumanigi, of the Loma ethnicity that spans the border between Guinea's Forest Region and Liberia's Lofa County, is known to have fled to Liberia, and developed close relations with Taylor and Burkina Faso President Blaise Compaoré. He is widely believed to have been involved in the 2000-2001 attacks into Guinea. Doumbouya was formerly chief of the BATA elite parachutist battalion, and was jailed for participating in the 1996 attempt. He was pardoned after serving three years, was arrested again as he was boarding a plane for Mali in December 2003 on suspicion of plotting a coup just before the December 2003 elections, and released on 6 October 2004.

¹¹⁷ Crisis Group interviews, April-May 2005.

Doumbouya's younger brother Bangaly is said to have met with Taylor, Zumanigi and Robert Bear, an ex-deputy director of Taylor's Special Security Service (SSS), formerly run by Taylor hit man Benjamin Yeaten. The meeting is reported to have taken place on 3 January 2005 in Taylor's house in Calabar, Nigeria. Such a meeting does not prove that the 19 January attempt was a Taylor operation but it suggests he was informed and did nothing to stop it, at the least. He may well have been involved in planning and/or funding. Nevertheless, it is worth asking if this was primarily a Guinean affair, in which Taylor became involved as patron, or whether it was a Taylor-organised operation. The case points to Taylor's continuing involvement as a regionally destabilising factor. He is not the only "Liberian problem" on Guinea's hands but he remains a major one.

Guinea's regional involvements risk becoming its downfall, from the return of the LURD militia recruited and trained on Guinean soil, to the alleged involvement of Charles Taylor in the attack on President Conté's convoy. Most of the country's destabilising activities have originated in its Forest Region, and this is where the greatest danger exists that they will return over the medium term, even if Conakry presents the greatest risk of implosion for now.

VI. CONCLUSION

There are two opposed processes occurring in Guinea today: the reforms proposed by the government and supported by the international community are moving the country toward a new era of openness, while the president's poor health is encouraging some to make another attempt at pillage before they perhaps lose their access to illegal gain. Guinea is thus moving forward and backward at once. In the balance is the future of 8.5 million Guineans who have yet to find means to force the government to do what is best for them, rather than for itself.

The key recommendation of this report is that political actors and the international community should combine to push forward the agreed reform program without reference to the President's health or the succession issue. These changes are needed and needed now. The President and the Prime Minister are apparently behind them, but they face stiff opposition from the vested interests that have calcified around the presidency. These reforms -- particularly revision of the electoral lists, opening of the airwaves, guarantee of freedom of movement and association for opposition parties and creation of an independent electoral commission -- should be implemented before municipal elections are held and before Presidential elections are held in the case of a vacancy. It is the achievement of these reforms in a consensual manner that should guide any possible succession scenario.

This process will necessarily be painful, slow and imperfect. It is unlikely to work if the military does not see its interest in it, so issues of salaries and career progression must be addressed. It will also require a new attitude from the opposition, which will have to make a leap of faith and participate even though progress is sure to come in fits and starts. Security forces and government officials may be subject to new rules but their day-to-day operations are still guided too often by habits formed under 47 years of authoritarian rule. Rather than opting out at the first sign of repression, opposition parties must keep pushing forward, demanding that the government make good on its promises. The media and civil society have important responsibilities also to push in the same direction.

Likewise, the international community should play a key role. Guinean pride requires that outsiders operate with tact and respect, but too often this has translated into acquiescence and even collusion. While Guineans hold strongly to their independence, the days when sovereignty could serve as an effective smokescreen for the government's right to abuse its own people are gone.

Officials do still use this rhetoric, but anyone who speaks with ordinary citizens knows these words are hollow to their compatriots.

For too long, Guinea's anti-colonial posture has combined with the hundreds of thousands of refugees it hosted to give the Conté government a free pass in dealings with neighbours and the donor and diplomatic communities. Guinea should be held to the same standards as any other country. It is rich, but its citizens are poor. If the political and economic reforms succeed, it could turn a corner in the next twelve to 24 months. Otherwise, whether or not the succession is bloody, the colossal mismanagement of the last 21 years likely will continue.

Dakar/Brussels, 14 June 2005

APPENDIX A

MAP OF GUINEA



APPENDIX B

GLOSSARY OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AND	<i>Alliance Nationale pour le Développement</i> (National Alliance for Development), opposition party led by Antoine Soromou and allied with the RPG.
AU	<i>African Union</i> .
BATA	<i>Bataillon Autonome des Troupes Aéroportées</i> (Autonomous Battalion of Airborne Troops).
BCRG	<i>Banque Centrale de la République de Guinée</i> (Central Bank of the Republic of Guinea).
CBG	<i>Compagnie des Bauxites de Guinée</i> (Bauxites Company of Guinea), the leading Bauxite company in Guinea, a Guinean-American-Canadian consortium.
CMRN	<i>Comité Militaire pour le Redressement National</i> (Military Committee for National Recovery, 1984-1992), the group of officers, led by Colonel Lansana Conté, who took power in a bloodless coup d'état in April 1984 after Sékou Touré's death.
ECOWAS	<i>Economic Community of West African States</i> .
EU	<i>European Union</i> .
FN	<i>Forces Nouvelles</i> (New Forces), ex-rebel group controlling the northern portion of Côte d'Ivoire.
FRAD	<i>Front Républicain pour l'Alternance Démocratique</i> (Republican Front for Democratic Alternance), the alliance of Guinea's major opposition parties.
GOL	<i>Government of Liberia</i> .
HIPC	<i>Heavily Indebted Poor Countries</i> , the name of the IMF program for alleviating the debt burden of the world's poorest countries.
IMF	<i>International Monetary Fund</i> .
LURD	<i>Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy</i> , one of the two main rebel groups in Liberia's 1999-2003 war (along with MODEL), with rear bases in and support from Guinea.
MODEL	<i>Movement for Democracy in Liberia</i> , one of the two main rebel groups in Liberia's 1999-2003 war (along with LURD), with rear bases in and support from Côte d'Ivoire.
OCHA	<i>UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs</i> .
PDG	<i>Parti Démocratique de Guinée</i> (<i>Democratic Party of Guinea</i>), the ruling and only party under President Sekou Touré (1958-1984).
PRP	<i>Parti pour le Renouveau et le Progrès</i> (Party for Progress and Renewal), party once led by Siradiou Diallo.
PUP	<i>Parti de l'Unité et du Progrès</i> (Unity and Progress Party), President Conté's ruling party.
RPG	<i>Rassemblement du peuple de Guinée</i> (Assembly of the Guinean People), opposition party led by Alpha Condé.
RTG	<i>Radio-Television Guinéenne</i> (Guinean Radio and Television).
RUF	<i>Revolutionary United Front of Sierra Leone</i> , the main rebel group in Sierra Leone's 1991-2001 war.
SOGEPAM	<i>Société Guinéenne d'Exportation des Produits Agricoles et Miniers</i> (Guinean Export Company of Agricultural and Mineral Products), company which held a monopoly on all cocoa and coffee exports, owned by Mamadou Sylla.
SSS	<i>Special Security Service</i> , one of former Liberian President Charles Taylor's militias.
UFDG	<i>Union des Forces Démocratiques de Guinée</i> (Union of Democratic Forces of Guinea), party of Mamadou Bâ.

- UFR *Union des Forces Républicaines* (Union of Republican Forces), party of Sidya Touré.
- ULIMO-K *United Liberation Movement for Democracy in Liberia*, one of the main rebel groups in Liberia's 1989-1997 war, led by El Haji Kromah. The ULIMO-K was largely transformed into the LURD.
- UNAMSIL *United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone*.
- UNDP *United Nations Development Program*.
- UNHCR *United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees*.
- UPG *Union pour le Progrès de la Guinée*, opposition party led by Jean Marie Doré.
- UPN *Union pour le Progrès National* (Union for National Progress), PUP spin-off party led by Mamadou Bhoie Barry, the unknown parliamentarian who ran against Lansana Conté to give the 2003 presidential election a democratic appearance.
- UPR *Union pour le Progrès et le Renouveau* (Union for Progress and Renewal), opposition party formerly led by Siradiou Diallo.