LIBERIA: SECURITY CHALLENGES

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ICG Africa Report N°71 3 November 2003

LIBERIA: SECURITY CHALLENGES

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Whether Liberia takes advantage of its best chance for peace in years and West Africa regains stability depends on bold action by the UN, which needs to shape a comprehensive regional security strategy while rapidly building its peacekeeping force up to strength.

The forced departure of former president Charles Taylor on 11 August 2003 after six years of tyranny offers Liberians a chance to reconstruct their country. The arrival of a United Nations force with a robust mandate, which will soon develop into the international body's biggest peacekeeping operation, is welcome by all who want to see peace in West Africa. But creating that peace will not be easy. Liberia is a broken state whose key infrastructure, physical and social, has been destroyed by years of fighting and self-interested political leadership and turmoil that goes far beyond the person of Charles Taylor. A generation under the age of eighteen has become all too familiar with survival through the gun, and problems in neighbouring countries, particularly Côte d'Ivoire, mean that the drive to create peace is taking place in an environment of insecurity.

Pressing questions concern the forces that were deployed in Liberia's most recent round of war, in mid-2003. While Taylor's troops are in disarray, Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) and the Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL) remain in offensive mode. They were armed and organised with considerable assistance from Guinea and Côte d'Ivoire respectively. Many in the region wonder what their future will be in the new circumstances.

Another important question concerns the U.S., which has long historical ties to Liberia and gave tacit backing to the forces deployed against Charles Taylor in mid-2003 to force him from power. Continuing U.S. attention is necessary not only if Liberia is to have a chance of rebuilding, but also to prevent previously proxy forces from causing new problems either there or in other parts of the region.

The UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) will struggle throughout the remainder of 2003 to organise itself on the ground. Until its military and police forces reach full strength, it will be vulnerable to pressure from a variety of sources inside Liberia, including both former insurgent groups, as well as members of the new National Transitional Government, many of whom have strong connections with the warring factions. This report analyses the immediate security threats UNMIL faces and recommends steps that should be taken by various parties. A subsequent study will examine longer-term issues concerned with the rebuilding of Liberia.

Liberia is at the heart of an unstable region. One neighbour, Sierra Leone, continues a rather uncertain peace process following eleven years of war, and the common border remains a concern. Another neighbour, Côte d'Ivoire, has settled into a situation of neither war nor peace but there are worrisome signs of a resumption of the fighting. Guinea is on the brink of political instability as the career of President Lansana Conté moves towards a close without any clear provision for succession, notwithstanding presidential elections on 21 December 2003. West Africa contains large numbers of small arms and is home to a floating population of veterans from multiple conflicts who are available to fight for anyone who will pay and give a licence to loot.

With three peacekeeping missions along the coast (Sierra Leone, Côte d'Ivoire and now Liberia), the UN has a considerable opportunity to drive events. The starting point must be the disarmament of fighters in Liberia but the UN should develop an integrated approach with its three West Africa missions aimed at capturing the weapons of many fighters in Liberia – both foreigners and nationals – and tracking the movement of others in the region, especially those who escape the initial disarmament. Its peacekeepers in Sierra Leone and Côte d'Ivoire should properly monitor and be ready to disarm combatants who cross from Liberia. Regional stability depends largely on stopping the flow of marauding fighters who migrate from conflict to conflict but in the very near term there may be need for coordinated international action to persuade President Gbagbo against returning to war in Côte d'Ivoire and Nigeria to prevent Charles Taylor from resuming his mischief in Liberia and elsewhere in the region.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

To the UN Security Council:

1. Work to create an integrated structure for administering the UN mandates in the neighbouring countries of Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia and Sierra Leone.
2. Design and implement a plan for regional disarmament applicable to all three countries.
3. In pursuit of its previously expressed "readiness to consider, if necessary, ways of promoting compliance" with its demands that all states in the region end their military support to armed groups in Liberia, impose targeted sanctions on the leaders of those states found not in compliance.
4. Create a timetable for the phased lifting of sanctions on Liberia, ensuring at the same time that there is proper management of key government revenue generators like the timber industry, and concurrently strengthen the capabilities of the UN Panel of Experts on Liberia to monitor through forensic auditing the flow of revenue from strategic resources such as timber and the Liberia Ship and Corporate Registry.

To the U.S.:

5. Make clear that it maintains an 'over the horizon' military intervention capacity and is willing to deploy it to support the UN mission (UNMIL) in an emergency.
6. Conduct a full-scale training program for the new Liberian armed forces that are to emerge as militias and private armies are disbanded.

To donors:

7. Ensure that UNMIL is fully funded, most particularly its disarmament and reintegration program.

To the UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL):

8. Consult with the International Criminal Court in The Hague on the collection and utilisation of evidence on war crimes and crimes against humanity, and make clear to the leaders of the former warring parties that they will face quick retribution if they violate the Accra peace agreement.

To Nigeria:

9. Stress to Charles Taylor that he must strictly adhere to the conditions of his asylum and avoid all further involvement in the affairs of Liberia and that if he does not, Nigeria will extradite him to Sierra Leone to face the war crimes indictment issued against him by that country's Special Court.

To the UN Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL):

10. Reinforce security along the border between Sierra Leone and Liberia with a view to preventing the passage of unauthorised persons bearing arms and work with Sierra Leone's army and police to ensure that combatants who have fought in Liberia are disarmed before entering Sierra Leone.

Freetown/Brussels, 3 November 2003

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LIBERIA: SECURITY CHALLENGES

I. INTRODUCTION

The decision by the UN Security Council to return peacekeepers to Liberia[1] offers the best opportunity the country will have to become a normally functioning state again. On 19 September 2003, the Security Council, under Resolution 1509, established the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) with compulsory (Chapter VII) powers to restore peace. The mandate is comprehensive, tough and intended to be backed by 15,000 peacekeepers and 1,115 international civilian police, of whom at least 200 will be armed to assist in the maintenance of law and order.[2] Once it is at full strength, UNMIL will be the largest and most robust UN mission in the world. Three neighbouring countries in West Africa are subject to UN mandates, including Sierra Leone, which is currently the largest peacekeeping mission, and Côte d'Ivoire. With each mission at different stages of its mandate, the UN and the wider international community have an opportunity that must not be missed to design and implement a truly regional approach to West Africa's insecurity.[3] Failure would lead quickly to greater troubles and a far greater drain on global resources.

This report examines the state of security in Liberia as the UN establishes its presence.[4] UNMIL will struggle to impose its will, especially in turbulent areas like Nimba County. It will not be possible to secure Liberia without the compliance – however obtained – of the three armed factions that are vying for territory. All three forces – those still loyal to former President Taylor, the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) and the Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL), which began as a splinter-group from LURD – have poor command and control. All have origins dating back to Liberia's first civil war and strong ties to one or more neighbouring states. None of the warring leaders can for long control their ill-disciplined forces, accustomed to living by plunder and associated with the most cynical of politicians. The potential for breakaway groups to emerge is very real. The period from now until disarmament starts in earnest – which is unlikely to be before UN troops are fully deployed, in January 2004 at the very earliest – is the most critical part of the peace process. UNMIL will be tested as fighters try to loot and expand their territory before the UN can spread its authority.

The political climate is similarly fragile. This report is not about the wider governance issues that ICG will analyse in the near future after further in-

[1] The original UN mission was withdrawn in September 1997, after Liberia's first civil war (1989-1996). The UN had sent observers from 1993-1997 as part of the United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia (UNOMIL). The main peacekeeping force during this period, known as ECOMOG, was organised by a regional organisation, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

[2] ICG Interview with Jacques Paul Klein, Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) in Liberia, Monrovia, October 2003. Also see United Nations Security Council Resolution 1509, 19 September 2003, p. 3.

[3] It is encouraging that the head of UNMIL, Jacques Paul Klein, has made a number of early visits to Sierra Leone.

[4] This report is based on ongoing research in West Africa and, in particular, Liberia from 30 September to 6 October 2003 and Guinea from 16 to 23 October 2003. However, parts of Liberia remained virtually impossible to access, notably in Nimba County where there were reports of fighting between forces loyal to the former Liberian president, Charles Taylor, and those of LURD and MODEL. Similarly, despite an invitation from LURD Chairman, Sekou Damate Conneh, ICG was unable to conduct a security assessment in the LURD-controlled territory of Tubmanburg in October 2003 because of shooting and internal tensions among LURD units. ICG was, however, able to visit the MODEL-controlled area of Buchanan in Grand Bassa County.

country research. However, it is important to note that key politicians, veterans of years of war, are not clearly committed to the peace agreement that was signed on 18 August in Accra, Ghana. The commitment, or lack thereof, of the interim government to the peace process will impact heavily on attempts to stabilise Liberia. It was officially installed, under its chairman, former businessman Gyude[5] Bryant, on 14 October 2003 but Liberians have been there before. Interim administrations governed the country from 1990 to 1997. At best they were impotent, and at worst they were simply cover for warlords to loot and further criminalise the state. This transitional government contains an unsavoury mix of nominees of the warring factions, plus some of the same politicians who are responsible for the country's decline. Together, they are tasked with governing Liberia's transition for two years, but they are pulling in different directions. Liberians know that many ministers, with backgrounds in warlord armies, can easily disrupt the peace process if they feel it is in their interest.

The Special Representative of the Secretary General and Coordinator of the UN Mission in Liberia (SRSG), Jacques Paul Klein, has already asserted himself. His straightforward, no-nonsense talk – he has called the warlords "gangsters" and dismissed them as mere criminals – has endeared him to many Liberians unaccustomed to blunt words from UN officials[6] but may sharpen reaction among the warring factions. He is at a disadvantage because of the slow arrival of peacekeepers and police. The next two or three months are an exceptionally dangerous moment as the warlords can be expected to exploit the security vacuum. As the military strength at his disposal builds, it might be appropriate for him to take a lower-profile approach that allows attention to shift to the transitional government.

Once the forces at Klein's disposal are at full strength, however, one can assume that the UN will be able to arrest those who violate the peace. In time, this may enable UNMIL to stamp its authority on Liberia and deliver sustained peace, but the risks are all too apparent. The events of 1 October 2003, when Taylor forces clashed with LURD in Monrovia, were a clear warning. In a previous report on Sierra Leone, ICG recommended that the UN force there (UNAMSIL) adopt a 'security first' strategy aimed at quieting the entire country ahead of elections.[7] ICG recommends this strategy to Liberia, which will need full security well before the proposed October 2005 elections. A 'security first' approach will, of course, require full disarmament of all warring factions. A vital question is whether Security Council members will provide sufficient money for an effective disarmament and reintegration (DR) process.[8]

UNMIL's size cannot substitute for quality. UN member-states must commit themselves early to ensure that it is a truly multinational peacekeeping force. Deterrence must back the 'security first' strategy, including a warning to Liberia's neighbours that they may face sanctions if they undermine the peace process. A credible threat needs to be developed that those who threaten the peace will be punished by prosecution before an appropriate court.[9] Curbing and reducing the influence of Taylor himself will remain important, both for building the confidence of Liberians and preventing regional mischief. ICG maintains its recommendations in previous reports and briefings that he should be brought before the Special Court for Sierra Leone if he violates the terms of his negotiated exile in Nigeria and seeks to remain active in Liberia's affairs.[10]

[5] Gyude is pronounced as if "Judy".

[6] Klein has used such language in various public and private interviews. See, for example, his interview on 1 October 2003 with BBC Network for Africa and also on 13 October with BBC Focus on Africa, BBC World Service Radio.

[7] ICG Africa Report N°35, *Sierra Leone: Managing Uncertainty*, 24 October 2001, p. i.

[8] For greater simplicity and in the hope that the usage will become more common, ICG employs in its reporting the abbreviation DR (for disarmament and reintegration) as subsuming the concepts of disarmament, demobilisation, repatriation, resettlement, and reintegration that are elsewhere often abbreviated as DDRRR or DDR.

[9] A complicating factor, discussed further in Section V below, is that Liberia, in the weeks between the departure of Taylor and the inauguration of a transitional government, signed a so-called Article 98 agreement with Washington, undertaking not to hand over U.S. nationals to the ICC. Article 98 of the International Criminal Court statute permits states to reach bilateral agreements on cooperation in respect to waivers of immunity and consent to surrender defendants. Such bilateral agreements have been reached between the U.S. and a number of states. See ICG Africa Briefing, *The Special Court for Sierra Leone: Promises and Pitfalls of a "New Model"*, 4 August 2003, p.16.

[10] ICG Memorandum, "Crisis in Liberia: A Call to Action", 10 June 2003; Gareth Evans and Comfort Ero, "How to secure peace in Liberia", *Observer Online*, 29 June 2003; ICG Media Release, "Liberia: ICG urges U.S. to lead a robust multinational force", 16 July 2003, and ICG Briefing,

The ability to achieve 'security first' has, however, been damaged by the near-absence of its most critical component, the United States. There is circumstantial evidence that U.S. officials, particularly from the Department of Defence, played an important role in coordinating military and other activity designed to rid Liberia of Charles Taylor and achieved considerable short-term success. However, the subsequent U.S. unwillingness to take a lead in bringing peace to Liberia has been disappointing. While Washington has understandable concerns about overstretching its military, which is heavily committed in Iraq and Afghanistan, its vacillation about leading a multinational force not only froze planning in the critical weeks following the 17 June 2003 ceasefire, but also made Monrovia extremely dangerous. Several U.S. officials have admitted that a more robust role could have considerably reduced the deaths and other casualties among non-combatants when Monrovia, packed with displaced people, was subjected to seemingly random shelling by LURD forces in particular.[11]

The U.S. troops who eventually arrived sailed away as the UN came on 1 October. Direct U.S. involvement is vital for rebuilding Liberia. Many of the country's key institutions – the judiciary, police and army – are modelled on U.S. structures. The U.S. has pledged to support UNMIL and humanitarian needs financially, to provide officers to UNMIL headquarters and to design a small bilateral military training program but this is not enough. It is critical that the U.S. coordinate its efforts in Liberia with British and French approaches in Sierra Leone and Côte d'Ivoire respectively, developing a process that can deal with the interconnected nature of conflicts in the region. Without a well-coordinated international strategy that involves all three Western powers as well as the UN and ECOWAS, Liberia and the region will continue to face an unstable future.

The Special Court for Sierra Leone, op. cit., all available at the ICG website, www.crisisweb.org.

[11] ICG interviews, Washington and Monrovia, July-October 2003.

II. THE ACCRA PEACE AGREEMENT

The signing of the Accra agreement on 18 August 2003 marked a significant moment in Liberia's long and tortuous search for peace. ICG came away from observing the negotiations, however, with serious questions about the sustainability of the process and concern at the inordinate ambitions demonstrated by several of the key participants. Although there is a provision in the agreement that no representative of a warring faction should hold the position of chairman or vice-chairman in the transitional government, civilians have been held hostage to many demands of the warring factions.[12]

The agreement effectively divided the Liberian state between military formations, political parties and civil society. Indeed, the peace process in Accra was about jobs: generals wanted to know how many positions they could command. The 21 cabinet posts are allocated between the former Taylor government, LURD and MODEL. Former members of Taylor's government will hold internal affairs, defence, planning and economic affairs, health and social welfare, and post and telecommunications. Some LURD fighters and politicians were visibly upset about the disposition of health and defence,[13] but they accepted instead transport, justice, labour and finance and the ministry of state. MODEL was given agriculture, commerce, foreign affairs, public works and land, mines and energy. The rest – national security, information, education, gender and development, rural development and youth and sports – was split among political parties and civil society.

Even more worrying is that each warring faction was given key public corporations and autonomous agencies, which promises to allow them to continue old habits of siphoning off state resources. MODEL,

[12] The MODEL delegation fought hard for a formula that would have resulted in one interim chairman from civil or political society and two vice presidential positions, one each for itself and LURD. ICG interview with Liberian delegates at Accra peace talks, 8-13 July 2003. The National Transitional Government of Liberia (NTGL) consists of the executive, the National Transitional Legislative Assembly, and the judiciary. The Assembly has 76 members, allocated in blocks to representatives from the Taylor government (12 seats); LURD (12 seats), MODEL (12 seats), political parties (18 seats), civil society and other special interest groups (7 seats) and Liberian counties (15 seats).

[13] ICG interview with LURD insider, Freetown, September 2003.

for example, got the Forestry Development Authority and the Bureau of Maritime Affairs. With a foothold in key timber ports in Harper, Greenville and Buchanan, its leaders stand to make lucrative logging deals, some of which will be used to maintain their fighting capacity. LURD leadership is pleased to have the management of the Port Authority, a position formerly held by one of their senior advisers, and the General Service Agency, a body originally created by Charles Taylor allegedly to service government procurement requirements but in fact designed to enable its directors to provide cars and other gifts to friends and allies. Appointees of the former government will control the strategic Liberian Petroleum Refining Corporation, a body that Taylor used to generate income by charging consumers excessive prices for petrol refined from low-cost oil imports.[14]

It is reasonably being asked, "how many of the fighters and politicians have a genuine interest in continuing the chaos or working to rebuild Liberia?"[15] The persistent focus at Accra on jobs, cars and money rather than the challenges confronting Liberia gives a clue to the character of the transitional government.[16] It is an indicator, if one were needed, that the country's political class and its associated warlords have little interest either in the technical efficiency of government or its ability to deliver public goods to a broad range of citizens.[17] Many members of the transitional administration will be holding formal office for the first time, with no knowledge or experience of government. In general, it may be said that the interim government is made up of two extremes – experienced office holders (Charles Taylor's former ministers) who mostly have an appalling record of venality and thuggishness, and others "who have been exiles and refugees, some in the bush who could never get food and are now asked to govern without looting".[18]

The inauguration of Gyude Bryant as the chairman of the National Transitional Government of Liberia (NTGL) on 14 October began the process of implementing the Accra peace agreement. But the establishment of an interim administration is only the first step on a long and arduous road if Liberia is actually to have peace. The political process must be underpinned by a strong security component. Securing the capital and the fourteen counties will be a hugely difficult task for UN peacekeepers, made all the more complex by the high expectations of fighters who anticipate being rewarded for what they have achieved and being given new incentives if they are to lay down their arms. Many rebel fighters and their leaders will see Monrovia as a personal fiefdom to exploit after so many years in the wilderness during Charles Taylor's rule.

[14] ICG interview with Liberian lawyer, Monrovia, October 2003.

[15] ICG interview with international NGO representative, Monrovia, October 2003.

[16] Liberians have already expressed alarm that people considered to be murderers will participate in the interim government. For example, there was protest against the choice of installing Taylor's former defence minister, Daniel Chea, in his old position. Similar there was uproar that George Dweh, who is believed by many Liberians to have killed a man called Johnny Nah and also was part of former president Samuel Doe's death squads, was made Speaker of the NTGL Legislative Assembly. See "Protest Against Re-appointment of Daniel Chea as Defence Minister", IRIN, 17 October 2003 and "LURD Leader Dweh Chosen as Speaker of Parliament", IRIN, 20 October 2003. The UN mission in Liberia (UNMIL) voiced its concern over the initial appointments made to the assembly and cabinet. See "UNMIL expresses concern over nominations to senior political positions", UNMIL Press Release, 19 October 2003.

[17] ICG interviews, Accra, 8-13 July and Freetown, 27 July 2003.

[18] ICG interview with LURD political representative, Freetown, September 2003.

III. INSIDE MONROVIA

Monrovians have a particularly expressive way of describing the three attacks that engulfed them between June and July 2003: World War One (4 June); World War Two (25 June) and World War Three (18 July). The battle for the capital between Charles Taylor's forces and LURD was hard fought.[19] Hundreds of mortar shells were fired, apparently at random, into the centre of the city, causing carnage among the displaced and hungry people gathered there. LURD was using 81 and 60 mm mortars, 14.7 mm Chinese-made heavy machine guns, and AK-47s that ICG believes were provided in the main by Guinea and transported through that country.[20] The U.S. embassy was hit by several rounds, which its personnel tracked as coming from LURD-occupied Bushrod Island.[21] Indeed, ICG evidence suggests that, despite the suspicions of some observers at the time, the shelling was not an attempt by Taylor's forces to encourage an international intervention by creating scenes of chaos and suffering that would be highly visible to the world media.[22] However, there are also fairly reliable reports of at least one rocket-propelled grenade being fired at displaced people in the Greystone compound opposite the U.S. embassy, which could only have come from Taylor's forces.

The LURD core force is reported to have consisted of about 3,000 fighters, but it picked up an unknown number of new recruits en route to Monrovia from its bases in Guinea during the early months of 2003, including from the border towns of Bo, Kenema and Zimmi in southeast Sierra Leone.[23] LURD took control of Bushrod Island, the industrial heart of Monrovia, and set up an office there to coordinate all the activities between its military base in Tubmanburg and the capital.

Monrovia, many of whose buildings were already badly damaged from the previous war, took a heavy pounding in June and July. It is overpopulated after receiving a flood of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees from Sierra Leone and Côte d'Ivoire. As a consequence of fourteen years of on-and-off war, there are at least 500,000 IDPs in the country, 280,000 Liberian refugees in neighbouring countries and at least 50,000 Sierra Leonean and Ivorian refugees within Liberia.

But despite the trauma of June and July, Monrovians are picking themselves up. The city seems calm. Markets are open, and business has resumed. The Lebanese traders, who keep its import-export business alive, are bouncing back with remarkable resilience. Obliged for years to pay protection money to governments, warlords and warring factions if they were to have any chance of keeping their businesses intact, they stand to benefit from the influx of internationals – UN, humanitarian agencies and NGOs. The cost of accommodation has increased rapidly. There is no longer the tension and the sense that everyone is spying on each other that was a feature of life under Taylor. The presence of internationals has largely contributed to this calm atmosphere. Dangerous areas remain, however, such as the LURD district of Bushrod Island and the pro-Taylor neighbourhood of Paynesville known as Red Light, and locals and internationals generally obey a self-imposed curfew after about 7-8 p.m.

The 1 October clash briefly marred the relaxed atmosphere. What should have been a proud day marking the official start of the UN mission and the arrival of the Special Representative of the Secretary General on the first flight of a restored direct air-link to Europe was marred by serious skirmishes between LURD and Taylor forces.

A planned meeting between the LURD chairman, Sekou Conneh, and then President Moses Blah, intended as a confidence building measure, went badly wrong in the suburb of Paynesville. An agreement brokered by the ECOWAS military mission (ECOMIL) had stipulated that LURD would enter Monrovia with a convoy of no more than fifteen vehicles manned by unarmed fighters and under ECOMIL escort. LURD broke this agreement.

[19] MODEL forces were also advancing from the east, but never reached Monrovia. According to ICG sources, MODEL forces remained static in River Cess County, resuming their advance only during the third battle for Monrovia on 18 July 2003. This suggests either that they were too weak to move on the capital, or that they were being discouraged by the U.S. from doing so lest they clash with LURD inside the city.

[20] ICG interview with LURD insider, Accra, July 2003, later confirmed by a private source, London, September 2003.

[21] ICG interview with U.S. government officials, Monrovia, October 2003.

[22] ICG phone interview with international journalist, August 2003.

[23] ICG interviews with representatives of international NGOs, July-August 2003, later confirmed by senior officer in the Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces (RSLAF), October 2003.

According to the UN, the convoy that arrived at the Po River contained in "excess of 50 vehicles".[24] While ECOMIL was informing the LURD chairman that so many could not enter the capital, one vehicle raced ahead towards Paynesville. A convoy of ten was then allowed to proceed under ECOMIL escort, but several LURD vehicles raced ahead while others joined in.

A serious confrontation occurred at the Red Light market area of Paynesville between the local population and individuals from the leading LURD vehicles. A grenade was apparently thrown by a LURD combatant, killing two civilians. Government militia then opened fire, killing a LURD fighter. Further shooting occurred, possibly causing more deaths, before ECOMIL managed to turn the convoy back to the LURD base in Tubmanburg, Bomi County, an hour's drive outside Monrovia.

What seemed curious to many observers was why a meeting was arranged at all on a day that was meant to witness a seamless transition, with ECOMIL troops putting on UN blue berets.[25] In the immediate aftermath of the shoot-out, UNMIL troops launched a cordon and search operation intended to turn Monrovia into a weapons-free zone ahead of the inauguration of the new transitional government. Armed peacekeepers randomly searched cars, particularly on the strategic Somalia Drive that leads to the Paynesville region.

The 1 October incident is a reminder to UNMIL of its vulnerability, at least until early 2004 when it anticipates reaching full strength. Its biggest challenge is to prevent fighters from violating the peace while it gradually builds its presence on the ground. Many fighters are not in Monrovia, but spread throughout the country, dispersed among civilians who are harassed and fearful. Violence may be used for purely personal enrichment in areas where UNMIL has limited or no presence.

There are already disturbing signs, particularly along the road north from Monrovia towards Gbarnga, that as UNMIL goes down the highways and dismantles militia road-blocks, the fighters move into off-road settlements, searching for food and displacing villagers in the process. Many of those displaced villagers are seeking shelter in turn deep in the forest to avoid the fighters.[26] It is encouraging that UN agencies and international NGOs conducted humanitarian security assessments in September and October in Nimba, Lofa and Grand Gedeh counties. Nonetheless, civilians are especially vulnerable now as fighters push to extort what they can before the UN expands into the interior. Without comprehensive security in the countryside, it will be hard to deliver humanitarian aid, and assuring Liberians that peace has come will prove difficult.

[24] UNMIL press release, statement by Jacques Paul Klein, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Liberia, 2 October 2003.
[25] ICG interview with UNMIL official, Monrovia, October 2003.
[26] ICG interview with humanitarian worker, Monrovia, October 2003.

IV. THE ARMED FACTIONS

The prevailing view in UNMIL is that time is almost up for the 48,000 to 58,000 fighters it estimates are in Liberia. The reasoning goes that LURD and MODEL no longer have a motive to fight since they have achieved their primary goal of getting rid of Charles Taylor, and their sources of supply will dwindle away; Guinea's President Lansana Conté has also achieved his goal of removing Taylor and has no obvious reason to keep the tap open for LURD; similarly the Ivorian president, Laurent Gbagbo, has pushed the Taylor forces who supported his opponents in 2002-2003 back into Liberia.[27] These assumptions are all plausible but other factors also need to be considered.

Dangers for the UN are the high expectations generated among LURD and MODEL fighters in their advance towards Monrovia and the bitterness among Taylor's forces that they won the battle for Monrovia but lost the war. U.S. and UN officials confirmed to ICG in late September 2003 that Guinea and Côte d'Ivoire respectively were still supplying their LURD and MODEL allies with weapons even after Taylor's departure, suggesting that they may retain ambitions for their Liberian proxies. Moreover, there are suggestions that LURD fighters in particular might regroup in Sierra Leone. These and other factors indicate that, even if the UN succeeds in disarming most fighters in Liberia itself, many may continue their activities elsewhere in the region, as has happened so often in the past.

Hence, the UN will have to find a way of managing expectations and neutralising the capacity of fighters to spoil the peace not only in Liberia, but also in neighbouring countries. LURD fighters firmly believe – with considerable justification – that it was largely through their efforts that Charles Taylor eventually heeded international calls to step down. As one Liberian noted to ICG, "LURD think they are saviours and that everybody owes them".[28] The peace dividend – jobs, education and money – will need to come quickly, but this will not happen if DR is not fully funded and competently handled.[29] The ministries and parastatal positions awarded to the warring factions are important prizes but they will not be filled by the rank and file. Their leaders may well soon forget them but if fighters fail to see significant rewards for their years in the bush in the DR packages, a return to war is all too likely – in a neighbouring country in the short term, in Liberia in the longer term.

A. CHARLES TAYLOR'S FORCES

The former president's supporters stand to lose much from the peace process. The fact that Daniel Chea, Taylor's former defence minister, continues to hold this position under the new interim government might persuade some fighters that they will have an opportunity to enter a newly reformed army and retain some important commands. But Taylor's departure has tremendously weakened his troops, who are demoralised and gradually splintering. In any event, they never amounted to a single, coherent force. As a Liberian human rights activist noted, Taylor had a security arrangement that "was neither conventional nor unconventional".[30] The generals answered to him personally. Each had sweeping powers over those he commanded but there was no attempt at an integrated structure. Instead power was deliberately divided so that no one unit had the means to launch a coup against the self-proclaimed ruler of Greater Liberia in the early 1990s, and the formally elected, internationally recognised president from 1997 to 2003.

Credible estimates of the numbers in pro-Taylor units range from 7,000 to 11,000. There is a further figure of between 20,000 and 30,000 in militias loosely aligned to Taylor, some of whom fought under the name of the official national army, the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL).[31] Surviving forces include: the elite Anti-Terrorist Unit, numbering about 6,000, including some 2,500 in Monrovia under General

[27] See ICG Africa Report N°62, *Tackling Liberia: The Eye of the Regional Storm*, 30 April 2003, pp. 20-24

[28] ICG interview with human rights NGO worker, Freetown, September 2003.

[29] ICG interviews with UNMIL military official, Freetown and Monrovia, September-October 2003.

[30] ICG interview with human rights activist, Monrovia, October 2003.

[31] The AFL, the official armed forces of Liberia from the 1960s, were virtually replaced after 1997 by Taylor's insurgent army, the National Patriotic Front of Liberia. ICG has estimated that the original AFL largely disintegrated, with many fleeing to join LURD and later MODEL forces. The remaining 1,500 or so were forced to fight with poor weaponry. Many had fled to Sierra Leone from late 2002 and were interned at Mapeh Camp. See ICG Africa Report N°62, *Tackling Liberia: The Eye of the Regional Storm*, 30 April 2003, pp. 6-7.

Winnie, formerly number two to Taylor's son, Chucky. Also in Monrovia are the Jungle Lions under General Roland Duo, numbering some 1,500. There are 200 to 300 Marines under General Gonda. The Special Strike Force commanded by Adolphus Dolo appeared in early October 2003 to be hemmed in at Saclapea, Nimba County, by MODEL and LURD and unable to reach Monrovia.[32] Taylor's personal protection force, the Special Security Service (SSS), numbering 300 to 800, has been under the control of his most trusted security chief and assassin, Benjamin Yeaten. Finally, a paramilitary police unit, the Special Operations Division (SOD) under Colonel Sahr Gbollie, has about 215 men in Monrovia.[33]

Now that the "Papay"[34] has gone, there is no longer a leader to hold these disparate elements together. The key commanders have their personal followers, but they do not possess the same authority as Taylor, and their futures are uncertain. Yeaten, loyal to Taylor since their training days together in Libya in the late 1980s, knows no other life than to kill for him and has little prospect of employment elsewhere. There are worrying and persistent rumours about his whereabouts. Since Taylor's departure, he has several times been reported to have left Monrovia for Ghana. Some sources have claimed he is attempting to recruit fighters in Bouaké, northern Côte d'Ivoire, home of the Ivorian rebel Mouvement pour la Justice et la Paix. Kuku Dennis, from a leading Monrovia family, will most likely be focused on maintaining his logging business in Nimba and Grand Gedeh County.[35] Dolo, whom Taylor summoned back to help him in 2003, may want to return to the U.S. where he is reported to have right of residence.

Essentially leaderless and with little room to manoeuvre, many of Taylor's fighters may turn to armed robbery to survive. Many were not paid even before Taylor's departure. Many are also hungry. In Buchanan, for example, Joseph Wong and Gus van Kouwenhoven of the Oriental Timber Company (OTC), who have managed logging operations for Taylor since the first civil war, fed his fighters while they evacuated their own heavy equipment. Now they have gone, leaving the fighters without food, which appears to have been one reason Buchanan fell rapidly to MODEL in late July 2003.[36]

Several people interviewed by ICG described Nimba County as "precarious", "volatile" and near explosion,[37] even "probably the biggest mess in the country".[38] It is home to many Taylor fighters, mainly from the Gio and Mano groups, who rallied to him at the start of the first war, in 1989-1990. Key commanders, including Yeaten and Duo, are from Nimba, as is Moses Blah, who briefly succeeded Taylor as president. LURD is still pressing hard on Nimba from Lofa County and Gbarnga (Bong County), and MODEL is raiding from the south. Sensing that Taylor's fighters are war-weary, both may try to consolidate their territorial gains before UNMIL is able to stop them. The worst scenario would involve ethnic killings by LURD and MODEL in Nimba, particularly by the former's Mandingo elements against the Gio and Mano, in revenge for the support they gave Taylor and the 1990 pogroms against Krahn and Mandingo people. Those abuses were in turn motivated by persecutions going back to the early 1980s. The cycle must be halted.

A final – but vital – question concerns Taylor's own future. Although he is in a comfortable exile in Nigeria, there is every reason to believe that he remains focused on Liberia, constantly phones his associates and commanders and both receives and hands out cash to maintain his patronage network.[39] Conventional wisdom suggests that he will be unable to maintain remote control for long, but some well-informed sources suggest that a shift in regional alliances could permit his re-entry into Liberia via Nimba County.

[32] Dolo was involved with the main fighting for Monrovia in June and July 2003. He took charge in Bong County in late July, as LURD moved closer to Taylor's farm in Gbarnga, and then transferred his operations to Nimba County.

[33] ICG interview, Monrovia, October 2003.

[34] The term "Papay" is commonly used by Liberians to describe big and powerful men.

[35] UNMIL has been searching for Kuku Dennis since late October, following allegations that he and his fighters abducted up to 30 civilians on the highway from Monrovia and Buchanan in an area called N°1 Compound. ICG telephone interview, Monrovia, October 2003.

[36] ICG interview with U.S. government official, Monrovia, October 2003.

[37] ICG interviews with international NGO representatives and British and U.S. government officials, Freetown and Monrovia, September-October 2003.

[38] ICG interview with international NGO representative, Monrovia, October 2003.

[39] See the discussion on Charles Taylor and war crimes in Section V below.

B. LURD

ICG has consistently reported the numerous internal divisions that have affected LURD and challenged its chairman, Sekou Conneh, but these did not divert its advance on Monrovia in early 2003 where the demonstration of its military capabilities surprised observers. The new assessment of LURD's armed strength should not be mistaken for endorsement of its methods. Its bombardments of defenceless non-combatants were brutal in the extreme and devoid of military rationale.

Observers remain divided over basic questions such as the coherence of the organisation and its survival now that it has achieved its core objective. Some see LURD as bent only on personal enrichment and power. There are clear factional struggles that may be sharpened by an anticipated cut-off of Guinean support and whatever encouragement LURD has been obtaining from the U.S. and by a realisation that fighters at least will receive limited rewards.

Much depends on whether LURD can maintain its links in Conakry. If not, the biggest loser may be Conneh, though some of his people might nevertheless get positions in the interim government.[40] Conneh's power in LURD is largely derived from the strong ties of his wife, Ayesha, with Guinea's President Conté, which apparently date to 1996, when he became convinced that she had spiritual powers that could protect him against harm.[41] Thanks to his wife's influence, Sekou Conneh was able to control all military supplies coming to LURD from Conakry and assure his position at the head of the movement. With Taylor gone, the old common interest between LURD and Conneh, as between Conté and LURD, is gone but it appears that Ayesha Conneh has ambitions of her own that may keep the connections together at least for a time.[42]

It remains unclear whether the lines of communication that developed between Guinean army officers and LURD created personal connections that will complicate the politics of Guinea's armed forces. Guinean soldiers at the border town of Macenta certainly established operational links, assisting LURD fighters' entry into Liberia and providing artillery cover during months of heavy fighting in Lofa and Bomi County. There is photographic evidence of uniformed Guinean soldiers with LURD deep inside Liberia.[43]

For all its relative military success, LURD has major political handicaps. Like other Liberian factions, it is a volatile mixture of elements. Also like other factions, it is largely descended from a militia formed in the early 1990s. In this case it was a wing of the defunct United Liberation Movement for Democracy in Liberia, ULIMO-K, that had an appalling reputation in parts of western Liberia, where it was responsible for heavier looting than probably any other faction and committed some of the worst atrocities, particularly in upper Lofa County. If only for this reason, LURD, has to overcome deep distrust.

Liberians regard LURD as a movement dominated by Mandingos, and indeed Sekou Conneh and many senior commanders are from that ethnic group, which is considered to have its historic centre in Guinea. Mandingos are widely seen as foreigners, despite their long presence in the country. Largely for this reason, many Liberians discount the possibility of a Mandingo president, and LURD nominees, particularly if Mandingo, can expect nothing more senior than a cabinet ministry. Realisation of their movement's political limitations could lead some LURD fighters to challenge a peace process that they calculate offers them little. If so, they would look for more help from Guinea, whose president is said to have expected LURD to seize Monrovia,[44] but they would have other sources as well.

With a foothold in the capital, LURD can raise funds through the goods it looted during the fighting (including cars, generators, computers, tools, machines) and sent to Guinea and Sierra Leone via Tubmanburg and Gbarnga. Some have appeared in

[40] LURD nominated Jackson Doe and Chayea Doe for the positions of Minister of State, Presidential Affairs, and Managing Director of the National Port Authority, respectively. While tensions were always high with Conneh, the Doe brothers remained close to him.

[41] This involves a religious belief sometimes attributed to the Muslim clerics known as *marabouts*.

[42] ICG interviews, Conakry, October 2003.

[43] This is also confirmed by both UN and Sierra Leonean military sources. During a mission to Guinea in October 2003, ICG received further information indicating the extent of cooperation between LURD and the Guinean army. Despite the fact that this cooperation has been proven beyond doubt, the Guinean government persists in denying its connection to LURD.

[44] ICG interview with senior U.S. and UN officials, September 2003.

Bo, Kenema and Freetown markets. The LURD coordinating office on Bushrod Island serves as a clearing-house. Stolen vehicles can be reclaimed at a going price of U.S.$500. In October 2003, ICG saw civilians applying to retrieve their vehicles and LURD officials typing a laissez-passer, on receipt of money, for those wishing to travel to Po River or Tubmanburg to collect them. It is an enterprise that UNMIL will need to shut down.[45]

Of all the warring factions, LURD can cause the biggest threat to the peace process and a weak interim government. That potential was displayed in the second half of October when a dispute broke out with Gyude Bryant over positions in the interim government. Conneh wanted his Chief of Staff, Mohammed Aliyu "Cobra" Sheriff, to have that same position in the new army. When that was not offered, LURD demonstrated how volatile Liberia remains by cutting off NGO and UNMIL movement to Tubmanburg and threatening renewal of the conflict. A military official commented: "LURD has everything to play for. They have the largest [capability], militarily to spoil the peace. They can therefore be flexible in their negotiations. Conneh knows that his fighters can cause problems for the UN".[46]

Perhaps the most worrying possibility, however – and one of the most likely – is that disgruntled LURD fighters will drift away from Liberia to make common cause with the former Civil Defence Force militias in eastern Sierra Leone, the Kamajors. LURD has had a connection to them since its inception in Sierra Leone in 1999,[47] and there are many Sierra Leoneans in its high command. ICG learned of at least five such LURD commanders in Gbarnga, Bong County, who seem to be veterans of the war in eastern Sierra Leone in the late 1990s.[48] The Kamajor heartland of Bo is home to many former Kamajors who are dissatisfied with their demobilisation in Sierra Leone and angry at the imprisonment of their one-time leader, the former national deputy minister of defence, Chief Sam Hinga Norman, and others – Moinina Fofana and Allieu Kondawa – who have been indicted by the Special Court for Sierra Leone.[49]

Kamajor forces in the east of Sierra Leone are known to have kept command structures intact. Having been partly financed from locally mined diamonds in the past, the Kamajors are in a better position than ever to commandeer the wealth from Sierra Leone's conflict diamonds, which come from their home region, now that competition from the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) and other pro-Taylor forces has been eliminated. A history of cross-border collaboration between Kamajors and LURD, plus shared historical and cultural links between Mende Kamajors and Liberian Mandingos, could well augur the emergence of a formidable new force astride the Sierra Leone-Liberia border in coming months.

C. MODEL

The last and smallest of the major warring groups, MODEL, is also a descendant of the old ULIMO organisation, but of the ULIMO-J faction.[50] It is closely related to LURD in various ways: both are offspring of the original ULIMO, which was formed in 1991 in Sierra Leone and Guinea to fight against Charles Taylor but later splintered into rival factions. The LURD wing based in Côte d'Ivoire emerged in early 2003 as MODEL. A feature of Liberia's wars has been the tendency of armed groups to split, but also to make alliances of opportunity. A chief skill of the country's extraordinarily duplicitous generation of politicians has been to maintain sufficient distance from the fighters to avoid being tainted with accusations of warlordism, while staying close enough to manipulate the divisions and fusions to their advantage.

MODEL's organisational structure is unclear but it is heavily dependent on Côte d'Ivoire. Its unusually rapid movement into the southeast of Liberia was largely attributable to sponsorship from the Ivorian president, Laurent Gbagbo. Western diplomats confirm that during all its attacks, MODEL was fully

[45] LURD fighters also control the diamond fields at Lofa Bridge and Weasua in western Liberia, which will allow them to generate some level of independent revenue, although these diamonds do not have the same value as those in Sierra Leone. ICG interview with Liberian diamond expert and international journalist, London, September 2003.
[46] ICG interview with military official, Freetown, October 2003.
[47] ICG Report N°43, *Liberia: The Key to Ending Regional Instability*, 24 April 2002, pp. 2-7 and ICG Report, *Tackling Liberia*, op. cit., pp. 6-7.
[48] ICG interview, Monrovia, October 2003.
[49] ICG interview with RSLAF officer, Freetown, September 2003.
[50] MODEL and LURD are sometimes referred to as ULIMO in Côte d'Ivoire and Guinea respectively.

supplied by Ivorians with uniforms, weapons and money. Within a few months, it pushed along the coast to take control of Grand Bassa County and Liberia's second-largest city, Buchanan, which is not only the base of the OTC timber company, once a major generator of Taylor's income, but also a major port through which his weapons used to flow and which still holds 800,000 tons of iron ore worth about U.S.$5.6 million.[51]

MODEL's links with Côte d'Ivoire will not be easily severed. The military supply line from Guiglo still exists, and MODEL retains a command post in Toulépleu, close to the Liberian border, where its commander, Paye Duoway ('General John Garang'), was based until he moved to Zwedru, Grand Gedeh, on about 20 August. During an ICG visit to Buchanan, a number of people interviewed said that many in the first wave of MODEL fighters to reach the port spoke French and openly identified themselves as Ivorians, recruited from the pro-Gbagbo military and militias earlier based in the west of Côte d'Ivoire.[52] MODEL's deep Ivorian connection could mean that it will evolve into a buffer force for Gbagbo if hostilities resume in Côte d'Ivoire. French troops deployed in Côte d'Ivoire under Operation Licorne established a presence in Toulépleu in September, from where they are presumably in a position to regulate weapons flows.

A majority of MODEL fighters and commanders probably fought with ULIMO-J in Liberia's first civil war. Before that, many of the older fighters were in the regular armed forces, the AFL, or were part of Samuel Doe's elite Special Anti-Terrorist Unit (SATU, similar to Taylor's ATU).[53] An eventual restructuring of the AFL will, therefore, be a high priority for MODEL. There are, however, younger elements in MODEL. In October 2003 ICG saw boys sporting obviously new weapons, in particular AK-47s, many also wearing braided hair or women's wigs, generally a sign of adolescent initiation into the ranks of the fighters. Many MODEL fighters in Buchanan looked as young as fourteen. Some on the outskirts were spending their day drinking the traditional and potent West African palm wine.

With an estimated 1,000 fighters, MODEL is much smaller and weaker than LURD, and international NGO workers report that it generally accords them respect.[54] On 29 September 2003, MODEL relaxed Buchanan's curfew from 6 to 10 p.m. Although there appears to have been a decline in looting, a number of people in the city indicated to ICG in October that MODEL continued to intimidate, and there were also reports of theft and rape by the group's fighters.[55]

Politically, MODEL is largely seen as a movement of henchmen of the former president, Samuel Doe that is dominated by his group, the Krahn. One Liberian called it "the lost tribe who lost power to Taylor and want it back".[56] A number of MODEL fighters interviewed by ICG wore grey t-shirts made in Côte d'Ivoire with the inscription 'New Horizon, New Idea, New Direction', redolent of the New Horizons movement created by Krahn living in the U.S. that sponsored a coup attempt in Monrovia in 1994.

MODEL's command and control is unclear. Internal problems came to a head in June 2003, when the former leader of ULIMO-J, Roosevelt Johnson, appears to have made an attempt to challenge the political leadership under Thomas Yaya Nimley.[57] A

[51] ICG interview with international journalist, London, and UNAMSIL officials, Freetown, September 2003.

[52] However, many Liberian MODEL fighters also speak French, as the core of MODEL is composed of anti-Taylor elements who fled to Côte d'Ivoire during Liberia's first civil war (1989-1996) and lived there as refugees, particularly in the west of the country.

[53] Doe, whose own family originated in Côte d'Ivoire, is reported to have recruited some Ivorians into the AFL in the 1980s. His Israeli-trained SATU unit was almost exclusively composed of people from his own group, the Krahn, or from their ethnic cousins, including from Côte d'Ivoire.

[54] ICG interview, Buchanan, October 2003.

[55] The MODEL commander in Buchanan, General Kaifala (sometimes pronounced as Kai Farley), is also known as 'B 50'.

[56] ICG interview with human rights NGO worker, Freetown, September 2003.

[57] While the story remains incomplete, a power struggle unfolded within MODEL when Roosevelt Johnson arrived in Abidjan from his home in Nigeria on about 16 June 2003. Johnson's arrival was linked to events in Liberia, in particular the indictment of President Taylor, the increase in fighting in Monrovia, and the peace talks in Accra. Several MODEL fighters, including the chief of staff, Amos Chayee, reportedly visited Johnson in Abidjan to seek his help and advice in handling their military movement in Sinoe County along Liberia's Atlantic Coast. Amos Chayee was Chief of Staff of Roosevelt Johnson's ULIMO-J militia during the first Liberian civil war. The then acting coordinator of MODEL, Thomas Yaya Nimley, was reportedly furious about Johnson's appearance, especially after Johnson reportedly stated that he was the rightful leader of MODEL since many of its fighters were drawn from his ULIMO-J. Nimley, fearing that he might lose the leadership of MODEL, informed President Gbagbo of

Krahn from Grand Gedeh County, Nimley sold his house in the U.S. to fund the struggle from Côte d'Ivoire.[58] He spent time in Abidjan from where he directed MODEL negotiators in Accra until he went there to sign the peace agreement. But MODEL lacks real political leaders, and a Western diplomat commented on its lack of senior figures with education.[59] The group has sought portfolios in the transition government that will help with the logging interests of money men like its chief negotiator in Accra, J. Denis Slanger, brother to the notorious Edward Slanger.[60]

Johnson's presence in Abidjan, claiming that he was a threat to Ivorian security. Nimley also apparently threatened Johnson. Johnson was later flown to Accra by Ivorian authorities, while Amos Chayee was imprisoned because of his alliance with Johnson, whose Nigerian bodyguard was reportedly shot dead. ICG interviews in Accra with Liberian sources close to or within MODEL and phone interview with MODEL insider, Abidjan, July 2003.

[58] Nimley is described as an American-trained psychologist. His Liberian counterparts describe him as "educated"; he has never been in government at a senior level. He is also said to be ambitious and "does not compromise anything on the issue of power and his personal esteem". ICG interview with exiled Liberian, March 2003.

[59] "There are no book men", he told ICG. The same, of course, can be said of LURD. ICG interview with Western diplomat, Monrovia, October 2003.

[60] Edward Slanger created death squads under Samuel Doe that targeted mainly Gios and Manos from Nimba County but is hailed as a hero among many Krahn for helping foil the 1985 coup attempt of General Thomas Quiwonkpa, a Gio from Nimba County. See ICG Report, *Tackling Liberia*, op. cit., p. 23.

V. UN PRESENCE: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

The mandate given to UNMIL compares favourably with that accorded to earlier UN missions in the region. From 1993 to 1997 the UN troops in Liberia were essentially observers, playing second fiddle to the main peacekeeping force, the West African-organised ECOMOG. A more apt comparison for UNMIL is UNAMSIL in Sierra Leone. The mandate is robust, and while there is disappointment at the U.S. failure to participate significantly, the force will include a small contingent from a permanent member of the Security Council that has not previously been active in peacekeeping – China.[61] But what should perhaps be the most important lesson from the UN experience in Sierra Leone seems not yet to have been clearly learned, namely that the mission must be adequately funded and, most particularly, adequate resources must be made available for disarming and demobilising fighters not just in one country, but in a coordinated process across the region.

A. LEADERSHIP

Kofi Annan's Special Representative in Liberia, Jacques Paul Klein, was a career U.S. Foreign Service Officer for a quarter-century before being appointed in 1996, in the wake of the Bosnia war, the UN Transitional Administrator for Eastern Slavonia, Baranja and Western Sirmium. In August 1999, he became the Coordinator of United Nations Operations in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In all three UN assignments, he has held the rank of Under-Secretary-General.[62]

While Klein has only some of the powers of an imperial pro-consul, he has much of the style. He likes to smoke Churchillian cigars and carry a silver-topped walking cane. He has travelled through the centre of Monrovia on top of an armoured vehicle and is what might be described, gently, as a self-

[61] There is a clear relationship between the participation of Chinese forces in UNMIL and the rapid recognition of the People's Republic by the new interim government, in contrast to Charles Taylor's steadfast, and highly lucrative, recognition of the Republic of China (Taiwan).

[62] Klein is also a retired Major General of the U.S. Air Force, a rank he achieved mainly through duties in the military reserves.

assured personality. While this approach alarms many UN bureaucrats, and also some long-term foreign residents of Liberia, it resonates among Liberians who remember that their most famous and longest-serving president, William Tubman (1944-71), also sported enormous cigars, while both Presidents William Tolbert (1971-80) and Charles Taylor habitually carried a carved walking-stick. Klein is outspoken. His language is particularly colourful when he is putting the warring factions and their leaders in what he regards as their proper place. He has called Charles Taylor a "psychopathic killer" and a "pathological liar" and publicly told former interim President Blah that he "does not know what he is talking about".[63] He habitually refers to the factions as "criminals", "gangsters" and "armed drugged thugs", all characterisations Liberians appear to regard as good plain speaking.[64] His approach is viewed as "refreshing" by some of his staff; others are concerned that in the long run his "lucid tongue" might pose problems for building consensus.[65]

1. U.S. Role

Although the American background of the Secretary General's Special Representative has been seen by some as a means for the U.S. to keep an eye on its interest in Liberia while distancing itself from formal involvement, Klein himself does not hide his annoyance with former American colleagues. He finds it "amazing" and "surprising", given historical ties binding the countries, that the U.S. has resisted more direct involvement in Liberia,[66] which, he says, has done its part for the West, though no one seems to remember: for example, Roberts Field International Airport was built as a refuelling stop for transports carrying combat planes in crates from California via Brazil, Liberia and Morocco to Britain during World War Two; Liberia's Maritime Bureau was created to give a neutral flag to U.S. ships delivering strategic goods.[67] The U.S. did play a useful role, as discussed below, in achieving Taylor's removal, and helped the first stage of the multilateral intervention by providing logistical support to 3,600 ECOMIL troops and paying to airlift part of the Nigerian contingent, at a cost of at least U.S.$26 million. Nevertheless, there is little doubt that the U.S. sponsored the Security Council resolution that created UNMIL in September 2003 in the hope of facilitating an early exit from its limited deployment in Liberia.

Even from a narrow definition of its national interests, the U.S. missed an opportunity. It had a chance to demonstrate, at a time when Liberia was receiving unprecedented media attention, that it could help restore peace and transform the political outlook in a corner of the world where "Uncle Sam" remains highly popular. Even Liberia's warring factions revere the U.S. As former Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Walter Kansteiner acknowledged, "U.S. actions would…represent for [the] U.S. a memorable foreign policy success story".[68] The Pentagon, however, viewed Liberia in the light of its distressing experience in Somalia in 1993 and misjudged the situation. Washington should have taken a leaf from the British script in Sierra Leone, where a highly theatrical (but militarily limited) intervention in the capital and its environs, including a demonstration of airpower and an 'over the horizon' strike force, gave an impression of readiness to fight, served as a powerful psychological tool, and thus transformed the political situation.[69] Like the British rapid deployment, U.S. boots on the ground would have had a massive psychological effect.

At the same time, it is becoming increasingly clear how central a part the U.S. government, especially the Department of Defence, took in orchestrating various aspects of Charles Taylor's overthrow. After years in which it was hard to arouse much interest in

[63] Klein has made these comments in various radio interviews. The comment about President Blah was made on the popular BBC World Service radio show, BBC Network for Africa, on 2 October 2003, following the previous day's clash between the forces of Charles Taylor and of LURD.

[64] See also Klein's briefing to the UN Security Council, 16 September 2003.

[65] ICG interviews with UN officials, Monrovia and Freetown, October 2003.

[66] ICG interview with Jacques Paul Klein, Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Liberia, October 2003.

[67] Ibid. Also see Klein's briefing to UN Security Council, 16 September 2003. The former Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, Walter Kansteiner, likewise acknowledged Liberian contributions when he stated that "during the Cold War, Liberia served as a relay station for Voice of America broadcasts, for tracking shipping, and for communications surveillance". Statement made to House Committee on International Relations Subcommittee on Africa, 2 October 2003.

[68] Kansteiner statement, op. cit.

[69] See ICG Report, *Sierra Leone: Managing Uncertainty*, op. cit., pp. 1-2.

Liberia, the Pentagon's attention seems to have been focused by the realisation of Charles Taylor's responsibility for regional destabilisation, especially after his attack on Guinea in September 2000, and by evidence that emerged from late 2001 of his earlier business connections with al-Qaeda.[70] A well-informed military source in the region described LURD to ICG as "a creation of the American secret services".[71]

This is an exaggeration, not least because anti-Taylor Liberians were coalescing in Sierra Leone and Guinea irrespective of any U.S. involvement. However, there is no doubt that Guinea was essential to the arming of LURD and that U.S. authorities were aware of this.[72] A former U.S. diplomat who retains a close interest in West Africa and good contacts with serving officials in U.S. government agencies went so far as to describe LURD's campaign as a "proxy war".[73]

The simultaneous build-up of MODEL in Côte d'Ivoire also appears to have occurred with the knowledge of U.S. agencies. Sources in Abidjan that ICG has found accurate on other security issues alleged that U.S. officials helped MODEL receive arms of Ukrainian manufacture via Côte d'Ivoire. A U.S. military official with knowledge of the issue described Charles Taylor's downfall as resulting from "an alignment of the planets" – but it appears to have had more to do with sophisticated human coordination than any movement of the heavenly spheres. Pressures on Charles Taylor converged, notably on 4 June 2003.

ICG received hints from U.S. government sources even earlier that an offensive on Monrovia might begin on or about that time. On the date his capital was assaulted by LURD, he was indicted for war crimes by the Sierra Leone Special Court, and there was an apparent attempt at a coup within his own entourage. This sequence of events suggests that the U.S. refusal to commit peacekeeping forces to Liberia in mid-2003 may have been due not only to strategic doubts and bureaucratic wrangling, but also to a desire to give LURD sufficient time to overthrow Taylor. If so, the Americans in Monrovia who endured mortar bombardments by LURD in June-July 2003 may have had mixed feelings about the strategy – in essence, they were under fire from ordnance procured by LURD through Guinea with the concurrence of U.S. officials. A diplomat in the region recalled that staff at the embassy "were not very happy" with this situation.[74] Both then Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Walter Kansteiner and his deputy, Pamela Bridgewater, went to Conakry at the height of the bombardments in Monrovia to warn President Conté about his support to LURD.

The U.S. government has stated that it will remain involved in Liberia in some capacity. It is seconding nine officers to UNMIL (two headquarters staffers and seven military observers, similar to British involvement in Sierra Leone's UNAMSIL). But the U.S. should go one step further, as the British did in Sierra Leone, and provide an 'over the horizon' force as demonstrative support for UNMIL.

SGSR Klein, meanwhile, hopes to secure U.S. involvement, if not in the full operations of his mission, then in bilateral initiatives. The U.S. committed itself quickly to help restructure and train a new Liberian army.[75] The U.S. Senate is expected to complete Congressional action on 3 November 2003 and send to President Bush for signature a supplemental appropriations bill for Fiscal Year 2004 that includes a U.S.$245 million contribution to UN peacekeeping costs (primarily Liberia) and U.S.$200 million in "international disaster assistance" funding that is earmarked specifically for Liberia and can be used for the full range of post-conflict aid, including reconstruction, governance, basic infrastructure and humanitarian programs. This is seen as opening the way for the U.S. to play a major role in the rebuilding of the country.[76]

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[70] Those connections, which appear to have escaped the attention of U.S. government intelligence and security agencies, were initially made public single-handedly by a journalist, Douglas Farah of *The Washington Post.* The connections were motivated not by any ideological affinity, but by lucrative cash-for-diamonds deals. See Douglas Farah, "Report Says Africans Harboured al-Qaeda, Terror Assets Hidden in Gem-Buying Spree", *The Washington Post,* 29 December 2002, and Farah, "Al-Qaeda Cash Tied to Diamond Trade", *The Washington Post*, 2 November 2001.

[71] ICG interview with military officer, October 2003.

[72] U.S. Special Forces were in Guinea in growing numbers to train a new, 800-strong Rangers battalion, some of whom have been deployed on the Liberian border. There is no reason, though, to believe that this Rangers unit was connected to LURD.

[73] In a meeting attended by ICG, August 2002.

[74] ICG interview, October 2003.

[75] Kansteiner statement, op. cit.

[76] "Senate will OK $87.5 billion Iraq, Afghan Bill", Associated Press, in *The New York Times*, 31 October 2003. ICG interviews, Washington, October 2003.

B. A MANDATE MADE IN THE USA

The Security Council resolution establishing UNMIL is a strong one. While the terms may have been influenced by Washington's view that the quicker the UN stepped in, the quicker it could pull back, Klein admits that they are more than he expected, especially for what is often called "nation-building" but, given the association in many contexts of "nation" with ethnic identity, would be more accurately labelled "state"-building. UNMIL has the toughest possible UN mandate, with Chapter VII enforcement powers.

In a small country with a population of about 2.5 million, UNMIL will eventually have at its disposal 15,000 military personnel, including up to 250 observers, and international police. (Klein had asked for 900 of the latter but the Security Council approved 1,115, of whom one-third will be armed gendarmerie.) The mission has powers to investigate violations against the peace process, but as discussed below, it has no guidance on what to do with the results of such investigations.

UNMIL will also have full control of the strategic levers of the country: the airports and ports, including other "vital infrastructure".[77] The mandate is sufficiently vague and open to interpretation that Klein could even conclude he can extend his mission's remit to customs and immigration control, something the former warring factions might not readily understand. The mandate also requires UNMIL to "assist the transitional government in restoring proper administration of natural resources", a critical point in light of the current sanctions regime, which Klein wants to see reviewed, most notably in respect of timber.

The sanctions, imposed under Security Council Resolution 1343 (6 May 2001), include a travel ban on all senior members of the Taylor government, a ban on direct and indirect import of rough diamonds, and an arms embargo. Timber sanctions were added only in May 2003 (Resolution 1478). The sanctions are in force until May 2004 and will be discussed by the Security Council in early November. While security considerations are paramount, it makes sense to sequence the lifting of sanctions, under close UN supervision, to provide the transitional government with some revenue. ICG recommends a gradual lifting of diamond sanctions and the travel ban, as was done in Angola and Sierra Leone.[78]

The arms embargo is unlikely to be lifted since it supports efforts to secure Liberia and the region, but other parts of the sanctions regime raise more questions. The focus should be on ensuring compliance with key aspects of UN Security Council Resolutions 1408 and 1478, especially with regard to timber.[79] Both resolutions called on the Liberian government to demonstrate that the revenue derived from that industry and from the Liberia Ship and Corporate Registry is used for legitimate social, humanitarian and development purposes. Klein is already thinking about how to employ international commercial agencies to deal with revenue collection, particularly in regard to timber. Nevertheless, before timber sanctions are lifted further consideration is required about how to develop better forestry practices and ensure proper control of the revenue. As an initial step, the UN Panel of Experts for Liberia should be given more expertise to follow revenue from timber and ship registration through forensic auditing.[80]

The need to apply this revenue to legitimate state-building purposes is urgent, as a few statistics make clear. Over 80 per cent of the population is unemployed, and even many civil servants have not been paid for almost two years; 74 per cent of the

[77] United Nations Security Council Resolution 1509, 19 September 2003, p. 3.

[78] The 24 April 2003 UN Panel of Experts Report was right to point out that the mandate for the sanctions on Liberia needed to be changed as the original justification for Security Council Resolution 1343 – mainly securing peace in Sierra Leone – had largely been achieved. Moreover, the situation had rapidly changed on the ground with Liberia's war extending into Côte d'Ivoire and Guinea's role becoming more apparent in supporting LURD in violation of the requirement on neighbouring states to refrain from supporting Liberia's armed groups. See statement by Alex Vines, former UN Panel of Expert staffer and senior researcher for Human Rights Watch, to the U.S. House of Representatives Sub-Committee on Africa, 2 October 2003.

[79] As discussed further below, another critical area of the sanctions regime that needs to be enhanced and properly monitored is the demand that neighbouring states "cease military support for armed groups in neighbouring countries, take action to prevent armed individuals and groups from using their territory to prepare and commit attacks on neighbouring countries and refrain from any actions that might contribute to further destabilisation of the situation in the region", UN Security Council Resolution 1478, 6 May 2003, para. 9.

[80] ICG interview with expert on Liberian sanctions regime, October 2003.

population has no access to safe drinking water, and 60 per cent has no access to sanitary facilities. Life expectancy is 48, infant mortality an appalling 157 per 1,000 births, and 42 per cent of the population is undernourished. The transitional government has virtually no money, having inherited little more than U.S.$2 million in the national treasury, against a national debt of U.S.$2.8 billion. Charles Taylor ignored the treasury, accumulating wealth in his own hands and forcing ministers to come to him for their salaries. UNMIL and international donors will have to work hard to revive the economy, not least because Liberia's poor record on debt repayment has made it an outcast with lending institutions.[81]

Klein has high ambitions for Liberia, however, based on a highly interventionist UN presence over the next three years, with an army of international civil servants providing technical support to local and central administration and reforming Liberia's institutions and bureaucratic infrastructure, including the security sector. The intention is to disband the hopelessly corrupt and politicised police force and re-employ perhaps one quarter in a new structure. Klein is proud of his team, many of whom worked with him in Croatia and Bosnia, and observers confirm it is an unusually tightly-knit group.

Turning the strong mandate into reality will prove difficult, however. The peacekeeping force will be too thin for at least most of the remainder of 2003 to do more than invest Monrovia and some major arteries.[82] Klein wants helicopter gunships, what Liberian fighters are most afraid of, and armoured vehicles with rubber tires, but there will be no heavy equipment anytime soon.[83] The operation is being put in place at very short notice. UN officials initially doubted they could be ready to take over quickly from ECOMIL, requested the U.S to stay longer and proposed 1 December for the transfer of responsibility. Klein suggested a 1 November compromise, but Washington insisted on the 1 October date for the UN to assume control and the last U.S. warship to disappear over the horizon. The fast pace means that the UN, with no really substantial force available before Christmas, is heavily reliant on ECOWAS countries, who have provided vital security since the first Nigerian contingent arrived on 4 August 2003.

The UN needs no reminding, however, that some ECOWAS countries were seen as partial in Liberia's first civil war. UNMIL must become truly multinational, but this may prove problematic. While Ireland has made a troop commitment, Klein is frustrated that "most of Europe" is going instead to Afghanistan and Iraq.[84] One European country had earmarked 1,000 troops for Liberia, until the U.S. requested they be deployed instead to Afghanistan.[85] UNMIL force headquarters was initially supported by the UN's Standby High Readiness Brigade (SHIRBRIG), including at least 25 soldiers from Canada and Scandinavian countries. It departed Liberia on 2 November.[86]

C. DISARMING THE FIGHTERS

UNMIL has to disarm fighters while blocking outside interference and finding the best way to deal with those who violate the peace process. At least 20,000 of the estimated 48,000 to 58,000 combatants who need to be disarmed are under eighteen, thus falling into the category of child soldiers, and of these around half (mainly LURD and Taylor forces) are females,. "Most of the

[81] "The World in 2003", *The Economist*, p. 52, and ICG interview with UN officials, Monrovia, October 2003. Liberia cannot borrow from the International Monetary Fund because it has repeatedly failed to repay its debts.

[82] UNMIL also has a troop presence in the MODEL-controlled area of Buchanan

[83] ICG interview with Jacques Paul Klein, Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Liberia, Monrovia, October 2003. ICG has learned, however, that Ukrainian helicopter gunships now with UNAMSIL in Sierra Leone "may be" lent to the Liberia mission. ICG interviews, New York and Freetown, October 2003.

[84] ICG interview with Jacques Paul Klein, Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Liberia, Monrovia, October 2003. The Dutch Government has discussed the possibility of sending a hospital ship to Liberia.

[85] ICG interview with a UN official, October 2003.

[86] The Standby High Readiness Brigade is intended to place a multinational brigade at the disposal of the United Nations for peacekeeping and humanitarian operations. The brigade mobilises with a fifteen to 30-day warning, is self-sufficient for 60 days, and can deploy for six months. After that the mission is either terminated or replacement units are sent. Planning for SHIRBRIG began in 1996. It came on line in January 2000, with its first deployment in November 2000 as part of UNMEE (UN mission in Eritrea and Ethiopia). The countries involved include Canada, Austria, Denmark, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Sweden, Argentina, Italy, Romania, Spain, Portugal, Slovenia, and Finland. While Canada and Argentina are not, of course, European states, the predominantly European nature of its constituent elements qualifies SHIRBRIG as virtually a European multilateral force.

fighters", noted a UN officer, "will soon recognise that they will get little",[87] but many will only disarm if they feel they have something to gain from the process. As in Sierra Leone, a number of hardliners might choose to flee across the porous borders to escape the disarmament program; there are indications that some are already doing so.

It is vital to find out how many mercenaries and foreign elements are within the various fighting forces. The most prominent foreign fighters in Liberia are from Sierra Leone, and they have fought for all sides. The presence of former Kamajor fighters commanding LURD units near Gbarnga has been mentioned. ICG was informed that fighters in Foya Kamala, a strategic village in northwest Liberia near the Guinea and Sierra Leone borders, have filtered into Guinea's forest region. Some buried their weapons before leaving. What is worrying is that Foya Kamala was not only the base for Taylor's Navy Division, but also home to fighters from the RUF (Sierra Leone) rebel group and dissidents from Guinea.[88]

West African heads of state have stressed to Klein the importance of keeping combatants inside Liberia lest they wreak havoc in the region.[89] However, it will be impossible to stop those who choose to return home. Sierra Leoneans, who have been fighting for both sides in Liberia, might feel that they have more to gain by returning. What is essential is to disarm them before they go. The failure to regionalise the DR program in Sierra Leone was one reason so many former combatants ended up fighting in neighbouring wars. At least 200 RUF fighters are known to have joined their leader, the late Sam "Mosquito" Bockarie, in Foya Kamala. The exact numbers of Kamajor civil defence militia who fought with LURD is unknown but the UN and Sierra Leone security authorities say there are between 1,000 and 8,000 former Kamajors in Liberia who are deciding whether to go home or see what the new disarmament package offers. In Guinea, civilian volunteers armed by the government to counter the September 2000 Liberian attack were never fully disarmed. Many moved to Lofa County in northern Liberia to fight with the LURD before heading to Côte d'Ivoire. Such experiences illustrate the necessity of an integrated, regional disarmament program if insecurity is to be halted, rather than the ending of one war resulting in the flare-up of another.

Regional leaders must also be more vigilant in monitoring the movement of fighters if there is to be proper disarmament in Liberia. Sierra Leone's decision on 23 September 2003 to allow a LURD convoy carrying Chairman Sekou Conneh from Guinea through Kambia District, Bo and Kenema to Tubmanburg was seen as a good will gesture but it also gave LURD fighters an opportunity to move freely in and out of Sierra Leone. While the army (RSLAF) and police (SLP) kept a watchful eye on that convoy, the number of fighters who have transited unofficially since the 23 September movement has been considerable, sometimes without the prior or immediate knowledge of Sierra Leone border authorities. A senior LURD commander passed through Sierra Leone with several lorries suspected to be carrying looted goods from Liberia. The lorries were unaccompanied by either the RSLAF or SLP, thus raising concerns about the movement of arms into and out of Sierra Leone.[90] These incidents highlight the inefficiency of RSLAF border monitoring. Senior Sierra Leone officials called the situation "confusing" but a military officer described the failure to control LURD fighters as "a debacle".[91]

Particularly worrying is the friction between Sierra Leone's army and police at the border. The RSLAF admits that the police, with their armed Operational Support Division (OSD), have primacy in controlling activities at the Mano River Bridge in Zimmi and are meant to be the first point of contact for LURD entry, with their own troops in support. Disputes over control of that bridge are largely financially motivated. As a senior Sierra Leone security official noted, confusion on the border is all about "who deals with the loot".[92] A military officer told ICG, "it is open season" on the border, with bribes being solicited for allowing looted goods to

[87] ICG interview with UNMIL official, Monrovia, October 2003.
[88] ICG interview with international NGO representative, Freetown, October 2003.
[89] ICG interview with Jacques Paul Klein, Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Liberia, Monrovia, October 2003.
[90] For example, ICG learned of another convoy, in early October, that caught Sierra Leone's security off-guard as it went from Kambia to the Mano River Bridge, the main crossing point into Liberia.
[91] ICG interviews with senior officials in the Government of Sierra Leone, Freetown, October 2003.
[92] ICG interview with senior official in the Government of Sierra Leone, Freetown, October 2003

pass,[93] but competition for money on the bridge is diverting eyes from the serious job of ensuring that Liberia's arms stay out of Sierra Leone.

UNAMSIL peacekeepers and military observers are now working with the RSLAF and SLP to tighten the border but a proper assessment by Sierra Leone security authorities is needed to define and clarify police and army roles.[94] This is especially true as ICG was informed that there are numerous unofficial crossing points, and neither the RSLAF nor the SLP has the capacity to deal with the flow of fighters and looted goods. Many crossings are at night when there is a more relaxed attitude toward security.[95] As many as 30 to 40 canoes at a time are said to cross into Sierra Leone at a number of border villages. Moreover, as Sierra Leone enters the dry season, its eastern border is likely to see increased movement by foot of people carrying looted goods from Liberia. As an immediate and short-term measure, a mobile UNAMSIL force, with helicopters and trucks and of at least battalion size, could give the SLP and RSLAF valuable help in managing border security.

Meanwhile, disarmament has to be successfully achieved. UNMIL presented a DR action plan to the Security Council on 19 October 2003 for disarming, demobilising, reintegrating and, where necessary, repatriating fighters.[96] An initial phase of planning and awareness raising within Liberia is underway. It is expected that the second phase, from about 1 to 31 December, will involve the establishment of cantonment sites in areas where UNMIL is operating, with further sites to be added as its on-ground strength increases.[97] The Accra peace accords call for creation of a National Commission for Disarmament, Demobilisation, Rehabilitation and Reintegration (NCDDRR), as was done in Sierra Leone, to provide policy guidance on and coordinate all DR activities. It is to include representatives from the interim government, LURD, MODEL, ECOWAS, the UN and the International Contact Group for Liberia.

Fighters still talk about earlier failed disarmament programs in Liberia that left veterans holding worthless vouchers that were to be exchanged for goods and services that never materialised. Some are embittered to this day.[98] The fighters are fully aware of the disarmament program in Sierra Leone and want something similar. First, the money given to fighters in the course of the DR process must be adequate. In Sierra Leone, a reinsertion package (or "transition subsistence allowance") of up to U.S.$300 was given in two instalments. The first tranche of U.S.$150 was paid upon demobilisation while the second was paid as combatants returned to their communities.[99] UNMIL must offer enough to buy up weapons, but not so much as to create a market that will suck in supplies from abroad. Secondly, there must be good planning linked to security sector reform. Thirdly, and most difficult, new opportunities must be available immediately. If reintegration programs are delayed, including access to school, fighters will get bored, hungry and restive. A possible option suggested by the U.S. ambassador, John Blaney, is for a Civilian Conservation Corps program giving food for work.[100] The aim would be to get fighters to clean up Monrovia, but they will quickly become impatient for more concrete incentives.

Funding will remain a core problem.[101] A special program will be needed for the many child soldiers. Ensuring decent education will go a long way to breaking their links with commanders. Donors will,

[93] ICG interview, Freetown, October 2003.
[94] ICG was informed by senior Sierra Leone officials that there would be changes in the security personnel at the Mano River Union Bridge. ICG interview, Freetown, October 2003. In addition, more barriers were placed at the bridge.
[95] UNAMSIL has increased night patrols in the area of the Mano River Union Bridge.
[96] UN Security Council Resolution 1509 of 19 September 2003 mandated UNMIL "to develop, preferably within 30 days…an action plan for the overall implementation of a disarmament, demobilisation, reintegration and repatriation program for all armed groups", para. 3(f), p. 3.
[97] ICG interview, October 2003

[98] ICG interview with disarmament expert, Monrovia, October 2003.
[99] Despite initial financial and operational difficulties, especially in awarding the second half of payment, all sums were paid by February 2002 following the end of the disarmament program in early January 2002. ICG interview, Monrovia, October 2003.
[100] ICG interview with U.S. government officials, Monrovia, October 2003.
[101] The cost of disarmament might be reduced through a group program similar to that tried in Sierra Leone but poor command and control makes this unlikely. In most circumstances, disarmament is based on the principle of "one person, one gun" and aims at helping individual ex-fighters. By contrast, group disarmament aims at disarming significant numbers of fighters while allowing their commanders some leverage in deciding whom to include in the group. See "Lessons Learned from United Nations Peacekeeping Experiences in Sierra Leone", Peacekeeping Best Practices Unit, Department of Peacekeeping Operations, August 2003, p. 22.

however, need to be pressed. A lesson from other UN missions is that disarmament cannot be done on the cheap. The UN should, as an urgent priority, draw the initial money from its assessed budget for the overall peacekeeping mission in Liberia. An investment in disarmament at this stage will almost certainly save far larger sums in a few years' time.

D. REGIONAL SECURITY

Securing Liberia will also require concentration on monitoring the country's borders and neutralising its influential neighbours alike. Klein readily acknowledges that UNMIL has to rebuild Liberia with an eye on regional security developments.[102] It is encouraging that all three UN missions in the region – Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia, and Sierra Leone – are beginning to work towards a more integrated approach to regional security. A series of meetings are planned for all the UN Special Representatives in West Africa to consider better coordination of the mandates of the missions.[103]

It is useful that key UNMIL personnel understand regional issues either from their previous work with the UN during Liberia's first war or from UNAMSIL, where they were well placed to see how Liberia nearly unravelled their attempts to bring peace to Sierra Leone. The Liberian conflict now extends beyond the Mano River Union region to Côte d'Ivoire, which first armed and supported Charles Taylor, then became a victim as Liberian fighters used its western territories to wage their war.[104] It will be vital to watch where the fighters who leave Liberia go, and what new networks are established or old alliances rekindled. An important part of UNMIL deployment will involve French-speaking contingents from Benin, Togo, Senegal and Mali, who are to monitor activities along the Guinean and Ivorian borders.

The Security Council has declared its "readiness to consider, if necessary, ways of promoting compliance" with its demands that all states in the region end their military support to armed groups in Liberia.[105] The idea is good, and the Council should consider imposing targeted sanctions as an immediate response to regional leaders who violate this part of the mandate. Regional leaders know that local power is unstable and often build up proxy armies or use dissidents groups to further their own interests. In return, exiled dissidents gain military and financial support to attack their own countries. Such proxy forces can easily escape control and even return to trouble their original patrons, as major powers have learned in many parts of the world and as Côte d'Ivoire has now learned. The umbilical cord between exiled fighters and regional heads of states needs to be broken if the deadly round of state-sponsored rebellions is not to destroy West Africa's current state structure for good.[106]

Guinea is certainly a candidate for sanctions if it does not show more commitment to Liberia's peace process. There is still significant collaboration between its military and LURD. Indeed, there are analysts in Conakry who believe that President Conté may wish to retain LURD, or at least some part of it, as an auxiliary force.[107] Multiple reports indicate that ULIMO-K, which in the 1990s had been directed by a colonel in Guinean military intelligence, was incorporated into LURD with assistance from the same Guinean officer and coordination by a senior presidency official. A chain of command ran through the general staff of the Guinean army, which sent 50 soldiers of the elite Presidential Guard to Guinea's forest region to work directly with LURD. In February 2003, ICG witnessed members of the Presidential Guard loading arms and ammunition onto trucks parked in the compound of the Conakry house owned by Sekou Conneh, LURD's chairman. ICG was informed that eight of the some 100 who crossed into Liberia in Conneh's convoy from Sierra Leone on 23 September were members of the Guinean armed forces.[108]

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[102] ICG interviews with Jacques Paul Klein, Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Liberia, New York, Washington and Monrovia, July-October 2003. Klein has also made references to regional security in numerous public statements since taking up his post.

[103] ICG interview, October 2003. The preamble of Security Council Resolution 1508 of 19 September 2003, dealing with Sierra Leone, notes the need "for coordination of UN efforts to contribute to the consolidation of peace and security in the sub-region".

[104] For an analysis of Liberia's link to the Ivorian crisis, see ICG Report, *Tackling Liberia*, op. cit., pp. 14-26.

[105] United Nations Security Council Resolution 1509, 19 September 2003, p. 5.

[106] ICG interview with international NGO representative, Freetown, October 2003.

[107] ICG was informed that Sekou Conneh still reports to President Conté on LURD activities. ICG interview, Conakry, October 2003.

[108] ICG interview with UNAMSIL and RSLAF officers, Freetown, September-October 2003.

E. ADDRESSING WAR CRIMES

SGSR Klein has made public his concern about Charles Taylor's continuing political activity, in violation of the terms of his exile. He is also concerned about how to deal with those who disturb the peace process in Liberia more generally. Even if UNMIL arrests them, it is not clear what should be done. There is no Special Court for Liberia like that in Sierra Leone, and the jurisdictional and political issues are tricky.

1. Charles Taylor

The former president resigned his office and went into exile in Nigeria after accepting an offer of asylum tendered by President Olusegun Obasanjo that was conditioned on his remaining out of Liberian politics. It appears, nevertheless, that he continues to intervene from long distance and represents both an immediate irritant and a longer-term threat to stability in the country and the region. Klein does not hide his desire to see Taylor brought before the Special Court of Sierra Leone, which has indicted him for charges relating to responsibility for the war in that country.[109] Klein says he will present evidence to Nigeria's President showing that Taylor is abusing the terms of his asylum in Calabar, southeast Nigeria. He cites calls made by Taylor threatening Liberians he wishes to influence. Taylor is also believed by ICG sources to have communicated directly with his military commanders and to continue doing business in Liberia. During the September 2003 UN General Assembly session, Secretary General Annan and U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell urged President Obasanjo to warn Taylor against such interference, and Obasanjo is known to have summoned the exiled leader to Abuja to caution him in the middle of that month.[110]

Taylor's trial before the Special Court in Freetown would be thoroughly deserved and a salutary lesson for all aggressive dictators with blood on their hands. But in the interests of maintaining the credibility of negotiated solutions of the kind that is now achieving an end to the conflict in Liberia, the temptation to bring him there should be resisted unless he continues to break the terms of the deal by which he was removed from Liberia in the first place.

Obasanjo should certainly put serious pressure on the former Liberian leader, in the first instance reminding him that his privileges can be easily removed. It costs Nigeria some U.S.$30,000 per day to maintain Taylor and his entourage,[111] and the presence of the former Liberian president, responsible for the murder of probably hundreds of Nigerian hostages in 1990 and the deaths of hundreds more Nigerian soldiers in subsequent years, is deeply unpopular with the public.[112] If Taylor ignores that warning, Obasanjo should then feel freed of the diplomatic obligations he assumed by offering the original asylum deal and make it clear to Taylor that upon the next violation of its terms, he will extradite his guest back to the jurisdiction of the Special Court for Sierra Leone.

Other approaches should also be explored to reduce Taylor's influence in Liberia. One possibility is to break his commercial interests there. Taylor's extensive business empire is widely believed to be tied to the activities of important Lebanese businessmen with whose help he has monopoly control over the country's petroleum-refining business and a share in other lucrative enterprises, such as frozen food products. His main commercial partners have been accustomed to paying no tax on imported goods.[113] As UNMIL assumes more oversight of Liberia's finances, mechanisms should be put in place to uncover the various commercial activities linked to Taylor. In particular, it needs to ascertain who is collecting the former president's

[109] ICG interviews with Jacques Paul Klein, UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Liberia, New York and Monrovia, September-October 2003.

[110] On 17 October 2003, 26 members of the U.S. House of Representatives wrote to Kofi Annan and Colin Powell urging that further consideration be given to ways in which to urge Nigeria to hand Taylor over to the Special Court.

[111] Francis Kpatinde, **"**Faut-il Juger Taylor", *Jeune Afrique l'Intelligent*, N°2232, 19-25 October 2003, p. 91. ICG was given similar information in Monrovia during an interview with a Nigerian official working with the UN, October 2003. Taylor goes on most weekends to a holiday resort at the expense of the Nigerian government. ICG interview with Nigerian official working with the UN, Monrovia, October 2003. But, as a Nigerian official working in Liberia told ICG, in the classic tradition of West African diplomacy, "if you are my guest, then I have to feed you".

[112] In addition to the diplomatic reasons why President Obasanjo offered Taylor asylum, and why he may still be reluctant to hand him over to the court that has indicted him, it is also known that the two men have been close in the past and have strong family connections.

[113] ICG interview with Liberian lawyer, Monrovia, October 2003. For further discussion of Taylor's control of "Liberia, Inc.", see ICG Report, *The Key to Ending Regional Instability*, op. cit., pp. 21-23.

profits and managing his business affairs while he is in Nigeria.

Taylor's continuing activities should be disrupted not just for retributive purposes but because, as informed military sources have emphasised to ICG, he still represents a real risk for the further destabilisation of Liberia and the wider region. Most immediately perhaps, should the deteriorating situation in Côte d'Ivoire lead to renewed fighting, Taylor could quite conceivably resume his ties with old associates connected with the main insurgent group, the MPCI, and with his long-standing partner, President Blaise Compaoré of Burkina Faso. If he or his allies were to operate again in northern Côte d'Ivoire, Taylor could relatively easily re-establish direct contact across the border with Liberia's Nimba County, his original political base, and re-equip the many fighters there who are still loyal to him, in an exact replay of his first campaign, in 1989-1990.

Some observers see this as a fantasy scenario and discount Taylor as a spent force, no longer seriously relevant to current events. This is a dangerous underestimation of a man who throughout his career has shown a ruthless drive for power and remarkable ability to adjust to and overcome setbacks.[114] At least prudence should dictate a vigorous effort to neutralise him.

2. Transitional Justice

SGSR Klein has already signalled his intention to see to it that anyone who breaks the peace agreement is punished. His message to the fighters and politicians is "if you break the (Accra) peace agreement, you will be arrested and face prosecution".[115] He wrote to Taylor's immediate successor, Moses Blah, that he rejected the idea of any blanket amnesty for war crimes. This emphasis on doing justice to Liberia's 'hard men' is admirable but leaves open the question of how it can be done. The Security Council's mandate for UNMIL "stresses the need to bring to justice those responsible" for human rights violations and atrocities against the Liberian population,[116] but says nothing about procedures and mechanisms.

UNMIL's international force of armed policemen may have the capacity by relatively early in the new year to arrest at least some of those suspected of the worst crimes during the fighting of recent years or of acting against Accra. It could hand them over for trial to Liberian civilian authorities, but the country's justice system is moribund, with few judges regarded as honest or competent. The transitional government itself will contain many undesirables who cannot plausibly be asked to preside over any justice mechanism.

Klein himself does not believe that there will be any money to establish a new tribunal specifically for Liberia, whether a fully international one like those handling the cases from the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda in The Hague and Arusha respectively, or a hybrid like the Special Court for Sierra Leone. While some have suggested that the latter court's jurisdiction be expanded to cover Liberia,[117] this seems not feasible for both legal and practical reasons.[118] Ambitious but vague talk of establishing a regional court for West Africa is unlikely to crystallise in a timeframe relevant to Liberia's pressing needs.[119]

The most reasonable and practical approach would normally be for UNMIL to consult with the International Criminal Court (ICC) in The Hague about the collection and use of evidence on war crimes. The ICC is competent to deal with war crimes and crimes against humanity committed after 1 July 2000 when the state that would otherwise have

[114] In one of his more colourful metaphors, Klein has compared Taylor to a Count Dracula-like vampire, who cannot be killed by ordinary means, but only when a stake is driven through his heart. See Emily Wax, "In exile, Taylor still exerts control", *The Washington Post*, 17 September 2003.

[115] ICG interview with Jacques Paul Klein, Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Liberia, Monrovia, October 2003.

[116] United Nations Security Council Resolution 1509, 19 September 2003, p. 5.

[117] ICG interviews with Jacques Paul Klein, Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Liberia, New York and Monrovia, September-October 2003, and officials of the Special Court for Sierra Leone, Freetown, October 2003.

[118] The Special Court for Sierra Leone was established by treaty between the UN and the government of Sierra Leone to try the cases of the handful of individuals deemed to "bear the greatest responsibility" for Sierra Leone's war. Its only link to Liberia is that a number of Liberian citizens, most notably Charles Taylor, are deemed to fall within those terms. Without a treaty amendment or a new treaty, in either case bringing in the problematic Liberian interim government, the court could not consider cases or personalities restricted to Liberia's conflict. For a fuller discussion of the court, see ICG Briefing, *The Special Court for Sierra Leone*, op. cit.

[119] ICG interviews, Freetown, September-October 2003.

jurisdiction is unable or unwilling to exercise it.[120] However, in the week preceding the inauguration of Liberia's interim administration on 14 October, Liberia's then Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Lewis Brown, signed an agreement with the U.S. government providing that U.S. citizens would not be turned over to the ICC.[121] This is a serious limitation since many of Liberia's warlords and some of its worst human rights violators have U.S. passports. It is unclear what sanctions could be applied to such individuals by the U.S. government or any other authorities.[122] By signing such an agreement with a government that U.S. officials recognised contained gangsters and criminals just one week before it was to be dissolved, Washington acted in accordance with its strongly expressed opposition to the ICC, but it also severely restricted the prospect both of bringing war criminals to justice and of using a credible threat of prosecution to hold to good behaviour some of those who may have inclinations to disrupt today's fragile peace.

A number of Liberia's transitional justice issues, of course, can still be addressed by other means, notably the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) that was provided for in the Accra agreement.[123] If there are to be prosecutions of the most serious war crimes, however, the Security Council, including the U.S., will probably need to decide between cooperation with the ICC – which ICG regards as the most appropriate and feasible course of action – and undertaking the costly and time consuming construction of a new special court or international tribunal.[124]

[120] Liberia signed in 1998 but has not yet ratified the ICC statute. If a decision is taken to make use of that tribunal to deal with some of Liberia's transitional justice issues, the interim government should ratify the statute expeditiously.

[121] On this so-called Article 98 agreement, see fn. 9 above.

[122] ICG interview with Jacques Paul Klein, Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Liberia, Monrovia, October 2003.

[123] The TRC concept is an increasingly popular but still evolving concept in post-conflict situations. For the most recent West African experience, see ICG Africa Briefing, *Sierra Leone's Truth and Reconciliation Commission: A Fresh Start?*, 20 December 2002, and ICG Africa Report N°67, *Sierra Leone: The State of Security and Governance*, 2 September 2003. Liberians are not yet agreed what period their TRC's investigations should cover. The Accra agreement envisages examination of the "root causes" of Liberia's woes but provides no cut-off date. The most appropriate would probably be 1979, often regarded as the turning point in Liberia's modern history because of the rice riots that erupted in April.

[124] Except for the threat of selective prosecution they would provide ("keep the peace or you will face a court for what you did in the past"), none of these options – ICC, special court or international tribunal – would likely be of much help in dealing with one of UNMIL's biggest concerns, namely those who "break the Accra agreement". Their mandates are, or presumably would be, to treat the most serious war crimes and crimes against humanity such as genocide.

VI. CONCLUSION

Charles Taylor's departure has brought hope that genuine peace can come to Liberia. The first step is to establish security throughout the country. Construction or reconstruction can then follow, as ICG will discuss in a subsequent report. Reducing the expectations of former rebels who want compensation for helping to remove Charles Taylor will be an immediate task for UNMIL. Establishing the legitimacy of the transitional government will also prove difficult. Not all the fighters respect it. It is, as one LURD insider said, "operating from a position of incredible disadvantage".[125] The same person noted that "there will be confusion and quarrelling in the first 100 days of the transition because expectation is high, yet resources are not available".

Gyude Bryant's only protector in this period will be UNMIL, which must rapidly bring in international expertise to help reform Liberia's crumbled institutions and attract Liberian technocrats, many of whom kept a low profile under Charles Taylor or lived overseas, notably in the U.S.

"We cannot be timid and handicap ourselves from the outset of this enterprise, as we did in Sierra Leone", SGSR Klein rightly says.[126] However, UNMIL's task is all the more difficult since its own financing is fragile. Klein estimates that he needs U.S.$280 million: "three days of money for Iraq I can use to rebuild Liberia".[127] A successful outcome at the donors conference, expected to be held in December 2003, is urgently required. Given its historical connections with Liberia, the U.S. must ensure that the funds authorised by its Congress are quickly disbursed if other countries are also to make meaningful contributions. As former Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, Walter Kansteiner, noted, "the international donor community will respond to Liberia adequately only if the United States help Liberia".[128]

Of course, the country's political future will ultimately be shaped by Liberians themselves, but to have even a chance of this they will need consistent international political commitment, as well as the financing to support a large UN peacekeeping mission. There will almost certainly not be another chance to rebuild a functioning state in Liberia. One of the few middle class Liberians summed up to ICG, "If we and the international community do not make it work this time round, then basically people like me will have to leave".[129] Unless UNMIL is properly supported, the country may well lapse into a permanent state of semi-peace/semi-war that will continue to destabilise West Africa.

Freetown/Brussels, 3 November 2003

[125] ICG interview with LURD political representative, Freetown, September 2003.
[126] Statement made during briefing to UN Security Council, 16 September 2003.
[127] ICG interview with Jacques Paul Klein, Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Liberia, October 2003.
[128] Kansteiner statement, op. cit.

[129] ICG interview with Liberian lawyer, Monrovia, October 2003.

APPENDIX A

MAP OF LIBERIA



Map No. 3775 Rev. 4 UNITED NATIONS
February 2003

Department of Public Information
Cartographic Section

APPENDIX B

ABOUT THE INTERNATIONAL CRISIS GROUP

The International Crisis Group (ICG) is an independent, non-profit, multinational organisation, with over 90 staff members on five continents, working through field-based analysis and high-level advocacy to prevent and resolve deadly conflict.

ICG's approach is grounded in field research. Teams of political analysts are located within or close by countries at risk of outbreak, escalation or recurrence of violent conflict. Based on information and assessments from the field, ICG produces regular analytical reports containing practical recommendations targeted at key international decision-takers. ICG also publishes *CrisisWatch*, a 12-page monthly bulletin, providing a succinct regular update on the state of play in all the most significant situations of conflict or potential conflict around the world.

ICG's reports and briefing papers are distributed widely by email and printed copy to officials in foreign ministries and international organisations and made generally available at the same time via the organisation's Internet site, www.crisisweb.org. ICG works closely with governments and those who influence them, including the media, to highlight its crisis analyses and to generate support for its policy prescriptions.

The ICG Board – which includes prominent figures from the fields of politics, diplomacy, business and the media – is directly involved in helping to bring ICG reports and recommendations to the attention of senior policy-makers around the world. ICG is chaired by former Finnish President Martti Ahtisaari; and its President and Chief Executive since January 2000 has been former Australian Foreign Minister Gareth Evans.

ICG's international headquarters are in Brussels, with advocacy offices in Washington DC, New York, London and Moscow. The organisation currently operates thirteen field offices (in Amman, Belgrade, Bogotá, Cairo, Freetown, Islamabad, Jakarta, Kathmandu, Nairobi, Osh, Pristina, Sarajevo and Tbilisi) with analysts working in over 30 crisis-affected countries and territories across four continents. In Africa, those countries include Burundi, Rwanda, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Guinea, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Somalia, Sudan, Uganda and Zimbabwe; in Asia, Indonesia, Myanmar, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Pakistan, Afghanistan and Kashmir; in Europe, Albania, Bosnia, Georgia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia; in the Middle East, the whole region from North Africa to Iran; and in Latin America, Colombia.

ICG raises funds from governments, charitable foundations, companies and individual donors. The following governmental departments and agencies currently provide funding: the Australian Agency for International Development, the Austrian Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, the Canadian International Development Agency, the Royal Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the German Foreign Office, the Irish Department of Foreign Affairs, the Japanese International Cooperation Agency, the Luxembourgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Royal Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs, the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, the Republic of China Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Taiwan), the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the United Kingdom Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the United Kingdom Department for International Development, the U.S. Agency for International Development.

Foundation and private sector donors include Atlantic Philanthropies, Carnegie Corporation of New York, Ford Foundation, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, William & Flora Hewlett Foundation, Henry Luce Foundation Inc., John D. & Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, John Merck Fund, Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, Open Society Institute, Ploughshares Fund, Sigrid Rausing Trust, Sasakawa Peace Foundation, Sarlo Foundation of the Jewish Community Endowment Fund, the United States Institute of Peace and the Fundação Oriente.

November 2003

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