

Security System Transformation in Sierra Leone, 1997-2007

Restructuring the Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces (RSLAF)

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The working paper series on Sierra Leone is part of the research programme 'Security System Transformation in Sierra Leone, 1997-2007'. These working papers present perspectives from both Sierra Leone and the United Kingdom regarding the implementation of activities broadly defined as security sector reform (SSR) in the period towards the end of and following the Sierra Leone war.

Following a core narrative constructed around four key events in the history of post-war Sierra Leone, starting in the mid-1990s and finishing with the successful General Elections of 2007, the work draws on a range of experiences from the process that may be used to inform future SSR policy and implementation. The final output of this research is a book documenting the security system transformation activities in Sierra Leone, 1997-2007.

This series is both an intermediate stage and an important output in itself. All papers were written by Sierra Leonean and British participants in security system transformation activities. The philosophy of the series is to edit as little as possible so that the views and opinions of the individuals are expressed, as much as possible, in their own words. As such, while the papers vary considerably in style and length, they provide a unique, collective insight into the Sierra Leone security system transformation process.

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Introduction

“Those thinking about Army transformation over the coming decade would do well not to forget that the past is crucial to understanding the future of combat, no matter what technological changes may occur. The world of the 21st century is likely to be fraught with peril and uncertainty.”

Clausewitz on War

Security is the preparation for war, the prevention thereof, defence against hostile activities and response to threats and aggression directed towards a state’s territory, sovereignty, population and infrastructure. With security there is stability leading to peace, economic growth and prosperity and a conducive and enabling environment for successful development. Development can only succeed in a country secured within borders and with people free from fear and violence. To achieve this, there is a need to ensure that the security architecture of a country is efficient, appropriate and affordable.

The current concept of human security, which places individual human beings at the centre of security, transcends the absence of war and the state of peace as defined technically in terms of militarism and conflict between states. According to classical definitions, security is the protection of the state, whereas what is actually central is the protection and welfare of the individual citizens living within the state. In other words, human security is a “people-centred concept.” It is based on the same premise as the related concepts of human rights and human development, all of which place the human being as the principal object of concern, regardless of race, religion, creed, ideology and nationality.

Restructuring the security sector is the process whereby, for instance, an oversized army is reduced in numbers and absorbed into a new structure in a phased manner. The Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces (RSLAF) is currently over-strength because, among other reasons, soldiers are not being discharged on time. Under the country’s constrained budget, RSLAF missions and tasks cannot be fulfilled while it is over-strength. The RSLAF is now being restructured for current conditions and reduced to a size commensurate with its defence missions and tasks.

The international community and donors are looking to the Government of Sierra Leone (GoSL) to down-size its armed forces in line with the improved security situation in the country. Failure to do so could prejudice donor aid. The number of RSLAF personnel is high; their numbers cannot be sustained in the long-term. Certain age-groups need to be decreased to avoid major structural problems in the future. At the same time, there are shortages in officers and specialist trades that cannot be made redundant. In sum, there is a need to bring in young recruits who will be RSLAF’s future. Room has to be made for these recruits.

Reforming and building the capacity of RSLAF can only be guided by political will and strategic direction as espoused by both the Sierra Leone Constitution and the GoSL Defence White Paper. From these two documents, it is clear that the functions of the security sector include guarding and securing the country, preserving its safety and territorial integrity, participating in its development and protecting the Constitution. This implies support to civil authorities in the promotion of wider national interests, encompassing the promotion of regional peace and stability, humanitarian operations and disaster management activities, both nationally and internationally.

These goals require professionalism, commitment, dedication, courage and a sense of purpose. It is essential that the basic needs of our soldiers are met, that they are cared for and managed properly and have a sense of belonging. Only by adapting to changing circumstances with candour and by taking precise and resolute decisions in the interest of troop welfare can we ensure their loyalty.

Achieving these aims requires both immense support from the GoSL in terms of resources, as well as a cordial working relationship and mutual understanding of purpose with donor agencies and the Ministry of Finance. Without such support, RSLAF’s task becomes impossible.

This paper covers a variety of past, present and future issues of the RSLAF. It analyzes the recent conflict in Sierra Leone and its aftermath, including implications for civil-military relations and the role of the United Nations (UN) Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL). The transformation of Sierra Leone’s armed forces is analyzed in detail, including the role and importance of the United Kingdom (UK) International Military Assistance Training

Team (IMATT). Also included is a discussion of a variety of policies and activities that were implemented in support of building RSLAF capacity and institutional support, such as the Military Aid to Civil Power (MACP) policy, Operation Pebu and Operation Silkman. Finally, the current image of RSLAF is discussed, as well as future challenges to sustain and consolidate the considerable successes we have had over the last nine years.

Reflections on civil-military relations in Sierra Leone

The military performs its role and tasks in conjunction with other stakeholders, such as government ministers, civil society and the international community. The state provides the purpose, the military the means and the people the will. No military can be effective unless it is founded on sound traditions of discipline, professionalism, bravery and inspirational leadership. It is also a truism that no military operates effectively without civilian partners.

However, instead of advancing on these fundamental truisms, during the 1990s, Sierra Leone's armed forces collapsed for a variety of reasons, threw the entire society into anarchy with catastrophic consequences and alienated the RSLAF even further from the population. This led to the development of a deep-seated public animosity against the military.

The civilian perspective holds several negative conceptions of RSLAF. They include the military intervention in politics through a series of coups, the unprofessional attitude of the majority of the military, displayed in particular by soldiers who perceive themselves to be above the law and the military's inability to stop the atrocities perpetrated by rebels, and in some cases, soldiers.

Meanwhile, the military blamed civilian authorities for the strained civil-military relationship and lack of discipline, claiming that politicians interfered in the running of the military, threw professionalism and competence overboard, failed to promote economic development and maintain the rule of law and could or would not improve their conditions of service. The lack of respect for soldiers and the low esteem of the military, along with the creation of the Kamajors² as a parallel military force, widened the gap between the army and the population.

Sierra Leone's armed forces - past and present

Sierra Leone's Armed Forces before 1991

The earliest evidence of a modern defence force in Sierra Leone was in the late 18th century when some small arms and six cannons were distributed among settler groups to defend Sierra Leone Company (a British commercial enterprise) against the indigenous Temnes. From then on, various efforts were made by the British to maintain a force for the purpose of defending imperial interests. What is known today as the RSLAF evolved from the Royal West Africa Frontier Force (RWAFF). At the country's independence in 1961, the force was known as the Royal Sierra Leone Military Forces (RSLMF) under the command of a UK officer, Brigadier R. D. Blackie. Independence did not immediately affect the structure of Sierra Leone's armed forces, which resembled in all important respects the UK military structure.

Before the conflict erupted in 1991, Sierra Leone's armed forces could be described as a ceremonial and conservative army of 3,500 personnel. While there was an outward show of pretence, professionalism and efficiency were lacking. Nonetheless, despite its internal diversity, the army remained united. Recruiting and training were carried out on an ad hoc basis; training by foreign sources (the UK, Egypt, United States, China, Ghana, Nigeria and Tanzania) was the norm.

In spite of its unity and its training by foreign sources, the armed forces exhibited a widespread lack of discipline. Recruiting mechanisms were often political: the so-called "card system" allowed politicians and the powerful to award cards that guaranteed entry into the military. Merit mattered, but not nearly as much as personal loyalty and conformity. Although a core of professional and committed officers tried to maintain standards, they were in a distinct minority. The army lacked strength, capability, motivation and equipment. (At the time, the only weapons the army could boast of were 12.7 Chinese Machine Guns, General Purpose Machine Guns (GPMG), Light Machine Guns (LMG), 81mm Mortars, Rocket Propelled Launchers (RPG) and Tubes as support weapons.)

The pre-war army was an army of foot soldiers; it was neither motorized nor mechanized and had no armour or air support. It had no specialized troops or special

operations equipment and suffered from exceptionally stifling political control. Its ability to respond to internal and external threats was practically non-existent. In addition, the army during the 1960s was polarized between the southern- and eastern-based Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP) and the northern- and western-based All People's Congress (APC). This dichotomy did not contribute to effective coordination of forces.

In the months before the 1967 general elections, several senior northern and western area officers were arrested for allegedly plotting to overthrow the SLPP government headed by Sir Albert Margai. They included Major M. S. Tarawallie, who later became a Major General and Force Commander, Brigadier John Bangura, Majors Farrah Jawara, Seray Wurie and George Caulker, who later became a Colonel. In 1967, the SLPP became the first party to introduce the army into politics in Sierra Leone after losing political power in elections that year. Because the SLPP would not accept defeat, the party inspired the incumbent Force Commander, Brigadier David Lansana, to stage a military coup, without success. When the country achieved Republican status on 19 April 1971, the Royal Sierra Leone Military Forces were renamed the Republic of Sierra Leone Military Force (RSLMF) by an act of fiat. It was a single service until the addition of a Naval Wing in 1979.

The APC Government under President Siaka Stevens appointed the Force Commander and Inspector General of Police as Members of Parliament. As war erupted in 1991, the military command structure was overthrown, and military coups staged, first by junior officers and later by soldiers.

The Armed Forces – 1991-1997

The Sierra Leone armed conflict, which started in 1991 and ended in 2002, was the product of many years of state failure and depredation. It was rooted in bad governance, consistent violation of basic human rights and endemic poverty. Government accountability was non-existent, political expression and dissent had been crushed, each regime had become increasingly impervious to the wishes and needs of the people. Democracy and the rule of law had ceased to exist. By 1991, Sierra Leone was a deeply divided society simmering on the edge of anarchy.

As a consequence, the army and the people were not prepared for the rebel war. The army was ill-equipped and badly led. Many of the card bearers deserted; many others stayed in the Freetown area. The government of the day, and subsequent governments, both military and civilian, had no alternative but to recruit hurriedly to fill the gap in personnel; consequently, selection and training of the 1991 intake of officers were poor.

In 1995, under the National Provisional Ruling Council (NPRC), the Defence Headquarters was established with a newly-created Air Wing. This limited restructuring initiative, carried out by a military regime that had achieved power through a coup, resulted in the elevation of the head of the military to Chief of Defence Staff (CDS). The RSLMF was officially renamed the Armed Forces of the Republic of Sierra Leone (AFRSL).

Since there were no criteria for the recruitment of other ranks and for screening to exclude recruits with criminal records, the resulting attacks on civilians were predictable. Allegations began to surface that gross human rights violations were taking place: men were robbed, beaten or killed and women were abused and raped by soldiers who came to be known as *sobel*s (meaning soldiers by day and rebels by night). This led to the loss of trust of the civilian population that the army was supposed to protect. The situation between soldiers and civilians was aggravated further with the emergence of the Kamajors. It is no secret that in this anarchy, civilians captured soldiers and burned them alive.

By the end of this brutal war, nearly 50,000 Sierra Leoneans had lost their lives, thousands had been maimed and a quarter of the population had been made refugees. A similar number had been internally displaced, the economy was in shambles and poverty was deeply entrenched. Hatred, vengeance and a culture of violence further divided communities; the country ranked in the lowest position in the United Nations Human Development Index.

From 1996 – Democratic Elections and Military Coup

The democratic government elected in 1996 and subsequent military rule of the NPRC were unable to sufficiently stabilize the country. In addition, the new SLPP government had great problems understanding and handling the post-NPRC SLA in 1996-1997; there was savage fighting between the *Kamajors* and SLA in 1995-1996. Initial armed forces restructuring was therefore badly handled and led directly to a coup of the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) in 1997.

Because of the politicisation of the military, undisciplined, poorly trained and ill-equipped soldiers put the country at risk. No effective opposition was organised and the AFRC coup succeeded. The country plunged into chaos and anarchy until March 1998, when the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) restored the democratically-elected government to power through Nigerian-led Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG). At the end of the war, the armed forces ushered in a new set of soldiers who had been promised they would be in charge of the army within the following five years. The SLPP government proved to be too weak to resist such politicisation of the military.

The fragile peace in Sierra Leone collapsed in January 1999, when remnants of AFRC and the RUF attacked Freetown because they felt that the SLPP government had not honoured the Conakry Peace Accord relating to amnesty. After coming back from exile in early 1998, the SLPP Government oversaw the execution of 24 senior officers who had been involved in the AFRC coup. Plans were also under way to execute 72 civilians found guilty of treason, including the Minister of Information and Broadcasting in the APC government. There is a firm belief amongst senior officers that this plan to get rid of undesirables would have been far more extensive and protracted without the presence of IMATT. There was a vehement national and international condemnation of these gross violations of human rights.

After the SLPP government was restored in 1998, it resumed the armed forces re-structuring process. The Nigerian-led remnants of indigenous officers began to recruit the “New Army” from social groups that were

known to have been anti-military. Partly in reaction to the “illiterate” officers staging the 1997 coup, much emphasis was placed on educational standards. The 1999 recruitment process took place in two ways, the first dominated by the Nigerians and the second by Vice-President Joe Demby and Minister of Defence Samuel Hinga Norman. The entry of these officers coincided with the death of then Nigerian Chief of Defence Staff, General Maxwell Khobe. The change in Nigerian government resulted in a sharp loss of Nigerian interest in Sierra Leone and support to the SLPP government; withdrawal of ECOMOG from the country began. The Nigerians were accused of double standards, engaging in diamond smuggling and collaborating with the RUF, thereby prolonging the war and preventing UN troops from working effectively. ECOMOG was therefore initially integrated into UNAMSIL.

At this time, then President Tejan Kabbah was considering the idea of disbanding the entire army and following the model of Haiti, which has a police force with expanded powers and no army. This idea had been opposed by Khobe, who held that it would be unwise to disband a body of men who were battle-tested. It was against this backdrop that the UK came to the rescue with IMATT, which paved the way for reforming and building army capacity. Since 1999, strengthening the capacity of RSLAF has been a central component of Sierra Leone’s security sector reform (SSR) process, as well as a key component of the peacebuilding and stabilization process in Sierra Leone.

Deployment of UNAMSIL, the largest peacekeeping mission in Africa at the time, brought stability, succour and relief to a people traumatised by war. UNAMSIL maintained a strong military presence; hard-line insurgents finally understood that violence and terror would not be tolerated and national reconciliation of all institutions was underway. The Pakistani Brigade (PAKBAT BDE) firmly dealt with unrest in Kono and the 7 Nigerian Battalion (NIBAT 7) ran convoys through Makeni to Kabala and Bumbuna. As part of its objective was to help the national government consolidate its position so as to assume full responsibility for security, UNAMSIL successfully conducted the 2002 proportional general and local elections and stayed in Sierra Leone until the end of 2005. Thus, it was the timely intervention of ECOMOG, UNAMSIL and the UK that ended the bloodshed and restored peace to our beloved motherland.

Transformation of the Armed Forces

Following the restoration of peace in 2002, the need for an effective military machinery had become obvious. In particular, RSLMF has been targeted for restructuring. In January 2002, the new Ministry of Defence (MoD) was opened and the Armed Forces were officially renamed the RSLAF in recognition of a new start for a new force. At the same time, the Defence Headquarters ceased to exist and was replaced by two organizations working in parallel, both of which were subordinate to the MoD. They were the HQ Joint Force Command (JFC) and HQ Joint Support Command (JSC), both under the command of IMATT. The Chief of Defence Staff was just a figurehead; armed forces restructuring was effectively being run by IMATT.

JFC brought the land, maritime and air component of RSLAF together under the operational command of the Joint Force Commander, who was responsible for the planning and conduct of all RSLAF operations. RSLAF operations were controlled by IMATT from the Headquarters of JFC and in Cockerill Barracks in Freetown. The task of the JSC has been to establish personnel, administration, logistics, and other organisational requirements to support RSLAF. Operational readiness and the ability of the armed forces to react quickly and effectively to any incident or threat has depended on JSC's ability to support the front line forces, which was achieved in a single and unified command structure under IMATT.

The main objective of the MoD within the strategic environment was established: to evaluate threats to national security, political and economic development. The MoD is also tasked to identify relevant formations and units to counter perceived threats to national security and develop appropriate, affordable security policies, programmes and procedures to deal with them. However, the SLPP government began this restructuring process by promoting favouritism and bypassing rules and regulations to ensure that some of their military and civilian supporters (such as Civil Defence Force (CDF) Kamajors) were put in key positions at MoD. Those selected and groomed during the APC regime prior to the conflict now served under SLPP political leadership. Professional standards were as prior to the conflict: sidelined for political

interests. Some of these civilians were not properly trained or qualified for their appointments. They were given positions of Deputy Secretary, the equivalent of Brigadiers (10 years service) and Senior Assistant Secretary, the equivalent to Colonels (7 years service). The Director General was assessed as a Major General. There was no juxtaposition between the Director General and the Chief of Defence Staff with the Deputy Minister caught in the middle. Inevitably, this created tension at the MoD. There was nothing IMATT could do to counter this political interference; it had inherited a highly-politicised military establishment and was faced with the challenge of simultaneously reforming the military while absorbing the implications of the country's culture. By the same token, the Sierra Leone military was learning to understand the culture of IMATT in an effort to build a successful collaboration for reform.

Threat analysis carried out at this time indicated that the majority of security threats to the country were internal, not external, and that the Sierra Leone Police (SLP) should have primacy in addressing internal security issues, with the option of Military Aid to Civil Power (MACP). In other words, soldiers would no longer be responsible for internal security. Before the advent of the MACP policy, there was bitter acrimony, misconception and rancour between the SLP and RSLAF, which eventually led to the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) delineating army-police responsibilities. Since the MoU, the division of labour between army and police is much clearer; the relationship much more effective. Soldiers no longer serve at check points; they can only deploy when asked to do so and must return to barracks when ordered. There has been retraining and reorientation of RSLAF staff to accept the doctrines of constitutional supremacy and improvements in the welfare of officers and men, both in service and retirement.

Financial control and accountability plays an important part in the control and accountability of RSLAF and is now exercised by Parliament, through the MoD with the Director General carrying overall responsibility. Funding is tight; except in urgent situations, funding policy calls for resources allocated by the government for one purpose should not be reallocated to another without political authorization.

Within a democratic framework, RSLAF has to deal with the challenge of transforming itself into a 'user friendly' organisation. There should be modalities for promoting a mutually beneficial relationship with the national legislature. The relationship between members of the armed forces and the civilian populace cannot be overemphasized. Until this is internalized and the culture of democracy accepted and institutionalized through systems and behaviour, the armed forces will not be able to adjust to the realities of survival in a democratic system.

The International Military Assistance Training Team (IMATT)

IMATT provides military advice to the MoD; and the Commander of IMATT is the military adviser to the GoSL. The timely intervention of the UK was instrumental in ending the war and establishing a stable, secure environment. The relevant UK aim for Sierra Leone is to support the government of Sierra Leone in the development of effective, democratically accountable and affordable armed forces, capable of meeting specified defence missions and tasks.

IMATT provides military advice to the MoD; the Commander of IMATT is the military adviser to the GoSL. Its primary operational role is to train RSLAF to meet international military standards. IMATT has integrated its officers into the RSLAF chain of command, not simply as advisers but also as serving staff.

The visit of the former British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, and UK government ministers to Sierra Leone in 2007 had an important symbolic purpose: it publicly demonstrated the UK's commitment to Sierra Leone.

The fact that IMATT entered into armed forces reform in Sierra Leone as a neutral force has allowed it to provide objectivity in the management of security matters and issues. Its presence has led to more public confidence in the country's security reform and operations. Even if IMATT did not fully understand the intricacies of the security problems in Sierra Leone initially, its presence acted as a buffer between civil society and RSLAF, whose relationship had been rife with suspicion and distrust.

From the beginning of the IMATT presence, the people preferred talking to them rather than to the military; public confidence in the potential transformation of the RSLAF into a democratic and accountable institution increased. While IMATT developed an executive role and the final say about the running of the RSLAF, its most important function was its presence in army staff positions. This positioning of trained, professional officers within the RSLAF chain of command proved to be a vital strategy by which to train Sierra Leonean officers to take over these posts eventually.

The Military Reintegration Programme

Sierra Leone's Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) of RUF, AFRC and CDF combatants began in 2000. The DDR programme had no option but to offer blanket amnesty to all soldiers and officers in June 1999 and invite them to take up arms again. Thus, the challenge for DDR became the transformation and integration of ex-combatants coming out of a vicious civil war into a viable and effective fighting machine.

The new armed forces would be comprised of former combatants of the SLA, RUF, CDF and the AFRC who had been re-integrated through the DDR Programme. This was followed by an intensive refresher course at the Armed Forces Training Centre (AFTC) and a Special Military Reintegration Programme (MRP) for the purpose of integrating all ex-combatants into a single armed force. About 2500 personnel, 150 of which were officers, were absorbed into RSLAF through the MRP in 2001/2002.

The DDR screening process was mainly focused on literacy and numeracy. All warring factions were absorbed into the army; some were given command appointments. Promotion was accomplished through appraisal reports; there were no noticeable differences in promotion based on past allegiances. Many ex-combatants were sent to take training courses in Ghana, where some failed woefully. Their problems were compounded when they became the first casualties of the downsizing phase for officers.

The British training programme began in the year 2000, partly as an exit strategy for UNAMSIL peacekeepers. In June 2000, a team comprising 200 trainers drawn from the 2nd Royal Anglican Regiment of the British Army arrived in Freetown to begin a training programme named Operation Basilica. Located at the Benguema Training Centre (BTC), this six-week programme trained 1,000 recruits. At the same time, 40 army captains attended a re-training course sponsored by the UK government at the Ghana Staff College. The second phase of the training programme, funded by £20 million (approximately US\$35 million) in UK funds, facilitated the training and retraining of 8,500 officers and soldiers required for the new army. So far, rightsizing RSLAF has been carried out in phases: phase one in January 2004 retired 784 personnel, phase two in January 2005 retired 1000 personnel and phase three in January 2006 retired 1092 personnel.

Many of the 1999 officers' intake have since been trained through IMATT's Operation Silkman, attending the UK's Short-Term Training Team's (STTT) Platoon Commanders' Battle Course (PCBC). In the main, this was the group recruited by the SLPP to be the "New Army". IMATT personnel were tempted to turn to these officers as the best chance of consolidating reform efforts to wash away the stains left by their predecessors, believing that the new officers had the flexibility, open-mindedness and idealism of young officers everywhere. However, these new officers viewed senior officers with contempt, as they mistakenly believed their only reason for joining the army was to rid the Sierra Leone army of the legacy of such officers. However, this picture of officer competency was more complex: some senior officers were highly principled and had distinguished themselves not only in Africa, but far beyond. Many of these officers were highly principled and had acted accordingly (then as now), but they were the exceptions and had often been marginalized by previous governments.

RSLAF officers worked side-by-side with IMATT, learning at all levels of the military hierarchy and leading eventually to a Command Review. The Command Review illustrated the need to abolish the Joint Support Command (JSC) and establish the Assistance Chief of Defence Staff (ACDS) Personnel and Training in parallel to the one already existing for Operations and Plans and Support

and Logistics. The Review also emphasised the dire need for downsizing and clarifying roles between civilians and military, IMATT and RSLAF. IMATT relinquished most executive roles and returned to advising and mentoring, thus accommodating the need for local ownership.

Restructuring Sierra Leone's armed forces

Restructuring the security sector is a process whereby an oversized army is reduced in phases to a new structure. Without the restructuring programme, there would be no financial headroom for future improvements. Restructuring will have a major positive impact on RSLAF in the long-term; the new structure will provide a significant number of promotions spread across the whole restructuring period. It is easy to be negative about this process, but the overriding objective is to ensure that restructuring is conducted in a positive way and that the RSLAF would avoid stagnation. All parties involved envisioned a smaller, more capable, professional and better-equipped force enjoying an enhanced package of Terms and Conditions of Service (TACOS). Such a force could not be achieved without restructuring; the full support and cooperation of all formations and commanders was required.

The Down-sizing Process: Who was Involved?

The Defence Council (DC) agreed amongst themselves on the future shape and size of RSLAF. In purely numerical terms, the force figure of 15,500 troops was reduced to 10,500 by December 2006. This reduction in numbers was achieved gradually; the first phase occurred in January 2004.

In the second down-sizing phase in 2005, the resettlement target was 1000 personnel; their past allegiances were not deemed relevant. However, only those with 10 or more years' service received a resettlement pension; in addition, a financial package was offered to those with less than 10 years' service. Officers were not involved at this stage, as there was already a deficit of over 300. Since there was also a shortage in most specialist trades, they were not included in this second down-sizing phase.

The net loss in the Order of Battle was only two infantry battalions (1,086 posts) towards the end of the restructuring process. However, those selected for resettlement were not necessarily from those two battalions, but were to be taken from across the whole RSLAF infantry. The down-sizing process emphasised the importance of providing clear and comprehensive information not only to the RSLAF, but also to the public about all aspects, including the reasons for troop reduction and its implications. IMATT briefings throughout the RSLAF chain of command about the details and implications of down-sizing proved invaluable.

The Restructuring Process – On-going Needs

The process of re-establishing, re-structuring and re-training RSLAF began in earnest in 2000. If past mistakes are not to be repeated, avoiding those things that went wrong with RSLAF in the past must be deemed of the highest importance.

By 1967, serious distortions had occurred in the structure of the armed forces. In addition, some military officials found themselves being used to resolve the unsettled political succession problem during this period. This event laid the foundation for direct interference by politicians in pure military matters; the armed forces were drawn into mainstream politics and politicking.

The result of this politicisation has been that the armed forces today contain officers who did not meet the standard requirements for recruitment and others who were promoted beyond their qualifications on the basis of political considerations. Others had key roles in the overthrow of democratically-elected governments or had committed gross human rights violations during the war years.

Therefore, while much has been done, there is a need for vigorous re-screening and restructuring of RSLAF in order to fully facilitate the restoration of discipline and professionalism. All officers who were recruited without meeting the standard requirements should be released from service. Besides removing undesirable personnel from the army, such an exercise would drive home the message of professionalism within RSLAF.

It is also necessary to continue to restore dignity, social prestige and service pride to armed forces members. An important step is to address the problem of ordnance, particularly uniform items. A soldier's turnout matters a great deal to him and constitutes a major factor in how he is perceived by the wider society. New RSLAF personnel should be issued with uniforms, kit and equipment to meet their basic administrative and operational needs. Battle and support equipment must not only be of high quality, but must be procured with due regard to the capabilities required, roles to be undertaken and funding limitations. The Defence Tenders Board should endorse requirements and specifications prior to orders being placed. Tender and procurement processes must be competitive and transparent.

Another critical concern is the need for retraining and reorientation of personnel in order to keep the military out of politics and prepare them to be able to perform their military tasks. Within a democratic society, armed forces should be trained, controlled, equipped and deployed in such a way that they are robust enough to act as an effective deterrence to groups who might resort to armed violence. Throughout the years of restructuring and reform under discussion here, Sierra Leone has witnessed the continued, low-lying threat of the return of armed violence and conflict; the military still need to be aware of the potential to relapse into conflict.

The international community should assist the government in equipping and modernizing the RSLAF through provision of modern arms, barracks, uniforms, communication equipment and vehicles. Parallel to specific RSLAF issues, the wider society should encourage the promotion of a culture of merit, fairness and high standards. The best way to do this is by developing a political environment which insulates military personnel from direct contact with politicians and a bureaucracy that operates outside the military chain of command.

The RSLAF should also carry out a programme of internal education among its personnel so as to limit their expectations. It is vital that RSLAF personnel understand that the country's resources have been depleted by the war; the military has to compete for scarce resources like other segments of society and may have to operate with a great deal of improvisation. The wider society, especially

political opponents of the government, should not seek to interpret the government's inability to provide all that is needed as unwillingness or lack of interest in the military by the ruling political party. In other words, all political actors, both internal and external, should send clear signals to soldiers that the wider society expects them to make sacrifices, perform their functions according to their constitutional duty, obey the incumbent government and make the best use of what is available.

However, beyond this initial training programme, it is important to institute and fund a comprehensive programme for continuous RSLAF training. For example, some of the vehicles essential for meaningful training are presently in dire need of spares and basic equipment. Similarly, institutional facilities are needed to undertake even the most elementary and fundamental training. Since the inception of the RSLMF in 1961, the army has not had even a Junior Staff College, let alone a Senior Division. In as much as IMATT has helped us with the building of the Horton Academy, IMATT should now organize and provide staff for Junior Division Staff Course (JDS) training from 2009 onward.

Efforts should also be intensified to identify and confirm offers of additional staff training from other countries worldwide. Such offers must be considered as part of an overall training strategy managed by the MoD. Without such outside support, the organizational reforms and capacity required to establish sustainable and accountable armed forces under effective civil control may not be achieved. Training in other countries assists RSLAF to assess its own standards, acquire new techniques and broaden the outlook of the participating personnel. This also serves as an incentive for the rest of the armed forces to work hard and adhere to high professional standards and loyalty. In turn, training in other countries has a stabilizing effect on the military command structure, as it provides for the most capable officers to rise to leadership positions. Officers who gain leadership positions under this system are less likely to plot coups or participate in partisan politics.

Support to Killed and Wounded in Action

Restructuring activities have included payments for personnel Killed-in-Action (KIA), Wounded-in-Action (WIA) and natural death beneficiaries. 3,029 beneficiaries were paid in 2004 for personnel KIA. In phase one of WIA, 290 personnel were paid terminal and disability benefits in 2005, while in phase two, 345 personnel were screened and certified as medically disabled. The latter personnel are still awaiting payment. IMATT and DfID have been instrumental in the handling of KIA payments and WIA support; in a country in dire economic straits, non-payment of KIA and WIA would have led to obvious security concerns.

Due to the nature of injuries sustained by combatants during the war, it is difficult, and in some cases, impossible, for a number of discharged WIA to find employment. During the restructuring process, it was agreed that WIA would be further assessed to ascertain the level and percentage of disability in order to decide on an enhanced benefit payment over and above the benefits they were entitled to under their terms of service. A technical committee was formed to establish a formula to allow fair and equitable payment to WIA personnel qualifying for disability pensions. The proposal was forwarded to the Chief of Defence Staff that an individual's salary should continue to be his monthly pension. Conscious of the fact that those KIA paid the supreme price, a KIA committee was also formed to ensure that they did not die in vain and to ensure that families left behind receive benefits. A verification exercise was designed to curb possible fraudsters.

A total of 1,466 beneficiaries were entitled to payments of benefits due to natural deaths of RSLAF personnel. This is causing a major challenge both for RSLAF and the government and has significant security implications. Most dependents continue to occupy quarters which are needed by serving personnel. It is however, unfair for them to be told to hand over their quarters when payments of their benefits have not been made yet.

Improving the Welfare of Officers and Men

Improving the welfare and living conditions of current and ex-servicemen would address the need to ensure that the military stay out of politics. At the moment, most of the defence estate is in a dilapidated state. Except for the newly-constructed barracks produced through Operation Pebu and the rehabilitated Teko Barracks, virtually no substantial maintenance has been conducted for the past 10 years. Furthermore, the recent conflict inflicted serious damage on many buildings with the result that water supply, latrines, sewage disposal and electricity wiring are now highly inadequate. It must also be noted that the strength of the army was less than 3,000 men at the onset of the war, but eventually rose to over 15,500, with major consequences for accommodation.

Therefore, a major practical step is to accommodate all RSLAF personnel in barracks built to acceptable standards. If the current unsatisfactory arrangement is not addressed, it could lead to disaffection and lack of discipline. Single personnel should be accommodated in barracks and not, as is currently standard, be required to find accommodation in the local community. Additional married quarters are also required. This will minimize RSLAF interaction with wider society and undue exposure to socio-political pressure. Most importantly, such an arrangement will also assist the military leadership in monitoring its personnel, restoring the traditions and values of the military profession and facilitating preventive measures to counter any attempt to mobilize troops for a coup. On the other hand, when soldiers are too isolated from the general population, this can lead to misunderstanding and mistrust. Some integration and community interaction should be encouraged.

Apart from accommodation, living standards of RSLAF personnel also need to be significantly improved. Among the lower ranks, poverty and economic insecurity have been cited as factors that encourage military involvement in politics. It is necessary to ensure that military personnel and their families are given middle class living conditions and assistance to buy modest houses upon retirement as part of the National Social Security and Insurance Trust (NASSIT) programme.

There should also be adequate capability available to ensure that personnel are fit and ready to carry out clear and defined instruction, thus discouraging the habit of leaving their duty posts unnecessarily. The current situation is making regimental administration difficult, if not impossible. At times, rice is available but with no condiments, and Ration Cash Allowances (RCA) are often paid late. Similarly, most Formation and Unit Troop Carry Vehicles (TCVs) are unserviceable due to the non-availability of tyres, oil, air and fuel filters to conduct routine servicing. Thus, transport capability at tactical level is slowly grinding to a halt.

A comprehensive post-service programme for effective reintegration into civil society is also imperative for Sierra Leone's future stability. By the nature of the military profession, some of the most vital skills developed within RSLAF are not utilized in the civil sector. This is particularly true for the infantry, which constitute the bulk of the military. Consequently, the most common job in the civil sector available for this category on retirement is that of security guard, where wage structure and conditions of service are unbecoming rewards for their distinguished service. This cannot be reconciled to the skill level and lifestyle that they have acquired in the service. Those former soldiers who seek to avoid undergoing a similar humiliating experience may be tempted to acts of corruption, crime, or succumb to material inducements and promises from individuals pursuing their own political and economic interests. A programme must therefore be introduced to enable soldiers to acquire skills for post-service life to enable them to engage honourably in a civilian capacity. Coupled with good governance, transparency, leadership by example and political will, this would help to keep soldiers out of coup planning.

Welfare requirements of the armed forces are indeed multi-dimensional and demand urgent attention. However, considering the limited resources available both to the government and particularly to the armed forces, these demands need to be addressed in order of priority. The five major priority areas to which limited resources available should be focused are:

- Operational imperatives must take priority over welfare and estate.
- Provision of barracks accommodation for all soldiers.

- Provision of basic amenities and conveniences necessary to make such accommodation habitable by soldiers and their families.
- Pay review and increased salaries and allowances of soldiers.
- Introduction of a comprehensive post-service programme to enable soldiers disengaging from service to reintegrate properly into civil society.

These five priority areas, if addressed effectively, will go a long way to discourage officers and men from the temptations of intervention in politics and governance.

Operation Pebu

Operation Pebu has been ongoing since March 2003. The original idea was to tackle RSLAF's accommodation needs up-country as an interim measure between the disarmament of combatants and the consolidation of the new RSLAF in battalion sites. The initial plan involved construction at seven sites: Simbakoro, Moyamba, Yele, Kambia, Kabala, Pujehun and Kailahun. Office and technical accommodation was provided first and was completed by mid-2003, when the original form of the project was suspended. Domestic accommodation was the second priority; the work re-started at Pujehun and Kailahun in April 2005 after a number of delays in building according to the original design.

The initial costing of generic modern barracks, with a proper road network, complete electrical and plumbing systems and all ancillary structures ranging from schools to a market place, was considered unaffordable at US\$ 7 million for each site. The aim for Operation Pebu – domestic accommodation – was to maximize the number of units that could be provided with funds available. Consequently, accommodation was designed at the most basic level to last three-to-five years until the future structure of RSLAF could be determined. The assumption was that the size of RSLAF would be reduced over time, and a programme of permanent building would begin to replace the temporary Operation Pebu housing.

Originally, there were two principal stake holders, DfID and the GoSL, both of which contributed funding and manpower, with DfID at an approximate cost of Le2.33 billion (approximately US\$0.77 million) and Le2.45 billion

(approximately US\$0.8 million), respectively, per barrack. The barracks in Kailahun, Simbakoro and Kabala were funded by the GoSL; those at Moyamba, Pujehun, Yele and Kambia were funded by DfID. The project evolved over time, so that there are now three principal stake-holders: DfID, IMATT, RSLAF/the Government. The RSLAF and the Government funded timber and corrugated iron; DfID and IMATT funded cement, aggregate and sand. The latter were supplied on 'call off' contract, i.e. the project manager is required to instruct the contractor when deliveries will be required, but the invoices are sent directly to DfID for payment.

The original (2003) project manager structure had a five-member Steering Committee based at the MoD. Subordinate to that was an IMATT project management team headed by a UK Lieutenant Colonel. Since commencement of the project, it has become quite obvious that the ambitious completion date of May 2004 was an unachievable dream. The experiences acquired during implementation of Operation Pebu have warranted a re-think of the concept leading to revised calculations based on troop production capacity and availability and level of construction supervision. In order to increase RSLAF ownership and capacity, a Chief Officer Engr Regt as Project Manager was appointed in April 2006; IMATT (and to some extent the Steering Committee) ceded some of their managing role to this officer. Operation Pebu project sites at Kailahun and Pujehun are ongoing. When completed, these two projects will house approximately 350 soldiers and their families.²

In a related developmental project, IMATT funded the refurbishment of married quarters at Teko Barracks in Makeni. The work has been carried out expeditiously and to a high standard by 4 Brigade with IMATT mentoring. IMATT has provided Le200.6 million (approximately US\$66,000), which has enabled the refurbishment of 90 blocks of six married quarters each, housing 540 families.

National Security Architecture

A very important development in addressing security challenges in Sierra Leone was the creation of the National Security Architecture (NSA), which coordinates the implementation of all security matters. The NSA consists of three key strategic forums: the National Security Council (NSC), the National Security Council

Coordinating Group (NSCCG), and the Office of National Security (ONS). The NSCCG is the forum for heads of primary security institutions and senior public officials from key line ministries. The NSCCG provides security direction on policies, priorities and objectives to the security sector and intelligence agencies. It also coordinates and monitors the activities of the Provincial Security Committees (PROSECs) and District Security Committees (DISECs).

Through the community, DISECs provide feedback mechanisms to the NSA, thus allowing citizens to participate in the governance of their security by participating in discussion of early warning signals indicating threats to state security. RSLAF plays an important role in all activities of the ONS from the NSC, NSCCG, PROSECs, DISECs, Joint Intelligence Committee, and HQ Operational Command to prevent and respond to external and internal security threats.

Training and Recruitment

Training and re-training are essential ingredients in the rebirth of the military as an institution of national pride and integration. The vision of the Personnel and Training Branch is to ensure professional, highly motivated personnel and training services manned, developed and configured to deliver, within budget, the highest quality of services.

Training facilities at Benguema and Horton Academy⁴ have been upgraded. Current training is intended to build the capacity of RSLAF to effectively carry out its constitutional responsibility. There have also been moves made to improve internal opportunities to further academic education up to the PhD level with the aim of recruiting more graduates into the army.

With the assistance of our donor partners including IMATT, UK, USA, China, Mali, Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Kofi Anan International Peacekeeping Training Centre (KAIPTC), Greece, Ghana, Nigeria and Egypt, many overseas military training activities have been taking place.

On the educational front, RSLAF has launched its literacy and numeracy project to build on the training already delivered to RSLAF by the AFEC. By increasing the output of such training, it is hoped to significantly develop standards within RSLAF and increase the number of soldiers benefiting from attendance. To date, 3,400 RSLAF personnel at various levels have been trained. AFEC, in conjunction with Partners in Adult Education Co-ordinating Office (PADECO), recruited more civilian teachers to do literacy training nationwide for RSLAF. This is carried out with active IMATT financial support.

RSLAF is also aware that delivery of high quality medical care at military medical centres is hampered by current difficulties faced by the Defence Medical Services. With the help of IMATT, medical staff have been able to undertake refresher training, a number of medical nurses have been upgrading their skills and other specialists have qualified as State Enrolled Community Health Nurses.

Operations

RSLAF experience in military operations dates back to World War I. In the past two decades the country has participated in many operations: suppressing internal insurrection, low-intensity conflicts and international operations in support of Mano River Union (MRU), ECOWAS and UN mandates. In spite of this experience, noticeable areas of difficulties often hampered performance in these operations. To meet international standards, adequate training and preparations, including logistics and equipment, for personnel in all military operations are required.

Military operations are still an evolving concept. Our experiences in various operations have not been properly documented and the lessons learnt are yet to be studied to enable the country to evolve its own doctrine. The peculiarities of Peace Support Operations (PSO) in Africa have also opened up new areas of intellectual research and these experiences would help provide the framework for the doctrine of RSLAF operations, including PSO training.

RSLAF, Women and Security

In October 2000, UN Security Council Resolution 1325 proposed a framework to address women's security issues at local, regional and international levels. It recommends that the UN Security Council, UN member states and civil society should endeavour to address four important issues: the need for the participation of women in all decision-making and peace processes in conflict states; the importance of integrating gender perspectives in training for peacekeeping operations; the obligation to protect women from gender-based violence in conflict zones; and the need to mainstream gender into UN reporting systems and programme implementation mechanisms.

The effect of the Sierra Leone conflict on women was devastating. More than a third of the population was displaced and living in camps or fled to other locations. The fighting increased the overall burden placed on women. During the war, women did not join the armed forces in any number. However, since the end of the war, the military has made significant progress to ensure the inclusion of women in the military.

There have been a number of policy adjustments regarding recruitment, training and retention of women in RSLAF; through the use of quotas, we have achieved a significant increase in women's participation in the military. While we have maintained the academic criteria necessary to recruit suitable personnel, recruitment base standards (including physical fitness) have been restructured to accommodate more women. Dialogue, discussions, seminars and workshops with women advocacy groups have been encouraged to create awareness in our female soldiers. Opening up the institution to women is enhancing better civil-military relations.

Efforts have also been made to attract qualified women to adopt leadership roles in order to actively participate in decision making at higher command levels. (The highest-ranking woman in RSLAF currently is a Colonel.) However, while many mechanisms have been put in place to monitor problems based on gender issues, sexual harassment policies for the RSLAF need to be established.

The RSLAF Military Justice System

During the 1970's, the right to appeal charges of treason was quashed. Under the 1990's regime, soldiers and officers were charged through 'summary dealings,' popularly known as 'orders.' There was no right of appeal except through a body called 'prerogative of mercy.' An RSLAF Act of 1961 (as amended) set out the categories of military offences. Violation of these offences may have led to the accused being charged. Before then there had been no framework that could be called the legal branch. The most important development that has taken place in the Legal Branch during the period under scrutiny here is the reintroduction of a Military Criminal Court System and a Court Martial System.

A building at the Joint Forces Command Headquarters at Cockerill now serves as the Court Martial Centre. In the absence of adequate professional staff to run the Court, IMATT recruited two civilian lawyers who are currently serving the positions of prosecutor and defence counsel for a period of two years. It is expected that by the end of their two-year contract, the army will have its own lawyers, since there are presently four captains in different stages of training at the University of Sierra Leone, sponsored by an IMATT scholarship scheme.

IMATT and MOD/RSLAF relations

The present relationship between IMATT and RSLAF can be described as cordial, professional, friendly and effective. IMATT operates with an ethos characterized by partnership, respect, transparency and flexibility. RSLAF has responded in a similar fashion, thus ensuring that a strong partnership is maintained. The RSLAF has benefited in particular from IMATT training in the critical activity of planning with an eye to eventual fiscal sustainability of the military by the GoSL.

The only area of great concern in the IMATT-RSLAF relationship was the initial planning of Operation Pebu, where RSLAF views were not considered. There have been claims and counter-claims by IMATT and RSLAF about the success and failures of Operation Pebu and other building projects. The RSLAF claims that if IMATT had listened to them, they could have concentrated on building modern barracks on just three battalion sites with DfID financial support. In turn, the government's own

contribution could have been used to build the capacity of the army in terms of equipment and fuel procurement. The RSLAF would have preferred building army accommodation similar to those constructed by DfID for the SLP.

IMATT itself has countered that RSLAF should also shoulder responsibility for Operation Pebu, as the RSLAF established programme management, yardsticks and timelines, all of which led to low-quality construction and even theft from construction sites. It is my view that Operation Pebu was a flawed concept. It was first framed as a temporary measure, but exhibited conflicting expectations between RSLAF and IMATT. However, we should not be overly mesmerised by the mixed success of Operation Pebu and allow it to overshadow IMATT's overall success.

IMATT holds the view that with training and the right influences, new officer recruits could become commanders who would match the quality of officers that exists elsewhere in West Africa. These recruits are a bright, ambitious and restless group; it is understandable that IMATT would consider them to be the best vehicle for RSLAF reform. IMATT believes that these young men are in a hurry, and impatience could easily turn to frustration and action. IMATT is optimistic that this group will be the first to command RSLAF competently without foreign 'guidance' or 'handholding'.

Although both members of RSLAF and IMATT are positively disposed to the Core Review, especially the reduction of RSLAF to 8,500, some members of RSLAF are concerned that downsizing without corresponding force multipliers will leave the army with less capacity.

At the initial stages of IMATT's presence in Sierra Leone, they held executive appointments at the MoD, JFC and JSC. IMATT gradually handed back these executive appointments, except for Chief of Operations at JFC and Director of Intelligence and Security at the MoD. STTT's also assisted in resuscitating RSLAF, following the conflict by conducting battalion level collective and special arms training. IMATT helped RSLAF in re-establishing and building civil-military relations by conducting post-war confidence patrols with RSLAF and funding some civil-military cooperation projects.

IMATT is a bold experiment and an innovative strategic concept. Over time, it has changed markedly from an executive to an advisory agency. It is a concrete manifestation of the UK commitment to establish a serious long-term partnership with Sierra Leone to address the issues that present challenges to our mutual security interest in this new century.

Command autonomy

There will always be a temptation for power players to seek support from elements in the military to enhance their political objectives by appealing to ethnic solidarity, economic difficulties, social disharmony, religion, etc. Such appeals might not be overt and accordingly, may escape the immediate attention of the intelligence community. It is therefore the task of the military leadership to maintain professionalism and monitor formal and informal relationships.

There has to be the political will and consensus in the wider society to discourage the re-introduction of politics within the armed forces. It should be the norm for our elite to avoid intrusion into the recruitment, promotion, training and appointment processes of the armed forces. Once clear policy and guidelines have been established, they should be allowed to run their natural course within the military command structure. There should be no covert or subtle efforts to bend accepted rules and regulations governing these processes in favour of particular individuals. The military leadership should be given the autonomy to implement policies laid down by the Government and enforce rules and regulations without undue pressure.

If abuses occur, let them be corrected and managed within the military command structure. Military personnel with one foot in the armed forces and the other in political circles should be exposed and barred from leadership positions.

We must stop promoting and rewarding people according to time served, and start demanding performance. All good militaries separate the wheat from the chaff, and so must we. Integrity is the most important attribute of a military officer.

The RSLAF has welcomed the role of IMATT in reforming and building the capacity of Sierra Leone's army and would like to see a skeletal staff of IMATT remain even after its final, official withdrawal. With IMATT's continued presence on the ground, it will continue to promote objectivity and transparency and attract funding based on realism.

The present image of the RSLAF

The MoD and RSLAF are now instruments capable of serving the public good and providing aid and protection to their citizens. The MoD's institutional capacity is sufficient to perform its responsibility to direct, manage and ensure RSLAF accountability, improve the management of fixed assets and provide better trained civilian and military staff.

Due to their recent horrible experience, a cross-section of Sierra Leoneans now believe and espouse that there is 'no sustainable development without security.' If serious and sustainable measures are not taken to build and maintain a strong national security apparatus, then the nation's vision of a peaceful, prosperous and progressive society will remain an empty dream. Most Sierra Leoneans are appreciative of the government's security reforms, reflected in the ongoing reform of the military and police, the creation of ONS and other such institutions. However, more needs to be done to build, consolidate and sustain the national security apparatus. In particular, the country needs modern, well-trained and equipped, highly motivated and dependable security forces imbued with professional values.

The new RSLAF is a credible, non-partisan, well-trained fighting force. The peaceful, legitimate and fair elections that took place in August-September 2007 indicated the return of stability. Territorial integrity is being maintained by RSLAF within the bounds of MACP; the RSLAF is strategically deployed throughout the country, enabling internally-displaced people and refugees to return safely to their homes and families.

In conjunction with the SLP, RSLAF is fulfilling its role in the existing NSA and continues to provide the enabling, peaceful and conducive environment necessary to

guarantee sustainable development. In the 2007 elections, RSLAF supported the SLP within the MACP framework by pre-positioning troops before, during and after the elections to respond to the threat of conflict. It also provided troops for joint mobile patrols with the SLP before the run-off elections when tensions were high. Considering the restive agitation of the masses, the SLP could not have done it alone; when the SLP requested its assistance, RSLAF played an essential role in ensuring a peaceful election process.

After years of wrenching conflict that tore Sierra Leone apart, the progress made in the restructuring and modernisation of the country's armed forces is gratifying.

Future Challenges

The next decade (2010-2019) could pose both political and military challenges to Sierra Leone, due to its frontline role in safe-guarding the territorial integrity of the country and its quest to participate in UN, AU and ECOWAS peacekeeping missions. The characteristics of the environment in which RSLAF will operate in the next decade dictate that its forces should continue to be restructured. While globalization is turning the world into one village, our force deployment could be limited to West Africa. Today, local or internal conflicts in one state are easily internationalized by global media coverage and can quickly draw in other nations. Therefore our nation needs to re-evaluate its force structure to ensure that we meet the geo-strategic challenges of our immediate environment.

The challenge is to design a national defence programme that will deliver capable armed forces within the limits of national resources. This involves long-term planning in every aspect of defence to enhance RSLAF capabilities. By making difficult choices and trade-offs, the nation will be able to preserve the core capabilities and flexibility necessary to meet Sierra Leone's security needs. It is therefore prudent for IMATT to leave a skeletal staff after their mandate to assist RSLAF with this long-term planning in achieving its defence missions and military tasks.

RSLAF has considered the following reasons why it needs longer-term IMATT assistance:

National Interests: With a land border of over 3,000 kilometres, Sierra Leone needs a military capable of blunting enemy action along the borders.

National Objectives: One security objective of Sierra Leone is to deter any aggression that could threaten the nation's security and, when deterrence fails, repel or defeat military attacks. The RSLAF requires access to force multipliers to accomplish its national objectives. IMATT could advise the GoSL in the future on the issue of modern force multipliers.

National Strategy: The RSLAF needs to be trained in PSO participation which requires specialist training skills. IMATT could establish a PSO training centre in conjunction with the UN.

National Military Strategy: The RSLAF does not have any defined military doctrine for achieving its defence missions and military tasks. IMATT needs to advise and assist RSLAF in designing a national military strategy.

Allies: One factor which states cannot afford to ignore when structuring their forces is the alliance system. Most documents regulating relations among allies include clauses that can make mandatory intervention on the side of the attacked member state. Thus, the structuring of RSLAF cannot ignore the French factor (their alliance with Guinea), even if all that the nation may need to do is to seek a counterbalance elsewhere, such as with the UK.

Technology: Technological advancement has altered the nature of war. Continued technological modernization of the RSLAF would enable it to better cope with the realities of the modern battlefield.

Resources Constraints: The performance of a nation's economy directly influences the structure of its forces. There are, however, never enough resources to satisfy all the nation wants; hence the need to establish requirements, set priorities, make decisions and allocate resources to the most critical needs. What resource constraints dictate in force structure is the need to arrive at a better-informed judgment concerning the level and

mix of the armed forces required. The structure of RSLAF must consider the possibilities of revenue generation during peace time, such as through the use of the Army Engineers in civil construction works.

Available Forces: At present, Sierra Leone has no formal ally, no prospective plans for mobilization and no articulated reserve system. This implies Sierra Leone would rely on the forces in active service to cope with immediate challenges until such time that new entrants can be trained and deployed. Therefore, the proposed structure for RSLAF should articulate a reserve force policy.

Assessment of Forces: Force assessment seeks to consider what needs to be done (objectives), how it is to be done (strategy), what the state is up against (threats), and what is available (resources). The variables employed in the comparative analysis of forces are qualitative (leadership, doctrine, training, morale, logistics, intelligence, technology and initiative) and quantitative (order of battle, fire power, mobility, survivability, accuracy, range and weapons effects). Hence, a structure is needed which would enable an annual assessment of the RSLAF through joint exercises.

Threat: When there is a strong perception of threat to the security of a nation, there is likely to be a willingness to forgo other needs to prioritise development of a credible force to respond to the threat. The same cannot be said for a nation that is in a state of relative peace. Sierra Leone's contiguous neighbours are Liberia and Guinea. Liberia at the moment cannot police its borders effectively; the continuous occupation of Yenga by Guinean Armed Forces (GAF) shows total disrespect for the sovereignty of Sierra Leone. Both countries pose threats to the sovereignty of Sierra Leone. In assessing these threats, Sierra Leone must consider conflicts of interest, contiguity, capability, credibility, intentions, circumstances and vulnerabilities. When these aspects are analysed with respect to Sierra Leone's neighbours and its quest to contribute peacekeeping troops, it would be risky to conclude that the country should downsize its armed forces without force multipliers.

Conclusion

Military intervention in politics and governance has undermined Sierra Leone's democratic development. The RSLAF has suffered from a serious decline in discipline and professionalism. As recent Sierra Leone history attests, members of the armed forces compromised allegiance to the state in their collaboration with partisan interests; the coherence of the military and its fighting capability were gravely undermined. Furthermore, as relations between members of the armed forces and their civilian compatriots deteriorated, the military lost the public support it needed to perform its duty to defend the country's territorial integrity.

Since 1999, RSLAF reform, restructuring and capacity-building have been central components of Sierra Leone's SSR process and a key component of the peacebuilding and stabilization process. ECOMOG, UNAMSIL and IMATT all played crucial roles in ending the war; IMATT played a subsequent role advising and mentoring the military restructuring process. DDR was an attempt to integrate ex-combatants into a single armed force; it has occurred through the deployment of both UNAMSIL and IMATT, re-integration of combatants into the armed forces, KIA/WIA Support and Operation Pebu.

At the same time, the MoD and RSLAF have experienced a significant decline, in real terms, of their budgetary allocations. Consequently, the preparation of security institution strategic and financial plans has become somewhat of an academic exercise because most of what is normally included in strategic plans is not achieved at the end of the year. For instance, the aspiration to have a viable air wing as a component of RSLAF is for now a distant dream, while the maritime wing is grossly underfunded. Military estates require significant improvement and investment if service personnel across the country are to live in standard accommodation. But for the donated vehicles from various friendly governments, it is difficult to move personnel and essential supplies to locations where they are required. However, even these highly valued gifts are now becoming difficult to manage, as both running and maintenance costs are having a telling effect on the lean budget.

Defence is an expensive but necessary business. Its requirements stem from the need to protect national assets and interests from internal and external threats. After all, the main causes of the RUF war emanated specifically

from the plundering of our essential resources in terms of marine, minerals and agriculture. The 1991 RUF insurgency, which escalated into the Sierra Leonean civil war, started as a cross-border incursion by rebels and their accomplices operating from bases in Liberia. Throughout the duration of the war, the rebel movement was constantly reinforced by supplies from across the border. It is widely known that the weakest points in our national security are the porous borders (both land and sea). Over the years, this has made it relatively easy for foreigners of all nationalities to walk or sail in and out of the country. They have habitually smuggled out our diamonds, gold, cash and food crops and poached fish from our rivers and sea. Even more horrible was the relative ease with which hoodlums and rebels entered under the guise of liberating the people, only to engage in mass murder, looting and destruction.

In post-conflict Sierra Leone, an integral part of our national security vision must be to vigorously protect and police our borders from all intruders, smugglers, poachers and saboteurs. In the past, we have not been particularly good at protecting our assets. The reasons for this are complex but lie in many years of injustice, bad governance, corruption and mismanagement. *If we are to ensure that history is not to repeat itself, we need to have loyal, strong, reformed, capable, well-motivated and equipped forces that answer to a democratically-elected civilian government.*

The present APC government has inherited a number of problems and recognises the contribution that RSLAF can make to support civil authorities with wide-ranging tasks within MACP, such as reconstruction, rehabilitation and joint off-shore patrols to arrest potential offenders. But funding is tight and the economy is currently 70% financed by international donor agencies. Our soldiers are living in deplorable conditions, some of the worst in the world. The Core Review, which will lead to right-sizing, is a welcome development, but should be compensated with corresponding force multipliers and equipment modernization. Efficient Army Engineers and Army Agricultural Units for income generation are also needed. Similarly, planning joint exercises to assess the state of combat readiness in RSLAF are needed. Conscious effort must be made to train and enable RSLAF to protect the economic resources of the nation, participate in PSO and aid the government in non-combat roles.

The question is how long our dependence on foreign aid will last. Currently Sierra Leone receives about 40% of UK's Africa Conflict Prevention Pool (ACPP). If the complete picture of all IMATT/RSLAF programme funding is considered, IMATT has contributed 50 to 70% of RSLAF's budget. This is not easy for hard-working taxpayers in the UK to understand. But while we realise that the UK spends a disproportionate part of its ACPP aid budget in Sierra Leone, it is a fact that RSLAF needs more. We also realise that the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank are not disposed to fund or support any military spending in the near future; in fact, they frown upon it. The point is that the patience and support of donors is running out. It would be unwise to expect substantial support long after 2012.

The underlying vision for RSLAF is for a nation that institutes an effective government devoid of corruption and offers Sierra Leoneans an improved quality of life through economic progress and prosperity in a safe and secure environment. This is what RSLAF is working to achieve in difficult circumstances.

General recommendations

- The Chief of Defence Staff and all those in command appointments should have the knowledge, efficiency and technical competence to lead the RSLAF forward.
- Train-the-trainer courses should be held to assist in the provision of training aids; equipment for RSLAF training institutions should be prioritized.
- Assistance should be sought to secure force multipliers vis-à-vis artillery pieces, fighter aircrafts, etc. This can be achieved through foreign donations and the national defence budget.
- Establish Army Engineers and Army Agricultural Units for income generation.
- IMATT should maintain a skeletal staff when its mandate expires.
- Modern barracks should be constructed with all amenities in order to enhance troop welfare.
- Continued democratization of the military should be ensured; the paradigm of civilian constitutional oversight through the MoD should be promoted.
- International best practices and values within the military should be secured through discipline, respect for human rights and constitutional authority.

Footnotes

¹ Major General Alfred Nelson-Williams is Chief of Defence Staff, Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces.

² Kamajors refer to traditional hunters in Sierra Leone, many of whom joined the Civil Defence Force (CDF). The CDF supported the Government of Sierra Leone against the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), and were led by Samuel Hinga Norman.

³ Operation Pebu is, in October 2008, finalized in Kailahun and Pujehun.

⁴ Over the reporting period of 2002 to 2007, the Armed Forces Training Centre (AFTC) has turned out an estimated 210 Second Lieutenants (2/Lt) and 940 young soldiers, at an annual rate of 30 officer cadets and 120 recruits. It has regularly conducted career courses for young officers, junior and senior non-commissioned officers (NCO's) on an annual basis. These courses included profession and career training, including Platoon Commander Battle Courses, Platoon Sergeant Battle Courses, and Section Commander Battle and Combatant Team Commander Courses. Over the period, the Horton Academy has been conducting continuing professional development courses for officers to enable them to take over any battalion/brigade staff and command positions commensurable to their ranks. The Horton Academy provides officers with basic understanding of the complexities of a Peace Support Operations (PSO) environment.

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