

## **GUINEA: REFORMING THE ARMY**

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## GUINEA: REFORMING THE ARMY

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

After decades of bad governance and misuse, the armed forces are a potential source of instability which could still throw Guinea and the region into chaos. At the very least, if not reformed thoroughly, they will continue to pose a threat to democratic civilian rule. The recent establishment of a transitional government and the ongoing, although fragile, electoral process are a significant opportunity. Getting army reform wrong could have disastrous consequences for the country's political future. Getting it right entails numerous technical challenges, redefining the relationship of the armed forces with civilian power and addressing the critical issue of military financing, in order to create disciplined, effective and affordable armed forces. The suspension of the second round of the presidential elections, originally scheduled for 19 September, has heightened tension. Though the army has remained neutral, fears remain that if the election is not completed successfully and without excessive delay, it may seize the opportunity to intervene again. This would be a major setback to any prospect of medium-term reform, which requires respect for civilian rule and oversight.

The army's well-deserved reputation for indiscipline and resistance to democratic civilian rule is a product of its troubled past. The country's first two presidents both manipulated the armed forces to their own political ends, allowing insubordination to develop, and bought off senior ranks with patronage opportunities. Mutinies over poor conditions, and waves of irregular recruitment characterised the last years of President Lansana Conté. The junta that took over on his death in December 2008 further exacerbated the situation in the military. Its leader, Dadis Camara, used the army against political opponents, fostered tension between the junta and the rest of the armed forces and recruited ethnic militia.

The armed forces today are divided along ethnic and generational lines and notorious for indiscipline, human rights abuse, insubordination and criminality. While military life is difficult and unrewarding for most, a handful of senior officers live opulently. Financial management is clouded in corruption; civilian and military oversight institutions are weak or non-existent. The army is bloated and poorly trained. With public confidence in it at an all-time low, reform would be a major step to help Guinea

achieve a secure environment in which democratic institutions can grow.

Since General Sékouba Konaté took over as interim leader in December 2009, reforming the armed forces has assumed new importance. Basic discipline has been improved, and the transitional authorities have welcomed the May 2010 report of an Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)-led security sector reform (SSR) evaluation mission. The army has thus far remained neutral in the lengthy and delicate electoral process. Dadis Camara, whose support in the institution is fading, remains in exile in Burkina Faso and effectively contained. But the extent to which senior officers have really bought into a meaningful reform agenda has yet to be tested.

The new president will face dilemmas and pressures pulling him in contradictory directions. He first needs to build consensus in the army to accept reform and to align expectations in the ranks with what the country truly requires. Balancing the need to keep the military on board with the need to reduce numbers and reform financial management will be tricky. While the president must satisfy some army concerns to assure his security and that of the transition in the short-term, the most contentious issues cannot be ignored for long. Army attitudes combine a willingness to engage on SSR with fears for loss of jobs and privileges and possible punishment for human rights abuses. The fears are exacerbated by awareness of the deep antagonism felt against it, especially after the massacre of opposition supporters on 28 September 2009.

There is a risk that the military will be willing to relinquish formal power but want to retain significant back-room influence and will ultimately refuse subordination to civilian rule on issues that concern it. This is what has happened in neighbouring Guinea-Bissau, where EU- and UN-led SSR has failed because the army has played the international actors off against each other. Good international coordination will be vital in order to avoid this in Guinea.

The objective of the reform process is to establish a much smaller force, accountable to civilians and capable of meeting the country's security needs. The most pressing

priority should be to get a larger part of the army to understand and embrace that objective without letting it dictate the nature and pace of the process. The longer-term challenges will be to enhance civilian oversight, cut the size of the force and establish financial transparency. These steps should go hand-in-hand with improved living and working conditions for the armed forces. The president must also resist the temptation to use the army for partisan ends, relying instead on democratic credentials to govern effectively.

Senior officers must come to recognise that comprehensive reform is in the military's best interest and that any attempt to undermine it would damage their credibility; reinforce anti-military sentiments in society; render the army less able to share in international peacekeeping missions; engender political instability; and result in further isolation of the country, potentially including international sanctions such as travel bans for individual officers and their families.

The international community will probably not be as heavily involved in reform of Guinea's security system as it has been in Liberia and Sierra Leone, although offers of aid and training will likely be forthcoming. Most donors are in wait-and-see mode, ready to negotiate help with a new civilian administration. Their help needs to be generous and long term, because the situation will be fragile for some time, and any reverse would threaten gains elsewhere. Reform of its army will take sustained effort and both require and feed into broader public sector reform, with important stakes for West Africa.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### To the new President:

1. Frame a national security strategy, including a white paper, to elaborate the role and mandate of the security and defence forces, and work to establish national consensus around reform, including armed forces' buy-in.
2. Begin discussions immediately with the armed forces, with a view to:
  - a) implementing a freeze on recruitment and conducting, with donor financial and ECOWAS technical support, a comprehensive army census as a first step to gauge resource needs;
  - b) demilitarising the administrative structures, including those overseeing management of the army itself and involving reduction of the number of officers working in the directorate general of the armed forces support command (*l'intendance*) and other parts of the defence ministry; and
  - c) initiating a comprehensive review of management within the armed forces that prioritises transparency, restoration of discipline and clarification of the legal status of personnel; priority should also be given to improving the management of arms stocks.
3. Protect the army from political manipulation by:
  - a) ensuring that senior officer appointments are subjected to the recommendations of legal regulatory bodies such as the National Defence Council (Conseil National de Defense), the defence ministry and the armed forces command;
  - b) building civilian oversight capacity by a training program for members of the key oversight institutions;
  - c) resisting the temptation to use the armed forces for partisan ends and recognising that any attempt to politicise them would damage the institution further; and
  - d) improving conditions of service, so as to tackle the army's widespread malaise and corruption.

### To the Army:

4. Continue to support reform efforts in good faith and work towards a common commitment to ensure a professionally-run force.
5. Cooperate fully with efforts to ascertain the true size of the armed forces and participate in good faith in discussions to determine future size.
6. Participate thoroughly in efforts to restore discipline and address injustice within the armed forces, including through reinforcing mechanisms to investigate cases of abuse suffered and/or committed by military personnel.
7. Cooperate fully with all government efforts to install transparent financial management; prioritise this issue in internal management reform; and consider to this end creating two broad chains of command – one dealing with operations, the other with support – so as to adapt the administrative structure to respond better to needs.

### To ECOWAS, major donors and other members of the international community:

8. ECOWAS and the UN Office for West Africa (UNOWA) should facilitate a donors roundtable conference, involving the new civilian president, to discuss and establish the framework for international support to SSR. Donor countries should recognise that army reform in Guinea will be an expensive and

- long-term undertaking, but one with considerable potential gains for the country and all its neighbours.
9. European countries, especially France, and the U.S., in liaison with ECOWAS, should support establishment of an International Military Advisory and Training Team (IMATT) to provide strategic and operational advice for a comprehensive long-term training program.
  10. All international partners of Guinea should:
    - a) follow the lead of national and regional actors in order to enhance national ownership of SSR;
    - b) prioritise coordination among donors so that an army keen to preserve privileges cannot play them off against each other, as has happened in Guinea-Bissau;
    - c) condition continued support for reform on progress in addressing financial mismanagement in the armed forces and depoliticisation in their management; help set up robust financial management structures through deployment of international experts; and
    - d) support the democratic government against any military attempt to resist reforms, including by continuing to send strong signals on the unacceptability of military intervention in politics and making clear that any attempt to derail the reform process by creating disorder will be met with sanctions. If the new president requests it, ECOWAS should consider offering tailored security support to allow the new president to face down potential spoilers in the armed forces.

### **To the UN Security Council:**

11. Recognise that army reform requires, as much as it will enhance, regional stability and take account of the situation in Guinea when considering the rate of drawdown of the UN mission in Liberia (UNMIL), slowing that process if significant progress is not made in army reform in Guinea or matters there otherwise deteriorate.

**Dakar/Nairobi/Brussels, 23 September 2010**

## GUINEA: REFORMING THE ARMY

### I. INTRODUCTION

Reforming the armed forces is crucial to dealing with Guinea's deep-rooted political problems. Since 1958, successive regimes have used the military for political ends. This has not only undermined its evolution as a professional institution, but has also made the army itself a source of political instability. Reforming this army, which is widely reputed for indiscipline, human rights abuses, factionalisation and unwillingness to submit to civilian power, is a huge challenge.

The challenge is all the greater given the current fragility in the political situation. The first round of voting in the presidential elections passed off peacefully and relatively satisfactorily, given the challenges, on 27 June. The results, which came out on 20 July, gave Cellou Dalein Diallo 43.69 per cent and Alpha Condé 18.25 per cent. Although the subject of criticism from Alpha Condé and other losing candidates, these results are now accepted, leading to a second round between Diallo and Condé. This second round has been victim of multiple delays, which have raised tensions between supporters of the two remaining candidates. No firm date has been announced at the time of going to press.

Since Sékouba Konaté took over in December 2009, he has secured his position and dismantled much of the power base of his predecessor, the leader of the military junta (Conseil National pour la Démocratie et le Développement, CNDD), Dadis Camara. The number of troops patrolling the streets of Conakry has been reduced considerably, while renovation of some military barracks in the capital is at an advanced stage. The Kaliah military training camp, notorious for training ethnic militias, has been shut down.<sup>1</sup> Dadis Camara, now living in exile in Burkina Faso, still has some influence in the army and among some in his south-eastern Guinée Forestière region. But this influence has been declining since the September 2009 massacre, and while he and his henchmen from 2009 remain potential spoilers, they are contained at present.

Over the past ten years, the size of the armed forces has risen dramatically from 10,000 in 2001 to a reported 45,000 in 2010, although the latter figure needs to be treated with great caution.<sup>2</sup> This rapid growth has resulted from both formal and informal recruitment. Erratic mass promotions have created an inverted structure, with more officers than simple soldiers, eroding professionalism and straining the defence budget. Indiscipline, criminality and impunity are rife, while working and living conditions for rank-and-file soldiers are deplorable. Over the years, little has been done to promote competence and provide the training necessary to match the grade structure. As a result, professional standards have deteriorated, contributing to mistrust between the army and civilians.

Although reform of the armed forces has been on the agenda since General Lansana Conté came to power in 1984, it has assumed new importance with the window of opportunity created under Sékouba Konaté in 2010, generating much interest both within the armed forces themselves and in the international community. Pursuant to Article 3 of the Ouagadougou accord of 15 January 2010, ECOWAS appointed General Lamine Cissé to lead a joint UN, African Union (AU) and Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) SSR evaluation mission.<sup>3</sup> Its May 2010 report now constitutes the broad basis for a comprehensive process. However, the report is

<sup>2</sup> These figures were given to Crisis Group by the inter-army reflection commission on restructuring of the armed forces, Conakry, February 2010. They are similar to those in the «Rapport d'Évaluation du Secteur de la Sécurité en République de Guinée», Mission conjointe de la Communauté Economique de l'Afrique de l'Ouest, de l'Union Africaine et de l'Organisation des Nations Unies pour la Réforme du Secteur de la Sécurité en République de Guinée, May 2010. They need to be treated with some caution however, as the armed forces have a strong incentive to talk up their numbers, in view of the prospect they may receive international SSR funds partly based on size in the near future. However, the basic expansion over the past decade is not in doubt. Crisis Group interviews, researchers for the report, Conakry and Dakar, May 2010.

<sup>3</sup> Crisis Group interview, General Lamine Cissé, Conakry, February 2010. The Ouagadougou accord, signed in January 2010 following the shooting of Dadis Camara in December 2009, created the transitional government and institutions in Guinea and made Sékouba Konaté the interim head of state.

<sup>1</sup> Crisis Group interviews, senior officer, Conakry, February 2010; civil society activist, Forecariah, May 2010.

vague on certain aspects, such as force size and financial issues. Although the current Guinea administration has expressed its support for army reform and the conclusions of the Cissé report, the new democratic government that results from the September 2010 elections will not necessarily be bound by this and will have to formulate its own response.

The possibility exists that the armed forces will try to impose their own vision of SSR on national and international efforts and may resist moves to improve financial transparency. The new president will in any event face difficult dilemmas – he will want to keep the army on side, but must not miss the opportunity to impose civilian oversight and proper financial management. The international community will want to ensure that efforts go beyond attempts to improve the material conditions of the armed forces to include defining its place in a new democratic dispensation. Security sector reform is not just a matter of addressing the malaise that is rife in the military. It is also about reformulating the armed forces' relationship with civilian power and contributing to addressing the country's dysfunctional political dynamics.

Thus far, the army has remained neutral in a very delicate electoral process. However, scepticism towards civilian rule is still fairly widespread in the army, and there are fears that if the process is derailed, the army may seize the opportunity to step in and further delay the transition, with possibly highly negative consequences. Tensions have already arisen in the first three weeks of September over the postponement of the second round, initially scheduled for 19 September, including violent clashes between supporters of the two remaining candidates, Cellou Dalein Diallo and Alpha Condé. Clashes on 12 September between supporters of the two presidential candidates led the government to suspend political rallies.<sup>4</sup>

Building on the May 2010 report of the joint mission, this report concentrates on the armed forces, both the land army and the smaller components (navy, air force and gendarmerie, the latter a paramilitary police under army command as is typical in Francophone countries). A full overhaul of the whole security system is undoubtedly necessary. The police are a vital part of any successful SSR. After years of de facto military rule, they feel marginalised. As with many other parts of the Guinean public service, they have low morale and are widely seen as cor-

rupt. The somewhat more limited focus is due to the army's potential spoiler role, in both the country and region, and hence the urgency of getting its reform right. The report outlines the armed forces' evolution under independent Guinea's three previous heads of state and the legacies for current reform efforts. Secondly, it looks at the current state of the military and (to a lesser extent) other security forces, considering recruitment issues, indiscipline, impunity, factionalisation, civil-military relations and life in the armed forces. Thirdly, it considers the efforts at army reform and lays out a way to make them succeed.

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<sup>4</sup>It was reported that one person was killed, and several supporters from both sides were injured. See "Fresh clashes in Conakry ahead of presidential run off", Radio France Internationale (RFI), 12 September 2010. On 18 September Alpha Condé, who favours further delays in order to sort out technical problems, said on RFI that a badly organised election could provide an opportunity for the army to hold on to power.

## II. THE MILITARY FROM SÉKOU TOURÉ TO THE CNDD

### A. THE SÉKOU TOURÉ YEARS

#### 1. The army and the revolutionary nation

The Guinean military was formally created on 1 November 1958 following French withdrawal. The bulk of the initial force was drawn from Guinean officers serving in the then-French colonial army. The task of building the new army was given to Captain Noumandian Keita, under whose leadership it was meant to become a modern institution to accompany the country's hope-filled first steps on the path to nationhood.<sup>5</sup>

The sudden withdrawal of French forces did not make for a smooth transition. Retired officers who served in both the colonial and the new army reported several consequences. First, by destroying the archives as well as recreation and training installations, the French deprived the country of important infrastructure. Further, the abrupt rupture resulted in a radical change in military orientation, since Guinea had to turn to the Soviet Bloc to train and equip its new army.<sup>6</sup>

Significant support, notably from the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria and East Germany, enabled Guinea's founding president, Sékou Touré, to embark on rapid modernisation of the armed forces.<sup>7</sup> Arms-for-bauxite deals allowed him to amass modern weapons and equipment. The resulting reasonably competent infantry contributed to repelling the Portuguese-sponsored armed attack on Conakry in 1970, led by Guinean dissidents, although civilian militias were credited with a prominent role in that operation.<sup>8</sup> Similarly, the air force was well equipped compared to its counterparts in the Mano River Union such as Sierra Leone and Liberia. It had a sizeable fleet of fighter jets and other planes manned by trained pilots, as well as parachutists. Following Soviet training of its first officers in 1973, the navy was equipped with surveillance boats and landing craft from the same source.

Sékou Touré's early vision was to create a revolutionary army that would be the engine of socio-economic development. Special battalions were established for that purpose, and, from 1961, young officers were sent to the Soviet Bloc to be trained in civil and mechanical engineering, aviation and agronomy. For instance, two civil engineering units were created. Between 1962 and 1997, the unit known as the Génie Route built road networks and bridges. The unit called the Génie Bâtiment, supported by Warsaw Pact countries, constructed barracks, administrative buildings and industries, including the military factories (Usines militaires de Conakry, UMC) based at the army's Alpha Yaya camp in Conakry, which between 1965 and 1984 produced about 250 military and civilian uniforms daily and about 180,000 pairs of shoes annually.<sup>9</sup>

The armed forces were also involved in agricultural development, with the establishment of the agricultural engineering unit called the Génie Rural. In 1970, agricultural production battalions were established in the four military regions of Kindia, Labé, Kankan and Nzérékoré. These were made up of 56 mechanised brigades and involved in growing rice, banana, tomatoes and coffee, for the marketing and distribution of which a military agricultural enterprise was established.<sup>10</sup> Sékou Touré pushed for recruitment and promotion of women in the armed forces, particularly the gendarmerie, although with only partial success. Women constituted about 10 per cent of the gendarmerie, a proportion that has remained fairly constant, while a few served in the army as nurses and radio operators.

Sékou Touré's armed forces were strongly influenced by his Pan-Africanist stance. Guinea supported liberation movements and was a home to independence fighters and dissidents, including Amilcar Cabral of neighbouring Guinea-Bissau, whose African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde (Partido Africano da Independência da Guiné e Cabo Verde, PAIGC) had its headquarters and naval base in Conakry.<sup>11</sup> Guinea intervened in a host of African countries in support of liberation movements and incumbent governments seen as supporting the "revolutionary" cause. From July 1960 to February 1961, a Guinean battalion served in the UN

<sup>5</sup> See «Spécial cinquantenaire des forces armées guinéennes: Honneur & Patrie», defence ministry, Conakry, November 2008.

<sup>6</sup> Crisis Group interviews, officials, office of ex-combatants (Bureaux des anciens combattants); and senior officer, Conakry, February 2010. Most of the serving and retired officers that Crisis Group spoke to were of the view that the French destroyed everything when they left, including the archives. However, some historians maintain that Sékou Touré exaggerated the extent of the damage, as part of his nation-building strategy.

<sup>7</sup> Crisis Group interview, retired general and former minister under the National Military Renewal Committee (Comité Militaire de Redressement National, CMRN), Conakry, February 2010.

<sup>8</sup> Crisis Group interview, colonel, Conakry, February 2010.

<sup>9</sup> Crisis Group interview, retired commandant (Major), Conakry, February 2010. See also "Honneur & Patrie", op. cit.

<sup>10</sup> Crisis Group interviews, colonel, Etat-major de l'armée de terre, Conakry, February 2010; corporal, Kindia military region, February 2010. This army mobilisation around agriculture is reminiscent of the strategy adopted by the revolutionary nationalist rebellion in Guinea-Bissau (then Portuguese Guinea) at the same time, and may have been influenced by the presence in Conakry of Guinea-Bissau rebel leader (and agricultural specialist) Amilcar Cabral.

<sup>11</sup> See Alexis Arieff, "Still Standing: Neighbourhood Wars and Political Instability in Guinea", *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, September 2009.



peacekeeping mission in the former Belgian Congo (now the Democratic Republic of Congo, DRC) to support Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba against a secessionist threat.<sup>12</sup> Military contingents were also sent on a bilateral basis to Sierra Leone in 1971, Benin in 1977 and Liberia in 1979 to assist in stabilising what Sékou Touré perceived as fellow Pan-Africanist or socialist regimes.

In the early years, therefore, the army was an integral part of Sékou Touré's revolutionary nation, involved in grass-roots projects, linked to socialist countries abroad and engaged in an anti-imperialist struggle across the continent.

## 2. Tightening political control

The regional coups of the late 1960s were a turning point for the Guinean armed forces. Sékou Touré saw two close socialist allies removed from power: Kwame Nkrumah in Ghana in 1966 and Modibo Keita in Mali in 1968.<sup>13</sup> These events rattled him. In 1968, he defiantly proclaimed that there would never be a coup in Guinea, and he subsequently adjusted his revolutionary ideology with respect to the army and increasingly used terror, ethnic divisions, clientelism and new forms of popular "revolutionary" oversight to bring the armed forces more fully under his control.<sup>14</sup>

Cells of the ruling Democratic Party of Guinea (Parti Démocratique de Guinée, PDG) known as the Military Section Committees (Comités d'Unité Militaire, CUM) were established in barracks across the country to monitor service personnel and report anti-revolutionary behaviour. They were run mostly by lower-ranking officers, because their leadership was based on popular vote within the barracks. Apart from their intelligence role, the CUMs influenced recruitment, promotion and access to the privileges of the officer corps. Members of the armed forces were automatically considered PDG "militants in arms". A "perfection centre" (*centre de perfectionnement*) was established at the Alpha Yaya camp, as a sort of transit point where young officers trained abroad were indoctrinated about the revolution. The prominence given to politics in the barracks undermined respect for hierarchy. Military personnel referred to each other as comrade, irrespective of rank, a practice still followed by some older officers.

In 1971, Sékou Touré established a formal command structure for the civilian militia corps created during the 1960s.<sup>15</sup> This militia force served as the armed wing of the party and acted as a watchdog over the military. It was armed, and many members were trained in Cuba. The secret police were also influential in efforts to forestall counter-revolution, monitoring the behaviour and movements of security personnel and civilians alike. These overlapping security elements weakened the command structure of the armed forces and undermined their monopoly over the use of arms.

Furthermore, Sékou Touré used purges and maltreatment of the officer corps to demoralise potential opponents and eliminate real and imaginary threats. Educated and competent officers were falsely accused of treason and sabotage, and many were summarily executed at the notorious Boiro military camp in the centre of Conakry and at other detention facilities.<sup>16</sup> The most prominent case was the Kaman-Fodéba "conspiracy" in 1969.<sup>17</sup> Subsequently, the founding father of the army, Noumandian Keita, was accused of supporting the Portuguese-backed incursion of 1970 and put to death. By targeting the army's elite class, the president weakened the officer corps and discouraged upward mobility within the ranks. The resulting voids at various levels subsequently proved hard to fill.

Sékou Touré also kept much of the armed forces in poverty. Conditions of service were deplorable, even for officers. The senior officer corps lived on meagre rations and saw its privileges and family allowances curtailed over time. Soldiers of all ranks had to find ways to supplement their rations and were often reduced to working either on state farms or in small agricultural projects.<sup>18</sup> A retired officer said that the officer corps engaged in farming, since all regular military activity, for example exercises, was considered potentially subversive.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> The Etat Major de la Milice Nationale (EMMN) was established in 1971, but mass recruitments started in 1972. Apart from the national militia corps, there were also largely volunteer militias at the municipal level (*quartier*). Crisis Group interviews, civil society leader, Conakry, February 2010; retired general and former defence minister, February 2010.

<sup>16</sup> See, Lt. Colonel Camara Kaba, *Dans la Guinée de Sékou Touré: Cela a bien eu lieu* (Paris, 1998); Alsény René Gomez, *Camp Boiro: Parler ou Périr* (Conakry, 2007); and "Interview: Colonel Facinet Touré, ancien ministre", Guineenews, 29 March 2010. Also, Crisis Group interview, civil society leader, Conakry, February 2010.

<sup>17</sup> See Kindo Touré, *Unique Survivant du 'Complot Kaman-Fodéba'* (Paris, 1987).

<sup>18</sup> On this period, Crisis Group interviews, colonel and former member of the CUM, Kindia, May 2010; retired military officer, Conakry, February 2010. See also Barry Mamadou Aliou, *L'armée guinéenne: Comment et pour quoi faire?* (Paris, 2009).

<sup>19</sup> Crisis Group interview, retired general, Conakry, May 2010.

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<sup>12</sup> Crisis Group interview, retired general and member of the military contingent sent to the Congo, Conakry, May 2010.

<sup>13</sup> Nkrumah spent the rest of his life in exile in Conakry.

<sup>14</sup> See Keita Koumandien, *Guinée 61: l'Ecole et la Dictature* (Paris, 1984), p. 79; Bah Tierno Siradou, *Kobélé épinglé - Réfutations du livre de Sidiki Kobélé Keita - Des Complots Contre la Guinée de Sékou Touré (1958-1984)* (Conakry, 2002). The analysis here is also informed by Crisis Group interviews with senior acting and retired officers.

A civilian defence program was initiated under the slogan “*le peuple en armes*” (“the people at arms”). Following the 22 November 1970 Portuguese-supported attack on the capital, the regime distributed arms and ammunitions to the population.<sup>20</sup> As well as keeping the citizenry in a state of constant mobilisation, this program aimed to avert any attack on the regime, either through a coup or foreign aggression, by holding up the prospect of popular resistance. Sékou Touré thereby not only created an armed rival to the military but also militarised the wider society. A retired general and former minister claimed that Guineans have been “living with arms for decades”, as few of the weapons distributed at this time were ever recovered.<sup>21</sup>

Despite his populist and nationalist rhetoric, Sékou Touré used clientelist links within his own Malinké ethnic group to ensure his control over the security forces. Malinkés were a majority within the military at that time, and certain senior Malinké officers enjoyed exceptional privileges. The president’s brothers, Siaka and Ismail, were instrumental in this. However, to some extent the preferential treatment of specific officers was obscured by the Malinké’s numerical strength, and ethnic favouritism was also blurred by the premium placed on partisan ideology within the armed forces.<sup>22</sup>

The establishment of overlapping armed structures allowed Sékou Touré to use multiple groups for his personal security. He also opted to maintain a sizeable presidential guard, and after the 22 November 1970 attack on Conakry, mobilised students from the Abdel Nasser University to help protect his residence.<sup>23</sup> Cuban military instructors brought in to train sections of the national militia almost certainly provided additional presidential security.<sup>24</sup> The multiple armed groups made it possible to keep the army relatively small and affordable.

On his death in 1984, Sékou Touré left behind an army which was relatively law abiding and well equipped, but also largely demoralised and partially impoverished. By stifling merit, discipline and political neutrality, he had

undermined the institutional basis upon which to build professionalism. He had also co-opted the armed forces into presidential protection, confusing the defence of the country with his own personal security. While this was and remains fairly common practice in West Africa, it was associated in Guinea with Sékou Touré’s personal paranoia and the consequent culture of plots and show trials that characterised his rule.

The creation of multiple competing and overlapping armed structures and the treatment meted out to senior officers destroyed the army’s morale and sowed the seeds of distrust between military and civilian power. It also made the armed forces less attractive to young people. The consequent military resentment and distrust of civilian power paved the way for Conté’s rise and his subsequent destruction of his predecessor’s civilian power base.

## B. THE CONTÉ YEARS

### 1. The military in power

General (then Colonel) Lansana Conté took over as head of state in a bloodless coup following the sudden death of Sékou Touré in the U.S. on 2 April 1984. Within the military, the choice of Conté (a Soso) to head the junta (called the Comité Militaire de Redressement National, CMRN) was driven as much by a desire to allay the fears of non-Malinkés within the defence and security forces as by his senior rank.<sup>25</sup> A former soldier in the French colonial army, he was a typical product of Sékou Touré’s military policies. Reportedly illiterate at the time of the coup, he had risen through the ranks via the revolutionary programs, notably participation in pro-PAIGC operations in the 1970s. He was also one of the few senior officers who had escaped being purged.

About nine officers from contingents stationed at the Samory and Alpha Yaya military camps and the air force led the coup.<sup>26</sup> Although widespread mistrust and rivalry characterised the various armed forces at the time, the political class was also deeply divided over who should succeed Sékou Touré. The coup resulted, therefore, in part from the inability of the politicians to deal with the succession crisis. Marking the end of the Sékou Touré era and taking place without great loss of life, it was well received by both the armed forces and the general populace.

Upon taking over, Conté banned the PDG and many of its structures, including the CUMs, and dissolved the national militia, integrating a majority into the army and police.

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<sup>20</sup> See Alexis Arieff, “Still Standing”, op. cit.

<sup>21</sup> Crisis Group interview, Conakry, February 2010.

<sup>22</sup> Crisis Group interview, retired colonel, Conakry, February 2010. The Malinké and the Peuhl ethnic groups comprise around 40 per cent of the population each, and have a historical rivalry. In particular, Sékou Touré persecuted the Peuhl, and many left Guinea, subsequently forming the core of the dissident diaspora.

<sup>23</sup> One of those former students, now a colonel in the army, claimed that they were armed with Karabine 44 rifles and were given packs of cigarettes to keep them vigilant. Crisis Group interview, Conakry, February 2010.

<sup>24</sup> Crisis Group interviews, retired colonel, Conakry, February 2010; retired colonel and former head of CUM in Kindia military region, Conakry, May 2010.

<sup>25</sup> Crisis Group interview, retired officer and former member, CMRN, Conakry, February 2010.

<sup>26</sup> Crisis Group interview, retired general and a coup ringleader, Conakry, May 2010.

He also abolished the Génie Rural and improved living and working conditions of the armed forces. Salaries and rations were increased and new uniforms distributed.<sup>27</sup> During his first few years in power, infrastructure was improved in barracks and in the defence ministry and military headquarters at the Samory camp, which Conté used as his base of operations and personal office.

Relative to Sékou Touré, Conté diversified Guinea's international military relations through greater cooperation with France, the U.S., China, Germany and a host of African countries. These ties allowed officers to be trained in prestigious military academies abroad such as St Cyr in France. In the mid-1990s, Conté attempted to review the conditions of service in the army, but when these changes were made public by the *Lynx* newspaper, they aroused considerable public concern over their budgetary implications. The changes were never fully implemented, thereby leaving military personnel without a clearly defined legal status.<sup>28</sup>

However, it soon became evident that Conté's apparent good intentions for the armed forces came with his own ideas of politicisation and personal gain. In contrast to his predecessor's marginalisation and even victimisation of the military, Conté, whose entire career has been in the army, used it to consolidate his rule. He bought senior officers by offering political appointments and access to state resources. The country's political and administrative structures were militarised, as senior officers were made ministers, governors and prefects. Special positions and units were created to give serving officers access to resources, including the fuel distribution unit that was the source of patronage that facilitated junta leader Dadis Camara's rapid ascent to power in 2008. Officers were constantly moved to ensure rotating opportunities to benefit, at the cost of institutional stability. Equally, senior officers were exposed to temptations for corruption in government contracts and business deals. A retired officer and former minister under Conté described the armed forces of the time as a business cartel ("*armée des affaires*").<sup>29</sup>

Just as the coups of the late 1960s in neighbouring countries affected the evolution of the army under Sékou Touré, the failed 1985 coup against Conté's regime, led by the number two officer in the junta, Colonel Diarra Traoré, had an important impact. Conté brutally suppressed it by executing senior officers and then altered the army's eth-

nic composition. Malinké officers – then in the majority and some of whom were implicated in the failed undertaking – were marginalised. Malinké civilians were also targeted, including by vigilante mobs that Conté publicly encouraged. Subsequently, Conté favoured irregular recruitment and promotion of Soso officers, giving them privileged access to business opportunities and resulting in the current numeric strength of his ethnic group in the armed forces.<sup>30</sup> He also favoured promotion of officers from the Guinée Forestière region to counteract the strong position of Malinké officers.<sup>31</sup> Although this ethnic favouritism did not go as far as in some other West African countries, and Malinké officers could still make a career, the merit principle suffered, and ethnically-based grievances built up.

The democratisation process of the 1990s enabled Conté to civilianise himself and formally participate in party politics, but it did not fundamentally alter the militarised nature of governance, and officers continued to enjoy great influence.<sup>32</sup> A senior officer in the junta retired from the military to participate in the 1993 presidential elections as one of the few candidates against Conté. Although he lost, this indicated the extent to which civilian politics remained tied to the military sphere.<sup>33</sup> Conté created the position of prime minister but, citing national security, prevented those who filled the post from playing any role in governance of the armed forces.

Discussions regarding defence and security, including the defence budget, were the monopoly of Conté and his coterie of senior officers, rendering oversight institutions such as the National Defence Council (Conseil National de Défense, CND) and Parliamentary Defence Committee (Commission de Défense parlementaire) redundant.<sup>34</sup> Conté directly oversaw promotions, postings, pay and benefits.<sup>35</sup> He was and remained a military man, and this lay at the heart of his governing methods. A former minister and general who served in the Conté regime said he made it clear on a number of occasions that he believed the armed forces needed to supervise and control political power in Guinea.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Crisis Group interview, colonel, Kankan military region, February 2010.

<sup>28</sup> The publisher of *Lynx* was arrested and jailed for three weeks for printing the entire decree detailing the benefits and salary scale of the military. See "*Lynx No 210*", 25 March 1996. Crisis Group interview, publisher of *Lynx*, Conakry, February 2010.

<sup>29</sup> Crisis Group interview, Conakry, February 2010.

<sup>30</sup> Crisis Group interview, colonel, Conakry, February 2010.

<sup>31</sup> Crisis Group interviews, retired general, Conakry, February 2010; senior civil servant, Conakry, February 2010.

<sup>32</sup> See Soumah Maligui, *Guinée, de Sékou Touré à Lansana Conté* (Paris, 2004).

<sup>33</sup> Crisis Group interview, former minister, Conakry, 27 May 2010.

<sup>34</sup> Crisis Group interview, former prime minister, Conakry, January 2010.

<sup>35</sup> Crisis Group interview, businessman and confidant of President Conté, Conakry, February 2010.

<sup>36</sup> Crisis Group interview, Conakry, February 2010. Conté, in his last years, worked out of the main military barracks in central Conakry, rather than his civilian presidential offices, indicating

## 2. Mutinies and regional wars

Conté's reliance on senior officers, particularly those from his ethnic group, to consolidate his power base while failing to provide resources for the rest of the army, generated frustrations and, at times, violent reactions. For instance, the majority of the soldiers who were wounded while participating in regional peacekeeping missions in Liberia and Sierra Leone reportedly never received the compensation they believed was their due.<sup>37</sup> Along with ethnic favouritism, this engendered frustration in the ranks that eventually culminated in a series of mutinies.

Mid-ranking officers held Conakry hostage for two days, 2-3 February 1996. They destroyed the armoury at the Alpha Yaya camp, took weapons, fired shots in the streets and shelled and laid siege to the presidential palace. They also besieged the national radio and television and generally caused lethal mayhem in the capital.<sup>38</sup> With no clear aims, however, the mutiny eventually petered out. In reaction, 87 officers and rank-and-file soldiers were accused of plotting to overthrow the Conté regime; six others were neither accused nor tried but left the army as a result of the mutiny; 50 were found not guilty but later retired from the armed forces. Most of the 37 who were convicted were imprisoned, though a few fled the country.<sup>39</sup> None were executed.<sup>40</sup>

The mutiny, like the failed 1985 coup, provided Conté further opportunity to eliminate and marginalise non-Soso officers. Similar unrest and protest took place in 2005, 2006 and 2007. As recently as May 2008, young officers led an uprising demanding improved conditions of service. Instigated by mid-ranking and junior officers, these mutinies became popular means by which to address injustice and poor conditions.<sup>41</sup> They highlighted a lack of respect for regulations and growing indiscipline and insubordination.

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a combination of personal insecurity and long attachment to the military.

<sup>37</sup> Crisis Group interview, officer formerly part of a Guinean battalion stationed in the south of Sierra Leone, Conakry, February 2010. The same was said to be true for the families of those killed in such missions.

<sup>38</sup> Crisis Group interviews, officer involved in the 1996 mutiny and journalist, Conakry, February 2010. See also Soumah Maligui, *op. cit.*

<sup>39</sup> With the exception of those who subsequently died, those who had been dismissed from the army were reinstated by Sékouba Konaté in February 2010.

<sup>40</sup> Crisis Group interview, senior officer and a former accused, Conakry, February 2010.

<sup>41</sup> Crisis Group interview, retired officer and organiser of the 1996 military mutiny, Conakry, February 2010.

Conflicts in neighbouring countries in the 1990s and attacks along the southern border in 2000-2001 by rebels acting as proxies for Liberia's Charles Taylor had important consequences for the defence and security institutions. From the start, the Conté government was deeply involved in the wars, through support for the main group fighting Taylor in Liberia – ULIMO (later LURD). The Taylor-inspired invasion in 2000 and 2001 was in part an attempt to stop this support. Between 1989 and 1998, the Guinean army intervened in Liberia and Sierra Leone as part of the regional ECOWAS peacekeeping contingent. Also, between June 1998 and March 1999, it defended Nino Viera in the Guinea-Bissau civil war, again under an ECOWAS umbrella. The attack by Taylor proxies in Guinée Forestière as well as the border area around Forecariah<sup>42</sup> had serious implications for the economy, leading to diversion of much of the budget to the war effort.<sup>43</sup> The conflicts also took a toll on the armed forces in both human and material terms.

The 2000-2001 conflict with Taylor's proxies pushed the country to near bankruptcy, as Conté was obliged to purchase tanks, armoured personnel carriers, Romanian-supplied helicopters and other military equipment. He also recruited and armed volunteers to fight beside the regular army. Of the 10,500 young volunteers, 3,500 were subsequently taken into the regular army, but 7,000 never went through a formal disarmament process and are now scattered across the region, including a large concentration in Nzérékoré, the capital of the Guinée Forestière region that shares border with Liberia, Sierra Leone and Cote d'Ivoire.<sup>44</sup>

This period of unrest and the involvement of the army in the final stages of the Liberian civil war set the pattern for changes in the Guinean armed forces for the rest of the Conté era. Professional standards deteriorated rapidly, while indiscipline, criminality, impunity and lack of transparency grew. Waves of unregulated recruitment made the armed forces a repository for criminally-prone youths and relatives of well-placed senior officers and politicians who had problems in school. Several interlocutors confirmed that immediate members of Conté's family, including his wife and sons, directly enrolled recruits from the Soso ethnic group.<sup>45</sup> A commanding officer claimed

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<sup>42</sup> See Crisis Group Africa Report N°74, *Guinea: Uncertainties at the End of an Era*, 19 December 2003; and Mike McGovern, "Conflit régional et rhétorique de la contre-insurrection: guinéens et réfugiés en septembre 2000", *Politique Africaine*, 88, 2002.

<sup>43</sup> Crisis Group interview, retired general and former minister, Conakry, February 2010.

<sup>44</sup> Crisis Group interviews, former recruits, Forecariah, 20 September 2009; director, Pacem in Terris community project, Nzérékoré, September 2009.

<sup>45</sup> Civil society leader, ULIMO, Conakry, February 2010.

that the “armed forces have become a dustbin for delinquents”.<sup>46</sup>

These recruitments were accompanied by promotions that resulted in a highly disproportionate number of officers. A former minister in Conté’s regime said that whenever there were problems or tensions within the armed forces, Conté immediately ordered promotions of all serving personnel, though some of the promised benefits were not fully implemented.<sup>47</sup> As a result, the normal pyramidal structure of an army was reversed, leaving an estimated two officers to each common soldier. Today, young lieutenants serve as military drivers.<sup>48</sup>

Moreover, Conté used the armed forces to suppress popular opposition, killing and detaining civilians and political foes. In June 2006, the military quelled student riots, resulting in sixteen deaths. On 22 January 2007, it fired on protesters at the 9 November Bridge in Conakry, killing over 100. On 9 February 2007, it violently put down another protest, killing several protesters.<sup>49</sup> During this time, it was also engaged in widespread abuses against civilians, including rape and looting.<sup>50</sup>

### 3. Corruption and decay

The events of 2007 and Conté’s personal oversight of the armed forces led to a fundamental breakdown in army command structures. In the last three years of his rule, it became obvious that the generals who continued to support him were gradually losing influence in the barracks. Equally, several key generals loyal to Conté died during that period, further weakening his control of the military. Lack of respect for hierarchy was rife, and senior officers could no longer control their junior officers,<sup>51</sup> whose mutinies, of varied scale and duration, became recurrent. Desperate to hold on to power and maintain a firm grip on the armed forces, Conté and his family were forced to forge links with mid-ranking and junior officers. He moved the popular Sékouba Konaté to Conakry to head the para-

chute regiment (Bataillon autonome des troupes aéroportées, BATA) in an attempt to calm the troops.<sup>52</sup>

Conté further traded personal enrichment opportunities for support, allowing young officers like Dadis Camara, for example, to control the lucrative fuel distribution unit, part of the army’s supply chain (the *intendance*).<sup>53</sup> Dadis Camara used his resulting wealth to mobilise ordinary soldiers and bring on board those like Claude Pivi who subsequently became his henchmen in the junta period. Pivi and other rebellious troop leaders were basically products of Conté’s chaotic governance of the military. He earned notoriety by suppressing popular opposition to the regime, but also, paradoxically, by insubordination to senior officers deeply resented for failing to improve conditions of service.

Conté’s relationship with the senior hierarchy of the army was further strained following the latter’s refusal to endorse the proposal that his son take over after his death.<sup>54</sup> Although Conté was too infirm to impose that wish, he continued to exert some control over senior ranks. However, tensions became visible, as he continued to forge parallel ties with Dadis Camara and other more junior officers, including Konaté. Conté believed that Dadis Camara could bring junior officers to his cause and protect his family. This gave Dadis Camara a privileged position with the president and his family. In the months before Conté’s death, when he was shielded from public view by his close family aides, tension was high in the armed forces, with overlapping plots and preparations for the president’s death mixing with broader concerns for the fate of the armed forces.<sup>55</sup>

Despite the misgiving of the senior ranks, Conté and his son, Ousmane, continued to siphon large sums of money each month to Dadis Camara, to support the 400 soldiers stationed at Dadis Camara’s house.<sup>56</sup> It was no surprise that the young officer was among the first people Conté’s wife called on 22 December 2008 to inform him of her husband’s death – giving him an advantage over his army rivals in the ensuing power struggle.

The breakdown in army command structures had allowed officers to get involved in criminality. The security and

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<sup>46</sup> Crisis Group interview, officer, Labé, February 2010.

<sup>47</sup> Crisis Group interviews, former minister, Conakry, May 2010; retired colonel, Conakry, February 2010.

<sup>48</sup> Crisis Group interview, colonel, Conakry, February 2010.

<sup>49</sup> See Crisis Group Africa Report N°121, *Guinea: Change or Chaos*, 14 February 2007.

<sup>50</sup> See “Dying for Change: Brutality and Repression of Guinean Security Forces in Response to Nation wide Strike”, Human Rights Watch, April 2007.

<sup>51</sup> Crisis Group interviews, gendarmerie colonel, Conakry, February 2010; senior officer, Kindia military region, Kindia, May 2010. Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°58, *Guinea: The Transition Has Only Just Begun*, March 2009, pp. 3-4.

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<sup>52</sup> Konaté, then a lieutenant colonel (now general) had a lot of experience in the wars in Sierra Leone and Liberia in the 1990s, including having served with the Guinean contingent in Sierra Leone.

<sup>53</sup> A leading businessman and confidant of Conté negotiated for Dadis Camara to take over the army fuel distribution unit. Crisis Group interview, businessman, Conakry, February 2010.

<sup>54</sup> Crisis Group interview, senior officer, Conakry, February 2010.

<sup>55</sup> Crisis Group interview, senior officer, February 2010.

<sup>56</sup> Crisis Group interview, former CNDD member, Conakry, February 2010.

defence forces, including senior military and police personnel, associated themselves with drug trafficking networks. For instance, Ousmane Conté, himself an officer in the presidential guard, was given a free hand to indulge in drug business and was subsequently arrested by the junta for trafficking. No longer under effective command, security personnel, particularly rank-and-file soldiers, committed many acts of petty banditry against defenceless civilians. Residents in Nzérékoré claimed that the months before Conté's death were a "nightmare", as armed soldiers in uniforms openly extorted money and attacked civilians.<sup>57</sup>

Conté used defence secrecy to cover gross financial mismanagement in the army to the detriment of professionalism. The *intendance* was never subjected to any financial regulation but became a conduit for draining public resources, leading to recurrent tensions with the public treasury that were never resolved under Conté.<sup>58</sup> In addition, salaries and procurement caused tensions within the armed forces. A senior officer described the *intendance* as a machine for perpetrating corruption and injustice.<sup>59</sup> Its inability to serve the welfare of mid-ranking officers and soldiers led to a widespread perception that resources were being stolen. Although soldiers were paid regularly and their rice rations assured, it became difficult to meet their welfare and operational expenses.<sup>60</sup>

A clear indication of this was the "Bulletin rouge" affair. It centred around claims by officers that the take-home pay indicated on their pay slip (the "*bulletin*") did not reflect the sum claimed on their behalf by the *intendance*. This sparked several confrontations, including an uprising by young soldiers in 2007. Although the report produced by an audit company charged to investigate cleared the *intendance* of corrupt practice, the government had to pay benefits to members of the armed forces to defuse the situation.<sup>61</sup>

Peripheral military structures, particularly those in the provinces, suffered from the misappropriation at the centre. Their only links to the central command were salaries and rice rations. Few gendarmerie posts in the interior had the resources to do their work. Equipment was unattended and sometimes left to rot. The air force could not

even purchase fuel for routine flying exercises, leaving a once well-equipped and proud force in virtual ruin.<sup>62</sup>

The Conté period is vital to understanding the current state of the army and the measures needed to turn it into a professional force. His impact was at first ambivalent. Initial actions to restore discipline, improve welfare and reverse the *peuple en armes* doctrine were welcomed, but their reach was limited, and in some cases they made things worse. Reform efforts were driven more by his determination to use sections of the armed forces for political ends rather than to build a disciplined and capable army. His control of the officer corps through patronage came at the expense of professionalism and transparent financial management. The bulk of the armed forces were deprived of adequate resources, resulting in frustration and mutinies.

Although Conté got outside support to train and equip specialised units, it had little impact, and those units became part of his system of repression, used for systematic human rights abuses and generating public distrust of the security forces. Lacking a strong command, the armed forces became riddled with personal networks and competing groups. By the time Conté died, morale was low, while the void created by the gradual collapse of command structures was filled by street-level commanders such as Dadis Camara, Claude Pivi and their undisciplined followers. The armed forces became known for impunity, insubordination and criminality. Many who lived through these times blamed Conté for failing to break with Sékou Touré's troubled legacy.<sup>63</sup> A former minister and close confidant lamented that the regime ended by "building a new house with old materials" – politicising the armed forces, depriving it of resources, neglecting the bulk of its common soldiers and institutionalising insubordination.

## C. THE ARMY UNDER THE CNDD

### 1. The Dadis Camara era

In the two months before Conté's death, when it was apparent that he was seriously ill, overlapping plans were made for a military take-over, involving groups of different ranks. However, the breakdown in army command structures and development of personal fiefdoms described above paved the way for junior and mid-level officers led by Dadis Camara to seize power. In discussions in the tense hours following Conté's death on 22 December 2008, Dadis Camara insisted that he become head of

<sup>57</sup> Crisis Group interview, youth leader, Nzérékoré, September 2010.

<sup>58</sup> Crisis Group interview, former prime minister, Conakry, February 2010.

<sup>59</sup> Crisis Group interview, Conakry, February 2010.

<sup>60</sup> Crisis Group interviews, non-commissioned officers, Conakry, February 2010; Kindia military region, May 2010; Labé military region, February 2010; Kankan military region, February 2010.

<sup>61</sup> Crisis Group interview, audit firm official, Conakry, February 2010.

<sup>62</sup> Crisis Group interview, senior officer, Conakry, February 2010.

<sup>63</sup> Crisis Group interviews, military officers, February 2010.

state, against the preference of his colleagues for General Toto Camara, then the most senior officer among them.<sup>64</sup>

Dadis Camara was able to impose himself due to his close ties to the Conté family and his network of allies in the Alpha Yaya camp and various army units, as well as his patronage from control of the army fuel distribution unit. He also threatened to set Conakry alight with the some 400 soldiers and weapons at his disposal if he was not made head of state.<sup>65</sup> Reportedly the eventual deal included his agreement to step down in due course.

The tensions surrounding Dadis Camara's arrival in power set the pattern. His relations with other members of the CNDD junta quickly deteriorated, as he reneged on the promise to step down and frustrated the ambitions of more senior officers. The deteriorating relations added to his profound sense of personal insecurity and led him to arrest many former colleagues. For example, important CNDD members like Alphonso Touré were jailed on charges of insubordination, while others, like Sidiki Camara (alias Idi Amin), were pushed out of the junta. General Toto Camara, the number two, was marginalised.

At the heart of the CNDD was the turbulent relationship between Dadis Camara and Sékouba Konaté. For much of 2009, Dadis Camara wanted to remove Konaté as defence minister, despite in many ways regarding him as a mentor.<sup>66</sup> Konaté survived largely due to his grip on elite battalions such as the BATA, which he previously commanded, as well as the networks he forged while minister. In effect, Dadis Camara, of junior rank and lower informal standing in the army, gave Konaté a free hand to manage the armed forces in return for his loyalty. Konaté was able to rally part of the army behind the CNDD, while placing his own men at the head of strategic units. For example, he put a protégé, Bunduka Condé (the current chief of staff for ground troops) in charge of the BATA. This was helped by the fact that, like other CNDD members, including Dadis Camara, Konaté made a lot of money through business deals and mining contracts that allowed him to build a patronage network in the army,

including senior officers who owed allegiance to him rather than Dadis Camara or other CNDD members.<sup>67</sup>

Dadis Camara's insecurity led him to build his own constituency within the armed forces. On 4 January 2009, a decree established the regiment commando, made up of units from four specialised elite battalions<sup>68</sup> and designed to secure him and the presidency. It was stationed at the Alpha Yaya camp, with a detachment at the Koundara presidential guard camp.<sup>69</sup> This regiment became critical for the CNDD and in particular Dadis Camara. Its head, Aboubacar "Toumba" Diakité, was the de facto number three man in the junta. Dadis Camara also drew support from a handful of street-level commanders, such as Claude Pivi and Moussa Tiegboro Camara, who had their own groups of soldiers. They and a few others from his forest region constituted Dadis Camara's inner circle.

Dadis Camara further relied on the distribution of money and favours to mobilise and control rank-and-file soldiers.<sup>70</sup> He surrounded himself with friends and colleagues from his officer training days, appointing some to command units irrespective of inexperience.<sup>71</sup> This was part of his plan to gather support for standing in an election, but it created division and mistrust. While overt public spending was still subject to restrictions demanded by donors, he disbursed huge sums in cash from the state coffers and business deals to young officers, military prefects and governors. Large numbers of vehicles bearing Dadis Camara posters were distributed to junta loyalists in Conakry and across the country.

The junta's relationship with the wider armed forces was complicated by the arrest of senior officers on charges of insubordination and drug trafficking and aggravated when Dadis Camara began to publicly humiliate senior officers, accusing them of incompetence.<sup>72</sup> Officers considered to be unsympathetic to the junta were harassed by soldiers belonging to the regiment commando. A senior officer and former member of the CNDD said soldiers from the

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<sup>64</sup> Crisis Group interview, senior military officer and member of the CNDD, Conakry, February 2010. This section builds on and adds to previous Crisis Group reporting on the CNDD and looks specifically at its military aspects. See Crisis Group Briefing, *Guinea, The Transition Has Only Just Begun*, op. cit.; and Africa Briefing N°66, *Guinea: Military Rule Must End*, 16 October 2009.

<sup>65</sup> Crisis Group interview, Conakry, February 2010.

<sup>66</sup> Crisis Group interview, CNDD member, Conakry, February 2010.

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<sup>67</sup> Sékouba Konaté was popularly dubbed the "businessman of the CNDD". See Crisis Group Briefing, *Guinea: Military Rule Must End*, op. cit.

<sup>68</sup> These battalions include the BASP (Bataillon Autonome de la Sécurité Présidentielle), BATA, the U.S.-trained Rangers and a Chinese-trained battalion, commonly called the "Chinese commandos".

<sup>69</sup> The Alpha Yaya camp is near the airport in Conakry; Koundara is in Boulbinet, the town centre, very close to the sea front.

<sup>70</sup> A CNDD member called the regiment commando "a cash and carry battalion". Crisis Group interview, Conakry, February 2010.

<sup>71</sup> Crisis Group interview, lieutenant, Kindia military region, 22 May 2010.

<sup>72</sup> Crisis Group interview, retired general, Conakry, February 2010. Some of these humiliations, part of the infamous "Dadis Show", are available on Youtube.

regiment commando searched his house and intimidated him on a number of occasions.<sup>73</sup> These actions further isolated the junta from the rest of the armed forces.

Dadis' bid to hold on to power and his intention to stand for election created critical tension in the junta. He reacted by continuing to use promotions and postings to reward officers sympathetic to his plans. He was renowned for making erratic and spontaneous appointments.<sup>74</sup> Officers close to the junta, or loyal to Dadis Camara individually, were appointed as ministers, governors and prefects. Command positions went to young and untested officers, opening an unprecedented promotion wave. Young lieutenants like Moussa Keita, former secretary general of the CNDD, became lieutenant colonels, while Moussa Tiegboro Camara, the anti-drug and crime minister, advanced from captain to colonel within a year.<sup>75</sup> Dadis Camara also gave preference to officers from his own region and created ethnic militias.

Indiscipline, insubordination, criminality and impunity became the hallmark of the armed forces. Dadis Camara's disdainful treatment of senior officers further eroded respect for rank, while junior officers and soldiers within the junta took orders only from him and his aide de camp.<sup>76</sup> A vivid example of the state of things was the beating of General Toto Camara by soldiers belonging to the presidential guard at the Alpha Yaya military camp on 21 July 2009.<sup>77</sup> Indiscipline and insubordination became so rife that Dadis Camara himself openly acknowledged his inability to control soldiers.<sup>78</sup>

Matters became worse when troops were used to harass opposition figures and quell protests. Soldiers acting on orders from Claude Pivi surveyed the offices and residences of political party figures.<sup>79</sup> For example, leading politician and current presidential front runner Cellou Dalein Diallo was on a number of occasions threatened by members of the regiment commando and once taken to the Alpha Yaya camp on the orders of Dadis Camara.<sup>80</sup> Another prominent civil society leader said that armed

soldiers went to his office and took away belongings, including computers.<sup>81</sup> The home of a leading trade unionist, Rabiadou Serah Diallo, was raided, ostensibly in a counter-narcotics operation.

While the violent repression of a political party rally on 28 September 2009 was a tragedy for the victims, it was also a turning point for power relations within the junta and can reasonably be hoped to be the opening of the final chapter in the CNDD story.<sup>82</sup> The planning and execution of the massacre by officers close to Dadis Camara and the subsequent fall out, including an ongoing International Criminal Court (ICC) "preliminary examination", resulted in serious tensions and disputes within the junta and widened the gulf with the rest of the armed forces, who blamed the regiment commando for bringing the whole military into disrepute.<sup>83</sup> Dadis Camara himself became increasingly unpopular, even among rank-and-file soldiers from whom he had previously drawn the bulk of his support.<sup>84</sup>

Toumba Diakité, the head of the regiment commando, was singled out by the UN-backed international commission report<sup>85</sup> as having played a key role in the massacre. He was severely criticised by junta members, and his reputation was soured with street-level commanders such as Claude Pivi and Moussa Tiegboro Camara. Morale within the regiment commando sharply deteriorated, as common soldiers called those involved in the massacre murderers and rapists.<sup>86</sup> In the months following, Sékouba Konaté distanced himself from Dadis Camara and his henchmen; two of the civilian ministers who resigned from the government as a result of the massacre reportedly did so with his blessing.<sup>87</sup>

<sup>73</sup> Crisis Group interview, Conakry, February 2010.

<sup>74</sup> Crisis Group interview, retired general and former defence minister, Conakry, February 2010.

<sup>75</sup> Crisis Group interview, senior military officer, Conakry, February 2010.

<sup>76</sup> Crisis Group interview, garrison head, Conakry, February 2010.

<sup>77</sup> See "Guinee: le numéro 2 de la junte brutalisé par des soldats", Agence France-Presse, 22 July 2009.

<sup>78</sup> See Crisis Group Briefing, *Guinea: Military Rule Must End*, op. cit.

<sup>79</sup> Crisis Group interview, political party leader, Conakry, September 2009.

<sup>80</sup> Crisis Group interview, Cellou Dalein Diallo, Conakry, September 2009.

<sup>81</sup> Crisis Group interview, human rights activist, Conakry, February 2010.

<sup>82</sup> Soldiers were used to suppress a peaceful opposition rally in a stadium that resulted in the deaths of 160 civilians. See Crisis Group Briefing, *Guinea: Military Rule Must End*, op. cit.

<sup>83</sup> The ICC is conducting a formal preliminary examination of the situation in Guinea in accordance with Article 15 of the Rome Statute, of which Guinea is a signatory. In the context of the preliminary examination, the Office of the Prosecutor has undertaken a high-level visit to the sub-region and two missions to Guinea in February and May 2010 to meet with the authorities.

<sup>84</sup> Crisis Group interviews, former member of the regiment commando, Kindia, May 2010; and senior military officer, Conakry, February 2010.

<sup>85</sup> See "Report of the United Nations International Commission of Inquiry mandated to establish the facts and circumstances of the events of 28 September 2009 in Guinea", S/2009/963-Security Council, December 2009.

<sup>86</sup> Crisis Group interview, former member of the regiment commando, Kindia, May 2010.

<sup>87</sup> Crisis Group interview, newspaper editor, Conakry, February 2010.



On 3 December 2009, Dadis Camara was shot by the head of the regiment commando, Toumba Diakité, who was also his aide de camp, at the Koundara camp in Conakry after an argument, seemingly over who would take blame for the 28 September massacre in light of the ICC interest and increasing international pressure on the junta. Hours later, following an intense exchange of shots that resulted in deaths of several presidential bodyguards, Dadis Camara was flown on a military helicopter to the Alpha Yaya camp. In the bid to capture Toumba Diakité, troops acting on the orders of Claude Pivi killed several soldiers believed to be in the hunted man's entourage at the Koundara camp. While the exact casualty figures are unknown, the cycle of revenge killings continued well into December.

An official commission was established to investigate the 3 December shootings, headed by an army colonel. Yet, few believe it has any prospect of working independently, and it has made no public announcement. The widely-held view is that the violence was linked to Dadis Camara's attempt to have Diakité shoulder the blame for the September massacre. But it may also be that some in the army by then considered Dadis Camara a serious liability and were looking for a way to remove him. Some have pointed to the apparent inability to locate Diakité, despite an ostensibly ongoing manhunt, as indicative of Sékouba Konaté's possible tacit or active approval of the shooting. It is now widely believed that Toumba Diakité has left the country. It is unlikely that he was able to do so without high-level complicity.

Whether the shooting was pre-meditated or not, it undoubtedly reflected fears among senior officers that Dadis Camara was a danger to the armed forces and the country, and should be seen in light of several attempts to drive him out or eliminate him.<sup>88</sup> Although he remained head of state, the incident fundamentally altered the balance of power. It allowed Sékouba Konaté to begin to dismantle his power base in the armed forces, including the regiment commando, and repair the damaged relations between the junta and the rest of the army.

The turbulent CNDD period was an outgrowth of the dysfunctional nature of the armed forces and must be viewed in that context if a repetition of some sort is to be avoided. Dadis Camara, a product of the army's impunity and financial management problems, left the institution even more damaged, having increased tensions at all levels in it and eroded what little social cohesion it had at the end of the Conté period. But in a longer historical perspective, there may be some positive elements. Many in the army

were appalled at what Dadis Camara was doing and the implications of the 28 September events, and their voices have come to the fore since 3 December. If the right steps are now taken, it is possible the Dadis Camara period will be seen as the army's nadir and its end as the point from which moral and physical reconstruction started.

## 2. Konaté's reforms

Although efforts to implement certain reforms within the armed forces began under Conté, with considerable if uneven international help, they have gained renewed importance since Sékouba Konaté became interim head of state. These have been driven in the first instance by desire to establish control over the junta and sideline or manage those agitating for Dadis Camara's return, but also by the need to secure the transition to civilian rule and wish to rebuild public trust in the armed forces.

His initial move was to shift senior officers with ties to Dadis Camara from command positions. Although a few loyalists, such as Claude Pivi and Moussa Tiegboro Camara, still are in the junta, they have been sidelined from decision-making and lack effective command positions from which to have real impact. Most officers appointed by Konaté owe him loyalty, but many are also respected within the ranks, including those named to the *intendance*.<sup>89</sup> A senior officer called the appointments attempts to address the problems associated with political postings that had undermined competence and destroyed morale over the years.<sup>90</sup> For example, Aboubakar Sidiki Camara, who is widely seen as among the military's most competent officers and had been marginalised by Dadis Camara, was named deputy army chief of staff. Parallel moves to reintegrate into the army a large number of former officers and soldiers whom Conté and Dadis Camara had dismissed have been interpreted by some as steps to address injustice and promote reconciliation.<sup>91</sup>

The notorious regiment commando, considered the hub of Dadis Camara's power base, was dismantled, its elements ordered to rejoin their parent units. For example, the "Chinese commandos" were moved to the Kindia military region, while the parachutists were reintegrated into BATA. A majority of officers stationed there have been ordered to vacate the Alpha Yaya camp, viewed as the seat of the junta's former power. By dismantling the regiment commando and removing the units and security personnel from Alpha Yaya, Konaté established firm control over

<sup>88</sup> Officers were arrested by Dadis Camara's orders on charges of insubordination and coup attempts. A senior junta member claimed that after 28 September, "Dadis's days were numbered". Crisis Group interview, Conakry, February 2010.

<sup>89</sup> See "Direction Générale de l'intendance militaire", *La Transparence*, Conakry, 17 May 2010.

<sup>90</sup> Crisis Group interview, senior officer, Conakry, February 2010.

<sup>91</sup> Crisis Group interviews, journalist, Conakry, May 2010; sources close to Sékouba Konaté, Conakry, May 2010.

the use of force, central to consolidating his power and keeping a hand on potential trouble makers.

The Kaliah military camp, where ethnic militias recruited by Dadis Camara were trained, was closed and the remaining militias dispersed. While some militia personnel were arrested on charges of disturbing public order following an attempted mutiny, the remainder have been dismissed. A verification team was set up subsequently to undertake on-the-spot assessments of new recruits at military training centres, including Falasada and Kissidougou. That exercise is meant to review the chances of such recruits remaining in the armed forces.

A special force was established to maintain order during the electoral process, the Force Spéciale de Sécurisation du Processus Electoral (FOSSEPEL). Created on 18 May 2010, it comprises mainly gendarmerie and police and has nearly reached its projected size of 16,000.<sup>92</sup> This force is directly supervised by the chief of staff of the gendarmerie.<sup>93</sup> FOSSEPEL has quickly taken shape and has performed relatively professionally, including efforts to calm electoral tensions.

As part of his moves to repair civil-military relations, Konaté called for firmer control over movements of soldiers and weapons. The number of armed troops parading the streets of Conakry and other major towns has been drastically reduced. The personnel and ammunition control mechanism (Personnel-Armaments-Munitions, PAM) is working far better than before. Weapons and ammunitions are kept at a depot, and the only armed soldiers are those deployed on special duty, such as guarding senior officials and manning important administrative buildings like the presidency.<sup>94</sup>

Konaté has publicly backed army reform, including giving moral and logistical support to the ECOWAS-led evaluation mission, but has not avoided pitfalls that have characterised management of the armed forces in the past. Recent appointments of service chiefs and the reintegration of former personnel seem to have been driven as much by desire to secure his own position in the army and buy-off potential troublemakers prior to elections, as by a commitment to address incompetence and injustice.

More worrying still are signs Konaté has used his time in office to reward the military for finally returning power to civilians. The July 2010 announced promotion of all corporals through majors by one rank can be viewed in light of the tradition of arbitrary promotions that produced

the army's inverted-pyramid structure.<sup>95</sup> Such collective promotions discourage reform and enormously strain the national budget. Concerns have been raised over the contract to renovate barracks which was awarded during 2009 to a company owned by one of Konaté's friends in his position as defence minister.<sup>96</sup> While the work on the barracks is being carried out to a relatively high standard (as observed by Crisis Group in May 2010), lack of transparency in the award of contracts is of concern. Furthermore, he has not dealt with militarisation of the administration, in particular in the provinces, leaving a potentially treacherous task for his successor.

<sup>92</sup> See "Sécurisation du processus électoral: Une force spéciale voit le jour", *L'Indépendant*, Conakry, 20 May 2010.

<sup>93</sup> Decree D/081/PRG/CNDD/SG PRG/2010.

<sup>94</sup> Crisis Group interview, major, Conakry, May 2010.

<sup>95</sup> See "Guinea gives soldiers boost after peaceful election", Reuters, 4 July 2010.

<sup>96</sup> The contract was awarded to GUICOPRES, KPC foundation group, owned by Kerfalla Camara.

### III. THE MILITARY TODAY: LEGACIES OF COLLAPSE

#### A. ARMY RECRUITMENT AND “IRREGULARS”

Guinea’s bloated army has become an unsustainable burden on the state. Each head of state has undermined formal recruitment and promotion structures. After 1958, the military gradually expanded, reaching 10,000 in 2001. The conflicts of the late 1990s and early 2000s inside the country and in the Mano River Union triggered massive new expansion, as formal recruitment procedures, affected by corruption, weakened considerably, and the soldier-militia distinction blurred.<sup>97</sup> This situation deteriorated further under the CNDD. Dadis Camara in August 2009 brought in young men, mainly from the Guinée Forestière region, to integrate them into the presidential guard. Most were from his ethnic group, and many had been volunteers in the war with Liberia. The exact number was not made public but is reported to be well above 2,000.<sup>98</sup> The Kaliah camp, where many were trained has been closed by Konaté. Most of the “new recruits” (as they are formally known) have been let go, while some were earlier sent to infantry schools around the country for proper training.

A number of factors explain these waves of unchecked recruitment. To a degree, they have been the response of successive regimes to security threats, real or perceived. The Portuguese-sponsored invasion of 1970 and that of Charles Taylor’s proxies in 2000-2001 were used not only to expand the military but also to arm parts of the population, drawing on Sékou Touré’s “*le peuple en armes*” doctrine. During the rebel attacks in 2000-2001, as described above, Conté recruited volunteers, mainly in Guinée Forestière, to fight beside the army. As Conté’s ability and willingness to govern properly declined rapidly in his final years, no subsequent attempt was made to reduce the forces and return to peacetime management principles.

Political and ethnic factors have also been important – in terms of both regime protection and creation of client blocs in the army. Sékou Touré’s expansion was geared toward creation of competing armed groups to guard his

regime from internal as well as external threats. Some, such as the national militia corps, were integrated into the regular army in 1984. Following the failed coup the next year, Conté recruited from his Soso ethnic group to reduce Malinké dominance in the army. The creation or at least subsequent use of elite military units, such as the “Chinese commandos” and the Rangers, were more directed at securing Conté’s regime than strengthening counter-insurgency capacity. Recruitment under the CNDD was driven in large part by Dadis Camara’s desire to build an ethnic client base in the army.

Nevertheless, economic factors have been the most significant in driving recruitment over the last ten years. This can be seen both at the elite educated level and further down the ranks. The downturns of the 1990s made military service one of the few means for young people to gain professional and technical skills. Educated youth, put off by the fate of many senior officers, shunned Sékou Touré’s army, but in recent decades, college graduates have dominated the intake at the National Academy for Junior Officers (Ecole Nationale des Sous-Officiers d’active). An increasing number have been sent for training to prestigious military academies abroad. Today, most of the intellectual core of the armed forces is drawn from this class. The army has thus become the career path for some of the country’s brightest youths. While not necessarily a problem, this phenomenon has increased pressure to expand recruitment.

At the other end of the spectrum, dropouts have been absorbed, either as a deliberate way of buying off potential discontent, or as a result of officers finding employment for relatives. This, too, is part of the origin of ethnic client blocs in the army, based on exchanges of loyalty for favours or just payments. In consequence, the military has reproduced itself, along with its nefarious habits, as many officers’ sons have entered the ranks or officer corps.<sup>99</sup>

To an extent, use of the army to absorb discontent may have reduced unrest in the last decade. But it amounts to paying off people with money that is not there, a resource problem at the heart of tensions between the army and successive governments. It is also part of a pattern seen in other conflict-affected countries in the region, wherein the soaking up of discontented youth by the army stores up potential later trouble. Attempts at reform have not included improvements in financial and personnel management, and the armed forces have never been subjected to financial control. The army has strongly resisted revealing the number of active-service officers and soldiers on

<sup>97</sup> As discussed above, the figure given to the ECOWAS evaluation mission of around 45,000 members of the armed forces must be treated with great caution. However, the breakdown between the elements given to Crisis Group by the inter-army commission provides some indication of relative strengths: ground troops, 26,752; navy, 2,806; air force, 2,703; gendarmerie, 13,058. Women – around 10 per cent of the total – are largely in the gendarmerie.

<sup>98</sup> As reported in Crisis Group Briefing, *Guinea: Military Rule Must End*, op. cit.

<sup>99</sup> Crisis Group interview, former prime minister, Conakry, February 2010.

the payroll.<sup>100</sup> This has undermined its professionalism and generated internal resentment. The *intendance* is constantly criticised for corruption and inefficiency. Lack of transparency has deprived the bulk of the military of the resources needed to function effectively.

As numbers rose in Conté's last years, not only did the army absorb an increasing share of the national budget, under the secrecy cloak of national security, but the president was forced to allow officers to benefit from criminal activities or tax avoidance to feed the army's bloated patronage networks. This direct link between force size and criminality has had consequences not least for discipline. It has also blurred the distinction between regular army and those who wear uniforms to commit criminal acts. Senior officers say fake soldiers are present in the capital and other urban centres. For example, a gendarmerie colonel acknowledged on national television in February 2010 that, as the press often reports, frequent arrests are made of individuals in military uniforms they have no right to wear. Arms have also become too easily available due to discipline problems.<sup>101</sup>

## B. LIFE IN THE ARMED FORCES

In the absence of an imminent external threat since the collapse of Charles Taylor's regime and the end of the conflicts in the Mano River Union, most ordinary soldiers pass their day relatively idly, hanging around the barracks, manning checkpoints and guarding public buildings, including the offices of regional governors and prefects and the residences of junta members.<sup>102</sup> At the Samory Touré headquarters, they spend most of their time watching television or doing petty chores for superiors, such as washing their vehicles.<sup>103</sup>

Military life is nevertheless difficult and unrewarding for most rank-and-file soldiers and officers cut off from political privileges. Their existence broadly reflects the ordinary in Guinea, one of the world's poorest countries. Working and living conditions are deplorable, and the institution overseeing management of the armed forces has been marred by corruption. Little if any attention is paid to promoting competency. While a small number of officers and soldiers close to major sources of patronage broadly benefit, ordinary troops live in poverty, are badly dressed and lack decent housing. Some simply put up

with this situation, but in others it encourages a predatory culture vis-à-vis civilians.<sup>104</sup>

There is no social security system for serving military personnel, and medical facilities are under-resourced. Military personnel pay their medical expenses and those of their families. Although there are well-qualified doctors, there is no standard military hospital, and health care centres lack the resources to provide basic services.<sup>105</sup> Most soldiers are forced to buy their own uniforms, imported from Mali by local businessmen; those who cannot afford this dress in tattered, old uniforms. An officer said he had to buy his own stripes when promoted to colonel.<sup>106</sup> Young officers are sometimes forced to bribe their seniors to be listed for overseas training and peacekeeping missions.<sup>107</sup>

For the majority in the armed forces, the rice ration is the only incentive for staying in active service.<sup>108</sup> Bags of rice are sold to members at 40-60 per cent of market price. The number each soldier or officer is entitled to depends on rank. A major may buy six bags per month; senior officers may get far more, depending on their leverage in the *intendance*, some of which are then reportedly sold on the black market. Despite the burden on the national budget, Conté maintained the rice ration as a way of buying support and indirectly channelling extra money to the armed forces. At the same time, it served as a source of personal enrichment for a few high-ranking officers involved in its management and distribution to the troops.

Both rank-and-file soldiers and officers have been involved in money making activities inside and outside the army. Manning checkpoints and guarding important government officials and officers provide opportunities for extortion and graft. A junior officer at a checkpoint outside the capital told Crisis Group that all soldiers at such places have to pass some of their illicit takings up through the command chain.<sup>109</sup> Army accountants often take rich advantage of the financial desperation of personnel by making

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<sup>100</sup> Crisis Group interviews, civil servant, finance ministry; and former prime minister, Conakry, February 2010.

<sup>101</sup> Crisis Group interview, small arms expert, Conakry, February 2010.

<sup>102</sup> Crisis Group interview, civil society leader, Conakry, February 2010; and Crisis Group observations.

<sup>103</sup> Crisis Group interview, corporal, Kankan military region, February 2010.

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<sup>104</sup> Currently, two broad categories appear to enjoy privileged positions within the armed forces. The first includes senior and mid-ranking officers with political connections and those in administrative or operational command positions. The second includes rank-and-file members of the presidential guard and, until recently, the entourage of prominent junta officers such as Claude Pivi and Moussa Tiegboro Camara.

<sup>105</sup> Crisis Group interviews, senior military officers, Conakry, February 2010; soldiers, Kindia military region, February 2010; soldiers, Labé military region, February 2010.

<sup>106</sup> Crisis Group interview, Conakry, February 2010.

<sup>107</sup> Crisis Group interview, lieutenant, Conakry, February 2010.

<sup>108</sup> Crisis Group discussions, inter-army commission, Conakry, February 2010; junior officers, Kindia, May 2010.

<sup>109</sup> Crisis Group interview, lieutenant, Labé military region, February 2010.

loans at exorbitant rates that are deducted from salaries at month's end.

Senior and mid-ranking commanders and those working at the *intendance* also make money on fuel, which is allocated to unit commanders through either the two stations at Alpha Yaya and Samory camps or privately-operated Total franchises.<sup>110</sup> It is often taken for personal use or resold to the public. Officers have worked to inflate supply figures, which may explain the close links Dadis Camara forged with certain employees of Total, who ended up working for the CNDD. For example, his chef de cabinet, his legal adviser and the CNDD marine resources minister were formerly with Total.<sup>111</sup> Senior officers cut off from patronage have relied on peacekeeping deployments to supplement salaries. One said he built his house with his allowances and salary from West African (ECOMOG) missions in Liberia and Sierra Leone.<sup>112</sup>

Barracks, office and housing facilities and training centres are in deplorable state, especially in the provinces, where around 60 per cent of the force is stationed. For example, in the Kankan region, some detachments use thatch houses as offices. Many soldiers must live in civilian suburbs and commute to duty stations. The once-proud military factory that produced uniforms is no longer operational, and the army is forced to rely on imports. Génie militaire, the construction battalion, has virtually collapsed. Logistics outside the capital are particularly poor. For example, many gendarmerie units, including those that patrol, have neither operational vehicles nor office space. A commander said they had to buy their own stationary and use personal mobile phones to give operational orders.

This is in sharp contrast to the environment at headquarters in Conakry, where senior officers work in comfortable offices with cable television and internet. In addition to their official vehicles, most drive expensive cars and jeeps. Most junior officers and soldiers with whom Crisis Group spoke complained about living in squalor while majors and above own cars and houses.<sup>113</sup> Such discrepancies, with their origin in financial mismanagement at the top, are responsible for much tension within the army.

### C. INDISCIPLINE AND IMPUNITY

As described above, history and their relations with civilian power have embedded indiscipline, disrespect for rank, insubordination and impunity deep into the armed forces'

culture. Successive regimes have aggravated the problem, in particular creating a sense of injustice and grievance within the military which appears to legitimise insubordination. Under Conté, the unfair distribution of resources coupled with the gradual breakdown in army command structures generated a frustrated corps of mid-ranking officers and common soldiers, resulting in violent reactions against superiors. Mutinies were inspired by demands to improve working and living conditions that had been made worse by the emergence of senior officers who lacked resources and/or competence.<sup>114</sup> Loyalty became a function of patronage, rather than service or rank.<sup>115</sup> All this deteriorated further under the CNDD, as Dadis Camara set his own example of lack of respect for hierarchy by humiliating senior officers.

The directorate general of the military support command (Direction Generale de l'Intendance Militaire, DGIM) is the hub around which financial mismanagement revolves. Responsible for budget planning and execution, it controls large sums that are disbursed in three broad categories: salaries and benefits, operations and logistics, including maintenance and services. The bulk of military expenditures goes, quite naturally, to salaries and procurement. Frequently, pay lists are bloated by "ghost names", through systematic connivance between officers at the *intendance* and unit and regional commanders. Much money is also spent on rice rations and fuel, frequently overpriced through arrangements with suppliers and resold to the public at black market rates. Many supplies are either not sent to their intended destination or considerably reduced. Money meant for maintenance is mostly not disbursed, so items such as transport and communication equipment, and even entire buildings, rot.

The structures and mechanisms set up to control military spending have failed to halt the deterioration in management. The regulatory division (Division de Contrôle et Réglementation) of the DGIM and the internal audit unit (Division des finances de l'Inspection Générale des Forces Armées) are almost non-functional. Moreover, the army has never been subjected to the external controls applicable to other government departments. Attempts by such bodies as the national directorate of financial control (Direction Nationale de Contrôle Financière), the general inspectorate of finance (l'Inspection Générale des Finances) and the ministry of state control (le Ministère du contrôle d'Etat, concerned with audit issues) have either been rou-

<sup>110</sup> Crisis Group interview, public servant, Conakry, February 2010.

<sup>111</sup> Crisis Group interview, journalist, Conakry, February 2010.

<sup>112</sup> Crisis Group interview, senior officer, Conakry, February 2010.

<sup>113</sup> Crisis Group discussions, junior officers and soldiers, Conakry, February 2010; Kindia, May 2010.

<sup>114</sup> A senior officer in the inter-army commission made the point that senior officers cannot command respect from juniors if they are unable provide for their welfare. Crisis Group interview, Conakry, February 2010.

<sup>115</sup> A retired colonel said as many soldiers as one likes can be rallied with money. Crisis Group interview, Conakry, May 2010.

tinely discouraged or met with stiff resistance from well-placed senior officers.

Parts of the army are notorious for involvement in crime. Senior officers have been arrested for drug trafficking, and soldiers have been involved in robbery, car theft, vandalism and, routinely, extortion from civilians and ransacking shops. In Nzérékoré in August 2010, armed men in uniform robbed a fuel station.<sup>116</sup> A leading politician said his cousin, a well-known businessman, was kidnapped from home by soldiers and released after a ransom was paid.<sup>117</sup>

Poor management of weapons is tied into this general indiscipline. The appalling facilities for securing arms and the lack of political will to enforce strict control over their circulation and use have led to widespread misuse. Soldiers are often seen with weapons in markets, bars and public transport. On several recent occasions, they have been observed shooting in the open to scare away civilians.<sup>118</sup> Compared with its neighbours, Guinea has a large number of armed men – not necessarily on active service – patrolling the streets of its main cities.

The habit of carrying weapons in public dates back to Sékou Touré's "*le peuple en armes*" doctrine, but little was done subsequently to reverse it, and the dramatic increase in the supply of arms during the conflicts around the turn of the century worsened the situation. The armoury at the Alpha Yaya camp that was destroyed during the 1996 mutiny is still in bad shape. Despite some very recent improvements in the weapons monitoring system under Sékouba Konaté, all this, along with the discipline crisis, has made it very difficult to enforce the existing regulation.<sup>119</sup>

The armed forces have a well deserved reputation for human rights abuses, including suppressing opposition, torture and extra-judicial killings, of which the 28 September 2009 massacre is the most recent example. Almost all officers and soldiers implicated in that affair are still in the army. The subsequent revenge killings of some soldiers and civilians believed to be sympathetic to Toumba Diakité are still shrouded in mystery.

Recent examples abound of soldiers committing abuses with impunity, including against other soldiers. In 2008 troops allegedly acting under the orders of Conté's son executed police over a drug-seizure case, reigniting tensions between the two forces.<sup>120</sup> On a number of occasions, the CNDD's anti-drug and crime cell has used drug trafficking charges to arbitrarily arrest ordinary civilians as well as police and army officers. In televised court proceedings at which they were testifying as witnesses in May 2010, a judge accused Tiegboro Camara and officers under his command of using drug raids to settle personal scores and abuse citizens.<sup>121</sup> As already described, the CNDD used soldiers to harass opposition leaders and disrupt rallies. Following the 28 September massacres, it employed death threats against members of the Forces Vives, a coalition of political forces and civil society leaders.<sup>122</sup> In the days after the massacre, soldiers attacked the homes of opposition leaders and civil society activists, including the Force Vives spokesperson.<sup>123</sup>

Some avenues exist to seek redress, but they have proved ineffective.<sup>124</sup> The fear of further reprisals from soldiers has often prevented citizens from lodging formal complaints.<sup>125</sup> Conté reinforced impunity by persistently refusing to investigate the massacres committed by members of the armed forces, despite national and international pressure.

Lack of redress for injustices within the armed forces is also a major problem. A number of officers have been victims of marginalisation in the form of delayed promotions and arbitrary postings. The internal institutional means to address such injustice are ineffective, and many officers and soldiers turn to civilian courts, which are mostly not suitable to handle cases involving the military and almost always prove equally ineffective.<sup>126</sup> Officers have also suffered such abuses as arbitrary arrest, torture, detention and dismissal. Successive presidents have used

<sup>116</sup> Crisis Group interview, youth leader, Nzérékoré, September 2010.

<sup>117</sup> Crisis Group interview, political party leader, Conakry, September 2010.

<sup>118</sup> Crisis Group interview, small arms expert, Conakry, February 2010.

<sup>119</sup> The Personnel, Armaments and Ammunition control regulation (PAM) provides that after each mission or exercise, weapons are to be handed over for accounting and safe storage. Crisis Group interview, small arms expert, Conakry, February 2010.

<sup>120</sup> Crisis Group interview, gendarmerie officer, Conakry, February 2010.

<sup>121</sup> Televised court proceedings of drug-trafficking offences shown on national television, Conakry, May 2010.

<sup>122</sup> Crisis Group interview, member of the Forces Vives, Conakry, February 2010.

<sup>123</sup> See "Jean-Marie Doré: 'Certains voulaient me tuer par balle, d'autres m'égorgent'", *Jeune Afrique*, 29 September 2009.

<sup>124</sup> The Bureaux de Garnisons are units in the army set up to deal with complaints against members of the armed forces. They are usually in most military barracks and gendarmerie units and are generally manned by a senior officer.

<sup>125</sup> Crisis Group interview, human rights activist, Conakry, February 2010.

<sup>126</sup> Aggrieved officers or common soldiers are expected to lodge formal complaints with their superiors, but if they are not satisfied, they can go into civil courts, as there are no military tribunals for such cases.

imprisonment, executions and forced retirements to deal with those they perceived as a threat. Conté, for example, used both the 1984 failed coup and the 1996 mutiny to remove officers he viewed as dangerous.

Torture within armies and the resulting resentment and trauma have been significant factors in conflicts in the region, so the issue needs to be addressed as part of the process of creating a disciplined military.<sup>127</sup> More generally, lack of opportunity for redress has institutionalised mutiny and popular protest as a means to seek justice in the armed forces and given rise to a culture of settling scores and avenging feelings of exclusion and marginalisation with violence.<sup>128</sup>

#### D. FACTIONS

Factionalism poses serious threats to institutional cohesion. The most evident and potentially volatile fracture line is ethnic. Each of the country's heads of state has pushed members of his ethnic group into the army and created rivalries by giving privileged access to promotions and rents. Most commanders seek junior soldiers from the same ethnic group.

Divisions are also evident along generational and educational lines, as successive regimes have placed a premium on loyalty at the expense of competence. Many educated officers, obliged to serve under less experienced and qualified superiors, are bitter about their apparent marginalisation.<sup>129</sup> Politically privileged officers often gang-up against educated officers whom they consider a threat.<sup>130</sup> Among the educated corps, there are usually frequent disagreements between officers trained in the old Soviet Bloc and those trained in countries like France and Morocco. This multiplicity of training has led to problems over issues such as troop organisation, command structures and operational tactics, thus further eroding morale.<sup>131</sup> Guineans often identify groups in the army according to the place of training.<sup>132</sup>

Under Sékou Touré, rank-and-file soldiers and members of militias and CUMs enjoyed privileges, creating tensions with more senior officers. Conté reversed this, disbanding the CUMs and tending to favour more senior ranks, at least initially. The problem then became that ordinary soldiers gradually felt marginalised and nursed grievances against senior officers. The CNDD came to power in a classic junior-officer coup, stimulated in part by generational differences. The aftermath, described above, was also typical for the region, as populist rhetoric against a corrupt older generation of officers gave way to insubordination and abuse of power.<sup>133</sup>

The CNDD is divided by loyalty to its various leaders. Attempts were made within it to block Sékouba Konaté from taking over from Dadis Camara.<sup>134</sup> In January 2010, officers opposed to Konaté's transition project called for Dadis Camara's return from convalescent exile in Ouagadougou, even sending a delegation there to demand his repatriation. Konaté's insistence on retaining notorious human rights abusers Claude Pivi and Moussa Tiegboro Camara in his cabinet despite popular outcry was an attempt to allay the fears of Dadis Camara loyalists within the junta and generally keep potential spoilers on board. It is still not clear how these divisions will play out; much will depend on the attitude of the new president to justice within the military – one of many tricky dilemmas he will face. What is certain is that the CNDD period has created a situation wherein some officers have loyalty simply to whomever can provide them with cover for prior abuses against the population.

The armed forces, particularly young officers close to the junta, are also divided between those who view the transition to civilian rule and reform as a threat to their privileges and those who see it as an opportunity for the moral and material renewal of the institution. A wide range of politicians and officers have repeatedly acknowledged the dangers of a split in the armed forces over core issues such as the handing over of power to civilians, amnesty for officers implicated in human rights abuses and reform of the army. Widespread unease about reform under a civilian government, confirmed in Crisis Group interviews, will have to be carefully handled.

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<sup>127</sup> Some junior officers who attempted the 2002 coup in Côte d'Ivoire, for example, had been tortured under the previous regime of President Guei. Equally, torture was a factor in antagonisms between Bissau Guinean President Nino Vieira and his army chief, General Tagme Na Wai, which ended in 2009 with the violent death of both. See Crisis Group Africa Briefing, N°61, *Guinea-Bissau: Beyond Rule of the Gun*, 25 June 2009.

<sup>128</sup> Crisis Group interview, colonel, Conakry, February 2010.

<sup>129</sup> Crisis Group interview, senior officer, Conakry, February 2010.

<sup>130</sup> Crisis Group interview, captain, Conakry, February 2010.

<sup>131</sup> Crisis Group interviews, instructor, Ecole des sous-officiers, Manéah, February 2010; senior officer, Conakry, February 2010.

<sup>132</sup> For example, some refer to recent appointments as the return of the "Meknès graduates" to command positions. Meknès is

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the military academy in Morocco Sékouba Konaté and many other senior officers, including the current army chief of staff, attended.

<sup>133</sup> The CNDD in power, including initial popularity and subsequent deterioration, can be compared in many respects to the NPRC (National Provisional Ruling Council) in Sierra Leone in 1992-1996.

<sup>134</sup> Crisis Group interview, source close to the junta, Conakry, February 2010.

## E. CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS

At independence, the army was part of the country's proud drive to nationhood. Over the years, it has derived some credibility with civilians from its stabilising role in West Africa, including participation in regional peacekeeping and its defence of the borders during the wars in Sierra Leone and Liberia. It may yet be possible to restore some of this residual pride. Even today, Guineans often feel strong ties with members of the army, not least because military service is frequently the means of financial survival for many family members.

However, from Sékou Touré through Conté, civil-military relations have been characterised by rivalry. Guinean history is full of politicisation of the armed forces and their misuse to suppress civic opposition, including extrajudicial killings, torture and rigged elections. Conversely, the treatment Sékou Touré meted out to the officer corps led it to mistrust civilian political leadership. Although Conté tried to civilianise his regime in the 1990s, it remained very military in character. He staffed the defence ministry with officers and moved most of its important offices into barracks. In the later part of his life, he himself worked out of the barracks in central Conakry.

Civil-military relations deteriorated further under the CNDD. Following the 28 September 2009 massacre, civilians openly attacked family members of military personnel.<sup>135</sup> This was especially apparent in Conakry and Moyenne Guinée, since the majority of the victims were reported to be from the Peuhl ethnic group, strongly present in those areas.<sup>136</sup> Several military sources spoke of fear for their own and their families' security in the aftermath of 28 September. In Conakry officers in uniform were reluctant to use public transport for fear of public reaction.<sup>137</sup> People believed to be sympathetic to the junta had property attacked by civilians. In Pita, for example, the house of one of the most prominent politicians, Ousmane Bah, was attacked by his own supporters because he showed sympathy for the junta.<sup>138</sup> In Labé, soldiers were advised to stay in their barracks to avoid confrontations with the local population. A group of soldiers said they preferred civilian clothes because they were consistently insulted when in uniform.<sup>139</sup>

The national picture is uneven, however. In some places, particularly communities with a large military presence, the massacre did not lead to a fundamental breakdown in relations, likely due to personal ties.<sup>140</sup> Since rotation is rare, personnel tend to stay in one place for long periods, allowing them to cultivate social and family links with host communities. In turn, these communities benefit from their presence and come to depend on them economically. A junior officer in the Kankan military region pointed to "the importance of the [military] rice rations to the communities", which are often distributed to relatives and friends or resold below the market price.<sup>141</sup>

Part of the problem in civil-military relations is a fundamental misunderstanding on both sides of the role of the armed forces. Officers' complaints that they encounter hostility on patrols show that many have come to view domestic control as their primary responsibility rather than defence of the borders. Many civilians see the army as a super-police, used to quell popular protests, man checkpoints and arrest criminals. Civic education on what the military's role should be is non-existent. Few soldiers, even officers, can clearly articulate the difference between defence and security.<sup>142</sup>

Opportunities for open discussions between the military and civilian politicians are rare. The highly politicised oversight Sékou Touré employed was outside formal institutions. The legally-mandated institutions to regulate the military, such as the National Defence Council and the Parliamentary Defence Committee, are barely functional. Particularly following the 1996 mutiny, discussions on defence and security became the monopoly of Conté, his family and the small group of senior officers around him. Over the years, any attempt by civilian officials to change the balance of power was met with dismissal or violence. Under Conté, all defence ministers, except one who served briefly in a national unity government, were military men.

At the more grassroots level, civil society's relationship with the armed forces has been limited to inviting a few members to workshops on issues such as child rights, border protection and civil-military dialogue.<sup>143</sup> Discussions on SSR are a fairly recent phenomenon but have been gaining ground since the transition of late 2009. A

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<sup>135</sup> Crisis Group discussions, rank-and-file soldiers, Samory Touré military camp, Conakry, February 2010.

<sup>136</sup> Crisis Group telephone interview, human rights activist, September 2009.

<sup>137</sup> Crisis Group interviews, officer and corporal, Conakry, February 2010.

<sup>138</sup> Crisis Group interview, gendarme, Labé, February 2010.

<sup>139</sup> Crisis Group discussions, rank-and-file soldiers, Labé military region, February 2010.

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<sup>140</sup> In Dalaba, a gendarmerie officer claimed the incident did not affect relationships with the local population, although most people Crisis Group spoke with expressed shock at the 28 September events. Crisis Group interviews, commandant, Dalaba, February 2010; businessman, Mamou, February 2010.

<sup>141</sup> Crisis Group interview, lieutenant, Kankan military region, February 2010.

<sup>142</sup> Crisis Group interview, civil society activist involved in SSR, May 2010.

<sup>143</sup> Crisis Group interviews, director, Sabou Guinea; head, civil-military committee, Conakry, February 2010.



televised discussion organised by a section of civil society in February 2010 was one of the first opportunities Guineans have had to publicly air their views on the armed forces.<sup>144</sup> A month before, two international NGO's published a study on SSR.<sup>145</sup> In April, the NGO International Alert organised a three-day workshop on national security and defence policy, with a number of senior officers and officials from the security and defence forces in attendance, including the deputy army chief of staff.<sup>146</sup> Such embryonic attempts to stimulate discussion on the armed forces' role are vital if there is to be army reform in the coming years, as has been shown in neighbouring countries like Sierra Leone.<sup>147</sup>

Civilian input into the ECOWAS-led SSR evaluation report of May 2010 was limited. Although it mentioned the need to institutionalise a participatory approach to security management, no serious effort was made to solicit endorsement by the National Transition Council (Conseil national de la transition, CNT), the quasi-legislative body created under the Ouagadougou accord.<sup>148</sup> This has not undermined the report's legitimacy but does indicate the importance of getting civilian institutions to take the lead on SSR. Repairing civil-military relations is critical to overcoming key challenges, including the public's fears and suspicions regarding the spoiler role of the armed forces and the prospects for civilian control.

## IV. REFORM CHALLENGES AND A WAY AHEAD

### A. STATE OF PLAY

**The new President** faces a series of challenges and dilemmas on army reform. Some of the pressures will be contradictory. It will be particularly tricky to balance the need to keep the army on board and achieve buy-in for the process with the need to reduce numbers and fundamentally reform financial management. Radical and rapid reduction would not only be resisted by the armed forces but also have adverse security implications. A civilian president will not want to have large numbers of aggrieved ex-soldiers wandering the country. The inevitable reductions should be carried out gradually, without weakening security and undermining the transition process. But a slow approach must not mean ignoring the problem – bloated numbers and the associated financial issues are at the heart of army indiscipline.

There are fears about the potential spoiler role of the armed forces, particularly whether they are really ready to accept genuine, not just formal, subordination to civilian rule. The new president will deal with an army that is deeply distrustful of civilian power, so may be tempted to buy his personal, short-term security by neglecting its problems, or to opt for an ethnically-driven presidential guard, which would be disastrous for relations with the rest of the army. Another tricky challenge is accountability for officers accused of human rights abuses. The army is likely to continue to resist national and international pressures on this and use the implicit threat of a new intervention as leverage. The president must find a balance between reconciliation and accountability that permits the country to come to grips with its past without endangering the entire transition.

Those with greatest responsibility for past atrocities must be brought to account, including through cooperation with the ICC's work. But it must also be accepted that many who have committed human rights abuse will need to find their place in society, and community-level reconciliation processes need to be used to that effect. Training must be used to weed out serious abusers, and recruitment must, in the future, include proper human rights vetting.

Overall the president has important strengths, including the legitimacy of the democratic process, international backing and a relatively peaceful neighbourhood. But his position also has weaknesses – in particular the size of the task and the implicit but ever-present threat that the army may intervene politically, or otherwise create chaos.

<sup>144</sup> Crisis Group interviews, television program discussants, Conakry, February 2010.

<sup>145</sup> This study – “Etude portant sur les Perspectives de Revalorisation des Forces de Défense et de Sécurité de la Guinée” – commissioned by the International Fund for Electoral Services, (IFES) and BEFORE, (a campaign group against mass violence) was among the first attempts made by NGOs to look into SSR challenges. A large group of officers and retired officers took part; Crisis Group interview, country director, IFES, Conakry, February 2010.

<sup>146</sup> Crisis Group interview, country director, International Alert, Conakry, May 2010.

<sup>147</sup> See M. J. Jalloh and Daniel Gbondo, “Playing with the Enemy: Making Sense of the Evolving Patterns of Civil-Military Cooperation in Post-Conflict Sierra Leone”, *Governance Review: A Journal on Good Governance in Sierra Leone*, (Free-town, 2006).

<sup>148</sup> The CNT was one of the key institutions set up as part of the implementation of the Ouagadougou accord signed by the CNDD and the political forces establishing a transitional government and institutions in January 2010.

**Within the army**, attitudes to reform combine willingness to engage with a series of fears over loss of privilege and jobs and over possible punishments. Although the majority, particularly outside the capital, are enthusiastic about a subject that occupies much barracks discussion, their information comes only from national television and local radios. Many see reform as an opportunity to address the malaise and injustice that is rife in the armed forces. Others see it as part of making the army internationally acceptable. This is important to many soldiers, tired, as are many civilians, of the supposedly exceptional status Guinea derives from Sékou Touré's revolutionary period. The positive attitude also has a more material basis – the desire to gain some of the prestige and money peacekeeping missions offer.<sup>149</sup> Many senior officers share the perception that an apolitical, well-equipped and managed force is vital for national stability and that this is in their interests.<sup>150</sup>

However, for a large section of the armed forces of all ranks, reform is more about “barracks prosperity”, improving material conditions, than restructuring relations with civilian power. Politicians are still regarded with mistrust if not contempt. This points to a serious, on-going difference in perception, which will have to be dealt with to avoid past problems.<sup>151</sup> Despite the enthusiasm for reform and Konaté's oft repeated assurances that only a civilian government can guarantee regular pay, some privileged officers, especially those close to the junta, do not share a sense of urgency over the need for democratic civilian rule but remain concerned over possible loss of special benefits.

Fears over accountability for past abuses are also evidently a reason for fear of civilian rule. Although many who have committed abuses still feel justified in having followed orders of superiors, they are also aware of the strong popular anger. Following the January-February 2007 and the 28 September 2009 massacres, there were numerous

calls by rights advocates – and some senior politicians, including the two leading presidential candidates – to prosecute members of the armed forces before an international tribunal. More recently, victims groups have demanded trials of military personnel for crimes against humanity.<sup>152</sup> The trial of Charles Taylor in The Hague is a reminder that, even years later, there could be accountability for past misdeeds.

**The international community** shows considerable willingness to help reform the army. While governments and donors are ostensibly prepared to follow the lead of domestic and regional actors, it is uncertain how coordination will work. It is vital that donors not be played against each other by an army keen to preserve its privileges, as in Guinea-Bissau.<sup>153</sup> Furthermore, it would be a mistake to think that a new democratic government could alone provide the necessary lead, especially on the hard financial decisions at the heart of army problems. Coordination is all the more difficult, but no less important, because funds must come from many directions. ECOWAS is unlikely to contribute money but is likely to be tasked with coordination, a situation which could generate disagreement over reform direction.

The ECOWAS-led SSR evaluation mission, described above, is regarded as a roadmap for international involvement. The choice of Lamine Cissé, a former Senegalese general and minister, as leader unquestionably gave it credibility, and it enjoyed support from Guinean authorities.<sup>154</sup> However, perhaps inevitably, the report was vague on such issues as budget, force size and impunity, which may explain why it was acclaimed in Conakry, including by the army. Details remain to be negotiated, and many international actors are waiting for a clear lead from a new government before deciding what financial or training support to offer.

France is keen to aid army reform if ECOWAS takes the lead, but there has not yet been a well-defined commitment on SSR, and Paris is likely to use its leverage to push for greater European Union (EU) involvement. The French remain concerned with cost issues; a senior official stated: “The Guineans should not expect donors to settle all the bills, and provisions should be made for army reform in the national budget”.<sup>155</sup> Any eventual French support will be tied to the 1984 bilateral agreement on military coop-

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<sup>149</sup> There is no formal bar to the Guinean army serving in UN or other international peacekeeping missions, but the poor state of its training, and evolving requirements at AU as well as UN level have in effect excluded it from consideration for over a decade.

<sup>150</sup> This analysis of views within the army is drawn from extensive Crisis Group conversations with soldiers across the country in February and May 2010, including interviews, corporal and private soldier, Kindia, May 2010; officer, Kankan military region, February 2010; junior officers, Labè military region, February 2010; and extensive discussions with members of the inter-army commission.

<sup>151</sup> Crisis Group interviews in May 2010 with a range of senior actors in the reform process highlighted a sharp distinction between members of the armed forces, for whom reform was about conditions, and civilians, for whom the main issue was frequently numbers and finance.

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<sup>152</sup> See “Des dizaines de constitutions de parties civiles dans l'affaire du 28 septembre 2009”, *GuineeDirect*, 4 June 2010.

<sup>153</sup> See Crisis Group Briefing, *Guinea-Bissau*, op. cit.

<sup>154</sup> The special presidential adviser on SSR said, “we are deeply satisfied with the report”. Crisis Group interview, Conakry, May 2010.

<sup>155</sup> Crisis Group interviews, French official, Paris, July 2010; security analyst, Paris, March 2010.

eration.<sup>156</sup> France has ten military officers in Guinea providing a wide range of technical assistance (principally training) to the defence and security sectors.<sup>157</sup> It also trained the election security force (FOSSEPEL) on crowd control and maintaining public order and, between 11 May and 11 June 2010, a detachment of ten officers based in Senegal trained two infantry companies in peacekeeping.<sup>158</sup>

The EU, while a significant contributor of development aid, is not contemplating a key role on army reform, unlike in Guinea-Bissau. The problems encountered there that led to the closing of the mission in mid-2010 may be a discouraging factor. However, EU officials appear ready to support some aspects of broader SSR, including justice, possibly depending on whether standard aid funds marked for Guinea can be allocated for skills training and retirements. The EU supported the ECOWAS-led SSR evaluation team. However, it does not envisage an SSR mission. A senior official said, "I don't see the EU playing a key role outside a broader configuration".<sup>159</sup> As accepted "lead nation" on Guinea in Brussels, much will depend on France's willingness to mobilise support.

The U.S. has also been involved in army reform. In 2002, it trained and equipped an 800-strong Ranger battalion as a counter-insurgency force in the Mano River Union. This contribution is highly respected within the armed forces. Guinea has also benefited from various U.S. military assistance programs. In March 2010, a Washington delegation was in Conakry to discuss support for justice and army reform. The U.S. provided two experts to work beside the ECOWAS-led SSR evaluation team.<sup>160</sup> The report of the March mission underlined U.S. willingness to assist on SSR. However, although \$3 million-\$4 million in State Department funds have already been programmed (not counting the support to ECOWAS, police reform and election security), it is unclear how much else will be made available.

The UN approach to SSR has been marked by commitment to enhance international coordination. Although the UN Office for West Africa (UNOWA) has been actively involved in the process, its role in SSR is undecided. It is not certain where it stands on mobilising international resources and greater UN involvement. So far, it has usefully rallied UN agencies in Guinea to form a common front on SSR, as well as carried out political coordination by virtue of its position on the international contact group.<sup>161</sup> It also was influential in the ECOWAS-led SSR evaluation mission.

## B. PRIORITIES FOR REFORM

Despite the apparent momentum and window of opportunity, the balance of forces is not entirely favourable to reform. With international involvement likely to be relatively weak, spoilers in the army will have a fair amount of leverage. The most important strategic task is to tip the balance within the military to favour those who are positive toward reform and isolate the spoilers. Many will need to be placated, but without violating the principles of transparent management, which must be at the heart of the reform process.

The objective of the reforms is not particularly complicated; the problems of Guinea's military are not, in the end, very different from those of comparable countries. A much smaller force is needed; the reformed armies of Sierra Leone and Liberia count only 10,000 and 2,000 respectively, and even with longer borders to patrol, the Guinean army needs reducing to a much lower, and more affordable, level. The exact size is a longer-term aim, to be decided within a comprehensive requirements review. Strong and sustained political will is necessary to achieve it. The new army should be focused on genuine national security concerns and will also likely be engaged in international peacekeeping. It should desist from working on domestic crime, the responsibility of the police and gendarmerie, both of which must be part of an SSR that operationalises distinct roles for each of the security sector's several elements.

That the Guinean army has, until now, differed from this model is mainly due to regime insecurity but also to its own ability to block previous reforms. A successful reform strategy needs to keep objectives in mind, while carefully selecting initial priorities in order to mitigate the risk of backsliding. The most pressing priority is to achieve buy-in from the army – at least a critical mass of officers – without letting the institution dictate the nature and pace

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<sup>156</sup> This cooperation was briefly suspended following the 28 September 2009 massacre and reinstated on 22 February 2010. Crisis Group interview, French military officer, Paris, July 2010.

<sup>157</sup> The ten officers are attached to units as follows: two (defence and security attachés); two (human resource development); two (Gendarmerie nationale); one (the Navy) one (Ecole de transmission); one (formation des officiers); one (Ecole sous officiers). Crisis Group interview, *ibid*.

<sup>158</sup> See "La France et la Guinée relancent leur coopération militaire opérationnelle: Déclaration", *Guineenews*, 15 June 2010.

<sup>159</sup> Crisis Group interview, senior EU official, Brussels, 29 June 2010.

<sup>160</sup> See Alexis Arieff, "Guinea's New Transitional Government: Emerging Issues for U.S. Policy", Congressional Research Service, April 2010.

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<sup>161</sup> Crisis Group interviews, UN Development Programme (UNDP), resident representative, Conakry, May 2010; UN officials, Dakar, May 2010.

of reform. This is particularly important in the first stage, which should be to elaborate a defence white paper and to enhance popular and democratic involvement in the process. A comprehensive army census will then be needed.

Two elements must be prioritised next. First, public administration needs to be demilitarised, including a significant reduction of officers in the defence ministry. Secondly, a rapid push must be made to improve the army's internal management, taking advantage of the disgust felt at the indiscipline displayed in 2009. This should lay the basis for a vital longer-term component: a far more robust military police with investigative powers.

Comprehensive donor coordination for the SSR effort is unlikely, as most donors will prioritise their own bilateral training programs. This will not be overly problematic if there is at least minimum adherence to AU and UN principles and doctrine. But a donor SSR coordinating committee should be established to work with a Guinean body on implementation of the white paper, including some specific spending items like a pension scheme. This will almost certainly have to be led by ECOWAS, with UNOWA support, even though the bulk of funds will likely come from Western donors.

### **1. Civilian oversight and clarifying the armed forces' role**

Comprehensive and functioning civilian oversight, down to grassroots involvement, is a vital objective of army reform. It is also essential that the reform process itself not be shielded from democratic scrutiny. At least some degree of popular consensus will be needed on how to create a disciplined, efficient, modern, non-partisan and transparent force. This involves framing a national security strategy and policy highlighting the goals of the overall reform process and the roles and mandates of the various defence and security forces. Before the legislative elections (expected six months after the presidential), the CNT must play a part. It should set up a sub-committee to examine the draft white paper and provide detailed recommendations. This should not be left to the president's office, as the widest possible buy-in will be needed to face down potential spoilers.

The process of discussion around a white paper should be used to stimulate debate within the armed forces; every effort must be made to get their support at this point and at an ever growing level of detail. It is vital to overcome the misconceptions of the army's role that have built up over years of political misuse. This should go hand-in-hand with demilitarisation of the administration to produce relatively quick, concrete and visible advances in the reform process.

The next step would be to establish civilian oversight of management, including the *intendance*, notably through a thorough capacity-building program in the newly civilianised defence ministry, though senior officers are likely to insist on retaining a measure of control over promotions, postings and recruitment. The National Defence Council and the Parliamentary Defence Committee should be re-activated and their powers renewed so they can contribute, along with the ministry, to civilian oversight and decide key issues such as force size, service chief appointments and defence expenditures. None of this can happen overnight. To work toward it, the defence-knowledge base of civilian politicians should be developed through training programs.

Meanwhile, thought must be given to repairing the mistrust – in some cases bitterness – that characterises civil-military relations at the grassroots level. NGOs could take an important share in this, including through civic education programs highlighting the fundamental task of the armed forces and organising public debates on the army in which military personnel would engage with civil society. While reconciliation will be an important theme, the door must be left open for justice in the most serious cases of past abuse. A new administration may be tempted to kick this issue into the long grass, but it is important at least to bring the principle of accountability into the open and establish basic principles, lest widespread, and in some cases unfounded fears create a favourable climate for spoilers.

Special consideration must be given to gradually prising open past cases of torture. While this may have some risks, including the spoiler role of those responsible, leaving such stones unturned has not worked in other similar cases. As noted above, victims of torture in neighbouring countries have instigated further violence. The only way to avoid this is to give them the sense that justice is possible. Torture sites and victims must, therefore, be identified, and investigations must be initiated.

Thought should also be given to a longer-term civilian involvement in the reform process, for example through regional civil-military development committees, as has been done with some success in Sierra Leone. These could coordinate at the community level, drawing on expertise from the military, particularly the *Génie militaire*, to advance rural infrastructure development.

It is vital that the armed forces become fully representative of Guinean society, especially in ethnic terms. While this is a medium-term task requiring turnover of troops and changes in recruitment, the principle must be embedded in the white paper discussions.

## 2. Resources and numbers

Since lack of financial transparency has been at the heart of numerous army problems, effective management of financial flows is perhaps the single most important component of reform. As with other elements, it needs to be both a longer-term objective and a guiding principle for implementing reform from the start. A program should be elaborated, involving both Guinean and international financial experts, who should be given specific responsibility to oversee the military budget, reporting jointly to ECOWAS, as the lead SSR coordinator, and the new president. Although the context is different, the financial management mechanism accepted by the Liberian government in the aftermath of the civil war (GEMAP)<sup>162</sup> could provide useful guidance. This oversight mechanism could also serve as the starting point for comprehensive administrative restructuring and creation of effective financial management tools.

The international community can start immediately by conditioning its support for SSR on increased financial transparency in the armed forces, including with respect to the refurbishing of barracks and a full and frank discussion of the use of alleged secrecy requirements to cover corruption. Donors also need to press for an overall reduction in defence spending. This, too, will not occur overnight, but it needs to be clear early on that SSR aims to reduce the burden on the national treasury.

There is probably no better example of the challenges facing reform of the army than its inflated size, a key aspect of the resource problem. The current numbers are untenable even in the medium term. Reduction will have to come in phases, each taking account of the balance of forces at the time and whether prior political work of persuasion and coalition building has borne fruit. The first, relatively easy step is a complete recruitment freeze, followed by a thorough overhaul of procedures. Though the armed forces claim 45,320 personnel, there are no reliable figures. It is thus urgent to conduct a credible count in order to begin to gauge the real resource needs and to plan for reductions. Outside help will almost certainly be required to meet the technical difficulties and prevent the military from distorting the outcome so as to lay claim on resources associated with the reform. ECOWAS is gradually developing expertise in this area and should be asked to help.

Training is one way to deal with force size in the medium and long term. It should be used both to ease the passage

into civilian life for those leaving service and to professionalise those who remain. An international military advisory and training team (IMATT), with ECOWAS and the French as core elements, but with U.S. input, should be established to give strategic and operational advice for a comprehensive long-term program. This would enable common soldiers to acquire basic skills to facilitate their eventual integration into civilian life. Fast-track training would be required for senior officers who have benefited from promotions for which they have lacked the requisite qualifications.

A plan should be developed to manage the retirement process. The ECOWAS-led SSR evaluation report found that 6 per cent of the total force is older than 55, including a large number of senior officers. The possibilities of recycling retired officers and soldiers should be pursued and reconversion schemes for voluntary retirement established that would enable some to seek appointment in other security-related professions, such as national park wardens. The fear of losing benefits like the rice ration explains the reluctance of senior officers to retire. Special, but time-limited incentives should be created, which could include allowing senior officers to retire with some of their benefits, including the rice ration. A multi-donor trust fund to help finance this plan should be created. The international community should also facilitate the process of engaging the armed forces in peacekeeping, a further means towards the longer term creation of a more professional force.

Special consideration needs to be given to the retirement of senior officers, some of whom have developed considerable business interests connected to their military position. Some will need to be placated as they move to civilian life, others to be carefully monitored for spoiler activity as financial transparency is better established.

Part of the quid pro quo of reform is that a smaller army should have better conditions of service. Without this, no amount of oversight will curb the corruption and malaise. Resources must be allocated for the welfare of officers, ordinary soldiers and their families. Safeguards will be needed to ensure that these resources go to providing better salaries, housing, transport facilities and health care for all ranks rather than merely improving the lot of senior officers. In parallel, it is vital to settle longer-term legal and employment status issues, which have become muddled by years of mismanagement, so as to guarantee career plans for officers and ordinary soldiers alike, including those who retire.

## 3. Dealing with politicisation

It is critical that the new president resists the temptation to use the armed forces for partisan ends as his predecessors have done. He must recognise that the politicisation of the military has destroyed its professionalism. Officers

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<sup>162</sup>GEMAP's full name is Governance and Economic Management Assistance Program. For a detailed analysis of financial issues in Liberia just prior to the GEMAP program, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°87, *Liberia and Sierra Leone: Rebuilding Failed States*, 8 December 2004.

should also realise that playing the spoiler would further damage their credibility and reinforce anti-military sentiments in the wider society. Considerable efforts need to be put into education and officer training to ensure the development of a professional and apolitical corps.

Consideration must also be given to the “insecure regime” syndrome, wherein presidents misuse the armed forces, often with disastrous consequences, because they fear for their personal or regime security. The current democratic process, for all its imperfections, is a first step to providing regime security via legitimacy. But more is needed, including clear security guarantees from ECOWAS and strong signals from the international community against any future military role in politics. Equally, the president must do his part, governing correctly and not manipulating the constitution to suit his personal ends.

While this report has concentrated on the national challenges, the regional security environment is highly relevant to army reform in Guinea. Without regional stability that allows breathing space, it will be difficult to make progress on many of the most pressing problems. Providing support for foreign armed groups, massive and unregulated recruitment, illegal arms flows and illicit economic activity are all regional problems which have weighed heavily on the professionalism of the armed forces in recent years. In particular, maintaining stability in Liberia, which has extensive links to the Guinée Forestière region, is vital to providing the incubation period army reform in Guinea needs.

## V. CONCLUSION

Reforming the armed forces is critical to addressing Guinea’s dysfunctional political dynamics and long-term stability in West Africa. Decades of bad governance and misuse have rendered the military a source of chronic political trouble and a liability to democratic civilian rule. Reforming an army notorious for indiscipline, human rights abuses and distrust of civilian power will require significant political will and long-term donor engagement and resources.

Despite the urgency acknowledged by all sides, there is a clear danger that the interested parties have different conceptions of what reform should bring, in particular that the armed forces will want to impose their own vision. While international actors should prioritise local ownership of the process, they should ensure that SSR is about not only improving the material conditions of the armed forces but also defining their place in a new democratic dispensation.

The ECOWAS-led SSR evaluation report has laid the strategic framework for army reform, but it will become a dead letter if the new civilian president and donors fail to deal with the most contentious issues of financial mismanagement and bloated size. The election of the president and the apparent momentum for reform within the armed forces themselves provide a window of opportunity to get reform right. The international community must remain engaged after the elections, however, or risk jeopardising the substantial investment already made in stabilising the country and West Africa at large.

**Dakar/Nairobi/Brussels, 23 September 2010**

APPENDIX A

MAP OF GUINEA



Map No. 4164 Rev. 3 UNITED NATIONS  
June 2004

Department of Peacekeeping Operations  
Cartographic Section

## APPENDIX B

### GLOSSARY

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AU	African Union
BATA	Parachute Battalion (Bataillon Autonome des Troupes Aéroportées)
CMRN	National Military Renewal Committee (Comité Militaire de Redressement National )
CND	National Defence Council (Conseil National de Défense)
CNDD	National Council for Democracy and Development (Conseil National pour la Démocratie et le Développement)
CNT	National Transition Council (Conseil National de la Transition)
CUM	Military Section Committee (Comité d'Unité Militaire)
DNCF	National Directorate of Financial Control (Direction National du Contrôle Financier)
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
ECOMOG	Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
ENSO	National Academy for Junior Officers (Ecole Nationale des Sous-Officiers d'active)
FOSSEPEL	Special Security Forces for the Electoral Process (Force Spéciale de Sécurisation du Processus Electoral)
ICC	International Criminal Court
IMATT	International Military Advisory and Training Team
LURD	Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy
PAIGC	African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde (Partido Africano da Independência da Guiné e Cabo Verde)
PAM	Personnel, Armaments and Ammunition control regulation
PDG	Democratic Party of Guinea (Parti Démocratique de Guinée)
SSR	Security Sector Reform
UMC	Conakry Military Factory (Usine militaires de Conakry)
UNOWA	United Nations Office for West Africa



## APPENDIX C

### ABOUT THE INTERNATIONAL CRISIS GROUP

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Crisis Group'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, it produces analytical reports containing practical recommendations targeted at key international decision-takers. Crisis Group also publishes *CrisisWatch*, a twelve-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.

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September 2010

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