LIBERIA: THE LONG ROAD TO RECOVERY

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ABSTRACT

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In September 2003, the United Nations (UN) authorized a 15,000 member United Nations peacekeeping force to intervene in Liberia to stop the fighting, restore law and order, establish a peaceful society, and a democratic government. Prior to that, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) had been the primary organization monitoring and negotiating peace in Liberia. Unfortunately, and despite oversight from the international community, the ECOWAS's efforts to end the war failed and the fighting and lawlessness escalated. Now in 2004, the United Nations mission in Liberia (UNMIL) is actively engaged in peacekeeping and security operations in the country. The UN mission is authorized for 12 months, but the global war on terrorism and other competing requirements may prevent countries from committing forces up to, or beyond the 12 month UN resolution. UNMIL must therefore ensure ECOWAS is soundly integrated into the current security and nation building efforts. ECOWAS and the new Liberian government, once established, must be capable of exploiting the UNMIL's success with peace enforcement, security, and stability. ECOWAS's long term involvement in regional security, rule of law and nation building offers the people of Liberia the best chance for stability in their country and in the region.

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OVERVIEW

The atrocities in West Africa have left a path of death and destruction throughout Liberia and in the neighboring countries. As Liberians struggle to emerge from a 14 year civil war which claimed the lives of more than 150,000 people and displaced an estimated 820,000 more, the country and region look to the United States, the United Nations and the world to help restore peace and order.[1] The decades of tribal fighting between government forces and warring factions led to the complete collapse of Liberia's infrastructure and economy and created conditions of poverty and starvation, in addition to giving rise to child soldiers. The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), established in 1975 to promote trade, cooperation and self-reliance in West Africa has worked off and on for the past 14 years to restore peace, implement disarmament and reunification measures, and revive the economy in Liberia as well as other parts of West Africa. This paper will argue that ECOWAS and the transitional Liberian government must be soundly integrated into the UN Mission in Liberia's (UNMIL) security and nation building efforts and must further be capable of exploiting UNMIL's success with law enforcement, peace and stability operations as well as good governance to ensure Liberia's ultimate long term success. The ECOWAS's active involvement is critical to the future of this country.

The ECOWAS initially entered Liberia in 1990. They were responding to a brutal civil war which erupted a year earlier and would last another seven years pitting tribe against tribe and leading to the death of more than 200,000 Liberians.[2] The ECOWAS made a valiant effort to end the violence but were unsuccessful in controlling the warlords and the fighting.

In 1997, following several years of mayhem, Charles Taylor, the leader of the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) was fairly elected President of Liberia.[3] Taylor's' win was a cry by the Liberian people for peace, new leadership, law and order. Liberia saw a brief respite in the ongoing civil war while they were mislead into an even briefer period of hope under the Taylor regime. It soon became clear that the Taylor government was just as corrupt as the previous regime and not only condoned the violence but engaged in criminal activity themselves. The ECOWAS, obliged to continue their efforts, remained until 1999, but once again, their efforts at intervention and disarmament failed despite their good intentions. The ECOWAS simply did not have the political savvy, the financial ability, or leadership skills to make a successful, lasting impact on the peace process.[4]

The UN's involvement prior to Taylor's election was limited to oversight of the ECOWAS efforts in an observer capacity. Finally, in September 2003, and with U.S. urging, The United

Nations (UN) authorized a peacekeeping operation, The United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) to intervene and provide the critical security and administrative framework to support the political transition, relief effort, rehabilitation and reconstruction in Liberia.[5] The UN's involvement was a welcomed relief and gave the citizens of Liberia a reason to believe in a future of peace and stability. This paper provides an overview of the background leading to the fall of Liberia, the current peace agreement, the UN mandate and international support, and the role of the U.S. in support of the peace effort. In addition, it addresses the role ECOWAS, the future Liberian government, and nongovernmental organizations must play in order to restore law and order and secure peace and nation building for the future.

The UNMIL has taken the lead to disarm combatants, enforce peace and establish security. The ECOWAS and a new Liberian government must be trained and enabled to exploit the UNMIL's success with building and maintaining legitimate security and police forces, and enforcing the rule of law. The ECOWAS's long term involvement is without question, Liberia's best chance for stability in the country and region.

INTRODUCTION

The prospect for peace in Liberia has taken on wings and is closer than it has been in over a decade. The UN and international community are committed to bringing security and democracy to this shattered nation, while creating conditions for reform.[6] Current world events, regional instability and crisis, as well as the global war on terrorism make it unlikely that the contributing countries to the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), despite good intentions, can afford to, or will commit troops to the security and nation building effort for more than the 12 months authorized by the UN. In fact, many countries may not be able to withstand even a short term troop commitment. Their failure to support the UN mission may force the ECOWAS and a new Liberian government which may still be in the infancy stages of nation building, to take responsibility should the UN footprint be reduced either short term or in the latter years. In addition, political and economic reconstruction depends on how quickly security can spread throughout the country and law and order can be restored. These and many other factors make it critical for the United Nations to create conditions to ensure the ECOWAS is capable and able to sustain UN efforts in future years and have the ability and capability to sustain conditions for Liberia's ultimate long term success.

BACKGROUND

Africa is the world's poorest continent and continues to have a sizable population of uneducated and disparate poor people. The West African region is among the most unstable

and contributes to the overall economic devastation of the continent. The sub-region is dominated by young people, most of whom lack education, technical skills, and the general prerequisites to function effectively in a modern economy. [7] West Africa has been plagued with civil wars, famine and destruction over many years and is home to skilled militia members and criminals. Many of these criminals, to include child soldiers, commit these deviant acts to survive in an economy that offers little alternative. As a result, the West African security environment is viewed as one of the most complex of all the regions in the world and is further compounded by the multi-ethnic nature of the states. Without exception, all of the states in West Africa are a forced amalgamation of different nationalities, some with opposing cultural value systems put together at the turn of the century by France, the UK, Portugal and Germany for their own administrative and economic convenience.[8] Shifting affiliations and unique tribal characteristics, in addition to a long history of corruption, crime, and mismanagement by previous governments, starvation, economic devastation, lack of education and opportunity, and violence are all prevalent destabilizers in the region.[9]

Liberia is a small country in the region with a population of about 2.5 million people. It was established in the early 1800s by freed American slaves. Its name ironically stands for "Liberty" and although they have long standing historical and cultural ties with the U.S., they were never ruled from Washington the way most other African countries were ruled by colonial powers.

Today, over 80 percent of the population in Liberia is unemployed, 74 percent of the population has no access to safe drinking water and 60 percent have no access to sanitary facilities. In addition, 42 percent of the population is considered undernourished and the life expectancy is a mere 48 years of age.[10] Liberia's recent decline can be attributed to the 14 year civil war which has had a devastating effect on the people, the land and their future.

FORMER PRESIDENT CHARLES TAYLOR

On 24 December 1989, Charles Taylor, a fugitive from American justice for corruption, led an invasion of insurgents to overthrow the sitting Government of Liberia. Taylor called his organization the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL). He received training and financial backing from Libya, and from Cote d' Ivoire.[11] The NPFL made rapid military gains and by the middle of June 1990, they were fighting in the vicinity of Monrovia, the capital of Liberia. The violence as well as the numbers of displaced refugees, dead and/or wounded non-combatants became overwhelming.

CIVIL WAR OF 1990

By August 1990 the civil war had advanced to intolerable levels. The combatants respected neither life nor property and killed Liberian nationals and foreigners indiscriminately; civilians were particularly targeted in the conflict.[12] To spare the region from further destruction, the regional leaders decided it was time to militarily intervene. They created a group called the Economic Community of West African States Ceasefire Monitoring Group (ECOMOG).[13] The ECOMOG was set up as an intervention force to respond to the civil war which at the time was reported to have had five armed factions, 60,000 combatants and responsible for tens of thousands of deaths.[14] ECOMOG's efforts met with some success. In particular, they prevented Charles Taylor and other armed factions from seizing power by force prior to the 1997 free and fair election.[15] The elections which were part of a peace agreement brokered by ECOWAS in Abuja Nigeria were observed by representatives from the United Nations as well as by former U.S. President Jimmy Carter.[16] Mr. Charles Taylor, who ran on a platform of unification and hope, was fairly elected.

THE WARRING FACTIONS

The fighting, brutality, and corruption between the rival warring factions slowed down briefly, but soon escalated to pre-Taylor conditions. Two distinct rivals came to power against Taylor's government, the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD), a breakaway group from Charles Taylor's' National Pacific Liberation Front, and the Movement for Democracy of Liberia (MODEL). Both groups had strong ties to one or more neighboring states and both were determined to take control of the Liberian government. Estimates of the number of pro-Taylor units range from 7,000 to 11,000. Another figure shows between 20,000 and 30,000 militias closely aligned to Taylor.[17] The LURD core force is reported to have consisted of about 3,000 fighters but picked up an unknown number of new recruits as it was enroute from its bases in Guinea to Monrovia during the early months of 2003.[18]

Charles Taylor, despite his initial political rhetoric had become a brutal oppressive leader and once again found himself at the center of a bloody civil war. Under Taylor's watch the economy and infrastructure was further destroyed and the Liberian people were unable to recover without more war, crime, and corruption or the more desirable option, intervention from the international community.

ECOMOG remained actively engaged in peacekeeping, but like most multinational peace support forces, experienced challenges. The difficulties included trying to operate a unified command when there was high level distrust among member states as well as influence from

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non-regional powers. In addition, troop contingents would on occasion arrive in the mission area with different and sometimes conflicting instructions.[19] Logistics were also problematic as each country provided its own contingent with arms, ammunition, food, transportation and communication equipment. Nigeria however, took the lead and provided the entire force with petroleum, oil and lubricants.[20] Other challenges included language differences, inadequate resources to deal with humanitarian problems and poor coordination and liaison with international relief agencies.[21]

U.S. INTERVENTION

In 2003, the United States and the international community were bombarded with media coverage of the escalation in rebel fighting and the atrocities being committed upon the innocent. It was also obvious that the ECOWAS, despite its best efforts would not be able to successfully enforce the original disarmament efforts and reverse the destructive cycle of violence without additional intervention. As the devastation persisted, the Bush Administration took a firm and very public stand in support of the West African peace effort. President Bush offered U.S. assistance under strict conditions. Those conditions included; the departure of Charles Taylor from office and Liberia; a cease-fire between rebel groups and the Liberian government forces; and the firm commitment by West African countries to provide leadership and the bulk of the troops for any further peacekeeping effort.[22] Charles Taylor succumbed to the pressure from the U.S. and the international community and reluctantly agreed to step down and leave the country. Taylor, who had prevented the peace process from taking hold in the past, had finally run out of options. His removal was non-negotiable, and eventually opened the door for the international community to respond in kind.

The U.S. led the way with a Joint Task Force of approximately 200 military personnel assigned for four primary purposes, 1) to assess the readiness of the combined ECOWAS forces, 2) to assist with training the forces if required, 3) to assist with the ECOWAS objective of achieving security and stability in the region, and 4) to provide a reaction force capability if the ECOWAS got into trouble before reinforcement arrived. The U.S. positioned a Marine element at the airport and embedded them as liaisons to serve with other elements moving to ports. The overall objective was to create conditions for ECOWAS forces to enter Liberia and eventually turn control over to the United Nations peacekeeping operation.[23] In addition, the US European Command used elements of the Southern European Task Force to provide a 40-person Joint Task Force Headquarters to conduct planning and liaison with ECOWAS. While the Task Force

was successful, it was subsequently disbanded to make way for intervention and assistance from the international community.

Theresa Whelan, the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs for Africa said in her testimony before the House Committee on International relations, that "there is evidence that the DOD programs are still working and that Liberia has benefited from U.S. and ECOWAS endeavors." She acknowledges that there is far more work to be done, but lauds efforts such as Operations Focus Relief, the African Crisis Response Initiative and the International Military Exchange Training program. In addition, she notes that:

> DOD's Liberia support mission builds upon DOD's security cooperation programs that develop allied and friendly military capabilities for self-defense and coalition operations and, in Africa in particular, create a capability for peace-keeping operations and enhanced regional stability and security. UN peacekeepers are critical to short-term success in Liberia and continued U.S. leadership in training programs will continue to pay dividends in regional stability. [24]

INTERNATIONAL INTERVENTION

On 19 September, 2003, The Security Council unanimously passed UN resolution 1509 under Chapter VII (Peace Enforcement) of the United Nations Charter. This resolution authorized the formation of the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL). The resolution authorizes 15,000 troops, and once it is fully implemented, will be the international body's largest peacekeeping operation to date.[25] The decision by the UN Security Council to return peacekeepers to Liberia offers the best opportunity the country will have to become a normal functioning state again.[26] It is also an opportunity to design and implement a regional approach to security. On 5 October 2003, the UN formally took the lead and began facilitating the establishment of peace, stability and democracy in Liberia. During the handover ceremony in Monrovia, UN Secretary General Kofi Annan told Special Representative of the Secretary General to Liberia, Jacques Paul Klein, that "that day was the start of a process of normalization for a country that has suffered the ravages of nearly a decade and a half of conflict."[27] In addition, he saluted the ECOWAS forces for their efforts in establishing a security climate which paved the way for the UNMIL. Approximately 3,500 West African troops were re-hatted with blue berets and now serve proudly under the UN command as UN peacekeepers.[28] Under the UN they transitioned from the ECOWAS mission of the Economic Community of West African States Mission in Liberia (ECOMIL) to UNMIL.

The arrival of the UN and the forced departure of Charles Taylor has given the Liberian people an opportunity for reconstruction, coexistence, peace and stability. It is perhaps the first time Liberians were able to imagine living without fear and the daily occurrences of death, crime

and corruption. It also allowed many desperate families to be reunited with loved ones.
Refugees began returning home from across the borders and many child soldiers laid down
their weapons and returned home. The Security Council Resolution includes but is not limited
to:

> Monitoring the ceasefire agreement, assisting with the disarmament,
> demobilization, reintegration and repatriation process of all armed parties,
> including child soldiers, providing security at key government installations and
> other vital infrastructures, assisting with the voluntary return of hundreds of
> thousands of desiring refugees, restructuring the police force, and helping the
> transitional government in the formation of a new and restructured military, as
> well as protecting the UN staff, facilities and civilians.[29]

The Security Council resolution also calls for urgent substantial humanitarian assistance
and reiterates support for the ECOWAS and their ability to stabilize the situation in a time of
crisis.[30] The UNMIL's efforts have not only increased the momentum and legitimacy of the
ECOWAS peacekeeping and disarmament efforts, but moved other organizations such as the
African Union, private, international, and non-governmental agencies to action. In addition,
UNMIL's presence provided the security, leadership and direction to begin to rebuild the country
and government, and stimulated economic growth and recovery.

ECOWAS, along with other contributing countries now work under the leadership of the
UNMIL to bring a positive change to the people of Liberia and ultimately the region. A billboard
in Liberia reads "full reconciliation by 2024"[31] Mohamed Ibn Chambas, Executive Secretary for
the Organization of West African States thought the billboard was an ambitious target when it
was first erected in 1990, but now, following UN intervention, believes there is a real chance for
the people of Liberia to actually reach that goal.[32]

THE ECONOMIC COMMUNITY OF WEST AFRICAN STATES

The Economic Community of West African States was founded in 1975 by the Treaty of
Lagos and began operations in 1977. It is a 15 member organization with representation from
Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Cote d' Ivoire, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bassau,
Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Liberia, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo.[33] The official languages of
ECOWAS are English, French, Portuguese and Arabic.[34] Its structure revolves around the
Conference Heads of State and Government, Council of Ministers, Tribunal, Executive
Secretariat Commissions and the Fund for Cooperation, Compensation and Development. His
Excellency John Agyekum Kufouor, President of the Republic of Ghana is the current
Chairperson. The Council of Ministers meets twice a year and is the body responsible for
running the community. [35] The ECOWAS mission is to promote cooperation, economic, social

and cultural development in West Africa. The organization is particularly active in observation and monitoring, intervention, enforcement of sanctions and embargos, preventive deployment, peace-building operations, disarmament and demobilization and policing activities, including anti-smuggling and anti-criminal activities.[36] The Economic Community of West Africa Observation Group (ECOMOG) is a military force formed by the member states of ECOWAS out of the units from their national armed forces.[37] ECOMG is the first armed force to be established by a regional organization[38]

To date, all ECOMOG intervention operations have been successful. They have forced armed groups to accept negotiations that, in most cases led to a ceasefire, and their peace enforcement operations have always led to a widening of the initial safe havens established for non-combatants.[39] While ECOWAS has had logistical and command and control problems, it has achieved more success than expected by its founders and the international community and has provided clear proof of what is possible if African states pool their resources to address a problems.[40] One such success is the signing of the Accra Peace Accord which is now being enforced by the UNMIL in Liberia.

THE ACCRA PEACE ACCORD

The Accra Peace Accord marks one of the most significant times in Liberia's long and difficult journey for peace. It provides an unprecedented opportunity to begin the healing and reconciliation process. The agreement named after the location of its signing in Accra, Ghana, was signed on 18 August 2003, by the Government of Liberia (GoL) formerly Taylor's NPFL, the other rebel groups, political parties and leaders of Liberia's civil society.[41] The signing of this agreement was an aggressive effort to build a transitional government structure. The Accra agreement successfully divided the Liberian state between military formations, political parties and civil society. There were 21 cabinet posts allocated between the GoL, LURD and the MODEL. Former members of Taylor's government now hold positions in internal affairs, defense planning, economic affairs, health and social welfare, as well as post and telecommunications positions.[42] LURD politicians were given positions in transportation, justice, labor, finance and the ministry of the state. Members of the MODEL were given positions in agriculture, commerce, foreign affairs, public works and land, mines and energy. The remaining positions such as national security, information, education, gender and development, rural development and youth and sports were split among political parties and civil society.[43]

The terms of the Accra peace agreement were formally implemented on 14 October 2003, following the election and subsequent inauguration of Gyude Bryant. Bryant was selected as

the Chairman of the National Transitional Government of Liberia (NTGL) in a fair election by the three parties, and on 14 October began the implementation process and the Disarmament, Demobilization, Rehabilitation and Reintegration (DDRR) program. Mr. Bryant was chosen because he is a businessman, not closely allied to any party and is thought to be able to bring all the parties together.[44] Bryant's focus for foreign policy is good neighborliness and peaceful co-existence.[45]

Jacques Paul Klein was named Special Representative of the UN Secretary General (SRSG) and Coordinator of the UN Mission in Liberia. He immediately began working with and supporting the efforts of Gyude Bryant. In addition he asserted himself and gained the respect of the Liberian people due to his tough talk, such as calling warlords "gangsters" and dismissing them as criminals.[46] SRSG Klein is working hard toward the implementation of a successful peace process, establishing internal and border security and disarming the warring factions. Unfortunately, he is at a major disadvantage due to the slow arrival of peacekeepers and police. Only 5,900 uniformed personnel out of the required 15,000 have arrived in country. They, along with members of the ECOWAS are working under the UN umbrella trying to fully support the mission, restore law and order and rebuild the war ravaged country. Additional forces are desperately needed and expected to join the mission by March 2004. The peacekeepers should include a total of 15,000 troops from the international community as well as 1, 115 international civilian police of whom at least 200 will be armed to assist in the maintenance of law and order.[47]

Despite some gradual improvements, efforts at disarmament are still met with fear, distrust, and dissolution by the warring factions. Current peacekeepers remain in dangerous situations as they await the full compliment of contingency forces. For now, they are doing what they can to enforce peace, disarm the warlords and keep them from exploiting the security gaps along the borders.

SRSG Klein made an impassioned appeal to representatives of donor countries during a keynote address and asked for their immediate help and support. He noted that the establishment of UNMIL and the installation of the National Transitional Government of Liberia (NTGL) had brought the Liberian people a great deal of hope for peace and security and for a better future.[48] Diplomatic representatives of Japan, Germany, Canada, the Netherlands, Great Britain, the United States, Lebanon, Ghana, China, and the European Union attended the briefing and followed it up with field visits to internally displaced camps in Monrovia. This briefing was a call for action from the international community and donor countries and an opportunity to brief them on the political and security developments as well as the reconstruction

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and humanitarian challenges ahead.[49]   A number of countries have begun sending forces to support the mission, but many more are still needed.

The people of Liberia have high hopes that UNMIL will enforce peace. The United Nations however, will need to ensure that it does not make costly mistakes, referring of course to the to United Nations observer mission in the 1990s that failed partly because of poor disarmament.[50] If SRGS Klein and his team can deliver a more sustainable disarmament process ahead of the October 2005 elections, that will be a critical first step.

The international communities' troop commitment cannot be guaranteed through 2005; as a result the more immediate tasks must be aggressively pursued in the short term. The immediate tasks involve security on the ground; putting in place a new government, and extending its authority throughout the country, establishing the rule of law as well as humanitarian aid.[51]

As security and stability are achieved, ECOWAS must be able to retain the current advantages made under the UNMIL. They must have the capability to conduct military and civil policing operations following the UNMIL's troop departure. To do that they will require the skills, training, funding, logistical support and competent leadership. The U.S. is major contributor to that effort.

U.S. SECURITY STRATEGY AND INTERESTS

Liberia no longer dominates the headlines as it did in July 2003, and is no longer in the national spotlight, but the international community has and continues to respond to the peacekeeping efforts. The U.S remains committed to the peacekeeping and peace enforcement efforts of the UNMIL. The United States has both values based and vital interests in Sub-Saharan Africa and Liberia. The vital interests include the prevention of transnational threats, narcotics trafficking, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and international crime. The values based interests include being champions of human dignity, and most recently world wide consciousness of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. [52] President Bush also states in his Africa Policy that "Africa's great size and diversity requires a security strategy that focuses on bilateral engagement and builds coalitions of the willing."[53] He further states that strengthening sub-regional organizations on a sustained basis is a primary means to address transnational threats. This strategy suggests continued support for legitimate regional organizations such as ECOWAS who are striving to bring peace to Liberia. The Bush African Policy includes the following three pillars:

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1) The strategic approach: work with key anchor states in each sub-region, support sub-regional organizations and engage the African Union; 2) clear policy priorities: combat HIV/AIDS pandemic, advance political and economic freedom and promote peace and regional stability and 3) principles of bilateral engagement: good governance, economic reform, promote health and education.[54]

All of these policies in varying degrees support previous and ongoing efforts in Liberia and should significantly impact its long term recovery. Lastly, the National Security Strategy (NSS) addresses the values based interests of championing aspirations of human dignity.

Senator Warner, one of the longest serving Republican Senators told journalists that the United States considers peace to Liberia to be a vital interest, and that the President recognizes the bond of friendship between the two countries. [55] The bond he refers to is the establishment of Liberia by the American Colonization Society, founded in 1816 by a group of abolitionists who worked to resettle freed American slaves in Africa. Senator Warner's comments reflect America's interests and involvement in supporting peace in Liberia.

U.S. involvement remains necessary to ensure ECOWAS's and the future legitimate government of Liberia is adequately prepared, trained and capable of sustaining themselves to become functioning members of the global world order. President Bush's policy in Africa is documented in his 2002 policy statement:

"Promise and opportunity sit side by side with disease, war and desperate poverty in Africa. This threatens both a core value of the United States—preserving human dignity–and our strategic priority—combating global terrorism. American interests and American principles, therefore, lead in the same direction; we will work with others for an African continent that lives in liberty, peace and growing prosperity. [56]

This position by the administration has resulted in intervention against matters threatening human dignity and will continue to manifest itself in the many roles and missions taken on by the United States and the international community.

U.S. GOVERNMENT/MILITARY PROGRAMS

Political and economic reconstruction depends on how quickly security can spread throughout the country. Government and military intervention and programs remain key and essential to long term security and peace. One far reaching and beneficial program is the Africa Contingency Operations Training Assistance (ACOTA) program. ACOTA is one of the newest U.S. efforts in support of peace, stability and security operations in Africa and has now expanded to include support to the HIV and Aids pandemic.[57] ACOTA was created by the Bush Administration in the spring of 2002 to take the place of the Clinton Administrations' African

Crisis Response Initiative (ACRI). It provides training in peacekeeping operations to regular military units from selected countries.[58] ACOTA like its predecessor program ACRI is currently active in every UN and regionally-mandated peace mission in sub-Saharan Africa. Kenya is providing the current Force Commander for the UNMIL and ACOTA trained forces are in ECOWAS.[59]

LONG TERM COMMITMENT

The road to recovery in Liberia will be a long one. The UN is the right vehicle to manage this difficult and challenging regional security environment and must continue to do so with the ultimate goal of transferring authority and responsibility back to ECOWAS and the newly elected government for long term stabilization.

The Security Council will, following the 12 month transitional phase, vote to determine the level of long term support authorized and required beyond the original commitment. Unfortunately, a protracted, lengthier commitment may not be supportable given the national priorities of many member states, the national security environment, and the global war on terrorism. Countries have failed to fully support the initial commitment as evidenced by the fact that less than one half of the required 15,000 forces on the ground in country to date. SRGS Klein has expressed frustration in that "most of Europe" is going instead to Afghanistan and Iraq. He notes that one European country had earmarked 1,000 troops for Liberia, until the U.S. requested they be deployed to Afghanistan instead.[60] These types of troop deployment decisions may become more common in the future. Clearly, threat-based interests such as the global war on terrorism may require additional, unplanned resources from the U.S. and the international community. The future of these operations and our subsequent requirement to support them is difficult to project, but may have a clear impact on the level of support and number of troops the international community is capable of providing to humanitarian missions such as Liberia, in the future.

The UN troop presence may also be reduced as current efforts in Liberia become successful. ECOWAS must therefore be prepared to exploit all successes achieved in Liberia. While they have faced challenges such as poorly trained and equipped armies and poor sustainment capabilities, it is clear that they will need the short and long term financial support of the U.S. as well as the short term intervention and presence of UN forces to help provide security and help ECOWAS transition to an effective long term stabilizing force. Fortunately, ECOWAS forces are committed to the pursuit of security, stability and peace and recognize that

with the help of the international community they can overcome many of the personnel and logistical challenges they faced when they operated independently.

Adekeye Adebayo in his book <u>Building Peace in West Africa</u> provides a comprehensive account and analysis of what it takes to end destructive internal conflicts and build peace in West Africa. He claims that West Africa has gone further than any other African sub-region in an effort to establish a security mechanism to manage its own conflicts and future sub-regional conflicts.[61] He is referring of course to ECOWAS and their efforts to secure the region and its future. This is a great testament to West Africa, but without proper training, careful management and resources, all the efforts made by the UNMIL, ECOWAS, and the transitional government may be lost. The U.S. must therefore ensure the presence of agencies and services to help the ECOWAS and Liberian government lead Liberia beyond initial successes to long term peace and prosperity.

Humanitarian support from non-government organizations (NGOs) and international agencies is another crucial element to ensure the long term success of efforts in Liberia. Humanitarian organizations are beginning to arrive in support of the Liberian people, children and refugees. Their goal is to ultimately improve the health, education and welfare which will have a lasting long term impact on the country. As of 30 January, NGO's have delivered food assistance to approximately 380,000 internally displaced beneficiaries, 60,000 children and helped reduce cholera cases and fatalities through mass chlorination of open wells. Measles vaccinations have been given to more than 600,000 children and other basic health-care services have been provided for. These efforts have been monumental and must continue throughout the long term to meet the current and future needs of the Liberian people.[62]

SUMMARY

Peace in Liberia will require a strong commitment from ECOWAS, the International community, and the United States. President Bush stated that the prosperity and security of Africa ultimately depends on African leadership, strong national institutions and extensive political and economic reform. The United States must continue to support and promote such national reforms and encourage regional arrangements that build cooperation among African states and the international community.

The UN mandate and subsequent intervention undoubtedly offers the best opportunity for Liberia to become a normal functioning state. The prevailing view by members of the UNMIL is that the LURD and MODEL will surrender arms and seek peace as they no longer have a motive to fight.[63] The U.S. and the International community must however, continually conduct

combined and joint exercises, provide support as well as reinforcement training and evaluation to determine the capabilities and readiness of the ECOWAS and Liberian forces.

Finally, United Nations support to the Liberian effort remains essential to Liberia's recovery. The U.S. has worked towards the professionalization of the African militaries and ECOWAS through programs like ACOTA and must continue to commit resources for the ultimate recovery of Liberia. The United Nations and ECOWAS have implemented a psychological counseling and vocational training program for disarmed soldiers. One military official who was loyal to Taylor said, "I want to disarm because I am tired of fighting"[64] To date, some of the necessary mechanisms have been established to encourage disarmament. In addition, some of the warring factions have been given positions in the new transitional government and while they are not completely satisfied with the distribution of power, they are gradually accepting of their roles and handing over weapons to be destroyed. They are also receiving food, shelter, basic orientation skills, and a stipend to cover reintegration expenses.

CONCLUSION

Ultimately, the long term success and stability of Liberia depends on African regional leadership, good governance and extensive political and economic reform, security and humanitarian support. The United States must continue to promote such reform and encourage regional arrangements that build cooperation among African States.

The Economic Community of West African States, the transitional government and the eventual lawfully elected government of Liberia are in the best position to exploit the successes achieved by the combined efforts of the U.S. and the member states of the United Nations. If a follow-on force is not authorized by the UN or more importantly if the UN member nations do not commit adequate numbers of troops and resources to the long term Liberian peace and security effort, the ECOWAS will have to carry the mantle and provide the leadership and tools necessary for Liberian peacekeeping efforts to succeed. As in the past, ECOWAS must remain committed to the process.

With an ambiguous U.S. and international agenda, the uncertain global security environment and the global war on terrorism, it is more important than ever that regional organizations lead from the front. ECOWAS must position themselves for long term success by preparing to handle the bulk of the security and peacekeeping missions and nation building objectives to create conditions for the economic and diplomatic and informational instruments of power to succeed. Recovery is clearly long term but possible, just look at their neighbors in Senegal, Zimbabwe and South Africa.   WORD COUNT=5985

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