

LIBERIA: THE REALITIES OF SSR

Background:

- 1980 military coup. Samuel Doe to power.
- Doe challenged by street protests, organised opposition and coup attempts, provoking his regime to increasing violence.
- By 1989 the crisis was a civil war, with Charles Taylor's National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) one of several armed groups vying for power.
- Took the intervention of the Nigerian led ECOMOG (Economic Community of West African States Cease-fire Monitoring Group) to check NPFL.
- Through ECOMOG's efforts, an Interim Government of National Unity was able to hold presidential elections in 1997, which Taylor won.
- Soon hostilities broke out again and rebel groups such as Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) and the Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL), closed in on Monrovia.
- Only the forced departure of Taylor to Nigeria in 2003 made peace possible under the terms of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA).
- To support the implementation of the peace process, the UN organised the UN Mission to Liberia (UNMIL). 15,000 troops
- UNMIL objectives: to assist the transitional government in the re-establishment of national authority throughout the country; the development of a strategy to consolidate government institutions, including a national legal framework, courts and prisons; the restoration of a proper administration of natural resources; and preparation for national elections.
- Despite UNMIL, intimidation continued for a further two years at the hands of elements of the military/rebel factions, particularly in the W & SW where UNMIL was slow to deploy.
- Under interim government senior government positions, including the internal security agencies, were distributed among the former rebel forces irrespective of merit. And despite the abuses committed by ex-combatants, many were absorbed by their factional patrons into the security agencies.
- Not until presidential and legislative elections of Oct/Nov 2005 did peace exist *throughout* the country. Only then, after almost 25 years continuous conflict, did the 3m Liberians have security from military/rebel violence.
- A key challenge for President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf's administration is to create an environment secure not only from rebel violence but from crime.

2 groups:

- A. SSR advisers as part of UNPOL
- B. Inspector General of Police (IGP), Minister of Security, Minister of Justice and Heads of internal security agencies.

1. Prior to first joint meeting

Group A:

How will you present your expertise, given your lack of country experience?

What are the benefits of SSR that you will be seeking to present at first meeting?

What do you anticipate will be the hardest feature of the meeting?

Group B:

What do you see as the principal threats of this meeting?

What do you see as the principal opportunities of this meeting?

What promises will you hope to secure from the SSR team?

2. An early joint meeting

Both Groups:

[SSR has been agreed] Who are the main players that need to be reformed?

3. Joint meeting to discuss 'deactivation' of unsuitable police personnel

Group A

What officers would you regard as unsuitable for retaining?

What methods are you thinking of using to remove unsuitable officers?

Group B:

What are your concerns as regards 'deactivation'?

4. Joint meeting to review progress June 2007

Both Groups

Would you do it differently next time? What, if any, premise of SSR would you re-examine?