

**TACKLING LIBERIA:
THE EYE OF THE REGIONAL STORM**

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS	i
I. INTRODUCTION	1
II. LIBERIA’S WAR	3
A. LURD LEADERSHIP STRUGGLES.....	3
B. WEAKNESSES OF GOVERNMENT FORCES	6
C. THE BATTLE FOR MONROVIA?	7
III. THE MANO RIVER UNION’S POROUS BORDERS	10
A. THE OPEN SECRET OF GUINEA’S ASSISTANCE	10
B. SIERRA LEONE’S BALANCING ACT.....	12
IV. THE CÔTE D’IVOIRE CRISIS	14
A. TAYLOR’S IVORIAN WAR.....	15
B. PRESIDENT GBAGBO AND ANTI-TAYLOR FORCES.....	20
C. LIBERIANS VERSUS LIBERIANS	24
D. MERCENARIES WITHOUT BORDERS	25
E. THE REGIONAL HUMANITARIAN CRISIS	26
V. CONCLUSION: PREVENTING FURTHER REGIONAL CHAOS	29
A. A PEACE PROCESS FOR LIBERIA	30
B. A SECURITY STRATEGY FOR THE REGION.....	33
APPENDICES	
A. MAP OF LIBERIA AND IVORY COAST	36
B. MAP OF REGIONAL CONFLICT	37
C. GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS OF ARMED GROUPS	38
D. INSURGENCIES AND THEIR REGIONAL SUPPORTERS.....	40
E. ABOUT THE INTERNATIONAL CRISIS GROUP	41
F. ICG REPORTS AND BRIEFINGS	42
G. ICG BOARD MEMBERS	48



TACKLING LIBERIA: THE EYE OF THE REGIONAL STORM

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

There is a critical need for further international action to end the civil war in Liberia – and to halt the spread of chaos beyond its borders that has both inflamed the Côte d’Ivoire crisis and threatens wider military conflict and humanitarian disaster in much of West Africa. The key mechanism in this respect is the International Contact Group on Liberia (hereafter Contact Group), established in September 2002. And the central players within that body, whose cooperation is essential if effective action is to be taken, are its three permanent members of the Security Council: the U.S., UK and France.

Liberia’s conflict has continued to spread and consume its neighbours. The Mano River Union war that originally encompassed Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea has now expanded east to Côte d’Ivoire. A small area in the western part of that country has been dragged into Liberia’s struggle, much as was Sierra Leone a few years earlier. The Liberian contenders are using the Ivorian crisis, which broke out on 19 September 2002, as a proxy battleground. All indications are that no one is in control of the situation on the Côte d’Ivoire-Liberia border.

Both sides of the Ivorian crisis have used Liberian fighters in their struggle. President Taylor increasingly employs rebel troops in western Côte d’Ivoire, which he treats as a second front against the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) insurgency that threatens his rule. Ivorian President Laurent Gbagbo is paying and arming just about anyone to balance Taylor’s support for his foes. His largesse enabled the formation of a new LURD faction, which calls itself the Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL). It is advancing against Taylor at the same time as it challenges, for primacy in the rebellion, both the LURD leadership based in Guinea and its military wing fighting on Liberian soil.

Western Côte d’Ivoire has become a magnet for mercenaries of many nationalities. The failure of the international community to devise a regional disarmament program has given the hard-line Sierra Leone fighters who fled to Liberia another chance to sell their skills. While international attention is focused on Iraq, a regional humanitarian crisis is raging throughout Liberia and western Côte d’Ivoire. Neither the Ivorian government nor rebel groups have allowed the UN or other donors access to assist the tens of thousands of refugees and internally displaced persons who are trapped by two brutal conflicts. The international community must act before Liberia’s conflict spreads to other West African countries. Sanctions and containment policies have not stopped Charles Taylor from supporting rebellions beyond Liberia’s borders. Whether he has grand regional designs or simply cannot control his ill-disciplined forces, he remains a regional security problem.

Neither Taylor nor the LURD is interested in peace, except on each’s own terms, and both have stalled on proposed peace talks. The recent appearance on the scene of LURD-MODEL has further muddied the prospects for peace. Liberia is scheduled to elect a new president on 14 October 2003. If President Taylor goes ahead with elections that are deemed unfair, they will perpetuate the status quo. ICG has consistently recommended increased international pressure for a ceasefire; insistence that Taylor step down once his term is over so that an internationally assisted and perhaps administered interim government can be established; and postponement of the October elections until conditions can be established for an open campaign unhindered by violence and intimidation.

The Contact Group has been unable to produce a ceasefire. Its diplomatic pressure has, however,

pushed Taylor to admit that conditions for free and fair elections do not currently exist in Liberia; to agree to an (unspecified) delay of the ballot; and probably also to a joint assessment mission of the UN, EU and the regional mission ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African States) to determine what would be needed to create the appropriate conditions. Before elections could take place, a ceasefire with the LURD (including LURD-MODEL) would surely be required, as well as a transition period during which human rights were respected and the opposition was able to campaign freely. Ideally this would be backed by a UN peacekeeping force on the ground during the transition period and the elections. However, the prospect of Taylor stepping aside to allow genuinely free and fair elections is still remote. The Contact Group, with a strong lead from the U.S. and prior Security Council backing, must make clear to Taylor, LURD and LURD-MODEL that if a commitment to achieve these conditions is not demonstrated by the middle of the year, substantially more serious measures will be taken.

There are two critical and interlinked elements for a successful resolution of Liberia's crisis: the conflict must be recognised as a wider regional one and addressed on that basis, and there must be effective coordination among the key external players, namely the U.S., the UK, France, the UN, the EU and ECOWAS. While two permanent members of the Security Council, the UK and France, play prominent roles in the closely connected peace processes in Sierra Leone and the Côte d'Ivoire respectively, no one has taken the lead on Liberia. The missing link is the United States. It has historical ties to Liberia, and most Liberians argue that no peace process is sustainable without its involvement. It must be encouraged to work more actively – and in close partnership with the UK and France, who are already deeply engaged in related aspects of the regional problem – to preserve the effective UNAMSIL mission in Sierra Leone and establish a similarly comprehensive peace process for Liberia that would ensure neither LURD, LURD-MODEL, nor Taylor's political and military barons fill the vacuum if he is forced from power.

The U.S., UK and France, working through the Contact Group, should also devise a strategy to prevent Taylor's assets from being used by his henchmen to continue the war. It should be made clear to the government, LURD and LURD-MODEL that war crimes will be pursued either at home or

through an international tribunal – but also indicated that cooperation on the peace process could earn them credit.

West Africa now bears most of the traits of Central Africa, which has been devastated by a regional war. To address the regional dimension, ECOWAS and the wider international community must deal with the growing tendency of leaders in West Africa to sponsor rebellions abroad to protect their positions at home. Burkina Faso, Guinea, Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire have all employed rebel groups either to get rid of their domestic enemies or to remove neighbouring leaders they do not like. The mandate of the UN Panel of Experts on Liberia, which will be reviewed in May 2003 along with the sanctions on Liberia, should be expanded to cover the entire region, and Guinea's President Lansana Conté, President Gbagbo of Côte d'Ivoire and President Blaise Compaoré of Burkina Faso in particular must be warned of sanctions – and their own potential exposure to war crimes prosecution – if they continue to undermine peace in Liberia.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To the Members of the International Contact Group on Liberia:

1. Address the continuing violence within – and associated with – Liberia by taking the following immediate steps:
 - (a) Insist (in the context of the full package of measures, immediate and future, here set out) that President Taylor, the LURD and LURD-MODEL end the fighting and conclude a ceasefire that includes a timetable for comprehensive disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration of combatants.
 - (b) Recommend to the Security Council that a UN peacekeeping mission be mandated to monitor, supervise and verify the ceasefire agreement once made.
 - (c) Recommend to the Security Council that standby arrangements be made for a multinational force to enforce the peace in the event that the ceasefire agreement breaks down. Such force – modelled on the role of the UK in Sierra Leone and France in Côte d'Ivoire – would ideally be led and primarily constituted by the U.S., but

- might also be constituted by ECOWAS countries (other than Sierra Leone, Guinea, Côte d'Ivoire and Burkina Faso).
- (d) Recommend to the Security Council that the mandate of the Panel of Experts be expanded, authorising it to investigate other West African leaders suspected of fuelling conflicts in the region, and encouraging it to name and shame those found in violation of sanctions and to work more closely with ECOWAS to improve its capacity to properly address the flow of arms in the region.
 - (e) Recommend to the Security Council that the sanctions monitoring regime be expanded to cover Guinea, Sierra Leone, Côte d'Ivoire and Burkina Faso as well as Liberia, and enhance it significantly by increasing the Panel of Experts' staff and budget to enable it to report every three months to the Council on all countries and individuals that fail to comply.
 - (f) Issue a clear public condemnation of Guinea and Côte d'Ivoire for their continued financial and military support for the LURD and LURD-MODEL insurgents and warn both that they face sanctions if they continue to break the UN arms embargo.
 - (g) Issue a clear public condemnation – with documentation – of Liberia's continued support for regional insurgencies.
 - (h) Work with the UN-mandated Follow-Up Committee in Côte d'Ivoire to develop an international strategy to stop the violence in the western part of that country and disarm the protagonists.
2. Address the problem of governance within Liberia by taking the following immediate steps:
 - (a) Seek a clear commitment from President Taylor that he will step down at the end of his term in October 2003 and not contest any subsequent election.
 - (b) Seek clear agreement from President Taylor and the Liberian government that elections be postponed, and an internationally assisted – and, to the extent necessary, administered – interim administration be established, until such time as conditions for their free and fair conduct exist.
 - (c) Seek full cooperation from President Taylor with a joint UN/EU/ECOWAS assessment mission to determine what is needed to create the appropriate election conditions.
 - (d) Initiate planning of an internationally assisted – or, depending on circumstances, administered – interim government that brings together all stakeholders in Liberia's conflict, including civil society and opposition groups, to begin implementing domestic reforms, including a start on justice and accountability mechanisms for addressing years of impunity, and preparing for free and fair elections.
 - (e) Recommend to the Security Council that the UN peacekeeping mission proposed to monitor the ceasefire also assume responsibility for the supervision of the postponed elections.
3. In the event that by July 2003 President Taylor does not agree to step down, or that no progress is made in achieving a ceasefire between the warring Liberian parties, or both, recommend to the Security Council that the following steps be taken:
 - (a) Broaden the sanctions to include timber, rubber, gold and the maritime industry as well as an expanded list of individuals whose assets would be frozen and visas revoked.
 - (b) Adopt an explicit Chapter VII provision requiring all UN member states to comply with measures of the Sierra Leone Special Court, and if it indicts President Taylor, call on any government harbouring him to extradite him to Sierra Leone.
 - (c) Establish a new war crimes tribunal for crimes relating to the Liberian war, it being made clear to the Liberian government, the LURD and LURD-MODEL that they face prosecutions for war crimes but that those who cooperate by promptly laying down their arms and entering constructively into a peace process would gain relevant credit (though not necessarily immunity).
 - (d) Extend the jurisdiction of the Liberian war crimes tribunal to those outside Liberia

who are responsible for crimes committed within the country, with it being made clear to the leaders of neighbouring countries that they may potentially be exposed to prosecution.

To the United Nations Security Council:

4. Adopt in full the recommendations of the International Contact Group on Liberia as proposed above.

To the Secretary General of the United Nations:

5. On Liberia:
 - (a) Plan a possible UN peacekeeping mission to implement the ceasefire monitoring, election supervision and other tasks identified by the Contact Group.
 - (b) Plan for a standby enforcement force, as recommended by the Contact Group, in the event that the ceasefire breaks down.
6. On Côte d'Ivoire:
 - (a) Appoint a senior resident humanitarian coordinator to achieve better protection of civilians in the refugee transit camps

throughout Côte d'Ivoire and humanitarian agency access, including through establishment of "safe areas" and safe passages for delivery of humanitarian assistance.

- (b) Make such arrangements if possible by negotiated agreement with the government of Côte d'Ivoire for areas controlled by loyalist forces, especially in the western part of the country (Toulépleu, Blolékin, Zouan-Hounien and the Tai Forest); and with Ivorian rebels controlling Danané, Man and other border areas in the far western part of the country.

To the French and ECOWAS force in Côte d'Ivoire:

7. Protect "safe areas" and safe passages for the delivery of humanitarian assistance in western Côte d'Ivoire – if possible through the negotiations described above with the government and Ivorian rebels, but if not by whatever means are appropriate.

Freetown/Brussels, 30 April 2003

TACKLING LIBERIA: THE EYE OF THE REGIONAL STORM

I. INTRODUCTION

Liberia's timetable for presidential and general elections has been set: voter registration from 15 to 29 April 2003, publication of the final list of eligible candidates on 20 June, campaigning from that day until 13 October, and voting on 14 October.¹ However, the conditions for free and fair elections are absent, both because 40 per cent of the country's territory is directly affected by civil war and because the security of opposition groups campaigning in areas controlled by forces loyal to President Taylor (the elite Anti-Terrorist Unit, private militia forces and former NPFL² fighters) cannot be guaranteed.

Liberia's conflict is again spreading beyond its borders. Sierra Leone's lengthy civil war was a regional crisis that began in Liberia.³ That regional crisis has not ended, and the threat of further instability, casualties, and chaos is very real as the Liberian conflict becomes increasingly entangled with that in Côte d'Ivoire.

President Taylor has continued his clandestine support of rebel groups. The Ivorian crisis is further testimony to the fact that sanctions have failed to contain the threat he represents to the region. Taylor has now shifted his focus from the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) and Sierra Leone's diamonds, east to Côte d'Ivoire where he is using Ivorian rebels to protect his timber resources and arms route. His activities in Côte d'Ivoire directly contravene UN Security Council Resolution 1343, which "demands that the Government of Liberia cease its support for

the RUF in Sierra Leone and for other armed rebel groups in the region".⁴

President Taylor is not, however, solely responsible for the crisis in the region. A group of anti-Taylor forces, closely associated with the LURD rebellion in Liberia and calling themselves the Movement for Democracy in Liberia (hereinafter referred to as LURD-MODEL), are now working out of Côte d'Ivoire and seeking to use that country's troubles to their advantage. They have been well armed by President Laurent Gbagbo and have launched several attacks into eastern Liberia.

This report updates and extends ICG reporting on Liberia and the Mano River Union region. It argues that if nothing is done now to address the spread of Liberia's conflict, there will be further large-scale violence along much of the West African coastline. Many of the mercenaries from Sierra Leone, Burkina Faso and Liberia who are fighting in the west of Côte d'Ivoire claim to be on ten-year contracts. They say they are heading for Lofa County in Liberia where the LURD insurgency is strong, Guinea (because of President Conté's support for LURD), Ghana and Togo.⁵

The most obvious starting point is to deal with Liberia's worsening internal condition. In April 2002 ICG made wide-ranging recommendations aimed at addressing Liberia's crisis:

¹ Voter registration failed to start on 15 April because of the lack of adequate funds and fighting in several regions. Six of Liberia's fifteen counties are affected by the civil war.

² National Patriotic Front of Liberia.

³ ICG Africa Report N°43, *Liberia: The Key to Ending Regional Instability*, 24 April 2002, pp. i, 2-3.

⁴ United Nations Security Council Resolution 1343, 7 March 2001; emphasis added. It was this resolution that led to the imposition of sanctions on President Taylor's government.

⁵ This information was consistently given to ICG in interviews with refugees in Guinea and private sources coming from western Côte d'Ivoire and Conakry, January-March 2003. Ghana shares many vulnerabilities, including a weak economy and northern tensions, with Côte d'Ivoire. Togo's upcoming presidential election has reactivated a debate about electoral law and eligibility criteria that might prevent President Eyadema's main opponent from running.

- ❑ creation of an International Contact Group to develop a comprehensive peace package including a negotiated solution between the government, LURD forces and all relevant stakeholders, security sector reform, and disarmament of all fighting forces;
- ❑ maintenance of the arms embargo until the conflict ended;
- ❑ funding of institutional reform if the government accepted a negotiated solution; and
- ❑ insistence by the international community on transfer of power to an impartial interim government if conditions were not met that would enable the elections scheduled for October 2003 to be free and fair.⁶

Such a Contact Group has been established but its work has been frustrated by the fact that neither President Taylor nor the LURD rebels are interested in peace.

Most people interviewed by ICG agreed that President Taylor should be held accountable for war crimes committed both in Sierra Leone and at home.⁷ It seems likely, based on indictments already handed down and the language used by the Special Prosecutor when announcing the first of those indictments on 10 March 2003, that charges will be brought against him before the Special Court for Sierra Leone. Five of the eight individuals thus far indicted for war crimes and crimes against humanity in Sierra Leone's civil war were senior leaders of the RUF insurgency. The indictments against them state that they "acted in concert with Charles Ghankay Taylor".⁸

⁶ ICG Report, *Liberia: The Key to Ending Regional Instability*, op. cit., pp. ii-iii, 26-28.

⁷ ICG Africa Briefing, *Liberia: Unravelling*, 19 August 2002, suggested that "the most promising approach", though "deeply controversial", was an exit strategy that gave Taylor immunity from the Special Court for Sierra Leone. This recommendation was reached after interviews in Liberia and Washington D.C. during April-July 2002 with both Liberians and non-Liberians. Many of those interviewed argued that if Taylor was not offered a way out, he would return to the bush and conduct a full-scale war. Since that time, it has become clearer that Taylor is determined to remain in power regardless of whether an indictment is hanging over his head.

⁸ "The Prosecutor against Foday Sankoh, Indictment", 7 March 2003. The indicted RUF figures included the rebel leader, Foday Saybana Sankoh; interim leader, Issa Sesay; the battlefield commander subordinate only to Sankoh and

By holding Charles Taylor responsible for the crimes committed in Sierra Leone, the Special Prosecutor would rightly underscore the regional dimension of the conflict and the central role played for thirteen years by the Liberian leader in the destabilisation of the Mano River Union states. Indeed, the language of the UN Security Council resolution that requested the Secretary General to negotiate an agreement with the government of Sierra Leone to establish that country's Special Court contains an implicit reference to Taylor in the recommendation "that the Special Court should have personal jurisdiction over persons who bear the greatest responsibility for the commission of the crimes, including those leaders who, in committing such crimes have threatened the establishment of and implementation of the peace process in Sierra Leone".⁹ An indictment, however, would not in itself be enough to remove Taylor from office, even if the Security Council strengthens the tribunal's enforcement capacity by adopting a resolution explicitly under the UN Charter's mandatory Chapter VII authority that requires any country harbouring Taylor to extradite him immediately to Sierra Leone.¹⁰

currently a senior commander for President Taylor in Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire, Sam "Mosquito" Bockarie; senior commander and later battle group commander, Morris Kallon; and, in mid-April, the RUF Head of Internal Security, "Colonel" Augustine Gbao. Sankoh's indictment further stated that in the late 1980s, while in Libya, he "met and made common cause with Charles Ghankay Taylor", that by 1989, he "assisted the National Patriotic Front of Liberia, led by Charles Ghankay Taylor, in its organized armed operations in Liberia" and that eventually, in order to launch his own war in Sierra Leone, he received "financial support and encouragement from Charles Ghankay Taylor". During his initial appearance before the Special Court, Issa Sesay stated that he was receiving orders directly from President Taylor. Special Court Hearing on Issa Sesay, Bonthe, Sherbro Island, Sierra Leone, 15 March 2003.

⁹ United Nations Security Council Resolution 1315 (2000), 14 August 2000, operative paragraph 3.

¹⁰ An indictment of Taylor by the Special Court arguably may already be considered a measure that must be complied with, at least by members of the United Nations. The Security Council determined in Resolution 1315 (2000) that the situation in Sierra Leone constitutes "a threat to international peace and security in the region" which is the formulaic language that indicates it has been acting under Chapter VII, the mandatory section of the UN Charter, with respect to the crisis in that country. It requested the Secretary General to negotiate an agreement with Sierra Leone to establish the Special Court as an integral part of its approach to resolving that threat to international peace and security. The Secretary General reported to the Security Council on 4 October 2000

In any case, a strategy centred on Liberia alone will not be enough. Violence in West Africa now shifts rapidly from country to country. The conflicts are complex, multi-layered and increasingly personal. Rebel groups ally with neighbouring heads of state in symbiotic relationships to pursue wars of revenge, and the prevailing logic is “my enemy’s enemy is my friend”.¹¹ There are extensive cross border linkages. Thus, Charles Taylor supports the rebels in the west of Côte d’Ivoire in part from desire to remove Gbagbo, a hostile neighbour, but also because it helps him pay his troops, keep open a major arms supply route, and prevent LURD-MODEL from launching attacks from Côte d’Ivoire into Liberia. The same dynamics exist between Guinea and Liberia, Sierra Leone and Liberia, and Guinea and Côte d’Ivoire. In essence, governments are using rebel groups in neighbouring countries to their own domestic political and security advantages.¹²

The international community, led by the U.S., UK and France working through the Contact Group, must act fast to prevent further regional fighting. Its strategy should focus on internal conditions in Liberia and the regions to its east and west that facilitate rebellions.

II. LIBERIA’S WAR

After three years, fighting between Liberian government forces and the LURD has taken on a familiar pattern. At the beginning of each year, LURD drives deep into Liberia ahead of the rainy season that begins in June or July. Then the government, despite the UN arms embargo, obtains new military supplies and pushes the rebels north, back to the Guinean border. Neither side is able to keep new territory for long. A British officer working close to the Sierra Leone-Liberia border described the fighting as “a cartoon sketch”.¹³ One side seizes a village, while the other side retreats, leaving it to loot for a few days. Then the retreating side returns to reclaim the territory and loot what remains. The result, as one Sierra Leone army soldier said with only slight exaggeration, is that “no actual fighting is taking place”; instead “fighters shoot then run”.¹⁴ Logistics, pay, food (or its lack), and morale determine results and produce a continual shift in the battle lines.

A. LURD LEADERSHIP STRUGGLES

Significant changes have taken place in the LURD since ICG first met with fighters and leaders in February and March 2002. They strongly indicate that this rebel group will not bring peace to Liberia. Its internal battles should send a clear message, in particular to the U.S. (which sees LURD as applying useful military pressure to force President Taylor from power) and Guinea (which sees it as playing a border security role), that as presently constituted, the LURD will exacerbate Liberia’s problems.¹⁵

The fear in 2002 that internal divisions would radicalise the movement has become reality. At the heart of the internal LURD disputes is the question of what the group is supposed to represent. While the overriding desire to depose Taylor continues to hold it together, there is no agreement on what

that he had carried out this request (S/2000/915). Indictments by that Special Court and related decisions, therefore, ought arguably to be supported by all UN member states. A new Security Council resolution explicitly based on Chapter VII and calling on all states either to comply with measures of the Special Court or, more specifically, to extradite Taylor to Sierra Leone, however, would substantially strengthen the Court’s enforcement mandate and place correspondingly greater pressure both on any states in whose jurisdiction Taylor might be and on Taylor himself.

¹¹ ICG interview with Mano River Union specialist, March 2003.

¹² See Appendix D.

¹³ ICG interview, Kenema, February 2003.

¹⁴ ICG interview, Kailahun, February 2003.

¹⁵ In its April 2002 report, ICG noted that the U.S. (along with the UK) turned a blind eye and on several occasions found the LURD useful as force to contain President Taylor’s regional aggression. ICG Report, *Liberia: The Key to Ending Regional Instability*, op. cit., pp. I, 12. In a number of interviews, LURD fighters claimed that they spoke to and often received “advice” from U.S. officials. ICG interviews, February-March 2003.

would follow.¹⁶ The diversity of competing objectives and presidential aspirations has made key players suspicious, even paranoid. These internal divisions indicate that the LURD is no different from those it seeks to replace in Monrovia. In its current form, the LURD is ruthless and interested only in grabbing power. It should not be permitted to secure a military victory.¹⁷

There are also serious ethnic tensions, particularly between Mandingos and Krahn, and significant cleavages between a hard line group led by the LURD Chairman, Sekou Dammate Conneh, and his powerful wife, Ayesha,¹⁸ and a more moderate group based in the Guinean capital, Conakry, that Sekou refers to somewhat dismissively as “the politicians”.¹⁹

Although the Mandingo members of the LURD do not have a monopoly on key positions, the insurgency’s leader, Sekou Conneh, comes from that disliked minority. Many Krahn believe that a successful leadership challenge to Taylor cannot be dominated by Krahn and Mandingo (or Gio and Mano) since these ethnic groups are regarded as problematic for having led the country into its first civil war.²⁰ The Krahn and Mandingos do not trust one another but have formed pragmatic alliances against the common enemy. For example, Chayee Doe, a Krahn who is the younger brother of the late president Samuel Doe and currently vice chairman in charge of administrative matters for LURD, stays with Conneh because he believes that Conneh’s close relations with President Lansana Conté and the Guinean military give the movement a better chance of reaching Monrovia. Conneh retains a “cordial” relationship with Doe in turn supposedly because he has links with Krahn financiers based mainly in the

United States, a connection that also allows Conneh to keep an eye on Krahn financiers connected to the new (and Krahn-based) LURD-MODEL faction in Côte d’Ivoire that is challenging his position.

The Mandingo-Krahn rivalry is also reflected on the battlefield. In October 2002, the LURD Chief of Staff and a key Krahn military leader, Prince Seo, was involved in a shootout with Ophore Diah, another commander. The dispute was apparently over money sent to Seo by an important LURD financier in the U.S. Ironically, Diah is also a Krahn. Conneh accused Seo of wanting to eliminate him and ordered his arrest by Guinean soldiers. Seo was released in January 2003 and has been “retired”²¹ and replaced by his deputy, General Mohamed “Cobra” Sheriff, a Mandingo.

One can now begin to categorise the LURD not only by its host country bases – LURD (Guinea) and LURD-MODEL (Côte d’Ivoire) – but also by ethnic affiliations, LURD-M (Mandingo) and LURD-MODEL-K (Krahn). Interestingly, this reproduces the history of its predecessor, the United Liberation Movement for Democracy in Liberia (ULIMO), which eventually split along Mandingo and Krahn lines during the first Liberian civil war. As discussed below, many LURD-MODEL-K fighters are now participating in the Ivorian conflict, where they hope to build alliances that will help them challenge Conneh’s presidential designs if he captures Monrovia.

Conneh is also suspicious of other Mandingos in the LURD, who are sometimes referred to as “intellectuals”. These “intellectuals” recognise that Liberians consider Mandingos foreigners and would not accept a Mandingo-based government. They want to diversify the movement’s leadership but face resistance from Conneh. The “intellectuals” also have financial support in the U.S. ICG understands that Conneh removed from the LURD what he calls the “American group”,²² while that group says in turn that it does not recognise his leadership.

¹⁶ ICG interviews with various LURD personalities, February-April 2003. Many LURD and LURD-MODEL members are willing to go into the finer points of how they believe an interim government should be constituted and who should be included or excluded but there is no common concept.

¹⁷ Even some LURD members apparently harbour doubts about the competence of their organisation to take on governmental responsibilities. As one with presidential aspirations said, “The leadership does not have the most politically competent people”. ICG interview, March 2003.

¹⁸ The Mandingo and Krahn were the two main anti-Taylor ethnic groups that supported former Liberian President Samuel Kanyon Doe (1980-1990).

¹⁹ ICG interview with senior LURD commander, January 2003.

²⁰ The Gio and Mano ethnic groups were the main supporters of Taylor’s insurgency in Liberia’s first war.

²¹ ICG interview, February 2003. Also see James Brabazon, “Liberia: Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD)”, Armed Non-State Actor Project, Briefing Paper No.1, The Royal Institute of International Affairs, February 2003, p. 10.

²² ICG interview with senior LURD commander, January 2003.

The most important split in the group, however, remains that between the political figures in Conakry and the overall leader, Sekou Conneh. ICG cautioned a year ago that if these divisions were not healed, they “would have serious implications for the region since LURD supporters and fighters in Sierra Leone and Côte d’Ivoire” only recognised the Conakry leadership. That is now reality. Several of these “politicians” have recently left the movement.²³ Conneh’s concern is that the “politicians”, who have extensive international links to diplomats, non-governmental organisations and the media, as well as access to money especially from U.S.-based financiers in the Liberian diaspora community, are gaining ascendancy and speaking without instructions from or consultation with him.

Some of these “politicians” have their own presidential ambitions and are not prepared to yield to Conneh. Others argue that his military objective of wanting to take Monrovia is wrong. Still others refuse to stay in the movement because of the atrocities he has tolerated in his attempt to secure power. Those who challenge his leadership are dealt with severely through imprisonment, including with Guinea’s help.

At least six senior individuals left the LURD in 2002 and 2003 over leadership struggles or differences in the group’s objectives. A significant loss in December 2002 was the LURD spokesman, William Hanson, who first fell out with Conneh at the end of 2001 over civilian protection issues and concerns that the leadership was beginning to harbour the same undemocratic, brute force principles as the Taylor government. Hanson’s trip to Rome in November 2002 raised Conneh’s suspicion that he was pursuing a separate agenda. A Guinean soldier and LURD fighters looted his home in early December after he returned from that trip.

Conneh ordered the imprisonment in March 2003 of a potential rival for the presidency, the elected Secretary General of LURD, Isaac Nyenabo. Vice-Chairman of Operations Laveli Supuwood was imprisoned on 21 February 2003 after Conneh accused him and another LURD member, Mustapha Kamara, of using money received from Dakar for personal gains. Supuwood was, however, released four days later.

Just how serious the divisions within LURD are was made clear in a recent interview given by the organisation’s senior military adviser, General Joe Wylie, to the popular BBC radio program Focus on Africa on 8 April 2003. Wylie denounced Sekou Conneh for poor leadership and carrying out witch hunts and declared that a special meeting would be held within weeks to consider removing him as chairman of the National Executive Committee (the regulating body of the LURD) and overall commander.²⁴ It appears that the process of removing Conneh has finally begun. A press release was issued on 20 April, following a meeting on 13 April of the National Executive Committee, declaring that a new chairman would be elected at a meeting to be held in May at an undisclosed location in Africa.

Despite leadership struggles and defections, however, the LURD has had considerable successes on the battlefield since January 2003. In September and October 2002, the LURD lost Tubmanburg, Kolahun and Foya Kamala after the government received six cargo aircraft shipments, totalling over 200 tons, of weapons and ammunition from old Yugoslav stocks, supplied by an arms dealer in Belgrade.²⁵ However, as this supply line dwindled

²⁴ Also see “Disunity at the heart of the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD)”, 8 April 2003 available at www.theperspective.org.

²⁵ “Report of the Panel of Experts appointed pursuant to Security Council resolution 1408 (2002), paragraph 16, concerning Liberia”, 7 October 2002, paras 64-74, pp. 18-20. The loss of Kolahun could also be related to tensions between LURD fighters. In late September 2002, LURD commander General Musa “Deku” Donso was apparently killed during the attempt by government forces to capture Kolahun but other reports state that he was “eliminated” by his own men following a dispute. A LURD soldier interviewed by ICG said he was killed in a “cross-fire”. In the process of explaining how the general died, he revealed apparent tensions on the frontline: “The story of Deku’s death involved General Komba “Blackie”, a cousin to Sekou Conneh and a logistics officer who used to bring food to Kolahun for the frontline. “Blackie” reportedly sold supplies for his own business and made soldiers go to the jungle to search for food. After that fighting spirit [was] reduced. Charles Taylor’s forces took advantage of the situation, and this contributed to us losing Voinjama and Kolahun. Because boys were not getting logistics, General Deku would bring logistics, food, and ammunition. During attacks on Kolahun, AFL took everything. Attacks were heavy, and it was during these attacks that Deku died, in cross fire”. Another LURD insider agreed Deku was killed by “friendly fire” – a term used when the LURD want to remove “those that are not friendly”. Both interpretations were supported by an officer

²³ ICG interview, February 2003.

between November 2002 and February 2003 – from two or three shipments a week to Sunday only and then to once every two weeks – LURD began to reclaim ground. It recovered Kolahun and Bopolu, including the diamond rich area of Weasua, before the end of last year and then began a new major offensive in January.

Some military observers suggested that the government's inability to resupply its troops in Lofa County by helicopter indicated that the arms embargo was having an impact.²⁶ The Navy Ranger division and the "Jungle Fire" forces lost Kolahun but did beat off five attacks on Foya Kamala²⁷ in January and February.²⁸ LURD forces regained Tubmanburg on 4 February, however, cutting off supply routes to the garrison in Foya Kamala. By mid-February, Taylor's forces were in disarray as the LURD moved south to Cheesemanburg and Po River. In a panicked response, he repositioned troops to protect Monrovia and brought his key military commander in Foya Kamala, Roland Duo, back to the capital to conduct operations. The redeployment enabled government forces to halt the LURD advance but left them highly vulnerable in Foya Kamala and permitted the rebels to move into Grand Cape Mount County in March, virtually within sight of Monrovia. Despite its successes, however, LURD still relies heavily on hit-and-run tactics. The further it moves away from its Guinean sponsors in the North, the more difficulty it has supplying its fighters.²⁹

LURD wants to make it impossible for Taylor to hold new elections as well as to gain as much territory as possible in advance of any peace talks. LURD and government representatives met in

from the Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces. ICG interviews, February 2003.

²⁶ ICG interview with UN military observers, Kailahun and Freetown, February 2003.

²⁷ Foya Kamala is a strategic village linking Liberia with Guinea and Sierra Leone. It has a large airfield at which government helicopters drop off military supplies.

²⁸ ICG was informed that the Navy Ranger division survived the attacks after two helicopter shuttles brought arms, ammunition and food on 23 February 2003. Both were seen flying near Dwa, a town on the Sierra Leone border. ICG interview with officer from the Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces, February 2003.

²⁹ ICG was told that the LURD had been asking for logistical help from Sierra Leone following capture of Bo Waterside and the Mano River Bridge in February 2003. ICG interview with Republic of Sierra Leone Force military official, February 2003.

Freetown on 7-8 February 2003 to discuss a ceasefire.³⁰ However, further talks scheduled for 9-10 March in Bamako, Mali were postponed at the last minute as fighting intensified. Another possible reason for the stepped up fighting is the fragile health of President Conté of Guinea. His critical illness has created uncertainty over the future leadership in Conakry and a sense of urgency about using his military assistance to maximum advantage as long as it is available.³¹

The offensive against Monrovia is badly coordinated, however, with no apparent communication between the troops and the leadership in Voinjama, or between LURD bases in Sierra Leone and Guinea. Some LURD fighters close to the Sierra Leone border did not even know why they were fighting.

B. WEAKNESSES OF GOVERNMENT FORCES

Despite being twenty times larger and vastly better equipped, a number of interrelated factors undermine the ability of government forces to crush the LURD insurgency, including desertions, low morale caused by forced recruitment, and poor or non-existent pay and training.

The LURD advances have left the capital shaken and government forces looking vulnerable. As the LURD offensive gained ground, demoralised troops began to desert in relatively large numbers (at least 350 from mid-February to April 2003). One Liberian refugee asked, "we are told that [President Taylor] has 60,000-plus soldiers, so why can't he defeat the LURD who only have about 2,000-3,000 fighters"?³² But as an ICG source observed, "the size of Taylor's forces does not matter. Taylor's boys are not totally committed" so they are easily overrun.³³

The government security sector is composed of the marginalised remnants of Samuel Doe's Armed Forces of Liberia; the elite Anti-Terrorist Unit, including fighters from Guinea, Burkina Faso, the

³⁰ The government was represented by parliamentarians from the National Patriotic Party. The talks were facilitated by the ECOWAS parliament and the Inter-Religious Council of Liberia.

³¹ President Conté has been ill for over a year, but since December there has been speculation that he is close to death.

³² ICG interview with Liberian refugee, Macenta, January 2003.

³³ ICG interview with exiled Liberian, Freetown, February 2003.

Gambia and Sierra Leone's former Revolutionary United Front; ill-disciplined militias; veterans from Taylor's wartime National Patriotic Front of Liberia rebel group; and a lynch mob of forcibly recruited idle street boys.³⁴ These troops, in varying degrees, are badly trained, badly paid and sometimes forcibly recruited, or to use the term of one interviewed by ICG, "arrested" with no choice but to fight for Taylor.³⁵ The alternative, he noted, is death. Only the Anti-Terrorist Unit receives a modicum of recognisable training. As one soldier remarked, "the troops are civilians with weapons". Another said, "Taylor puts forward so many men but many of them cannot fight, hence Taylor cannot shake off the LURD".³⁶

Many soldiers receive no pay and are left to fend for themselves. ICG interviewed some who had turned to looting in Sierra Leonean border towns to survive. Others work on farms in Sierra Leone in exchange for food and clothes.³⁷ Some fight in jeans and t-shirts.³⁸ Those who are paid receive their salary intermittently and often see it decline. The only time fighters are guaranteed some form of remuneration is shortly before Christmas.³⁹ Even the Anti-Terrorist Unit is suffering from the lack of funds. Its salaries have dropped from U.S.\$150 to about U.S.\$50 per month, and the rice allowance has been cut as well.⁴⁰

The result is that many are no longer willing to fight. The most significant desertions since January have been from the regular army (Armed Forces of Liberia, AFL), which has long been especially disadvantaged.⁴¹ There are also desertions from Taylor's private militia forces, which is a clear indication that defences are weakening. Government forces, as a Sierra Leone military source told ICG, are also stretched too thin to offer prospect of a military victory.⁴²

Poor payment among Taylor's private militia forces has led to increased looting near the capital. In what has become a persistent pattern, "fighting" close to Monrovia has often come when Taylor has been unable to pay his troops. The effect is to spread fear, forcing many to flee while militia forces seize what they can.⁴³ Even Defence Minister Daniel Chea has acknowledged a link between government losses, looting and lack of military discipline.⁴⁴

It is not clear whether Taylor's forces will be able to prevent further LURD advances on Monrovia. Many deserting soldiers interviewed by ICG gave clear warnings that desertions were not just the result of poor pay and working conditions, but also of Taylor's misrule. As one noted, "some of us are genuinely tired of supporting Taylor's war, some of us are on a suicide mission and we want to stop".⁴⁵

C. THE BATTLE FOR MONROVIA?

LURD has continued to apply pressure, attacking Foya Kamala again in mid-March 2003, but a constant flow of supplies by helicopter ensures Taylor's grip on this important base. In a letter to the UN Security Council, on 20 March, Taylor openly declared that he was importing arms and ammunition into the country for self-defence because the country

³⁴ ICG interview with an "original" Armed Force of Liberia soldier, Freetown, February 2003.

³⁵ ICG interview with militia soldier who deserted to Sierra Leone, March 2003.

³⁶ ICG interviews with various military personnel along the Sierra Leone-Liberia border, and Liberian soldiers who fled to Sierra Leone, February 2003.

³⁷ ICG interview, Kailahun, February 2003.

³⁸ ICG interview with Armed Force of Liberia soldier, Freetown, February 2003.

³⁹ ICG was shown a number of pay cheques by Armed Forces of Liberia soldiers that indicated they had not received pay for from six months to one year.

⁴⁰ When the ATU was created in 1998, pay was U.S.\$250 monthly and a bag of rice with uniform and boots. Some senior commanders reportedly received up to U.S.\$400. As war with the LURD progressed and UN sanctions made it more costly to obtain arms, President Taylor reduced and delayed ATU salaries. Many junior ranks fighting in the interior have not been paid for some time. Most live on money gained from harassing citizens at checkpoints and looting at the front, including in Côte d'Ivoire. The police, who have similar problems, finally received two months pay in December 2002 after a break of nine and in some cases twelve months. ICG interview, March 2003.

⁴¹ For example, UN military officials told of AFL soldiers who, when ordered to report for duty following the LURD advance on Tubmanburg, refused on grounds of poor pay. ICG interviews, February 2003.

⁴² ICG interview, Kailahun, February 2003.

⁴³ ICG was informed that the attacks in Brewersville near Tubmanburg on 4 and 5 February 2003 were not conducted by the LURD, but involved militias firing in the air to force the local population to flee so that they could loot. ICG interview with Liberian refugees, Freetown and Kenema, February 2003.

⁴⁴ Interview on BBC Focus on Africa, 18 February 2003.

⁴⁵ ICG interview, Freetown, February 2003.

was at war.⁴⁶ Taylor is, however, beginning to pay heavily for his military adventures, and while it would be bold to predict that the rebels will actually take Monrovia, both the LURD and LURD-MODEL in Côte d'Ivoire are hurting Taylor. New pockets of fighting are opening every week in the country leaving Taylor fighters weak in areas that are psychologically and militarily important.

A government counter-offensive, with air support, in Grand Cape Mount County failed, and in late March there was serious fighting for Gbargna in Bong County, a significant support base during Taylor's rise to power that is close to the Gbatala training camp of the Anti-Terrorist Unit. This is the second time Gbargna has been hit (the first was in May 2002), and as an exiled Liberian noted, the repeated attacks on such targets "will begin to have psychological impact" on the government.⁴⁷ Another major blow was the heavy fighting in Ganta, Nimba County (the home base of Taylor's original rebellion), from late March that resulted in the death of one of Taylor's top commanders, "Jack the Rebel" (also known as "General Mission", whose real name was George Douana, from Lofa County). Another senior commanding officer, Aldophus Dolo, was reportedly injured and flown out of the country for medical treatment.⁴⁸ Taylor had to activate local hunter groups to beat back the LURD in Ganta.

By the start of April 2003, the LURD controlled three major axes leading toward Monrovia: Tubmanberg-Kley (Bomi County), west of Monrovia along the road to Sierra Leone; Bopolu (Lofa County), with a direct route to Arthington (northwest of Monrovia), Bensonville and eventually the capital; and Zorzor (Lofa County) to St. Paul's Bridge on the outskirts of Bong County. By mid-April, in a bid to reclaim control of the southern border with Sierra Leone, Taylor's forces recaptured Kley Junction, moved into Sinje and were once again pushing hard to dislodge LURD forces in the Bo Waterside region. However, LURD-MODEL attacks have weakened government positions in the southeast counties of Grand Gedeh on the border with Côte d'Ivoire and Sinoe along the Atlantic coast.

UNAMSIL officials assess the military situation as highly fluid.⁴⁹ Logistics will likely be decisive, but both sides have serious problems in that area. Their difficulties in supplying fighters with military material and food have caused them to prey on the traumatised civilian population and have been behind much of the serious human rights abuses, including harassment of civilians, summary killings, torture and abduction of civilians for labour.⁵⁰ There are rarely reports of troop casualties on either side; civilians remain the main victims, attacked by both sides on suspicion of collaboration if they stay in a village or are unable to flee. Despite their claims of abiding by humanitarian principles and protecting civilians, the LURD have increased their abuses, including forced recruitment of young men and children for combat.⁵¹

There has also been an increase in recruitment abuses by the government. Local militias conduct many of the forced recruitments in Monrovia. One refugee informed ICG of forced conscription in a camp there from December 2002 to January 2003. Another spoke of Sierra Leonean youths, who were seeking refuge in camps, being forced into the frontline. There are no precise numbers available but recruiting varies, as one refugee noted, "sometime 150, sometimes 300". Another refugee said "recruitment" is not an event but a constant process. Government security personnel are combing Monrovia and other regions of the country in search of potential recruits. Refugees told ICG that government forces come to houses at night to abduct young boys for fighting and have been seen lurking around schools and the university area in Monrovia.⁵²

⁴⁶ "Second Report of the Secretary-General pursuant to Security Council resolution 1408 (2002) regarding Liberia", Security Council, S/2003/466, 22 April 2003, para. 28, p. 5.

⁴⁷ ICG interview, April 2003.

⁴⁸ ICG interviews, March-April, 2003

⁴⁹ ICG interview with UNAMSIL military official, February 2003.

⁵⁰ Human Rights Watch, "Liberian Refugees in Guinea: Refoulement, Militarisation of Camps, and Other Protection Concerns", vol. 14, N°8 (A), November 2002, pp. 1-2 and 6-11.

⁵¹ In several instances, LURD has allegedly forced many sick or unfit persons trying to escape into Sierra Leone to pay up to U.S.\$25 to pass through its lines. This is a practice that has been going on for some time, particularly in northern Lofa County, but since March 2003 has also become rampant further south, in the Grand Cape County region.

⁵² ICG interviews, Macenta, January 2003. In February a number of UN agencies and Liberians were reporting the recruitment of students particularly in Nimba County. This led to the closure of several schools in Nimba County, particularly in Ganta in the North and neighbouring Bong County. Demonstrations were held on 24 February 2003 in Nimba County. Some schools are still closed.

Taylor, clearly sensing the LURD and LURD-MODEL determination to capture Monrovia, is relocating camps for internally displaced persons (IDPs) in order to ring the capital with a kind of human security shield. ICG received reports suggesting that the supposed LURD attacks on 24-26 March 2003 near one such camp (Rick's Institute) ten kilometres from Monrovia were actually carried out by Taylor militia. They allegedly began "fighting" near the camp, then claimed that LURD was forcefully recruiting IDPs. The resulting panic was reportedly used by Taylor to reposition a number of such camps around Monrovia in ways that he hoped would slow down the LURD advance. Taylor relocated civilian camps around Bomi Hills and on roads leading to Monrovia in mid-2002 for a similar purpose.⁵³

Despite their claims to have supporters there, the LURD will find it difficult to take Monrovia, which is heavily guarded by the Anti-Terrorist Unit and loyal militia. However, as one Liberian refugee stated, "the environment is now ripe for change. There are many people and fighters in Liberia and surrounding its borders who are interested in seeing Taylor go".⁵⁴ For example, General John Tarnue, formerly an army general, went over to the LURD earlier this year. He had been assigned in 2001 to training the Anti-Terrorist Unit but fled into exile, reportedly after differences with his troops and being tortured. He now trains LURD fighters.⁵⁵

A public indictment of President Taylor by the Special Court for Sierra Leone could have major security implications. One observer remarked that it would "make Liberia (and Monrovia) more dangerous".⁵⁶ The LURD might use it to legitimate a push into Monrovia, presenting the attack as an attempt to remove a leader officially labelled as a war criminal. Taylor would be likely to develop a

"bunker mentality", dig in and launch a full-scale terror campaign against Liberians. Already substantially restricted to Liberian soil by a UN travel ban (though the French brought him to Côte d'Ivoire peace talks in January 2003), he has his back to the wall and would probably dare anyone to come and get him. One Western diplomat said, "Taylor is prepared to go down like Saddam. Like Saddam, Taylor cares about power more than life. He is not the retiring type. People would even be happy to buy him off, but he would not go".⁵⁷ The wider region could suffer along with Liberia if the UN Security Council did not react immediately to an increase in violence.⁵⁸

⁵³ ICG interview, April 2003. Following a mission from 7 to 11 April 2003 to verify Liberia's compliance with UN sanctions, ECOWAS observed that "there was now no safe haven for internally displaced persons because they were constantly attacked and abducted by rebel groups and Government Security agents and sent to the front lines". "Second Report of the Secretary-General pursuant to Security Council resolution 1408 (2002) regarding Liberia", Security Council, S/2003/466, 22 April 2003, para. 33 (c), p. 6.

⁵⁴ ICG interview with Liberian refugee, Kenema, February 2003.

⁵⁵ ICG interviews, Freetown and Abidjan, March 2003.

⁵⁶ ICG interview with a representative of an international NGO, Freetown, March 2003.

⁵⁷ ICG interview with Western diplomat, Abidjan, March 2003.

⁵⁸ A Western official in Freetown claimed to ICG that "there is no doubt" the Security Council would act to contain a serious escalation of violence in Liberia, or a spillover from its borders. ICG interview, Freetown, April 2003.

III. THE MANO RIVER UNION'S POROUS BORDERS

Both LURD and government forces rely heavily on the porous zones along the borders with Sierra Leone and Guinea for re-supply, rest and reinforcement. Liberia's neighbours to the east are playing their own game of provoking tensions inside the country that could come back to haunt them.

A. THE OPEN SECRET OF GUINEA'S ASSISTANCE

Guinea is reinforcing its border with soldiers trained under the U.S. military assistance program, citing fear of more refugees from Liberia and, since November 2002, Côte d'Ivoire.⁵⁹ But the role of the Guinean government cannot be overlooked in explaining LURD successes. While it continues to deny helping the rebels, President Conté's support is an open secret. Even Guineans living in the border towns of Macenta and Nzérékore, north of Liberia, laugh when they say, "Officially, Guinea is not helping the LURD".⁶⁰

Several recent events suggest a decline in this support.⁶¹ For example, LURD forces have been moved out of Macenta back to their base inside Liberia, at Voinjama.⁶² But as one LURD insider told ICG, "it is all a cover, Macenta is the political headquarters of the LURD, Voinjama is used to indicate that LURD is a Liberian base, but in reality the leadership is in Macenta and Conakry".⁶³ There are also credible reports from some LURD fighters that they receive substantial artillery cover from the Guinean military, especially when under pressure. A number of sources confirm such artillery assistance

also during the fights to recapture Kolahun and Foya Kamala and other areas.⁶⁴

Guinea has also provided vital arms or facilitated their receipt. One LURD fighter told ICG, "Yes, we receive weapons and ammunition like SMGs (submachine guns), AK-60s, GPMGs (general purpose machine guns), LMGs (light machine guns), anti-aircraft guns (50-calibre) and 60mm mortars".⁶⁵ The LURD's rapid gains from January to March 2003 suggest that such supplies have been substantial. Fresh stocks of RPGs (rocket propelled grenades) and new vehicles in the Macenta border zone in January were clear indications of continued Guinean support.

Even Guinea's controversial occupation of the Sierra Leone border town of Yenga in the Kailahun District raises suspicion.⁶⁶ While Conakry claims this land, several observers suggested to ICG that it wants the outpost because it "provides viewing access" into activities taking place in areas like Foya Kamala. Others said that Guinea holds Yenga because President Conté is determined to prevent a repeat of the September 2000 incursions by Liberian-sponsored Guinean dissidents and RUF fighters.⁶⁷

The LURD leadership says that Guinean support is overstated. A senior commander insisted that "we have cordial relations with the Guinean authorities because the LURD is protecting their border. If

⁵⁹ Since 1993, Guinea has received substantial U.S. military support. In 2002, the U.S. trained an 800-man Rapid Reaction Force. Some of the trainees are now protecting the border with Liberia.

⁶⁰ ICG interviews with Guinean residents in Macenta and Nzérékore and a Western diplomat, Freetown, January 2003.

⁶¹ ICG interview with Guinean government official, Conakry, June 2002.

⁶² Macenta is a border town close to Liberia that has traditionally harboured many Liberian Mandingo refugees and ex-fighters from the ULIMO who fought against President Taylor in Liberia's first civil war.

⁶³ ICG interview, February 2003.

⁶⁴ ICG interviews with several LURD fighters and military officials in Sierra Leone, February 2003.

⁶⁵ ICG interview, February 2003.

⁶⁶ Yenga is small town along Sierra Leone's eastern border. Sierra Leone and Guinea are separated by the Makona River, but according to Guinean officials the original frontier map demarcated by Britain and France in 1912 and the accompanying 1913 protocol which confirmed the boundaries gives the entire river to Guinea, including what is known as its "flood gates" – a description that gives Guinea a quarter mile from the river bank into Sierra Leone. Yenga has been occupied by Guinean troops since a large contingent arrived under the auspices of the ECOWAS peacekeeping mission in 1997. They stay as "peacekeepers" under UNAMSIL. On 18 November 2002 Guinean and Sierra Leone government officials said they had resolved the border dispute in Sierra Leone's favour, but Guinea troops are still in Yenga, and they prevent views across to the river. Another attempt was made on 29 March 2003 for government representatives to meet but the issue remained unresolved. A sub-committee was created to meet on 9 April and follow-on sessions are expected from late April.

⁶⁷ ICG interviews, Freetown, Kailahun and Kenema, February 2003.

Guinea was supporting us, we would be in Monrovia by now".⁶⁸ A fighter denied LURD weapons came from Guinea: "The weapons came from Voinjama; we also captured them during fighting". She implied that LURD has "indirect assistance" or even "supporters" within Taylor's government because the rebels often know the exact location and time of helicopter deliveries of arms to government forces in Lofa County.⁶⁹

But LURD fighters also privately inform ICG of Guinea's "extensive" involvement and the frequent presence in Conakry of trucks, heavily protected by presidential guards, outside the house of Ayesha Conneh (the wife of the LURD leader). Likewise, many diplomatic and intelligence officials readily acknowledge the situation. The radio communication centre that tracks LURD activities at the front is based in the house of Ayesha Conneh and was fully set up by Guinean authorities. Trucks frequently leave Conakry and proceed directly to Macenta under Guinean government supervision and then on to Voinjama.

Guinean authorities not only continue to allow senior LURD fighters to operate in Macenta, but also facilitate the forced recruitment of LURD fighters, leaving many Liberians increasingly wary about their security.⁷⁰ As one exiled Liberian noted to ICG, "many of Liberia's refugees live in fear in Guinea because the leadership of LURD is disturbing refugees with the assistance of Guinean authorities". The only way you can survive in Conakry or the main refugee bases in Macenta and Nzérékore is to support the LURD or "go out of sight".⁷¹

One humanitarian worker cited a number of credible indications that the LURD operates freely in refugee camps with the knowledge of the Guinean authorities:

The LURD move freely in the main refugee Kouankan camp. During visits to Kouankan camp in December 2002, I received a report from one man who reported that a group tried to take him from the camp. A female refugee reported that she regularly sees a man in the camp she knows from Lofa County who burnt

her village and who tells her each time he sees her that if he finds her in Liberia he will kill her. There are numerous cases like this.⁷²

Following the September 2000 attacks by a coalition of Taylor-sponsored Guinean dissidents and RUF fighters, Guinea has defended such assistance to the LURD as it has acknowledged on the pretext of border security. The international community, in particular Britain and the U.S., agree that Guinea helped defeat the RUF and its Monrovia-based leadership. Arguably, allowing the LURD to operate along the Guinean border provides President Conté with a cheap alternative to securing the border with his own army.⁷³ However, this has given renewed life to Liberia's war. Conté has also found the LURD useful to protect him from armed dissidents, especially those based in Liberia.

The international community needs to send a clearer message to Guinea that continued military support to the LURD is in direct contravention of the arms embargo the UN Security Council placed on that movement in October 2002. The UN sanctions monitoring committee should be empowered to investigate all West African leaders suspected of fuelling conflicts in the region. Those found to be in violation of sanctions should be named and shamed. Indeed, it is hard to argue with the letter President Taylor sent to the UN Secretary General in March 2003 criticising Guinea, which at the time held the presidency of the Security Council, for its continued support of the LURD. That support also leaves Guinea vulnerable to attacks by an increasingly isolated and unconstrained Charles Taylor. Liberian

⁶⁸ ICG interview, Macenta, January 2003.

⁶⁹ ICG interview with LURD fighter, Macenta, January 2003.

⁷⁰ ICG interview, Macenta and Kaliahun, January-February 2003

⁷¹ ICG interview, February 2003.

⁷² ICG interview, January 2003. This corresponds with cases documented by Human Rights Watch in a November 2002 report that provided extensive evidence of how Guinean authorities were allowing LURD to recruit refugees. For example, it noted instances in which Guinean commanders handed over Liberian refugees to LURD for use as porters or military recruits. The report also noted that Guinean commanders and LURD took "direct part in the screening" of refugees and decided who would return to Liberia to fight, p. 13 and said that LURD combatants moved unhindered in refugee camps. For example, in Kouankan refugee camp, "witnesses said LURD forces sometimes recruited men and boys from the camp. They also described how recruits who had abandoned the frontlines in Liberia and returned without permission to their families in the camp were sometimes forcefully taken out of the camp", p. 20. Human Rights Watch, "Liberian Refugees in Guinea", op. cit.

⁷³ U.S.-trained Guinean rangers also man the border but without the LURD, the Guinean authorities would need to maintain a stronger presence.

military officers made it clear to ICG that Taylor would in some circumstances be prepared to launch new attacks in Guinea. If he did so, he would certainly be supported by Guinean dissidents allied with him, who would like to exploit the power vacuum that has been developing in their homeland since President Conté's health apparently began to worsen in late 2002. Some of those dissidents, known as "The Missionaries", are based in Foya Kamala (Liberia) from where they and the RUF fighters were launched the September 2000 incursions into Guinea.

B. SIERRA LEONE'S BALANCING ACT

Sierra Leone carefully disguises its support of the LURD since it is still in a delicate situation and has often fared poorly when Liberia has been in disarray. President Kabbah does not want to give Taylor a pretext for attacking Sierra Leone, so must be "reasonably friendly toward Liberia and must not be seen as being pro-LURD".⁷⁴ For example, Sierra Leone expelled a key LURD operative, General Charles Bropleh, in the fall of 2002. Arrests and surveillance of LURD supporters in Freetown continued in December 2002.⁷⁵ Nevertheless, many LURD fighters and leaders still see Sierra Leone as an important base. Some in Sierra Leone have also fallen out with the Guinea-based LURD command, perhaps due to Conneh's quest for total power.⁷⁶ Internal divisions could potentially result in the Sierra Leone-based LURD acting independently against Monrovia, much as LURD-MODEL now does.

With a pool of ex-combatants from either side of its civil war, Sierra Leone has provided useful manpower to both LURD and Liberian government forces. The latter openly admit to the presence of RUF fighters in Liberia.⁷⁷ Some civil defence forces,

mainly Kamajor fighters, are with the LURD. Sierra Leone military officials received a letter in February 2003 from Liberian counterparts stating that up to 250 Kamajors were being trained in Guéckédou, a town in the southern part of Guinea close to the Liberian border, for an attack on Foya Kamala.⁷⁸ LURD forces confirmed this information.⁷⁹

Sierra Leone also appears to be a significant transit route for LURD weapons.⁸⁰ One route runs across the south of the country near Bonthe, Sherbro Island to the Mano River Bridge border crossing point to reach LURD fighters in the Grand Cape Mount region of Liberia. The other runs from the far eastern border of Sierra Leone to the same crossing point. A significant amount of truck movements take place after 10 p.m., when there is less policing in several towns and districts in the South and East.⁸¹ It is unclear exactly where arms enter Sierra Leone in the East, whether from Liberia or Guinea, via Yenga. Either route would provide the LURD with an easier alternative to shipping arms through Robertsport (west of Monrovia), which it held only briefly in February 2003 and is heavily patrolled by Taylor's navy. Access through various locations in Sierra Leone via Guinea is also easier than transporting arms across land from Voinjama in Lofa County (Liberia), which involves passing through several Liberian government areas. Some evidence points to LURD elements in Sierra Leone's eastern Kenema district as the main organisers of these new arms routes. The whole southern region of Sierra Leone, which includes Pujehun district, is also home to Kamajors. The Kamajor civil defence forces there have already been a significant source of manpower for the LURD and may also be assisting the arms flow.⁸²

The presence of former Liberian government fighters inside Sierra Leone is also a major concern for the Freetown authorities. At least 350 deserters have been in the Mapeh internment camp at Lungi since April 2002, the same facility as LURD fighters,

⁷⁴ ICG interview with British military official, Kenema, February 2003.

⁷⁵ General Bropleh was a key leader in the formation of the Sierra Leone chapter of the LURD. Bropleh is a former ULIMO general who fled to Sierra Leone in 1997. He commanded about 400 Liberian fighters called the "Special Task Force" that was initially close to the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council military junta that came to power in Sierra Leone on 25 May 1997. He later joined a coalition of Sierra Leone Kamajor civil defence forces in 1999 during counterattacks against the RUF.

⁷⁶ ICG interview, March 2003.

⁷⁷ ICG interviews, February 2003. On the role of Kamajor and RUF fighters in Liberia's conflict, see ICG Report, *Liberia: The Key to Ending Regional Instability*, op. cit., pp. 2-7.

⁷⁸ ICG interview, February 2003.

⁷⁹ ICG interviews, Sierra Leone and Guinea, February-March 2003.

⁸⁰ ICG interviews, Freetown, March 2003. The UN Panel monitoring Liberia's sanctions noted that Sierra Leone could possibly be an arms route for the LURD. See Report of the Panel of Experts appointed pursuant to Security Council resolution 1408 (2002), paragraph 16, concerning Liberia, 7 October 2002, para 46, p. 14.

⁸¹ ICG interviews, March-April 2003.

⁸² ICG interviews with various military officials, Freetown, March 2003.

which presents an issue of camp security, especially as camp personnel are overstretched. While many residents claim that relations between the two groups are “cordial”,⁸³ their simultaneous presence makes for an explosive situation. Furthermore, there is potential for a diplomatic incident should Taylor request that his ex-soldiers be repatriated and Sierra Leone refuse.⁸⁴

Other former Liberian government fighters are circulating in the Zimmi area and close to refugee sites in the Southeast. Groups of soldiers have also been known to masquerade as refugees in order to enter camps. There are suggestions that some might be involved in diamond mining in River Sewa, Bo District. While a UN official noted that “maintaining the civilian nature of camps is difficult”, the presence of Liberian fighters in the Southeast, particularly in or near refugee camps, does suggest the need for better screening in the area.⁸⁵

Security on the border remains a real concern as UNAMSIL begins to reduce its military presence in Sierra Leone.⁸⁶ All residents of the Kailahun border district interviewed by ICG cited Liberia as their primary security concern.⁸⁷ Some parts of the district, especially those closest to the border like Kissi Tongi, have not been declared safe by UNAMSIL because of the proximity to fighting in Liberia.

On 10 January 2003, at least 70 LURD combatants made a serious incursion into Mandavolahun, Kailahun District.⁸⁸ One woman was wounded, two buildings destroyed and thirteen houses burnt in what the Sierra Leone army and UNAMSIL officials

described as “a well-coordinated attack”.⁸⁹ In an “embarrassing” response, a Sierra Leone army platoon (about 30 men) fled, leaving behind stores of weapons and communications equipment. This incident raised doubts about the reformed army’s ability to provide border security without continued major UNAMSIL aid.⁹⁰ There were periodic border raids throughout 2002 but the 10 January incursion was noteworthy as the first involving relatively heavy weaponry (mortars) and because the attackers were LURD rather than Liberian government forces.⁹¹

UNAMSIL’s presence along the Liberia-Sierra Leone border has improved security but as long as there is serious fighting in Liberia, the region will be vulnerable, both to further incursions and to the strain on infrastructure produced by refugees.

⁸³ ICG interviews with LURD and Liberian government fighters, Mapeh, Sierra Leone, February-March 2003.

⁸⁴ Any decision to return these fighters should not be taken lightly. There are a number of reports that ex-RUF fighters now working for Taylor have executed government soldiers who attempted to leave Liberia. ICG interview, March 2003.

⁸⁵ ICG discussion, March 2003.

⁸⁶ UNAMSIL began drawing down its military presence of 17,500 peacekeepers in September 2002. During the first phase from September to November, 600 troops were withdrawn. By January 2003, mission strength was down to 15,500. When the second phase of withdrawal is completed in May 2003, strength will be 13,000. See *Seventh Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone*, UN Security Council, S/2003/321, 17 March 2003, paras. 10-11, p. 3.

⁸⁷ ICG interview with Sierra Leone residents in Kailahun District, February 2003.

⁸⁸ ICG discussions with UNAMSIL military observers, January 2003.

⁸⁹ ICG interviews with UNAMSIL and RSLAF officials, January-February 2003.

⁹⁰ ICG interviews with military officers, January-February 2003.

⁹¹ Following the border attacks, a meeting was held between senior officials from the Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces, the Armed Forces of Liberia, UNAMSIL and local authorities in Dawa, Kailahun District on improving border security.

IV. THE CÔTE D'IVOIRE CRISIS

Traditionally considered a haven of peace and stability in the region, Côte d'Ivoire is the latest country to experience the impact of Liberia's instability. On 19 September 2002 a group of soldiers called the Mouvement Patriotique de la Côte d'Ivoire (MPCI) attempted a coup. Having failed to take the capital, Abidjan, on the first day, they retreated to Bouaké, in the centre of the country. Largely due to rapid French intervention, the rebels were contained in the northern half of the country, and a ceasefire that French troops were to patrol was signed on 17 October 2002. On 28 November, two new rebel groups emerged in the West. Calling themselves the Mouvement pour la Justice et la Paix (MJP) and the Mouvement Patriotique du Grand Ouest (MPIGO), they claimed to be fighting to avenge the leader of the December 1999 military junta, Robert Gueï (killed on the morning of 19 September), and to remove President Gbagbo.

While information is sometimes hard to substantiate due to the access problems independent observers have in western Côte d'Ivoire, certain facts have become clear:

- ❑ the rebel groups in the West are being aided by Liberian government troops, including former RUF soldiers from Sierra Leone;
- ❑ President Gbagbo has armed the former LURD (now LURD-MODEL) forces to fight on his behalf and has allowed his army to support their attempts to enter Liberia and overthrow President Taylor;
- ❑ a front of the Liberian civil war has now been opened in western Côte d'Ivoire, with alarming impact on the Ivorian conflict;
- ❑ the Ivorian crisis has given both sides in Liberia's conflict the opportunity to rekindle old networks and create new alliances;
- ❑ the Ivorian crisis has allowed a number of veterans of the Mano River Union conflict that was fought out on the borders of Sierra Leone, Liberia and Guinea to move on to another war; and
- ❑ a humanitarian nightmare is unfolding in western Côte d'Ivoire, characterised by killing of civilians, looting, and a spiral of attacks and reprisals with increasingly ethnic overtones.

The reverberations are being felt especially at the Ivorian-Liberian border and in the southern part of Guinea.⁹²

It is not surprising that the two countries find themselves deeply involved in one another's conflict. Since the era of President Félix Houphouët-Boigny in Côte d'Ivoire (1960-1993) and the emergence of Charles Taylor in the 1980s, they have played clandestine roles in each other's domestic affairs. Western Côte d'Ivoire was significant in Liberia's first civil war as both an arms route and business centre for Charles Taylor's National Patriotic Front of Liberia insurgency. It also hosted many Liberian refugees, political asylum seekers and anti-Taylor forces, mainly ethnic Krahn from Grand Gedeh County.

Taylor's senior commanders and some of his troops are directly implicated in the Ivorian insurgency in the West. Ivorian rebels could only have captured the towns of Danané and Man on 28 November 2002 with the consent of the highest authority in Liberia. The first attacks on Danané were reportedly planned, coordinated and led by Taylor's men: Kuku Dennis, Sam "Mosquito" Bockarie, Roland Duo, Aldophus Dolo and the late "Jack the Rebel".⁹³ Eyewitnesses testify to seeing Bockarie between Danané and Monrovia at the start of the Ivorian crisis.⁹⁴ Others claim to have seen him between Man and Bouaké, the MPCI stronghold, apparently acting as an adviser and occasionally engaging in combat.⁹⁵

The key questions are why and to what extent President Taylor is involved in the Ivorian crisis. Closely related is the question of whether he was aware of the planned coup and actively participated, or whether he simply took advantage once the

⁹² The Ivorian crisis is a complex power struggle, mixing issues of nationality, the constitution, land ownership and the nature of independence from the former colonial power, France. A forthcoming ICG report will focus on these internal factors. The purpose of this section is to illustrate the impact of Liberia's conflict on the Ivorian crisis. It is based on interviews in Abidjan, Abuja, Freetown, Conakry, Lagos, Macenta, Nzérékore and Ouagadougou from November 2002 to March 2003.

⁹³ ICG interviews with Liberian refugees, Nzérékore (Guinea) and other sources, January-March 2003.

⁹⁴ ICG interview with Liberian refugees, Guinea. This was later confirmed by an international journalist based in Abidjan and several Western diplomats, February 2003.

⁹⁵ ICG interview, February 2003. A number of Western military officials also confirm knowledge of Bockarie's presence, March 2003.

northern-based MPCCI rebels needed help in opening a western front to obtain access to the rich cocoa/coffee belt and the port of San Pedro. Most likely Taylor's initial involvement was indirect, conducted through his old links with Côte d'Ivoire and his relationship with Burkina Faso's President Blaise Compaoré. His involvement intensified, however, once the coup failed, his friend Gueï had been killed, and problems inside Liberia gave him reasons to actively support rebel movements in the West.

Just before this report went to press, on 26 April 2003, the governments of Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia announced agreement to deploy a joint force with help from French and ECOWAS troops to end border incursions between the two countries.⁹⁶ It remains to be seen if, and how, this agreement will be implemented.

A. TAYLOR'S IVORIAN WAR

A useful starting point in understanding Taylor's involvement in Côte d'Ivoire is his insurgency against the government of President Samuel Doe. President Houphouët-Boigny allowed him to launch his rebellion from Côte d'Ivoire on 24 December 1989. That decision was closely tied to the murder by Doe during his 1980 coup of Houphouët-Boigny's close friend, the Liberian president William Tolbert, and Tolbert's son, Aldophus, who was married to Houphouët-Boigny's goddaughter, Désirée Delafosse.⁹⁷ Houphouët-Boigny essentially used Taylor to take revenge against President Doe.

The involvement of Ivorian soldiers in his movement brought Taylor close to Houphouët-Boigny's Chief of Staff, General Robert Gueï, who played a significant role in funnelling arms to Taylor once he entered Liberia. The Taylor-Gueï link was strengthened by the close ethnic affinities between Taylor's fighters and those from General Gueï's home in Gouéssesso, north of the western city of Man and surrounding areas in western Côte d'Ivoire. Many of Taylor's fighters, including key

commanders such as Benjamin Yeaten and Roland Duo, were from the Gio ethnic group in Nimba County, Liberia, where Taylor began his insurgency. The Gios are closely linked to the Yacouba in western Côte d'Ivoire. Gueï was a Yacouba, and many from his ethnic group supported Taylor's war. The Gio fighters in Taylor's rebel movement have remained "grateful for the support Gueï" gave during Liberia's war.⁹⁸

Côte d'Ivoire remained an important business and arms route for Taylor's wars when Henri Konan Bédié became president in 1993 on Houphouët-Boigny's death, and the relationship with Gueï was rekindled when the general became head of the military junta that toppled Bédié in December 1999. Taylor was the first head of state whom Gueï visited, in early 2000.⁹⁹ As Côte d'Ivoire's leader, Gueï was able to provide Taylor with further arms and materiel in return for manpower from Sierra Leone's RUF insurgency and soldiers from Taylor's former NPFL rebel group. An unknown number of these were apparently installed in the elite Brigades Rouges (Red Brigades), a part of the Ivorian Presidential Guard.¹⁰⁰

A "pact" was reportedly agreed whereby Taylor would support a Gueï coup if he lost the October 2000 Ivorian presidential elections.¹⁰¹ Reports emerged in the latter half of 2000 that soldiers loyal to Gueï and supervised by a top Taylor commander, Kuku Dennis, were training at least 500 fighters from Liberia, the Sierra Leone RUF, and Burkina Faso near River Gbeh in River Gee County, Eastern Liberia.¹⁰² The key training commandant was reportedly the long-time regional diamond dealer and gun-runner, Ibrahim Bah, who was assisted by Bockarie.¹⁰³ Gueï's soldiers were said to be "waiting

⁹⁶ "Ivory Coast, Liberia Back Force for Chaotic Border", Reuters, 26 April 2003.

⁹⁷ Adekeye Adebajo, *Building Peace in West Africa: Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea-Bissau* (Boulder, 2002), p. 48 and Stephen Ellis, *The Mask of Anarchy: The Destruction of Liberia and Religious Dimensions of an African Civil War* (London, 1999), pp. 53-54.

⁹⁸ ICG interview, February 2003.

⁹⁹ ICG interview with Liberian refugee, Abidjan, March 2003.

¹⁰⁰ ICG interviews with Liberian refugees based in Sierra Leone and Côte d'Ivoire, March 2003.

¹⁰¹ ICG interview with Liberian refugees from Danané who fled to Bossou, Guinea, January 2003, confirmed by other Ivorian and Liberian military sources, Abidjan, March 2003. ICG interview, February 2003.

¹⁰² ICG interviews with a Guinean journalist, Conakry, October 2001, and a Western military official and a number of private sources, Abidjan and Conakry, February-March 2003.

¹⁰³ Senegalese commander Ibrahim Bah (or Balde) has played a direct role in numerous West African conflicts. He was involved in rebel activities in Guinea-Bissau, the Casamance

on the ground” in his home town for the Liberian group to finish training. Part of the “agreement” was that Gueï’s troops would commute between River Gee and Man to provide information on the Ivorian terrain. The operation to support Gueï also enabled President Taylor to pay soldiers who had been “harassing government ministers for money”.¹⁰⁴

On 24 October 2000, General Gueï stopped the vote count when early indications were that Gbagbo was in the lead. He dissolved the National Electoral Commission and declared himself winner. Gbagbo responded by telling his supporters from the Front Populaire Ivoirien party to lead demonstrations. These soon became violent as gendarmes loyal to Gueï fired on the demonstrators. ICG was informed that at least 100 trained soldiers of various nationalities on standby in Abidjan after having been flown in by helicopter from Liberia fought the Gbagbo supporters and defectors from the Ivorian military who had turned against Gueï.¹⁰⁵ Defeated, Gueï fled to exile in Benin for about two months before returning home. The 100 foreign troops who had fought for him in Abidjan stayed with him. Additional training took place in early 2001 in Grand Gedeh County close to River Cavally on the Ivorian border. Once again, this was supervised by Commander Kuku Dennis, who was based in that county.¹⁰⁶

President Gbagbo, and a number of Western military officials, knew of the movement of Gueï loyalists and the presence of Liberian military officials inside Côte d’Ivoire from late 2000 through mid 2001. A

separatist war in southern Senegal, and Sierra Leone as a member of the RUF. His main undertaking was training fighters and diamond trading. He has also been involved in supplying arms to Taylor’s fighters in Liberia and Gueï’s soldiers in Côte d’Ivoire. Bah is said to have had his own “road runners”, who provided consignments of diamonds from Kono District in eastern Sierra Leone to his diamond business base in Monrovia, and to have brought many rebel leaders together in various criminal and clandestine activities, including illegal diamond sales, that extend beyond the region as far as the Middle East. ICG interview with RUF insider and other sources, March-April 2003. See also Report of the Panel of Experts appointed pursuant to Security Council resolution 1408 (2002), paragraph 16, concerning Liberia, 7 October 2002, paras. 2-3, 52, 87, 131 and 135, pp. 7, 15, 22 and 31, which acknowledged Bah’s links to RUF fighters.

¹⁰⁴ ICG interview, February 2003.

¹⁰⁵ ICG interview, March 2003. For an analysis of the violence that unfolded during the elections, see Human Rights Watch, “The New Racism: The Political Manipulation of Ethnicity in Côte d’Ivoire”, vol. 13, N°6 (A), August 2001.

¹⁰⁶ ICG interview, Abidjan, March 2003.

Western military official said, “We knew that Gueï was training in 2000, it was an official fact and not a secret. Gueï did not only rely on Ivorians. We knew that he had a number of Liberians with him”.¹⁰⁷

Gbagbo might have decided not to react publicly to the military preparations in what was increasingly dubbed “Gueïland” because he had already developed links with several LURD personalities based in Côte d’Ivoire.¹⁰⁸ However, suspicion that Gueï was plotting another coup persisted, even after a National Forum for Reconciliation was held in October 2001 and Côte d’Ivoire’s four “big” leaders met in January 2002 in Yamoussoukro.¹⁰⁹

Gueï’s murder on the morning of the attempted coup has led many to maintain that he was unaware of the plot or at least of its timing.¹¹⁰ Following his death, Gueï’s Yacouba supporters in Man and Danané announced that the country would see in 45 days (after the period of mourning) how the people of the West would react.¹¹¹ On 26 and 27 September, Taylor’s notorious general, “Jack the Rebel”, reportedly came on a “tour” of Danané.¹¹² Liberian refugees told ICG that a number of Gio from Liberia were going back and forth to “spy” on the situation in Côte d’Ivoire following the attempted coup.¹¹³ Liberians in Nimba County said that their countrymen recruited for the Ivorian operation were trained in Belegaly, the home of Taylor’s frontline

¹⁰⁷ ICG interview, March 2003.

¹⁰⁸ ICG interview, March 2003.

¹⁰⁹ The four leaders were President Laurent Gbagbo, former President Henri Konan Bédié (1994-1999), General Gueï and former Prime Minister Alassane Ouattara (1990-1993).

¹¹⁰ ICG interviews with Western military officials, Ivorian citizens and Liberian refugees, Abidjan, March 2003. Gueï was killed near his house, wearing sweatpants, a t-shirt and sandals, despite government claims that he was “killed in a shootout” on his way to the television to announce he was taking power. Western security officials confirm that he, his wife and members of his family were killed by security forces close to the presidency. While the timing of the coup clearly took many people by surprise, members of the government and leading opposition members had all been informed that “something” was about to happen. The attacks, which had clearly been underestimated, had been announced in intelligence circles every day for the previous ten days. Such announcements are not, however, uncommon, and the regime had been fearful of a coup attempt for nearly two years.

¹¹¹ ICG interview with Western military official, Abidjan, March 2003.

¹¹² ICG interview, March 2003.

¹¹³ ICG interview with Liberian refugees, Nzérékore, January 2003.

commander, Roland Duo, as well as Ganta.¹¹⁴ The attacks into Côte d'Ivoire took two months to unfold. At least 500 fighters from Taylor's former NPFL rebel group, from the Sierra Leone RUF and "able bodied men and women trained in Nimba County" apparently crossed into Danané to join fighters that had been loyal to General Gueï.¹¹⁵ Liberians in Nimba County reportedly saw Taylor commanders Benjamin Yeaten and Roland Duo take truck loads of Liberian fighters recruited in Nimba County to Danané late at night every week following Gueï's death.¹¹⁶ A pick-up truck believed to belong to Kuku Dennis was also seen carrying recruits to Danané.

Two Ivorian rebel groups, the MPIGO and the MJP, emerged to attack Danané on 28 November 2002. Eventually, the MJP headed toward Man¹¹⁷ while the MPIGO went on to capture Blolékin, Touba, and the south of Toulépleu. The compositions of MPIGO and MJP remain unclear. Several sources state that the former is largely comprised of Gueï loyalists and Liberians as well as Sierra Leonean fighters. Most observers present in the area at the time and shortly thereafter claim that the MJP, the smaller of the two, is a satellite of the northern-based MPCII, but does indeed include Liberian and Sierra Leonean fighters.¹¹⁸

MPCII commanders and materiel were identified by eyewitnesses in Man in early December. Travellers in the region held by the MJP note that MPCII and MJP laissez-passer are interchangeable but both often pose problems at MPIGO checkpoints on the road to Danané. In any case, it is clear that both movements have many Liberian and Sierra Leonean

fighters, as well as mercenaries of various West African origins.¹¹⁹

It is less clear how much control Monrovia wields over military operations. The western rebels could not have launched their attacks from Liberia without Taylor's consent.¹²⁰ The MJP would have needed a significant quantity of weapons to intervene, probably more than it could have gotten from the MPCII alone. The timing of those MJP attacks at Danané and Man coincided with the arrival in Liberia of six cargo aircraft containing 200 tons of weapons and ammunition. As mentioned earlier, Taylor's troops would have used those old Yugoslav stocks to repel the LURD in Northern Liberia¹²¹ but some may well have been passed on to the Ivorian rebels. In a recent report, Global Witness pointed to numerous arms movements in December 2002 from Harper Port in Maryland County to the training camps in the River Gbeh region under the control of Taylor's Chairman of Joint Security in the southeast of Liberia, General William Sumo.¹²²

The weapons used by Ivorian insurgents could also have come from President Taylor's old ally, President Blaise Compaoré of Burkina Faso. A number of Liberian government soldiers interviewed by ICG claimed that weapons arrived at the Presidential Executive Mansion in July 2002 directly from Burkina Faso.¹²³ The claims of continued arms

¹¹⁴ ICG interviews, March 2003.

¹¹⁵ ICG interviews, February-March 2003

¹¹⁶ ICG interview, February 2003. Not all recruitments are necessarily tied to the Ivorian mission. Recruitment in Nimba County could have been associated with defence against LURD attacks in Northern Liberia. There has been heavy recruitment in the area for the last two years, and the recruitment camps in Belegaly are widely known by residents of Nimba County. Young men and women from various towns are often brought there for at least seven to ten days of "intensive training" before they are sent to the front. Most Liberians interviewed stated that recruitment for an operation in Côte d'Ivoire started in 2001 but became widely known in 2002 and early 2003.

¹¹⁷ ICG interview with private source, confirmed in interviews with humanitarian agency and international NGO representatives, February-March 2003.

¹¹⁸ ICG interviews with Liberian refugees and a number of private sources, Nzérékore and Abidjan, January-March 2003.

¹¹⁹ In a sarcastic reference to the diverse origins of the insurgents, a humanitarian worker said in early January 2003, before the deployment of ECOWAS peacekeepers, "the ECOWAS forces have been on the ground for over a month already!" ICG interview, January 2003.

¹²⁰ ICG interviews with humanitarian agency representative, March 2003.

¹²¹ Report of the Panel of Experts appointed pursuant to Security Council resolution 1408 (2002), paragraph 16, concerning Liberia, 7 October 2002, paras 64-74, pp. 18-20.

¹²² Global Witness, "The Usual Suspects: Liberia's Weapons and Mercenaries in Côte d'Ivoire and Sierra Leone. Why it's Still Possible, How it Works and How to break the Trend", March 2003, p. 31.

¹²³ ICG interviews, February-March 2003. Also see Global Witness, "The Usual Suspects", op. cit., pp. 10, 22, 26, which highlights Burkina Faso as an arms traffic route. This was confirmed in ICG interviews with senior Burkinabé officials. A number of officials in Ougadougou said that planes loaded with weapons were leaving Ougadougou airport every day for Bouaké and that everybody knew. Payments to Burkinabé fighters involved in the Liberian and Sierra Leone conflicts are the subject of a public debate in the Burkinabé parliament, as is the question of compensation for truck companies that were hired to bring weapons to Liberia and Sierra Leone and lost their vehicles there. ICG interviews

flows cast doubt on the repeated statements of Western diplomats that Compaoré distanced himself from Taylor after UN sanctions were imposed on Liberia in May 2001 and following creation of the Special Court for Sierra Leone. Several diplomats also argue that Compaoré moved away after the 11 September 2001 terrorist bombings in the U.S. triggered allegations that Taylor might have al-Qaeda ties. A reduction in Ouagadougou-Monrovia helicopter flights carrying arms and ammunition seems to suggest that Compaoré's support did decline,¹²⁴ but several Liberians and Burkinabés interviewed by ICG remain convinced that the two leaders planned together to back the coup in Côte d'Ivoire and that the apparent cooling of relations was only a facade.¹²⁵

Similarly, a number of sources paint a picture of involvement by Taylor from the beginning in the attempt to remove Gbagbo. However, the level of coordination between Taylor and Compaoré is not known. What seems clear is that based on the location of the rebels and their initial success, none could have launched their attacks without the financial or military support of Taylor or Compaoré. It is possible to imagine a tacit arrangement between the two presidents pursuant to which each dealt directly with the Ivorian movement to which he was closest. There are many indications of a degree of coordination before the coup but it appears that the initial military action came from the North, with the support of Burkina Faso.

The most important figures in the MPCCI military command were all victims of Gueï. As junior officers who played major roles in the 1999 coup that brought him to power but were reputed to be close to Alassane Ouattara, leader of the Rassemblement des Républicains opposition party, they were accused by Gueï in September 2000 of attempting to overthrow him and were arrested and tortured. From exile in Burkina Faso, they began to plan in early 2001 for the 19 September 2002 coup. Significantly two

Compaoré envoys to Taylor, (Salif Diallo, Minister for Agriculture and Roc-Christian Kaboré, President of the Burkinabé National Assembly) are reported by various sources as also advising Ibrahim Coulibaly, ("I.B."), who is generally considered the military brains behind the MPCCI rebels. Compaoré has a number of reasons to want to oust Gbagbo, not least because of the state violence that has been targeting growing numbers of the three million Burkinabés in Côte d'Ivoire. Relations between Abidjan and Ouagadougou have worsened significantly during Gbagbo's regime and reached an all-time low just before the attempted coup.

Evidence of a direct link between the Ivorian military leaders of the MPCCI and Taylor has yet to be established. However, a Taylor insider informed ICG that two top Taylor aides, Mohamed Salamé, the ambassador-at-large in Abidjan and Taylor's main financier and arms broker, and General Melvin Sobandi, Minister of Post and Telecommunications in Monrovia, travelled to Bouaké on 17 September 2002 to deliver money.¹²⁶ Liberian and Sierra Leonean fighters were reportedly seen in that MPCCI stronghold following the coup attempt¹²⁷ although they may not necessarily have had instructions from Taylor to fight.¹²⁸

Taylor has strategic, military and commercial interests that could explain why he would engage in the Ivorian conflict but he would have needed a more direct motivation to join in the fighting. The first impetus would have to have come from President Gbagbo's recruitment of anti-Taylor fighters, a high percentage of whom were from the LURD, immediately after the attempted coup to bolster his inefficient and unmotivated army and to protect the west of the country from the MPCCI.¹²⁹ Many LURD

in Ouagadougou and Brussels, November and December 2002.

¹²⁴ ICG interview with former RUF insider, Sierra Leone, March 2003.

¹²⁵ ICG interview with exiled Liberians and private individuals, Abidjan and Ouagadougou, November 2002 and Conakry, March 2003. An exiled Liberian noted, "officially the Blaise-Charles relation has declined, but they are still close". ICG interview with exiled Liberians in the West Africa region, January-March 2003.

¹²⁶ ICG interview, March 2003.

¹²⁷ "Côte d'Ivoire: The nightmare scenario", *Africa Confidential*, Vol. 43, No.19, 27 September 2002, p. 1.

¹²⁸ Other bits of circumstantial evidence, as noted above, are the numerous reported sightings of the Taylor commander, Sam "Mosquito" Bockarie, in the area between Bouaké, Man and Danané from September to December 2002. Ibrahim Bah told investigators from the UN Panel of Experts on Liberia that Bockarie could have travelled to Zambia in the fall of 2002. The investigators maintained that Bockarie might have relocated to Ghana. Report of the Panel of Experts Appointed Pursuant to Security Council Resolution 1408 (2002), paragraph 16, concerning Liberia, 7 October 2002, paras. 2, 52, pp. 7, 15.

¹²⁹ A number of sources claimed that LURD fighters volunteered to support Gbagbo because they also saw the

fighters had lived in western Côte d'Ivoire as refugees with other anti-Taylor Liberians. Some of these LURD fighters were loyal to Samuel Doe and had belonged to the old Liberian army. Others belonged to the factions that fought against Taylor in Liberia's first war and fled following the 1998 Camp Johnson Road clash between ULIMO-J and Taylor's forces¹³⁰ or were associated with the Liberian Peace Council (LPC), another warring faction headed by Dr. George Boley, a former Doe advisor.

Taylor knew in 2001 that Gbagbo had ties with various exiled Liberians close to the LURD but apparently told him that so long as they did not bother him, he would not respond. However by late 2002, with evidence that Gbagbo was arming fighters linked to LURD forces, the situation had changed.¹³¹ ICG was informed that none of the Liberians recruited actually took part in active fighting until 10 December 2002, when Gbagbo tried to recapture Blolékin from MPIGO.¹³² Gbagbo's increased use of LURD elements would have given Taylor reason to involve himself more directly with the MJP and the MPIGO so as to use them against his Liberian enemy. The reports that Gbagbo was using LURD fighters to protect the western border region coincided with the beginning of successful attacks from late November 2002 by the Guinea-based LURD into Liberia. Beyond any old deal with his friend Robert Gueï, Taylor had different security concerns at the end of 2002 as LURD appeared to be opening a new front with Gbagbo's assistance. Taylor might have feared being squeezed by LURD attacks from two sides. As discussed below, LURD elements and Ivorian government loyalist forces, the

opportunity to attack Liberia. Similarly, as discussed later, reports emerged soon after the attempted coup that Liberians were also involved in fighting with the northern-based MPCCI rebels. ICG interview with private sources, Abidjan and Conakry, November 2002-March 2003. The Liberians are not the only external recruits Gbagbo engaged. It is public knowledge that he also recruited French, Eastern European, and South African mercenaries. ICG was informed of some 2000 Angolans, 800 of whom were in Côte d'Ivoire before the coup. Interviews with Western security officers and diplomats, March 2003. Another group of 1,000 mercenaries from South Africa reportedly entered Abidjan in March-April.

¹³⁰ At least 600 ULIMO-J fighters fled Liberia following the incident. For an analysis of the Camp Johnson fight, see ICG Report, *Liberia: The Key To Ending Regional Instability*, op. cit., p. 8.

¹³¹ ICG interview with Western military official, Abidjan, March 2003.

¹³² ICG interviews, Abidjan, March 2003.

Forces Armées Nationales de Côte d'Ivoire (FANCI), combined to strike into Toe Town in Grand Gedeh County in January and February 2003, shortly after which the former assumed the new name MODEL. These incursions would certainly have given Taylor cause to deepen his already extensive military involvement.

Strategically, Taylor's involvement in Côte d'Ivoire fits squarely with attempts to build a rear-base in the event he eventually has to flee Liberia. He has always seen Danané as a crucial potential haven,¹³³ and as a humanitarian agency representative noted, "a rebel without a sanctuary cannot survive".¹³⁴

One can also assume that Taylor sought to capitalise commercially on the attempt by the MPCCI to open a second front. The MPCCI wanted to block Gbagbo's capacity to use cocoa revenue to buy arms, which made the seaport of San Pedro vital. In the immediate aftermath of the coup attempt, the French drew a ceasefire line that effectively divided the country in half, from north to south, above the area where the new rebel movements appeared. This froze the conflict, which, on the face of it, was useful to Gbagbo since the North is not as rich in resources as the South. MPIGO and MJP could have been created to get around the ceasefire line and enable an advance on San Pedro. Several sources confirmed to ICG that the main rebel goal was to capture that port before the January 2003 peace talks in Paris.¹³⁵ The French reportedly knew of the planned attack and quickly secured San Pedro, which is still under the control of the Ivorian government.¹³⁶

San Pedro has always been the main port for Ivorian, Liberian and Guinean timber exports. Revenue from timber remains a key source of financing for Taylor's military operations. The road from Danané

¹³³ ICG interviews with a Taylor insider and a Liberian refugee, Conakry and Abidjan, February-March 2003.

¹³⁴ ICG interview, Freetown, March 2003.

¹³⁵ Rebel sources indicated that Danané, which is the gateway to Liberia and Man (with a strategically useful airbase), was also important but that San Pedro was critical for arms and ammunition supply. ICG interview, Conakry and Abidjan, February-March 2003. It remains unclear whether the western rebels were instructed by the MPCCI in the North on where to attack. All three groups shared the same objective of removing President Gbagbo. MPCCI had moved from its northern bases in Korhogo to Séguéla to meet the western rebels in Man and gave both those groups arms and supplies.

¹³⁶ ICG interviews with Western military official and Liberian refugees, Abidjan, March 2003.

to San Pedro and the Liberian border is heavily used by timber trucks, many of which cross into Liberia at Toulépleu (an Ivorian town) and Logatuo (a Liberian town in Nimba County).¹³⁷ As discussed below, Toulépleu has been the site of critical battles between Liberia's warring factions. San Pedro has also served on several occasions as an important arms route for President Taylor. The need to maintain his access to that port would have been a strong reason for Taylor to support MPIGO and MJP, while those groups could also protect his commercial interests from LURD-MODEL attacks into Eastern and South-eastern Liberia.

Taylor and his senior military commanders have numerous longstanding commercial interests, particularly in timber, in the East (Nimba County) and Southeast (Grand Gedeh County). For example, Kuku Dennis has a logging company that operates between Nimba and Grand Gedeh County, opposite Danané. Maurice Cooper runs a timber business in Nimba County and reportedly benefited from booty brought over from Danané.¹³⁸ Taylor's top Lebanese financier, Abbas Fawaz, has timber concessions in Maryland called Maryland Wood Processing Industries (MPWI).¹³⁹ Another key ally, Oscar Cooper (brother to Maurice), has timber concessions in Sinoe County. And Salamé, his ambassador-at-large in Abidjan, owns the Mohammed Group of Companies and Bureaux Ivorian Ngorian (BIN) logging company. BIN operates a sawmill in Liberia near the Ivorian town of Toulépleu.¹⁴⁰

Also significant are the seaports in Southern Liberia (Greenville in Sinoe County and Harper in Maryland County), through which most of Taylor's arms enter and that Oscar Cooper and Abbas protect with their own militias. In many ways, MPIGO exists also to prevent LURD-MODEL from crossing into Liberia from Côte d'Ivoire to threaten Taylor's business.

One source said MPIGO "serves [as] a blockade".¹⁴¹ On 19 February 2003, MPIGO spokesman Felix Doh, Colonel Michel Gueu from the MPCCI, and Déli Gaspard, leader of the MJP, apparently attended a meeting in Monrovia with Benjamin Yeaten, an Anti-Terrorist Unit commander called General "Eagle", and Sam "Mosquito" Bockarie to discuss the strategy for the West, including San Pedro, so that Taylor could "access everything that he needed, including arms and wood".¹⁴² As a humanitarian worker noted to ICG, controlling western Côte d'Ivoire would make good commercial sense since sooner or later there will be no more wood or other resources to exploit in Liberia, and Ivorian cocoa is highly lucrative.¹⁴³

B. PRESIDENT GBAGBO AND ANTI-TAYLOR FORCES

The Ivorian crisis has also provided numerous opportunities for anti-Taylor forces. There have been many attempts by LURD and other observers of events in western Côte d'Ivoire to dismiss or deny LURD activities there. ICG research, however, indicates that the LURD faction that has called itself MODEL since March 2003 has been deeply involved in recruiting and fighting on behalf of the embattled President Gbagbo. It has also become clear that the Liberians fighting against Charles Taylor from inside Côte d'Ivoire are acting independently of the Guinea-based LURD controlled by Sekou Conneh. While the Guinea branch even denies that the fighters in Côte d'Ivoire are LURD, Joe Wylie acknowledges that "the brave men and women who are presently fighting in the southeast of our country to deny Taylor access to our timber and gold resources are all members of LURD. And whether Sekou Conneh likes it or not, it's going to stay that way".¹⁴⁴ LURD-MODEL has a dual agenda: fulfilling its own and President Gbagbo's wish to hurt Taylor, and preventing Sekou Conneh's

¹³⁷ See Global Witness, "Taylor-made: The Pivotal Role of Liberia's Forests in Regional Conflict", September 2001, p. 8.

¹³⁸ ICG interview, March 2003.

¹³⁹ Global Witness "The Usual Suspects: Liberia's Weapons and Mercenaries in Côte d'Ivoire and Sierra Leone. Why it's Still Possible, How it Works and How to break the Trend", March 2003, p. 12.

¹⁴⁰ For a profile of Taylor's timber industry, see Global Witness, "Logging Off – How the Liberian Timber Industry Fuels Liberia's humanitarian disaster and Threatens Sierra Leone", September 2002, pp. 8 and 13-16, and "Taylor-made: The Pivotal Role of Liberia's Forests in Regional Conflict" September 2001, p. 26.

¹⁴¹ ICG interview, February 2003.

¹⁴² ICG interview with private source, confirmed by a humanitarian worker and security officer, Freetown and Abidjan, March 2003.

¹⁴³ ICG interview with representative of a humanitarian agency, Abidjan, March 2003.

¹⁴⁴ Press release by Joe Wylie, "Disunity at the heart of the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD)", 8 April 2003 available at www.theperspective.org. The LURD leadership in Guinea has maintained its position that there is no connection between the two groups in several press releases over the same period.

largely Mandingo movement in Guinea from taking power in Monrovia. ICG was informed that the Krahn-dominated group is in the “process of putting together a political leadership”.¹⁴⁵

It is however important to stress that while several senior leaders of MODEL are associates of LURD, an increasing numbers of other Liberians, in particular refugees, were either forcibly recruited or have chosen to fight with Ivorian government forces.

When ICG first met with the Guinea-based LURD in February and March 2002, senior commanders stated that between 300 and 500 fighters were based in western Côte d’Ivoire awaiting orders.¹⁴⁶ The LURD chapter in Côte d’Ivoire was made up mainly of former political leaders and fighters from various factions that opposed Taylor in Liberia’s first war.¹⁴⁷ The claim was that LURD had a long-term strategy for extending the war to all Liberia if President Taylor refused to meet its political demands, most importantly that he resign. The LURD commanders insisted that Taylor had been moving equipment and supplies into the Southeast but that if he shifted his base from Monrovia, or attempted to move north to link up with his Ivorian friend, General Gueï, they would open a new front from Côte d’Ivoire.¹⁴⁸

A number of key LURD-MODEL fighters in Côte d’Ivoire have been known by Western diplomats, intelligence services, and even journalists for some time. They include:

- ❑ *General Arthur Baygbor.* LURD-MODEL’s military coordinator in Côte d’Ivoire and political advisor is a Krahn and one-time deputy commanding officer to General Prince Seo in ULIMO-J.¹⁴⁹ He fled Liberia following the 18 September 1998 Camp Johnson Road fight and is presently third in seniority as field commander responsible for battle front operations.

- ❑ *General Amos Chayee.* LURD-MODEL’s acting chief of staff is a Krahn, was Chief of Staff of ULIMO-J during Liberia’s first war, and fled Liberia following the Camp Johnson Road fight.
- ❑ *George Dweh.* A founding member of the LURD and a distant cousin of the former Liberian President, Samuel Doe, he was a supervisor in the General Services Department of the Liberia Electricity Corporation prior to the first Liberia war, served in the 1996 Transitional Legislative Assembly as an ULIMO-J representative, and fled Liberia after he was attacked during the Camp Johnson Road incident. He now claims to be the head of the “Military Wing” of LURD-MODEL, although this is not confirmed.
- ❑ *General Joseph Padia.* A general under the Liberia People’s Council rebel faction headed by Dr. George Boley, he is from the Sapo ethnic group in Sinoe County.
- ❑ *Zoe Pennue.* A Krahn, and nephew to Samuel Doe during whose presidency he was a notorious death squad leader, he was LURD’s chief of protocol in Conakry and still acts between both LURD and LURD-MODEL while serving as the latter’s military liaison and senior intelligence officer.

LURD political associates now in the upper echelons of LURD-MODEL include:

- ❑ *Chayee Doe.* A Krahn, younger brother to Samuel Doe and uncle to Zoe Pennue, he was vice chairman for administration of the LURD and is now considered a senior leader of LURD-MODEL.¹⁵⁰
- ❑ *Jackson Doe.* Deputy director of the Presidential Security Service under his cousin, former President Samuel Doe and a deputy director-general of the government insurance agency until war broke out in 1989, he lived in Conakry, was often hosted by the Guinean military at their Camp Samory Barracks, and

¹⁴⁵ ICG interview, February 2003.

¹⁴⁶ Many LURD fighters were located in Danané, Guiglo, Man, Toulépleu and the Tia forest region before the start of the Ivorian crisis. ICG interview, Abidjan, March 2003.

¹⁴⁷ ICG Report, *Liberia: The Key to Ending Regional Instability*, op. cit., pp. 8-9.

¹⁴⁸ ICG interviews with LURD fighters, Macenta (Guinea) and Voinjama (Liberia), February-March 2002.

¹⁴⁹ As mentioned above, Seo was LURD Chief of Staff until he was “retired” in January 2003.

¹⁵⁰ Also see “Greenville (sud-est) attaquée par un nouveau rebelle libérien”, Agence France-Presse, 8 April 2003. A number of other former LURD personalities left the movement during 2002 following differences with Sekou Conneh in Guinea. They have made some initial contact with LURD-MODEL but as yet their role in the new group is unclear.

played a significant role, under Sekou Conneh, in most LURD military matters, including appointments of commanders and decisions on what targets to attack, before becoming a senior figure in LURD-MODEL.

- *Edward Slinger*. A Krahn and cousin to Chayee and Jackson Doe, he was a major in the Armed Forces of Liberia, was hailed as a hero by Krahns for foiling the 1985 coup attempt against President Doe when he captured the coup leader, General Thomas Quiwonkpa, but was imprisoned for treason by Charles Taylor after the 1998 Camp Johnson Road fight. Released in early 2002, he is a political liaison officer in LURD-MODEL.

Another link is that the two groups have received financial support from the same sources. For example, Ambassador Roosevelt Quiah, a Sapo from Sinoe County and long-term financier of the LURD, who has wide links among the Liberian political elite and long-established ties to President Gbagbo, now provides money to LURD-MODEL.¹⁵¹

President Gbagbo has benefited from a ready-made force that sees advantage in helping him. The relationship has also profited from old ties. Gbagbo's links to Liberia date back to Samuel Doe's presidency. As discussed above, the relationship between Liberia and the Ivorian president Houphouët-Boigny declined dramatically when Doe came to power. Gbagbo was able to capitalise on this when he looked for money to bolster his opposition to Houphouët-Boigny's one-party rule. Two senior Doe ministers set up the contact. The same men still have strong ties with the Gbagbo government and individuals in his party, the Front Populaire Ivoirien. Samuel Doe was a Krahn from Grand Gedeh County.¹⁵² Many Liberians in Côte d'Ivoire, particularly in the West, are Krahns. There is also an Ivorian ethnic group, the Guéré (also called the Wê) that is "cousin" to the Liberian Krahns. Gbagbo's supporters in the West, other than his own Bété group, are predominantly Guéré.

¹⁵¹ Roosevelt Quiah financed the Liberia People's Council rebel faction that fought Taylor in the first Liberia war. Under the 1996 Transitional Government, he was appointed Inspector General of Foreign Services at the Liberian Foreign Ministry, a position which confers ambassadorial status. ICG interview with private sources confirmed by a Western diplomat, Abidjan, March 2003.

¹⁵² Doe's father was also from Côte d'Ivoire and later moved to Liberia where he married into a Liberian family.

Since the Ivorian crisis began, a number of prominent Krahn political figures who served under Samuel Doe have supported Gbagbo by recruiting Liberian fighters, including several like Edward Slinger who are known to be associated with LURD-MODEL.¹⁵³ On the Ivorian side, several Guéré personalities in the business or entertainment community or in the president's party have helped finance, recruit and arm the LURD-MODEL to fight with Gbagbo's loyalist forces, the FANCI. Arms and ammunition for LURD-MODEL are handled through a senior official in the Abidjan port and two senior Guéré army officers.¹⁵⁴ In a meeting at the Sofitel Hotel in Abidjan in late 2002 or early January 2003, top Krahn and Guéré leaders agreed that "Liberian Krahns would give Gbagbo manpower for his war. In return Gbagbo and FANCI would give free passage and military support to remove President Taylor".¹⁵⁵ As one Krahn close to the fighters put it, the Krahns are using Gbagbo to do to Taylor what Taylor did for Foday (Sankoh) in Sierra Leone.¹⁵⁶ After January 2003, the Krahn leadership, including Slinger and Baygor, moved from Abidjan to Toulépleu.¹⁵⁷

Liberia's Krahn leadership have also supported recruitment of Liberians from refugee and transit camps. The greatest recruitment activity has taken place in the Nicla transit camp for refugees from Liberia's first civil war, south of Guiglo in western Côte d'Ivoire. ICG understands that FANCI government forces have been arming refugees and LURD fighters there since late December 2002. At least 32 soldiers have been enrolled. Recruitment has also taken place in transit camps in Abidjan. Between 50,000 and 100,000 CFA was offered to each recruit in Abidjan.¹⁵⁸ They were then "put on

¹⁵³ According to sources interviewed, Gbagbo already had close contact with LURD in 2000 before he became president. He apparently gave money to a LURD fighter who wanted to launch attacks into Liberia but asked that Côte d'Ivoire not be used as a base for this. Gbagbo's relations with Liberians close to the LURD continued once he came to power. ICG interview with exiled Liberian, February 2003.

¹⁵⁴ ICG interview with private source in February confirmed by Western diplomats, Abidjan, March 2003.

¹⁵⁵ ICG interviews with private sources confirmed by Western diplomats, Abidjan, March 2003.

¹⁵⁶ ICG interview, February 2003.

¹⁵⁷ ICG interviews with a number of private sources, confirmed by a Western military officer, Abidjan, March 2003.

¹⁵⁸ The value of the CFA has been fluctuating since the beginning of the crisis in Côte d'Ivoire. In mid-April 2003, the CFA was being exchanged at about 600 to one U.S. dollar in Abidjan.

buses” to go and fight.¹⁵⁹ Bumjubura Camp, about 30 kilometres west of Accra, Ghana, which also hosts refugees from Liberia’s first conflict, has been used for recruitment since 5 January 2003. The first of those recruits apparently began arriving in Côte d’Ivoire five days later. ICG was informed that at least 175 of the recruits (other figures suggest between 300 and 500) from the Ghanaian camp were former ULIMO fighters, mainly Krahn, who defected from the Armed Forces of Liberia when Taylor came to power. They were taken from the camp to a special base for training, and each was paid at least U.S.\$250 to fight under a LURD leader who shuttled between Côte d’Ivoire and Ghana.¹⁶⁰ Estimates of the overall number of Liberian fighters on the Ivorian government side range from 1,000 to 2,500, 95 per cent of whom are Krahn.¹⁶¹

The first known use of the Liberian recruits was on 6 December 2002 in the attempt to take Blolékin, south of Danané, from the MPIGO.¹⁶² The Liberian fighters, working with FANCI government forces, succeeded in capturing Toulépleu on 16 January from MPIGO forces.

President Gbagbo has also employed Liberians to conduct reprisals against northern populations living in western Côte d’Ivoire, generically called the “Dioulas”, and other “enemies” associated with the rebel groups that are close to the homeland of his Bété ethnic group. A series of attacks and reprisals involving civilian populations has occurred since rebels lost then retook Man in December 2002. Ivorian Yacoubas, their Liberian Gio “cousins” and

northern fighters and civilians (Dioula) have been the targets of, and in turn have targeted, the Ivorian Guéré and Liberian Krahn fighters and civilian populations, creating a cycle of inter-ethnic violence that is fuelled by incendiary reports in press outlets close to Gbagbo and the rebels respectively. In a horrifying incident on 7 March 2003, Liberian fighters acting for FANCI forces massacred in their homes Dioula men, women and children in the town of Bangolo, north of the last French checkpoint in Duékoué. French troops were alerted by MJP fighters stationed between Man and Logoualé. By the time they arrived, however, any remaining population had fled, and no livestock or food remained. The French found 60 bodies but said there may have been many more.¹⁶³

That night French troops arrested and disarmed 112 Liberians involved in the massacre, who said they belonged to a group of Liberians of Guéré origin that had been organised by the FANCI loyalists. The Liberian fighters admitted they had committed the massacre after having infiltrated the area for seven days.¹⁶⁴ Some claimed to be “sons of Doe”, the late Liberian president.¹⁶⁵ Three child soldiers, five women accompanying the fighters and 80 civilians, mainly women and children, were also picked up by French troops. The French informed the International Committee of the Red Cross and UNHCR about the fighters, but it is not clear what will happen to them. For now, they are being held at the French base in Daloa. Unsurprisingly, Gbagbo’s officials denied any recruitment of Liberians, claiming that those arrested are local Guéré youth who mobilised following killings of Guéré by the MPIGO and MJP. The incident was the subject of a report to the UN Security Council the following week that provoked a violent anti-French reaction from the Gbagbo government, military officials and the president’s partisans.

Despite denials that the fighters were conducting operations on its behalf, the Ivorian government maintained that they were based in Guiglo, the main FANCI base in the West. An Ivorian youth leader, Charles Blé Goudé, went to Daloa with 5,000 to

¹⁵⁹ ICG interviews with Liberian refugees, international journalists, UN officials and humanitarian agencies, March 2003.

¹⁶⁰ ICG interviews with exiled Liberians, February 2003, and with humanitarian agencies, a Western diplomat and a military official, Abidjan, March 2003. ICG was informed that President John Kuffuor of Ghana told President Gbagbo that he should end the recruitment of refugees.

¹⁶¹ ICG interviews, Abidjan, March 2003.

¹⁶² Eric Dagbeson, a Krahn, an inspector of police under President Doe and a key Liberian recruiter, died in the fighting on 10 December. Dagbeson was involved in recruitment in Ghana and, with Slanger, was the principle brain behind the alliance between the Ivorian government, FANCI and LURD (the renaming of the latter to MODEL occurred after Dagbeson’s death). Another fighter, Colonel Nathan Pile (or Piad), a veteran of the Armed Forces of Liberia and cousin of the late Samuel Doe, was also involved in the Ghana recruitment drive. Like many other fighters involved in LURD-MODEL, he left Liberia after the 1998 Camp Johnson Road fight. ICG interview, March 2003.

¹⁶³ ICG interview, March 2003.

¹⁶⁴ The French later called the Liberian fighters “LIMA”, for the letter “L” as used in the universal radio code: Alpha, Bravo, Charlie, and so forth. ICG interview, Abidjan, March 2003.

¹⁶⁵ ICG interviews with a humanitarian agency and a Western military official, Abidjan, March 2003.

6,000 “young patriots”, who attacked the French base and forced the barrier. In the ensuing mayhem, 30 to 75 “young Guéré patriots” escaped.

President Gbagbo has consistently criticised Presidents Taylor and Compaoré for their support of Ivorian rebels, while denying his use of Liberians, but as one humanitarian worker states, “Everybody agrees that he is arming mercenaries and many fighters. He has thrown in a lot of money and the Liberian faction is benefiting”.¹⁶⁶ One source close to the fighters said, the “Liberians are getting arms, logistics, food and medication from FANCI forces”.¹⁶⁷ Gbagbo is able to deny the role of Liberians because it is often hard to distinguish the Liberian fighters from FANCI loyalist forces. The Liberians can “easily pose” as FANCI because they wear the same uniform and speak French well.¹⁶⁸

C. LIBERIANS VERSUS LIBERIANS

The events at the beginning of January 2003 around Toulépleu, the Ivorian border town sandwiched between Liberia’s Nimba and Grand Gedeh Counties, show how western Côte d’Ivoire has become a new battleground in Liberia’s war. Heavy fighting broke out between January and February 2003. Toulépleu had been under the control of MPIGO fighters, including many Liberians, since 2 December 2002. In the counter-offensive, FANCI government troops used mainly Krahns to lead the assault. The campaign was largely a Liberian affair involving fighters from both the LURD (before the name change to MODEL) and Taylor’s Anti-Terrorist Unit. The former finally won in February and now control the town.

Also between January and February 2003, a number of attacks were launched by LURD fighters, supported by FANCI, from Toulépleu into Toe Town in Liberia’s Grand Gedeh County. The first of these, probably in February (dates are disputed), was reportedly the result of a business disagreement between one of Taylor’s commanders and an Ivorian businessman with logging interests in that county. This Ivorian – a Guéré who often resides in Grand

Gedeh County – is said to have a number of close Krahn associates and to be a significant contact for Krahn recruitments. He apparently requested Krahn fighters to resolve his business dispute, which provided them a foothold inside Liberia.¹⁶⁹ At the height of the fighting, Liberia’s Information Minister, Reginald Goodridge, and Defence Minister, Daniel Chea, announced that government forces would retaliate against Ivorian government forces if further attacks occurred.¹⁷⁰ The Krahn fighters used the occasion of their attack on Zwedru, the main town in Grand Gedeh County, between 27 and 28 March to announce the birth of MODEL as a new group in Liberia’s war.

The Ivorian crisis is an economic opportunity for soldiers who are not paid in Liberia where there is little left to loot. Côte d’Ivoire by contrast offers lucrative opportunities but the Liberians must compete with fighters from Sierra Leone and Burkina Faso, as well as many others of unidentifiable origins who have appeared in Danané. A humanitarian worker said, “it is as if all the thieves of Liberia have found an opportunity to loot”.¹⁷¹ As one Western diplomat noted, fighters are now going for “infrastructural stuff and cars, air conditioner units, roof tops, door knobs. Things that can be resold are taken”.¹⁷² One humanitarian agency told ICG that many LURD fighters had gone to Côte d’Ivoire to get money. “They are mercenaries just fighting for money”.¹⁷³ Humanitarian workers in the region also report that violent infighting over loot is common.¹⁷⁴ Many looted items find their way on to the Liberian market, especially in border towns close to Côte d’Ivoire such as Ganta (Nimba County) and Gbargna (Bong County). A number of vehicles have reached Monrovia.¹⁷⁵

French soldiers and humanitarian workers note a marked difference in the behaviours of rebel fighters from the North and West. The former were paid

¹⁶⁶ ICG interview with a representative of a humanitarian agency, Freetown, March 2003.

¹⁶⁷ ICG interview, Abidjan, March 2003.

¹⁶⁸ ICG interview with exiled Liberian, February 2003. ICG met a number of Liberian fighters wearing FANCI uniforms who conducted conversations in French and Liberian English.

¹⁶⁹ ICG interview, April 2003.

¹⁷⁰ “ULIMO Generals Attack Grand Gedeh, two killed, Government Revels”, *The Mews*, Monrovia, 21 January 2003, and interview with Daniel Chea on BBC Focus Africa (radio) on 1 March 2003.

¹⁷¹ ICG interview with humanitarian agency, Freetown, March 2003.

¹⁷² ICG interview, Freetown, February 2003.

¹⁷³ ICG interview with humanitarian agency, Nzérékore, January 2003.

¹⁷⁴ ICG interviews with representatives from humanitarian agencies, March 2003.

¹⁷⁵ ICG interview, February-March 2003.

from the beginning, and their money lasted until December 2002. Until January 2003, discipline was relatively well maintained, and in general, civilian populations have been protected. The situation is very different in the West where the fighters have looted, raped, killed and forced villagers to pay to gain access to roads or other villages.¹⁷⁶

Ivorians on either side of the conflict are now complaining that they have lost control of the Liberians they brought in to fight. As one source said, "it is Liberians causing mayhem and fighting their own war". Liberians are blamed for the chaos in the West. Suddenly neither side in Côte d'Ivoire finds the Liberians useful. All claim that at one stage they needed them "but today they have realised that they came, looted, raped and caused mayhem".¹⁷⁷ A UN official explained, "the Ivorian government and rebels recruited Liberians because they are better fighters, but now want to get rid of them".¹⁷⁸

The Ivorian rebels have apparently taken several steps to regain authority. A number of interviewees stated that several envoys from the MPCJ in the North had come to MJP bases in Man since January 2003 to improve security. There was also an attempt in January to push Liberians back from Danané and south of Man on the road to Duékoué where the last French base is located. Towards the end of February, and again between 23-25 April the MPCJ attempted to help the MPIGO control their Liberians. The latter effort to disarm and repatriate some Liberian fighters resulted in skirmishes.¹⁷⁹ Much of this effort at reorganisation will depend on the military balance in Liberia's internal war where Taylor faces mounting difficulties on several fronts.¹⁸⁰

Between 21 and 24 March 2003, for example, the Guinea-based LURD made serious incursions into Gbargna in Bong County. There were also reports that LURD-MODEL was able to move out from Toulépleu on 18 March and cross through the Liberian bush to attack Nimba County.¹⁸¹ On 30

March, Taylor's forces were engaged in heavy fighting with LURD forces though it was not clear whether MODEL elements were involved. The advance to Sinoe County (Pyne Town), as mentioned earlier, may indicate that MODEL is heading for the key financial and strategic zones that sustain Taylor's military operation: Buchanan, the home of the Oriental Timber Company, Greenville (Sinoe), and Harper (Maryland).

The attacks launched from Guinea and Côte d'Ivoire, though not coordinated and without a common objective, have certainly hurt Taylor militarily and forced him on to the defensive. He may soon feel compelled to send more troops to Côte d'Ivoire to push LURD-MODEL back from the borders.¹⁸² At the least western Côte d'Ivoire will remain a very dangerous place.

D. MERCENARIES WITHOUT BORDERS

The western part of Côte d'Ivoire has also attracted fighters from other wars. Many are hardcore elements from Sierra Leone's RUF who opted out of the disarmament process and went with Sam "Mosquito" Bockarie to fight with Taylor.¹⁸³ Some of these are likely to be the same fighters who made incursions with Guinean dissidents and Taylor's forces into Guinea in September 2000. As one UN official stated to ICG, "it's as if the ... boys have come to finish their war".¹⁸⁴ The same UN official said:

Blolékin, which is closer to the Liberian border. ICG interview, March 2003.

¹⁸² ICG interview with Western military official, Abidjan, March 2003. Reported MPIGO attacks in early April on the southern town of Grabo close to River Cavally on the Ivorian-Liberian border could reflect Taylor's strategy. Although information is sketchy, the attacks would fit with earlier information received by ICG on troop activities in the southeast of Liberia close to River Cavally. ICG was informed that a group of 1,500 to 2,000 Liberian and Ivorian fighters with strong links to General Guei's son, Major Andrew Guei, were based in the Grand Gedeh County area. It is understood many of these fighters arrived in truck loads from January to February via Nimba County and would stop at Zwedru in Grand Gedeh, but since mid March they have driven straight through to River Gee County, which is opposite Grabo. There is no evidence that MPIGO launched the attacks from Liberia, but it cannot be ruled out.

¹⁸³ The number of RUF fighters who fled with Bockarie when he left Sierra Leone in 1999 was about 200.

¹⁸⁴ ICG interview with UN official, Abidjan, March 2003.

¹⁷⁶ ICG interview with Western military official, Abidjan, March 2003.

¹⁷⁷ ICG interviews, Abidjan, March 2003.

¹⁷⁸ ICG interview with UN humanitarian official, March 2003.

¹⁷⁹ "Combats entre rebelles ivoiriens et leurs allies libériens dans l'ouest", Agence France Presse, 25 April 2003.

¹⁸⁰ ICG interview with Western military official, Abidjan, March 2003.

¹⁸¹ The move into Nimba County by MODEL coincided with the movement of FANCI and Liberians based at Guiglo to

Côte d'Ivoire is now suffering from the consequence of unfinished problems from Sierra Leone's conflict and the failure of UNAMSIL to properly disarm RUF hardliners. UNAMSIL should have developed a regional disarmament strategy that targeted a number of fighters that fled to Liberia.

Worryingly, many people interviewed by ICG repeatedly stated that they met fighters from Sierra Leone, Liberia and other nationalities who claimed to be on "ten-year contracts". Some wore black t-shirts with pictures of Gueï printed on the front. Others had no identifying uniform but gave a fair idea of which side they were on when they claimed that their fight was linked to the struggle to drive rebels out of Lofa County in Liberia. According to refugees and private sources interviewed, the fighters indicated they were going to Guinea before heading to Ghana and Togo.¹⁸⁵ If their claims are true, one can only assume that they consider themselves part of an unfinished war that seems tied to Taylor's desire for a Greater Liberia. The references to "a 10-year contract" suggest they believe the Mano River Union conflict still has significant life in it.

Some Liberians and Sierra Leoneans who have fought in that conflict refer to a "pan-African revolutionary plan", allegedly developed in the training barracks of Libya during the 1980s by dissidents from the Gambia, Ghana, Burkina Faso, Liberia and Sierra Leone. Their claim is that Libya's Colonel Gadhaffi financed the original plan and the training, motivated largely by his desire to dismantle the influence of Western powers, particularly the U.S. in West Africa. The "plan" is said to have come to life in Burkina Faso when Gadhaffi's protégé, Blaise Compaoré, took power in 1987. Liberian dissidents from the Libyan camp collaborated with Compaoré, who had the support, or at least acquiescence of both Houphouët-Boigny and Paris to remove Thomas Sankara. Compaoré then became its chief facilitator and helped it unfold in Liberia. Côte d'Ivoire allegedly was left out of the original plan because its then president, Félix Houphouët-Boigny, provided a safe haven for several leaders and was

considered "the godfather" of many dissident fighters.¹⁸⁶

After succeeding in Liberia, President Taylor, with collaboration from Foday Sankoh and arms from Burkina Faso and Côte d'Ivoire, was supposed to facilitate its advance to Sierra Leone. Guinea was allegedly to be next. After his failed 1996 coup against President Conté, General Zuomanigui joined Taylor in Monrovia and made another effort in September 2000 with RUF allies. But the alleged "plan" backfired in Sierra Leone and Guinea when the LURD in both countries and the Kamajor CDFs in Sierra Leone were created and used to push Taylor's minions back to Liberia.

Taylor's involvement in Côte d'Ivoire is interpreted in these quarters as re-ignition of the "plan", which will only be complete when the Liberian president and Compaoré install their protégés throughout the region.¹⁸⁷ It is impossible to verify whether such a grand plan has any basis in reality or, if it once did, whether Gadhaffi still gives it any credence and support. But the very real existence of these Mano River mercenaries does challenge the U.S. view that Taylor's ability to undermine regional security has been contained.¹⁸⁸

E. THE REGIONAL HUMANITARIAN CRISIS

Toulépleu is a microcosm of the humanitarian tragedy afflicting western Côte d'Ivoire. The situation there is particularly catastrophic because the area has been the main battleground for groups of Liberian fighters. It is a real "convergence of anarchy", as one humanitarian NGO worker noted,

¹⁸⁵ ICG interview with Liberian refugee from Côte d'Ivoire based in Guinean camps in Nzérékore, January 2003 and private sources in Abidjan, March 2003.

¹⁸⁶ ICG interview, Freetown, March 2003. Many fighters Taylor recruited when he began his war in Liberia in 1989 were from Togo and Ghana. They stayed with Taylor after he came to power and reportedly shared a belief that they were part of a pan-African revolution. Some became involved in other coup attempts and clandestine activities in the region. It is claimed they influenced new recruits brought in to fight for Taylor, who imbibed from them the concept of the long revolutionary struggle, and replaced leaders who did not share these "ideals". ICG interview with West African specialist, April 2003.

¹⁸⁷ ICG interview with exiled Liberians, Freetown, Conakry and Abidjan, January-March 2003.

¹⁸⁸ Statement of U.S. Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Mark Bellamy at the seminar "Liberia – Eye of the Hurricane", the United States Institute for Peace, Washington, D.C., 9 December 2002.

because no one is able to intervene despite the extreme civilian suffering.¹⁸⁹

Only a handful of humanitarian NGOs have gone into Toulépleu and those at considerable risk to their lives and for merely a few hours. FANCI forces are present between Guiglo and Toulépleu but Toulépleu itself is largely under the command of LURD-MODEL fighters. They allow little access to civilians, many of whom flee or hide in the bush. Those that stay face rape, mutilation or execution. One humanitarian worker described the situation as follows:

Harvest is looted, physical security has gone, lots of abuses, execution, gang rapes are taking place. Many of the fighters are young, crazy, and on drugs. They say they are boss.¹⁹⁰

Humanitarian agencies and NGOs have extreme difficulty trying to break into the circle of vulnerability. They find it increasingly hard to respond to the starvation among the civilian population stuck in the border areas and the Tai Forest region. A humanitarian worker called the border region “a dangerous place that is currently untouched”.¹⁹¹ There are very few accessible areas, and even in these there are difficulties. A diplomat explained to ICG, “there is a reported 17 per cent global malnutrition rate in accessible areas, so we can presume the figures are considerably higher in non-accessible areas”.¹⁹²

The humanitarian situation is also grim in areas held by the Ivorian rebels. Many rebel fighters in the West take their frustration with the freeze imposed by the French out on the civilian population.¹⁹³ The rebel leaders execute fighters involved in looting but the situation is out of control. “There are no rules anymore, just complete chaos”.¹⁹⁴ Many soldiers in Danané from Sierra Leone, Liberia and Côte d’Ivoire have nothing to do but threaten civilians with guns to

give them food. As one humanitarian worker stated, “the income generating program or enterprise of the rebels is centred around an anti-aircraft gun. They just get it and use it to get what they want”.¹⁹⁵

Liberians are the main victims in western Côte d’Ivoire. The Ivorian crisis has made them easy targets.¹⁹⁶ Many Liberian refugees interviewed stated that they had little place to hide. Many are in a catch-22 situation. If they stay they are forced to fight, while those who refuse are nevertheless accused on all sides of being rebels. A number of refugees informed ICG that some LURD-MODEL recruiters put those who refuse to fight on a black list.¹⁹⁷ As one refugee noted to ICG, “we are refugees on a run from crisis to crisis”.¹⁹⁸ Another said that Liberians now have a “bad image” in the region as “provokers of war”.¹⁹⁹

At the start of the conflict, Côte d’Ivoire hosted as many as 72,000 Liberians in an area designated as the Reception Zone for Liberian Refugees²⁰⁰ under a Houphouët-Boigny policy not to leave refugees in camps, but to integrate them into Ivorian society. Now tens of thousands of individuals, including at least 40,000 to 45,000 Liberians, have been forced to flee by the daily deteriorating conditions. By mid-February 2003, 90,843 persons were recorded to have received assistance on the Ivorian-Liberian border, including 35,051 Ivorian refugees.²⁰¹

Many Liberian refugees cannot go home because they are seen as Taylor enemies.²⁰² Several Liberian refugees interviewed by ICG spent two months

¹⁸⁹ ICG interview with humanitarian NGO representative, Abidjan, March 2003.

¹⁹⁰ ICG interview with humanitarian agency, Abidjan, March 2003.

¹⁹¹ ICG interview with humanitarian NGO representative, Abidjan, March 2003.

¹⁹² ICG interview with Western diplomat, Abidjan, March 2003.

¹⁹³ “The rebels had a mission to go to Abidjan, but since they were stopped have turned to looting and raping”. ICG interview, Abidjan, March 2003.

¹⁹⁴ ICG interview, Abidjan, March 2003.

¹⁹⁵ ICG interview with humanitarian NGO representative, Abidjan, March 2003.

¹⁹⁶ “Liberian Refugees’ Dilemma”, United Nations Integrated Regional Information Network (IRIN), 21 December 2002.

¹⁹⁷ ICG interviews with Liberian refugees in Abidjan, March 2003.

¹⁹⁸ ICG interview with Liberian refugee from Côte d’Ivoire based in Guinean camps in Nzérékore, January 2003.

¹⁹⁹ ICG spoke to a boy who escaped recruitment in Gbargna, Bong County and fled to Macenta. ICG interview with Liberian refugee, Macenta, January 2003. See “Alert raised over Liberian refugees”, BBC News Africa, 13 February 2003.

²⁰⁰ The Zone d’Accueil des Réfugiés includes the towns of Danané, Guiglo, Man and Tabou along the Ivorian border with Liberia. In total at least 120,000 Liberians were living as refugees in Côte d’Ivoire before the September crisis.

²⁰¹ Statistics received from UNHCR Sierra Leone and Côte d’Ivoire Office, Freetown and Abidjan, February-March 2003.

²⁰² ICG interview with Liberian refugee from Côte d’Ivoire based in Guinean camps in Nzérékore, January 2003.

travelling over the Nimba Mountain on the Guinean side in order to avoid entering Liberia. Nor is their safety guaranteed in Guinea, which already hosts a large refugee population from Liberia's first civil war and worries about the prospect of more Liberians on its border.

Liberian and other refugees find little protection in transit camps. There are about 32,000 refugees and displaced persons throughout the country, mostly in and around Nicla Camp. Many fighters who use Nicla Camp as a resting base also bring their arms. Access and security is a major concern in all camps where the FANCI forcefully recruit civilians to fight. The office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees sent a protection officer to Nicla in mid-March 2003 but the situation is at the point of being beyond control. Nicla Camp "is no longer a civilian camp", a UN official said.²⁰³ Fighters who enter the camp also rape, loot and threaten other refugees.

Civilians have similarly been caught in attacks by Ivorian government helicopter gunships since they were first used in Daloa in October 2002. At least nine civilians died from such attacks in December in Mahapleu when the government attempted to win back Danané;²⁰⁴ a further 40 to 46 civilians died subsequent to 7 April 2003 when the government attempted to recapture Bin-Houyé and Zouan-Hounien from MPIGO.²⁰⁵ The gunship attacks have increased the flight of civilians to neighbouring countries. The humanitarian consequences are spilling over into Guinea, Burkina Faso, Liberia and Mali, none of which can absorb the level of refugee flows. Independent humanitarian agencies and UN officials are pleading for help, but two months after the visit of the UN Special Envoy for Humanitarian Affairs in Côte d'Ivoire, Carolyn McAskie, very little has been done to address the humanitarian crisis seriously.²⁰⁶ The response of international donors has been poor, while the UN has struggled to keep up with the disaster on the Ivorian-Liberian border. A diplomat sounded a note of despair about the inactivity:

They are ignorant of the humanitarian crisis. The UN is doing very little at the diplomatic level. It is failing on humanitarian advocacy. Since the McAskie visit, nothing has changed. There has been no effort to get the Ivorian government to respond to requests for access. The UN is not pressing. If donors put more emphasis on the humanitarian side, then we would have seen protection, access, and speed of response. But as we speak we are six months into the crisis and nothing has changed.²⁰⁷

Perhaps McAskie's current visit (23 April – 1 May) and the launch on 28 April of a UN Consolidated Inter-Agency Appeal to meet basic humanitarian needs in Côte d'Ivoire and the region²⁰⁸ will reinvigorate efforts, but a stronger UN role is required. A senior humanitarian coordinator permanently based in Abidjan is needed to deal solely with humanitarian issues and civilian protection. Creation of such a post would, according to a Western diplomat interviewed by ICG, significantly enhance the seriousness to which Western embassies in Abidjan take the humanitarian crisis and would impel them to press their governments for a more robust humanitarian response.²⁰⁹ In addition, not all embassies, which have better protection than independent humanitarian agencies, have travelled to western Côte d'Ivoire to witness the level of suffering. The UN mission is also failing to deliver a strong humanitarian message. The UNDP office in Abidjan is geared towards development; its personnel have little or no experience in managing humanitarian response on the scale unfolding in Côte d'Ivoire. The country representative cannot "play both humanitarian and development roles".²¹⁰ Other UN agencies such as UNHCR appear overstretched and have only just managed to send a protection officer to monitor the situation in Nicla Camp. The World Food Programme has tried for the six months to get food to the population, but more is needed.

²⁰³ ICG interview, UN official, Abidjan, March 2003.

²⁰⁴ Letter to Security Council, Human Right Watch, 14 April 2003.

²⁰⁵ ICG discussion with humanitarian NGO, later confirmed by private source, April 2003. At the time of writing, heavy fighting was still taking place around Bin-Houyé, with reports indicating that the town might have fallen to government FANCI forces.

²⁰⁶ Carolyn McCaskie visited Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia at the beginning of February 2003.

²⁰⁷ ICG interview with Western diplomat, Abidjan, March 2003.

²⁰⁸ This new appeal covers a longer period and is more comprehensive than the Flash Appeal issued in November 2002.

²⁰⁹ ICG interview with Western diplomat, Abidjan, March 2003.

²¹⁰ Ibid.

V. CONCLUSION: PREVENTING FURTHER REGIONAL CHAOS

A solution must now be found to end Liberia's war, prevent its further spillover into neighbouring countries and halt the persistent interference by some regional states in the internal affairs of vulnerable neighbours. A process to resolve Liberia's conflict was begun in late 2002. On 17 September, a meeting was held at the United Nations to form an International Contact Group on Liberia that would seek to bring the Liberian government and LURD insurgents together for peace negotiations. It is composed of the UK, France, the U.S., Morocco, Nigeria, Ghana (which replaced Senegal), the Africa Union, ECOWAS, the European Union, and the UN.²¹¹ The Contact Group has met twice, on 19 December in Dakar, and on 28 February at the UN in New York,²¹² and has sent a mission to Monrovia for one day on 15 April. Following that mission, the Contact Group chose former Nigerian head of state General Abdulsalami Abubakar to facilitate peace talks on Liberia.²¹³

Members agreed that their mandate would focus on supporting "processes aimed at promoting good governance and democracy, political initiatives aimed at creating an enabling environment for a peaceful and democratic transition in Liberia, with full respect for the human rights" and regional security of the Mano River countries.²¹⁴ At both the Dakar and New York meetings, the Contact Group called for a "ceasefire, conditions for credible free and fair elections, respect for the rule of law, human rights and good governance". At the New York meeting, it "agreed to call on the Security Council to consider authorising a ceasefire monitoring mechanism" in the event that both sides in Liberia's conflict agree to a ceasefire settlement.²¹⁵ This was a

positive step but a much more vigorous approach is needed.

The Contact Group's mandate has remained vague and leaves little room for optimism that its members will address the fundamental challenges that confront Liberia. It does not mention election monitoring or possible responses to unfree and unfair elections. In discussions with members of the Contact Group, ICG was left with the impression that they remain unclear about the task ahead of them.²¹⁶

Since the Contact Group was inaugurated, the situation in Liberia and the region has worsened dramatically. Liberia's war has intensified and is now partially fought in Côte d'Ivoire. Attempts by ECOWAS to host peace talks in Bamako, Mali in March 2003 were postponed, due in no small part to a Contact Group communiqué calling for a ceasefire without preconditions. A senior LURD military commander told ICG that the group would not accept a ceasefire that left Taylor in power. He added pointedly that "nearly one million Liberians are living in exile and cannot return, so why negotiate? The result must be one that forces Taylor to step down from power with all his security men".²¹⁷ Credible ceasefire negotiations seem further away than ever as the LURD-MODEL pursues a new front in Côte d'Ivoire with the assistance of President Gbagbo. In fact, neither side is interested in peace.²¹⁸

As a result, the Contact Group has achieved far too little in seven months. Its pressure has at least persuaded Taylor to admit that conditions for free and fair elections do not currently exist in Liberia and so agree to an (unspecified) delay of the October 2003 presidential ballot; he also is reported to be likely to accept a joint UN/EU/ECOWAS assessment mission to determine on the ground in Liberia what is necessary to create the appropriate

²¹¹ Ghana replaced Senegal when it took over the chair of ECOWAS in February 2003.

²¹² The Contact Group agreed to meet again two months after its 28 February 2003 meeting.

²¹³ General Abubakar was head of state of Nigeria, 1998-1999.

²¹⁴ Draft statement at the establishment of the Mano River Union/Liberia Contact Group, New York, 17 September 2002.

²¹⁵ Liberia Contact Group Meeting in Dakar, Press Release, 19 December 2002, and "Liberia: International Contact Group urges Government and rebel ceasefire talks", available at www.un.org/apps/news, 1 March 2003.

²¹⁶ ICG interviews with European and West African diplomats, Paris, London, New York, Ouagadougou and Abuja, September-December 2002.

²¹⁷ ICG interview with a senior LURD military commander, Macenta, January 2003.

²¹⁸ Following a mission to Liberia from 7 to 11 April, ECOWAS representatives observed that "the Government was still not committed to dialogue with the rebels of LURD or the new group that has merged under the name Movement for Democracy in Liberia". *Second Report of the Secretary-General pursuant to Security Council resolution 1408 (2002) regarding Liberia, Security Council, S/2003/466, 22 April 2003, para. 33 (c), p. 7.*

conditions.²¹⁹ The Contact Group cannot make a difference, however, unless it takes a more forceful and ambitious stand. When ICG proposed such a body in its previous report, the idea was that it would deal with Liberia's internal problems in a sustained manner by applying pressure to both the Liberian government and the LURD rebels to engage in a comprehensive ceasefire as a first step to creating conditions for free and fair elections. ICG also recommended that if Taylor refused to pursue peace, elections should be postponed because they would inevitably be rigged to validate his continued rule. Those recommendations remain appropriate.²²⁰

Dealing with Liberia's internal problems, however, is not enough. This report has demonstrated that those internal problems are inextricably linked to regional security; therefore, a solution must also deal with the regional environment. It is increasingly apparent that the international response cannot focus on one country, especially when neighbours share the same vulnerabilities. Thus the following section suggests a way to begin dealing comprehensively and simultaneously with both the internal difficulties of the Mano River Union countries and Côte d'Ivoire and their problems with each other. Neighbouring countries must be deterred from exploiting one another's domestic problems and the practice of harbouring insurgent groups from neighbouring states and using them against domestic enemies.

The Contact Group should pursue a two-phased strategy that is capable of dealing with both a situation in which Taylor is prepared to cooperate with an early transfer of power and one in which he seeks to defy the international community and hold on to power at all costs. It needs to encompass the possibility of sequentially scaling up pressure on both Taylor and LURD (including LURD-MODEL) for a ceasefire and creating an environment in which human rights are respected and electoral campaigning can take place unhindered by violence. Simultaneously, pressure must be turned up on other West African leaders who are playing direct and indirect roles in the regional security crisis.

If such an international effort is to have a realistic chance of success, it must be strongly led by the three members of the Contact Group that are also

permanent members of the Security Council. France's vigorous role in Côte d'Ivoire and Britain's similar one in Sierra Leone should be complemented by and closely coordinated with an assumption of responsibilities by the U.S. in Liberia, a country with which the U.S. has a long and deep historical connection. Effective cooperation will also be required with the UN, the regional organisation ECOWAS and the EU in the framework of the Contact Group. One issue on which effective coordination within the Contact Group would be particularly meaningful is the need to address the interlinked financing of government forces and rebel groups that is facilitated by the region's lucrative extractive industries.

A. A PEACE PROCESS FOR LIBERIA

Insist on an immediate ceasefire. The LURD (including LURD-MODEL) and President Taylor are each trying for a military victory or, at least, to enter eventual negotiations with a battlefield advantage. Neither is particularly interested in an early end to fighting. Military victory by either would mean continued chaos in the country and region. The Contact Group should continue to insist upon an immediate ceasefire, to cover also the new LURD-MODEL group, and provide a timetable by which that ceasefire would lead to comprehensive disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration of all combatants. The Contact Group should strongly condemn either or both sides if this ceasefire or the timetable linked to it is refused. The threat should be held out of the creation of a new tribunal for war crimes and crimes against humanity relating to the Liberian conflict both in the past (where the jurisdiction of the new International Criminal Court cannot reach) and in the future.²²¹ In particular, it

²¹⁹ ICG interviews with UN officials and Western diplomats, New York, April 2003.

²²⁰ For the full set of recommendations, see ICG Report, *Liberia: The Key to Ending Regional Instability*, op. cit.

²²¹ The International Criminal Court established by the Rome treaty has no jurisdiction over crimes committed prior to 1 July 2002. The Special Court for Sierra Leone was established by agreement between the UN Secretariat and the government of Sierra Leone after the Security Council, in Resolution 1315 (2000), requested the Secretary General to undertake negotiations. That court is unique, essentially a Sierra Leone body that receives substantial international assistance. It thus differs from The Hague Tribunal (ICTY) for war crimes and crimes against humanity in the former Yugoslavia and the Arusha Tribunal for such crimes committed during the Rwanda Genocide, both of which were established by Security Council resolution and are fully international bodies. While Charles Taylor is in power, it would obviously not be possible to create by agreement with

should warn both sides that they will certainly be held to account for such crimes that they commit subsequent to the date upon which they refuse the ceasefire: this warning would not imply immunity or amnesty for earlier crimes but rather convey the message that some credit can be earned for constructive behaviour. It should also be made clear to the leaders of neighbouring countries that they may potentially be exposed to prosecution by such a court if they are responsible for crimes in Liberia and do not cooperate with the peace process.

Insist on Taylor stepping down and an interim administration being formed. President Taylor has lost irretrievably any possible claim to legitimacy. His continued leadership of Liberia would leave the country in a permanent state of war. The Contact Group should make clear that it is not prepared to accept his continuation in office beyond his present term, which expires in October 2003. It should insist that he agree to leave the presidency no later than that date, and not contest any subsequent election – and that an interim administration can be formed that will prepare conditions for free and fair elections as quickly thereafter as possible. Even if Taylor departs early, the October 2003 elections will have to be postponed: time will be required for political groupings and civil society, which have been brutalised for so long by Taylor, to prepare and otherwise to establish the conditions for a free and fair process.

The Contact Group and a UN peacekeeping mission, as discussed below, will need to work with Liberians on developing a transitional process that focuses on creation of an interim administration to take over when Charles Taylor leaves office, a timetable for elections, and a program for fundamental institutional reform including of the security sector. Whether this interim administration would be Liberian and assisted by the UN mission or internationally administered would depend upon the circumstances under which it was created, including the degree to which Charles Taylor may have cooperated in allowing preparations to be made before he left office. The prospect of security sector reform,

the government of Liberia a court on the Sierra Leone model to deal with war crimes and crimes against humanity in the Liberian situation. If it is necessary to create a court for such a purpose while Taylor remains in office, therefore, the Security Council would need to establish by resolution a fully international court on the model of the tribunals in The Hague and Arusha.

including professional training and guarantees of regular salary as in Sierra Leone, should be used as an incentive for a ceasefire.

Another key area on which a start can be made is the creation of justice and accountability mechanisms for the difficult task of addressing years of impunity: it would appear desirable to ensure that those responsible for war crimes from either side are held accountable, whether, depending on circumstances, through a special court for Liberia with a jurisdiction modelled on that of the Special Court for Sierra Leone or an ad hoc international tribunal,²²² though sufficient flexibility should be shown so that the LURD, LURD-MODEL and President Taylor recognise it is in their interest to gain credit by cooperating with rather than frustrating the peace process. The message should be conveyed that while no immunity or amnesty for earlier crimes is implied, Taylor and others can gain some credit for constructive behaviour.

It should also be made clear to Taylor that if he does not accept these conditions and begin cooperation by July,²²³ the screws will be tightened, beginning with a broadening of sanctions to include timber, rubber, gold and the maritime industry as well as an expanded list of individuals whose assets would be frozen and visas revoked. And in addition to the prospect of a specifically Liberia-focused war crimes tribunal, the prospect should be emphasised of prosecution by the existing Special Court for Sierra Leone. If Taylor is not cooperative, and the Sierra Leone court has indicted him, as anticipated, or subsequently does so, the Security Council should increase pressure on him and on countries that might otherwise be inclined to give him refuge, by passing a resolution under the mandatory Chapter VII provisions of the Charter that explicitly obliges all

²²² See the discussion in fn. 221 above.

²²³ July is suggested as a decision point for whether Taylor is prepared to cooperate – and whether the international community can base its policy on the possibility of cooperation with him – because it is the beginning of the rainy season in the region. That is a season when, because of their material superiority, Taylor's armed forces will again enjoy a distinct military advantage. If by that time he has not committed to cooperate and begun to demonstrate good faith to fulfil that commitment, it would be reasonable for the Contact Group to assume he is determined to pursue a military solution at a high cost in lives and at further peril to regional stability and therefore for it to take and to recommend to the Security Council more substantial measures.

member states to assist in enforcement of that indictment.

The Contact Group should simultaneously encourage increased international assistance to Liberian civil society, including to help it to boycott the October elections if Taylor is uncooperative and proceeds with them. Although Liberia's civil society and opposition are weak, divided and frightened, the next six months will be a moment of truth. They must either rally together or be prepared to pay the price for the next five years.²²⁴ Liberia has personalities with regional and wider international prestige whose status could help protect them from Taylor's harassment. They need to form a strong coalition. As one potential member of this coalition told ICG, "Taylor is not bigger than these people who have numerous contacts. Taylor survives because he is not threatened by the opposition, which has continually struggled to come together to talk about issues on the future of Liberia. Instead they prefer to focus on who will become president".²²⁵

Start planning for peacekeeping and peace enforcement missions. Liberians cannot be left with a choice only between Taylor and the LURD (including LURD-MODEL). Nor can they be expected to deal with these violent contenders for power on their own. The Contact Group will need to help them achieve a series of objectives that can sustain the peace process. Once again, that peace process needs to begin with a ceasefire, accompanied by a timetable for comprehensive disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration of all combatants. The international community cannot help implement such a ceasefire from a distance, however. Preparations need to be made so that in the event of a ceasefire, a UN peacekeeping force could be deployed quickly to monitor, supervise and verify it. Such a force would need to be deployed in Monrovia and other strategic areas such as those where a presence is necessary to monitor the diamond trade, where Taylor's key logging industries are located (particularly Nimba, Grand Gedeh, Sinoe and Grand Bassa Counties), the seaports used for exporting timber and importing arms (Greenville, Harper and Freeport) and the borders. Its functions would also include, as discussed below, election supervision and

involvement in the proposed interim administration to the extent necessary.

ECOWAS could participate importantly in this mission, including by providing troops. However, though the regional organisation's reputation has improved significantly in recent years, Liberia and neighbouring states have viewed it with suspicion since its Nigerian-dominated interventions in Liberia and Sierra Leone in the 1990s.²²⁶ Moreover, ECOWAS troop contributors should not be neighbouring countries, which could be accused of taking sides.

As well as planning for a familiar peacekeeping mission of the kind described, attention will also have to be paid to what happens if the ceasefire breaks down. Given the UN's effective inability to operate full-scale Chapter VII enforcement missions itself, planning should commence now for a standby enforcement mission endorsed but not led by the UN. Because of its special historical relationship and because it is in effect the only country that President Taylor listens or reacts to, and for burden-sharing reasons as well, the U.S. is the logical candidate to lead, and primarily constitute, such a mission should it be required – just as Britain has played this role in Sierra Leone and France in Côte d'Ivoire. Ideally, the British and the French would share this responsibility with the U.S., a prospect that is more realistic than a year ago since involvement in Côte d'Ivoire has made Paris more aware of the problem that Charles Taylor represents for the region and has accordingly brought its views closer to those of London and Washington. However, if the U.S. is to contribute its own troops to the mission, domestic political requirements, grounded in especially its Somalia experience, will require that the force be subject to U.S. military command. If the U.S. is unwilling to play the role envisaged, there is no good reason why the enforcement operation should not be

²²⁴ ICG was informed that, although there has not yet been an announcement, five or six opposition political parties have agreed to endorse a single candidate. ICG interview April 2003.

²²⁵ ICG interview, January 2003.

²²⁶ This sensitivity is demonstrated by the Ivorian insistence that ECOMOG be re-branded ECOFORCE for the operation in that country to reassure the population that the organisation had changed. For the same reasons, Nigeria was effectively barred from any role in ECOFORCE. ECOWAS peace missions are also sensitive for Nigeria. One official interviewed by ICG referred to its role in Liberia as Nigeria's Vietnam. There is a widely held feeling that many Nigerians were sacrificed in a war that their country should not have been involved in. ICG has found in interviews with LURD personalities in Conakry, Freetown, and Macenta, February to April 2003, that the insurgents also harbour reservations about ECOWAS that date to earlier Liberian experiences.

a multinational force constituted by ECOWAS countries (other than Liberia's involved neighbours Sierra Leone, Guinea, Côte d'Ivoire and Burkina Faso).

There is another, broader, context in which – however unpalatable – some thinking will need to be done about the possibility of mobilising a UN-endorsed, though not operated, peace enforcement mission. The prospect of broadened sanctions and threatened war crimes prosecutions may prove to have little or no deterrent effect on President Taylor, who has survived extensive sanctions over the years and has probably already calculated the implications of an indictment for war crimes and associated measures that have long been contemplated. If there is no ceasefire, it is also quite likely that the level of violence will rise, especially after the rainy season begins (normally in July), when conditions will again favour operations by the Taylor forces. It is also possible that Taylor would respond to new measures such as those recommended above – including in particular public indictment by the Sierra Leone Special Court – with more violence against the country's civilian population in an attempt to eliminate any potential opposition. If the situation does deteriorate, therefore, the international community may quickly find itself faced with the need to consider more radical steps to avoid a meltdown in Liberia and the surrounding states. Military action may be the only way of avoiding worse catastrophe.

B. A SECURITY STRATEGY FOR THE REGION

President Taylor can say one thing in his defence. He can clearly point to other leaders in the region who have also sponsored and encouraged rebellions in neighbouring countries. International response can no longer start and stop with Taylor. While his removal is necessary for tackling security in this part of West Africa, it will not end the pattern of interference. Two complex and intertwined problems need to be dealt with: rebellions and their causes (internal problems) and border security (external problems).

What West Africa lacks is a regional strategy for addressing the conflicts in Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire, as well as the countries supporting and affected by these crises, including Burkina Faso, Guinea, Ghana, and Sierra Leone. The French attempt to handle the crisis in Côte d'Ivoire, and the British continue to

sustain the peace in Sierra Leone. The U.S. has stepped up military support of Guinea (and some claim the LURD) and its rhetoric against the Taylor regime. These three countries need to coordinate their efforts and recognise the interconnected nature of the conflicts. Otherwise, the contribution of each will ultimately be futile. The Contact Group was created to achieve a coordinated policy but it has lost its way.

It is worth noting in a broader context that the UK has made welcome moves to try to tackle conflict in Africa from a regional perspective. Responding to concerns that diplomatic work is often limited to specific countries or departments, the British government has created a number of Regional Conflict Adviser positions as part of its conflict prevention policy. Advisers have already been appointed for the Great Lakes, Southern Africa and East/Horn of Africa. However, in West Africa, which arguably needs this kind of position most, funding problems are holding up the decision making process.²²⁷ It would be helpful for the responsible ministries (FCO, DFID, and Treasury) to resolve these problems as soon as possible in order to ensure that a Regional Conflict Adviser for West Africa is appointed promptly.

Strong coordination and leadership of the U.S., UK and France in the Contact Group. These three must lead the Contact Group both to bring about a ceasefire in Liberia and to pressure Taylor to step down and make way for free and fair elections. France and the U.S. are also members of the UN-mandated Follow-Up Committee in Côte d'Ivoire that is tasked with monitoring the very shaky peace agreement there. There must likewise be effective coordination with the other members of the contact group, particularly Nigeria, Ghana, the EU and the UN. Libya is another country with great potential influence. Its policies and objectives are often difficult to identify and interpret. The disruptive role it played when leaders such as Charles Taylor and Blaise Compaoré first emerged has been discussed above. However, while the U.S. in particular might have difficulty bringing Libya formally into the structure of a regional strategy, its present attitude should be quietly explored and the point made that a constructive contribution would considerably help its efforts to obtain greater legitimacy as an influential member of the wider international community.

²²⁷ ICG discussions with UK officials, London, April 2003.

Many elements that have been used to achieve peace in Sierra Leone will be relevant to Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire, including a political process that leads to a legitimate, consensual, non-exclusive, non-discriminatory government with proper controls and capacity to manage its territory. Donor assistance is another prerequisite for strengthening legitimate government. Because there is clearly a further need to address the propensity of fighters to roam from one war to another, a regional strategy will need to be developed for disarmament, demobilisation, resettlement and reintegration of former combatants and related security sector reforms.²²⁸ British assistance to Sierra Leone, French initiatives in Côte d'Ivoire and U.S.-led efforts in Liberia should be closely coordinated, in cooperation with the UN and ECOWAS.

A regional security strategy should also centre on preventing neighbours from exploiting domestic instability.²²⁹ The failure of sanctions to contain Taylor's attempts at destabilisation demonstrates the need to take a broader approach. The activities of Guinea and Côte d'Ivoire, for example, have also been provocative and ought not to be left unchecked. All countries of the region should be made aware that if they pursue policies of aggrandisement and do not cooperate with the regional peace initiatives, the Security Council will be prepared to apply sanctions similar to those imposed on Liberia, including economic curbs, travel bans on targeted leaders, and an arms embargo.

The ECOWAS Moratorium on the Importation, Exportation and Manufacture of Small Arms and Light Weapons should be strengthened.²³⁰ Its implementation and monitoring are weak, and its

effectiveness has been significantly impaired by its voluntary nature and the lack of a corresponding regime of enforceable sanctions. Its effectiveness is also undermined by failure to address non-state actors. Working more closely with the UN Panel of Experts on Sanctions on Liberia would go some way to addressing these weaknesses, particularly if the latter's mandate were expanded to encompass monitoring of the whole region.

Transform the UN Panel of Experts on Liberia into a Regional Reporting and Monitoring Mechanism. The UN Panel of Experts on Sanctions on Liberia should become a key component of a regional strategy. The next Security Council review of sanctions against Liberia is on 7 May 2003, following the panel's report. Those who are likely to criticise Liberia sanctions (France and China) on the grounds that the rationale has changed and new language is required have it half right. With the crisis in Côte d'Ivoire in which several West African leaders support Ivorian rebel groups, continued Guinean military and financial backing for the LURD, and Ivorian Government involvement in the creation of LURD-MODEL, the focus of sanctions and of the UN Panel of Experts needs to be widened to encompass the region.

The UN Panel of Experts has in fact provided an entry point for such an amendment. In its October 2002 report, it recommended that an "arms embargo should be extended to all non-State actors in the region, including the LURD" and that "arms-exporting countries should abstain from supplying arms to the Mano River Union countries, in line with the moratorium on small arms that applies for the whole ECOWAS region".²³¹ The Panel's mandate must, however, encompass the entire region of West Africa, not just the Mano River Union countries. It should focus on unravelling the complex web of traders and businesses and the network of ringleaders in and outside the region that continue to supply weapons.

The need for a more rigorous surveillance process cannot be over-emphasised. The entire region is awash with small arms and light weapons. The gravity of the problem was recognised by the UN Security Council in Resolution 1467 of 18 March 2003. As an arms expert noted to ICG, "what is

²²⁸ ICG interview with UN humanitarian official, Abidjan, March 2003. In a statement to the UN Security Council session on strengthening cooperation in West Africa to counter small arms trafficking, Secretary General Kofi Annan stated that a key problem was "the failure to adequately fund and implement disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration, and the failure to provide enough assistance to countries in restructuring their armed forces as part of post-conflict peace-building". See statements accompanying UN Security Council Resolution 1467, 18 March 2003.

²²⁹ An element of the strategy could be negotiation of good neighbour and non-aggression agreements. The regional organisation, ECOWAS, has these mechanisms but West African leaders have largely ignored them.

²³⁰ On 31 October 1998, ECOWAS member states signed a three-year renewable moratorium which came into effect on 1 November 1998.

²³¹ "Report of the Panel of Experts appointed pursuant to Security Council resolution 1408 (2002), paragraph 16, concerning Liberia", 7 October 2002, para. 8, p. 8.

needed is more surveillance, more investigation, more scrutiny and more naming and shaming to make it difficult for regimes to buy the repressive weapons or be involved in repressive actions".²³²

Insist on UN humanitarian access to western Côte d'Ivoire. A major humanitarian crisis is developing along similar lines to that which hit West Africa in 2000-2001 when Sierra Leone refugees were caught in the fighting between Guinean and Liberian and RUF forces. The immediate task is to protect civilians. The UN and major donors (especially the U.S. and France) must insist on better access to both rebel and government areas. The Ivorian government in particular must be pressed on this, especially concerning the road between Guiglo and Toulépleu and the Tai Forest area. This area is allegedly under FANCI control so it is unclear why access is difficult. As an observer said to ICG, "either the government provides access or it should be forced to admit that it has no control in these areas or admit that it is in bed with the [LURD-MODEL] fighters".²³³

UN agencies are concerned about the possible risk of rebels stealing humanitarian deliveries "but civilians do not have to be provided food in situ".²³⁴ French and ECOWAS forces can provide protection in safe zones and safe passages so humanitarian agencies can organise canteens to feed the many starving people. A senior humanitarian coordinator should be sent to Abidjan to start working with embassies and demand better access and safety for humanitarian agencies. As things stand, these agencies can only do "hit and run delivery".²³⁵

Freetown/Brussels, 30 April 2003

²³² ICG interview, Freetown, February 2003.

²³³ ICG interview, Abidjan, March 2003.

²³⁴ Ibid.

²³⁵ Ibid.

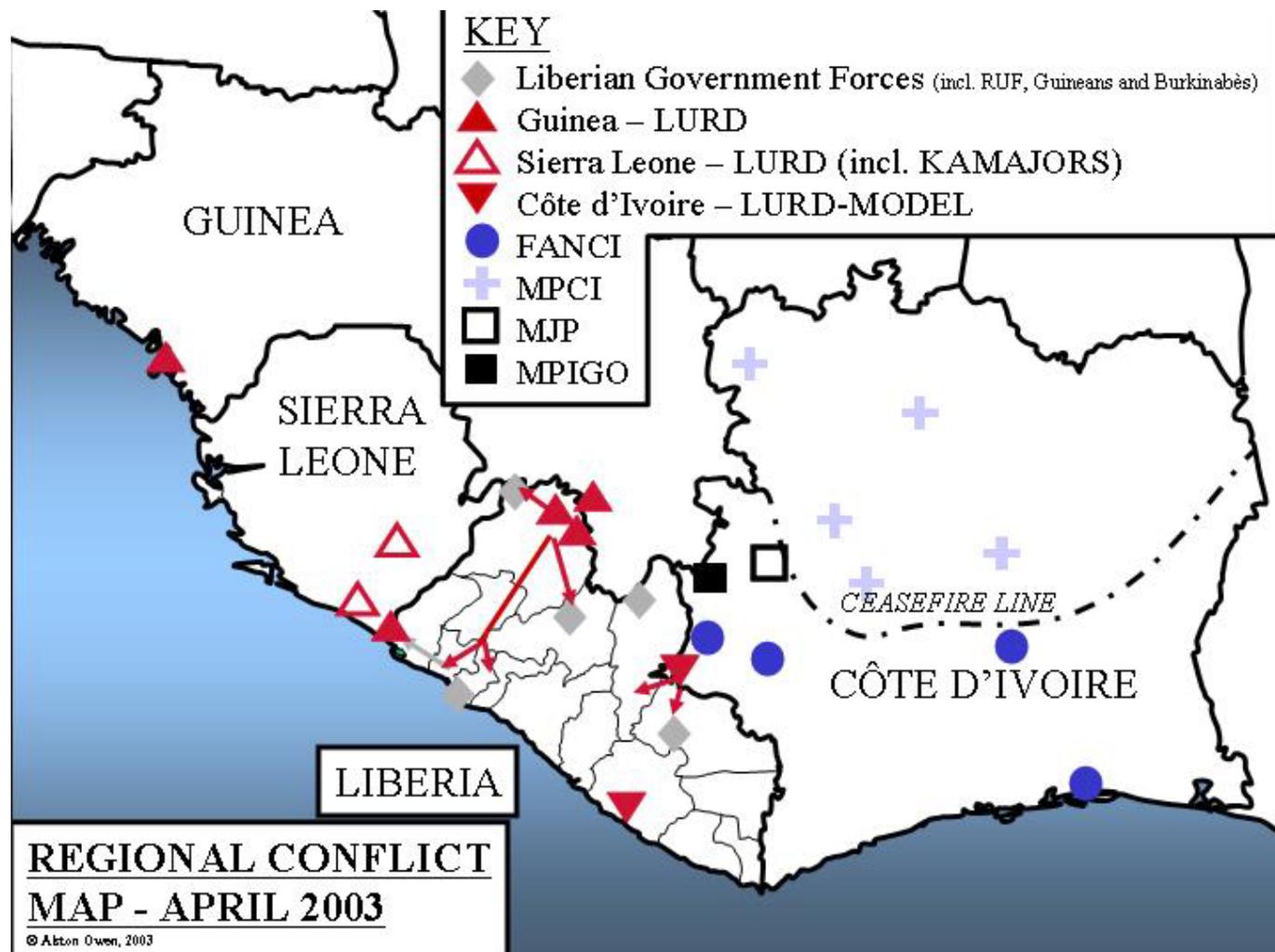
APPENDIX A

MAP OF LIBERIA AND IVORY COAST



APPENDIX B

MAP OF REGIONAL CONFLICT



APPENDIX C

GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS OF ARMED GROUPS

- AFL** Armed Forces of Liberia, the official national army of Liberia under former President Samuel Doe. Charles Taylor created a parallel AFL, staffed with his own loyalists, when he came to power in 1997.
- ATU** Anti-Terrorist Unit, the elite force within President Taylor's security apparatus. It was created in 1998 from various rebel fighters (the Sierra Leone RUF), dissident forces (including from Guinea and the Gambia) and soldiers on loan mainly from Burkina Faso.
- CDFs** Civil Defence Forces. The main CDF fighting force was the "Kamajor" hunters, a militia that developed in 1994 out of the efforts of communities in Southern Sierra Leone, mostly of the Mende tribe, to protect themselves from the army and the RUF. The CDF collaborated with anti-Taylor forces from 1999 in operations against the RUF and reducing Taylor's capacity in the Sierra Leone and Guinea conflicts.
- FANCI** Forces Armées Nationales de Côte d'Ivoire is the national army for Côte d'Ivoire, loyal to President Gbagbo in the Ivorian crisis.
- LPC** Liberian Peace Council, a rebel group formed in 1993 under Dr George Boley, who served as advisor to President Samuel Doe. The LPC contained many top-level commanders and fighters from the AFL and drew support mainly from the Krahn and Sapo ethnic groups in Grand Gedeh and Sinoe Counties, respectively.
- LURD** Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy, a rebel group opposed to Charles Taylor's government and created in February 2000 in Freetown, Sierra Leone. The LURD has operated out of four countries: Liberia, Guinea, Sierra Leone and Côte d'Ivoire and has a loose affiliation in Ghana. In late 2000, Guinea became a critical base after the RUF, backed by Taylor, launched an incursion into that country.
- MJP** Mouvement pour la Justice et la Paix is one of two rebels groups that emerged in western Côte d'Ivoire on 28 November 2002, two months after the beginning of the Ivorian conflict. It has received support from President Taylor and from the northern based Ivorian rebel group, Mouvement Patriotique de la Côte d'Ivoire.
- MODEL** Movement for Democracy in Liberia, a rebel group whose formation was announced in March 2003 and composed of veteran anti-Taylor fighters, refugees and political asylum seekers predominantly based in Côte d'Ivoire since Liberia's civil war in the 1990s. This group gains much of its financing from the Krahn ethnic diaspora in the U.S., is allied to the government of President Laurent Gbagbo in Côte d'Ivoire, and seeks the overthrow of President Taylor in Liberia. Essentially a faction of LURD opposed to the leadership claims of that organisation's Guinea-based chairman, Sekou Conneh, it is also referred to as LURD-MODEL in this report.
- MPCI** Mouvement Patriotique de la Côte d'Ivoire, the first rebel group formed in Côte d'Ivoire in September 2002. It is mainly seen as a northern-based movement with strong links to Burkina Faso.
- MPIGO** Mouvement Patriotique du Grand Ouest, the second rebel group that emerged in western Côte d'Ivoire in late November 2002. Its initial operations were heavily coordinated and influenced by President Taylor's top commanders.

- NPFL National Patriotic Front of Liberia, Charles Taylor's rebel group in the first Liberian civil war. Many ex-rebels now form part of Liberia's security apparatus (the Navy Division, the Anti-Terrorist Unit, the Marine Division, the Special Operations Division and the Special Security Services) and have command positions at key government sites and seaports and in the timber producing areas.
- RSLAF Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces (name readopted in 2002).
- RUF Revolutionary United Front of Sierra Leone, the main rebel group in Sierra Leone's civil war.
- ULIMO United Liberation Movement for Democracy in Liberia, formed in 1991 and opposed to Charles Taylor's faction in Liberia's first civil war. In 1993, ULIMO split into two groups based on ethnic lines, Krahn and Mandingo.

APPENDIX D

INSURGENCIES AND THEIR REGIONAL SUPPORTERS

Rebel Group	Country of Origin	Country Support Base
Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD)	Liberia	Guinea, Sierra Leone and Côte d'Ivoire
Movement for Democracy in Liberia (LURD-MODEL)	Liberia	Côte d'Ivoire
Guinean dissidents	Guinea	Liberia
Revolutionary United Front (RUF)	Sierra Leone	Liberia, Côte d'Ivoire and Burkina Faso
Mouvement patriotique du Grand Ouest (MPIGO)	Côte d'Ivoire	Liberia
Mouvement pour la Justice et la Paix (MJP)	Côte d'Ivoire	Liberia
Mouvement Patriotique de la Côte d'Ivoire (MPCI)	Côte d'Ivoire	Burkina Faso

APPENDIX E

ABOUT THE INTERNATIONAL CRISIS GROUP

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

ICG's approach is grounded in field research. Teams of political analysts are located within or close by countries at risk of outbreak, escalation or recurrence of violent conflict. Based on information and assessments from the field, ICG produces regular analytical reports containing practical recommendations targeted at key international decision-takers.

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

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

ICG's international headquarters are in Brussels, with advocacy offices in Washington DC, New York and Paris and a media liaison office in London. The organisation currently operates eleven field offices (in Amman, Belgrade, Bogota, Islamabad, Jakarta,

Nairobi, Osh, Pristina, Sarajevo, Sierra Leone and Skopje) with analysts working in over 30 crisis-affected countries and territories across four continents.

In *Africa*, those countries include Burundi, Rwanda, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Sierra Leone-Liberia-Guinea, Somalia, Sudan and Zimbabwe; in *Asia*, Indonesia, Myanmar, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Pakistan, Afghanistan and Kashmir; in *Europe*, Albania, Bosnia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia; in the *Middle East*, the whole region from North Africa to Iran; and in *Latin America*, Colombia.

ICG raises funds from governments, charitable foundations, companies and individual donors. The following governments currently provide funding: Australia, Austria, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Japan, Luxembourg, The Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, the Republic of China (Taiwan), Turkey, the United Kingdom and the United States.

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

April 2003

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