Liberia

Liberia has made substantial political progress toward sustained recovery since the election of Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf—the first elected female president in Africa—in 2005. The Johnson-Sirleaf government has taken steps toward improving the fragile security situation and revamping the country's socioeconomic fabric, which was destroyed during the nearly fourteen-year brutal civil conflict. However, while the country remained stable throughout 2007, a high unemployment rate, especially among youths, and the slow process of developing professional security forces, persist as major security concerns. Throughout the year in review, the UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) remained deployed and continued its support of the government's peace consolidation efforts.

In August 2007, noting the "great strides in consolidating peace and promoting economic recovery" in Liberia, the UN Secretary-General recommended a gradual, three-phase drawdown of its military forces in the country.[1] The Security Council passed Resolution 1777 (2007) shortly after the Secretary-General's report, approving the first phase of the drawdown, and granting a one-year extension to UNMIL. The first phase of the drawdown, which began in October 2007 and will run through September 2008, will see the departure of 2,450 troops. An additional 498 police officers will depart during the period April 2008 to September 2010. Despite the drawdown, by the end of 2010, UNMIL will still have over 9,000 uniformed personnel in Liberia, ranking among the larger global peace operations.

Map No. 4255.6 Rev. 1   UNITED NATIONS
September 2007

Department of Field Support
Cartographic Section

UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL)

- Authorization and Start Date — 19 September 2003 (UNSC Res. 1509)
- SRSG and Head of Mission — Ellen Margrethe Løj (Denmark)
- Force Commander — Lieutenant-General Chikadibia Isaac Obiakor (Nigeria)
- Police Commissioner — Mohammed Ahmed Alhassan (Ghana)
- Budget — $688.4 million (1 July 2007–30 June 2008)
- Strength as of 31 October 2007 — Troops: 13,322
  Military Observers: 206
  Police: 1,172
  International Civilian Staff: 502
  Local Civilian Staff: 945
  UN Volunteers: 242

For detailed mission information see p. 296.

Background

Liberia had been at war since 1989, when the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL), led by Charles Taylor, invaded the country from bases in Côte d'Ivoire. The conflict claimed an estimated 200,000 lives, resulted in injury to thousands more, and uprooted approximately 1.8 million civilians from their homes. Additionally, the conflict severely impacted Liberia's immediate neighbors—Sierra Leone, Guinea, and Coté d'Ivoire—as they struggled to cope with waves of refugees from Liberia while dealing with their own domestic challenges.

The deployment of the ECOWAS Mission in Liberia (ECOMIL) in August 2003 paved the way for UNMIL. The UN mission was deployed in October 2005 to oversee implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), signed on 18 August 2004 by the Liberian government, Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD), the Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL), Liberian political parties, and civil society, under the auspices of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). Authorized under Chapter VII of the UN Charter, UNMIL was given a mandate to oversee the cease-fire agreement; develop and implement a disarmament, demobilization, reintegration, and repatriation (DDRR) program; provide security at key locations; protect UN staff and Liberian civilians under imminent threat; provide humanitarian and human rights assistance; support security sector reform; assist in extending state authority throughout the country; and support the implementation of the peace process, including assistance to national elections held in 2005.

Key Developments

Security

Liberia's peace is still quite fragile, with serious consequences for not only the Johnson-Sirleaf government, but also UNMIL, as its eventual withdrawal depends on Liberia's ability to manage its own affairs, including the provision of security. Despite relative stability, during 2007 there were reports of plans to overthrow the government, and on 17 July the government announced the arrest of George Koukou, former speaker of the National Transitional Legislative Assembly, and of Major General Charles Julu, former army chief of staff, on suspicion of plotting to overthrow the government. The two men were charged with treason and are still in detention. A third Liberian, Colonel Andrew Dorbor, had meanwhile been arrested in neighboring Côte d'Ivoire, allegedly trying to buy arms for the planned coup.

Potential regime insecurity is matched by personal insecurity. Violent crime, including armed robbery leading to serious assault and even death, appears to be on the increase. UNMIL reported nineteen incidents of armed assaults on individuals and twenty incidents of armed attacks on residences in August 2007 in Monrovia alone, and outside Monrovia some dramatic incidents of communal violence have been reported. But senior UNMIL and government officials caution that the high crime figures are the result of better reporting and do not really represent a spike in incidents of crime. Nevertheless, some serious incidents have occurred—notably on 20 June, when ex-combatants, protesting delays in the payment of their subsistence allowances, mounted simultaneous demonstrations in the towns of Buchanan, Ganta, and Gbarnga. This was followed by another incident in September, when former combatants of the national army (the Armed Forces of Liberia [AFL]), attempted a nighttime riot in the heart of Monrovia, blocking major roads and intersections. UNMIL police and Liberian personnel intervened in strength to clear them away.

The insecurity prompted President Johnson-Sirleaf to announce the launch of Operation Calm Down Fear, supplementing the earlier Operation Sweeping Wave, and to increase the number of patrols and spot-checks on vehicles in Monrovia. But these robust steps

were undermined by the sheer lack of a dependable national security apparatus. An UNMIL technical assessment mission made on-the-spot visits to several police stations in the country in June and reported back on the lack of basic equipment such as communication facilities.

Security Sector Reform

Liberia is still a long way from creating a dependable security infrastructure. Attempts at creating a national army from scratch—with a proposed troop strength of 2,000—are being spearheaded by two US private security companies, DynCorp and Pacific Architect Engineers, with US government financial support. DynCorp is responsible for the recruitment and provision of basic training to the recruits at the Barclay and Camp Ware training centers, while Pacific Architect Engineers is responsible for providing advanced training of the recruits and the construction of the barracks, as well as the battalion and brigade headquarters, at Camp Kessely near Monrovia. The training of military personnel has been remarkably slow, as by October 2007 only 11 officers and 634 noncommissioned officers had completed the advanced individual training. The program also proved controversial, with some observers questioning the policy of having a private security force train a national professional army.

Meanwhile, the rebuilding of the Liberian National Police (LNP), led by UNMIL, has progressed faster: over 3,500 police officers graduated from the national academy in July 2007. Through UNMIL's quick-impact projects, police stations in several counties have been rehabilitated. Other stations in about half a dozen other counties are currently being rehabilitated. In addition to providing basic training for 3,500 police officers—including an all-female class of 110 police recruits—UNMIL, together with the UN civilian police, has initiated programs designed to strengthen the supervisory capacity of the LNP.

The presence of an all-female police contingent from India in UNMIL is believed to

Members of UNMIL's all-female formed police unit conduct a cordon and search operation in Monrovia, 4 April 2007.

have had a positive impact on UNMIL's drive to recruit more women to the LNP. However, the fact that many women lack the basic education to be accepted into the police force hampers such efforts. To tackle this problem, UNMIL launched an initiative aimed at providing women with intensive schooling within a short period of time to help them qualify for recruitment to the LNP. Meanwhile, forging an integrated command structure for the LNP has been slow, and it is difficult to assess, at this stage, the quality and impact of the training on the new police force.

Efforts to revamp Liberia's justice sector have registered slow progress, and the country's judiciary remains in a state of disrepair. An acute shortage of qualified personnel and woeful infrastructure are some of the major impediments to rebuilding a credible justice sector. Despite these challenges, UNMIL has since May 2006 provided training for 336 magistrates, 220 justices of peace, 226 prosecutors, 147 magistrate court clerks, and 53 circuit and Supreme Court clerks. UNMIL's quick-impact projects have also rehabilitated nine courthouses, and work is ongoing on several others.

Governance and Resource Management
In 2006, with the conclusion of the DDR process, the UN shifted its efforts toward the rebuilding of governance institutions more broadly, as well as toward the consolidation of state authority. There are several clusters of engagement with Liberia's rebuilding process. The UN Development Programme (UNDP) leads the early recovery cluster, which—together with the International Labour Organization—focuses on job creation and skills training. The Civil Affairs section in UNMIL spearheads the clusters on the rule of law and infrastructure rebuilding: under this program, there are plans to help the country rebuild vital state institutions and to revamp the justice sector. In all fifteen counties, the UN has established County Support Teams that bring together the various UN activities around one clear shared goal: to strengthen local government at the county level. UNMIL's Civil Affairs section, which has been operating at the county level since the deployment of the mission, plays a lead facilitation role in most counties. Importantly, the County Support Team initiative—in addition to being a mechanism for coordination—contains a project element that allows for direct support to capacity building, infrastructure development, information management, and day-to-day support.

The task of decentralization was complicated by a number of factors, including the centrist tradition that has characterized Liberian governance since the birth of the nation; the extreme low level of capacity currently found at county and district levels; and a tendency among donors and the government to focus primarily on national planning processes and other central-level governance issues. Despite these impediments, some progress has been achieved, not least due to the combined mobilization of UNMIL Civil Affairs officers and UN County Team staff and program resources.

In other areas, the government launched an interim poverty reduction strategy paper, a framework document to guide Liberia's development, at a partner forum in Washington, D.C., in February 2007. Shortly after, several countries, led by the United States, stated they would help Liberia to clear its nearly $4 billion in external debt. The framework document sets out the national socioeconomic context, choices and priorities regarding capacity building for poverty reduction and long-term development, as well as the implementation challenges the cash-strapped country will face. The interim poverty reduction strategy will guide Liberia's development management process through June 2008. The process to elaborate a full poverty reduction strategy has begun, and a substantive draft is intended for completion by March 2008.

2007 also saw efforts by various international partners, in particular the United Nations, the World Bank, the US Agency for International Development, and the European Commission, in collaboration with Liberia's Ministry of Public Works, to use road rehabilitation as a means of generating jobs. During last year's dry season—October 2006 to April 2007—this experiment helped create approximately 39,000 temporary jobs. The government's Liberia Emergency Employment Program–Liberia Employment Action Program (LEEP/LEAP), run by the Ministry of Labor, has also played an important role in this regard. Since it began operations in 2006, LEEP/LEAP is said to have generated thousands of temporary jobs as well.

Meanwhile, the government continued to pursue its official zero-tolerance policy for corruption. It submitted a draft bill to establish an anticorruption commission, which was returned to the government in October for modification; it will be reintroduced when the legislature reconvenes in January 2008. The government's anticorruption drive led to the prosecution of former transitional president Gyude Bryant on corruption charges and the dismissal of key government officials for the same reasons. In March, a deputy minister and an assistant minister were fired for allegedly granting bogus mining licenses.

UN sanctions against timber and diamond exports have now been lifted, since the

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Box 3.4.1 Gender and Policing in UN Peace Operations

Addressing gender disparities in UN peace operations has been a major preoccupation for the Department of Peacekeeping Operations. But in the seven years since adoption of Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000), which mandated greater female representation in all categories of UN peacekeeping, progress has been limited. By July 2007, women still accounted for only about 2 percent of military and 6 percent of police of the over 83,000 uniformed personnel deployed under UN command, with even greater disparities at the senior mission-management level. During 2007, however, there were several promising developments in the UN's attempt to achieve balanced gender representation, especially with respect to civilian police in peace operations.

In February 2007, the police component of the UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), the third largest in the field, was supplemented with the first all-female formed police unit, from India. The 103 armed policewomen were trained in India's often tumultuous northern regions, and thus are well suited for the law enforcement challenges in Liberia. While the presence of the unit is viewed as a milestone in the UN's efforts for balanced gender representation among its uniformed and civilian personnel, it has had an even greater impact on public percep-

tions about the role of the police, especially among Liberia's female population. This is especially crucial because the Liberian National Police were seriously discredited during the country's civil war.

Thus, in postwar Liberia, the country's national police force was viewed with a great deal of skepticism. This was more pronounced among Liberian women, who were often the victims of police abuse during the civil war. The arrival of the all-female formed police unit appears to have reversed some of these negative perceptions, given that, one month after the arrival of the contingent, three times the usual number of females applied to join the Liberian National Police. Six months later, 115 female recruits had begun training in the country's police academy. Encouraged by these results and in order to deal with the high levels of illiteracy among Liberia's female population, UNMIL began a special program of public education to prepare aspiring female candidates to join the Liberian National Police.

Along similar lines, the UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) also began an initiative toward a more gender-balanced police force. In support of the Haitian National Police, MINUSTAH began a large-scale registration program in August 2007, aimed at recruiting about 150

women for the twentieth graduating class of the police academy. But much work still needs to be done, as only about 5 percent of Haiti's approximately 8,000-strong police force are women.

The continuing efforts to build the UN's standing police capacity also include a strong focus on gender. Approved in 2006, a staff of over twenty-five police experts, once fully operational, will assist in the startup of new missions and provide rapid technical and operational support to existing UN operations. The UN Police Division has emphasized that this vital component of UN peace operations will be gender-sensitive: 24 percent of staff officers will be women, and gender considerations will be central in all of the division's plans and activities, both when conducting assessments and when starting up new missions.

Finally, October 2007 saw the Security Council renew its support for the role of women in peacekeeping operations. Citing the encouraging success of the all-female formed police unit in Liberia and the progress in Haiti, the Security Council called on the Secretary-General to prepare a report on the full implementation of Resolution 1325, including information on the impact of armed conflicts on women, their protection, and their role in peace processes.[1]

Source: United Nations, Department of Peacekeeping Operations, Peacekeeping Best Practices Section.
Note: 1. United Nations, "Statement by the President of the Security Council," UN Doc. S/PRST/2007/40, 24 October 2007.

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government has instituted the required legislative and transparency measures. Liberia exported its first batch of Kimberley Process–certified diamonds in early September. The diamonds were worth $222,000, with the government earning a paltry $6,000 from them in the form of export tax, but this is projected to rise as exports increase.

The Governance and Economic Management Assistance Program (GEMAP)

The Liberian government bills GEMAP as an affirmation of its "commitment to a balanced budget and the establishment of a social macroeconomic framework." The program was signed between Liberia's national transitional

government and the International Contact Group for Liberia on 9 September 2005. UN Security Council Resolution 1626 (2005) endorsed the agreement, and since then UNMIL has become the coordinating arm between the Liberian government and its international partners in implementing GEMAP.

The program was initiated as a response to pervasive corruption and mismanagement under the national transitional government. In early 2005, a European Commission audit of five key state-owned enterprises (Roberts International Airport, Liberia Petroleum Refinery, the Bureau of Maritime Affairs, the National Port Authority, and the Forestry Development Authority) revealed gross inefficiency, corruption, and a complete lack of transparency in the conduct of officials. Proceeds from these institutions could amount to 75 percent of the state's revenue. Among other things, the European Commission audit found a high level of uncertainty in the reporting related to the general accounts of these institutions, inconsistencies in staff salary levels, operating expenses and allowances, and an unjustified tax exception system in which tens of millions of dollars were lost by the state every year. A team of investigators of "financial and economic crimes" sent by ECOWAS buttressed the European Commission's findings, noting that the national transitional government was presiding over a financial administrative system that sacrificed financial probity to appease former warlords and ex-combatants.

These disclosures prompted some commentators to call for the imposition of external authority over the management of Liberia's natural resources and state finances. This, unsurprisingly, was deemed unacceptable by the government. But business as usual was also deemed unacceptable. GEMAP—which has expatriate officials operating what amounts to a "dual key" system with Liberian officials over the financial management of Liberia's key revenue-generating institutions—was the compromise arrangement. Even so, many Liberians, including senior state officials, still saw GEMAP as a highly intrusive program that would fail to

meaningfully develop Liberia's economic and governance institutions. The president herself shared this view publicly before her election, as did former president Amos Sawyer, who heads the Governance Reform Commission.

Once in office, however, President Johnson-Sirleaf embraced GEMAP. Five key state institutions operate under dual Liberian and international management, both of whose signatures are required for all transactions. The Economic Governance Steering Committee, responsible for overseeing the implementation of GEMAP, is chaired by the president, with the US ambassador as the vice president, and meets on a monthly basis at the Executive Mansion. A representative of UNMIL, who serves as facilitator, is always present at these meetings. The policy-setting GEMAP Technical Team meets bimonthly. The agenda of the Economic Governance Steering Committee is normally set by the US ambassador, although the government also participates. Even the national budget has to be thoroughly vetted by the Technical Committee, without meaningful participation by the legislature.

Real gains have been achieved from GEMAP. Revenue collection and preinspection of goods, once activities prone to corruption in Freeport, have greatly improved, and state revenues are up by 74 percent over last year. The Cash Management Committee now functions far better than before, and there is some transparency in the management of state expenditures. The Central Bank of Liberia, another key area of GEMAP intervention, now functions better, according to the monthly status reports of the chief administrator of Liberia's Central Bank, which is financed by the International Monetary Fund.

Critics of GEMAP, however, contend that these achievements are temporary, and that the intrusive nature of the program will be counterproductive. There does not seem to be a firm timeline for its conclusion, nor much evidence of local capacity building. Expatriate GEMAP officials are paid many times more than their Liberian counterparts, and there is a sustained lack of collegiality between the expatriates and

their Liberian counterparts in key areas, often stymieing progress. Tentative efforts are currently under way to tackle some of these problems—national Liberian officials now report on GEMAP reforms, and the government, not the US ambassador, now reports on GEMAP work to the Economic Governance Steering Committee. Other problems persist, however, including some incoherence in the running of GEMAP. The international partners—the United States, the European Commission, and various multilateral institutions and governments—fund different sets of projects and personnel, and these consultants tend to report to those paying them, rather than to the Liberian government. The different layers of management do not seem to be fully accountable to the Liberian government.

Conclusion

Liberia is no longer the collapsed state it was when Taylor relinquished power in 2003. The continued presence of UNMIL has contributed to stabilizing the security situation, allowing the government to undertake crucial political steps aimed at stabilizing the country and restoring the economy. Confidence in UNMIL and the government is high, often manifested in a general sense of optimism by the civilian population. While there is thus cause for hope, developments in 2007 gave equal grounds for caution in assessing the medium-term prospects for the state and the economy. Significant concerns remain, including the slow process of rebuilding the country's security apparatus, notably the Armed Forces of Liberia; the slow pace of restoring government authority across the country; and the high unemployment rate.

More positively, as the year came to an end, renewed efforts to establish a truth and reconciliation commission, the increased stability in neighboring Sierra Leone, and the modest progress in Côte d'Ivoire's peace process, seemed to bode well for Liberia's peace consolidation efforts. The continued engagement of UNMIL and the international community looks likely to continue, and should provide the Johnson-Sirleaf government with the necessary support for still-needed governance reforms, including progress on decentralization, and the rebuilding of the country's infrastructure.

Note

1. See UN Security Council, *Fifteenth Progress Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in Liberia,* UN Doc. S/2007/479, 8 August 2007.