CHAPTER TWO

External Actors and their Impact on the Conflict

Introduction

1. Non-interference of one state in the internal affairs of another state is a core principle of international relations. In reality, however, there has hardly been an intra-state conflict in the world that has not seen the involvement of external actors. These external actors typically provide military, political or moral support to one or a variety of competing factions, or they attempt to arbitrate and implement resolutions to the conflict.

2. There are many reasons and motivations behind the participation of external actors in intra-state conflicts. These parties may be lured into a conflict by a shared ideology with one of the factions, or by ethnic, religious or other identity sentiments. Furthermore, the strategic importance of the conflict-affected state, geo-political interests or economic considerations could also be taken into account before intervening in intra-state conflicts. The involvement of external actors could also result from compliance with obligations under international protocols or membership of regional or international institutions, like the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the United Nations (UN). The conflict in Sierra Leone was not a war imposed from outside: it was an internal armed conflict in which certain external actors became involved.

3. As part of its mandate to unearth the antecedents, causes and nature of Sierra Leone’s conflict, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (“TRC” or “the Commission”) recognised the importance of investigating the role of external actors. There were two main parties to the conflict in Sierra Leone - the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) and the Government of Sierra Leone. It should be accepted at the outset that each of these parties underwent numerous changes of character in the course of the conflict and formed alliances with other factions that were neither predictable nor enduring. Nevertheless, all the other factions that took part in the conflict can be loosely placed under one of these two parties, including the various external actors who offered their support in the course of the war.

4. For the purposes of analysis, the Commission has divided the Sierra Leone conflict into three phases.¹ This chapter begins by examining the involvement of external actors in the pre-conflict years and the first phase of conventional “target” warfare from 1991 to late 1993. It then tracks these external actors, along with others who joined the conflict, throughout the second phase, from late 1993 up to March 1997, and the third phase, from 1997 to 2002.

¹ More detail on the Commission’s three phases, including a justification for the chosen parameters, can be found in the chapter on the Military and Political History of the Conflict in Volume Three A of this report.
External Actors in the Pre-Conflict Period up to 1991 and in Phase I of the Conflict: March 1991-1993

*Libya: preparing revolutionaries in pursuit of ideology*

5. The involvement of external actors in Sierra Leone’s conflict can be traced to the 1970s when attempts were made by different groups of Sierra Leoneans to undo Siaka Steven’s decade-old hegemonic grip on the country. These efforts included the nation-wide student demonstrations of 1977, which largely failed in the face of a violent clampdown by state security forces. Since the demonstrations did not yield a regime change, the students resorted to political sensitisation on college campuses and among youths in greater Freetown. Initially the sensitisation took the form of study groups. On the Fourah Bay College (FBC) campus of the University of Sierra Leone, a number of study groups sprang up. Prominent among these was the Green Book Study Group.

6. The Green Book contains the political philosophy of the Libyan President, Colonel Muammar Ghaddafi, which is known as the Third Universal Theory. It advocates the creation of a Jamahiriya – a peoples’ state. Ghaddafi claimed that the Third Universal Theory is instrumental to the emancipation of the human race. The spread of Ghaddafi’s political philosophy became a key foreign policy objective of the Libyan state. Even before he began supporting revolutionary movements in different parts of the world, Ghaddafi offered diplomatic relations and foreign aid in furtherance of his aim of spreading his political philosophy. Libya gave financial assistance to Sierra Leonean Muslims in the late 1970s in order to perform the annual hajj pilgrimage to Mecca. The Libyan government also provided funds to assist the Sierra Leone government to host the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) summit in 1980.

7. As part of a wide range of foreign policy tools to influence events outside Libya, Ghaddafi provided a safe haven and weapons training for individuals who wished to instigate revolutionary struggle in their own countries. These were people who had been branded as terrorists, dissidents and insurgents by their own governments but who (in many cases) were engaged in resistance to overthrow dictatorial and colonial regimes. Ghaddafi also created front organisations for their operations in neighbouring states.

8. A number of formal bodies were responsible for the execution of Libya’s foreign policy. These included the Foreign Liaison Secretariat, the Secretariat for External Security, the Divisions of General and Military Intelligence, the Libyan Special Security Forces, and the Secretariat of Justice.

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2 More detail on the pre-conflict phase and, in particular, on the rise of revolutionary thinking and the participation of Sierra Leoneans in training programmes in Libya can be found in the chapter on the Military and Political History of the Conflict in Volume Three A of this report.

3 Gibril Foday-Musa, former student of Fourah Bay College who attended a training programme in Libya in the 1980s; TRC interview conducted in Freetown, 26 September 2003.


9. As part of Libya's foreign policy strategy, Libyan Peoples' Bureaus and Revolutionary Committees / Councils facilitated the setting up of revolutionary movements in a number of countries. In 1985, a renewed drive was undertaken to extend Libya's influence in the third world.\(^7\)

10. Members of the Green Book Study Group at FBC had established contacts with Libyan authorities in the early 1980s. In 1985 three lecturers and 41 students were expelled from FBC following allegedly riotous conduct by students after a convocation ceremony, on and off the campus in Freetown. Alie Kabbah, the student union leader, along with some of the other students who were expelled, travelled to Ghana towards the end of 1985. The Commission received a variety of accounts of the steps that occurred next and the following descriptions can reflect only the experiences and perspectives of those cited.

11. The then President of Ghana, Flight Lieutenant John Jerry Rawlings, and his government had an avowed revolutionary posture. He was perceived as a proponent of pan-Africanism.\(^8\) The majority of the radical students who were expelled from FBC were members of the Pan-African Union organisation (PANAFU). Upon arrival in Accra, some of the students were received by the Chief of the Libyan Peoples' Bureau in Ghana.\(^9\) Some of the students gained admission into the University of Ghana at Legon to complete their studies. The Libyan government paid their fees and their upkeep on scholarships. While in Ghana, the student radicals were invited to attend seminars and conferences in Libya. Their trips were funded by the Revolutionary Council of Libya.\(^10\)

12. Alie Kabbah and his colleagues in Ghana subsequently worked out a programme with the Libyan authorities to train Sierra Leonean revolutionaries to overthrow the All Peoples' Party (APC) regime. About 25 Sierra Leoneans participated in such training in Libya between 1987 and 1989.\(^11\) In 1986 some of the students in Ghana travelled to Conakry to meet with members of PANAFU from Sierra Leone. It was resolved thereafter that four members of PANAFU would be sent from Sierra Leone for training in Libya. They travelled to Ghana where they stayed with Alie Kabbah and his colleagues in their hostel for a week before proceeding to Libya.\(^12\) They were joined by three others who had been based in Ghana. All of these Sierra Leonean dissidents travelled to Libya without proper travel documents.\(^13\) This suggests that the Ghanaian authorities were aware of their presence and movement. The government however declined to comment on the issue on an invitation by the Commission.

\(^7\) Simons, *Libya: The Struggle for Survival*.
\(^8\) Gibril Foday-Musa, former student of Fourah Bay College who attended a training programme in Libya in the 1980s; TRC interview conducted in Freetown, 26 September 2003.
\(^9\) Gibril Foday-Musa, former student of Fourah Bay College who attended a training programme in Libya in the 1980s; TRC interview conducted in Freetown, 26 September 2003.
\(^10\) Gibril Foday-Musa, former student of Fourah Bay College who attended a training programme in Libya in the 1980s; TRC interview conducted in Freetown, 26 September 2003.
\(^11\) Victor Reider, Sierra Leonean participant in training programmes in Libya in the 1980s, TRC interview conducted at TRC Headquarters, Freetown, 21, October 2003. See also Cleo Hancilles, former lecturer at Fourah Bay College (FBC) who conducted ideological lessons for trainees in Libya, TRC interview in Freetown, 31 October 2003. See also Samuel Randolph Tenga, recruit of Foday Sankoh who participated in training in Libya, statement given to the Sierra Leone Police at the Headquarters of the Criminal Investigation Department (CID), Freetown, February 1999.
\(^12\) Victor Reider, Sierra Leonean participant in training programmes in Libya in the 1980s, TRC interview conducted at TRC Headquarters, Freetown, 21, October 2003.
\(^13\) Victor Reider, Sierra Leonean participant in training programmes in Libya in the 1980s, TRC interview conducted at TRC Headquarters, Freetown, 21, October 2003.
13. The training in Libya was mainly premised on ideology. It commenced in around August 1987 and ended in January 1988. Sierra Leoneans who subsequently travelled to Libya received not only ideological training, but also military training. In 1988, another group of Sierra Leoneans was sent to Libya for training.

**Liberia: assembling the RUF war machine and launching war**

14. Liberians were undergoing military training during 1988 to begin a revolution of their own against President Samuel K. Doe. In the course of the training in Libya, a disagreement arose among the Sierra Leonean revolutionaries regarding the timing and manner of the proposed revolution in Sierra Leone. Contrary to what the Libyans and some Sierra Leonean radicals wanted, the group of student revolutionaries wanted a well-structured revolution that would be restricted to Sierra Leone. The student-led group became known as the Alie Kabbah group. The Alie Kabbah group wanted more time to plan such a revolution. The Libyans wanted the Sierra Leonean revolutionaries to join the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL), in their revolution against Doe and then move on to Sierra Leone. Charles Taylor, who was leading the Liberians, was quick to take advantage of the split in the ranks of the Sierra Leoneans by aligning with Foday Sankoh, a former corporal in the Republic of Sierra Leone Military Forces (RSLMF), who emerged as the leader of the more militant faction. Sankoh had no prior prominence within the Sierra Leonean revolutionary movement, but was willing to go with Taylor’s NPFL to Liberia.

15. After the training of the NPFL forces concluded in Libya in 1989, Charles Taylor travelled to Sierra Leone and requested President Joseph Saidu Momoh to allow him to use Sierra Leone as a launch pad for his revolution into Liberia. The request was not granted because of the Mano River Union (MRU) Protocol that disallowed the interference of one MRU Member State in the affairs of another. Not only was Taylor’s request turned down, he was also arrested and incarcerated at the Sierra Leone maximum security prison at Pademba Road. Nevertheless, it was alleged by President Kabbah that the APC Government received money from Taylor to look favourably on his request to use Sierra Leone as a launching pad for war in Liberia.

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14 Victor Reider, Sierra Leonean participant in training programmes in Libya in the 1980s, TRC interview conducted at TRC Headquarters, Freetown, 21, October 2003.
15 Samuel Randolph Tenga, recruit of Foday Sankoh who participated in training in Libya, statement given to the Sierra Leone Police at the Headquarters of the Criminal Investigation Department (CID), Freetown, February 1999. See also Cleo Hancilles, former lecturer at FBC who conducted ideological lessons for trainees in Libya, TRC interview in Freetown, 31 October 2003.
16 Gibril Foday-Musa, former student of Fourah Bay College who attended a training programme in Libya in the 1980s; TRC interview conducted in Freetown, 26 September 2003.
17 Samuel Randolph Tenga, recruit of Foday Sankoh who participated in training in Libya, statement given to the Sierra Leone Police at the Headquarters of the Criminal Investigation Department (CID), Freetown, February 1999.
18 ECOMOG Deployment Review Committee, chaired by Colonel D. D. Oyebanjo; *The Participation of the Nigerian Contingent in the ECOMOG Operation in Sierra Leone*; undated document marked ‘RESTRICTED’; provided to the Commission in hard copy; September 2003, at page 8. More detail and analysis of the events around Taylor’s incarceration in Sierra Leone can be found in the chapter on the Military and Political History of the Conflict in Volume Three A of this report.
19 Alhaji Dr. Ahmad Tejan Kabbah, President of the Republic of Sierra Leone (hereinafter “President Kabbah”); testimony before TRC Thematic Hearings held in Freetown; 05 August 2003; at page 3.
16. In 1990, the Economic Community of West Africa States Ceasefire Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) undertook ‘Operation Liberty’ in an effort to quell the crisis in Liberia. Sierra Leone was used as a forward base and as a launch pad for subsequent ECOMOG operations in Liberia. ECOMOG’s success in preventing the NPFL from taking over Monrovia in 1990 was regarded by Taylor as a calculated move to prevent his ascension as President of Liberia. Taylor saw Sierra Leone as a major player in the success of ECOMOG’s operations in Liberia. In early 1991 Taylor, in an interview with the BBC, vented his disappointment with Sierra Leone and vowed that the country would “taste the bitterness of war.” Taylor had captured territories in Liberia, which he had made available for the further training of RUF fighters. On Sankoh’s request, the NPFL began turning over Sierra Leoneans captured in Liberia for training.  

21 Taylor also provided trainers from among his NPFL commandos.  

17. The RUF launched its insurgency without any independent direction or means, due to the sizeable presence of Taylor’s men among them. As explained in the chapter on the Military and Political History of the Conflict, NPFL fighters outnumbered their RUF counterparts by four to one. In addition, as pointed out by one Sierra Leone researcher, “those Liberian NPFL fighters never took orders from Sankoh, but from Taylor or NPFL commanders.” Taylor and his men were in control of operations at the initial stage; indeed, it has even been suggested that the presence of Sierra Leoneans was merely designed to lend an indigenous flavour to the incursions. It is perhaps best to relay the experience of local people on the ground at this time through excerpts from TRC statements in which Liberian or NPFL fighters are mentioned:

“... On 23 March 1991, there was a cross border attack on Bomaru town, Upper Bambara Chiefdom... The elders resolved to send a fact-finding mission to ascertain what happened...I led a team of seven men to Bomaru. On our arrival, we were shocked and dismayed about the killings of up to 13 civilians. We went to the point where Major Foday was killed. I met his body hanging through the roof and blood flowing freely on the ground. Among the 13 civilians killed were 7 men, 4 women and 2 children. They had bullet holes all over their bodies. We were informed that the conflict was...between the Sierra Leone Army stationed at Bomaru and rebels of the NPFL of Liberia....

21 BBC Focus on Africa; BBC Africa Service; “Interview with rebel leader Charles Taylor of the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL)”; broadcast on 01 and 02 November 1990.  

22 More discussion of the RUF’s recruitment practices can be found in the chapter on the Military and Political History of the Conflict in Volume Three A of this report.  

23 Jonathan Kposowa, former Adjutant General of the RUF who worked closely with the Leader and other members of the High Command throughout the conflict; primary interview conducted at TRC Headquarters, Freetown; 25 June 2003.  

24 Lansana Gberie, Sierra Leone researcher for Partnership Africa Canada, TRC interview conducted at private residence, Freetown; 10 April 2003.  

25 John Benjamin, former Chief Secretary of State and Secretary-General under the National Provisional Ruling Council (NPRC), from 1992 to 1996; TRC Interview conducted at private residence, Freetown; 10 April 2003.
... Early in April, 1991, the Liberians launched the attack on a full scale... days later, the rebels attacked the chiefdom headquarter town of Pendembu. They entered the town firing and bombing from all angles... later they called the trapped residents to assemble at the town barray. The commander, speaking through an interpreter in Liberian pidgin English, explained the mission and their aim of taking on the APC Government. He announced his organisation as Revolutionary United Front of Sierra Leone... he was Colonel Sherita, a chartered mercenary for the mission...\textsuperscript{27}

[and]

"...On the day my father was killed, he was at home discussing with his friends when the rebels attacked shooting indiscriminately with no specific target. These rebels were from Liberia...."\textsuperscript{28}

\textbf{Burkina Faso: an early backer of the RUF’s war efforts}

18. Statements taken by the Commission show that fighters from Burkina Faso, known as Burkinabes, were involved in the early stages of the conflict. Burkinabes were fighting on the side of RUF. Sierra Leone military personnel found Burkina Faso identification cards on some members of the rebel fighters who were killed at battle front:\textsuperscript{29}

"It happened at Ngolawahun, Sorogbema in Pujehun district in May 1991 where Mr. Moseray was asked to hand over his cigarette to the Burkinabes who were part of the RUF. The rebels captured and killed him for refusing to give them his cigarette."\textsuperscript{30}

"It was in 1991 and I was staying with my aunt as a ward. When the RUF - Burkinabes - first entered Pujehun. I was at the stream with my companions. We were laundering clothes. We were caught and sexually abused by those rebels. I was eight years then and about three to four of them had sex with me. I was deflowered..."\textsuperscript{31}

19. Although there were no suggestions that Burkina Faso was involved at state level, the relationship between Taylor and Blaise Campaore of Burkina Faso is noteworthy. The two were close friends. Campaore had introduced Taylor to Thomas Sankara and Ghaddafi in a bid to establish contacts for the rebellion in Liberia.\textsuperscript{32} In 1991, six Burkinabes, led by Captain Ndola Wasando, were captured by Sierra Leone Army personnel in Kailahun.\textsuperscript{33}

\textsuperscript{27} Moijueh Kamara, TRC statement number 4772, Pendembu (Kailahun), 20 January 2003.
\textsuperscript{28} Ibrahim Mansaray, TRC statement number 0614, Matotoka (Tonkolili), 8 December 2002.
\textsuperscript{29} Brigadier (Retired) Julius Maada Bio, Former Head of State and Chairman of the National Provisional Ruling Council (NPRC) from January to March 1996; TRC Interview conducted at private residence, Freetown; 30 September 2003.
\textsuperscript{30} Senessie Johnny, TRC statement number 5843, Bendo-Jaiama Bongor (Bo), 27 October 2003.
\textsuperscript{31} Female victim; TRC confidential statement 4524, Limba Bagbo (Bo), 12 February 2003.
\textsuperscript{32} An account of these meetings and the personal relationships between the men involved is provided in the autobiography of former NPFL General Prince Yormie Johnson.
\textsuperscript{33} See Sierra Leone Daily Mail; Foreign fighters captured in Kailahun; 14 June 1991, at page 1.
20. The speed with which the RUF attacked other towns and villages after the attack on Bomaru on 23 March 1991 was greatly assisted by the involvement of Liberian NPFL fighters and the Burkinabes. The Liberians and Burkinabes were trained in guerrilla warfare and had prior experience in the war in Liberia. The Liberians and Burkinabes fighters devised the crude strategies around enlisting new fighters, including recruiting child combatants. Their intimidatory practices included forcing children to kill their parents in the full view of onlookers from community. The rationale was that those children, forever haunted by their actions, would then stay with the rebels. The Liberians and Burkinabes also committed atrocities ranging from systematic rape to cannibalism.34

21. The initial response of the APC Government of President Joseph Saidu Momoh to the attack on Bomaru was to dismiss it as an act of banditry. However, when Pujehun District and other parts of the country came under attack, it was clear that a strong army was needed to curb the invasion of the RUF. The strength of the military in 1991 was about 3,500 (three thousand five hundred) men. The military had an almost empty armoury.35 It was under these circumstances that the RSLMF requested military assistance from the Republic of Guinea.36

Guinea: the first state to provide combat support for the Government of Sierra Leone

22. The bilateral defence pact between Sierra Leone and Guinea to provide defence assistance in times of crisis dates back to 1971.37 In 1971, Guinean soldiers were in Sierra Leone to help the government of President Siaka Stevens quell an attempted coup. In 1982 upon the request of the Guinean Armed Forces, the RSLMF sent a medical team to help Guineans in the face of a natural disaster.38

23. Guinean Armed Forces personnel arrived in Sierra Leone three weeks after the attack on Bomaru39 and went straight to the battle front at Daru where: “the intervention of the Guinean forces at that time saved the lives of men and officers of the RSLMF who were at Daru barracks which had been surrounded by the rebel forces”.40 The Guinean Armed Forces supplied much-needed arms and ammunition to the RSLMF up to 1993.41

34 More detail on the atrocities committed by NPFL fighters can be found in the chapter on the Military and Political History of the Conflict in Volume Three A of this report.
35 Lieutenant Colonel Simeon N. Sheriff, officer in the Sierra Leone Army (SLA), TRC interview conducted at Defence Headquarters, Freetown, 2 April 2003.
36 Lieutenant Colonel Simeon N. Sheriff, officer in the Sierra Leone Army (SLA), TRC interview conducted at Defence Headquarters, Freetown, 2 April 2003.
37 The defence pact between Sierra Leone and Guinea certainly exists, according to officials contacted in the Ministries of Defence and Foreign Affairs. However, despite prolonged efforts through various channels, the Commission was not able to obtain a copy of the agreement.
38 Lieutenant Colonel Simeon N. Sheriff, officer in the Sierra Leone Army (SLA), TRC interview conducted at Defence Headquarters, Freetown, 2 April 2003.
39 Lieutenant Colonel Simeon N. Sheriff, officer in the Sierra Leone Army (SLA), TRC interview conducted at Defence Headquarters, Freetown, 2 April 2003.
40 Lieutenant Colonel Simeon N. Sheriff, officer in the Sierra Leone Army (SLA), TRC interview conducted at Defence Headquarters, Freetown, 2 April 2003.
41 Lieutenant Colonel Simeon N. Sheriff, officer in the Sierra Leone Army (SLA), TRC interview conducted at Defence Headquarters, Freetown, 2 April 2003.
ULIMO: united with the Government in opposition to RUF / NPFL

24. Since the initial invaders of Sierra Leone were predominantly Liberians, the personnel of the RSLMF had reasons to be suspicious of anyone who had a Liberian accent. Liberians living in refugee camps in Eastern Sierra Leone were not spared such suspicion and in some cases they were targeted by personnel of the RSLMF. Some Liberians were killed in the process.\(^{42}\) The situation in the Liberian refugee camps became deplorable. This resulted in a meeting between Momoh and General Kapeh, who was a former Liberian ambassador to Sierra Leone under President Doe. At that meeting, Kapeh expressed his government’s willingness to help the Sierra Leone government prosecute the war. Doe’s government saw the war as an NPFL invasion.\(^{43}\) As a result of that meeting, Dar Youlou was asked by Kapeh to organise Liberians in the refugee camps and other parts of Sierra Leone into a fighting group to fight along side the RSLMF. Dar Youlou (alias D-Wah) named the group ‘Liberian United Defence Force’ (LUDF). The name LUDF was rejected and changed to United Liberation Movement (ULIMO). According to a senior officer of the group, the name LUDF was changed because they were not in Liberia and they were not fighting for the Liberian people, but for Sierra Leoneans.

25. ULIMO mainly recruited Mandingos and Krahns. Mandingos and Krahns were supporters of the Doe regime and therefore the main targets of the NPFL fighting forces:

“....At one time in Monrovia, my father called me and told me that the names Koroma and Kanneh were the names the Liberians didn’t want to hear. If you were in Liberia and you carried any of those names, you would be killed. My father was a twin; Koroma was his name. When we crossed the river, they killed my father and took away all his belongings...”\(^{44}\)

26. Some former soldiers of the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL), who fled from the war in Liberia, were also in the ULIMO group\(^ {45}\) and these soldiers were given guns and uniforms. One of the training camps of ULIMO was in an oil palm farm near Kpetema village along the Kenema and Zimmi highway in the East of Sierra Leone. Major James Yayah Kanu, who was the Brigade Commander in Kenema, was charged with the responsibility of overseeing the ULIMO training. After the training, ULIMO forces were put under his command.\(^ {46}\) The Liberian Roosevelt Johnson was named the field commander of ULIMO.

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\(^{42}\) Philip Maxwell Cartos, Liberian former ULIMO fighter, TRC interview conducted at Mapeh Camp, Western Area, October 2003.

\(^{43}\) Colonel M. S. Koroma, officer in the Sierra Leone Army SLA), formerly of the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL) and later ULIMO; TRC interview conducted in Freetown, September 2003.

\(^{44}\) TRC closed hearing featuring a Sierra Leonian former resident of Liberia, conducted in Kailahun Town, Kailahun District, 14 May 2003.

\(^{45}\) Colonel M. S. Koroma, officer in the Sierra Leone Army SLA), formerly of the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL) and later ULIMO; TRC interview conducted in Freetown, September 2003.

\(^{46}\) Colonel M. S. Koroma, officer in the Sierra Leone Army SLA), formerly of the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL) and later ULIMO; TRC interview conducted in Freetown, September 2003.
27. ULIMO was to set up a joint task force with the RSLAF at the war front to launch offensives against RUF positions and recapture RUF-controlled territories. However, from the outset ULIMO commanders were intent on establishing a corridor into Liberia to resume the war against Taylor’s NPFL. A former ULIMO fighter told the Commission that the organisation also wanted to save the Liberians in refugee camps in Sierra Leone from the abuses of personnel of the RSLAF.47

28. Internal ethnic divisions soon began to compromise the cohesion of the ULIMO force. In particular, fighters began to align themselves according to their allegiances to either the Mandingo or the Krahn ethnic groups, the two dominant tribes in the organisation. Ethnic Krahn fighters remained close to Roosevelt Johnson and formed a loyalist group called ULIMO-J. Meanwhile Mandingo financiers in Kenema and some Guinean officials rallied around rival commander Alhaji Kromah to create the splinter group ULIMO-K.48 In 1993 ULIMO fighters from both sets crossed into Liberia to fight against Taylor’s NPFL. The weapons supplied for the war against the RUF were instead used by ULIMO to carry out its own fight against Taylor and the NPFL in Liberia.

29. ULIMO troops under the command of Charles Collins, who went to protect the diamond fields in Tongo in 1991, executed hundreds of civilians accused of being members or collaborators of the RUF. Most of the executions were carried out on a hill between Lalihun and Giehun. This hill became known as ‘Rebel Hill’, a nickname that is still used by the locals today.49 Although ULIMO succeeded in retaking some areas, including Pujehun, the RUF invasion of the country persisted. Greater military strength was required to protect Sierra Leone from the incursions.

Nigeria: intervening to assist the Government of Sierra Leone

30. At the request of the Sierra Leone government, Nigeria sent a small force in late 1991 and they guarded RSLMF bases and installations. Apart from formal requests or protocols for military assistance, officials of both Nigeria and Sierra Leone pointed to socio-cultural ties between the two countries as good reason for Nigerian support. Socio-cultural ties between Sierra Leone and Nigeria have their genesis in the end of slavery and the establishment of Freetown as a haven for freed slaves. Slaves from Nigeria bound for the New World, freed by British naval boats, were resettled in Freetown. These ex-slaves from the Americas and Britain became known as the Krios, with a cultural identity that drew much from Nigerian heritage. President Olusegun Obasanjo talked about this ‘blood relationship’ between Nigerians and Sierra Leoneans as the foundation and justification for Nigeria’s military and diplomatic intervention in Sierra Leone.50

47 Philip Maxwell Cartos, Liberian former ULIMO fighter; TRC interview conducted at Mapeh Camp, Western Area, October 2003.
48 Bai Sidi, Liberian former ULIMO fighter; TRC interview conducted at Mapeh Camp, Western Area, October 2003.
49 Chief Kini Lansana Charles, resident of Tongo Field, TRC interview conducted in Tongo Field, Kenema District, 3 August 2003.
31. The desire to give a regional outlook to ECOMOG in Liberia also accounted for Nigeria’s deployment of troops in Sierra Leone. Nigeria also supplied direct support to Sierra Leone’s own military efforts. It sent soldiers to Sierra Leone to protect military installations and other strategic facilities so as to enable Sierra Leone send a contingent of troops to the ECOMOG mission in Liberia.  

32. In April 1992 junior officers of the RSLMF moved to Freetown from the war front and overthrew the government of Momoh. They established the National Provisional Ruling Council (NPRC) and promised to expel the rebels from Sierra Leone. In pursuit of this promise the NPRC embarked on mass recruitment into the army and thousands of youths who had little or no formal education found themselves in the army.

33. The NPRC continued the diplomatic and military relations between Nigeria and Sierra Leone, and a “Status of Forces Agreement” (SOFA) was signed with the Nigerian government, which led to the deployment of the Nigerian Armed Forces Training Group (NATAG). NATAG had a specific mandate to provide training to the Sierra Leone military. In spite of such support the fortunes of the Sierra Leone army at the war front did not change for the better and by the end of 1993 the RUF had taken much of the Southern and Eastern parts of the country.

Phase II of the Conflict: 1994-1997

Government of Sierra Leone searches for solutions through diplomacy and non-state private armies

34. By the beginning of 1994 disciplinary problems, due to factional fighting in ULIMO’s ranks, began to take their toll on the organisation’s prosecution of the war in Sierra Leone. There was a dispute between Kapeh and Youlou, commanders of ULIMO. Colonel Tom Nyuma, NPRC secretary of state for the Eastern province, called a meeting to settle the dispute. Youlou took the opportunity to express his anger and dislike for Kapeh. Following that, he ordered Mandingo fighters of ULIMO to kill Kapeh. Kapeh tried to escape, but was killed. Following this incident, in June and July 1994, all ULIMO personnel operating in Sierra Leone were disarmed by the SLA contingent at Waterloo and taken to the Allen Town camp in Mayami.

35. By the end of the year, the RUF had brought the war to the outskirts of the capital city, Freetown, when it captured Newton. The NPRC chairman, Captain Valentine Strasser, promising amnesty, asked the RUF to cease hostilities. The RUF turned down the request and continued hostilities.

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52 More detail on the NPRC’s mass recruitment drive of 1992 can be found in the chapter on the Military and Political History of the Conflict in Volume Three A of this report.
The maiden intervention of the United Nations (UN)

36. In November 1994 the NPRC Chairman, Valentine Strasser, wrote a letter to the UN Secretary-General asking the UN to facilitate negotiations between his government and the RUF. The UN Security Council responded by sending an exploratory mission to Sierra Leone on 15 December 1994 and the team travelled across the country. Following the report of the Mission, Mr. Berhanu Dink of Ethiopia was appointed Special Envoy to Sierra Leone two months later. The role of the UN Special Envoy included facilitating negotiations between the Government of Sierra Leone and the RUF and returning Sierra Leone to civilian rule. However, the presence of the UN Special Envoy in Sierra Leone did not stop the terror campaign of the RUF.

37. It was in these circumstances that Strasser’s government hired the services of the Ghurkhas Security Group (GSG) in 1995. The GSG was a privately owned British company formed in 1989 and specialised in recruiting former British army Ghurkhas officers and soldiers for security services. GSG was sub-contracted to the Sierra Leone mission by J&S Franklin Limited, a British manufacturer of non-lethal military equipment and a weapons sales agent.

38. The GSG was to train the presidential guards and the RSLMF in counter insurgency techniques and safeguard Camp Charlie - a military base at Mile 91. The GSG arrived in Sierra Leone in February 1995 with 58 Ghurkhas and three European managers. The NPRC had acquired two Russian Mi-24 helicopter gunships, manned by Belarusian mercenary pilots, and engaged in attacks on a number of RUF bases. The GSG refused to conduct offensive operations against the RUF, arguing that it did not form part of their contract. On 24 February 1995 the GSG commander, Mackenzie, and other personnel were killed in an ambush by the RUF and two months later the GSG withdrew from Sierra Leone. In their short stay, the Ghurkhas achieved nothing. The abrupt withdrawal of the GSG, at a time when the RUF had intensified its operations in areas close to the capital city, not only created a precarious security situation, but caused much embarrassment for the NPRC government which had promised to pursue the rebels by land, sea and air.

39. The NPRC government asked a former AFL soldier, Brigadier-General David Bropleh, to re-organise the disarmed ULIMO fighters so that they could fight on the side of government. The NPRC government and ULIMO authorities agreed, among other things, to drop the name ULIMO and the fighters were to be constituted as part of the Sierra Leone Army as a new unit called the Special Task Force. Members of the Special Task Force would serve under the laws and army rules of Sierra Leone. The recruited Liberians were issued with Sierra Leone military identity cards.

53 See Captain (Retired) Valentine E. M. Strasser, Former Head of State and Chairman of the National Provisional Ruling Council (NPRC); testimony before TRC Thematic Hearings held in Freetown, 30 July 2003. See also Mercenaries, African Security Dilemma, at page 87.
54 For more discussion of the enlistment of private security and logistical support by the NPRC, see Vines, A.; “Ghurkhas and the private security business in Africa” and “Fighting for Diamonds - Private military companies in Sierra Leone” in Cilliers, Peace, Profit and Plunder?.
55 See President Kabbah, testimony before TRC Thematic Hearings in Freetown, 05 August 2003; see also the secondary sources listed in the previous footnote.
56 Colonel M. S. Koroma, officer in the Sierra Leone Army SLA), formerly of the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL) and later ULIMO; TRC interview conducted in Freetown, September 2003.
57 Colonel M. S. Koroma; TRC interview conducted in Freetown, September 2003.
58 Colonel M. S. Koroma; TRC interview conducted in Freetown, September 2003.
40. On 5 May 1995 the first batch of Special Task Force personnel was re-armed and sent with Sierra Leone Army personnel to fight at the Waterloo front against the RUF. On 10 June 1995 a second batch was re-armed and also sent to the war front in the Bo District area. The Special Task Force went on to score significant successes at its various war front deployments. In spite of the successes, there were many areas that remained under the control RUF.

The enlistment of Executive Outcomes

41. The NPRC government secured the services of Executive Outcomes, a South African private security firm. Executive Outcomes was introduced to Strasser by Michael Grunberg and Anthony Buckingham of the mining company, Branch Energy. The contract required Executive Outcomes to provide between 150 and 200 soldiers, fully equipped with helicopter support. Executive Outcomes was to help repel the RUF from the Freetown area, secure government control of the diamond areas in Kono, help stabilise the whole country and retrain the army and the Kamajor militia. The company was to provide logistical support, sophisticated communications equipment and transportation for the army.

42. Executive Outcomes was set up in 1989 and was run by Luther Eeben Barlow, previously a Lieutenant Colonel in the South African military intelligence unit and a senior member of the Civilian Cooperation Bureau (CCB). Executive Outcomes, in its early days, developed a flourishing business relationship with the diamond-mining sector. In 1993 Executive Outcomes carried out its first significant military operation in Angola for the Angolan government against UNITA.

43. Between 1993 and 1995, Executive Outcomes changed its strategy and its company profile. It expanded and became a fully-fledged private army. British operations were established under Executive Outcomes (UK) Limited and registered in London in September 1993. Barlow registered Executive Outcomes as a private company in South Africa in 1994. Its men were mostly ex-commandos who had worked for the former apartheid government of South Africa.

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59 Colonel M. S. Koroma, officer in the Sierra Leone Army SLA), formerly of the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL) and later ULIMO; TRC interview conducted in Freetown, September 2003.
60 More detail on the successes of pro-Government forces during this period can be found in the chapter on the Military and Political History of the Conflict in Volume Three A of this report.
61 More background detail on the entry of Executive Outcomes into the conflict can be found in the chapter on Mineral Resources earlier in Volume Three B.
63 The CCB was a covert unit of the South African military that conducted assassinations and dirty tricks operations against anti-apartheid activists.
44. Executive Outcomes was to be paid two million US dollars ($2,000,000) a month by the Sierra Leone government. Executive Outcomes financed its own activities at the beginning, hoping to be reimbursed by the government of Sierra Leone when control over the diamond mining areas was regained. Executive Outcomes encountered financial problems between 1996 and 1997 because of non-payment for its activities in Sierra Leone. In all, the company was only paid about a third of its total fees for the eighteen months it was in Sierra Leone. Part of these funds allegedly came from an IMF loan to the government. Executive Outcomes was also partly paid in the form of diamond concessions offered to Branch Energy, a diamond mining company with close links to Executive Outcomes.

45. Executive Outcomes, with its reconnaissance capabilities, air power, and guerrilla warfare experience was able to beat back the RUF to Kailahun and the Liberian border. It retook Kono and destroyed Camp Zogoda, the RUF jungle base that acted as its headquarters. All of these military and strategic gains were accomplished in only a few months.

*RUF seeks foreign assistance in the face of defeat*

46. The RUF was thrown into disarray but it was not annihilated. In order to continue its campaign in Sierra Leone, the RUF fell back on external support. Libya, which had provided training for Sankoh and other Sierra Leonians, continued to give support to the RUF. In a letter to Brother Mohamed Talibi, the Ambassador of the Libyan Arab Peoples Jamahiriya in Accra, Ghana, dated 26 June 1996, Sankoh wrote:

"I want to thank you and the other brothers at home again for the half million United States Dollars (500,000USD) which I received through you for the purchase of needed materials to pursue the military mission."

47. In the same letter, Sankoh went on to make a further request for $1 million to "purchase twice the listed materials for effective and smooth operation".

48. By the end of 1995 the NPRC clearly had the upper hand in the war as the RUF had been pushed through Kailahun District into Liberia. At this time, the people of Sierra Leone were anxious for a return to democratic rule.
**Elections and diplomatic initiatives to end the war**

49. In February and March 1996, multi-party elections brought the Ahmad Tejan Kabbah-led Sierra Leone Peoples’ Party (SLPP) to power. External involvement in Sierra Leone’s war remained insignificant, mainly taking the form of international diplomacy and the occasional condemnation of human rights violations and abuses taking place in the country.

**Britain and the West: strategic contributions towards stability**

50. Britain provided financial support for the elections of February and March 1996 with a contribution of some £17 million. The EU, the Commonwealth, the US and the UN also provided funds and technical support. The emerging opportunity for stability in Sierra Leone saw other countries bolstering diplomatic initiatives to end the war.

**Libya: bridging the gap to Peace Talks in 1996**

51. The Commission heard that Colonel Ghaddafi admitted supporting the RUF when he was confronted on the issue by Julius Maada Bio, the second Chairman of the NPRC, in 1996. Moreover Ghaddafi provided Bio with vital information and direction as to how to get the RUF to the table for peace talks. The opening of those discussions was partly facilitated by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General of the UN to Sierra Leone, Mr. Berhanu Dinka.

**Côte d’Ivoire: a host and a catalyst for Peace Talks**

52. Konan Bedie, the President of Côte d’Ivoire and his foreign minister, Amara Essé, were also instrumental in bringing the SLPP government and Foday Sankoh together in Abidjan. Essé went to the bush to persuade Sankoh to attend the peace talks. The Abidjan talks resulted in the signing of a Peace Accord on 30 November 1996. The main elements of the agreement included the total and immediate end of hostilities, disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration of all combatants, the withdrawal from the country of all mercenaries and amnesty for RUF fighters.

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69 Brigadier (Retired) Julius Maada Bio, Former Head of State and Chairman of the National Provisional Ruling Council (NPRC) from January to March 1996; TRC Interview conducted at private residence, Freetown; 30 September 2003.

70 Brigadier (Retired) Julius Maada Bio, Former Head of State and Chairman of the National Provisional Ruling Council (NPRC) from January to March 1996; TRC Interview conducted at private residence, Freetown; 30 September 2003.
53. Sierra Leoneans were generally uncomfortable with the Abidjan Accord. They were displeased, for example, with the fact that Côte d'Ivoire had allowed the RUF to establish an office in Abidjan. This gesture was not without precedent, however. Côte d'Ivoire also permitted UNITA, which was waging war against the Angolan government, to set up an office in Abidjan.

The RUF regroups and poses a renewed threat

54. According to Kabbah, the RUF's signing of the Abidjan Accord was a deception. A few days after the signing of the Accord, the government intercepted a message sent by Sankoh to his field commander, Sam Bockarie (alias Mosquito), in which Sankoh told Sam Bockarie that he signed the Accord to relieve international pressure on the RUF. In the same message, Sankoh was said to have ordered his men to resume hostilities on an even bigger scale. A month before the Abidjan Accord, Sankoh wrote a letter to Talibi indicating that he had earlier received US $29,000 through a certain Daniel Kallon. Sankoh said in the letter that he would use the period after the signing of the Abidjan Peace Agreement to “transact (my) business in getting (our) fighting materials freely and easily”. He further requested US $700,000 to help purchase fighting materials.71

55. Kabbah, demonstrating commitment to the negotiated settlement of the war, terminated the contract of Executive Outcomes in accordance with the Abidjan Accord. The RUF had insisted on the early implementation of the clause that provided for the withdrawal of all mercenaries. This was to dramatically weaken the government's military position. Sankoh had refused to sign the document authorising the deployment of UN monitors. Although the Executive Outcomes contract was terminated several of the company’s personnel stayed on in Sierra Leone and took up other security-related assignments.

56. After his election, Kabbah made requests to the international community for assistance in the areas of intelligence-gathering and training.72 The response of the international community was negligible. Kabbah’s request to the US government to assist his government with weapons, when it became clear that the Abidjan Accord was not holding, 73 was turned down. Another request for assistance in training soldiers at Benguema to the US and British governments, resulted in these countries sending five soldiers, two Americans and three British. The highest-ranking soldier was a sergeant.74 After a brief spell, the five trainers left without informing the Commander-in-Chief of the RSLMF.75

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71 Letter from Foday Sankoh to Mohamed Talibi of the Libyan Peoples’ Revolutionary Council, Accra; dated 4 October 1996; Criminal Investigations Department (CID) of the Sierra Leone Police; letter included in the dossier pertaining to the ‘Foday Sankoh / 8 May 2000’ case; dossier provided to the TRC in July 2003.
72 See President Kabbah, testimony before TRC Thematic Hearings in Freetown, 05 August 2003.
73 See President Kabbah, testimony before TRC Thematic Hearings in Freetown, 05 August 2003.
74 See President Kabbah, testimony before TRC Thematic Hearings in Freetown, 05 August 2003.
75 See President Kabbah, testimony before TRC Thematic Hearings in Freetown, 05 August 2003.
Phase III of the Conflict: 1997 – 2002

The coup of 25 May 1997

57. In the early months of 1997 there was an alleged coup plot against the Government of Kabbah. The government requested Nigerian assistance to investigate the coup plot, which resulted in Johnny Paul Koroma and other junior military officers being charged with treason. The trials were taking place when soldiers of the Sierra Leone Army and a handful of civilians staged a coup on 25 May 1997. Following the coup, Kabbah and his cabinet fled to Guinea and the plotters established themselves as the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC).

Greater international community involvement to end the coup

58. The coup took place in an optimistic post-Cold War decade that had seen the collapse of undemocratic one-party and military regimes across the world. The coup was received with shock by world leaders as a setback for the growth of democracy in Africa. It was swiftly condemned.

ECOWAS, OAU and the Commonwealth enter the fray

59. On 4 June 1997, the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) at its annual meeting in Harare, only one week after the coup, called on Africa and the world not to recognise the military junta in Sierra Leone. At the same meeting the OAU appealed to ECOWAS to assist the people of Sierra Leone to restore constitutional order. The OAU stressed the “imperative need to implement the Abidjan Peace Agreement” which, “continued to serve as a viable framework for peace, stability and reconciliation in Sierra Leone”.

60. Consequently, in June 1997, ECOWAS heads of governments put forward three objectives on the Sierra Leone conflict. The objectives were: 1) to ensure the early restoration of the legitimate government of Kabbah; 2) the return of peace and security to Sierra Leone; and 3) the resolution of the issues of refugees and displaced persons. The OAU aimed to establish dialogue and negotiations with the AFRC junta. Failing persuasion it aimed to impose economic sanctions AFRC. The use of force to remove the junta from power was also considered. A committee of four was established to implement the action plan. The committee comprised the foreign ministers of Côte d’Ivoire, Guinea, Ghana and Nigeria. The foreign minister of Liberia was later added to the committee, making it a Committee of Five.

61. The Committee first sought and received the support of the UN Security Council for its initiatives in Sierra Leone. From 17 to 18 July 1997 the Committee met with representatives of the AFRC in Abidjan. The Committee and junta representatives agreed that the issues relating to the crisis in Sierra Leone should be peacefully resolved and a cease-fire was agreed upon. It was also agreed that the junta would be allowed to prepare to return the country to constitutional order. From 29 to 30 July 1997 the parties met again in Abidjan.

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76 OAU Heads of Government resolved in June 1997 that the military coup establishing the AFRC in Sierra Leone was unlawful and should be reversed by ECOWAS.
While the meeting was in progress, the AFRC announced in Freetown that they would remain in power until 2001. This brought the renewed Abidjan negotiations to an abrupt end.

62. Ecowas heads of government at the twentieth ordinary summit, in Abuja from 28 to 29 August 1997, proposed the imposition of economic and other sanctions on the junta. These sanctions covered weapons, petroleum and petroleum products, a travel ban on members of the AFRC and members of their families and an embargo on humanitarian aid. Recognising Article 53 of the UN Charter, which provides that “no enforcement action shall be taken under regional arrangement or by regional agencies without the authorisation of the Security Council”, the proposals were tabled before the UN Security Council for approval. The UN Security Council Resolution 1132 of 8 October 1997 endorsed the sanctions but declined to endorse the use of force to remove the junta from power or an embargo on humanitarian aid. Under Article 7 of the Ecowas decision, Ecomog was mandated to “employ all necessary means to enforce the implementation of this decision”. Prior to the endorsement of sanctions and embargo, but after the coup of 25 May 1997, the UN Secretary-General appointed Mr. Francis Okelo of Uganda as the new Special Envoy to Sierra Leone.

63. The sanctions imposed by Ecowas and the UN were broadly welcomed by Sierra Leoneans opposed to the AFRC. However, the measures took a heavy toll on the civilian population. The fact that Ecomog targeted humanitarian aid in enforcing the sanctions partly contributed to the suffering of civilians. On 7 November 1997 the World Food Programme, warned that the health of thousands was at stake because humanitarian assistance had not been allowed to cross into Sierra Leone from Guinea.

64. In spite of the worsening humanitarian situation, Ecomog and the international community believed that the sanctions were vital to the success of the intervention. This was also the view held by most Sierra Leoneans. Peter Penfold, the former UK High Commissioner to Sierra Leone, remarked that “the people of Sierra Leone were resolved to undergo anything in exchange for democracy.”

65. Testimonies to the Commission suggest that the sanctions and embargo greatly contributed to the junta’s willingness to meet with the Ecowas Committee of Five on 23 October 1997, in Conakry, Guinea for a fresh round of Peace Talks.

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80 See the Integrated Regional Information Network (IRIN) of the UN-DHA; IRIN West Africa, Background on The Conakry Peace Accord, available at the website: www.reliefweb.org.
81 Peter Penfold, former High Commissioner of the United Kingdom to Sierra Leone; TRC Interview conducted at TRC Headquarters, Freetown; 31 July 2003.
66. At the Conakry meeting of October 1997, the representatives of the junta and the ECOWAS Committee of Five agreed that the junta would hand over power to President Kabbah on 22 May 1998, but that the sanctions and embargo provided for in UN Security Council Resolution 1132 were to be maintained. Provisions were made for the immediate cessation of hostilities and the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration of all combatants. Disarmament and demobilisation of combatants was to commence on 1 December and end on 31 December 1997. Humanitarian assistance, which would be monitored by ECOMOG and UN military observer operations, would recommence on 14 November 1997. All those involved in the coup were granted immunity from prosecution. This agreement came to be known as the Conakry Peace Plan. In a communiqué issued by the Committee, it was recognised that Sankoh was expected to return to Sierra Leone in order to support the peace process.

67. In November 1997, the British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, invited President Kabbah to attend the Commonwealth summit in Edinburgh as his personal guest. President Kabbah was given the opportunity to put across the problem of Sierra Leone to the summit. The summit condemned the military dictatorship in Nigeria and its abysmal human rights credentials, but noted “the positive contribution the country was making through ECOWAS in support of democratic government in the region”. The summit also condemned the military junta in Sierra Leone and called for the reinstatement of Kabbah’s government. It suspended Sierra Leone from participating in the councils of the Commonwealth and Peter Penfold, British High Commissioner to Sierra Leone, went with Kabbah and his cabinet to Guinea to demonstrate the determination of the British government to support democracy in Sierra Leone. The British government also provided £250,000 to Kabbah and his cabinet while they were in exile in Guinea. These funds were used to run the government-in-exile. The British government also funded the setting up of Radio 98.1 FM. The radio station was an effective propaganda machine used by the government against the military junta.

68. The Conakry Peace Plan seemed like a viable framework for peace in Sierra Leone. In a press release issued on 5 November 1997, Kabbah stated that he found the peace plan acceptable and that the Conakry Peace Plan contained a number of positive elements, which would lead to the resolution of the crisis in Sierra Leone. Kabbah pledged that his government would do everything possible to co-operate with ECOWAS and its monitoring group, ECOMOG.

69. In spite of the acceptance of the Conakry Peace Plan by all the parties to the conflict, each gave it a different interpretation. Questions in relation to disarmament, the Army, the release of Sankoh, and Nigeria’s dominance in ECOMOG became the subject of several unproductive meetings between the junta and ECOMOG.

70. At its seventh meeting in Abuja on December 1997 the ECOWAS Committee of Five maintained that the Conakry Peace Plan remained the best framework for the restoration of peace and constitutional order in Sierra Leone. The reality was that the Conakry Peace Plan was rapidly collapsing.

71. The international community was not enamoured with the Nigerian ruler, Sani Abacha, who while leading a dictatorship back home presented himself internationally as a fighter for democracy in Sierra Leone. In its desire to distance itself from Sani Abacha, the international community declined to provide much-needed support for the Nigerian-led ECOMOG.
Sandline International: Kabbah brings in a non-state private army

72. The period following the 1997 coup saw the biggest diplomatic engagement on Sierra Leone since the start of the conflict in 1991. However, it became clear that force would be needed to remove the junta. Kabbah and his government sought the services of a non-state, profit-making military outfit. Kabbah contracted the British private military company, Sandline International. It has been alleged that it was the British High Commissioner to Sierra Leone, Peter Penfold, who introduced Sandline to the President. In an interview with the Commission, Penfold denied this version of events but acknowledged that Kabbah did consult him on the terms of the Sandline contract. Kabbah’s contact with Sandline was actually initiated in mid-1997 by Rupert Bowen, a former diplomat and intelligence operative. Bowen was Sandline’s representative in the West African Region and a friend of Penfold. By the middle of July 1997, Tim Spicer, the head of Sandline International, had flown to West Africa to meet with Kabbah and ECOMOG.

73. Sandline was contracted in the sum of US$1.5 million a month to provide training, arms and equipment support to the pro-government forces. Sandline International was also allegedly asked to plan, execute and co-ordinate an assault on Freetown. Sandline’s operations in Sierra Leone were reportedly financed by a Vancouver-based Indian national, Rakesh Saxena.

74. Sandline was registered in the Bahamas and had its headquarters in Chelsea, sharing its premises with Branch Energy and Heritage Oil. It also had offices in the USA headed by Bernie McCabe, a former officer in the US Army Special Forces.

75. The operations of Sandline International in Sierra Leone had no independent structure. Sandline depended on ECOMOG, which co-ordinated the activities of the pro-Kabbah forces within and outside of Sierra Leone. Sandline may have been forced to operate covertly because of a UN arms embargo on the Government of Sierra Leone and the AFRC junta at the time.

76. By the end of 1997, the Conakry Peace Plan was in tatters. The Kamajors, a pro-government civil defence militia, had launched “Operation Black December”, attacking several junta positions. The Kamajors succeeded in taking most of the major roads in the east and south of the country. By the beginning of 1998, skirmishes between the junta and ECOMOG personnel on the ground in Sierra Leone increased. As the security situation deteriorated, humanitarian assistance ceased. Rhetoric from the exiled Government, ECOMOG and the junta moved increasingly away from peace and back to war.

77. On 5 February 1998, the AFRC launched an attack on an ECOMOG patrol team. ECOMOG forces launched a full-scale attack and forcefully removed the military junta from power. On 10 March 1998, President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah was reinstated.

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82 Peter Penfold, former High Commissioner of the United Kingdom to Sierra Leone; TRC Interview conducted at TRC Headquarters, Freetown; 31 July 2003.
83 Background information on Sandline International has been drawn from the secondary source: Mercenaries: African Security Dilemma, at page 98.
84 See Fred Marrafone, former Executive Outcomes officer, TRC interview conducted in Freetown, 4 June 2003.
78. ECOWAS deserves credit for its role in the Sierra Leone. Nigeria’s role should be highlighted. It provided the bulk of the military resources deployed in Sierra Leone in the name of ECOWAS / ECOMOG. Many ECOWAS Member States, like Guinea Bissau, Cape Verde, Niger and Benin, lacked the resources to do much beyond voting on resolutions at ECOWAS meetings. While there has been no suggestion that Ghana did anything to fuel the war, Ghana’s contribution to the search for peace was not significant. Countries such as Burkina Faso and Liberia were covert backers of the rebels.

Liberia, Libya and Burkina Faso: the network of RUF backers coalesces around the AFRC

79. Although the ECOMOG military intervention succeeded in removing the RUF/AFRC coalition from power and reinstating Kabbah’s government, it did not have the endorsement of the UN Security Council. On 16 March 1998, the UN Security Council, issued Resolution 1156 welcoming the return of Kabbah to power, followed by Resolution 1171 in June, prohibiting the sale of arms and related material to non-governmental forces in Sierra Leone. The Resolution included a travel ban on all members of the overthrown junta and their families.

80. When ECOMOG attacked Freetown, the junta forces and their RUF allies did not put up any resistance. They escaped through the Freetown peninsula to the northern part of the country and to the RUF stronghold in Kailahun in the east. This meant that the RUF and the AFRC did not lose significant manpower or equipment. Some nine months later the alliance was able to capture half of the country and occupy most areas of the capital for two weeks.

81. The war in Sierra Leone persisted during the third phase largely because the RUF controlled the diamond-producing areas. Taylor became the conduit for the sale of the diamonds on the international market. In return the RUF received arms and ammunitions through Taylor.

82. Liberia’s involvement in the conflict was part of a wider network of outside support for the RUF, which also involved Burkina Faso and Libya. However, there is no evidence before the Commission that Libya and Burkina Faso shared Liberia’s interest in the diamond resources of Sierra Leone. Although Libya had promised to withdraw its support for the RUF there are suggestions that following the coup of 1997, Libyan support for the RUF and its allies continued. Arms and ammunitions were flown from Libya via Burkina Faso and Liberia to the RUF. In a statement given to the Sierra Leone Police, Yair Gal (aka Yair Galklein), an Israeli “businessman”, testified that while travelling from Burkina Faso to Monrovia in December 1998, he witnessed the loading of rifles into an Air Burkina plane. The plane flew into Monrovia. Upon arrival the rifles were loaded into a Jeep, and driven to the border with Sierra Leone.

85 Yair Gal (alias “Yair Galklein”) Israeli businessman involved in diamond mining companies and dealerships in both Liberia and Sierra Leone during the conflict period; statement given to the Sierra Leone Police Force at RSLMF Headquarters, Cockrill, Freetown; 28 January 1999
86 Yair Gal (alias “Yair Galklein”) Israeli businessman involved in diamond mining companies and dealerships in both Liberia and Sierra Leone during the conflict period; statement given to the Sierra Leone Police Force at RSLMF Headquarters, Cockrill, Freetown; 28 January 1999
In December 1998 two Ukrainian planes loaded with arms and ammunition from Libya flew into Monrovia at midnight. The arms and ammunitions were then loaded into four trailer trucks belonging to Simon Rosenbloom, another Israeli. Three of the trucks went to Lofa country from where the arms and ammunitions were transported to the RUF base in Kono. In his testimony to the Commission at the public hearings held in Makeni, Bombali District on 29 May 2003, Reverend Father Mario Guerra testified that, while he was in captivity, two hundred rebel soldiers – albeit mostly affiliated to the AFRC – received a large number of rifles of identical make. This was in contravention of UN Security Council Resolution 1171, which prohibited the sale of arms and other related materials to non-government forces in Sierra Leone.

Although Liberia, Burkina Faso and Libya constituted a network of support for the RUF, they did not share the same motivations. Ideology accounted for Libya’s involvement in the Sierra Leone conflict. Libya wanted a revolutionary regime in Sierra Leone but the RUF lacked the necessary organisational cohesion and revolutionary discipline. Many commentators have described Sierra Leone’s civil war as one of the most brutish and deadliest wars in recent times. The RUF has been credited as one of the primary violators of human rights in Sierra Leone. As the civil war unfolded these facts could not have been unknown to Libya. The regime in Burkina Faso claimed to be revolutionary. It would seem that the strong relations between Burkina Faso and Libya resulted in Burkina Faso’s involvement in the Sierra Leone conflict as an ‘errand boy’ for Libya. Individual Burkinabes also benefited from the arms and diamonds trade.

Misuse of the Red Cross emblem

Humanitarian aid was another dimension of the involvement of external actors in the conflict. International organisations were pivotal in meeting the medical, food and shelter needs of people directly affected by the war.

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) was a leading agency in humanitarian intervention in the country. Under the Geneva Conventions and the Additional Protocols, the ICRC is mandated to bring neutral and impartial assistance and protection to victims of war, regardless of their race, religion, origin or sex. In carrying out its work the ICRC maintains contact with all parties to a conflict. The Red Cross emblem, depicting neutrality and impartiality, is relied upon for the protection and safety of ICRC staff, facilities and equipment. Sierra Leone is a party to the Geneva Conventions and the Additional Protocols.

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88 Reverend Father Mario Guerra, Catholic priest and long-time resident of Sierra Leone who was abducted and held captive by the AFRC in late 1998, testimony before TRC public hearings in Makeni, Bombali District, 29 May 2003.
89 See the multiple reports produced by international NGOs documenting the human rights abuses carried out by the RUF; for example, both Amnesty International (www.amnesty.org) and Human Rights Watch (www.hrw.org) maintain web archives of their reports on Sierra Leone.
87. In 1992 the ICRC established a permanent structure in Freetown as a sub-delegation managed from Abidjan. In 1995 the Government of Sierra Leone authorised delegates of the ICRC to assess the humanitarian situation in Kailahun District, which was under RUF control at the time. In February 1996 the ICRC established an assistance programme for civilians in RUF territories in Kailahun District and in the course of the conflict, the ICRC extended its assistance to victims of the war all over the country.

88. In the events leading up to the 6 January 1999 invasion of Freetown, there were reports of a helicopter bearing ICRC insignia flying above Sierra Leone for non-humanitarian purposes. The helicopter with the Red Cross emblem was reported to be delivering arms, ammunition and other supplies to the RUF:

"A helicopter was coming from Liberia to supply arms in Sierra Leone. I saw one of those helicopters. The helicopter was covered with ICRC flag so that people will not know...."  

[and]

"There were helicopters operating out of Liberia coming in to the rebels. We have fairly solid proof that the Red Cross helicopter was supplying weapons to the rebels. Now, if it was on behalf of the Red Cross or whether it was being used by individuals for Red Cross, or they chartered it, I am not too sure...."

89. Neil Ellis, a government helicopter pilot, informed the Commission that the government had received repeated warnings about the use of ICRC-marked helicopters to fly arms supplies to the RUF. On one occasion, he was instructed to tail the ICRC helicopter and to shoot it down if it deviated from its flight path. In that instance, the helicopter kept to its flight path to Mabang in the Moyamba District.

90. In an interview with Radio Democracy 98.1 FM on 9 December 1998, the Minister of Information, Dr. Julius Spencer, noted that the government was investigating allegations that the ICRC helicopter had been delivering materials to the RUF. On 13 January 1999, the government asked the ICRC to leave the country. The ICRC was allowed to return in May 1999 and resumed operations but was restricted to government-controlled areas.

91. The ICRC supplied the Commission with a detailed letter in which it pointed out that its helicopters had flown over Sierra Leone for several years during the conflict period. The organisation provided model names and even code numbers for each of its helicopters, as well as specific years in which they operated. Based on this assessment, the ICRC contended that the specific allegations about its involvement in arms trafficking during late 1998 could not have been true.

92. After this initial response from the ICRC, the Commission was obliged to invite ICRC officials for an interview because they had mixed up certain dates in their

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91 Reverend Father Mario Guerra, Catholic priest and long-time resident of Sierra Leone who was abducted and held captive by the AFRC in late 1998, testimony before TRC public hearings in Makeni, Bombali District, 29 May 2003.

93 See Neall Ellis, former Executive Outcomes helicopter pilot who later transferred to the employment of the Government, TRC interview conducted in Freetown, 27 May 2003.

94 See Neall Ellis, former Executive Outcomes helicopter pilot who later transferred to the employment of the Government, TRC interview conducted in Freetown, 27 May 2003.
submission. The officials furnished the Commission with further explanations, which satisfied the Commission that the helicopter in question was not an official ICRC helicopter. Moreover, the ICRC had logbooks and pilot verification procedures that prevented helicopters chartered by the ICRC and bearing its emblem being used without its knowledge and approval.

92. The balance of probabilities, supported by perpetrator testimony, indicates that ICRC emblems were misappropriated and used on “alien” helicopters by one or more of the fighting factions. The misuse of humanitarian emblems can seriously compromise the activities of humanitarian organisations. Such misconduct is strictly prohibited under International Humanitarian Law by virtue of an express provision in the Additional Protocols to the Geneva Conventions. The Commission calls upon peacekeeping forces and law enforcement authorities in conflict zones to be aware that those trafficking in arms may deploy vehicles or planes marked with the emblems of humanitarian organisations such as the ICRC. Extra vigilance and spot checks are required to stop this pernicious practice.

Charles Taylor’s personal influence on the RUF

93. In the aftermath of the invasion of Freetown, on Thursday 25 February 1999, former ECOMOG Field Commander, General Timothy Shelpidi accused Charles Taylor of Liberia and Blaise Campaore of Burkina Faso of planning to destabilise the entire sub-region. As long as Taylor was in power in neighbouring Liberia, he said, the crisis in Sierra Leone was never going to come to an end.96

94. The Liberian Government repeatedly denied accusations that it was supporting the RUF. It did admit, somewhat reluctantly, that there were Liberians fighting on the side of the RUF, but claimed that they were doing so without the support or backing of the Liberian Government.96 In a letter to the Secretary-General of the UN, dated 23 February 1999, President Charles Taylor wrote:

“Liberians have been used as mercenaries in Sierra Leone for a long time by all governments of Sierra Leone. They have always been there, about 3,000 of them. But they are there on their own.”97

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96 See Sierra Leone Broadcasting Service (SLBS), 25 February 1999, included in the BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, 26 February 1999.
97 See Pratt, D. (MP for Nepean-Carleton, Canada), Special Envoy to Sierra Leone; Sierra Leone: the forgotten crisis; Report to the Canadian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Honourable Lloyd Axworthy MP, 23 April 1999, at page 18. Also available on the web: www.sierra-leone.org/pratt042399.htm.
Charles Taylor’s and his Government’s denials of support for the RUF appear nonsensical in the face of overwhelming testimonies and evidence given to the Commission, not least by the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) of the Sierra Leone Police. In a letter from the Office of the President of Liberia addressed to the Leader of the RUF on 3 November 1998, Taylor expressed continued support for the RUF organisation and its aim of taking over the Government of the Republic of Sierra Leone.98

Taylor’s influence over the RUF was demonstrated on a number of occasions. Taylor personally intervened to persuade the RUF to accept the terms of the Lomé Peace Agreement. In May 2000, when the RUF took over 500 UN peacekeepers hostage, Taylor was instrumental in negotiating their release. An ECOWAS delegation met Taylor on 19 June 2000 and asked him to help secure the hostages’ release. The Secretary-General of the UN, Kofi Annan, the Indian prime minister, Atal Bihari Vajpayee and the Nigerian president, Olusegun Obasanjo made a request on 21 June 2000 for Taylor to intervene in the hostage crisis in Sierra Leone.99 He responded:

“I have said to them that I will do everything within my own strength to help release the hostages in whatever way I can.”100

The Liberian Minister of Information, Joe Mulbah, told the BBC on 29 June 2000 that the hostages would be released “over the weekend”. Before Mulbah’s announcement, 139 Zambian peacekeepers held hostage by the RUF, were moved to Foya across the Liberian border and handed over to the Liberian authorities by Issa Sesay on 15 June 2000.101 On the day the announcement was made by the Liberian Minister of Information, 21 Indians were transported to Foya by Issa Sesay, who again handed the hostages over to the Liberian authorities.102

It was not until November 2002, that Taylor openly admitted his involvement in the Sierra Leone conflict. Taylor maintained that:

“In the Sierra Leone crisis, for example, Liberia was not the only country involved. The other countries got off the hook because other major countries protected them. We had good reason for our association with the RUF (Revolutionary United Front of Sierra Leone) at that particular period, purely for national security concerns.”103

95. Letter from the Office of the President of Liberia to the RUF Leader, Foday Sankoh, dated 3 November 1999; Criminal Investigations Department (CID) of the Sierra Leone Police; letter included in the dossier pertaining to the ‘Foday Sankoh / 8 May 2000’ case; dossier provided to the TRC in July 2003.

96. See the report on NewsMax.com; “UN Hostages May Be Free by Weekend”, 22 June 2000.

97. See the report on NewsMax.com; “UN Hostages May Be Free by Weekend”, 22 June 2000.


100. See Washington Post newspaper, 12 November 2002; at page A16, column 6.
An enhanced role for the United Nations

99. In July 1998, the UN Security Council established the UN Observer Mission to Sierra Leone (UNOMSIL). UNOMSIL had an initial strength of seventy military observers, fifteen medical staff and five civilians. Mr. Francis Okelo, the Special Envoy to Sierra Leone, was named the Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) and Chief of Mission. Brigadier Subhash C. Joshi, from India, was the Chief Military observer. UNOMSIL’s mandate under Security Council Resolution 1181 was to monitor the security situation and to advise on the disarmament and demobilisation of combatants. UNOMSIL never achieved full strength and is mostly remembered for its lack of impact.

100. It was no surprise that hostilities continued in spite of UNOMSIL’s presence. By December 1998, the RUF/AFRC controlled a large portion of the country’s territory. In January 1999, the mobs of thugs associated with the AFRC invaded Freetown inflicting widespread destruction and casualties. In the wake of these attacks, SRSG Okelo helped to initiate negotiations between the Government and the RUF/AFRC. On 18 May 1999, Kabbah and Sankoh entered into talks in the Togolese capital, Lomé. The United States, through its Embassy in Freetown, also assisted to bring the parties together in Lomé. On 7 July 1999, the Government of Sierra Leone and the RUF signed the Lomé Peace Agreement. The Lomé Agreement, among other things, made provision for a blanket amnesty for members of the warring factions; the establishment of a neutral United Nations group to monitor a cease-fire; and the creation of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

101. While recognising that the amnesty provisions in Lomé were “difficult to reconcile with the goal of ending the culture of impunity”, the UN Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, hailed the Lomé Agreement as “a great step forward for Sierra Leone.” Annan further intimated that amnesty may not apply to international crimes and instructed the UN SRSG to enter a handwritten reservation explicitly stating that the UN did not regard the amnesty provisions as applying to international crimes of genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and other serious violations of international humanitarian law.

102. Although Lomé was heralded as the beginning of the end to the conflict in Sierra Leone, attacks on civilians recommenced almost as soon as Sankoh returned to Freetown. On 23 March 1999, the UN Secretary-General had recommended to the Security Council that it should authorise the deployment of a substantially larger peacekeeping force in Sierra Leone. On 22 October 1999, the UN Security Council authorised the establishment of the United Nation’s Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL). The military and civilian components of UNOMSIL were transferred directly to UNAMSIL and the UNOMSIL mandate was terminated. The Secretary-General appointed Mr. Oluyemi Adeniji, a Nigerian diplomat at the UN, as his new Special Representative and Chief of Mission. UNAMSIL’s brief included overseeing the implementation of the Lomé Agreement, establishing a security presence at key locations throughout the country and monitoring adherence to the cease-fire. In February 2000 the number of peacekeepers was increased to 11,100.

103. The hostage-taking incident seriously tainted the image of the peacekeepers and undermined the confidence of the people of Sierra Leone in the UN. However the UN did not give up on Sierra Leone.\textsuperscript{106} Annan declared that ‘the situation in Sierra Leone remained tense and volatile under conditions that resemble civil war’.\textsuperscript{107} On 19 May 2000, two days after the arrest of Sankoh, the UN Security Council authorised an increase in the strength of the peacekeeping force to 13,000 military personnel.

104. In June 2000 the Sierra Leone Government requested the UN Security Council to establish a tribunal in Sierra Leone to prosecute those in the RUF who had breached the cease-fire “in order to bring and maintain peace and security in Sierra Leone and the West African sub-region.”\textsuperscript{108} In July 2000, the Sierra Leone Government approved and sent a draft resolution to the UN formally requesting the Secretary-General to set up a criminal tribunal. The Security Council unanimously adopted a resolution on 14 August 2000 and endorsed the Government's request with the understanding that ‘the amnesty provisions of the Lomé Agreement did not apply to international crimes.’\textsuperscript{109}

105. One crucial element that aided the consolidation of the peace was the intervention of the British military. In the aftermath of the UN hostage crisis, Britain raised its security profile in Sierra Leone considerably. It sent more soldiers to the country and seconded a military adviser to the government. When the RUF threatened the Freetown International Airport at Lungi, British soldiers halted their offensive. British forces also dislodged a band of former AFRC soldiers known as the West Side Boys, who were threatening the security of the city. These combat actions and Britain’s military presence around the country may have convinced the RUF to opt for peace.

106. The Government and the RUF agreed to a renewed cease-fire on 10 November 2000. The cease-fire hardly held. The RUF continued sporadic attacks around the country. On 30 March 2001, the UN Security Council authorised the expansion of UNAMSIL to 17,500 military personnel. UNAMSIL became the world’s largest peacekeeping mission and peacekeepers were located all over the country. This helped to facilitate the return of refugees and internally displaced persons to their communities of origin.

107. In June 2001 the Disarmament, Demobilisation and Re-integration (DDR) programme was established. The peacekeepers provided security at the disarmament centres and for officials of the DDR programme.\textsuperscript{110}

108. On 18 January 2002, President Kabbah declared that the war was over at a symbolic ceremony at Lungi Airport. Among those in attendance were numerous external actors, preparing themselves for participation in Sierra Leone’s fresh efforts to achieve sustainable peace and development.

\textsuperscript{106} UNAMSIL, Submission to TRC Thematic Hearings on Governance, 1 March 2003.
\textsuperscript{108} Letter dated 9 August 2000, from the permanent representative of Sierra Leone to the UN, addressed to the President of the Security Council; UN Doc. S/2000/786.
\textsuperscript{109} UN Security Council Resolution 1315, 5, 14 August 2000.
\textsuperscript{110} UNAMSIL, Submission to TRC Thematic Hearings on Governance, 1 March 2003.