

CHAPTER 3

UNAMSIL AFTER THE ELECTIONS

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Introduction

On 22 October 1999 the UN Security Council authorised the establishment of the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL), with a maximum authorised strength of 6,000 military personnel, including 260 military observers, to assist the government and signatory parties in carrying out the provisions of the Lomé Agreement. In early December 1999, the first company of 133 Kenyan soldiers flew into Lungi International Airport as the advance unit of the first new UNAMSIL battalion, to join some 223 UN military observers from 30 countries already on the ground. Four Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) battalions already in Sierra Leone, comprising troops from Ghana, Guinea and Nigeria, were 're-hatted' as UN peacekeepers.

On 7 February 2000 the Security Council voted unanimously to approve the Secretary-General's plans for strengthening UNAMSIL. This not only raised the maximum authorised strength from 6,000 to 11,000, but also granted the mission an expanded mandate under Chapter VII of the charter. After a number of serious setbacks, rooted in non-compliance by the RUF, agreement was finally granted by the Security Council in March 2001 to increase the force level from 13,000 to the 17,500 that were needed to accomplish the mission's mandate.

Though UNAMSIL is touted as the current largest UN peace operation on the grounds of its authorised military and police strength, it is also a multifunctional, civilian-led mission in every sense of the word. The Special Representative of the Secretary General (SRSG), Ambassador Oluyemi Adeniji of Nigeria, heads the mission, and exercises control through his two deputies: DSRSG (Operations and Management, or O&M), Mr. Behrooz Sadry of Iran, and DSRSG (Governance and Stabilisation) Mr Alan Doss of the UK.

Mr. Sadry was appointed by the Secretary-General to assist the SRSG in the overall political leadership, operations and management of UNAMSIL and to

assume the responsibilities of Acting SRSG in the absence of the SRSG from the mission area. The Chief Administrative Officer (CAO), who is responsible for all administrative, financial and logistical functions of the mission as well as the United Nations Volunteers programme, reports directly to the latter. The administrative component of UNAMSIL comprises the following sections: civilian personnel, finance, procurement, security and integrated services, which is responsible, among others, for telecommunications, transport, engineering, supply services, air operations and movement control.

The Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General (Governance and Stabilisation) was appointed in March 2001 to co-ordinate UNAMSIL's civilian components, focusing on governance, recovery and reintegration matters in support of a cohesive approach to peace-building. This has contributed to the promotion of peace-building as an essential complement to the mission's peacekeeping role. The DSRSG also serves concurrently as the resident co-ordinator and humanitarian co-ordinator, as well as the resident representative of UNDP. This arrangement enables the various elements of the UN system to come together in support of common humanitarian and development goals while ensuring a more effective sharing of resources and information.

At time of writing, UNAMSIL remained the largest UN peacekeeping mission in the world, consisting of 17,500 troops and military observers from more than 37 countries. Another 322 international and 552 national civilian staff members were working within the rather complex civilian-military mission structure that is depicted schematically below.

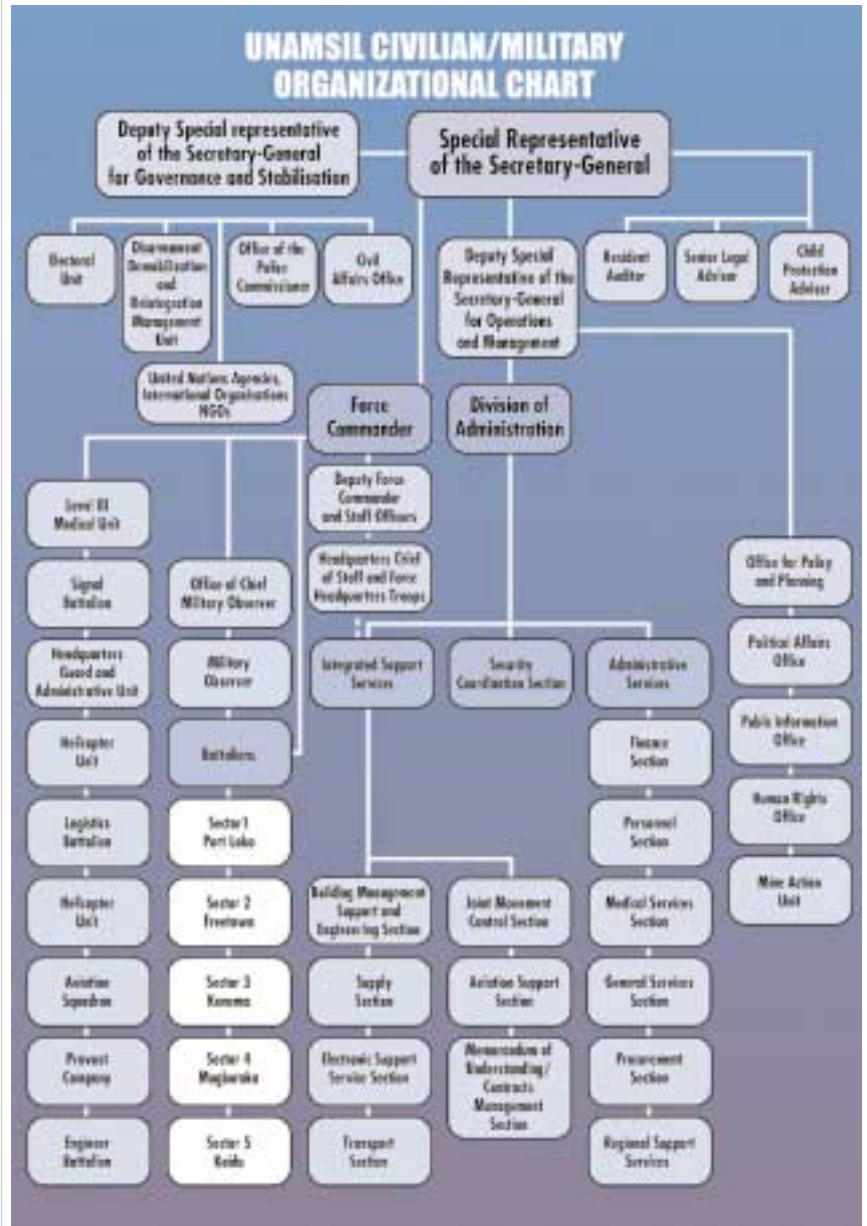
Nevertheless, it is the peacekeeping force that is the most visible part of the mission, and it is this force that has hitherto featured most strongly in the mission's mandates.

Mandate and mission of the force

The United Nations Security Council, through resolution 1270 (1999) of 22 October 1999, mandated UNAMSIL to:

- Co-operate with the government of Sierra Leone and the other parties to the Lomé Peace Agreement in the implementation of the agreement.
- Assist the government of Sierra Leone in the implementation of the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration plan.

Figure 1: UNAMSIL civilian/military organisation



- Establish a presence at key locations throughout the territory of Sierra Leone, including at disarmament/reception centres, and demobilisation centres.
- Ensure the security and freedom of movement of United Nations personnel.
- Monitor adherence to the ceasefire in accordance with the ceasefire agreement of 18 May 1999 ... through the structures provided for therein.
- Encourage the parties to create confidence-building mechanisms and support their functioning.
- Facilitate the delivery of humanitarian assistance.
- Support the operations of United Nations civilian officials, including the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and his staff, human rights officers and civil affairs officers.
- Provide support, as requested, to the elections which are to be held in accordance with the present constitution of Sierra Leone.

These, mainly military, tasks were expanded by the UN Security Council (resolution 1289 (2000)) on 7 February 2000, to include:

- Providing security at key locations and government buildings, in particular in Freetown and at important intersections and major airports, including Lungi airport.
- Facilitating the free flow of people, goods and humanitarian assistance along specified thoroughfares.
- Providing security in and at all sites of the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration programme.
- Co-ordinating with and assisting the Sierra Leone law enforcement authorities in the discharge of their responsibilities.
- Guarding weapons, ammunition and other military equipment collected from ex-combatants and assisting in their subsequent disposal or destruction.

The detail of these resolutions was encapsulated in a more concise overall mission statement, which declared:

The main objectives of UNAMSIL in Sierra Leone remain to assist the efforts of the Government of Sierra Leone to extend its authority, restore law and order and stabilise the situation progressively throughout the entire country, and to assist in the promotion of a political process which should lead to a renewed disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration programme and the holding, in due course, of free and fair elections.¹

The mission statement underpinning the resulting military concept of operations (CONOPS) for 2001, may be summarised as follows:

UNAMSIL's mission is to deploy progressively and robustly within a coherent operational structure, dominating strategic locations and lines of communication, whilst affording and facilitating a degree of protection, freedom of movement and the delivery of humanitarian assistance to civilians, in order to assist the legitimate government to restore law, order, peace and stability throughout Sierra Leone.²

By early 2002 the UNAMSIL force had made tremendous strides in accomplishing its core mission of providing security throughout Sierra Leone, whilst gearing itself to provide additional support to the upcoming elections. The UNAMSIL military component by that time had been fully deployed in five sectors across the country. These are shown on the map on the next page.

The force was also looking ahead to operational priorities for the coming year, and had already developed a concept of operations for 2002, based on the following set of assumptions:

- There will be no deliberate resumption of hostilities;
- Disarmament will be completed in all districts by the end of 2001/early 2002;
- Sierra Leone police and/or government of Sierra Leone authorities will continue to deploy throughout the country progressively during 2002;
- Elections will be held in 2002; and



- The withdrawal of the force will commence within a reasonable time frame after elections that are widely accepted as free and fair.

Operational priorities were aimed at supporting this scenario, as reflected in the mission statement underpinning the concept of operations for 2002:

UNAMSIL is to maintain a coherent operational structure until full withdrawal, enabling complete freedom of movement, guarding against security threats, whilst affording a degree of protection to other agencies and civilians, lending selective assistance to other agencies, particularly during the elections, in order to assist the government to restore and maintain law, order, peace and stability throughout Sierra Leone.³

The military planners' assumptions proved to be correct, and with the successful staging of national elections in May 2002, many are asking if there still is a need for a peacekeeping force. The basic answer is that the SLP is not yet ready to maintain law and order on its own, and the Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces (RSLAF) are not currently mandated to provide support to the police. The UN force fills this gap.⁴ In addition, the force is increasingly involving itself in peace-building activities, for example by engaging in labour-intensive, quick impact projects (QIPs) that employ former combatants, such as road reconstruction.⁵

Although military involvement in post-conflict reconstruction is often regarded as wasteful of the military's 'relative advantage' and as something to be avoided lest 'mission creep' set in, the two sectors visited by the authors displayed an extremely positive and constructive approach to their 'non-military' role, as outlined briefly below. The UNAMSIL military observers have also adapted extremely well to playing a key role in peace-building, after their highly successful engagement with supervising and monitoring the disarmament and demobilisation of combatants.

Military involvement in peace-building

It makes sense to evaluate peace missions from the perspective of the intended beneficiaries of such missions – the host population. If the legitimacy of a peace operation depends in large measure on internal support, then the ultimate success of an operation depends heavily on relations between the intervening forces and the local population – and particularly on local perceptions of force credibility.

Military thinkers have readily conceded that in a joint and multinational intervention of long duration, involving many civilian organisations and agencies, military strategic objectives may be milestones along the way to achieving the political end-state or an actual element of that end-state. The military recognise that peace-building actions are designed to cement a fragile peace and to contribute towards long-term stability by encouraging reconciliation. They assume that military engagement will mainly involve the provision of a stable and secure environment in which civilian agencies can focus on the processes of reconciliation and peace-building. According to peace operations doctrine, military peace-building activities should have a high visibility and impact, demonstrating an immediate benefit from the presence of the peace-keeping force.⁶

Similarly, the Brahimi Report notes that “all peace operations should be given the capacity to make a demonstrable difference in the lives of the people in the mission area, relatively early in the life of the mission”.⁷ UNAMSIL is putting theory into practice, with the force not only continuing to provide a safe and secure environment, but also engaging in some very meaningful recovery projects on behalf of and in partnership with local communities.

Sector 4 – Magburaka

Bangladesh provides the largest contingent (4,257 troops) to UNAMSIL. Sector 4, headquartered in Magburaka, has three battalions under its command, two Bangladeshi and one Nigerian (BANBATT 5, BANBATT 6, and NIBATT 11). The sector headquarters also provides administrative support for all Bangladeshi forces in UNAMSIL, e.g. BANBATT 7 and BANENGR (Engineering) 2 at Lungi, and BANARTY (Artillery) 2 at Lunsar.

Sector 4 focused its operations on disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) until 19 January 2002, with specific responsibility for the formal disarmament camps at Makeni, Magburaka and Kabala. From 30 December 2001 to 14 March 2002, the sector also provided support to the SLP in conducting the Community Arms Collection and Disposal (CACD) programme. As indicated in Chapter 1, this programme netted very few assault weapons, but did result in the collection of a considerable number of hunting weapons. The latter are being held by the SLP, pending the promulgation of a new gun licencing law. Significantly, many individuals who turned over weapons under the CACD attempted to claim the reintegration benefit under the DDR programme, to which they were obviously not entitled.

From mid-March 2002 onwards, the sector concentrated on providing support to the National Electoral Commission (NEC). This involved the secure transportation of election materials to all polling stations in the sector, the establishment of a patrol base to ensure security for the elections, and the retrieval of electoral materials once the ballots had been cast. The sector also provided transport for the 670 SLP members that were deployed for the elections throughout the sector's area of responsibility.

Since the elections, the sector has been focusing on assistance to internally displaced persons (IDPs) and returning refugees. For example, BANLOG (logistics) has provided transport for 2,288 IDPs, as well as for 2,499 people needing resettlement. On the humanitarian side, the Bangladeshis have provided much-needed medical care from their field hospitals. The hospital at Lungi treated 6,686 local patients in May 2002 alone. The sector has also used its own rations to feed local populations in need. When some 16,000 people fled Koidu to Magburaka, they were fed by the sector.

The sector command is concerned with the continuing poor state of governance and community services. Some of the issues raised include the fact that the authority of the District Officers (DOs) is still not universally respected by the paramount chiefs, that there are no representatives of the judiciary, that revenue collection remains non-existent, and that schools have not yet reopened. Sector 4 has therefore engaged in a meaningful military-civic action programme, utilising its own resources to launch a number of appreciated projects for the locals. These have been in the area of educational and developmental assistance, sports and cultural development, and the provision of agricultural equipment and advice. The BANSIG (signal) battalion has built a school at Port Loko, and BANBATT 4 erected a similar structure at Lungi. The Bangladesh Sector Headquarters (BANSEC HQ) has built the Sierra-Bangla Friendship Secondary School at Robol, 7km from Magburaka, which opened for classes on 9 September 2002. This co-ed school, which cost about US\$12,000 to complete, can accommodate approximately 150 students.

The Bangladesh-Sierra Leone Agricultural Project (BANSAL) was initiated on 28 August 2001. It encompasses 25 acres of land adjacent to the new school at Robol, which was cleared for cultivation by local participants in the project, some 650 people from 15 villages in the area. The project director is a former RUF commander with the nom de guerre of 'Base Marine', who runs the enterprise according to strict rules of business that were worked out with the help of BANSEC HQ. These rules are applied by management and financial oversight committees, and include a work roster and roll call system to ensure

strict discipline and commitment by all project participants. Cultivation is well planned, with the land planted with local crops such as cassava, ground nuts and corn, as well as 'Bangladeshi vegetables' – banana, chilli, etc.; the cultivation of which, if enjoyed by the locals, will be expanded.

A sorely needed engineering project has been the reconstruction of the Mile 91–Robol road. BANENGR 2 has totally restructured and resurfaced this 54-kilometre route, starting in March 2002 and completing the project by the end of August. Although a gravel road, the new surface has been designed to cope with run-off from the heavy rains. According to the officer in charge of the project it will have a life span of about three years before any major maintenance work will be required – a task which will then be the responsibility of the Sierra Leone authorities.

The significance of this project lies in the fact that the old road was virtually impassable, and many locals chose to travel from Mile 91 to Robol and Magburaka via Makeni, adding much time and cost to the journey. On the upgraded road the distance can be covered in an hour, a fact which should stimulate the movement of people and goods, and thus make a major contribution to the future development of the area.⁸

Sector 5 – Koidu

The Pakistani Contingent (PAKCON) is the second largest in UNAMSIL, with a total strength of 4,225 (273 officers, 176 junior commanders, and 3,806 other ranks). It consists, among others, of a headquarter unit (50), three infantry battalions (each some 795 strong), an artillery battalion (395), an engineers battalion (395), and an aviation unit (145). The contingent's area of responsibility (AOR) corresponds with that of sector 5, and extends from the Kono diamond fields in the north to Daru in the south and Koindu in the extreme east of the country.

On the security side, there are still large numbers of IDPs and refugees at Kono and in Kailahun, and it is difficult to determine whether they are local or from Guinea. Sector 5 forces provided protection for the SLP when they began their deployments, but there was initially no contact between the UNAMSIL Sector Command and the RSLAF. However, a joint decision was later taken to deploy RSLAF closer to the positions of the Pakistani contingent, and all concerned regard the proximity of the forces as a welcome development. The sector enjoys very cordial relations with its RSLAF counterparts.

Aside from the key task of providing security throughout the AOR, a number of major activities have been undertaken by the contingent since its arrival in the mission in October 2001. These include disarmament, payment of reinsertion benefits, assisting a GTZ team with weapons destruction, the incineration of ammunition, security for the CACD programme, and support to the electoral registration process and the May 2002 elections.

The Pakistani contingent played a significant role in the electoral process – something that was unavoidable, as the NEC deployed only one electoral official to the sector, and who had to get by with one vehicle and a ration of eight litres of diesel fuel per day. The SLP were similarly under-resourced, with 205 police officers to see to security at more than 300 polling stations in the sector.

The Pakistani contingent has also been active in rebuilding infrastructure in the sector. It has put in over 481,000 man-hours of work on the roads in the past year. Five thousand cubic metres of stone have been quarried and two tons of plastic explosives used to provide the necessary material for building road surfaces and substructures. In addition to launching a Bailey bridge on the Kailahun–Buedu road, extensive maintenance has been carried out on the following roads: Magburaka–Yengema; Yengema–Koidu; in the towns of Koidu and Yengema; Daru–Pendembu; and Pendembu–Kailahun. Key to the durability of the repairs is the design by Pakistani engineers, which has led to a marked improvement in the road drainage systems. These projects are essential to the revival of economic activity. For example, a vehicle trip from Daru to Kailahun (about 70km by road) that used to take approximately ten hours can now be completed in two hours.

The Pakistani contingent has gone out of its way to provide substantial assistance to the local people, including:

- construction of recreation facilities and the distribution of footballs;
- organisation of inter-school sports competitions;
- provision of administrative assistance to schools and an orphanage;
- renovation of places of worship and distribution of the Quran and Bible;
- distribution of clothing; and
- a variety of other contacts and confidence-building measures.

The PAKCON also provides regular medical assistance to local civilians, as well as evacuation to Freetown in the case of serious injuries or illness. The Pakistani field hospital had treated 37,633 local patients by 28 August 2002.

The deployment of PAKCON has also created sufficient security for the return of humanitarian and development non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to the AOR. While World Vision International was in Kono district before sector 5 was established, the organisation has been joined by a number of other large and smaller actors, including the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), GTZ, Premier Urgence, Peace Wind, and Famous Agricultural Organisation for Africa (FACOVA). Kailahun district is also benefiting from the presence and activities of a host of NGOs, including the International Medical Corps, NRC, ICRC, Medecin Sans Frontiers (MSF), Oxfam, GTZ, Africare, Save the Children, and World Relief.

The assistance offered by the Pakistani contingent to these and other NGOs has primarily been in the form of providing blanket security, but has also involved some transportation, the provision of accommodation and food, and the co-ordination of meetings with a variety of NGOs and the military.⁹

Military observers

Military observers are rightly considered as an integral part of the military component of any UN peace mission. However, the nature of both their tasks and their 'clients' in post-disarmament Sierra Leone has placed them rather uniquely at the civil-military interface. It may also be assumed that, like many parts of the civilian component, the importance and workload of UNAMSIL Military Observers (MilObs) will increase as the peacekeeping force draws down. A brief synopsis of the role of the MilObs is presented below.

From January 2002, the UNAMSIL MilObs shifted their focus from disarmament to electoral support, including sensitisation and education functions as well as the provision of a wide range of administrative support functions. Indeed, it was the MilObs that were responsible for guiding the deployment of teams of international election observers, and briefing them on the situation in each deployment area.

After 14 May 2002, the role and functions of the MilObs shifted again to reintegration issues – from assessing funding priorities to monitoring the 'mood of the people'. As of August 2002, the MilObs have been gathering vital infor-

mation for planning the draw-down process for the force. The MilObs are now also key role-players in the effort to promote recovery and stabilisation, specifically by focusing on three critical aspects of governance, namely the chieftain system, the Sierra Leone police, and the judiciary.

Military observers assess progress with recovery and stabilisation against sets of criteria and according to a well-planned benchmarking process. They engage in village profiling at a basic level (e.g. monitoring and reporting on the number and nature of returnees) in order to provide a comprehensive needs assessment at this level. They are thus of great assistance to the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), which is handling a huge case load of returnees as they move from Freetown back to their districts of origin. For example, 8,000 people who returned from exile are now being moved from the capital, Freetown, to Kono district.

The 'clients' for such assessments include not only UNAMSIL and the UN agencies, but also other key agencies such as the National Commission on Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (NCDDR) and other government departments, as well as a wide variety of NGOs involved in community-level assistance programmes and projects.

Information gathered by the MilObs is collated in a civilian situation report, which is distributed to all mission units, who then add their specialist interpretation and analysis. It was however emphasised that in order to make the information as useful as possible, there is a need for greater civil-military co-ordination and co-operation in this process.

The MilObs cover about 30 villages per day, or an average of about 900 per month, so they are indeed the 'eyes and ears', not only of the force, but of the mission and all its various components.¹⁰

Adjustment, draw-down and withdrawal plan (ADWP)¹¹

The military is not and should not be the sole or even the principal agent in post-conflict reconstruction efforts. Although the UN force can and does play a vital role in some areas of Sierra Leone, there are a host of civilian actors and agencies that have a comparative advantage in addressing the country's wide range of reconstruction needs. These include governance and participation, justice and reconciliation, and economic and social needs. As part of preparations for eventual downsizing, the United Nations Department of

Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) dispatched a military team to Sierra Leone from 9 to 14 June 2002 to help UNAMSIL draw up the withdrawal proposals that were approved by the UN Security Council on 24 September 2002.¹² The new mission formulated for the force is:

To conduct the timely transfer of responsibility for the security of Sierra Leone from UNAMSIL to the Government of Sierra Leone, in order to effect a measured and balanced troop withdrawal commensurate with the achievement of defined security benchmarks.

The intent is to conduct a draw-down of UNAMSIL troops, commensurate with an increasing capacity by the government of Sierra Leone to maintain law and order, and to assume responsibility for its own internal and external security. The key to success lies in maintaining and sustaining sufficient impetus to overcome any inertia on the part of the government to assume those responsibilities. The gradual process of hand-over and the accomplishment of key enabling initiatives and milestones must therefore be driven at all levels in a manner that assists and encourages the government to assume responsibility for national security. The draw-down must be balanced and comply with two principles, namely to:

- ensure that UNAMSIL retains a credible capability to deter, or if deterrence fails, combat any resurgence in violence; and
- ensure that the draw-down of UNAMSIL does not itself precipitate that resurgence.

To that end there will be a period of stabilisation at the end of each significant force draw-down, in order to monitor reactions at local, national, and sub-regional levels before the next step of the draw-down process is initiated. The task of downsizing the mission, whilst also consolidating peace and addressing the remaining security challenges will obviously involve a delicate balancing act. Specific benchmarks have therefore been identified for the entire draw-down process.

The paramount concern throughout will be to avoid creating a security vacuum in the country. The key security benchmark thus revolves around progress made in building up the capacity of the RSLAF and the SLP. The other benchmarks that will be used to determine the pace of the draw-down entail priority tasks aimed at reducing the remaining security challenges, such as:

- Completing the reintegration of former combatants and the resettlement of IDPs and refugees.
- Consolidating state authority throughout the country, including the restoration of law and order by region.
- Dealing with the challenges presented by disenfranchised and disaffected youth.
- Establishing effective government control over diamond mining and other critical resources such as gold and rutil.
- Making progress with the resolution of the conflict in Liberia (and, potentially, the more recent conflict that has erupted in Côte d'Ivoire).

In each of the broad benchmark areas outlined above, UNAMSIL planners have identified more detailed indicators. For example, the 'generic security benchmarks' for monitoring progress in building the capacity of the RSLAF include:

In the moral realm:

- Morale;
- Level of self-confidence;
- Level of competence;
- Level of confidence within general population;
- Effective leadership at all levels; and
- Maintenance of constitutional subordination.

In the physical realm:

- Logistic sustainability in barracks;
- Logistic sustainability whilst deployed on operations;
- Manned to target strengths;

- Sufficient stores of equipment;
- Equipment availability;
- Professional competence; and
- Barrack facilities and housing.

At the conceptual level:

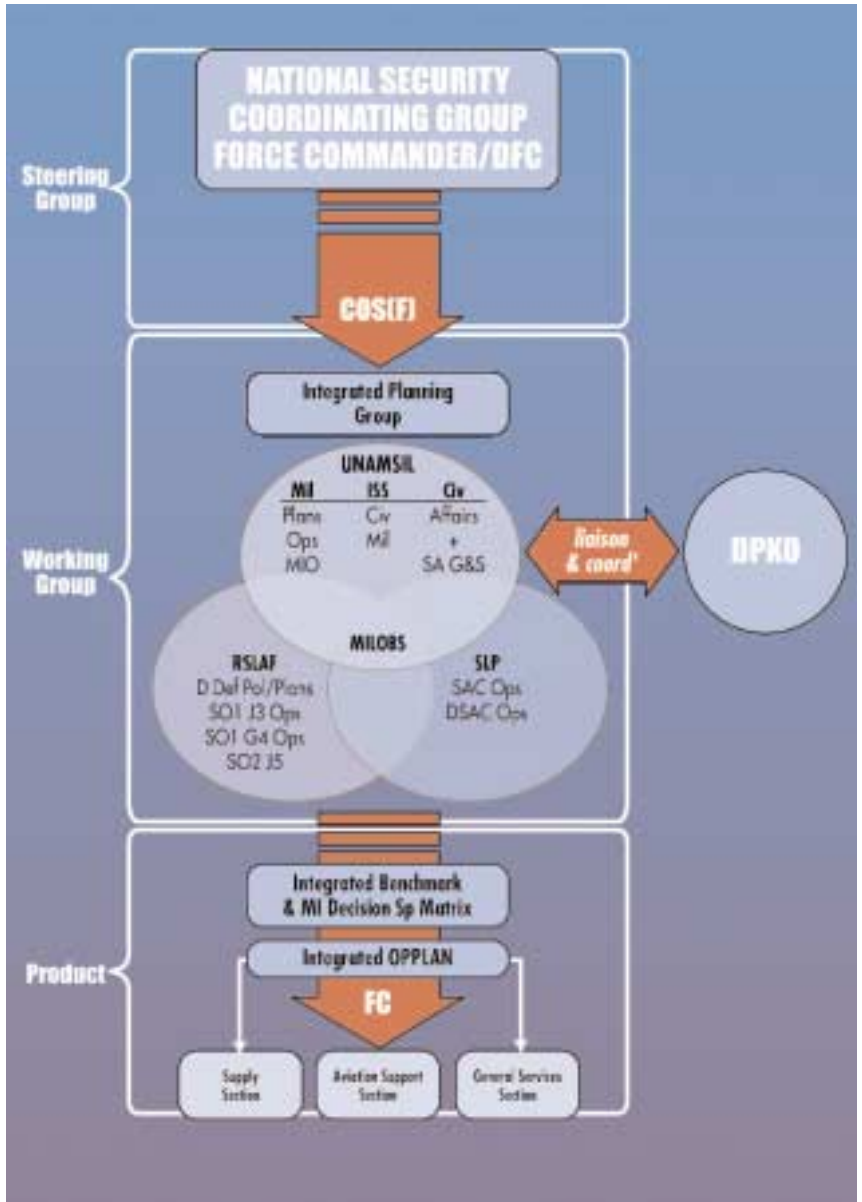
- Effective management; and
- Development of MACP (Military Assistance to the Civil Power) capability

The initial monitoring of benchmarks and the adjustment of plans will not be left to UNAMSIL alone, as the very nature of the ADWP requires an integrated planning and monitoring mechanism that involves a variety of actors from the mission and from government. Indeed, in devising the draw-down plan, such a mechanism was established for consultation and co-ordination with government, including the police and the armed forces. It provides for a National Security Co-ordinating Group that supplies direction to an Integrated Planning Group, that in turn guides the formulation of operational plans to be executed by the RSLAF, SLP and UNAMSIL. The structure and process is illustrated schematically below.

The initial draw-down plan for the force (of which phase 1 and phase 2 were approved by the UN Security Council on 24 September 2002), is based on an evaluation of possible security scenarios. The most likely scenario, according to the planners, is one where there is sufficient international investment to create a capable SLP and RSLAF, faced with only minor domestic and external challenges. In this scenario it is envisaged that troop withdrawal will largely be completed by December 2004. However, the plan is sufficiently flexible to deal even with the worst-case scenario – unsatisfactory progress in building the capacity of the SLP and RSLAF, together with a heightened regional threat to security (see Chapter 5). The major difference would lie in a considerable extension of the time frames for draw-down and withdrawal.

As it stands, the broad draw-down concept provides for four phases. During phase 1 (Adjustment), the force will be ‘pruned’ of troops that are no longer considered operationally essential, whilst still maintaining a presence throughout the country. This will result in a modest reduction of some 600 troops by the end of 2002.¹³

Integrated Planning Mechanism (Diagram 1)



During phase 2 (Initial Draw-down), the force will be concentrated in the central part of the country, around key provincial towns, main communication routes, the principal diamond areas, and areas bordering Liberia.

During this phase, which the UN Security Council expects to be completed by the end of May 2003,¹⁴ UNAMSIL's five sectors are to be reduced to three, with four major units (comprising a total of some 4,000 troops) being withdrawn. The remaining 13,000 members of the force are to dominate key terrain and perceived threat areas. UN Military Observers (MilObs), as well as civilian personnel, are to provide active monitoring of the vacated areas, whilst SLP and RSLAF take over responsibility for security. The UNAMSIL force will maintain sufficient military capacity and mobility to deter or counter any resurgence in violence in these areas.

Phase 3 (Subsequent Draw-down) will follow as soon as conditions allow for significant further troop reductions – from 13,000 down to about 5,000 by late 2004. During the course of this phase, the force will pull back to the Freetown and Lungi peninsulas, while handing over responsibility for the hinterland to the government.

During phase 4 (Withdrawal), a presence of about 2,000 military personnel is envisaged. The precise form and disposition of this military element will be determined by the nature of the security situation at that time, as well as progress made in achieving the various benchmarks.¹⁵ By the time the mission reaches this phase, the role and importance of the civilian component will have clearly superseded that of the military component.

Role of the civilian component

Civilian police

The civilian police (CivPol) component of UNAMSIL was strengthened from 60 authorised posts to 90 for a period of six months, in order to support the May 2002 elections. These additional officers, known as 'election specialists', are now in the process of leaving the mission.¹⁶

Prior to the elections CivPol selected ten of the best police trainers from a pool of 16 at the police training school for participation in a two-week course on providing safety and security during elections. These SLP trainers were then expected to each train teams of about 100 officers every four days in

the run-up to elections, in order to provide sufficient police supervision for the elections.

During the election period, CivPol deployed regional co-ordinators to all the regional headquarters, and strengthened its team sites in the various sectors. The civilian police assisted in the delivery of voting materials, as well as providing oversight of the security measures in place at the various polling stations.

The post-election focus of CivPol has been on the restructuring, training and equipping of the SLP (also see Chapter 6). Four options for future CivPol support were included in the draft report to the United Nations Secretary-General, and formed the basis of his fifteenth report to the UN Security Council on Sierra Leone. Indeed, the size and shape of UNAMSIL will be tailored to the broader parameters of the ADW plan of the force. The basic difference in the new plan is that CivPol will take the lead in training the SLP, with the Commonwealth team providing support in the form of facilities and equipment – which amounts to something of a role reversal. This focus will be on training of SLP trainers to provide thorough and effective training at all levels.¹⁷

Civil Affairs section

The Civil Affairs section has 34 officers in the mission. Three civil affairs officers staff and administer the section's Trust Fund Unit, which is supported by a number of donor countries such as Japan, Canada, Italy and Sweden. The trust fund is earmarked for assistance to special categories of people, such as ex-combatants, and women and child victims of the war. Projects are implemented through local and some international NGOs.

Between late 1999 and May 2001, the civil affairs section was instrumental in getting the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) leadership to talk with the government. Over this period, the section was also instrumental in the extension of government authority to the south and to parts of the north of the country, actively encouraging the government to deploy officials to districts as soon as they had been 'opened up' by the peacekeeping force. By the end of May 2001 the section had deployed civil affairs officers to every district, where they act as 'ombudsmen' for property disputes, issues around project funding, and other local matters.

The civil affairs section has been spearheading a process of conducting community needs assessments in newly opened up areas of the country, and draft-

ing an Interim Recovery Strategy Paper for the mission. The section is still doing needs assessments at basic levels, such as compiling lists of drugs, which it submits to the Ministry of Health. It then transports the medicines received to the district concerned.¹⁸

Human Rights section

The Human Rights section has a total of 20 officers, with 12 operating out of the mission headquarters in Freetown and two officers deployed to each of the four regional human rights offices in Port Loko, Makeni, Kenema and Koidu. A gender specialist recently joined the section to deal with cases such as the reported deaths of two women in August 2002 as a result of traditional genital mutilation. The section also has its own child rights advisor, who deals with issues related to children and youth, and has recently been bolstered by the arrival of a training specialist. There is no dedicated human rights training for the military observers, although some have sought information from the human rights section of their own volition. A planned programme of training for all military observers would no doubt improve the overall human rights monitoring capacity of UNAMSIL.

One of the most important mission training needs articulated by the human rights section was for cross-sectional or inter-component training on the role and functions of each element of UNAMSIL. According to the human rights section there is a very low level of comprehension among mission personnel about the work that people do beyond their immediate section, and thus very limited understanding of how to interact with and contribute to the broader mission objectives.¹⁹

One human rights officer is working full-time on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and attends its weekly briefings, while the human rights section is engaged in mapping the record of human rights violations during the conflict. The investigation of mass graves began in October 2001, when the existence of these sites was first reported. The section is also busy with a study on amputees, which involves a sample of 150 people (two-thirds of whom had limbs forcefully amputated for non-medical reasons). The purpose is to enhance knowledge and understanding of who committed what kinds of atrocities, at what time and to what purpose and effect.

An important project of the section is the establishment of a database on human rights violations in Sierra Leone. The database design and structure has

been completed and handed over to the TRC and the National Forum for Human Rights. The section is advocating for the compilation of national human rights indicators, as well as for the establishment of a human rights subcommittee in parliament.

The section also has been involved in sensitisation and training on issues surrounding the Special Court and the TRC and has provided basic training in human rights to both the SLP and the RSLAF.

Political Affairs section

The mission of Political Affairs is to consolidate the peace through early warning, monitoring and analysis. The political affairs section was increased in number²⁰ ahead of the May elections in order to closely monitor the campaigning and reactions to the campaign by all political players – including the parties, civil society groups, and the unions.

The section is responsible for the collection and analysis of information, and the identification of trends. Reports are provided to the Special Representative of the UN Secretary General (SRSG), who provides the information and analysis to relevant components of the mission and to UN headquarters. The section's work also provides essential background information for the SRSG's ongoing dialogue with the government.

Post-elections, political affairs officers have been closely monitoring the work of parliament and following key developments such as the nomination of parliamentary committee members. The section is concerned by the current exclusiveness of the ruling party in the parliamentary processes.

The political affairs section is also responsible for monitoring regional political and security dynamics. Because the Mano River Union secretariat in Freetown is dysfunctional, political affairs communicates with the ECOWAS Secretariat in Abuja, Nigeria, and also directly with the foreign ministries of neighbouring countries.

The section relies on the MilObs for some information, but also has its own channels for collecting information, such as NGOs and the civil affairs and reintegration officers. Political affairs officers also conduct their own information-gathering missions to the various provinces and districts, where they visit with chiefs and other local political actors.²¹

Public Information section

The Public Information (PI) section employs between 35 and 40 people, the majority of whom are local.²² With the end of the disarmament phase in January 2002, the public information section shifted its focus to preparation for the elections. It provided invaluable support to the NEC, which did not have sufficient public information capacity to keep the electorate informed. Support ranged from providing technical advice to actually taking over responsibility for disseminating voter information.

A special electoral information unit was created within the PI section. They found UNAMSIL Radio a particularly effective medium for dissemination of information, as the station's transmitters reached all but the most remote areas of the country. Due to the high rate of illiteracy, the PI section has always placed special emphasis on radio. A special programme, 'Elections Watch', was created. Candidates from all contending parties were given the opportunity to speak on the programme, though it was mainly the more serious contenders that actually took advantage of the free airtime.

Voter education was also provided by performing artists, who put on shows targeted at the chiefs. Theatre performances were staged for politicians in all five sectors. The PI section hired an additional 20 journalists to cover the elections, while their cartoonist and artist created all the posters used by the NEC. Returning officials were able to announce results over UNAMSIL Radio as soon as they became available.

After the elections, since beginning June 2002, the PI section has focused on providing information about peace-building activities and the planned draw-down process. Attention is being paid to the TRC, the Special Court, and reintegration issues. The idea is to involve the entire population in the peace-building process.²³

Conclusion

This chapter has provided a brief overview of UNAMSIL's role and objectives in Sierra Leone. The highlighting of the activities of certain contingents and mission components, whilst omitting mention of others who have and are playing equally important roles, is an unfortunate limitation of the scope of this particular research project. No offence is intended, and it is sincerely hoped that all who contributed to the peace process will receive appropriate recognition through other publications and projects.

At the risk of compounding an admitted weakness, the next chapter expands on the role of the media and the public information section of UNAMSIL. Any further imbalance thus created has been weighed against the need to publicise, and to learn from those who have made known the role of their colleagues in the mission. Often it is those who are dedicated to fostering better understanding who are least understood.

Notes

- 1 Briefing by Colonel Douglas Mudave, Deputy Chief of Operations, UNAMSIL, South Africa Army College, Pretoria, 6 September 2001.
- 2 Briefing to ISS, Lt Col Richard Hackett, MBE, Chief of Operations (Force), UNAMSIL HQ, 22 October 2001.
- 3 Briefing to ISS by Lt Col T. Beckett, UNAMSIL HQ, Freetown, 22 October 2001.
- 4 Interview with Lt Gen D.I. Opande, UNAMSIL Force Commander, Freetown, 21 August 2002.
- 5 Interview with Amb Oluyemi Adeniji, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Sierra Leone, Freetown, 20 August 2002.
- 6 Peace Support Operations, *Joint Warfare Publication* (JWP) 3-50, London, Ministry of Defence, 1999.
- 7 United Nations General Assembly/Security Council, *Report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations*, A/55/305, S/2000/809, 21 August 2000, par. 37.
- 8 Briefing by Lt Col Hasan (on behalf of Brig Gen Iqbal Karim Bhuiyan, Commander Sector 4), Magburaka, 23 August 2002.
- 9 Interview with Brigadier Pasha, Officer Commanding Sector 5, Koidu, 28 August 2002.
- 10 Interview with Col Fred Hughton, Deputy Chief Military Observer, Freetown, 20 August 2002.
- 11 As at 18 August 2002. Briefing by Lt Col Nick Fitzgerald, Freetown, 20 August 2002.
- 12 United Nations Security Council, Resolution 1436, 24 September 2002.
- 13 The first 200 troops (from the Bangladeshi contingent) left Sierra Leone in early November 2000, along with the Deputy Force Commander, Major General Martin Agwai of Nigeria.
- 14 See Resolution 1436, paragraph 4.

- 15 United Nations Security Council, *Fifteenth Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone, S/2002/987*, 5 September 2002, paragraphs 28–32.
- 16 UNAMSIL CivPol is somewhat sceptical of the notion of ‘election specialists’, as this is not a general policing speciality for which officers in the majority of police contributing countries are ever specifically trained. Some of the officers currently being repatriated, could, with six months experience in Sierra Leone, make a valuable contribution to the new CivPol concept of operations if allowed to stay on for a full one year tour of duty.
- 17 Interview with Superintendent Francis Muhoro, Deputy Civilian Police Commissioner, Freetown, 22 August 2002.
- 18 Interview with Chief of Civil Affairs, Mr. Ismael Diallo, Freetown, 22 August 2002
- 19 Interview with Ms. Lizbeth Cullity, Human Rights Officer, Freetown, 22 August 2002.
- 20 There are eight authorised posts for political affairs officers. Seven political affairs officers are presently serving in UNAMSIL, including the head of section.
- 21 Interview with Mr. Peter Tingwa, Chief of Political Affairs Section, Freetown, 21 August 2002.
- 22 There are 12 authorised posts for international staff, of which nine are presently filled.
- 23 Interview with Ms. Margaret Novicki, Mission Spokesperson and Head of Public Information Section, Freetown, 22 August 2002.