



INNOVATIONS FOR SUCCESSFUL SOCIETIES

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BOUTELLIS: Today is May 14, 2008 and I am now sitting Mr. Joseph C. Kekula who is the former Inspector-General of the Liberian National Police. We are at the Mamba Point Hotel in Monrovia, the capital of Liberia. First, thank you for your time. Before we start the interview I'd like you to please confirm that you've given your consent to the interview.

KEKULA: *Sure, I've consented, that's why I'm here and ready to proceed.*

BOUTELLIS: First I'd like to learn a little bit more about your personal background, particularly the history of how you joined the police and your career within the Liberian National Police.

KEKULA: *Thank you. In 1977 in August, I went to the—at that time it was the Public Safety Institute where the police training was conducted. I went through the regular policing courses. Upon completion I specialized in VIP protection. Then I started work at the presidential mansion during the regime of the late President William R. Tolbert Jr. and I worked at the mansion, went through all the ranks. At that time colonel was the highest rank and became a colonel. I went into exile in 1997 when President (Charles) Taylor took over and returned in 2003.*

When I came back, having had a lot of experience for so many years, I was appointed as a Deputy Director for Administration of the Liberian National Police.

BOUTELLIS: That was during the transition government?

KEKULA: *Yes, through the transitional government in 2003. Thereafter I was appointed as Acting Director. Actually we were the ones who changed the ranking system and decided to have Inspector-General instead of Director. Before then the head of the Liberian National Police was a Director. Maybe later during the interview I will tell you the reasons why we changed the nomenclature from Director to Inspector-General.*

BOUTELLIS: You can explain now if you want.

KEKULA: *One of the major reasons that we had to do that was because if you travel through all the English-speaking countries in the Sub-Region, in the entire region you find that we were the only country using the word Director for the head of the police. Since we are part of, we are participating in regional security we always found ourselves different when we meet other people. So we decided that in order to harmonize our system with the entire region or the Sub-Region it was better that we change the nomenclature. Also, we looked at the ranking system which was not unified. At the time the police were carrying military rank, civilian ranks, all kinds of ranks so we decided that if we are to reform the police system we cannot just do window dressing, let's do it in totality. So we brought in the new ranking system that conforms to other countries around us. So that was the basic reason.*

Fortunately for us, when the idea was brought before the UN police, they saw that it was a good idea and then we went through the Rule of Law Implementation Committee. Then from there we went to the chairman who was heading the government this was the subject, executive order to back it because you cannot just do anything without backing from law. This permitted us to use the ranking system for a period of one year and after that it should have gone through legislation but I'm not sure that that has been done but we are no longer there.

BOUTELLIS: Did the changing in the ranking system imply also a reduction in the number of ranks - consolidation of ranks?

KEKULA: *What actually happened is that we did this - it actually helped because first the police were somehow militarized. After the coup in 1980 policemen started carrying military ranks in order to be on par with the military people at that time. You had lieutenant, you had sergeant - you had majors, colonels. The only military rank we never had was a general. So it reduced the number of ranks and it helped us to demilitarize the police.*

The former ranking system had the potential to make police feel and behave the same as the military men. So we started and said if we are going to help the people to think that they are not military people and they are police people they must have something distinct from military people. They can be carrying a civilian rank. Psychologically that is more correct. That is the reason why we brought that suggestion.

BOUTELLIS: So that was one of the first measures that you took when you were appointed Director for Operations. So maybe you can go through now the history, take us back when you were appointed and the major phases maybe in your work since you returned to Liberia.

KEKULA: *When we took over actually we found out that the entire system was not very well organized administratively. We had people who were working with the police who were not even on the payroll - they called them volunteers. The entire situation was just that you could hardly account for the people. There was no way to account for people. So one of the things that we did was firstly to reduce the unwanted number of people that were just floating around, everyone saying they were police officers where most of them had never even gone for training and were just around. They could do anything and it would reflect on the police.*

We took over a police that was actually, that had a very bad reputation as far as the public was concerned.

BOUTELLIS: What was the role of the police during the time of the war and during the period of 1997 through 2003, what were the police doing? Were they on duty or not? They went home? Some participated in the conflict?

KEKULA: *They were there. The police were there before we came in 2003, but they had different roles within the police. For instance they had a special group that was directly responsible to the President. They were given instructions and they carried out orders directly from him and the police were used to reward some of these fighters who fought for the President. Without training, they just put them in there, they were just there.*

BOUTELLIS: What was the name of the units that were serving the President?

KEKULA: *I will get to that later. Let me continue with the details. We tried to reduce the number of the people because it was like the whole place was just crowded with people who were doing nothing, who would go on their own without instructions because some of them were not attached to special units. Even though they were not official, whatever they did outside reflected on the police. We thought it wise in the first days that it is wrong to have people working and they cannot get paid. That is against the laws of this country. You can't have somebody working and you don't pay them. So we first stopped that particular group from working.*

Then we again realized we had a whole lot of people who came to take pay but were not coming to work. So with this we reduced the payroll by about 600. Six hundred police officers were not coming to work. So we put up notices for them to come and report to work. They refused to come. After some time we just fired them.

BOUTELLIS: How did you do this? You went around to all the police stations to check the records?

KEKULA: *The system is that every month all the police stations sent in their report, all the zones and depots sent in reports every month. The objective is to take the attendance, those who report to work and send it to personnel and then the personnel station would do the analysis and submit it to the office of administration. So through that we were able to establish those that were not reporting to work. That brought a whole lot out. A lot of times they would call me. Some of them would call and threaten me. You fired us and we are the ones who fought for the country when some of you were not here. It is our right to be on the payroll. But we didn't mind that. We took those steps to make corrections.*

After that we had meetings with the UN police when Mark Kroeker was still here. We worked very hard with them to put in some kind of system. If you made a police force that you have to administer and you inherited a whole lot of ills, there are no set policies to guide you to do things. For instance detention - we detain people without proper records. We had to go and provide these policies, detention policy, and administrative policy - how people should report to work. There were a whole lot of things, along with the UN police we had to work together.

So we set up a committee to work hopefully, UN and Liberian police. That was helping us with the change management because was the time that we had to change things around. We were doing the reform so we had a Change Management Committee comprised of both UN and Liberian National Police. We gave them specific responsibilities. Most especially whenever we had meetings and came out with some things that needed to be changed, they went and looked at it formulated some procedures through which we could go with the changes. So that helped us a lot. Once they are making changes and you do not know how to manage these changes, what to do, sometimes you have slide-backs that you may not be able to handle easily. So we actually had to put that committee to say they were very, very helpful.

After we put the change management in place they came up with a recruitment policy, how to go about doing the recruitment, how to do the vetting, the guidelines, there were specific guidelines for the vetting and all of that. So we were able to follow those guidelines. We started vetting within. Before we go out there to start recruitment, let's vet those who are working presently within the police. So we started the vetting process.

BOUTELLIS: You said you already crossed out 600 LNPs that were not showing up for work, how many were left from the former LNP?

KEKULA: *I think we still had over 3000.*

BOUTELLIS: So you vetted these 3000 first.

KEKULA: *Yes, we first started vetting and then we put them in categories. Those who could not meet the educational standards, some people because of their age, and tenure of service. So, we categorized them and after reducing a substantial number of people we then set our target as to how many people we would need in the future.*

BOUTELLIS: To finish with the vetting, was there vetting based on previous human rights violations or did you consult with communities for instance?

KEKULA: *Yes, in the process we put people's names in the newspapers. Before you were accepted, even during the recruitment, when you passed our tests, before we accept you we put the names in the newspaper for like one week and then we put boxes everywhere, suggestion boxes because some people might be afraid to come up. If they can write they can send it to the UNPOL or to the Liberian National Police and just put it in the box, if you have something against somebody.*

There was a particular case where somebody came and accused one of the officers of violating his rights. So in cases like that we suggested that if you brought a complaint, we had our internal board investigation. They came out with an investigation. After the investigation they brought whatever findings they found. Then we can ask you if you want to go to court. For instance, this officer I was talking about, somebody brought a complaint against him. Then the Board of Investigation came out that the officer was wrong. But the officer took exception and said that in fact some of the members of the board were against him for personal reasons so he did not accept it. He wanted to court.

So we sent it to court. Then the complainant could not show up in the court so in such cases what do you do? They bring a case and he cannot follow up in the court. So we just have to forget about the entire case. So we did not only do the vetting, but we put it in the newspapers, we put the names in the paper so the public could give their opinion on these individuals.

BOUTELLIS: Were there any pictures put in the papers?

KEKULA: *No we did not put pictures; we put the names and the addresses. Besides that we also had a background investigation team. If you came up and said you are Mr. X, we sent people to go and do a background investigation. If you say you are a high school graduate, we go and check with the school that you say you're from. If you say you live in this community then we go in that community and ask questions about you. We did all of that in order to complete our vetting. It is a long procedure but it paid in the really long run.*

BOUTELLIS: How many did you have left from the 3000 men approximately?

KEKULA: *When we vetted it took almost close to a year.*

BOUTELLIS: And of the 3000 how many were left after the vetting?

KEKULA: *I think a little over 1000 were qualified, 2000 did not qualify. Now you see that most of the police officers now are new, more than 75% are new. We had a target to augment the strength to about 3500.*

BOUTELLIS: How was the target determined? How did you decide on that?

KEKULA: *We estimated the population and then tried to set a standard, like take a ratio, the percentage of population, how many persons to one police officer. We estimated our population to be between 3.5 to 4 million. Over 15 years we have not had a population census, so through that we came out with a figure of 3500. So that is how we came up with the target.*

BOUTELLIS: So after this one-year process of vetting, there was also, you mentioned a recruitment policy that was drawn at the same time.

KEKULA: Yes.

BOUTELLIS: What did the recruitment policy consist of?

KEKULA: *The recruitment policy was really about what you're supposed to do during the recruitment, how you go about it. Before you go into the community how you should, the manner in which you communicate with the entire community. When you go in the community the people that you are supposed to contact, like the community leaders, get them involved. If you went in a certain community before you can really know who is good or who is bad, you have to make some consultation. So the recruitment policy had to guide us how to do the recruitment.*

BOUTELLIS: So once you finished the vetting of the existing officers, did you start recruitment for new candidates?

KEKULA: *Yes. When we got through with the vetting, we trained, we didn't just - we started training. In fact, we were doing the training and the vetting simultaneously because as the vetting was going on, you can't train everybody at the same time. When you get a number of persons, like 150 at a time - that is for one set of students and you send them to the academy. The academy was arranged in the way that it would hold almost up to 600 persons, but then the training is like ten months, ten months of training. So first you start with 150, and then additional, after the first three months you send an additional 150 and just continue adding, adding, and adding. Every three months you graduate 150, and then you add additional 150. Every time you graduate 150, you put an additional 150. So it just goes in a cycle.*

BOUTELLIS: What were the main novelties in the training, the curriculum, compared to what had been done before?

KEKULA: *Some of the new things in the curriculum were like emphasis on human rights, the new curriculum put a lot of emphasis on human rights, more than the first curriculum. Before we took over we heard about a lot of human rights violations by the police. That's why we set up this criteria of all those who were involved in human rights violations. We found out that if you were you would not become part of the new police. So the new curriculum put more emphasis on human rights.*

BOUTELLIS: The new curriculum was drawn in collaboration with UNPOL?

KEKULA: *Yes, UNPOL approved the new curriculum and then the Change Management Committee was composed of UNPOL and the Liberian National Police.*

BOUTELLIS: They reviewed it and approved it?

KEKULA: *They did the work, they'd send it over to us. Mark Kroeker would have a copy, I would have a copy. Then we'd look at it. Whatever input we'd have, they'd input*

it. We took it to the Rule of Law Implementation Committee. The Rule of Law Implementation Committee was comprised of the UNPOL Police Commissioner, the Deputy SRSG (Special Representative of the Security General) who was then Mr. Beyounsen, then the Minister of Justice and then the National Security Advisor who was directly at the Office of the President. So we all used to meet weekly to review all the operations of the police, every week. So the Rule of Law Implementation Committee sat as the highest body in making reform decisions. Thereafter we just take it directly to the President and have a meeting with him.

BOUTELLIS: Who were the trainers at the time in your police academy?

KEKULA: *The trainers were mainly people who were UNPOL, a few Liberians, LNP officers who were identified by UNPOL. According to the CPA (Comprehensive Peace Agreement), that was drawn in Ghana. So according to the CPA UNPOL was responsible for the training and reforming of the new police, of the Liberian National Police. We couldn't just sit back because the UNPOL does not know the culture of this country. They are strangers. So they couldn't do things without consultation so we worked closely with them to carry on the reform.*

BOUTELLIS: In 2003 when the Comprehensive Peace Agreement was signed you were appointed as Deputy Director of Administration. The Inspector-General is also appointed?

KEKULA: *At that time Mr. Massaquoi, Chris Massaquoi who is now in immigration. Christian C. Massaquoi was the Director of Police. He was also appointed by the transitional government, yes.*

BOUTELLIS: Were there any other positions that were appointed by the transitional government? Or how was the top management of the police at that time?

KEKULA: *The entire top management was appointed by the transitional government. There were the head of the police, the Director, the Deputy Director for Administration, and the Deputy Director for Operations. Even the Assistant Directors were all appointed.*

BOUTELLIS: Were they mostly former police?

KEKULA: *Not exactly. At the lower level some people came in that were not former police. But the Director himself, Chris Massaquoi worked with the police long ago even though he went into exile. Then myself. Then the Deputy for Operations, Ansumana Kromah worked with the police for a very long time. All the other people were police products except for one fellow who was brought in by LURD (Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy), one of the factions. It was decided by everybody else. They went through the regular police training.*

BOUTELLIS: So the minimum standards for recruitment at that time were?

KEKULA: *A high school graduate, you had to graduate from high school and you had no bad human rights record and you had to be above 18 years.*

BOUTELLIS: As part of the—so the Change Management Committee was where all the discussions over reform and restructuring were happening. Was there discussion over the integration and amalgamation of some of the services within the security sector at the time?

KEKULA: *That discussion was not heard by the Change Management Committee. We discussed it before in the Rule of Law Implementation Committee. But the President preferred to leave that to an elected government. Those were legal issues. Most of these bodies were established by statute so you just can't go and do automatic changes. You have to go through law, the legislation and all of that.*

BOUTELLIS: What were some of the other major internal management issues – challenges – that were identified at the time?

KEKULA: *There were many challenges in those days. As I told you, we inherited a police that was not professional. So we were kind of trying to professionalize the police because this was an institution that was plagued by bad character, poor public relations. We had to, when we took over there were a lot of challenges. There was no equipment to operate with in the beginning. We didn't even have a car. I used to walk to work. For several months I walked to go to work. At some point we were able to receive some vehicles, even to get the gas for the vehicles was a very serious problem. So there were a lot of challenges, a lot of operational challenges.*

Sometimes we had to improvise. Sometimes we had the men go on foot patrol because if you just said there was no vehicle so nobody could go on patrol without vehicles. We had a lot of challenges for equipment, uniforms. There were no uniforms. Later on some vehicles started coming in. We also decided because of the frequent problems that we used to have with demonstrators, we decided to have a Police Support Unit (PSU) - we established a Police Support Unit which we envisioned would be armed to help with violent crimes. We took 300 men that we vetted and sent to Nigeria to take training at the training base of the Nigerian formed police units training base. I traveled with them personally and visited that area.

Then when they came back we were in the process of arming them. I personally went to Nigeria and requested them to supply us with some firearms. Being under sanction the United Nations had to approve for the arms. We wrote communications to the Rule of Law Implementation Committee and then our communication was forwarded to the Chairman, Chairman Bryant then and then both he and the SRSG wrote New York and the approval was given with the conditions under which it would be possible. They gave us some conditions that we had to meet with and that process was ongoing when we moved from that place.

BOUTELLIS: So the Police Support Unit you said was selected and trained to deal with the issues of riot control. That was right before the elections.

KEKULA: *Yes. Right before the elections. We used to have a lot of demonstrations around here. The ex-combatants, former AFL (Armed Forces of Liberia) soldiers and sometimes even civil servants. There were a lot of demonstrations all the time. Besides that there was armed robbery and a lot of violent crimes. So against that background we asked the Nigerian government, through our own government, to help us train the 300 men. So the United Nations helped us. They provided the plane to take them there. They took them there, they had the training and they brought them back. I think that it is the same group now. When we left from there the administration that took over from us did not carry out the plan as we decided, but right now, since we saw there were a lot of armed robberies all around, I think they are trying to regroup the same people. So we armed them. Those arms that we requested from Nigeria have arrived. I think right now the police is armed now or should be armed by now.*

BOUTELLIS: At the time you were already Acting Director, when does the transition happen between being Director for Operations and Acting Director—?

KEKULA: *What?*

BOUTELLIS: When does the transition, you said you were appointed in 2003 as Director of Operations, then when does the transition happen that you become—?

KEKULA: *That's the time I told you, I'll tell you I was Director—a little over one year. I was appointed as Deputy for Administration in 2003, November 2003. Then in 2004, it was in 2004 that I was appointed as Acting Inspector-General.*

BOUTELLIS: When Chris Massaquoi leaves.

KEKULA: *Yes, when Chris Massaquoi left I took over. I took over from Massaquoi.*

BOUTELLIS: One of the major issues of the police has been, as you were describing, the public perception - relations with the public. What was done during your time to try to improve the accuracy of the police and the public relations?

KEKULA: *What was done to improve our relations with the public - we brought in the community policing where we established forums in many communities. We had meetings with them, we tell them what the police are doing and how they could work together with the police, how to reduce crimes in their areas. I think the community policing helped a lot to regain some of the lost image of the police. I don't know how much they carry on the community policing now. At that particular time it became a very big thing in the whole country. Every police unit, we had a community policing unit attached to every area. We had a community policing forum all around in most of the communities so that helped us a lot. The presence of the UNPOL also helped. They were working with the LNP at all times. I believe when the Public saw the UNPOL along with the LNP it gave them confidence.*

BOUTELLIS: Another issue has been the depoliticization of the police force. You described how the Taylor administration appointed, used units of security for political purposes. How is depoliticization—?

KEKULA: *What happened is that when we took over—every administration depends on the administrators. The interim government at the time, the transitional government at the time was not the kind of government that could misuse the police, or use the police for political purposes. If you saw the situation at that time we were under a microscope. The entire world was focused on us, the UN, the CIA; everything that we did was in collaboration with the United Nations. They had offices right in the police headquarters. We all worked together. We received advice from them; they received advice from us on most of the critical issues.*

BOUTELLIS: You supervised; you were the head of the police during the 2005 elections. How did the issue of politicization play during the elections and how did the elections go from a police perspective?

KEKULA: *From the police perspective that was one of the major things that I was very happy about. We put in the plans and the plans that we put in were so good to the point that we were able to cover every precinct in the country. That helped us a lot. We had men assigned to every precinct. We had investigators assigned with vehicles. Every county we had two teams of investigators so that if there*

was a problem anyplace, these people would be found and they would go straight to the problem area. There were no incidents of violence throughout the country because the police were present everywhere. That is one of the things that really made me happy that we succeeded because we carried out the elections so peacefully. That made me happy.

BOUTELLIS: So immediately after the results of the elections come out, then what is the situation?

KEKULA: *Well, when the results of the elections came out, then we became more engaged, planning the security for other issues along with we had a lot of meetings. That's when we had inauguration, security, all the security had to join together. The LNP alone could not supply the manpower to cover the entire country during the election, so we got men from all the security agencies who participated in election security. We had people in immigration who were involved in election security. Similarly during the inauguration time we had joint security operation, everybody participated. Things went on very smoothly.*

Whenever there was an incident whereby we knew that police alone could not handle, we needed more manpower, we called on the other security sectors to join so that made things work. We never acted like the police were the only ones who could do everything.

BOUTELLIS: So after the elections and the inauguration there is a new government that comes into place?

KEKULA: *Yes, after the inauguration the new government came in place and they started making appointments.*

BOUTELLIS: Including in the police.

KEKULA: *So things changed. I think I commend this new government because of the changes they made. They took most of the people from within. Some had been there during the reform and restructuring process. I think only three new people were taken but even the three new people two of them were former police executives like the present Inspector-General, she was Deputy Director for Operations before within the police before she traveled. The present Inspector-General.*

BOUTELLIS: She was already in the police?

KEKULA: *She was in the police before. She was Deputy Director for Operations before. She traveled and went to the States.*

BOUTELLIS: In exile also?

KEKULA: *Yes. She was appointed as IG. Then, the other fellow who became First Deputy for Administration, Alfred Kalley. I understand he was a police officer, he was in the police in Los Angeles Police Department. He didn't stay there too long. He was transferred somewhere else. The present Deputy for Adm. Mrs. Asatu Barh Kanneh was with him, she used to work along with us. She was the head of a community police team. The Deputy for Operations, Mr. Gayflor Tarpeh, he is a veteran police officer even though at the time we were there he was not with the police. So I think they have a good team. Every time when there is a major change with the police you take some steps backward. The present, all the procedures, all the plans that we made, the new people want to make their own*

plans. They will not be satisfied with some of the things that we were doing. So that brings about a set back. One of our major aims at the time was trying to professionalize the police.

If you have a force like right now most of them are new, most of the police people are new. So in order for you to professionalize this new group it takes a lot of work and a lot of time. Every time there is a change it affects the plans made by the heads, then you have problems. You can't carry out your plans.

BOUTELLIS: So when the new appointments were made was there any transition handover period between the former leadership of the police and the new appointees?

KEKULA: *When the new appointments were made the present IG was out of the country when she was appointed. I turned it over to the deputy who was also appointed newly, Alfred Kalley a young man from the States. Then when she came there was a formal program for turning over, but all the other turning over was done before she came in but Kalley was the one who received the entire briefing about our projects, about our plans that we had. We had our own strategic plan that we intended to carry out within five years. But since we had to leave, we had to turn over the strategic plan and tell them how far we had gone with it. It was left to them to decide what they wanted to do.*

When you're running an organization like the LNP you need to have a strategic plan that guides you. You need to know where you want to be in a period of time. So that as you go about you evaluate what you have done to see whether you have progressed. This is how we would carry on the entire administration.

BOUTELLIS: So the plan was a strategic plan from 2004, the five year plan?

KEKULA: *Yes, actually from 2004. We had a strategic plan before Mr. Massaquoi left. We did this plan along with him.*

BOUTELLIS: So it was from 2004 to 2009.

KEKULA: *It was not a plan I started. It was done by us along with Mr. Massaquoi.*

BOUTELLIS: So when you left office you went on to immigration.

KEKULA: *The Bureau of Immigration.*

BOUTELLIS: Yes, the Bureau of Immigration. So when you left the police you had a strategic plan that was starting to be placed, what were some of the major challenges and some of the key priorities you had identified for the police?

KEKULA: *First we were doing capacity building, building the capacity of the manpower. We had to develop the human resources first of the police. Then we also were trying to get equipment because if you train the men and they don't have the equipment there's a serious problem. We asked a lot of friendly nations to help and most of these requests, some of them materialized, really, when we were out already. For instance the Nigerian assistance they gave after training the men we asked them to equip the men. Our plan was to—the 300 men to locate them strategically in the country in three different locations. Then for instance Buchanan is an industrial city. If there was a riot in a place like Buchanan and you don't have a group there lot of damages would be done before you arrived there. I think we need to change this location.*

BOUTELLIS: This is the second part of the interview with Joseph Kekula.

KEKULA: *I was talking about how we intended to use the Police Support Unit. As I was saying we had decided to deploy them in three locations. There were 300 of them. So that in case there was a riot in one part of the country you won't have to always take people from Monrovia. Before they get there in time it would be done. So we decided to have them in stations in central Liberia, that's Gbarnga, and another group in Buchanan, which is one of the industrial cities in the country. So we intended to have them well equipped and then have a base for them. That could make our work easier. Whenever there was a riot one group could not contain at least they would be on the ground while augmenting their strength with other groups within the area. So that's how we decided to use that particular group that we trained.*

BOUTELLIS: You mentioned the difficulty of the transitional government in bringing about major changes because they were not elected government. Was the security sector, particularly the police, one of the priorities you felt of the politicians at that time?

KEKULA: *The CPA mandated the reform and restructuring of the police so that was not anything they had choice over, whether they liked it or not. In the CPA, it was an agreement from Accra. So it was a priority, the reformation of the police was a priority. The document mandated the United Nations to do that, to do the reform and restructuring of the police.*

BOUTELLIS: What were some of the underlying political, social, and economic conditions that may have made reform easier? This was one actually that there was a CPA signed that made the reform easier. Were there some other aspects that made it maybe more difficult in terms of the context in which it was driven?

KEKULA: *Some of the things that made it a little more difficult was that at a certain point we found it difficult to get the number of men that was needed. That number of high school graduates that wanted to be police officers. So as a result I think I understand they had to reduce education level to about tenth grade which to me was not correct. The law that established the police says high school graduate.*

BOUTELLIS: Was it because there were not enough people with high school degrees or was it because the police was just not attractive enough that people with degrees didn't want to join?

KEKULA: *Before we actually left we tried our best to make it more attractive. For instance we prevailed on government to increase the police salary from \$15 US to \$90 for private.*

BOUTELLIS: To increase from \$15 a month to \$90 a month?

KEKULA: *Yes, that was done and it helped a lot to attract people. So even right now the police is receiving more money than other civil servants. Civil servants are receiving \$55 per month and police are receiving a minimum of \$90. We did a lot to impress on the government and the government was very cooperative at the time, the transitional government was very cooperative and accepted most of our proposals and suggestions.*

BOUTELLIS: Were there any innovations at that time or any major reform changes that you think were particularly successful in the police?

KEKULA: *I think we were successful in many ways. First we were able to change the image of the police, it was changed completely. The police became somehow more community oriented. We were able to change a lot of negative perceptions people had about the police. We were able to also improve the economic status of the policemen themselves. Besides that we were able to weed out a lot of unproductive officers. We got rid of a whole lot of unproductive officers who were only there for the name and were not doing what they were supposed to do. So I'm sure we were successful in some ways.*

BOUTELLIS: Now the last section, we turn from the police to the donor community and the United Nations who were heavily involved at that time because their mandate because of the CPA to reform and restructure. I'd like to ask you if there were some—what were some of the positive aspects of working with the UN and the donor community and maybe what were some mistakes that the donor countries and international organizations like the UN with respect to the relationship with the country personnel and the country, in general, made.

KEKULA: *The relationship with the UN, especially the UN police was very cordial I can say from the top even though from the beginning a lot of people were against the change. It took us a long period of time to make some of these officers understand that these changes have to go on whether they like it or not. At first we had a lot of opposition from within the police itself regarding the change process. Then when everybody became convinced it is going to go on, everybody was in line.*

With the donor communities sometimes the process takes too long. If they are going to donate something it takes too long. For instance, I was there when Mark Kroeker was still here. We were working on some very needed supplies such as vehicles, uniforms and other things. Believe me I left from there before some of these things even came. He went back so many years - and it takes too long. Also sometimes, for instance if the donor country agrees to provide certain things they are going to send it through the United Nations Development Project [Programme], UNDP, and sometimes together, those things, through those stages might take a very long time. Sometimes the UNDP may not know the implications.

I'll tell you one instance. Since we came out with the new ranking system, a donor country agreed to provide badges and the money went to UNDP. Samples, everything was provided, the companies for the supply. I can tell you that to this time those badges have not been brought in. So sometimes there are a whole lot of delays. When the officers do not have the correct badges the civilians find it difficult to identify who is who. If you are going with no badge there is no badge number, only maybe the name tag and not everybody is using it. These are some of the constraints, otherwise things go pretty well. Sometimes when two groups are working there are some misunderstandings but you can quickly get over those things if you have a set plan. If both of you have a plan, you know where you are heading to. If somebody makes a mistake you can easily correct it.

I think the best thing that we did along with the UN was to have a plan which was understood by both sides. We knew where we were and we knew where we were heading and who was responsible for what. These were made very clear so the UN officers knew their responsibilities and the LNP officers knew their responsibilities. Even during riot control, before you go out there, the UN people know what their responsibilities are and the Liberian officers know what their responsibilities are. Once you set those properly in place - even if there are mistakes, the mistakes will be minimal. This helped us a lot.

BOUTELLIS: The UN is still in country but had already a plan of restoring progressively, now it is the drawdown phase. I know it has been almost three years since you left the Liberian National Police, but in your opinion based on your experience what are the biggest challenges that the police will face once the UN and the donors withdraw?

KEKULA: *What the biggest, some of the challenges, major challenges we will face is to be able to—once, for instance, some criminals will try to make advances, will try to challenge to see the strength because once the UN army is gone, you have the Liberian army in place, which is not fully equipped like the UN army. When the UN police is gone, the Liberian police is there and they're not equipped, I think the major challenge the Liberian National Police will face is equipment and building up the capacity of the manpower which they are working on now. If we happen to get the results of the census to tell us exactly how many people live in this country then based on that they will be able to either increase the manpower to know how many men they need to cope with the population. Then for the equipment I'm sure they already know what kind of equipment is needed. The government just has to take over the responsibility to supply the needed equipment.*

BOUTELLIS: Do you have any final comments reflecting on your time in the police or since you left the police?

KEKULA: *The only comments I would have is that any reform and restructuring situation, I think if you have a good team that is working hard it is not always good to make abrupt changes especially that would affect the implementation of the plans that are put on the ground. Like in the situation of Liberia the political authorities did well - they made a lot of changes to effect the implementation of the plans because when we left from there there were still people within who ascended to certain decision-making levels and were able to advise the incoming heads on the things we were doing. Most of it was carried out, especially like the number of officers that we wanted to train within a given period of time. All of that was carried out.*

Also the recruitment process should always reflect the kind of services that you hope the people, those who are recruited will be rendering. If you take people who would otherwise after their training not be able to do it—there are a lot of people who would want to be policemen but they could never be police material. They would try their best but in the long run they just will not make it. So it is always good to have proper planning for your vetting process when you do your recruitment. I think generally everything is okay; things are coming on fine for the Liberian National Police. I just hope we will be able to identify nearly all of the things that we need to do before the departure of the United Nations police.

BOUTELLIS: Mr. Joseph Kekula, thank you very much for your time.

KEKULA: *Thank you.*