



INNOVATIONS FOR SUCCESSFUL SOCIETIES

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BOUTELLIS: Today is March 14th, 2008 and I am not sitting with Mr. Ibrahim Idris, who is UNPOL (United Nations Police) Operations Coordinator and officer in charge right now in the UN Mission In Liberia (UNMIL). We are now at the UNMIL headquarters 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.

IDRIS: *Based on the papers I've signed I think I've given my consent in writing and orally as I'm speaking to you now.*

BOUTELLIS: Thank you.

IDRIS: *Based on the conditions specified in the papers.*

BOUTELLIS: I'd like to start by learning a bit more about your personal background, particularly the positions you held before coming here and how did you get involved into policing work overseas.

IDRIS: *Thank you very much. As you said, my name is Ibrahim Idris from Nigeria. I am a Deputy Commissioner of Police, that is my rank in Nigeria. In Nigeria I joined the police force in 1984 as a cadet Assistant Superintendent of Police. That is a cadet officer. In Nigeria we consider that as a commissioned officer. I was trained in police staff college in Jos. From there, it is a one-year course. After the course I was transferred to Sokoto State. I served in various units of the Nigerian Police Force at the division level, both in the traffic and in the crime. I was a crime officer for the division, I was a traffic officer for the division.*

I later than transferred in 1987 to the Police Mobile Force which is a special unit of the Nigerian police that deals with riot control, anti-insurgency operations. I have been in the Police Mobile Force since 1987 till date. Initially I was posted to—the unit, a brigade of the Mobile Police which we call a squadron. I was first sent to Number Seven squadron in Sokoto as a unit commander that is like a platoon commander. I was there for some time, then later I was transferred to Calabar which is in Cross River State in 1990 as the squadron commander, just like a brigade, to head a brigade. I was in Calabar for five years and from there I was moved to Lagos, that is the commercial capital city of Nigeria. I was commanding Mobile 23, we call it Police Mobile Force Squadron 23 in Lagos. In Lagos I was in charge of most of the foreign embassies, protection of VIPs, escorts, in addition to the normal anti-riot and anti-insurgency operations.

I was in Lagos up to 1998, January. Then in 1998 January I was transferred to head at that time the only Mobile Police Training School. I was the commandant there from 1998 to 2004. It is from there that I came into the mission. I arrived in the mission here first of February 2004, first as a UN advisor, UNPOL advisor.

In Nigeria, during my course of services in the Police Mobile Force, you know, it is a special unit that transcends state boundaries. So I think I've operated virtually in all the cities in Nigeria because we move from one city to another based on the situations on the ground. I've served also in the Bakassi Peninsula. I think I was the first Police Commander, at that time I was commanding Mobile 11 Calabar. I was the first person to move a police unit into Bakassi and to organize for the first police station that was built in Abana by land donated by the community.

I also coordinated the police operation between the Chads and Nigeria on the Nigerian border. We were having some problems of incursion of armed troops from Chad and Niger. As you know these countries have a lot of rebel groups, especially in Chad where you have changes of government. So I participated in a joint operation there. That is before my coming to the mission.

So in essence what I'm saying is that peacekeeping is something I have been doing I think for the past over twenty years now.

BOUTELLIS: Can you describe the history of the mission, the goal and the objectives when you first arrived in February, 2004 and maybe the evolution since then.

IDRIS: *Let me just start by saying that this is my first mission, first UN mission. So when I came here in 2004, February, the mission was just a few months old, I think about four or five months old. There were so many things. Really, the country itself at that stage is still in a very disorganized state. You just have to go outside now. If you stay on this Tubman Boulevard Road for ten minutes, you hardly see one or two vehicles passing. Now this is just to tell you how the situation was at that time.*

The police at that time were obviously totally in disarray. Most of the officers had left the country. Most of the stations are abandoned, most of them were taken over by rebels. I remember at that time I was the former police unit advisor, we started that office in the mission. I went to GBarna, I went to Tubmanburg, I went to Buchanan, we went to visit some of these police stations and we discovered that these stations were overrun by rebels. In Tubmanburg you have the LURD (Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy). In Buchanan we met the MODEL (Movement for Democracy in Liberia). In GBarna we met the ex-AFL (Armed Forces of Liberia) officers, that is Charles Taylor's troops that are running the police stations.

So compared to then and now you can see that so many things have happened. The LNP headquarters was in total disarray. Virtually they have abandoned the building. So it is gradually, it is our presence that people started coming. I remember it was a Former Police Unit that was occupying the police headquarters. They worked two dual purposes..., one the patrol and their presence provided to the headquarters. They also patrol the city without LNP and provided security to the city at that time. Also the Liberian National police headquarters is to serve a security to that premise, to that facility so that the officers, the Liberian police officers who are scattered all over, all of them are scattered all over the world, started coming back. Some of them started reporting because it gives a security cover for some of them to report back to duty. That is how we started to have streams of officers coming from different locations. Almost all of them are in exile.

That's how we started. In fact, we were operating at the German embassy, those were our first offices, just one container with Mr. Mark Koreker as the Commissioner, we had Al Hassan as the deputy. The whole UNPOL are using a container, that's to tell you. We meet under the tree as UNPOL officers, brief our officers, we go on patrol. Just as I said, just to show some police presence and try to bring some sense of normalcy back to the city so that people started trooping in from various parts of the country and from outside the country. That's how we started.

From there we started organizing what you call the interim police training. The few officers that we were able to mop up together we sent to the police academy

and give them just a few weeks training, an interim. They are going to establish an interim police force. We did that. With that I think we were able to get some officers especially in Monrovia to cover some of the police stations. Then we started, the police started operating within Monrovia.

In the leeward areas, apart from those areas I told you we visited, we started sending some of these officers there. You have some areas where, like I said, you have, apart from these rebels, you have volunteers. By the time we did that process it picks up, most of these rebels, all of them went back for the disarmament. They were taken back to these disarmament camps. So we had most of the police stations manned by volunteers in some of the leeward counties. That's how from UNPOL we started sending officers. At that time we called it expedition. We tried to locate where the police station is and then plan the deployment of our UNPOLs there after some assessment of security.

Every once in a while there was occasional with, there was movement of our officers runs into roadblocks so you see how some of these rebels are still manning roadblocks all over the country. So this is how we put it. We were able to open up most of the police stations that were closed for virtually some ten to fifteen years during these conflicts. We sent our officers there. Then gradually some of these volunteer officers, some of the former, old LNP officers, some of them are very, very old, started to come in to render some assistance at the police stations. This is prior to the time we started the police actual basic training.

I think from there we now started the building of this—the police academy was opened. Which, I'm sure you must have been briefed. At that time you see we just have to start working. So the police academy was opened with some few tents. That's how our officers started operating. Initially everything is 100% on UNPOL. So far we don't have an executive responsibility but obviously we have to fill in the vacuum. So we started that. We built up what is called the police basic training curriculum. It is based on that and we started training LNP officers in 2004. As of last year, I think July, we were able to complete training of 3500 Liberian National Police officers that have undergone basic training. The training is still ongoing, so we have now reached above the 3500. The 3500 is the agreement between the UN and the country, that is the Liberian government.

So that is the evolution of the mission. After the start up of the mission we came into what you call the election phase. I remember the challenges we faced at that time during the election phase.

BOUTELLIS: In 2005.

IDRIS: *Yes, in 2005. In fact, like I said, when I came into the mission I think first for three months I was in the planning office. I was deputy to the planning coordinator. At that time I was not an international staff. But by June 2005, I was appointed as the Acting UNPOL Operations Coordinator. I was still at UNPOL. Then there was a vacancy announcement for the Operations Coordinator who was leaving. I applied and I was taken as the operation coordinator. So from that acting position I became the operational coordinator, that was prior to the elections.*

One of the challenges we discovered that time before the election was one, the Liberian National Police like I said was going through a very critical phase. We don't have many officers on the ground, to mobilize officers is a problem. Their coordination, their cohesiveness was a problem. So what we did, Al Hassan at that time, because Al Hassan was the one who was the commissioner on the ground. We discussed with the peace negotiator General Abdusalami from

Nigeria, he was the peace negotiator for this, the Accra Peace Agreement. So we discussed with him the need for training I'll call it a riot unit.

BOUTELLIS: Crowd control units.

IDRIS: *Yes, crowd control unit which we can use for the elections. I think he spoke to the President of Nigeria at that time and they gave us the slots in the Mobile Police Training School. That's where I was the commander before coming here for the training of 300 police units. Before there, I brought up the paper on the establishment of this Structural police support unit, that unit is presently existing in the LNP. So we sent 300 officers to Nigeria with the use of UN flights. The training and everything was handled by Nigeria. They trained these 300 officers just a month before the election. That was in June 2005.*

We brought them back and to be frank those officers assisted us during the election and immediately after the election because I'm sure you must have heard, after the elections there were so many demonstrations by the CDC (Congress for Democratic Change) supporters of other parties that lost the election alleging that the election was rigged and everything.

BOUTELLIS: These were Police Support Units right?

IDRIS: *Yes, 300 that were trained in Nigeria. Yes Police Support Units, PSU, we call them PSU.*

BOUTELLIS: So during the elections it was rather calm but right after you're saying there were riots.

IDRIS: *Right, during the election we did not have much problem. There was a lot of enthusiasm obviously from Liberians. Even in Nigeria, the first day of the election, like I said, I was the Operation Coordinator. I drafted the planning of the operation, the operation plan, the execution and everything. I coordinated that. What I said on the Election Day it was so well attended I was surprised. By 4, 3 a.m. people are suddenly lining up at the polling booths, you can't believe it. By 5 a.m., by the time we are going around you see queues of people. There was a lot of enthusiasm from the people. So I think the only challenges we faced during the election was the crowds, especially in Monrovia. Some of these pollings are distant. Taking into consideration the number of officers we had on the ground because apart from these 300 Liberian National Police, LNP at that time training had not gone far and we had problems like I said of mobilization of them, moving them as a group. So these 300 police we really used greatly. Most of these areas where we had buildup of crowd we deployed them to these areas to maintain, give assistance in controlling the crowd and making sure that people are—. Everything was orderly. It was an election that was—there were so many external monitors including Jimmy Carter. He was in Liberia. He went around to visit some of these areas.*

So the election went on smoothly like I said. The result was announced. Immediately after the announcement of the result we started having problem of demonstrations. Thousands of people, CDC (Congress for Democratic Change) supporters moving from one embassy to another. I think that demonstration took almost two weeks, moving from one embassy to another, giving their letters of petition, alleging that the election was rigged and other things like that. But I think the credit goes to the police support unite there because I think they performed greatly. They were the people that we used in the front line.

BOUTELLIS: So of the 300 how many were deployed in Monrovia and how many were in the provinces?

IDRIS: *At that time we used, we deployed some of them during the elections because we now have another challenge of deploying LNP officers to these counties because we break down numbers of officers required by counties depending on the number of the polling booths outside of Monrovia. We came up with a joint operation plan for the Liberian National Police obviously based on our own advice and mentoring. So it is based on this that we now determined the number of LNP officers that we deploy outside, as anti-riot control and then also covering some of these polling booths. We have problems of getting some of these officers, one, like I said the LNP was in a very unique stage of development, most of them had no uniforms. It was really a challenge, no uniforms.*

So you see an officer without a uniform, he is just like a civilian, he is just like an ordinary person. It is very hard for them to show, for their presence to make any impact, especially at the polling booth. So we have to use some of these Police Support Units to fill in some of these vacuums. Some of these officers were transported by ship to Harper for the election.

BOUTELLIS: To the southern cities.

IDRIS: *We used all the UN assets, helicopters and other things to move them to other locations. I think by and large the election—we used the military for security of the electoral materials. Then also we used them to secure the houses of the electoral officers. But actually the military were not deployed to the polling booths, we didn't do this, only the police, the LNP with our officers were deployed to the polling booths. I think the election went on smoothly. After the election all these officers were also brought back by the same UN assets that we used to take them out of Monrovia.*

So we had, like I said about one week or two of demonstrations. Some of them were a bit violent, throwing of stones and other things like that by the CDC supporters.

BOUTELLIS: How were the PSUs equipped? The LNP Police Support Units?

IDRIS: *The PSU during that time—when we took them to Nigeria, Nigeria made the undertaking that they were going to equip them after training. Unfortunately that equipment came very, very late. But we were lucky, I think in 2004 there were some donations from the US government of some batons, shields, helmets, plastic shields. Those are the items that we used, we gave to the PSUs at that time and they used them in controlling the riots and demonstrations during that period after the elections. Okay?*

BOUTELLIS: Go ahead.

IDRIS: *After the elections we now come back to what you call the consolidation phase. We now have what you call intensive and aggressive mentoring because by then we have started passing out the LNP graduates who have undergone the basic police training. So we now started this aggressive mentoring and monitoring of them, attaching our officers to all the police stations. During the consolidation phase we now face the deployment of the LNPs to the counties. We started opening more police stations, posting LNPs all over the country. Trying to spread the law enforcement capacity of the Liberian National Police all over, apart from the county headquarters to other areas. We made an assessment of what areas*

requires police presence. Also to areas in the previous time most of them had police stations that were put in those areas. So we further expanded them all over the country. I think so far we have covered all the counties. In addition to the counties we have also covered most of the, at least some areas of interest like where you have some of the plantations, where you have mining activities, areas that obviously based on our assessment of the LNP required the presence of the Liberian National Police.

During this period also we started the building of the capacity, the capacity of the Liberian National Police, providing them with, through the UN itself, we call it quick impact projects, building police stations all over the country, more in Monrovia. I must have counted about seven or eight police stations in Monrovia built by the UN. The UN also came in through this QIP to construct some of these police stations, just to ensure the continued deployment of the Liberian National Police.

Other countries also came in to assist us based on our contacts and the drive of the mission. We have countries like Norway, we have countries like the Netherlands, we have countries like Belgium. They came in with the construction of police stations, the provision of vehicles and the provision of equipment. Countries like Nigeria, like Britain. Britain also came, I think they provided stationary, uniforms. These are things that came in this period, after the election, 2005 – 2006.

I think the uniforms were just completed, we just completed the distribution of uniforms last year, toward the end of last year.

BOUTELLIS: The UK offered that?

IDRIS: *Yes, US and UK, the US also gave a contribution of the uniforms. So now I think most of the officers at least have some uniforms, some sets of uniforms that they are wearing. I think there are more, through the UNDP (United Nations Development Program), through donations from some of these countries, that is in the offing to provide these uniforms. So the mentoring and the monitoring was very, very aggressive during the consolidation phase. The Police Support Unit I think it, after last year, rather 2006, Nigeria finally brought their support. I think they brought I think about 12 vehicles, some uniforms, some protective vests, helmets, plastic shields, batons, for the Police Support Unit. It came in 2006. That was I think almost a year after the training. But it was to equip the Police Support Unit.*

I think this mentoring and advisory role of UNPOL was ongoing up until last year. I'm sure by now you should have heard about this drawdown plan. The mission is in the drawdown phase now. All the previous periods we were concentrating on what you call individual capacity development. We have trained the officers on basic training. We followed them to the field to mentor and advise them. Now we are trying to focus on the institutional development which is going to be more technical. It is also going to be focusing on the management of the LNP. I think management is one of the areas of challenge. I think these are areas we should consider when you're talking of lessons learned. As I said earlier LNP went through a phase from a near zero level to where it is now.

After the election those officers—I'm sorry, I forgot the deactivation process which is very, very important, deactivation. By the time, before we started training we had to conduct what we call the vetting exercise. We have to vet those officers—

BOUTELLIS: That happened when?

IDRIS: *That happened in 2004, vetting.*

BOUTELLIS: At the beginning.

IDRIS: *An aggressive vetting exercise, before the training commenced, the basic training. We have to go through a vetting exercise. We set criteria which we jointly agreed with the government of Liberia, at that time which is a transitional government. We said every person that has a previous human rights violation record should not be part of the new police force. Every person that would serve in the future Liberian Police Force must be a high school graduate in addition to other issues related to how they were operating, even as police officers during the previous regimes. Because, like I said, most of them abandoned—the genuine ones abandoned the stations and ran away. But all those that stayed behind and were serving as police officers were part of one rebel group or the other. So most of them stayed there were getting involved with one atrocity or the other. So these are areas we looked into and then we set up a very vigorous vetting process where we have to go to the communities. We contacted the human rights groups in this country. We went through the available police records. They contacted other intelligence units with the names of officers.*

After the advertisement, after filling in forms, we compiled these names with their pictures. We published them in the newspapers, for people to come forward to comment on these individuals. Also we went through their forms. If somebody said he is from a particular location we go there, meet his neighbors, try to get the community leader to comment on him. So this is the vetting process that was put in place for us to be able at least to sieve out those, even within the LNP. The vetting affects both serving and those coming in. So it is based on that that we—

BOUTELLIS: How big was the old LNP and how many of these were deactivated and how many actually made it through the vetting?

IDRIS: *Before this, before the vetting process we had what you call registration of all law enforcement agencies in this country. At that time I think the LNP was about 2000. But the majority of these, what do you call them, some of them are over age but they just come up. They are still LNPs. Some of them are over age, some of them have abandoned the job for ten, fifteen years because after the year they just—. But they came back, all of them reported and we registered them. I think just a little above 2000. Those came to register. Out of this I think by the time we finished vetting I think we had less than 1000. I don't know the actual figure. I think the reform should be able to—but less than a thousand after the vetting. Old age also is part of the reason because there is a retirement age if you are too old. These were vetted out before we commenced the training of the new recruits.*

So all of them, at that time, both from the highest rank you can think of down went through that basic training because they have to go through this new training program that was set up by UN police at that time. That's how, then from there, after finishing with those, we now started recruiting from the streets now, new fresh people coming into the force.

Like I said, as of July last year, we trained 3500 but the training is ongoing up to now. It is a long way. After that phase of consolidation where we did this mentoring, from this year, we are going into—

BOUTELLIS: 2008, the drawdown?

IDRIS: *We are going into the drawdown where we are going to be reducing our staff, though very gradually. Like I said we are now focusing on the institutional capacity development of the LNP. We are starting to now come up with their policies, the duty manual. That one has been finished, we are coming to the Police Act. Obviously these are things that needs a lot of consultation because these are legal documents. That one is ongoing now. We are also going into, also like I said we are now focusing on technical specialization of the LNP themselves. Initially we gave all of them basic training, now we are going into specialization. These are the areas of investigation, crime scene investigation, exhibits, taking of exhibits, custody of exhibits in those areas. Forensics. These are some of the areas. Forensic investigation. These are areas also we are trying to focus on now.*

Then one of the biggest challenges we have in the LNP is the issue of leadership. This I think is, there are factors one can attribute to this. During all that consolidation phase, when we started during the elections, we met officers within the organization. You mentioned Kekula, Mr. (Joseph) Kekula was the IG here during that phase. Even when we went to Nigeria we went to seek for the training of these Police Support Unit. Immediately after the election they had a Constitutional government in place so you now have what you call political affiliations now. So people are appointed based on political affiliations. I think that is one area we have to look at.

To be frank with you, from our own side, in the modern democratic policing concept, you try to depoliticize the police because when you have a lot of political influence in the police, you know you're going to have a lot of problems which is one of the—I think that is one of the factors that caused the war in this country, the politicization of the security agencies. People are using the agencies as their personal—instead of serving the people they are serving a few individuals. So the interest of this individual is what they're protecting.

In the LNP, from everywhere we have been saying this to the government, but unfortunately, presently, I'm just saying this, there is a limit, you have a constitutional government in place but there is, especially the three management lines of the LNP are politicized. They are appointed by the President.

BOUTELLIS: The top three tiers?

IDRIS: *Yes, the three tiers. The IG, the Deputy Inspector-General and then the Commissioners of police. It is contrary to our own advice.*

BOUTELLIS: They're all appointed by the President.

IDRIS: *The President appoints them and they go through legislative screening. They went through legislative screening all of them.*

BOUTELLIS: So Parliament?

IDRIS: *Yes Parliamentary screening and confirmation which means they are politicized. They are just like ministers. What we recommend and—.*

BOUTELLIS: How many does that represent?

IDRIS: The IG, you have two DIGs, and then the Commissioners I think you have about five of them. That is eight, the three top-most lines of officers are political appointees of government. So this is something—left for us it is only the head, the IG all over the world can be political, but these are supposed to be professional levels. So this is a challenge to us because these people are politically appointed, some of them have no police background. These are some of the challenges I think we are facing now, the issue of leadership of the LNP.

BOUTELLIS: She came in 2005?

IDRIS: Her appointment was—.

BOUTELLIS: After the elections?

IDRIS: Yes, after the elections. I think about—so end of 2005.

BOUTELLIS: So prior to the elections who were the top people in the police and were they also political appointees?

IDRIS: No, when we came in I think we met, those we met were not political appointees. Like (Joseph) Kekula, when we came Kekula was deputy to (Chris) Massaquoi. Massaquoi was appointed, he is the Commissioner for BIN (Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization) now, Massaquoi, Chris Massaquoi, was the person when I came into UNPOL he was the person I met. He was appointed by the NTGL (National Transitional Government of Liberia). He was even formally UN staff and they appointed him as the IG.

BOUTELLIS: The head IG?

IDRIS: That was Chris Massaquoi then. So when he was relieved of his appointment the then NTGL appoints Mr. Joseph Kekula as the IG. He is the one that conducted the elections. It was after the election now, it was after the election they now appointed this new IG. He was initially transferred to BIN, Bureau of Immigration, but later I think he left. I don't know where he is now. Massaquoi left the IG, he was relieved of his appointment. The next time we saw him he was with the President. At that time she was campaigning for the President. I think he was her security advisor. So after she was elected she appointed him as Commissioner of the Bureau of Immigration. After that he was transferred as the Director of the Security Service to protect the President.

BOUTELLIS: The SSS.

IDRIS: I'm just giving you an example of how politics plays in the appointment of some of the leadership of these agencies. Someone who was somewhere, he messed up. You move him, you find him another agency. He messed up, he moved out, you find another. They are just moving them around, just like all the previous, because they are political appointees. The only thing we can do is to recommend to government, say these guys are unsuitable. But in most cases I think the President has the prerogative to appoint who she wants to work with. But that is one of the greatest challenges we are facing in the LNP now. I think this transcends most of the security agencies in this country.

Some of them we understand. Because of a long period when this show was not operating as a normal institution. They don't have the on-the-job experience. But at least, if they can sit down to follow, but in most cases like I spoke of someone, there were so many problems in the SSS. All this happens because of, contrary

to advice that we give, or not listening to advice, not amenable to advice. That is one of the challenges we face with some of these agencies.

Those professional levels I was telling you, those matter a lot to the affairs of this organization. Like I said, one, they have no police experience, some of them do not have the educational background. We don't even know where some of them worked before. Some of them are just private security officers, some of them just came in, they were just fresh grabbed from universities. These are people that are now professional heads of the organization, they are commissioner of operations, they are deputy Inspector-General of Police. That is where we are having the greatest challenges.

One, some of these young officers were not trained, they didn't go through our normal basic training. They didn't go through our vetting. We didn't vet them because they are political appointees. So it is a way—you have the good people under, then on top just sloppy—you understand. So it has caused a lot of problems. You have low morale among the men which now extends, we start having absenteeism which is now getting to, is becoming a concern though I think last year we have to be very blunt with the government and I think they themselves, the officers are trying to adjust themselves to address that issue. You have poor management because they've not—they never had any position before in the public so they don't know how to manage. Planning and management is lacking. Lack of on-the-job experience. So these are some of the factors, these are some of the challenges that we are facing now with the LNP.

BOUTELLIS: UNPOL has been planning, starting actually management courses, is considering sending of them to the UK.

IDRIS: *This is with the UK, the sub-region. That is one area.*

BOUTELLIS: Would those be these political appointees or it is the tier just below?

IDRIS: *We are going to—what we did, because we met with the government, we are very blunt with the government in providing this, we gave them the assessment of most of the critical agencies. What we did is we now went down and tried to get those potential leaders. We got the lists. So we are now agreeing with government, it is going to be a gradual transition. So we got people that are going to fill in the space. We are not going to throw these people away. We will be mixing them. We mix both of them. They'll go for training. When they come back we are going to have a gradual transition. But I think from the point of view of the mission especially the first two, the IG and the deputies we need to make a change there for us to move.*

From the Commissioner of Operations down, that one we will be able to send some of them for courses, we can at least mix them with some of these young officers that have the potential. Like you said, we organized some management courses, yes, but to be frank, training them in this environment we are going to give them some knowledge but it is good for them to go to an established system. Apart from gaining from the training itself, they will know how a system operates because like I said most of them are not even exposed to what a proper police organization should look like. That is why I said, like you said, we are trying to see whether they can train them in the UK, some of them I think Ghana and Nigeria. I think that are some of the plans we are trying to do so we send some of these young officers to go to these institutions. Apart from gaining the knowledge, they'll go down and see how a police organization functions and I think this is going to assist us. These potential officers, as I said earlier we just

picked them from the streets, gave them ten-months basic training, they are just fresh officers. So it is something that is going to be gradual.

BOUTELLIS: Before we get into different technical areas, looking at the rule of law in Liberia and levels of crimes, types of crimes, what was your first assessment when you got here? You described the presence of rebels and so on, but in terms of crime rates, in terms of types of crime, what has been the evolution since the mission got here?

IDRIS: *When we came into the mission, when I was here 2004, we had, most of the crimes were just burglary. I think that's one of the things I have been telling people. You know in Nigeria we had war, we had civil war before. This country it is surprising, I'm surprised, even during the disarmament period, you hardly see crimes with weapons. It is, up to now it baffles me. I'm thinking when I say weapons, rifles, and most of what you hear is robbery in this country. They are talking about people carrying cut glass or iron bar or sticks.*

BOUTELLIS: Machetes.

IDRIS: *Machetes, that's all.*

BOUTELLIS: No guns.

IDRIS: *No guns. Most of the crimes involving guns in this country are those involving a shotgun, it is hunters mistaking one as an animal. That is most of the cases we have, but these are shotguns. They are—they are somehow legal weapons but need to be licensed. They are not illegal, not sophisticated rifles we are talking about.*

BOUTELLIS: What are these weapons for? Is it for hunting?

IDRIS: *The shotgun, this hunting gun. They are using in the hinterland. Most of the crime, when you see a crime, instead of firearm, that is what is happening. You have one hunter, two of them go into the forest, one mistaking the other, is hit. I don't know whether they have a problem, but mostly it is a very rampant issue here. Two hunters in the forest, one firing the other. That is the only firearm we see there. But to say somebody go to rob, no.*

What we did, I think in 2005 we had some operation sweeping and all this, we were able to raid some of these houses, we were able to seize some of these weapons from them.

BOUTELLIS: The operation was called?

IDRIS: *We called it Operation Sweeping Wave.*

BOUTELLIS: Sweeping Wave, 2005.

IDRIS: *2005 yes.*

BOUTELLIS: It was to respond to?

IDRIS: *Perceived robbery because these kind of people, there is armed robbery, but most of the robbery here like I said is with machetes and sticks. So based on that this operation came up. We now have, in each of these operations we have what you call a coordinating team. So based on that, this information, we got this*

information about some of these ministers. We raided their house. I think we were able to recover a few—in those days official weapons. The records are not there. But that's how we were able to retrieve. Then I think they warned some of them I think after that. There was a warning from government and some of them voluntarily surrendered some of those weapons back to government there. But most of these weapons we gave them to the military for destruction.

Like you said, you talk about general security, about disarmament. The only incident I think since I came to this country, there were two major riots that one can say is something that is, that threatened the nation's security itself. One was in 2003. I was not even here then. When they started disarmament they are trying to force the ex-combatants into camps where they would disarm them, we called them disarmament camps. I think here in Camp Schieffelin, when you are going to RIA (Roberts International Airport), those surrounding this area, we are taking there. So I think there is an issue about either not feeding them or something. Some of them just drove right into Monrovia and started shooting, looting. It happened in 2003. I think the Nigerian military at that time they were already in the mission, they came in and they were able to force them back into the disarmament camp. I don't know what happened. I was here in 2004, I think it was around 10 o'clock at night, there was a construction site, there was a fight between a Muslim and a Christian. From there it snowballed into an attack of churches and mosques and I think a little over 20 people died in that riot before morning. At that time we also had move in formed police units from all over the country. They came in and they were able to—many people were arrested and were taken to court. In that case no firearms were used which is very interesting. Apart from that or 2003 because, then in 2003 the disarmament had not even started, they just put them into camp, they had not started disarmament so all of them had their weapons. But that in 2004, no firearms, one year after. With all the riots, with all the killings we didn't have any report of seeing somebody use guns or something like that.

So that's why I say up to now really for a country that came out of war, compared to—most of the robberies you don't see a report of rifle or anything. So I think that shows this country by and large is not so bad, most of the problems, are with the political leaders, not the ordinary people on the street. Generally they are just peace-loving people that don't want much.

BOUTELLIS: So the crime levels are generally pretty low?

IDRIS: *They're low. I think we just started—there's one operation that we launched some 2-3 weeks ago, Operation Thunderstorm, I'm sure you must have heard of it. What it is, they say that crime is high. In all of this country, within a week, we are recording between 12 to 15 cases of robberies. But when I say robberies, not people using machetes and sticks, and what are they stealing? Cell phones. Between 12 to 15 per week in all of Liberia. So people start shouting that there are robberies. So that is the nature of it. So that is why we set up this Operation Thunderstorm and then there is a lot of noise in the newspapers, this reassurance of people. We increased patrols and then everything just fizzled out.*

BOUTELLIS: I'd like to go through a number of different areas. If you don't have any particular comments we'll just move to the next area.

IDRIS: *Okay.*

BOUTELLIS: The first one is recruitment, in terms of the recruitment strategies. You described the deactivation process and the vetting. How has been the recruitment? What

are the strategies that have been put in place here in Liberia and maybe some of the challenges?

IDRIS: Within the recruitment cycle, let me start with the vetting. Vetting I think, from our own side I think we have a very, very good vetting process. Like I told you, one we have to scrutinize their papers, we have to go to locate the schools they finished from although that is very difficult because some of the records—you go to some of these schools the records are destroyed but at least we are able to make some headway on those because we normally have some exams if we doubt you or something like that. We have to go to their communities to meet the community leaders, where you are living, we have to talk to your neighbors. We have to give your name to human rights groups in the country because they may have records, they have previous records. We have to give your name to the other intelligence units, NSA (National Security Agency), SSS, NBI (National Bureau of Investigation) so that they go through their records. They know those who have sat in any of these rebel groups. We have to put your pictures in the newspapers. But you see, with all this process, there is still this belief, within some of the government officials that there are some people, a very negligible numbers, very, very negligible, I think only one so far, that was discovered to have gone to the academy but he was detected and he was dismissed. Their own position is that the communities are still afraid, that they don't have that confidence to talk. But when we talk about the communities, what of the intelligence units, what of the human rights groups and other things like that. So these are some of the areas I think—it is others coming off—if you have a meeting on vetting this issue, somebody will bring this issue up, that the communities are still afraid. They cannot come out to say this guy has done something to my family before. Again, of interest, the TRC (Truth and Reconciliation Commission) now, we have never seen them mention any serving police officers, serving. That is they are talking about others, this guy is one of the officers, up to now, with all this the TRC, they have gone now in their sitting, but so far we have not had any accusation against any serving officer now. So at least at some level the vetting process is credible.

One area where we are facing a lot of problems is the gender issue with the females which obviously is understood. During the war they are the victims. They are subject to so much brutalization, they are subject to forced labor and other things like that. So some of them they were did not have the opportunity to go to school. Some of them who were in school were forced to abandon the school. So we feel that challenge in the whole Liberian National Police.

What we are doing now is we came up with what we call a special program to address this issue. Through all the stakeholders, you have the Minister of Gender, you have the Minister of Education, we are trying to come up with an MOU (Memorandum of Understanding) with the government, with the WAEC (West African Examinations Certificate) and the UN.

BOUTELLIS: The Women and Children?

IDRIS: No, I'm not thinking of women and children, we call this special education for women. West African Examinations Certificate.

BOUTELLIS: High school level examination.

IDRIS: Yes, high school, for the West African Sub-region. You can go to Ghana or Nigeria. You can work within the whole of West Africa. It is set by WAEC, one exam. So we came with the understanding. We came up with the policy. Some of

these women due to one issue or the other were forced to abandon school, they don't have high school certificates. And they don't have the means to pursue their education.

What we did is that we tried to get some funds, organize a special education which was vetted and approved by WAEC. We take them through this special education. All this just to get enough women, because the concept of democratic policing is you have equal representation. There should be some level of representation of all the sectors of the community. So we are now trying to see how we can improve on the recruitment of women into the LNP.

BOUTELLIS: So there has been a quota agreed on for women in the LNP?

IDRIS: *Yes, I think what we have is 20%. It is supposed to be 20%. That is a UN standard. So what we did now with this special education we got funding through UNDP. The Minister of Education organized with Stella Maris, it is a school, it is one of the high schools here. They organized it. They take these girls and women through some formal tutorial for I think two months or something like that, I'm not sure of the time. After this tutorial they now take WAEC who now examine them. It is a special examination, it is not like the normal WAEC. WAEC will examine them. Those that pass, we now take them to go through our basic training for the police. We recruit them. Those that pass now go through the process of recruitment because they have to fill out their forms, they have to go to physical checking, they have to go through the vetting process.*

BOUTELLIS: So it is prior to entering the academy.

IDRIS: *Prior, we try to detach that from the academy so it doesn't look as if we are cutting corners. Those that pass we now give them to the recruitment team, now starts recruitment afresh. Then they go through the vetting, they go through the recruitment process. So with this, I think we are now able to—that's one of the highest [Indecipherable 53:32] region. I think we may be about 10% or something like that. I am not sure of it, but we are going gradually to raise the female number. So we are improving on that on female recruitment.*

One other challenge in the recruitment process is the issue of the confidence of the public. Because for any organization it has to get the support—people have to accept or have confidence in this. The level of response of people trying to join that organization depends on how they perceive that organization. Unfortunately the LNP has gone through, during the war, like I said, some of the officers that are left in the organization, they have bastardized the organization. People have lost a lot of confidence, not only in the LNP, but most of the security agencies in this country because of the way they were treated during the war. So these are some of the issues we are facing now.

BOUTELLIS: So people are not applying. It should be in greater numbers.

IDRIS: *Yes, not in the way we want them. The best quality applicant, thinking of the quality of the people who come into the organization now. They are not in great numbers. In fact there was a time we had to be following people with forms. If I tell you, I talk to you, encourage you. We say fill out the form on the spot because when you give someone the form that's the end of it, nobody would come back. There was a time we used helicopters to drop leaflets on recruitment, the beauty of LNP, that kind of thing. We started going from house-to-house, school-to-school to talk to people. People perceive the police—you understand?*

Because of the previous historical perspective or how they were treated by the security agencies. That's how we were able to break—.

In fact, to be frank with you, towards the end of July 2005, the MOU signed between UN and the Liberian government. By the end of July we want to train 3500 officers. It was getting our recruitment, so we had to adopt a lot of measures to encourage people, using helicopters, dispatch riders, to make it attractive. So many things just to make them join. Organizing some community forums where people would come and go into police stations, get used to the police, just to bring their confidence back into the police. These are some of the measures we adopted in time for us to be able to get to that 3500 mark last year.

BOUTELLIS: So these are the number of officers that have been trained out of the—?

IDRIS: *They are now above as I said July last year, 3500. Now I think we have gone beyond that now. There are more than 3500. From July until now I think we passed out after this one or two classes. They are not up to 4000 yet.*

BOUTELLIS: So what is the benchmark? What is the end target for the size of the police?

IDRIS: *The police initially I think it was at 3500 we put the size of the police, but that's just between us and the government. The number is not static. As you are training people there is also attrition. Some of them are leaving, some of them die, some of them are dismissed.*

BOUTELLIS: So the new classes are also replacing people who are retiring or leaving and so on. So the police was maintaining approximately—.

IDRIS: *Yes, just to maintain that level of 3500. But I think another thing that was added, that was, I'll come to this, a special unit, the Emergency Response Unit (ERU), that just started training January of this year. The Emergency Response Unit is a response—the Rand Commission, I think they are from the US. They made a study. For the purpose of taking history into perspective, they are trying to create an environment where you hardly see the military of this country on the street. So the only way you can do that is to make it impossible, virtually, for them to have a reason to come back onto the streets. So then you say okay, why don't we create a special unit that is a bit higher than the police but not up to the military but which is going to be under police control. So it is police officers. It is not going to be permanent. If you are transferred to ERU you are not going to be there permanently.*

BOUTELLIS: They rotate you out.

IDRIS: *They are rotating you so you don't have this feeling of look, I'm in a special police unit. So that is the plan of this year. The ERU is going to be 500 people. They are going to be recruited from the LNP. So this program was started this year in January. So far we have trained class one, about 100. We are going to class two now, about 69 of them are in training now. At the end of 2009 the plan is that we are going to operationalize 500 ERU officers. So the point I'm saying, this is part of the 3500, these 500 is now going to be an additional number to the original 3500. You understand?*

BOUTELLIS: So it will be a force of about 4000.

IDRIS: *Yes, 4000 on the average. So that is what is our target now, because we are taking these 500 from the LNP, so we have expanded the strength to add these 500 and then we will be at 4000 strength.*

BOUTELLIS: So this is a big novelty. You mentioned the achievement of doing basic training for 3500, what are the other achievements in the training?

IDRIS: *Training, I think so far there are so many things that have been achieved, they've have the basic training, like you observe. We have conducted some management training for the management, the first line managers. Even [Indecipherable 59:58], we organized the management training for them, the top level, what I'd call the first line providers also, the county commanders. They have done, I think, one or two courses of county commanders. They have done training also on the issue of investigation. I think they've done some advanced training in investigation also, but it is limited.*

Women and Children's Protection Unit. I think that is one area that is very, very important and critical. I think we have been so lucky, the Norwegians are assisting in that project. That unit was created, obviously you know the history in post war conflict areas, the issue of violence against women, rapes. So I think it was recognized that we needed special—a unit of the LNP to be addressing the issue of children and women. So this Women and Children's Protection Unit, the WACP, that is what we call it, was created. It has its headquarters here. Initially, they have a course in the police academy. We started sending batch by batch. By now I think we have covered almost all over the country although there are a few counties that we have yet to cover but we have expanded to many parts of the country including Monrovia here and they are now addressing the special cases of women and children, especially rape and other violence against women.

That is one of the areas the police have clearly done because they have been training the people in this aspect and also, as I said, the Norwegians they are building—. Most of the police stations built now they have a WACP—they have a Women and Children's Protection Unit attached. You see it is a special addition. In each police station, just to give emphasis to that project. I think the project is ongoing. I think we are about to start the construction of the headquarters, the Norwegians are building a headquarters for it in Monrovia. I think the project is almost about to start.

The other areas of training I think we were able to improve on the capacity of the other areas, the airport, we call it the RIA security, for airport security. I think some are getting some basic training by the police academy also. We have the Liberian Seaport Police, we also provided some training for them at the police academy. The PSU, you know after training 300 PSU in Nigeria, by the time the weapons came in 2006 the police academy also had to organize a firearms training for them to qualify them to bear fifty weapons because Nigeria promised, donated fifty pistols to them which obviously we Nigeria, we sent to the Sanction Committee, the UN Security Council's Sanction Committee, they approved it. Then we had what you call a firearms' policy which we prepared which is approved by the Sanction Committee. Anybody bearing firearms will go through a particular training which is also carried out at the police academy. So they have been conducting that training, not only for the PSU but also for the SSS in the police academy, this firearm training. Because that is the other thing, any agency now that has to carry weapons must go through that training before they are qualified to carry weapons. We call it Firearm Qualification Training.

BOUTELLIS: So that is 50 PSU out of the 300.

IDRIS: Yes, about 50 have been trained.

BOUTELLIS: And who else carries weapons?

IDRIS: The SSS, the—.

BOUTELLIS: The Special Security Service for the—.

IDRIS: Yes, for the President, they carry weapons also.

BOUTELLIS: So they also have been certified.

IDRIS: Yes, they are certified by this training for them to carry weapons. Those are the only two agencies now, apart from the AFL which is outside of our scope, the AFL is the Armed Forces of Liberia. They are entirely different.

BOUTELLIS: The military.

IDRIS: Yes.

BOUTELLIS: So the next area I'd like to talk about is the integration and amalgamation of services.

IDRIS: Yes, the restructuring.

BOUTELLIS: Yes, the restructuring.

IDRIS: *You're talking of security sector reform, the restructuring and amalgamation of the security agencies. There has been a lot of—during the period of transitional government these consultations, discussions were ongoing on how they are going to restructure the security sector. So many proposals were put forward. But by the time the government came in, this government, obviously they started all over again. Now there is a Government Reform Commission. I think now everything is being handled—after the other stakeholders, all the strategians, the agencies, the civil societies, the human rights groups, everybody I think so far has made a contribution to that before.. So now they send it to the Government Reform Commission. I think that is going to be the final—the Government Reform Commission and the government will now have the final say then before they take it to the national legislature. So they will now give it the final [Indecipherable 1:05:14].*

In the proposals over the time that I saw there was put out by the Government Reform Commission, there were some agencies. The problem, I think one of the problem we have in this country is that you have so many overlaps of functions. It create a lot of security issues because every agency wants to show that they are the people in charge. So you have conflicts. You have duplication of duties, two or three agencies doing the same work. So I think one of the recommendations of this security sector is that they should merge some of these agencies that have similar areas of responsibilities. In reality, this country does not have the resources to have so numerous security agencies. Even the few they have, the ones they have, they can't manage the ones they have, even though the LNP has gone far, it is still in a very, very terrible problem for financing. I will come to that later, financing, the budgetry, financing of the security services. That is one of the challenges we are facing also.

So you have agencies like National Bureau of Investigation, Drug Agency Administration, I think they are going to be merged. From the proposal I saw they are going to be merged into the Liberian National Police, those two agencies. You have agencies like Ministry of National Security that is going to be merged into the NSA, National Security Agency. Even the triple S, I think this is a recent development because initially they were supposed to—now the President is considering, one she wants to change the name.

BOUTELLIS: Of the triple S?

IDRIS: *Yes, because this triple S, they are protecting her, it is not proper to say they are state security because it is mainly for the President's protection. So they want to make it like an Executive Protection Unit or something like that. Now they are going to reduce their number, purely for that responsibility.*

BOUTELLIS: What is the number right now of triple S?

IDRIS: *The triple S I think is about 900, there are many. I am not sure of the figure now.*

BOUTELLIS: The triple S?

IDRIS: *Maybe 700, they did some vetting—.*

BOUTELLIS: Apart from the—they are completely apart from the LNP?

IDRIS: *The triple S is triple S. Now they follow the President, they follow the Vice President. That's all.*

BOUTELLIS: 700?

IDRIS: *I don't know, there are too many. The last proposal I think, it is now going to be terms Executive Protection and I think they will be reduced to 200 or something like that, or 150. Then those that are going to—may take some of them to LNP.*

BOUTELLIS: Is this merging going to lead to some deactivation of further vetting and so on, a reduction of the numbers overall?

IDRIS: *I think, obviously if they are merging them with the LNP. We have a criteria already. They have to go to the criteria. Either they have to be taken independent, the level of training they go through. They have to go through the basic training. They have to go through the vetting. But definitely I think all of them in the triple S have gone through vetting. I think there was a time, I don't know what happened to those, there were some of those that were disappointed because after she was elected President, there were some of her former security—she just merged them into the—but I don't know whether they are now vetted. I don't have an update on that. Obviously if they are merging them with the LNP, they have to go through the vetting process. Then they have to go through the basic training of the LNP before they can operate.*

BOUTELLIS: So this is the big plan that is—.

IDRIS: *For security sector reform, trying to merge. The other, I think we mentioned the issue of the Liberian Seaport Police, the RIA, Roberts International Airport, they are now going to operate as security for this, because some of these entities are going to be commercialized. So they will not have—they operate now as if they are government security agencies. They are going to be operating as*

government security agencies now. They will just operate as a local security for some of these commercial entities. So they will not be part of the national security agencies. That is one of the proposals, just to reduce some of this.

Another area also of interest I think is when we came into this country in 2004 some of these agencies that I mentioned to you, even Firestone, some of these plantations, LAC, Liberian Agriculture Company, Firestone plantation, all the security agencies are arresting people, they are taking you to court.

BOUTELLIS: These are private securities?

IDRIS: *These are private securities. In law they don't have that power, but they used that period of instability to do it.*

BOUTELLIS: Were they carrying weapons?

IDRIS: *No. What we, like LAC, we had information that they were carrying weapons but by the time we moved there we couldn't prove it so far. It is not proved. But initially there were allegations they were carrying weapons, not sophisticated, these shotguns. They said with shotguns they were patrolling their plantation. I think the way we are going to clamp down on them, stopping them from doing any police duties. I think it has made them stop.*

BOUTELLIS: So you talked a bit about private security groups in the country, are there also like neighborhood watch and these kinds of groups?

IDRIS: *Neighborhood watch is an entirely different thing. They don't operate like security. What you are talking about is a chain of command, you're talking of—no, neighborhood watch is a concept that just started because of this fear of the people. We say okay, we limit it, we don't encourage it. The LNP themselves they have what you call Police Community Forums. So they deal with the community. There are leaders of these communities. What we are saying is that each community may decide within, like if you are staying in the same compound, neighborhood, to organize yourself, have a few people—in front of your house. If you don't go in your streets. The LNP gave them phone numbers so if there is an emergency they can call. Then they have whistles, that's the neighborhood watch.*

BOUTELLIS: So these neighborhood watch—.

IDRIS: *No uniform, no—it is different from some of the private securities for these plantations that they patrol. They are not police officers, they don't have police powers.*

BOUTELLIS: So the police coordinates with the private security as well as the neighborhood watch?

IDRIS: Yes.

BOUTELLIS: And there are no issues of—.

IDRIS: *Initially like I said those were top ones in 2004 but these are things, Firestone proved very difficult, but I think we were able to overcome it and now they don't do police duties again. The first thing we did is to seize their powers, stop them from doing police duties. Another thing is to make sure that we have at least some few LNP officers patrolling within their plantations so that they don't have*

any excuse. Like Firestone, like Guthree, because the economic recovery of the government is the focus now, so they are trying to reclaim some of these plantations. They started in Guthree Plantation, then LAC (Liberian control company), to Kokopa, then Kavala and all the Plantations. So the government is gradually getting, winning concessions, getting some foreign investment into these areas. We are assisting also from the UN side, supporting the LNPs that are deployed there, to patrol the areas. Because these ex-combatants, the issue of disarmament, demobilization, rehabilitation, resettlement, these are all of the lessons learned.

When the disarmament and the demobilization was on, many of them came. What we did here is, because I was here then, some of them with the rifles, some of them would give their sister/brothers the magazine while holding the rifle. Each of them they will give this to the disarmament team, we paid them some money. So I think in the end the money that was supposed to have gone into the next process, that is after disarmament, to rehabilitate them, either through attaching them to vocational training, most of the money was spent in the D and D, the disarmament and demobilization, a lot of money. That still served its purpose in the sense that, like I said, I think it is that, believe me, in post conflict you hardly see somebody carrying weapons. Most of the weapons that are discovered are those that are buried, rusted, and they're where somebody is farming. No report of recovery of weapons after the disarmament which means that it worked. But really, they spent a lot of money, far beyond what was expected.

So this now, because it now affects the rehabilitation process, the vocational training. So within that period, I think that was in 2006 we had a little protest by these ex-combatants. Mostly they were attached to some of these vocational schools, computer schools. The money is not forthcoming. Some of this money they give them to also take care of themselves. There are so many demonstrations here and there. But I think later with a lot of drive by the mission, I think they were able to get some funding. But that was the initial problem during that time, that is one.

Another area is by the time the government is established, that is the elected government, and they decided to be moving into these plantations because obviously government now decided to start facing the economic problems because that is where they are going to get a lot of money from some of these investments, the taxes and what have you. People will get jobs. Most of these plantations are occupied by ex-combatants. Guthree, 80% of ex-combatants in Guthree are from other areas. They are not from that area. So they are like an occupational force.

BOUTELLIS: When you mean they occupy, they don't work there?

IDRIS: *They are working. The war brought them. Some of them are LURD, they are LURD fighters. Some of them are from Guinea. Some of them are from Nimba County they just came, they are LURD fighters. I think the factions, the rebels were controlling that. During that war that's where the rebels were getting their money, they just plundered the plantations, taking these, they virtually killed all those rubber plants because they are not tapping them in accordance to [Indecipherable]. So some of them are there even after the war, even after disarmament. They went back there because they are still doing illegal tapping of rubber.*

So government now, obviously, government wants to now start claiming these plantations, give it to the owners, because most of the owners like this Guthree is

a foreign company. Most of the owners left, they ran away during the war. So they have to reclaim and then call the owners back and give it to them so they can now start the proper use. Because as they are occupying it, one, they are killing the plantation; two, government is getting nothing out of it, no tax money. They are just illegal occupants. So that was the first project that the mission undertook, to reclaim Guthree. It is only Firestone and LAC that were not affected throughout the war. So to reclaim Guthree they had to send in—I think the mission supported, we deployed some military, the UN formed police units were deployed there with the LNP, to back up the LNP. So Guthree was the pilot.

Then from there we now start in Kokopa, Kavala, I think the next one we are trying to move it to Sino, that's in Greenville. There are so many problems there but I think we can, we've done so many studies on that, so many discussions with the government. That one is going to be after the rainy season because that is really a terrible place. There is a lot of [Indecipherable 1:17:47] that is no access roads, before you can deploy to have proper control of security there.

So some of these ex-combatants they are moving from these illegal mining sites, plantations where they are doing illegal tapping, that's how they are just moving around. When you clean here, they move to the next. So these are some of the challenges between 2006, 2007 before we move in to Guthree Plantation. You have demonstrations by these ex-combatants. Any small thing they will just go to the police station, they attack people and other things. Godfrey the same thing. You have robberies. You have destruction, but gradually we are able to take possession of these areas and bring in sanity into the place. Also government is getting some taxes from it. So gradually I think these are some things that are improving, just to improve the economic base of the country for them, to be able to at least finance some of these issues about the security. I told you they are talking about the budget. That is one of the challenges also with most of the security agencies.

BOUTELLIS: Moving to actually budget and finance I'd like to talk about internal management issues of all the support offices and so on and particularly the issue of budget. What are the major challenges?

IDRIS: *Budget, financing the security obviously is a challenge, a very, very great challenge. Let me give you one example. I told you about the donations by countries in terms of vehicles, in terms of buildings. They construct police stations, provide vehicles. But you would be surprised that some of these vehicles are still new but they are not used because the government itself is not able to fuel these vehicles to move. Most of the vehicles attached to police stations outside of Monrovia have not been moved. There is no fuel, no fuel allocation from the headquarters here to those delivered to police stations to move these vehicles. That is one.*

Two, some of the commanders, one way or the other, were getting vehicles. That is another area where there is corruption. Some of these commanders are trying to move the vehicles but a small filter, an oil filter, is enough to park a vehicle for one year. By the time you go back and discover that, that is how things are. So you have a lot of resources that are given to these people but they cannot manage it, they cannot sustain it. So many buildings were given, but to buy a small generator, the current is not there. You go to most police stations it is dark, pitch dark.

Most of the police stations, in some of these counties, they build the police station, then provide the generator, but the fuel for the generator, the government

would not be able to provide this. I'll give you an example of a station, [Indecipherable 1:21:11]. The LNP ability to use the station is lacking. There are a lot of challenges. I know it may be part from government. The government is not giving them much, but also from the leadership, the management by the leaders, I think there is a lot—. Their priorities are—somebody can go to travel out of the country for nothing, spend thousands of dollars, but to give paper for a security to write a memo, they don't look at it as a priority. So these are some of the things. They spend money in areas that are not necessary and then overlook others. When you ask them they will tell you that they don't have money. So these are some of the challenges.

I think it is also part of the lessons learned. When donors are giving money to these agencies, they should also look at do they have the capacity to maintain that. Some of these vehicles, like I told you, Nigeria gave some vehicles, the Netherlands gave some. If you see those vehicles now, within one year, you won't recognize them.

There is an example of the Monrovia Central Prison. I don't know whether you've gone there. You see a block. The prison service is congested, too congested. But then the US government and some donors came and they built I think a two-story building. To open that, to commence the opening of that facility they need padlocks which is just ten, about \$10. They need to connect the water which would cost about \$150-200 US dollars, from just one block. There was a riot in November last year. I was there. That is the time, we don't have much to do with the prisons, but I saw this. We had a meeting with the Minister of Justice. I said, "Look this block is empty". Most of the problems were you see some of these prisoners being agitated and then they are uncomfortable. They are too congested. No human being can stay in that kind of place. Why don't you open this place. From what I learned it requires only a few, 20 or 30 dollars to buy the padlocks, \$100 or \$200 to connect the water.

He said "yes, sign the check". You know as of today nothing has happened. That block is there. It is getting to one year, built by a donor country. Abandoned. Free looking space. But look at it. This is misapplication of priority by the government's functionaries themselves. Contrary to most of the drive and advice that we give them. So these are some of the areas. This issue of financial management, budget for locations. There is no focus, no foresight. Because when you are planning the budget you have to be able to look at all your needs. Somebody may decide, they are creating—to deploy 30 LNP officers to support the [Indecipherable 1:24:22] palace. This talk has been going on for one year now. But nobody ever told us this has to be reflected in the budget because you are taking these guys outside their own area, so they need some sort of sustenance there. Nobody thought of it. It is where you are now deployed. They will tell you.

Like I observed initially to be frank, when we started, when this woman came in, the IG, there was a lot of reluctance for us to know what is happening within the financials. There was trouble before we could lay our hand on the payroll. You understand? So that will tell you, because they don't want us to know what is within the, who is on the payroll, how well they are paid. It became a challenge. We are trying now, we started with a lot of force for them to initiate verification of this process. Like I said I know we have trained 3500, but what do we have left. Some people have left to go the US, some of them have died, but they are not reflected in the payroll. These are some of the areas we are trying to cover. These should be completed within two months but these logistics, they put one reason or another. They don't have no car today, no this, there is no current, the computer is broken, just to delay. So these are some of the areas of challenges

also from them because there are certain things that they don't want us to know, to be private. All these would be financial management of the organizations. They try to—they say the more you see the less you understand there. That's how we put it. They don't want us to know what is really happening. But I think it is gradually, now we have had a lot of pressure, we are trying to break in tactically. Those appointed, we find any small thing, we say change this, put that. If we have one reason we say look, this guy has to be changed. So when they bring in a new person, it takes time for that person to build on that so we will be able to penetrate some of this. That is how we are gradually getting in to have an influence on the financial planning.

BOUTELLIS: Public perceptions have been a major issue as you have highlighted and impacted all aspects of policing from recruitment to ability to get the trust of the population. Has there been some progress in terms of external accountability and effectiveness? You mentioned the forums.

IDRIS: *Police Community Forums.*

BOUTELLIS: What are some of the initiatives and progress in that regard?

IDRIS: *One of the areas where most of the security agencies were really, have been accused of, this community, they can do anything and get away with it. So when we came in we tried to build up this concept of accountability. It is one of the principles of democratic policing. One, we have now built up what you call a Professional Standard Unit within the LNP. This unit also is financed by the US government. They brought in some advisors. We also task our headquarters, police headquarters in New York, they got us some experts in these areas. We have gone far in the development of this Professional Standards Unit. They started operating. We have some good officers within the LNP because they went around to scout for some of these officers.*

Where we are now is the process of enlightenment, trying to make the people know. To establish the unit is one thing. People have to know that this unit exists for them to have access to it. If people know that if you violate my rights I can complain within the organization and have a visible action taken. It helps the credibility of that organization, of this internal accountability unit. So we are working on that. I think we have gone far. So many cases have been taken up. They have taken about—there are some officers that were found to have brutalized some detainees and I think they took them to court. We had a briefing this morning, some of them were taken to court, LNP officers.

There is also the issue of external oversight. We have gone further also. I think also the US government is coming in to assist in that. They are trying to have what they call a Police Council that is going to be external to the LNP. Apart from this internal Professional Standards. This is going to be external to the LNP. They will also have an oversight function over the LNP. This also is going to be peopled by people from the major sectors of the country. You have the civil societies, you have the business community. So this also, I think when the people themselves now realize they have a say on how the conduct of the police is covered, I think it is something that can improve on the confidence the people have in the police.

I think we have also gone far here. The last meeting we had with the Minister of Justice and the Deputy IG, I think they said he is going to Ghana, he wants to go and see how the system works in Ghana, the Police Council in Ghana. I am sure you are aware the Deputy SRS for the Rule of law was a member of the Police

Council in Ghana. Mrs. (Henrietta) Mensa-Bonsu. I think she is going to organize that. They are going to Ghana to see how that one works. So we are trying to build the same system here in Liberia.

Another area is the strengthening of the Police Community Forums, bringing police closer to the people so that the people will have a say, at least in how the police operate within their environment? They will have a say in how the police conduct themselves within their environment. I think this is working. Every week, every week now we have this Police Community Forum in various parts of Liberia, both in Monrovia and the leeward, making the county commanders, even the IG has some. They go to these communities. They have a chairman. These Police Community Forums are formed all over the country now, so each of these have a chairman. We meet with them. Saturday we meet in this area. They are numbered. So the same thing in leeward, the county commanders will go to these community forums and be talking to them. To break this line, this suspicion. We get close to each other and then they will be able to understand the problems of the police. There is one forum we had, people were surprised what the policeman tells them. Invariably they will also be putting pressure on the government on their own people in the legislature there. Look, you have to do something about the financing of the police. How can you have police that cannot write statements, where do they keep records. You understand what I'm saying? So these are some of the things that we are doing in the police community. Then also we have reorganized training also in the police academy with the police community members and the LNP.

So all the ways we try to involve the community so that they will now that these are the intentions of the police, this is the direction the police is going. So we also hear what are their problems, how do they perceive the police, so that they are now going to cause the police themselves to change their ways where it is necessary. It needs some explanation why some incidents happened, they should be able to tell them. Also we have now been having feedback. It is just like the issue of rape. Nobody, I think because of the trauma, people feel that it is a normal thing, but now, because of the aggressive nature the mission has gone through you can now see the report of rape is just coming in from left and right. Not that it is increasing, but people are aware that if someone just comes and sleeps with me whether it my brother I think I have the right to report it. They just go to the police and report it. But years ago nobody ever thought of it. So the same thing with this complaining.

People are now realizing, people are coming to report. They now know how to report it. You give them a channel of communication, contact this chairman of the police forum. So it really brings up confidence. It takes a long time, it is a perception. But gradually, I think with all these efforts together, I think people will be able to change their perception of the police and know that these are our officers. They are to serve us. They are not our masters. So gradually people are now calling, they say who are you? You can't do this here. It will also reduce the abuse of some of these officers.

BOUTELLIS: Now we've identified a number of challenges from depoliticization to integration of service, reform training, recruitment, accountability issues and so on. What are, in your opinion, the tasks that should be prioritized? What are your priorities?

IDRIS: *As I said, we should look at the overall security sector reform. They have to do faster the process of the reform itself. Those agencies that will be phased out should be phased out. Because in reality, some of the officers are just moving*

around, they don't know their fate. Some of them know they may not survive the integration. So the faster the government moves so that we now have a proper structure of security. Then based on that structure you have to start planning ahead. So I think that that should be given a priority.

Two I think government needs to prioritize in the budget and financial planning the security in Liberia at this stage. Security should be one of the top priorities of government. So a situation where you have security officers for three months, they are not paid salary, I think they should try to be very, very—they have to pay a lot of attention to the welfare. I'm not saying thinking big, but the basic requirements of these agencies, I think government should try to give priority to each of them, try to face it squarely because there is a dependence on the UN, thinking that we may not go. Obviously we are leaving, and very soon. So they have to start prioritizing and giving emphasis to the basic needs of the police station, the one that is close to the people. Giving stationary, paying the salaries on time. I think these are issues the government has to prioritize.

The issue of the LNP politicization. We need to depoliticize the security agencies. This is very apparent. I'm sure that you are aware of this.

But these are issues—that's one of the—they have to back off the politicization of these agencies. People feel because they are affiliated—they don't think about the feelings of the people. They believe that their appointment is based on the—anything, it is only because of their loyalty so they don't give a damn about what people feel.

So I think if we can depoliticize these agencies so that we now have people that are professionally oriented, that is just committed to their job, I think it is going to be better. No matter what we do, that is the problem we are facing. I'll give you an example of the third line of management of LNP, the commissioners, there are five of them. Each of these five have their political groupings. That is one of the challenges we have with the LNP. So because all of them are from a different support base, their loyalty is outside, it is now brought into the LNP. Now you know how in LNP no one wants to obey directives of their superiors.

[Indecipherable 1:39:00] If something happens the DIG of Operations cannot direct the Commissioner of Operations. Because he is also appointed, they went to the legislature clearance together. He has his own interests. If his and the DIG's political base are in conflict with his own political basis, this is brought into the organization. So you see there is no cohesion, no control. The command control is weakened. It is affecting—it brought a lot of frustration to the UN officers. You have a special operation that has been planned, everybody will assemble. Even their own officers will assemble, but the head is nowhere to be seen. You wait two, three hours. When he comes he is going to come in his short jeans and cap. No sign of seriousness of the situation. No professional—even of the subordinates. So this gradually now affects the morale of the men.

Even the officers initially that we trained with all the basic training, young officers, high school graduates, having a future. They are looking for the future, a professional. They become disillusioned, their morale became low. The subsequent question is that some of them start to come in late. What do you say? They know their bosses will not be there. These are some of the things. So politicization I think—government, we need to depoliticize. Everybody should be a professional officer. I think that is an area of priority.

I think the other area is that the mission itself, from the UN. You discover that you have the best programs, you have the best officers on the ground but because

the UN is not giving the money, the people that finance most of the programs, who finance all the things you put on the ground, you depend on the donors. If you have no good response from the donors, money is not coming you have a situation or they are coming in some areas that—because every donor has its own interest. You may be having interests in a different area. You can try to push them but they are coming with their money and they have their own interests. This also is a challenge in the area. I'll give you an example. Another area, so many governments have given vehicles, they build buildings with generators, but no money to buy fuel to fuel them, no money to maintain these generators. You understand? So everything within a short time because the governments of the countries do not prioritize or pretend that they don't have the capacity. Everything collapses. These are areas that—.

BOUTELLIS: That was my last question but you already started answering. This is your first UN mission, and turning to the UN, if there would be two or three changes in terms of UN policy or internal management of the UN, that could help you do your job more effectively what would these be?

IDRIS: *Like I said, one would be, from the mission here, to be frank with you, I know the UN is a combination of so many countries, there are so many political decisions that are above our own level in the mission. But there are so many things you observe. Most of the policies, most of the structures we put on the ground, most of the concepts we develop, most of the projects that we have, if we can have, when they deploy you there should be a fund somewhere to support you. Things would move faster then they do because in most cases you put up a good structure, you train the people, but then the involvement when they do the work is lacking. Governments themselves don't have the capacity. There is virtually very little.*

BOUTELLIS: Because the UN has funds for its own functioning but not to invest in the host countries.

IDRIS: *Yes, mostly they don't, except for as I said to a little, the QIP, the Quick Impact Projects, which are just small, short time. But actual funds? No.. When you develop the police, you train them, you build stations until the government will be able to deal. From this government, when they say they don't have money. This brings a lot of delays and makes things a bit difficult for us to have optimal. You train people with the best ideas and everything but then how do they work. If I train you, you learn how to do regular patrol and you don't have a vehicle. I'll continue to be working with you. So in the end we find ourselves, up to today, doing things. We are a non-executive mission, but we find ourselves doing things that by now we are not supposed to be—we say we want to be in the background. But in most cases we still find ourselves—you ask, they say no, we don't have fuel. By the time we start putting pressure. At the time we were going on the night patrol, the IG was there. We asked the IG, where is the fuel? I think this touches her. So then they started giving five liters for two days now, 48 hours. So what do the officers do? They park the vehicle at the station. If there is an incident they run there. After that they come and park it.*

But if anything spoils inside, that is where the problem lies. No matter how small. They just abandon it. That is why most of the vehicles they can't sustain the vehicles they are given. These are areas we also from our own side with the level of officers coming into the mission. Some of our advisors we need to have officers, English-speaking mission where you see some officers who cannot even speak English, not to talk of to write. If somebody writes a report to you cannot

read what is written. We are improving on our pre deployment assessment to get good quality officers to the mission.

But I think that overall I think the UN, overall, I think it is good. For troubled areas, the UN benefits far outweigh the weakness. Its positives are far, far more. It is hope to the defenseless. They are just helpless. I think the organization should be more forcefully in some areas. I'm just imagining what the people here are going through during the Taylor years. We need to be forceful because if not many people within these environments are helpless. They have no control over the situation they found themselves. You have few people, few political leaders that just sit there, get a few of these security agencies and that's all, nobody matters. They now become dictators and continue to oppress their people. if you see an average Liberian, so peaceful. They have no time to make trouble. It is the political leaders that are the source of their problems. There are just a few bad ones; they surround themselves with armed gangs and terrorizing their people. And the ordinary people are just helpless, they fold their arms and they become victims of these dictators. I think the world have to come in these situations forcefully to liberate people from some of these dictators.

BOUTELLIS: Ibrahim Idris, thank you so much for your time.

IDRIS: Thank you.