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Postconflict Democratization of the Police

The Sierra Leone Experience

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Democracies are political systems characterized by popular participation, genuine competition for executive and legislative office, fostering of fundamental human rights, and institutional checks on power. While the actual democratic structure of government may vary, these fundamental concepts remain constant (Siegel, Weinstein, & Halperin, 2004).

The key to the level of developmental and economic success of the Western nations is their adoption of democracy. Within such nations, the police operate under internationally recognized democratic principles to ensure a harmonious society in which political, social, and economic life can flourish (Crawshaw, Cullen, & Williams, 2006).

Democratic civilian policing is an essential component of good governance operating under a range of basic principles. In ensuring that a police organization is civilian rather than military, there must be separate government ministers having control and oversight over the police and military. Similarly, the commander or chief of police and senior police posts should not hold military rank or be associated with the national armed forces. Whereas the military have a primary role in securing the state from external threat, the police should have a primary and accountable role in citizen security and serving the law. Extraordinary circumstances may demand military personnel having to assist the police in joint public safety operations (for example, in protecting the citizenry from terrorists or armed bandits). In these circumstances, it is essential for the police to have primacy in command and control of operations. Legislation or the constitution should prevent the police from being controlled by political parties or the military (Crawshaw et al., 2006).

The police should be accountable to government, for example, through a minister of citizen security or home or internal affairs, and to the citizens through community consultative groups representing all sections of society. The police should be able to respond to community needs and expectations. This can be facilitated by the organization of an independent civilian review board or commission comprising cross-party political appointees and other nonpartisan members. Their role is to oversee and monitor policing functions and senior police appointments and to ensure that matters of public concern are addressed (Crawshaw et al., 2006).

Democratic police organizations function within and are accountable to the rule of law. Their members have a duty to protect human rights. National legislation defines their authority and responsibility, rules of conduct for officers and officials, standards for the legitimate use of force, and similar practices. Torture and extra-judicial tactics are prohibited. Formal mechanisms should exist to investigate allegations of police misconduct and where necessary, to enforce the law (Code of Conduct for Law Enforcement Officers, 1979).

Unfortunately, democracy is a complicated and often elusive phenomenon. The establishment of democracy in postcolonial nations around the world, particularly Africa, has not ensured political, social, or economic development. In many African states, democracy has evaporated or been crushed in the path of intractable and destructive conflicts based on tribalism, race, religious and identity issues, corruption, wealth, and land issues. The sheer impoverishment and ruinous situation of much of Africa, never starker or more revealing, testifies to that reality.

The misappropriation of state and public assets and finances by the ruling or dominant elites have turned many of these democracies into “kleptocracies.” The effects of the unattended HIV/AIDS pandemic throughout the continent have further added to political and economic disaster and the decline of civil society. And as citizens react, the unrepresentative and often unelected corrupt ruling cliques characteristically deploy the military and police against ordinary citizens. The resulting spiral of violence frequently leads to civil war.

Background

The political, social, and economic decline of the Republic of Sierra Leone from its independence in 1961 through its 1991 civil war provides a case study at its most brutal and raw. It is a classic example of the importance of the police to democracy. More important, it demonstrates the effects and consequences of the political transformation of a democratic police organization into a repressive and corrupt arm of a despotic government.

The Republic of Sierra Leone occupies 71,740 square kilometers on the west coast of Africa and has an estimated population of 6,017,643 (July 2005 estimate). It remains one of the world’s poorest and least developed

countries despite vast deposits of diamonds and other natural resources (CIA, n.d.).

Sierra Leone gained independence in 1961 following 150 years as a British protectorate. The nation was established as a constitutional democracy and a member of the British Commonwealth. The legal system and laws of Sierra Leone were based on those of England and Wales and customary tribal practices. The first general election under universal adult franchise took place in May 1962 (Cullen & McDonald, 2005).

The first police force in Sierra Leone, the paramilitary West African Frontier Force, was created in 1900 from the Royal Sierra Leone Regiment and commanded by the British officer corps. Its primary purpose was to protect British colonial interests (Lord, 2005). The Police Act of 1964, part of the national Constitution, established the Sierra Leone Police (SLP) as a national, armed, civil force. The Constitution separated the police from the military and charged them with specific responsibility for citizen security, the prevention of crime, and the detection, apprehension, and prosecution of offenders. The force generally follows the British police model in organization and rank structure (Cullen & McDonald, 2005).

During the five years following independence, the country possessed some critical structural features necessary for the development of a modern democratic state, including an educational system based on the British model, a modern economy, a multiparty political system, a professional civil service, and a Western style constitution. A modern military, police, and judiciary served society with a degree of professionalism and integrity. Despite positive beginnings, Sierra Leone quickly fell into ruinous decline brought about by endemic corruption (Thompson & Potter, 1997).

Political Decline, Corruption, and the Police

In a 1967, a coup d'état brought Siaka Stevens and his All Peoples' Party (known by its acronym APC in the local language) to power. They quickly moved the nation from a multiparty constitutional democracy to a single-party executive presidency. With them came excesses of systematic corruption in the national government, particularly the police, and in every aspect of daily life (Thompson & Potter, 1997).

Like many African nations, Sierra Leone always experienced some level of government corruption as a by-product of modernization. Under Stevens and the APC, the extent of corruption grew to such proportions that the distinctions between the personal lives and the public roles of government officials and between personal and public finances blurred at every level of the administration (Thompson & Potter, 1997). They openly condoned and encouraged the looting of government funds at levels rarely seen. The adage, "A cow will graze on the land allotted to it for that purpose," often alluded to by Stevens himself, became their operative norm (Thompson &

Potter, 1997, p. 150). Few nations have experienced such a pattern of government corruption (Kpundeh, 1993). Eventually, that culture of corruption allowed economic domination of the entire country by members of the power elite. The entire government structure became a mechanism for profit and personal gain (Kpundeh, 1995).

Once in power, the APC quickly changed the civilian nature of the police and moved to exert complete control over their activities. That control became a critical element in their consolidation of power and the exploitation of society. The inspector general of police and the head of army were made part of the ruling cabinet, and the cabinet operated almost solely for the benefit of the dominant (though not majority) Limba tribe and its allies. Its policy was to divide and rule the nation for the personal gain of its members, and that was only possible through the neutralization of the police (Lengor, interview, April 14/15, 2005).

APC political appointees infiltrated the administrative machinery of the police force and brought with them the widespread corrupt practices of the ruling political party. The police leadership was purged of non-APC personnel (Lord, 2005). Transfers, promotions, and recruitment became APC economic and political opportunities. Promotion depended entirely upon APC membership, political loyalty, and bribes (Lengor, interview, April 14/15, 2005). Political favoritism allowed the recruitment of uneducated and illiterate APC supporters into the police ranks. Officers who failed to support these practices were quickly transferred to undesirable postings or dismissed on trumped up charges (Meek, 2003).

The ruling party soon controlled every aspect of SLP operations, and the police quickly became political agents of the APC (Lengor, interview, April 14/15, 2005). During the 1982 national election, for example, the APC used the police against its political opposition, the Sierra Leone Peoples Party, in a violent conflict known as the Bush Devil War. Its members were licensed to abuse their powers to protect and profit the ruling elite and to seize every opportunity for personal gain through bribes and criminal activity (Lord, 2005). Equally important, any resistance to APC authority from within the police service itself had been neutralized (Thompson, 1996).

Members of the SLP engaged in general policing duties directed by the APC through senior police officers, protected monopolies, collected bribes from sympathetic corrupt businesses, and harassed both the political and financial rivals of the APC. Targeted business people were arrested on fabricated charges, then convicted, imprisoned, or executed and put out of business. "Connected" competitors easily acquired the assets of these closed businesses at ridiculous prices (Lengor, interview, April 14/15, 2005).

Police agents provocateurs were employed to encourage and then reveal "crimes," either real or fictitious, allegedly committed by prominent citizens or political opponents. The accused were then publicly prosecuted, or in lieu of prosecution coerced into state-sponsored delinquency. SLP Special Branch officers, posing as bona fide university and college students, spied

on students and professors, reporting back to a paranoid regime that feared subversion from its youth (Lengor, interview, April 14/15, 2005).

In the end, the SLP had been totally politicized. Opposition to the state-sponsored economic corruption that might normally arise from the police had been neutralized. The SLP role in the political, economic, and social fabric of the state had changed. The responsibility for citizen security and the protection of democracy had been replaced by the responsibility to manage and safeguard a national protection racket for the benefit of the ruling clique (Lengor, interview, April 14/15, 2005).

Corruption and an accompanying general systematic neglect of police services by the national government led to the decline of their constitutional role in society. Skills necessary for effective policing were not sought. Officers were untrained and lacked uniforms and even basic equipment. These problems were exacerbated by low wages, illiteracy, the lack of professional standards and ethics, and extremely poor morale. This situation quickly led to a breakdown in the quality of police service, and more important, a breakdown in public confidence in the police (Groenwald & Peak, 2004; Malan, Rakafe, & McIntyre, 2003; Meek, 2003). Restoration of that public trust became one of the critical elements for restoring the police and the society (Groenwald & Peak, 2004).

Widespread societal and political instability followed. By 1991 the country was economically and politically near collapse. Opposition to the APC from the political opponents and the disenfranchised business community reached explosive levels. What followed was one of the most violent and horrific internal conflicts in the history of Africa.

The Civil War

In 1991 a Liberian civil war spread northward into Sierra Leone. Foday Sankoh's Sierra Leone Revolutionary United Front joined with Charles Taylor's National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPF) to overthrow the government and seize the country's diamond mines. Millions of dollars' worth of diamonds smuggled out of the country financed the rebellion (Lord, 2005). At the same time local militias and delinquent youth gangs such as the West Side Boys, fuelled by the influx of drugs, especially heroin, took control of large sections of the country, adding to the chaos (M. Lengor, interviews, April 14/15, 2005). At the height of the conflict, experts estimate more than 48,000 armed combatants, representing a variety of political and criminal organizations, participated in the civil war (Meek, 2003).

Atrocities committed by all parties to the conflict, but especially by rebel forces, terrorized the population (CIA, n.d.). The limbs of innocent citizens, police officers, and political opponents were systematically amputated. Captives were forced to murder and mutilate their own local political leaders, family members, and tribal officials. Enslavement, forced conscription

of child soldiers, and systematic gang rapes of women and children plagued the nation. The Sierra Leone military and SLP proved powerless and lost control of large areas of the country to the various rebellious forces, violent gangs, and criminal thugs. Eventually, elements of the military rebelled, contributing to further chaos and disorder (Lord, 2005).

The Sierra Leone Police and Restoration of Democratic Rule

In March 1996, after considerable international pressure and military support, and despite continuing violence, free elections established a fledging democratic government under President Ahmed Tejan Kabbah (Lord, 2005). Kabbah's role in the reconstruction of Sierra Leone, and particularly in the rebuilding of the SLP in that process, has proven critical to the nation's reconstruction.

Educated at a private school in Sierra Leone, Kabbah earned his bachelor's and law degrees in Britain. His entire career had been in the public sector. He served as district commissioner in all the regions of Sierra Leone and as deputy chief of the West African Division of the United Nations Development Program in New York. During the 1970s he coordinated United Nations assistance to liberation movements that needed to be assimilated into legitimate governments following the cessation of conflicts in South Africa and Namibia. That experience convinced him of the critical importance a reorganized and democratic SLP would play in the restoration of social order and democracy ("State House," 2005).

Recent international experience in postconflict resolution efforts supported his position. Most experts agreed that, absent restoration and maintenance of the rule of law, all other investments in the peace process would prove meaningless (Malan et al., 2002).

Shortly after assuming office, Kabbah petitioned the government of the United Kingdom for assistance in the restructuring and development of the Sierra Leone Police. The United Kingdom authorized a preliminary project in 1997, but continuing internal conflict forced its early cancellation. A second program, the Commonwealth Police Development Task Force became operational in 1998. Led by a career British detective and former assistant chief constable, Keith Biddle, the task force included a small number of former United Kingdom police officers and police advisers from Canada, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, and Zimbabwe. All had considerable experience in command roles and a wide range of policing skills. Their charge included technical and financial assistance to support community safety through logistical support, the provision of professional expertise, and the delivery of wide-ranging training programs (Biddle, interview, April 13, 2005).

The selection of Biddle to command the project proved instrumental to its success. During his 32 years of service, he had served in a wide variety of ranks and assignments. He had a well-deserved reputation as a direct,

tough, no-nonsense police officer with proven qualities of leadership and a sharp intellect (Malan et al., 2002; Meek, 2003).

The task force faced a ruined and demoralized SLP. More than 900 officers had been killed during the various internal conflicts. Many had been tortured, while others suffered amputation by the rebellious forces. Inept and corrupt personnel occupied leadership and other key positions. Much of the senior command staff and many of the middle-level officers were APC appointees. The force lacked even fundamental equipment and training. Most police facilities had been looted or destroyed during the conflict. Various warring factions and criminal elements had commandeered vehicles, communications systems, and weapons. Wages had not been paid in years (Biddle, interview, April 13, 2005; Malan et al., 2002).

Death, torture, and desertion had reduced the force from its prewar size of 9,300 officers to less than 6,600. And the task force faced a psychological crisis within the SLP. Years of war, corruption, and governmental neglect, the loss of public confidence, and the frequent abandonment of officers and police facilities to advancing rebel forces left the SLP a demoralized organization (Malan et al., 2002).

The SLP had little or no presence outside the capital. Remnants of the army and the quasi-official Civil Defence Force (CDF) maintained a semblance of aimless and undirected "security" around the country through a network of road checkpoints. The CDF was a ragtag collection of armed, ill-disciplined, and aggressive youths, often without uniform or identification, known locally as *Kamajors* (brave hunters). They came primarily from local armed militia groups that had earlier colluded with the army and loosely allied themselves with the government. Little more than armed thugs, they terrorized civilians; committed rapes, ritual murders and other violent crimes; and consistently interfered with the military, police, and peacekeeping operations. Their presence disrupted stability and citizen security (Hoffman, 2005).

The military was little better. Basically an armed mob, corrupt and with little organization or purpose, they continued to contribute to the national chaos and mayhem (Malan et al., 2002).

Amazingly, even though the SLP had virtually collapsed, Biddle found that many officers had served bravely under the most difficult of circumstances. Despite the destruction of most police facilities, many police officers still reported for duty and attempted to go through the motions of providing a police presence. Although it was at odds with the SLP's corrupt image and practices, there remained an underlying ethos of loyalty to the state, nation, and organization. As an institution, the SLP had not been involved in atrocities. Many officers had struggled to maintain constitutional order. The majority had remained loyal to the nation (K. Biddle, interviews, April 13, 2005). For example, in May of 1997 they had fought bravely to save the life of the newly elected President Kabbah by holding off attacking army elements bent on a coup (Malan et al., 2002).

The first priority of government and the international community was to restore law and order in a democratic model and to ensure that the SLP had primacy in all matters of citizen security. To do so, the new government had to aggressively address corruption within the force, restore police self-confidence, and most critical, to restore public confidence. That required an entire rebuilding of the SLP, a job made even more difficult by the continuation of the civil war in many parts of the country (Malan et al., 2002).

President Kabbah set the tone for the new SLP in August of 1997 in the official Government Policing Charter.

THE SIERRA LEONE POLICE

Government Policing Charter

Introduction

My Government wants to create a police service which will be a credit to the Nation.

The Role of the Police

The Sierra Leone Police will assist in returning our communities to peace and prosperity by acting in a manner which will:

- eventually remove the need for the deployment of military and para-military forces in our villages, communities and city streets
- ensure the safety and security of all people and their property
- respect the human rights of all individuals
- prevent and detect crime by using the most effective methods which can be made available to them
- take account of local concerns through community consultation
- at all levels be free from corruption

Equal Opportunities

The personnel policies of the Sierra Leone Police will be the same for all members, regardless of sex or ethnic origin. All recruitment, training, postings, promotions and opportunities for development will be based on a published equal opportunities policy.

The Role of My Government

The Government will do all in its power to ensure that the Sierra Leone Police is:

- directed and managed in accordance with The Constitution
- locally managed so as to ensure that community views are always taken into consideration

- adequately resourced and financed
- well equipped to undertake its duties
- professionally trained
- dynamically led and,
- that the terms and conditions of service for members of the Sierra Leone Police reflect the importance of the task they perform.

The Role of the People

In order that our police officers can successfully fulfill our expectations, it is essential that all people of Sierra Leone help and support them at all times.

Conclusion

Our aim is to see a reborn Sierra Leone Police, which will be a force for good in our Nation.

August 1998 His Excellency
The President Alhaji Dr Ahmed Tejan-Kabbah

SOURCE: *From Crisis to Confidence* (1998).

The charter called for a professional service-oriented police organization that would meet the needs and expectations of all citizens by working in partnership with the community. Moreover, it restored the civilian, democratic nature of the national police service. The SLP would become a “force for good”; this slogan became the unofficial motto of the new SLP.

From Crisis to Confidence

Biddle, his task force colleagues, and members of the SLP command staff quickly adopted the theme set by the president. Senior members of the SLP suspected of corruption or of political affiliations with prior regimes were retired or suspended (Malan et al., 2002). Biddle and his team summoned the remaining senior officers to a master planning session in December of 1998. The seminar, entitled “From Crisis to Confidence,” was a historic turning point for the SLP and produced a strategic blueprint for it (Biddle, interview, April 13, 2005).

The working group began by identifying the key values and aims of the new police service. From that they formulated a mission statement based on the president’s “force for good” concept.

SIERRA LEONE POLICE FORCE**A Force for Good****Our Duty**

We will provide a professional and effective service which:

- Protects Life and Property
- Achieves a peaceful society
- Takes primacy in the maintenance of Law and Order

Our Values

We will respect Human Rights and the freedoms of the individual
We will be honest, impartial, caring and free from corruption

Our Priorities

We will respond to local needs
We will value our own people
We will involve all in developing our policing priorities

Our Aim

To win public confidence by offering reliable, caring and accountable police services

SOURCE: *From Crisis to Confidence* (1998).

The master plan identified a wide range of operational and organizational needs. These included human resources and welfare, organizational structure, training, policy making and support, planning, operational management, rules and regulations, ethical standards, recruiting, command and control, and roles and responsibilities. But their main energy focused on restoring the corroded public trust and confidence in the police as quickly as possible. The plan called for the immediate application of community policing principles to the particulars of Sierra Leone's recent history and complex social structure. Organizational changes in support of that objective would start with individual officers and units. The new SLP would then be built up from that foundation (Groenwald & Peak, 2003).

Local Needs Policing

In the months prior to the planning session, the SLP, under the guidance of the task force, had piloted a Sierra Leonean version of community policing in several urban districts and one rural community called local needs

policing (LNP). LNP focused on local needs as defined by specific communities. Key issues included victim services, domestic violence, crime prevention, and the needs of those most victimized by the war, especially women and children (Groenwald & Peak, 2003).

These decentralized units delivered police services to meet the expectations of the local community. And with the absence of a meaningful national police service, they became, in effect, independent neighborhood based police forces, addressing immediate local needs in full view of and in close scrutiny by the community. The model allowed for flexibility, enabling local LNPs to develop in different ways to match the pluralist needs of different communities throughout Sierra Leone. Equally important, the model allowed for the restoration of the rule of law and of public confidence in the police at the very foundations of the society (Groenwald & Peak, 2003; Lengor, interview, April 13/14, 2005).

The pilot projects met with considerable success. The idea was adopted as the main mechanism for the restoration and rebuilding of the SLP. Local Needs Policing became the cornerstone of the force strategic plan. LNP would expand as elements of the countryside came under control of the national government. In support of that effort, and in face of the disastrous lack of training, the blueprint called for an aggressive Field Training Officers Program to provide relevant and effective training services (Biddle, interview, April 13, 2005).

Under the LNP initiative, SLP headquarters would continue to be responsible for the strategy and direction of the police force and for managing organizational needs, but police services were decentralized through the LNP units. Neighboring LNP units were clustered into Local Command Units (LCUs) under the direction of a police superintendent. Each LCU worked in collaboration with a Local Policing Partnership Board made up of citizens and local tribal leaders (Moigbe, interview, 2005). Superintendents' authority extended beyond the delivery of routine police services and included the management of local police resources and equipment, training and the development of personnel, job descriptions, and staff assessment (K. Biddle, personnel communication, April 13, 2005).

The LNP concept met another important need of the police force. Because the senior members of the SLP had formulated the program, its success promised to restore self-confidence within the force itself. It was, in effect, their property, their plan, the first organized effort to restore the force and its fundamental role in a democratic society. They had designed it and were accountable for its success or failure (Biddle, interview, April 13, 2005).

By 2002, policing primacy had been established throughout the whole of Sierra Leone. By April 2005, 27 LCUs provided local police services nationwide, each with its own Local Policing Partnership Board (Lengor, interview, 2005).

But a major problem presented itself in the early stages of the plan's implementation: the issue of force leadership. The incumbent acting head of

the police, the inspector general of police (IGP), and other senior officers eligible for the position faced both political and practical problems. Politicians and local community leaders threatened to derail the appointment of anyone other than their own political or tribal allies. Considerable infighting between senior police officers over control of the force made matters worse and threatened the potential effectiveness of the reorganization effort (Biddle, interview, April 13, 2005).

President Kabbah addressed the issue immediately. He approached the government of the United Kingdom and asked that Biddle be appointed to head the SLP. The appointment of an outsider had advantages. The candidate would be seen as unsullied by state and institutional corruption and neutral in matters of tribal and kinship allegiances. International donors were more likely to support the nation-building process if the IGP had no connection with previous allegations of corruption or human rights abuses. With permission of the United Kingdom and after approval by the Sierra Leone Parliament, President Kabbah swore Biddle in as inspector general of police on December 1, 1999 (Biddle, interview, April 13, 2005).

Biddle immediately became a member of the Police Council, a statutory body made up of the inspector general of police, the deputy inspector general, the vice president of the republic, the minister of internal affairs, a representative of the Civil Service Commission, a representative of the bar association, and two eminent citizens appointed by the president. The council advised the president on all major matters of policy relating to internal security, including the role of the police, budgeting and finance, administration, and any other matter as dictated by the president (Biddle, interview, April 13, 2005).

United Nations Assistance

At about the time of Biddle's appointment, the promise of United Nations assistance to the SLP arrived. The United Nations Observer Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) was to maintain peace and restore a trained, legitimate military and citizen security. Based on the experience of more than 20 such postconflict missions in recent years, the United Nations understood the critical importance of establishing a civilian democratic police service. The UNAMSIL civilian police element, the Commissioner of Civilian Police (CIVPOL), was charged with improving the professional standards of the SLP.

By the year 2004, 9,400 UNAMSIL troops and 119 international civilian police (CIVPOL) were deployed throughout the country; that force was scheduled to be downsized to 3,300 by June of 2005 (Refugees International, 2004). Unfortunately, the initial relationship between the Commonwealth task force and the CIVPOL was somewhat confused and at times difficult (Malan et al., 2002).

A number of problems hampered the relationship. The initial CIVPOL deployment took place 15 months after the British task force was formed

and became fully operational only in 2000. By the time CIVPOL arrived, the British contingent had been deeply involved with the SLP for almost three years. A strategic reorganization plan had already been prepared and initiated. At times, however, CIVPOL appeared to ignore or disregard the work that had been done (Biddle, interview, April 13, 2005).

CIVPOL, for example, reported a need for community policing while overlooking the fact that the inspector general and his senior staff had already initiated a progressive model of community policing through the Local Needs Policing program that met the needs and expectations of the communities of Sierra Leone. A community policing command staff had been appointed, and Local Policing Partnership Boards established. And an aggressive Field Training Officers Program in support of the community policing initiative was under way (Biddle, interview, April 13, 2005; Malan et al., 2002). In another incident, CIVPOL's complaints about the British lack of cooperation in providing them accommodations in a rural war-torn district simply failed to recognize that neither the government nor the SLP had the necessary resources to do so (Malan et al., 2002).

CIVPOL demands that the SLP conform to "international best practice" based on the experience of other similar missions around the world, particularly those in the Balkans, complicated matters further. The Balkan experiences were considerably different from those of Sierra Leone (Malan et al., 2002). CIVPOL appeared to have little appreciation that different nations emerging from conflict require different solutions, solutions specific to their circumstances. "Off the shelf" programs were not always appropriate or welcomed by the SLP. Sierra Leone had its own unique history, and the SLP required unique solutions (Biddle, interview, April 13, 2005).

Bureaucratic reporting procedures and CIVPOL accountability to United Nations headquarters in New York made efficient decision making difficult and constrained the provision of promised United Nations funds. Changing and emerging international priorities, especially in the form of international humanitarian disasters, diverted funds initially committed to the SLP, thereby damaging CIVPOL credibility (Biddle, interview, April 13, 2005).

The CIVPOL personnel selection process, directed from United Nations headquarters, caused further difficulties. A number of totally inappropriate officers had been assigned to the project. Many were inexperienced, with less operational practice or knowledge than their SLP counterparts. One had served only 18 months in his home force (Malan et al., 2002). Some came from nations with authoritarian regimes and had little experience of civilian, service oriented policing, modern policing styles and methods, or concepts of institutional reform within the democratic process, while others had gained experience only in countries with questionable human rights records and endemic corruption within government and society (Biddle, interview, April 13, 2005). Many spoke no English and were unable to communicate directly with the English-speaking SLP (Malan et al., 2002).

In time, however, CIVPOL made important contributions to the democratization and rebuilding of the SLP. Among their accomplishments, they

played a key role in the reestablishment of the Police Training School, provided a variety of specialized training programs, developed a force evaluation program, conducted important needs studies, designed a human rights manual for SLP officers assigned to election duties and Human Rights issues, provided badly need equipment, and built several new police stations (K. Biddle, interviews, April 13, 2005; Malan et al., 2002).

Combating Corruption

Over the next few years, the SLP and the national government, with the assistance of its international partners, initiated a wide range of programs and changes to move the force and the nation closer to their democratic goals. Donor funding enabled the purchase of equipment, vehicles, training, and a modern radio communications system as well as the building of new police stations and the important refurbishment of the Police Training School (Malan et al., 2002).

The problem of corruption, especially in the midlevel ranks, continues to threaten progress (Malan et al., 2002). To facilitate more rapid and expeditious removal of corrupt officers from the organization, SLP administrative policies have been reformed. Existing practices allowed such officers to remain in the police services until the outcome of the criminal prosecution against them was determined. The new regulations require the SLP to dismiss officers charged with a criminal offense under administrative disciplinary procedures regardless of the outcome of the criminal case. At the same time, effective mechanisms have been introduced to investigate, expose, and prosecute misconduct and to boost public confidence in the organization's ability to deal openly with allegations of misconduct, poor discipline, and inefficiency within the police service (Biddle, interview, April 13, 2005).

In 2000, the government of Sierra Leone passed an anticorruption bill creating the Anti Corruption Commission (ACC). Headed by an independent commissioner and staffed with lawyers, former SLP officers, and Commonwealth task force, the ACC investigates a range of corruption complaints. A toll free anticorruption hotline allows for and encourages anonymous reporting. The 2003–2005 five-year ACC strategic plan contains specific programs for the prevention of corruption, including public education, more effective investigation and prosecution of offenders, and research and intelligence gathering (Biddle, interview, April 13, 2005). A Truth and Reconciliation Committee modeled on that of South Africa has been in operation since 2003 (Dougherty, 2004; Lengor, interview, April 14/15, 2005). In August 2000, at the urging of the Sierra Leone government, the United Nations Security Council established the Special Court for Sierra Leone to try those responsible for the crimes committed during the civil war (Special Court for Sierra Leone, 2005).

The New Sierra Leone Police

The task force, with the help of local journalists, trained police personnel in public and media relations in order to further improve the image of the SLP. A formal press office has been established (Moigbe, interviews, April 14/15, 2005).

The SLP suffered from internal inertia. Because of political corruption and government neglect, all decision making within the organization had become the sole domain of senior officers. Consequently, supervisors and managers abrogated their responsibilities, passing even simple matters to senior management. Political favoritism compounded the problem by creating an illogical and cumbersome rank structure of 21 ranks, many with duplicate roles and responsibilities. The official duties, for example, of constables, corporals, sergeants, sergeant majors, and subinspectors were identical. The organization had become top heavy, a steeply pyramidal and stagnant bureaucracy, where decision-making and organizational communications were impossible. In 2003, the SLP leadership addressed the problem. They reduced the number of ranks to nine and clarified the duties of each. The following year, the SLP collapsed the 15 posts of senior assistant commissioner and assistant commissioner into a single rank of assistant inspector general (AIG).

The current rank structure of the SLP is shown in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1 Current Rank Structure of the Sierra Leone Police

<i>Rank</i>	<i>Number</i>
Deputy Inspector General	1
Assistant Inspector General	15
Chief Superintendent	18
Superintendent	33
Assistant Superintendent	198
Inspector	417
Sergeant	1838
Constable	4251
Total	6771

SOURCE: Moigbe (interview, April 14/15, 2005).

In order to improve the quality of supervision and leadership, a comprehensive promotional system based on merit and performance has been implemented (Biddle, interview, April 13, 2005). SLP officers of the rank of assistant superintendent and above attend the prestigious 10-week International Commanders' Program at the Police Staff College, Bramshill, England. The course, designed specifically to meet the needs of the SLP,

provides training in operational planning and command skills, leadership, strategic planning skills, ethical policing, human rights, and the political, social, and economic context of policing. Participants are attached to English police forces, assigned to units specific to their regular SLP duties. On return to Sierra Leone, they design and conduct relevant training programs for middle managers and supervisors based on their Bramshill experiences (Cullen & McDonald, 2005).

Vigorous organizational reforms have moved the police force toward decentralization of resources and greater operational authority for local commanders. The entire organizational structure has been revamped. Under its current structure, the SLP maintains four major operational regions: Western Province Divisions, Northern Province Divisions, Southern Province Divisions, and Eastern Province Divisions. Central headquarters control includes the following key organizational elements (Moigbe, interview, April 14/15, 2005):

- Criminal Investigation Department (CID)
- Complaints, Discipline, and Internal Investigations Department
- Special Branch
- Operations Support Division (Public Order)
- Media and Public Relations Department
- Estates Department
- Marine Department
- Equal Opportunities Department
- Research and Planning
- Police Training School
- Transport
- Communications
- Family Support Unit
- Community Relations Department
- Inspectorate
- Change Management

The force continues to be understaffed, down from its preconflict staffing of more than 9,000, and the problem of illiteracy interferes with progress. To address these issues, the SLP has raised recruiting standards and initiated an aggressive recruiting campaign. Special efforts have been made to bring women and university graduates into the force. Women currently occupy two of the AIG positions, and graduates are joining the force in increasing numbers (Moigbe, interview, April 18, 2005). Current applicants for the SLP must be citizens of Sierra Leone between 18 and 30 years of age, of good health and without criminal convictions. They must possess a minimum of five General Certificates of Education and complete a multifaceted selection process. All applicants, irrespective of education, join at the constable rank. There is no direct entry at officer rank (Cullen & McDonald, 2005).

When Biddle left the SLP in late 2003, the force had clearly achieved measurable and qualitative success in a very short period of time under

extremely difficult circumstances (Groenwald & Peak, 2004). His replacement, Deputy Inspector General of Police Brima Acha Kamara, a career Sierra Leone police officer, continues the work begun by Biddle and the Commonwealth task force (Biddle, interview, April 13, 2005).

The SLP and the nation are very much works in progress. Serious problems still exist, and the future remains uncertain. Large numbers of citizens have migrated from rural areas to the major cities. Wide-scale poverty and unemployment, the repatriation of large numbers of refugees and combatants, political and regional instability, the tradition of corruption, and similar issues remain threats to progress. Nonetheless, the country and the SLP continue to move toward democracy. While some increase in robbery and automobile-related crime as well as problems with urban traffic congestion and road safety have been noted, the national crime rate remains low, with an annual national homicide rate of less than 1 per 100,000 (2003). A duly elected democratic government remains in place. Civil war has been avoided.

The successful rebuilding of the SLP to date can be attributed to many factors, but two stand out. First, and perhaps most important, the reform of the Sierra Leone Police was led from the very top of the government and the society. President Kabbah made it a priority for his administration. He personally penned the Government Policing Charter, sought international support, and took the bold step of appointing a well-qualified foreign national to head the force. He endorsed the SLP strategic plan, and his authority made it national policy.

Second, the SLP reorganized itself. Rather than struggling to retrofit tactics and programs developed in other postconflict societies, the force took charge of its own rebuilding by developing Sierra Leonean solutions to its problems. With the help of the British task force and support from the United Nations, the SLP designed its own strategic plan around the specific needs and expectations of the citizens of Sierra Leone and within its existing political system, history, and criminal justice system. And they did so from the bottom up rather than from the top down. The operational success of the SLP is largely a factor of its unique decentralization of police services to the community level in a community-policing framework as the starting point for the force rebuilding process. Only after police returned to the community both physically and philosophically did the formal reorganization begin.

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