

ELECTIONS IN SIERRA LEONE: A STEP TOWARD REGIONAL STABILITY?

HEARING BEFORE THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON AFRICA OF THE COMMITTEE ON INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES ONE HUNDRED SEVENTH CONGRESS SECOND SESSION

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ELECTIONS IN SIERRA LEONE: A STEP TOWARD REGIONAL STABILITY?

THURSDAY, MAY 16, 2002

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON AFRICA,
COMMITTEE ON INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS,
Washington, DC.

The Subcommittee met, pursuant to call, at 2:10 p.m. in room 2172, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Edward R. Royce [Chairman of the Subcommittee] presiding.

Mr. ROYCE. I am going to call this hearing of the Subcommittee on Africa to order at this time and ask everybody to take their seats.

The title of this particular hearing is "Elections in Sierra Leone: A Step Toward Regional Stability?"

After years of brutal civil war, Sierra Leone held an election on Tuesday. This election appears to have gone well. Sierra Leone's newfound stability is most welcomed, and it is most welcome because an estimated 60,000 Sierra Leoneans were killed and many more than that were wounded and maimed in 10 years of fighting. Perhaps nowhere in the world have children been so exploited as they have in Sierra Leone.

There is no other country that this Subcommittee has spent more time on over the last several years than Sierra Leone. One can't help but be moved by the photos of Sierra Leoneans who had their hands amputated by the Revolutionary United Front managing to cast ballots last Tuesday. It is a hopeful week in Sierra Leone.

This progress has been backed by the United Nations' largest peacekeeping operation. Stiffened by British troops, unfunded mandates has managed to pressure the RUF rebel group, notorious for its campaign of systematic amputations, into suing for peace.

We owe a big debt of gratitude to Britain for its work, as well as to Nigeria and other countries that have stepped into Sierra Leone. UNAMSIL has come a long way since its poorly motivated troops surrendered to RUF forces 2 years ago, bringing this peacekeeping operation to near collapse at that time.

Peace prospects in Sierra Leone are linked to conditions in neighboring Liberia. Liberian President Charles Taylor's continued support for the RUF led the U.N. Security Council last week to extend a ban on weapons sales to Liberia. International travel by Liberian officials has also been banned and the export of diamonds from Liberia.

I would like to see a timber ban added. Foreign logging companies are enriching Charles Taylor and, by extension, the RUF,

while exploiting the timber forest there and caring little about sustainability. China and France oppose a U.N. timber ban, and perhaps this is because Chinese and French companies have logging interests in Liberia.

For the sake of the entire region that it preys upon, Charles Taylor, Inc., with its ties to international organized crime, must be shut down. Hindered by these U.N. sanctions and pressured by rebels, the Taylor government could implode. The U.S. must anticipate the day when democracy in Liberia is possible, the day when political opponents and journalists aren't beaten, aren't imprisoned or tortured.

We should be doing more to bolster democratic forces in Liberia and more to bolster democracy in Guinea. We should be working to break its government's monopoly on the radio.

If Sierra Leone is going to build on its progress, it will have to better manage its abundant natural resources, especially its diamonds. The new government must work to see that diamonds now contribute to national development, not to national destruction. Corruption in the government must be recognized, and it must be fought.

It is critical that the U.S. and the international community stay committed to Sierra Leone. There will be pressure to scale down and close out UNAMSIL. The slower that happens, the better. The British troops should be encouraged to stay as long as possible, as well as the Nigerians. Elections are a step in the right direction. We should not fool ourselves, though. This election is only one step in what hopefully will be a national recovery. Let us not blow a big investment by running out the door.

The special court needs to be supported so it can try ex-RUF leader Foday Sankoh and Charles Taylor and others responsible for this country's human rights nightmare. The U.S. has been working with West African militaries in Nigeria, in Ghana, in Guinea and elsewhere to improve their professionalism. Attentiveness to human rights is a must. These modest programs are very worthwhile investments in regional stability.

A year ago, UNAMSIL was floundering and the RUF was an active military force. Great challenges lay head, but Sierra Leone today looks a whole lot better than a year ago and certainly than 3 years ago. I look forward to this Subcommittee's continued work with the Administration on Sierra Leone, especially concerning UNAMSIL's future and especially concerning independent radio broadcasting in the region.

I will now turn to the Ranking Member of the Subcommittee for any opening statements, Mr. Don Payne of New Jersey.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Royce follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE EDWARD R. ROYCE, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA, AND CHAIRMAN, SUBCOMMITTEE ON AFRICA

WASHINGTON, D.C.—The following is the statement made by Africa Subcommittee Chairman Ed Royce (R-CA) at today's hearing on the elections in Sierra Leone.

"After years of brutal civil war, Sierra Leone held an election on Tuesday. This election appears to have gone well. Sierra Leone's newfound stability is most welcomed. An estimated 60,000 Sierra Leoneans were killed and many more wounded

and maimed in ten years of fighting. Perhaps nowhere in the world have children been so exploited.

"There is no other country that this Subcommittee has spent more time on over the last several years than Sierra Leone. One can't help but be moved by the photos of Sierra Leoneans who had their hands amputated by the Revolutionary United Front [RUF] managing to cast ballots. It's a hopeful week in Sierra Leone.

"This progress has been backed by what is the United Nations' largest peacekeeping operation. Stiffened by British troops, UNAMSIL has managed to pressure the RUF rebel group, notorious for its campaign of systematic amputations, into suing for peace. We owe a big debt of gratitude to Britain for its work, as well as to Nigeria and other countries that have stepped into Sierra Leone. UNAMSIL has come a long way since its poorly motivated troops surrendered to RUF forces two years ago, bringing this peacekeeping operation to near collapse.

"Peace prospects in Sierra Leone are linked to conditions in neighboring Liberia. Liberian President Charles Taylor's continued support for the RUF led the U.N. Security Council last week to extend a ban on weapons sales to Liberia, international travel by Liberian officials, and the export of diamonds from Liberia. I would like to see a timber ban added. Foreign logging companies are enriching Taylor, and by extension the RUF, while exploiting primeval timber and caring little about sustainability. China and France oppose a U.N. timber ban, perhaps because Chinese and French companies have logging interests in Liberia. For the sake of the entire region that it preys on, 'Charles Taylor, Inc.,' with its ties to international organized crime, must be shut down.

"Hindered by these U.N. sanctions, and pressured by rebels, the Taylor government could implode. The U.S. must anticipate the day when democracy in Liberia is possible—the day when political opponents and journalists aren't beaten, imprisoned, and tortured. We should be doing more to bolster democratic forces in Liberia, and more to bolster democracy in Guinea. We should be working to break its government's monopoly on the radio.

"If Sierra Leone is going to build on its progress, it will have to better manage its abundant natural resources, especially its diamonds. The new government must work to see that diamonds now contribute to national development, not national destruction. Corruption in the government must be recognized and fought.

"It is critical that the U.S. and the international community stay committed to Sierra Leone. There will be pressure to scale-down and closeout UNAMSIL. The slower the better. The British troops should be encouraged to stay as long as possible. Elections are a step in the right direction; we should not fool ourselves though: this election is only one step in what hopefully will be a national recovery. Let's not blow a big investment by running out the door. The Special Court needs to be supported so it can try ex-RUF leader Foday Sankoh, Charles Taylor and others responsible for this country's human rights nightmare. The U.S. has been working with West African militaries, in Nigeria, Ghana, Guinea and elsewhere, to improve their professionalism. Attentiveness to human rights is a must. These modest programs are very worthwhile investments in regional stability.

"A year ago, UNAMSIL was floundering and the RUF was an active military force. Great challenges lay ahead, but Sierra Leone today looks a whole lot better than a year ago, and certainly three years ago. I look forward to this Subcommittee's continued work with the Administration on Sierra Leone, especially concerning UNAMSIL's future and independent radio broadcasting in the region."

Mr. PAYNE. Thank you very much, Chairman Royce. Let me commend you for holding this very important hearing regarding the elections in Sierra Leone, a step toward regional stability.

We are well aware of the importance of the Mano River relationships; and in order for that region to progress, there has to be an understanding and working relationship with the three countries of Liberia and Sierra Leone and Guinea. So, hopefully, this will start to move a process forward where we can focus more attention on that region.

Let me say that in January of 2002, following a nationwide completion of the disarmament of the former rebel group, the Revolutionary United Front, the RUF, U.N. officials formally declared the end to the country's decade-long conflict. As we recall, it was a very fierce battle at times. At one point it was just the Nigerian troops without financial support even from the U.S. or the U.N., that

stayed there during terrible times. I think we have to certainly express our appreciation for what Nigeria did not only in Liberia but also in Sierra Leone.

According to preliminary reports coming out of Sierra Leone, there was an estimated 80 percent turnout of that country's 2.3 million voters. As we know, that is the first election it has had in 6 years. As a matter of fact, 6 years ago, Congressman Amo Houghton put a resolution on the floor commending the people of Sierra Leone, who at that time had the election where they came out to vote in spite of those elements that were trying to discourage them. Though of course, we saw, following that turnout, that the forces came into play anyway.

But the people of Sierra Leone have shown a tremendous amount of resilience, a tremendous amount of determination, and I think that we owe it to that country to give it as much support as we can. At least half of Sierra Leone's 5.5 million people were displaced during the war and sought safety in other parts of the country or fled to neighboring Guinea or Liberia.

Sierra Leone is now at peace, but its peace is fragile. Diplomats and analysts warn that a rebellion spreading from native Liberia and weapons proliferating across the border in West Africa, where AK-47s can be bought for as little as \$100, could again destabilize Sierra Leone.

The Mano River countries—Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea—have each been plagued with border insecurities, refugee flows and intermittent fighting for over a decade. The militaries or rebel groups from each of these countries at some point have violated the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the West Africa region.

Reverend Jesse Jackson 4 or 5 years ago was able to get the three Presidents together for a meeting; and I would hope that once we get proper government stability in the countries and clear up the issue in Liberia that it is essential that the Presidents, the heads of state of the Mano River region countries, should come together and to have dialogue. I would hope that the U.N. would have goals of that happening as soon as we can get a stable government, which may be some time off, in Liberia.

According to reports, rebel groups seeking to overthrow Charles Taylor of Liberia, called Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy, has reached 25 kilometers outside of Monrovia. I hope that the witnesses here today will be able to shed some light on the identity of the LURD, Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy, and who is providing financial support to the rebel groups.

I am very concerned about U.S. policy toward West Africa. I don't believe we have, during the past Administration or this one, put enough emphasis or time or focus on West Africa. While I fully support the U.N. Security Council's Liberian sanctions placed against the Charles Taylor government as a result of Liberia's support for the RUF, I cannot support foreign military financing, even though it is nonlethal assistance, to the government of Guinea.

President Conte is no democrat. In November of 2001 President Conte won a referendum that is likely to make himself President for life.

Secondly, I do not believe that the U.S. Government will accomplish its overall humanitarian strategic objectives by funding military assistance to a government of a leader who came to power through a military coup. Assisting a non-democratic elected government is not a way to counter insurgencies and to halt rebel activities in their country.

Mr. Chairman, I would like to submit for the record a statement by members of the Guinean community, and I quote:

“We are rather puzzled to note that our government and the U.S. openly supports the regime of General Conte. The U.S. Government has provided training to an entire battalion of special forces for an institution that General Conte uses to subvert the rights of Guinean people.”

They further call for an extension of the arms embargo on Guinea and to administer programs through a civil society only. They publicly denounce the human rights and election violations and imposed travel bans on members of the Guinean government.

I think it will be very important that we focus attention on the Mano River region, and hopefully we will get some answers here today.

Once again, Mr. Chairman, thank you for calling this hearing.

Mr. ROYCE. Without objection, we will include that.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Payne follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE DONALD M. PAYNE, A REPRESENTATIVE
IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF NEW JERSEY

Thank you for calling this hearing on “Elections in Sierra Leone: A Step Toward Regional Stability.” In January 2002, following the nation-wide completion of disarmament of Sierra Leone, government officials, leaders of the former rebel group the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), and U.N. officials formally declared the end of the country’s decade-long conflict.

According to preliminary reports coming out of Sierra Leone, there was an estimated 80 percent turnout among the country’s 2.3 million voters, the first in six years. Hopefully this signals an end to a war-ravaged decade in the West African region. Sadly, the 10 year civil war in Sierra Leone and the 7^o year civil war in Liberia that ended in 1997 devastated the economies of both countries.

At least half of Sierra Leone’s 5.5 million people were displaced during the war, and sought safety in other parts of the country or fled to neighboring Guinea and Liberia. Sierra Leone is now at peace, but it’s peace is fragile. Diplomats and analysts warn that a rebellion spreading in neighboring Liberia and weapons proliferating across borders in West Africa, where an AK-47 assault rifle can be bought for less than \$100, could again destabilize Sierra Leone.

The Mano (MANO) River Countries, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea have each been plagued with border insecurities, refugee flows, and intermittent fighting for over a decade. The militaries or rebel groups from each of these countries—at some point—have violated the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the West Africa region.

According to reports, a rebel group seeking to overthrow Charles Taylor of Liberia called Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD), has reached 25 kilometers outside of Monrovia. I hope the witnesses today will be able to shed some light on the identity of LURD and who is providing financial support to the rebel group. I am very concerned about U.S. policy toward West Africa. While I fully support the UN Security Council’s Liberian sanctions, placed on Charles Taylor’s government as a result of Liberia’s support for the RUF, I cannot support Foreign Military Financing (FMF) funds—non-lethal assistance—to the Guinean government.

President Conte is no democrat. In November 2001, President Conte won a referendum that is likely to make him president for life. Secondly, I don’t believe the U.S. government will accomplish its overall humanitarian and strategic objectives by funding military assistance to the government of a leader who came to power

through a military coup. Assisting a non-democratic government is not the way to counter insurgent rebel activities in neighboring countries.

Mr. Chairman, I would like to submit for the record the statement by members in the Guinean community and I quote, "we are rather puzzled to note that our government openly supports the regime of General Conte. The U.S. government is poised to provide training to an entire battalion of Special Forces; the very institution that General Conte uses to subvert the right of the Guinean people." They further call for:

- An extension of the arms embargo on Guinea (similar to Liberia);
- Administer programs through civil society only;
- Publicly denounce the human rights and electoral violations;
- and impose travel bans on members of the Guinean government

In conclusion, let me say that the U.S. should allocate financial assistance to place monitors on the border of Sierra Leone, Liberia and Guinea.

Thank you. I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. ROYCE. Ms. Lee from California.

Ms. LEE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just want to thank you also for calling this hearing. I look forward to the testimony.

I would like to insert my statement into the record.

Mr. ROYCE. We shall do that, without objection.

Congressman Tancredo?

Mr. TANCREDO. No questions. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. ROYCE. I will introduce Mr. Bellamy. I will direct those at the hearing that we have screens, and on those screens we can include some photographs of the recent elections in Sierra Leone as well as some of the history in Sierra Leone.

With that said, let me introduce William Bellamy.

He joined the Foreign Service in 1977. He has served in Africa, Australia, and Europe. Mr. Bellamy was appointed Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Africa and African Affairs in June of 2001, after serving as the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs for the previous 10 months. He was the Acting Assistant Secretary of State during Assistant Secretary Walter Kansteiner's travel in Africa, and we want to thank him for joining us today.

Mr. ROYCE. Mr. Bellamy.

STATEMENT OF WILLIAM M. BELLAMY, PRINCIPAL DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY, BUREAU OF AFRICAN AFFAIRS, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Mr. BELLAMY. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

With your permission, instead of reading my prepared testimony, I would like to spend just 4 or 5 minutes highlighting some of the key aspects and request that the full text be inserted in the record.

Mr. ROYCE. Without objection, we will do that. Thank you.

Mr. BELLAMY. Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, I am very pleased to be here today to review with you the progress that has been made toward restoring peace in Sierra Leone.

The elections held 2 days ago throughout Sierra Leone represent a major milestone in that country's road to peace. The people at Sierra Leone turned out in impressive numbers to vote peacefully for their next government.

Mr. Chairman, this might not have come about had it not been for your early and ongoing concern about the tragic suffering of the people of Sierra Leone. The region has certainly come a long way

since May of 2000, when Sierra Leonean rebels of the Revolutionary United Front, the RUF, took hundreds of U.N. peacekeepers hostage and posed a direct threat for the third time in 3 years to the capital of Freetown.

I don't believe any of us here would have dared predict then that a combination of U.N. and British peacekeeping, backed by vigorous American diplomacy, would succeed in ending this war and putting democracy back on track in this conflict-torn country in just 2 years.

Despite this success, we must not be complacent. Peace in Sierra Leone is not guaranteed. The region remains troubled, as evidenced by recent events in Liberia. There is much that remains to be done before this corner of Africa will be secure in peace.

The Sierra Leone elections will put in place a democratically-elected government that faces a number of challenges. Provided the immediate post-election period remains peaceful, the international community will need to consider how and when the U.N. peacekeeping operation, UNAMSIL, draws to a close.

UNAMSIL's current mandate expires in September, September 30 of this year. We will want to see a phased reduction of UNAMSIL's troop strength but accomplished in a very smooth manner.

Though the United Kingdom will maintain a small military forces in Sierra Leone, the government will need some UNAMSIL presence until it can better establish its authority throughout the country. We will consult closely with Congress on the phase-out of this peacekeeping operation. This has been the U.N.'s largest peacekeeping operation ever, and we appreciate the support of Congress over UNAMSIL's lifetime.

Even the best-intentioned government in Sierra Leone will have a difficult time sustaining piece if it remains under threat from its neighbor, Liberia. We are trying to neutralize this threat in two ways.

First, we are continuing to try to compel President Taylor to sever all links with the RUF by keeping pressure on his regime through international sanctions aimed at keeping weapons out of Liberia and denying Taylor access to the resources he needs to pursue regional destabilization.

On May 6, the U.N. Security Council renewed for another year a ban on arms imports, a ban on diamond exports, and a ban on travel by Taylor and his close associates and senior Liberian government officials. That sanctions resolution also called on Taylor to allow for verifiable international monitoring of revenues derived from Liberia's ship registry and timber industry, to assure that funds from those sources are used only for legitimate social, humanitarian and development purposes.

The United States has openly condemned the renewed, senseless violence in Liberia and has called on all states in the region to respect the international borders of their neighbors. To forestall further internal violence, it is imperative that the Taylor government create conditions conducive to reestablishing peaceful political competition.

To date, Taylor has played a shell game, offering greater political openness, but then intimidating anyone he perceives as too outspoken or too much of a potential threat.

Mr. Chairman, an important component of our regional strategy is to expand the horizons of democratic development in the region. Towards this end, we are supporting the establishment of multiple independent short- and medium-wave radio stations in the region.

As a long proponent of the use of radio broadcasting in closed societies, Mr. Chairman, you are well aware that there can be no fair political contest where the government monopolizes the dissemination of information.

We are also seeking to strengthen civil society groups and are prepared to support electoral processes that we see as having a good chance of being relatively free, fair and inclusive. The parliamentary elections in Guinea later this year may, for example, warrant our support.

Mr. Chairman, we became heavily involved in the region for humanitarian reasons, to stop the brutality of the war in Sierra Leone and to foster peace and stability. Our efforts and those of our partners produced positive results, despite the predictions of many that Sierra Leone was doomed to further carnage and war.

We must continue those efforts in order to solidify the gains that have been achieved. Leaving the region to slip back into turmoil would create conditions conducive to those who seek to attack our system and values. We must not let that happen.

Thank you.

Mr. ROYCE. Thank you, Mr. Bellamy.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Bellamy follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF WILLIAM M. BELLAMY, PRINCIPAL DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY, BUREAU OF AFRICAN AFFAIRS, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, I am pleased to be here today to review with you the progress that has been made toward restoring peace in Sierra Leone. The elections held two days ago, May 14, throughout Sierra Leone, represent a major milestone on that country's road to peace. The people of Sierra Leone turned out in impressive numbers to vote peacefully for their next government. Mr. Chairman, this might not have come about had it not been for your early and ongoing concern about the tragic suffering of the people of Sierra Leone. The region has certainly come a long way from May 2000, when the Sierra Leonean rebels of the Revolutionary United Front, or RUF, took hundreds of UN peacekeepers hostage and posed a direct threat for the third time in three years to the capital, Freetown. I don't believe any of us would have dared predict then that a combination of UN and British peacekeepers, backed by vigorous American diplomacy, would succeed in ending this war and putting democracy back on track in this conflict-torn country in two years time. Despite this success, we must not be complacent. Peace in Sierra Leone is not guaranteed. The region remains troubled as evidenced by recent events in Liberia. There is much that remains to be done before this corner of Africa will be secure in peace.

Mr. Chairman, I would like briefly to review the multi-faceted, regional approach we have pursued over the past two years that brought peace to Sierra Leone. First of all, we played an essential role in shoring up the shaken UN peacekeeping operation in Sierra Leone—UNAMSIL. We did so by helping to recruit effective reinforcements from around the world, and by training seven West African battalions through Operation Focus Relief for service in UNAMSIL. UN officials commended the OFR-trained battalions for their peacekeeping abilities and professionalism. We also provided non-lethal military assistance to Guinea when it came under serious attack from the RUF rebels of Sierra Leone in September 2000. In Sierra Leone, we supported the significant British effort to retrain the Sierra Leone army by providing non-lethal equipment and three U.S. military personnel to serve in the international military assistance training team (IMATT). Perhaps most importantly, we

secured smart, targeted international sanctions on the government of Charles Taylor of Liberia, which raised the cost to that government of supporting the RUF. Faced with a determined international community, under military pressure from Guinea and with its main backer under international sanctions, the RUF decided last May to begin to disarm and demobilize.

The actual process of disarmament and demobilization began on May 18, 2001, and did not officially end until January 11, 2002. During this period, over 47,000 combatants were demobilized and roughly 26,000 light and medium weapons were turned in to UNAMSIL for destruction. The challenge is now to reintegrate these combatants into civilian life. The United States is playing an important role in this process. USAID's "Youth Reintegration Training and Education for Peace Program" has enrolled over 40,000 ex-combatants and war-affected youth in a course of non-formal remedial education addressing basic livelihood skills, civic education and health. Another USAID reintegration program targets local government officials, civil society activists and community leaders. USAID has expended \$5.6 million on these two programs, which have earned high marks for their effectiveness. In addition, we provided \$1.9 million through the World Bank to help fund the "reinsertion payments" that the Sierra Leonean government had promised to disarmed combatants to help them in the early stage of their reintegration into civil society. The UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) is doing an excellent job preparing former child soldiers for civilian life. It is essential that we be under no illusions that this reintegration process will be quick or easy; undoing years of being accustomed to taking what you want at the point of a gun is not a quick or simple process.

Many of Sierra Leone's hundreds of thousands of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees are now returning home with assistance from our refugee and disaster assistance programs as well as humanitarian programs of other donors. The refugees and IDPs too will need to be reintegrated into their home communities.

Bringing to justice those who have committed atrocities and traumatized Sierra Leone for so many years is another important element in sustaining peace in Sierra Leone. I am pleased to report that the Special Court championed by the United States has finally been established by the United Nations and Sierra Leone. This is a hybrid court—neither a Sierra Leonean nor a UN institution—that will seek to bring to justice those who bear the greatest responsibility for violations of international humanitarian law and related Sierra Leonean law. The United States is pleased that UN Secretary General Annan appointed U.S. citizen David Crane as the Court's prosecutor, and we have already provided \$5 million toward the first year's functioning of the court. We anticipate providing a similar amount for the court's anticipated two additional years of operation. Sierra Leone is also in the process of setting up a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) that will seek to heal the wounds of war by getting oppressors to face their victims and seek acceptance into the new peaceful life of Sierra Leone. We have notified Congress of our intention to contribute \$500,000 to the TRC, which should begin its twelve to eighteen months work by September this year.

The presidential and legislative elections of May 14 put in place a democratically elected government that faces a number of challenges. Provided the immediate post-election period remains peaceful, the international community will need to consider how and when UNAMSIL will end. UNAMSIL's current mandate expires on September 30. We will want to see phased a reduction in UNAMSIL's troop strength accomplished in a prudent manner. Though the United Kingdom will maintain a small military force in Sierra Leone, the government will need some UNAMSIL presence until it can better establish its authority throughout the country. We will consult closely with Congress on the phase out of this peacekeeping operation. This has been the UN's largest peacekeeping operation ever, and we appreciate the support of the Congress over UNAMSIL's lifetime.

Once Sierra Leone is able to protect its own borders, and the potential for extra-territorial aggression is neutralized, sustained peace in Sierra Leone will depend mainly on the willingness of its elected leaders to provide good governance and economic opportunities to the people of Sierra Leone. In this regard, it will be extremely important that the diamond wealth of the country is used to benefit the people and not just a narrow political class. We have helped Sierra Leone create a diamond export certification regime that has bolstered the reliability of Sierra Leone's legal diamond exports and that will serve as the basis for Sierra Leone's full participation in the global rough diamond certification system known as the Kimberly Process. This is expected to come into effect at the beginning of 2003. We are prepared to work with Sierra Leone in ensuring that its diamond industry contributes to peace and economic growth rather than war. We are also prepared to protect our multi-hundred million-dollar investment in peacekeeping by helping Sierra Leone rebuild institutions and reconstruct vital infrastructure. This year we

have allocated \$9 million in Economic Support Funds (ESF) and \$5.4 million in Development Assistance (DA) for this purpose. In addition, USAID provided \$26 million of food aid in 2002 alone through American NGOs and the World Food Program.

Even the best-intentioned government in Sierra Leone will have a difficult time sustaining peace if it remains under threat from its neighbor, Liberia. Liberia's President Charles Taylor helped create the RUF and was an essential external supporter and provider of arms. Unfortunately, Taylor has accepted in Liberia those members of the RUF who refused to disarm, demobilize and participate in the peaceful political life of Sierra Leone. We understand a number of these recalcitrant fighters have been incorporated into Taylor's panoply of security forces. Supported by the Taylor government, they represent a serious potential threat to the nascent peace in Sierra Leone.

We are trying to neutralize this potential threat in two ways. First, we are continuing to try to convince President Taylor to sever all links with the RUF by keeping pressure on his regime through international sanctions aimed at keeping weapons out of Liberia and denying Taylor access to resources he can use to pursue regional destabilization. On May 6, the UN Security Council renewed for another year a ban on arms imports, a ban on diamond exports and a ban on travel by Taylor and his close associates and senior Liberian government officials. That sanctions resolution also called on Taylor to allow for verifiable international monitoring of revenues derived from Liberia's ship registry and timber industry to assure that funds from those sources are used only for legitimate social, humanitarian and development purposes. These sanctions are not against the Liberian people; they are specifically targeted against Charles Taylor and his cronies. We expect Liberia to comply with this request of the international community.

It would be a tragedy if the new peace in Sierra Leone were to be followed by renewed conflict in Liberia, a country that has also suffered horribly from civil conflict during the 1990s. The Taylor government has recently made much of the supposed threat posed by the armed group calling itself Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD). The LURD is, to the best of our knowledge, a loosely organized armed group comprised mainly of Mandingos and Khran. Its avowed aim is the ouster of the Taylor government. It has been blamed for attacks on logging operations in Lofa County and for attacks on towns in central Liberia and even on the periphery of Monrovia.

It is unclear whether the LURD has been involved in even a fraction of the incidents blamed on it and for which it has taken credit. Information we have indicates that most recent "attacks" have actually been perpetrated by Taylor's own unpaid military and para-military forces. However, the fact remains that there are armed factions operating in Liberia and that the peace and welfare of the Liberian people is again at risk. There is a growing population of over 100,000 new internally displaced persons and 20,000 new Liberian refugees as a result of the confusion caused by the "attacks" this year. We are closely monitoring the situation and will do our part to ensure that these innocent people receive needed humanitarian aid from the international community.

The United States has openly condemned the renewed senseless violence in Liberia and has called on all states in the region to respect the international borders of their neighbors. To forestall further internal violence, it is imperative that the Taylor government create conditions conducive to reestablishing peaceful political competition. To date, Taylor has played a shell game, offering greater political opening but then intimidating anyone who he perceives as too outspoken or too much of a potential threat. The recent arrest and beating of human rights activist Tiawan Gongloe is a prime example of Taylor's repression. Presidential elections are scheduled to be held in Liberia in October 2003. The United States is under no illusion about their ability to reflect the will of the Liberian people as things stand now.

Opposition political parties and groups remain hopelessly fractured and rightly afraid to campaign. Opposition groups know they need to return to run a political campaign, but we can understand their hesitancy to do so. Nevertheless, the Liberian opposition must get more organized and engaged. No opposition leader can be credible to the Liberian people if he or she stays forever safe in exile. Liberia needs the talents and resources of its diaspora, including some eighteen thousand who reside in the United States, if it is to recover peace and prosperity.)

An important component of our regional strategy is to expand the horizons of democratic development in the region. Toward this end, we are supporting the establishment of multiple independent short and medium wave radio stations in the region. As a long proponent of the creative use of radio broadcasting in closed societies, Mr. Chairman, you are well aware that there can be no fair political contest where the government monopolizes the dissemination of information. We are also

seeking to strengthen civil society groups and are prepared to support electoral processes that we see as having a good chance of being relatively free, fair and inclusive. The parliamentary elections in Guinea later this year may, for example, warrant our support.

U.S.-Guinean relations took on a new dynamic following the Liberian-supported RUF attacks into Guinea beginning in September 2000. The United States moved to aid Guinea, a victim of external aggression and the generally welcoming host to close to an estimated 500,000 refugees from Sierra Leone and Liberia. We provided approximately \$1 million in non-lethal military equipment and supplies and offered to train four companies of Guinean infantry. That training was delayed by a series of events, most notably the terrorist attacks of September 11 on the United States. With Guinea facing continued small scale incursions, we intend to follow through on our commitment. U.S. military trainers will deploy to Guinea later this month to begin the long-promised training, which will include a significant human rights component.

We do not wish to see a new war in the region that will cause yet another humanitarian disaster. We intend to use our engagement with Guinea to try to ensure there is no new regional conflagration. Toward this end, we encourage continuation of the Mano River Union dialogue agreed at the February 27, 2002 summit in Rabat. We are also exploring modalities for providing greater capacity, such as an aerial surveillance platform, for monitoring the borders between Guinea, Sierra Leone and Liberia.

The region is walking a tightrope. Taylor and the recalcitrant RUF remain a threat to Sierra Leone. This threat must be countered. However, it must not be countered in a way that will result in renewed civil war in Liberia. Such a war would prove disastrous for the region, including Cote d'Ivoire, which is just beginning to recover from its own internal political upheaval.

Mr. Chairman, we became heavily involved in the region for humanitarian reasons, to stop the brutality of the war in Sierra Leone, and to foster peace and stability in the region. Our efforts and those of our partners produced positive results despite the predictions of many that Sierra Leone was doomed to further carnage and war. We must continue those efforts in order to solidify the gains that have been achieved. Leaving the region to slip back into turmoil would create the conditions conducive to those who seek to attack our system and values. We must not let that happen.

Thank you.

Mr. ROYCE. Let me ask you, first, has UNAMSIL been a success for U.N. peacekeeping in Africa? Is this an unqualified success, in your view?

Mr. BELLAMY. I think UNAMSIL peacekeeping in Sierra Leone, by almost any measure, Mr. Chairman, yes, is a success; and I think it is perceived as such by our partners and by much of Africa.

Mr. ROYCE. Do you think its performance there has consequences for conflict resolution in the rest of Africa?

Mr. BELLAMY. The UNAMSIL experience in Sierra Leone taught us many lessons, Mr. Chairman. I think, from the debacle of May of 2000, the sending in of U.N. forces that were ill-briefed and ill-prepared to deal with the threat, the necessity of ensuring that forces sent to the theater had the right equipment and had the right training, the importance of political-military coordination, I think we learned many lessons from UNAMSIL. To that extent, yes, I think it is definitely applicable in other contexts.

Mr. ROYCE. UNAMSIL recovered from the early errors and you have learned a lot or we have learned a lot from that operation. But let me ask you, now we talk about drawing down that 17,500-soldier force. Safely, how quickly or slowly should we draw down those forces? Let us try to get your estimate on the record for that.

Mr. BELLAMY. I would certainly say, Mr. Chairman, that we must be prudent in any drawdown of UNAMSIL forces. I think there is general agreement in the U.N. that we need to wait to see the results of these elections. We need to see what sort of govern-

ment is formed in Sierra Leone. We need to gauge its stability. We need to see how capable this government is of extending its authority and administering Sierra Leonean territory. These are all measurements we must take between now and September when the UNAMSIL mandate comes up for renewal.

I would hesitate—I could not hazard, Mr. Chairman, a timetable at this point as to how quickly or how slowly UNAMSIL will be drawn down, only to say that there is, I think, wide consensus that we must not, as you said, squander a large investment by running out the door.

Mr. ROYCE. I think their presence there is the key to maintaining stability, and I think we risk a return of instability if we don't recognize that this is going to be a process that is going to take some time.

I have another line of questioning. That has to do with our preparation in Liberia, our democracy-building efforts there.

For some time, I have tried to get radio operational there. What happens if the LURD overthrows the Taylor government in Liberia? I know that is a possibility you seem to discount. But is the U.S. and the international community prepared to weigh in in a major way to promote broadbased democracy should something like that occur? Are we thinking a few steps ahead?

I guess my question is, has the United States been doing enough to aid civil society in Liberia to prepare Liberians and give Liberians access to facts and support in building a civil society?

Mr. BELLAMY. Mr. Chairman, let me say, first of all, that we do not look forward to the prospect of the LURD, this dissident army, overthrowing the government in Monrovia simply because we do not believe that would enhance the chances of creating the democratic development that you have just outlined.

But you are very right to ask the question, what are we doing to go beyond the pressure we are putting on Charles Taylor to prepare for a post-Taylor Liberia? The answer is that for a number of years we have maintained a fairly active AID program in Liberia that has worked exclusively through civil society and NGOs to develop capacities in a variety of areas and to make up for the shortcomings of the government's own administration.

We have throughout this period been hampered by the fact that the Liberian opposition, the democratic opposition in Liberia, has been thoroughly intimidated and thoroughly beaten into the ground by Charles Taylor and by the fact that many of Liberia's most able and best-equipped of potential political leaders have moved into exile. It has been difficult to locate a legitimate democratic opposition to work with.

That situation is beginning to change now, we believe. We are seeing the first stirrings of a renewal of opposition, very timid though it is, opposition activity in Liberia; and we will be requesting congressional support next year for funding for political party training, for working to develop the capacity of democratic organizations. We will also be seeking funding for radio broadcasts in Liberia to open up—further open up the political space in that country.

Mr. ROYCE. I had a chance to meet Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, as you have met her in the past, as well. In a situation where there was

no way to get the message out, she still returned to run against Charles Taylor a few weeks ago. That is the last I have heard of how she is doing. Can you tell us anything about how things are on the ground over there for her and for anyone else who wishes to assert their interest in running for elective office in Liberia?

Mr. BELLAMY. Mr. Chairman, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf is a good example of perseverance of democratic Liberians in exile. She, I think correctly, feared for her safety at certain points in the recent past and was understandably reluctant to return to Monrovia. She has since gone back several times to Monrovia. She has stepped up her political activities.

We stay in close touch with her. She is someone I think that many Liberians would like to see play a larger role in the political future of their country.

Mr. ROYCE. Thank you. We might go to Mr. Payne, but I wanted to ask one quick last question. That is whether at the U.N. Security Council the United States pressed the point on sanctions on the export of Liberian timber?

We have talked in the past about the environmental consequences of the way this is done and the fact that it does not benefit the country. Did we press the point?

Mr. BELLAMY. Absolutely.

I will just quickly mention, Mr. Chairman, that 2 months ago it was not at all a foregone conclusion that we would even get a renewal of the existing sanctions; and we are delighted that a lot of hard work paid off and we were able to renew the existing sanctions. In fact, we were not able to get everything we wanted, because we pushed for timber sanctions, but we got timber on the agenda.

Mr. ROYCE. Thank you, Mr. Bellamy.

We will go to Mr. Payne.

Mr. PAYNE. Thank you very much.

I appreciate your short statement and willingness to take our questions.

Just hitchhiking onto what the Chairman indicated about the reduction of U.N. troops, after the blunder of sending 50 light-armed troops into the heart of the RUF-controlled territory, which absolutely made no sense, we have seen, with the deployment of an adequate number of troops and the program of bringing in combatants to retrain and so forth—I think it would really be a big mistake if we became too ambitious about quickly reducing the number of troops.

First of all, with the elections being over and with the new government now attempting to put in its programs, to have a downturn and withdrawal of troops I think makes very little sense. I would even hope that they would not even start to reduce troops until the new government begins to function. There is no guarantee that new edicts will be respected, so I would hope that our voice in the U.N. would be—let us be very, very cautious.

We took a blunder, and we made it successful. Now, let us not waste all of that energy by having a rapid deployment or withdrawal. I hope that you would concur with our views on that.

Also, I would hope—you see, one of the ways—there are many reasons why in countries rebel groups are able to fester and grow.

It is because the central government in many instances simply does not service the rural community. That was specifically the problem in Sierra Leone. Freetown was serviced to some degree, but the rest of the country was just abandoned, never dealt with. Therefore, you get elements of hostility toward the government, which does not serve them at all.

It certainly does not mean, therefore, that you say that a group like the RUF should come to be, but that is what does happen. Groups like the RUF even become supported by the people in the—at least they were originally, before all of those horrible atrocities began. But you find support from people because they feel they have been abandoned.

Has there been any discussion—or do you intend to have discussions with Mr. Kabbah on his reelection, that they look at Sierra Leone as a totality—and not only Freetown, not only being able to do things in the town and therefore once again creating the dissatisfaction in the rest of the country.

Mr. BELLAMY. That is a very valid and a very good point, Congressman. Certainly the origins of the conflict in Sierra Leone have a great deal to do with the gulf between the capital and the rest of the country.

In our conversations, we don't know whether President Kabbah will be reelected, but assuming that he is, or regardless of who is elected, part of our message to that government will be the necessity of redressing this legacy of neglect in the countryside, developing strong governmental institutions and directing governmental resources toward the neglected sectors of the population. Because there is—no government is going to enjoy legitimacy and the country is not going to be stable until that problem is addressed.

Mr. PAYNE. Thank you.

Another question, in the past it seemed like President Kabbah was simply an extension of the British government. If he is going to be able to serve his country, will the U.S. also attempt to be there to assist in nation building—or not nation building in the sense that is negative but to help with the ministries and things of that nature in civil society?

Mr. BELLAMY. Yes, sir. Yes, we will. The British presence is drawing down and will be drawn down further. I think we will hear less and fewer accusations that Mr. Kabbah is a puppet or agent to the British, and we have every intention of remaining engaged in Sierra Leone and working with the new government to develop its administrative and its governing capacities.

Mr. PAYNE. I think that another shortcoming would be if, once again, Mr. Kabbah hires Sandline, or whatever the mercenary group from Britain was there previously, to simply protect the diamond mines. I think mercenaries, whether they are Executive Outcome from South Africa or Sandline from Britain, paid fighters, really should have no place. We should have U.N. people. We do not need to have mercenaries there to supposedly protect a legitimate government.

Mr. BELLAMY. That is quite right. I could not agree with you more.

One of the reasons the British have invested so much money and time in training a new Sierra Leonean army is so that desperate

measures, such as bringing in mercenaries, do not occur in the future.

Mr. PAYNE. Thank you very much.

I just want to finally conclude. You usually have to say something when you take a little more time. The Chairman does not, but if you are not the Chairman, you have to ask if you can have one more question. May I have one more question, Mr. Chairman?

Mr. ROYCE. Yes.

Mr. PAYNE. Thank you.

The whole question of Liberia, as you know, there is a tremendous amount of interest on the part of African Americans because of the historic relationship between Liberia and African Americans from 1820 to the first free people. However, much of what has not been made public is that Sierra Leone even has a longer history. The British granted freedom to slaves that fought on the British side against the Colonies, and they lived up to their agreement, although the British lost, and they took former slaves from the U.S. That is how Freetown became—got its name. So, therefore, there is some tie to Sierra Leone, as there is to Liberia. Do you know who is supporting this rebel group?

Secondly, I think Ms. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf would have had a good opportunity if she—it is hard to win the presidency of a country when you live in another country, and that is one thing that has to be changed. Either you are going to be there or you are going to be coming in at luncheon time and the same thing is going to happen again.

Mr. BELLAMY. Absolutely. In our contacts with Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and with other members of the political diaspora, we have made the point that the political battle to be fought is in Liberia, and the sooner those who need to fight the battle can get back, the better.

As to your question on who is supporting the LURD, our information on the LURD is not at all as complete as we would like it to be, but our best information suggests that the bulk of support this organization is receiving is from Liberians abroad, Liberians in exile. There have been earlier credible reports of some support for the LURD from elements within Guinea, with the Guinean Armed Forces. There are various sources of support for this somewhat rag-tag guerilla army.

Mr. PAYNE. Finally, just in Angola, UNITA troops are starving to death, literally. I have never been a supporter of UNITA. I was always on the other side. However, I do feel that there should be some immediate action on the part of the U.N. or to get the Red Cross involved or someone to tell the government of Angola that they cannot allow this to continue and that there must be humanitarian assistance to those troops who have laid down their arms and are looking for a new Angola. It is wrong that this is happening.

Mr. BELLAMY. Congressman, I completely agree. We are very concerned about the situation in the demobilization centers in Angola.

Three things have to happen: The government of Angola has to sign an agreement with the U.N. to allow the U.N. to implement a very good plan that it already has in place for feeding and taking

care of the soldiers and their families in these camps; we need a point of contact within the UNITA government that the international community can liaise with so the considerable bilateral assistance that we are providing can be routed effectively; and we are also insisting that the government in Luanda move on to develop a political dialogue, in addition to a military dialogue, that it has with the UNITA leaders.

We are very active in Luanda, and in New York I was on the phone with the U.N. regarding this. We are on the issue and fully share your concern that we need to make urgent representations to the government of Luanda on this.

Mr. ROYCE. Mr. Bellamy, let me just add my voice to our Ranking Member's, Don Payne's, on that issue, and hope that you can secure that objective.

Okay, we are going to go to Mr. Tancredo of Colorado.

Mr. TANCREDO. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Bellamy, with all the discussion here and your testimony with regard to the importance of UNAMSIL in the successful transition to—at least into a peaceful election, it begs the question, then: To what extent do you believe what is happening in Sierra Leone is something that can be sustained, something that is not a relatively superficial structure that exists now as a result of UNAMSIL? To what extent is it really the manifestation of sort of a groundswell of support for democracy? What indices would you use to determine whatever you think is the outcome?

Mr. BELLAMY. Congressman, I think, as Congressman Payne underlined a moment ago, the critical post-election issue or post-conflict issue in Sierra Leone will be how capably the government organizes itself, how seriously it takes its responsibilities for reaching out to a traumatized population, how it marshals resources and international support in order to deliver services to its citizens.

Unless that happens, you are correct, the good results to now may turn out only to be superficial, the result of an antiwar groundswell.

We recognize that dilemma, and our engagement in Sierra Leone and our modest aid programs in Sierra Leone are going to be oriented and directed to that effort to strengthen the government's capacity in those areas.

Mr. TANCREDO. Well, let me pursue that just a little bit. How can you be sure that those activities that you have described for the government—how can you be sure that that is what will instill in the population an innate desire to retain a democratic system?

Mr. BELLAMY. I suppose we do not have any such guarantee or any such absolute—any absolute certainty. But I think what we do know, Congressman, is that the lack of such performance on the part of previous Sierra Leonean governments was definitely a contributing factor to the civil war, the conditions of civil war that have existed in that country for more than a decade.

Mr. TANCREDO. Thank you. Let me ask you just a couple of other quick questions with regard to the special court.

Given the mandate of the court, which is to prosecute war crimes in Sierra Leone, what if Charles Taylor is identified as a perpetrator of war crimes? What would be the outcome of that?

Number one, is it a possibility that he will be named? Number two, what will happen if he is?

Mr. BELLAMY. I would have to go back and read the mandate, but I believe it is possible that non-Sierra Leoneans can be, in fact, named and pursued by the court, whether they are Liberian or whether they are from someplace else.

A prosecutor for the court has just been named. He expects to arrive in Freetown in July. He will pull his team together and commence work shortly thereafter. It will be up to this prosecutor to decide who he—who is pursued and who is indicted. We are not going to interfere in that process, but if the trail leads to Charles Taylor, we are not going to complain.

Mr. TANCREDO. Okay. One more question: What is Libya doing in this mess? Are they being mischievous?

Mr. BELLAMY. I think that is probably fair to say. Again, we don't always have as much information as we would like. Libya has historically been a source of support for Charles Taylor. Libya we know has supplied arms. We also know that, because of the sanctions applied to Charles Taylor, he does not really have the revenue that he used to have. He has difficulty arranging for arms shipments and external support.

So while the basis for a business arrangement still exists between Libya and Liberia, the means to conduct it and perhaps the willingness on the part of the Libyans appears to be somewhat perhaps slightly diminished.

Mr. TANCREDO. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, Mr. Bellamy.

Mr. ROYCE. Thank you.

Ms. Barbara Lee.

Ms. LEE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Hello, Mr. Bellamy. Let me ask you a couple of questions with regard to the United States' commitment and involvement really specifically with regard to helping with the rebuilding of the governmental institutions and what type and the levels of development assistance are we providing.

Specifically, I want to know a little bit more about the HIV and AIDS pandemic in Sierra Leone. Do we have a handle on that? Do we know what the numbers are, and do we know what is happening with regard to the peacekeeping forces? Have they been provided with condoms and all the types of AIDS prevention measures that we know work?

Mr. BELLAMY. If I may, I don't believe I am in a position to give you a good or satisfactory answer in terms of the HIV/AIDS situation in Sierra Leone or how the UNAMSIL, the peacekeeping forces there, have been part of that. But I will certainly undertake to provide that information as soon as I can get hold of it.

Ms. LEE. Thank you very much. That would be very helpful.

Mr. BELLAMY. In terms of the sort of support that we propose or are giving and propose to give to Sierra Leone, first and foremost—and I think I mentioned, it is the support to the peacekeeping forces in an ongoing peacekeeping presence of some sort to enable the government to achieve a more stable situation and extend its administration.

We are going to continue to fund the special court. We are going to hopefully fund the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which is a parallel structure and not a court of law but a structure somewhat similar to that erected in South Africa at the end of the apartheid for exposing the truth of the atrocities and the terrible recent history of Sierra Leone and reaching some means of reconciliation.

We very recently rescheduled Sierra Leone's bilateral debt to the United States and by scheduling this debt we have given Sierra Leone a bit of breathing room and a much-needed economic boost.

In the future, some of the projects that we are looking at for the next year or two include continuing to provide election support and strengthening the electoral systems in Sierra Leone. We propose to provide support to the justice sector, building up Sierra Leone's fledgling judicial institutions.

We also have under way a very successful program that was launched as part of the demobilization and disarmament process whereby child soldiers, young people, ex-combatants, are given basic livelihood skills, basic job training, basic socialization and are prepared for reinsertion into civil society.

So those are a few examples of the sorts of programs that we have under way now and that we will be continuing in the future.

Ms. LEE. Can I just ask you what our level of funding is in 2002, and then what will it be in 2003 in terms of development assistance?

Mr. BELLAMY. Okay. Our development assistance in 2003, we have requested \$3.9 million in development assistance. We have not made a specific request for ESF, but we will. Sierra Leone is not a line item in our budget, but we will be requesting money from our Africa regional funds to continue supporting the special court and to manage the programs that I have just mentioned to you.

Without being specific, the number last year for that was \$9 million, and I suspect that the request will be similar this year. The \$9 million last year, much went for support and demobilization. That is not an expense this year. Hopefully, that can be used for purposes of reconstruction.

Ms. LEE. You say the other category, the \$3.9 million, that is development assistance?

Mr. BELLAMY. Yes.

Ms. LEE. What was it in 2002?

Mr. BELLAMY. 5.4.

Ms. LEE. Million?

Mr. BELLAMY. Million.

Ms. LEE. We went down?

Mr. BELLAMY. The request went down compared to 2002.

Ms. LEE. Can you give me an explanation for that, given the enormous need that we know the country has and the people have as a result of the war?

Mr. BELLAMY. I will have to give you more precise information on that. I don't have an explanation of what accounts for that \$1.5 million.

Ms. LEE. Could you? Because I have a concern—I am sure some Committee Members may have the same concern—that as we move

forward to try to assist the recovery efforts and assist the civil society and people, the people of Sierra Leone, we need to provide the basic—provide that type of development assistance that they should have; and to go down on that at this critical juncture to me seems to be really very inappropriate and very counterproductive.

Mr. BELLAMY. With your permission, I would like to get together with our eight colleagues and perhaps provide you and the Committee with a more detailed explanation of what the assistance looked like in 2002 and what we have in mind for 2003.

Ms. LEE. Thank you very much. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. ROYCE. Thank you, Mr. Bellamy.

We will now go to our second panel. I am going to ask our panelists—since we have already read their statements, I am going ask the witnesses to please keep their remarks to under 5 minutes.

I am going to ask our panelists, since we have already read their statements, I am going to ask our witnesses to please keep their remarks to under 5 minutes. We are going to hear from Mr. Dave Peterson, Senior Program Officer for Africa at the National Endowment for Democracy. Since 1988, the NED has identified and assisted hundreds of African organizations and activists working for democracy and human rights.

Mr. Peterson has a bachelor's degree from Columbia College, and a master's degree from the Columbia School of Journalism in New York, and a master's degree in African studies and international economics from Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies. Mr. Peterson has published numerous articles on African politics.

We also have John Prendergast, co-Director of the Africa program of the International Crisis Group. He formerly worked as special advisor on African conflicts at the State Department and was Director of African Affairs at the National Security Council. He has also worked for a variety of NGOs on issues of peace, human rights, and humanitarian assistance in Africa. He has authored numerous books and journal articles on Africa.

We have Binaifer Nowrojee. She is counsel with Human Rights Watch's African Division. She has been with the organization since 1993, and prior to that served as staff attorney on Africa for the Lawyers Committee on Human Rights. She has led numerous fact-finding missions to Africa to investigate human rights abuses and is the author of many reports and articles on human rights in Africa.

Ms. Nowrojee holds a law degree from Columbia Law School and a master's in law from Harvard Law School.

And before proceeding, without objection, I would like to enter into the record statements from two U.S.-based Liberian organizations. The Liberian Democracy Initiative is an independent organization dedicated to advancing the interests of Liberia; and secondly, the Union of Liberian Associations in the Americas is the largest umbrella organization of Liberians and their associations. And hearing no objection, the statements from these two organizations will be entered in the record.

[The information referred to follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF THE LIBERIAN DEMOCRACY INITIATIVE

On the eve of the historic elections in Sierra Leone, it is truly fitting for the Liberian Democracy Initiative (LDI) to join this honorable body in examining the *"Elections in Sierra Leone: A Step Towards Regional Stability."* Reports indicate that the polls were by far the most orderly and peaceful in Sierra Leone since the country gained independence from Britain in 1961.

Although Sierra Leone provides an element of hope for democracy in the West African Sub-Region, yet governmental instability will exist especially when government such as the current Liberian Government continues to disrupt its neighbors' political systems and sovereignty. At this critical time of much needed peace and stability in Sierra Leone, neighboring Liberia is going through serious fighting and turmoil around Monrovia.

All of Africa is impressed with the tremendous progress made by the people of Sierra Leone in achieving an end to strings of barbaric massacre of their people by dissidents bent on destroying the fabrics of democracy in West Africa. It comes as no surprise to members of the United States Congress and other members of the international community, that the people of Sierra Leone would have one day join other nations in moving their country towards democracy. This undertaken effort is truly monumental.

The Liberian people have consistently paid a supreme price to experience a day of true democracy and its principles in action in the country instead of a pseudo-democratic format that has undermined the integrity of the country and her people. The people of Liberia like the people of Sierra Leone have a common interest in peace, stability, and respect for human dignity.

However, democracy and lasting peace is only possible in the West African Sub-Region when Charles Taylor, president of Liberia is actively contained as well as pressurized to institute practical and verifiable democratic measures aimed at holding the elections in 2003 and respecting human rights of the Liberian people as well as his neighbors. Taylor ascended to power in 1997 when elections were held after the senseless killings of over 200,000 Liberians. Voters were intimidated to vote Charles Taylor or risk yet another civil war.

The whole world continues to witness how Liberians are suffering from inhumane and oppressive acts by the Taylor administration. In the face of renewed brutality and cruelty, LDI has no alternative but to call for the resignation of Mr. Taylor as president of the Republic of Liberia. He is incompetent and has misled the Liberian people by failing to uphold the Liberian Constitution as well as to protect the basic fundamental rights of the Liberian people. Mr. Taylor has failed our people and clearly demonstrated that he is increasingly intolerant of criticism and cannot preside over a constitutional democratic government, people and a country like Liberia.

As Liberians prepare for the general and presidential elections in 2003, we are calling on peace-loving and pro-democratic nations not to stand aside and allow a tyrant like Charles Taylor to once more continue to rule the people of Liberia with iron hands as he has done during the last five years.

LDI will leave no stone unturned in monitoring and working for democratic principles and practices in Liberia. We continue to sponsor and undertake projects for democratic changes in the country. In the interest of democracy, peace, and human dignity, LDI is co-sponsoring a Pro-Democracy Conference on Liberia at the University of the District of Columbia this June to facilitate an understanding amongst pro-democracy advocates, civic society, opposition political parties and others that the bigger picture of interest is the Republic of Liberia, and the protection of the rights of her people.

Accordingly, LDI calls on the United States Government and Congress—as a true champion and partner of democracy in the New World—to assist us in actively undertaking endeavors to ensure democracy and lasting peace in Liberia. Therefore, we resolve that the U.S. Government:

- Insist on press freedom in Liberia as well as the freeing of all journalists and political detainees currently jailed on bogus charges by the Taylor administration.

- Pressurize the Taylor regime to allow foreign journalists and United Nations inspectors full and unimpeded access to monitor the release of journalists, politicians, child soldiers and others presently detained in Liberia.

- Exerts pressure on Mr. Taylor either to put in place practical and verifiable democratic measures before elections in 2003 or for him to resign.

- Provides logistical, technical and financial assistance to opposition political parties and pro-democracy groups like LDI.

Request the United Nations sanctions on Liberian rubber and timber as well as create an independent auditing of the maritime funds.

Freezes the bank accounts of Mr. Taylor, his senior government officials, and his family members and friends who are engaged in his commercial dealings.

Increases humanitarian aid to the Liberian people. For the U.S. Government and the international community to continue to find creative ways and means to provide assistance and support for the Liberian people and democratic institutions through the work of local and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Liberia.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF THE UNION OF LIBERIAN ASSOCIATIONS IN THE AMERICAS

West Africa is among the world's most unstable sub-regions. In the last decade, Liberia and Sierra Leone have been embroiled in protracted Civil Wars. Liberia and Guinea continue to accuse each other of launching border raids. The remarkable intervention of the international community, especially Great Britain, in Sierra Leone led to an end to the war and holding of elections on May 14, 2002. We commend the efforts to bring relative peace to Sierra Leone and the continued strides to bring lasting peace to our neighbor. This is a great accomplishment, because a major obstacle to peace and stability in West Africa is the lack of viable systems of governance and democratization. With peace coming to Sierra Leone, Liberia is once again in the spotlight in the wake of renewed rebel activities and sanctions imposed as a result of actions of the Liberian Government, inimical to peace and stability not only in Liberia but the entire sub-region. Over the last decade rebel groups have caused widespread instability in the sub-region and President Charles Taylor bears responsibility for much of the long-standing aggression. The recent gains by the rebel Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) has made it even more important for special attention to be given to Liberia if regional stability is to be achieved.

Over the last few weeks, the Taylor Government has been increasingly intolerant of divergent views. A State of Emergency was imposed in February 8, 2002, indiscriminate arrests of peaceful citizens carried out, newspapers closed, and recently human rights activist Tiawon Gongloe was detained, tortured until he collapsed and hospitalized. The Armed Forces of Liberia has been called to active duty and remilitarization of the society is in full gear. The recruitment of child soldiers as well as constant threats and intimidation of civil society persists. There is the need for constitutionalism and principles of law, respect for human rights, political pluralism, accountable and transparent government, and proper management of public finance as well as empowerment of the civil society.

In view of the prevailing circumstances, the Union of Liberian Associations in the Americas (ULAA), the umbrella organization of all Liberians and their associations, calls upon the Government of the United States and the international community to pay special attention to Liberia to avert regional stability. Pressure should be used to obtain a negotiated solution that would end Liberia's conflict and a ceasefire between LURD and the Liberian Government. Unless something is done immediately to stop the violence, misery and death in Liberia, there will continue to be regional instability. A substantive peace negotiation among civil society and the opposition would be necessary.

ULAA calls upon the international community to secure fundamental reforms and that the scheduled free and fair elections are held. These reforms include the restructuring of the Armed Forces, the removal of decrees and orders that prevent the opposition from effectively functioning as political institutions, financial accountability, freedom of the press and other freedoms guaranteed by the Constitution. President Taylor must understand that unless concrete actions are taken that will convince the stakeholders that free and fair elections can and will be held, Liberians and the international community will continue to press for arrangements whereby such elections are held.

ULAA calls upon the international community to diplomatically encourage the development of responsible alternatives to the approach of the Taylor Government to governance and democratization, and give significant assistance to the empowerment of civil society. Experiences show the need for a people centered approach to security. Human security especially when it comes to the right of the individual to live in peace and to satisfy his/her basic needs should share equal status with traditional concerns for regime survival.

Finally, President Taylor's rule has fueled regional instability in the region of West Africa. He continues to push a grand scheme of political change and unless something is done to arrest the current deteriorating state of affairs in Liberia, the

fragile peace in Sierra Leone and the resultant free and fair elections will not yield the desired stability in the region. The United States and the international community must compel President Taylor to implement a comprehensive and constructive program of institutional reforms, including security reform, re-establishment of rule of law to pave the way for free and fair elections and lasting stability in the sub-region.

Mydea Reeves-Karpeh (Mrs.)
National President

Mr. ROYCE. We will start with Mr. Peterson.

**STATEMENT OF DAVE PETERSON, SENIOR PROGRAM OFFICER
 FOR AFRICA, NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR DEMOCRACY**

Mr. PETERSON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Members of the Committee, thank you, Mr. Chairman, for inviting me to testify this afternoon. The National Endowment for Democracy is currently supporting more than a dozen civil society human rights NGOs in the Mano River Union. And, in fact, I would like to acknowledge the presence today here of two human rights activists, Charlie Hughes from the Forum for Democratic Initiatives of Sierra Leone, and Benedict Sano from the Center for Human Rights Education of Liberia.

Mr. ROYCE. We would like to ask Mr. Hughes and Mr. Sano to stand. Welcome.

Mr. PETERSON. They have been doing tremendous work in those two countries.

I think that the point has already been made in the testimony before that the elections in Sierra Leone demonstrate both the potential and the fragility in the region. Even as Sierra Leoneans celebrate their elections, civil war threatens to engulf Liberia. But I think that the most important lesson of the past few years the international community can get from these elections is that with the political will and the necessary resources, these crises can be addressed.

When the international community pushed for a quick and cheap solution to Sierra Leone's war with the Lome Accord in 1999, the agreement soon fell apart, and unprepared U.N. troops were held hostages by the rebels, and it was only the direct intervention of the British and a huge buildup of U.N. troops that managed to restore order. The international community cannot cut off and ignore Liberia's problems or fail to acknowledge the injustices fueled by Guinea dictatorship. To do so would only invite more death and destruction.

But I would like to make a few other specific points. First, war, violence, and dictatorship cannot solve the region's problems. I am convinced that very few Liberians, Sierra Leoneans or Guineans want more death and destruction. As much as we may detest the government of Charles Taylor in Liberia, it must be acknowledged that he was generally recognized by the international community to have been democratically elected and enjoys a mandate until the next elections. Any attempt to remove him by force will only bring more suffering on the Liberian people.

Given Liberia's history, we should have learned that any group seizing power by military means would more likely than not be worse than Taylor and is unlikely to be considered legitimate by a large portion of Liberians. Whatever such groups may say, they in-

evitably commit grave human rights abuses and create pretexts for their opponents to do the same, as Human Rights Watch has documented. The violent insurgency of the LURD should be unequivocally condemned and the flow of arms cut off to all of the belligerents. If LURD does not immediately enter into negotiations, it should be placed on the list of terrorist organizations, just as the RUF was, which would serve to cut off their financial support, including any coming from groups in the U.S. or the Government of Guinea. Any foreign support provided to Guinea that is utilized in any way to support the LURD rebels should be ended immediately.

Secondly, I think that Sierra Leone has shown the way for Liberia and Guinea. If all the sides in Sierra Leone can accept that there was a free and fair process even after all the years of civil war and atrocities, then there is no reason the same cannot happen in Liberia and Guinea. The 90 percent turnout in Sierra Leone is proof of the faith that citizens in the region put in democracy. There should be stronger international support for democratic institutions and processes, including civil society and elections in both Liberia and Guinea, and continued support for these in Sierra Leone.

Liberia will hold elections in 2003. It shouldn't be the roll of the U.S. or other countries to interfere with the outcome of these elections. However, by creating both pressure and incentives for an open process, one in which Liberians are given a chance to debate issues, compare a range of candidates and begin to reestablish democratic processes and institutions, then no matter who wins the elections, Liberia will be a better country, more stable and free, and no longer a threat to its neighbors. If the violence is allowed to continue, there will be no elections. Taylor will only become more repressive, the region more unstable, and the human and material costs more enormous.

Guinea has never really had a free and fair election, and the social tensions that are building there are only likely to end in explosion. Without greater insistence on behalf of democratic change in Guinea, our pressure on Liberia will be nothing but hypocrisy.

Finally, strategic implications for the West Africa region and the rest of the African continent and many other parts of the world should be drawn. Stability and democracy in Sierra Leone will reinforce the advances that have been made in Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, Senegal, Mali and Niger. All of these are democracies. It could open up the political space in Liberia, Guinea, and Burkina Faso.

Peacekeeping and elections have worked thus far in Sierra Leone. They can also work in Congo and even in Sudan. This is not to underestimate the challenges in terms of political will and resources or the differences from one situation to the next. In fact, it is only to underline them.

If it costs the international community a billion dollars over several years to help Sierra Leone, then we need to be prepared to spend 10 times that in Congo, a country 10 times the size. But if after 50,000 deaths Sierra Leoneans can come together and begin to heal their wounds, then it might indeed be possible in some of these other places.

In conclusion, continuation and expansion of assistance to civil society and democratic institution-building in the Mano River

Union is a great investment. Such assistance must be combined with aid for basic social infrastructure and economic development. In the end, if this type of assistance is sustained in Sierra Leone, that country will have a good chance of overcoming its terrible past, rebuilding and joining the family of democratic nations.

As well, there are many courageous peaceful democracy activists in Liberia who have recently been starved of resources to continue their work. The National Endowment for Democracy has tried to fill some of this gap, but much more needs to be done. Activists from all three countries, including Guinea, are beginning to collaborate in pressing their governments for peace and democracy. They need and deserve our support.

Thank you very much. That is all I have to say.

Mr. ROYCE. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Peterson follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF DAVE PETERSON, SENIOR PROGRAM OFFICER FOR AFRICA,
NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR DEMOCRACY

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee. Thank you for inviting me to testify this afternoon. Although the remarks I will be making are my personal opinions and do not represent those of the organization I work for, the National Endowment for Democracy, I think it is important to point out that the Endowment is a congressionally-funded grant-making organization that has been active in the countries of the Mano River Union for more than 12 years. NED is currently supporting more than a dozen groups in the sub-region, such as the Press Union of Liberia, the Justice and Peace Commission, the Center for Law and Human Rights Education, and the Liberia Institute of Journalism in Liberia; the Campaign for Good Governance, National Forum for Human Rights, Forum for Democratic Initiatives and Radio Bo in Sierra Leone; and the Organisation Guineene des Droits de l'Homme in Guinea, as well as an initiative called the Mano River Union Civil Society Movement that spans all three countries. In discussing the way forward for the Mano River Union countries in the aftermath of Sierra Leone's recent elections, I hope that my remarks will to a great extent reflect the opinions and aspirations of many of the individuals in these groups with whom the Endowment has had the privilege to work.

Sierra Leone's elections demonstrate both the potential and the fragility of the region. Even as Sierra Leoneans celebrate their peaceful elections, civil war again threatens to engulf Liberia, and I doubt that either Guinea or Sierra Leone can long remain immune from the contagion of violence if Liberia does not stabilize. I do not have time to review the history and social roots of the crisis that have made these three countries among the poorest, bloodiest, and most corrupt in the world, despite abundant natural resources and human talent. But the most important lesson of the past few years is that if the international community can muster the political will matched with the necessary resources, this crisis can be properly addressed and surmounted. When the international community pushed for a quick and cheap solution to Sierra Leone's war with the Lome Accord in 1999, the agreement soon fell apart, the unprepared UN troops were held hostage by the rebels, and it was only the direct intervention of the British and a huge build-up of the UN troops that managed to restore order. Similarly, the international community cannot simply cut off and ignore Liberia's problems, and must not fail to acknowledge the injustices and instability fueled by Guinea's dictatorship. Nor can the international community afford to pack up and leave Sierra Leone now that they have had their elections. The US and others must be engaged in the region with significant resources, or the costs in terms of refugees and death will be sure to climb dramatically once again.

I would like to make a few more specific points:

First, war, violence and dictatorship cannot solve the region's problems. I am convinced that very few Liberians, Sierra Leoneans or Guineans want more death and destruction. As much as we may detest the government of Charles Taylor in Liberia, it must be acknowledged that he was generally recognized by the international community to have been democratically elected and enjoys a mandate until the next round of elections. Any attempt to remove him by force will only bring more suffering on the Liberian people. Given Liberia's history, we should have learned that any group seizing power by military means would likely be considerably worse than Taylor, and is unlikely to be considered legitimate by a large portion of Liberians.

Whatever such groups may say, they inevitably commit grave human rights abuses, and create pretexts for their opponents to do the same (as Human Rights Watch has recently documented). The violent insurgency of the LURD should be unequivocally condemned, and the flow of arms should be cut off to all of the belligerents, and if LURD does not immediately enter into political negotiations, LURD should be placed on the list of terrorist organizations just as the RUF was, which would serve to cut off their financial support, including any coming from groups in the US or the government of Guinea. Any foreign support provided to Guinea that is utilized in any way to support the LURD rebels should end immediately.

Secondly, Sierra Leone has shown the way for Liberia and Guinea. If all sides in Sierra Leone can accept that there was a free and fair process, even after years of civil war and atrocities, then there is no reason the same cannot happen in Liberia and Guinea. The 90 percent turnout in Sierra Leone is proof of the faith that citizens in the region put in democracy. There should be strong international support for democratic institutions and processes, including civil society and elections, in both Liberia and Guinea, and continued support for these in Sierra Leone. Liberia will hold elections in 2003. It should not be the role of the U.S. or other countries to interfere with the outcome of these elections. However, by creating both pressure and incentives for an open process, one in which Liberians are given a chance to debate issues, compare a range of candidates, and begin to re-establish democratic processes and institutions, then no matter who wins the elections, Liberia will be a better country, more stable and free, and no longer a threat to its neighbors. If the violence is allowed to continue, there will be no elections, Taylor will only become more repressive, the region more unstable, and the human and material costs more enormous. Guinea has never had a really free and fair election, and the social tensions that are building there are only likely to end in an explosion. Without a greater insistence on behalf of democratic change in Guinea, our pressure on Liberia will be nothing but hypocrisy.

Finally, the strategic implications for the West African region, the rest of the African continent, and even many other parts of the world, should be drawn. Stability and democracy in Sierra Leone will reinforce the advances that have been made in Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, Senegal, Mali, and Niger. It could open up the political space in Liberia, Guinea, and Burkina Faso. Peacekeeping and elections have worked thus far in Sierra Leone; they can also work in Congo, Sudan, and perhaps other parts of the world. This is not to underestimate the challenges in terms of political will and resources, or the differences from one situation to the next, in fact it is only to underline them. If it cost the international community a billion dollars over several years to help Sierra Leone, then we may need to be prepared to spend ten times as much in Congo, a country ten times the size. But if, after more than 30,000 deaths, Sierra Leoneans can come together and begin to heal their wounds, then it might indeed be possible in many other places.

In conclusion, a continuation and expansion of assistance to civil society and democratic institution building in the Mano River Union is a great investment. Such assistance must of course be combined with aid for basic social infrastructure and economic development. In the end, if this type of assistance is sustained in Sierra Leone, that country will have a good chance of overcoming its terrible past, rebuilding and joining the family of democratic nations. As well, there are many courageous, peaceful democracy activists in Liberia who have recently been starved of resources to continue their work; NED has tried to fill some of this gap, but much more needs to be done. Activists from all three countries, including Guinea, are beginning to collaborate on pressing their governments for peace and democracy. They need and deserve our support. Thank you.

Mr. ROYCE. Mr. Prendergast.

STATEMENT OF JOHN PRENDERGAST, CO-DIRECTOR OF THE AFRICA PROGRAM, INTERNATIONAL CRISIS GROUP

Mr. PRENDERGAST. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today for the International Crisis Group. We have an office in Freetown and are monitoring events throughout the region. So we very much appreciate your invitation.

It is certainly justifiable to take a moment today to celebrate democratic elections and extol the virtues of the beginnings of a success story in Sierra Leone, but it is indeed only a beginning, as everyone here has concurred today. The giant elephant in this

hearing room today is the regional agenda of destabilization emanating from Liberia. Our written testimony deals with some of the issues internal in Sierra Leone, but I want to focus in the first instance on the issues coming from Liberia.

It is important we take a second to understand what is motivating—what are the motivations and objectives of those destabilizing the region. Charles Taylor continues, with Libyan support, to push a grand scheme of political change in West Africa which involves intertwined objectives of achieving a greater Liberia and asset-stripping of the vast natural resource base of the region. For the last 10 years since his assistance for the RUF's first incursion in Sierra Leone, he has been the key figure in the attempted destabilization of Guinea and Sierra Leone. As long as Charles Taylor remains in power, the entire region will be unstable. He and his rogue commercial and military allies feed on instability, leaving unaddressed the root causes of regional decay, which are endemic poverty, the lack of economic opportunity and a history of parasitic governance throughout the region.

Mr. Tancredo, you asked about Libya. Well, Taylor's agenda dovetails very, very closely with Qadhafi's aims, which stretch back to the 1980s when he set out to sponsor a wave of insurrections in Africa to displace Western influence. Taylor was one of the first graduates of Libya's elite school of insurrection. He obviously listened well in his classes.

The threat of Liberia's conflict spilling back into Sierra Leone is a real one in the near future. A number of former RUF fighters who opted out of the disarmament process are now fighting with Taylor's forces in Liberia, effectively forming Taylor's own Foreign Legion. The involvement of Sierra Leone's militias, fighters in the war on both sides, is another cause for concern. The impetus for this move is money, of course, and the related lack of employment and earning opportunities back in Sierra Leone. The flow of ex-combatants back and forth across the Sierra Leone and Liberian border, often with weapons acquired in Liberia, threatens the stability of the border region and beyond.

I would like to focus for a minute on specific U.S. policy initiatives at this critical juncture. Again, the written testimony has specific recommendations regarding the internal Sierra Leone priorities which we need to remain focused on, but I want to continue to highlight the regional dimensions of a peaceful Sierra Leone which in the end requires a just peace and real democracy in Liberia, as my colleague Mr. Peterson has just pointed out.

Regional stability demands U.S. leadership at this point and what we are calling for to be a dual-track, internationally supported peace effort which would have as its starting point a new and serious peace process aimed at resolving Liberia's civil war. In the context of that effort, a parallel international diplomatic engagement is needed to deal with the regional cross-border security issues by building upon the Mano River Union's initiatives in this regard.

The two issues are deeply intertwined. Liberian opposition forces throughout the region believe the only way they can return to Liberia is through the barrel of a gun and have found regional support. Similarly, disaffected, impoverished or opportunistic elements from

throughout the region, particularly Sierra Leone, have found Charles Taylor to be a generous godfather supporting dissident units to destabilize neighboring countries. The internal Liberian conflict must be dealt with as the major contagion in West Africa, while the disputes between neighboring countries must be addressed in order to reduce cross-border support for rebel movements.

What we are calling for, Mr. Chairman, is a contact group—that the U.S. lead an effort to build such a contact group that would include the United Kingdom, France, Nigeria and other actors of importance in order to create such a new and serious peace process for Liberia which would be backed by intensive involvement and pressure from the international community. The aim—it is almost identical to what Dave has just told you—is to create consensus among key internal Liberian elements by creating consensus amongst the fractious external actors in the region and beyond. Success will depend on whether this group of external actors can unify behind a common approach. Harmonizing France's considerable influences in the region with the objectives of other European nations, the United States and Nigeria will be key.

We think also that the administration should pressure the LURD, its sponsor Guinea, and the Liberian Government to convene substantive peace negotiations which involve civil society and opposition as well from Liberia and negotiate a cessation of hostilities in the context of a renewed peace process. As part of that peace process, the Bush Administration, along with others with influence, should demand that the Liberian Government implement a program of comprehensive institutional reform including security sector reform and reestablishment of the rule of law to pave the way for free and fair elections. Support should be provided by us if real verifiable steps are taken in this regard.

Fourth, the Bush Administration and other donors should use the time before the end of Taylor's term to fund and help develop independent Liberian civil society and media institutions, and offer support and protection to independent political voices, and build on the kind of things that NED has been doing.

Fifth, we would focus attention on the three Es undergirding the effectiveness of sanctions on Taylor. Liberia's greatest susceptibility to pressure remains the financial element of leverage. The three Es I am referring to are evidence gathering. We need to do a better job of building the evidentiary chain for moving on sanctions busters for breaking the sanctions in Liberia.

Second, we need to enforce these sanctions and move on the sanctions busters across the globe. A few people have been arrested and indicted; we have to do more on that.

And third, and finally and most importantly, and, Mr. Chairman, you referred to this, we need to expand these sanctions. We need to hold out the real threat of expanding sanctions to the timber and maritime industries, the principal remaining sources of revenue for Liberia, Incorporated.

Thanks very much.

Mr. ROYCE. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Prendergast follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF JOHN PRENDERGAST, CO-DIRECTOR OF THE AFRICA
PROGRAM, INTERNATIONAL CRISIS GROUP

I would like to begin by thanking the Committee for offering me the opportunity to testify and present the work of the International Crisis Group in Sierra Leone and the broader Mano River region. Sierra Leone was one of ICG's first projects; recently we have expanded our project to include a focus on the broader regional issues, because we believe there is no prospect for lasting security in Sierra Leone until the conflict that began within Liberia, and has touched several other states of the region, is resolved. As this testimony was written, Sierra Leoneans were going to the polls to choose a new President and parliament. My oral testimony will offer an update on what we know about the election's results and implications.

I. OVERALL OUTLOOK FOR SIERRA LEONE

Today there is no active fighting in Sierra Leone, but the country has yet to win the peace. This realization must shape the next phase of any international strategy toward Sierra Leone and the broader region. The international community needs to use the immediate period after the elections to drive hard at consolidating the peace process, for Sierra Leone's future still hangs in the balance. The international community tends to see elections as an exit strategy, but Sierra Leone remains vulnerable.

Eleven years after the fighting in Sierra Leone began, the country's fundamental problems remain largely unchanged: first, the self-perpetuating cast of political characters that led the country to war and prolonged human suffering; second, the status quo of corrupt and weak one-party government; third, the unfinished regional conflict.

The international community has invested time, effort, and approximately \$2 billion in an expensive, but ultimately successful, peacekeeping mission. It was this investment that made this week's presidential and parliamentary elections possible. However, the difficult task of rebuilding and changing the political landscape must start now, or that money will have been largely wasted as Sierra Leone will remain a permanent breeding ground for war, chaos and illegal commercial activity.

II. THE INTERNAL CLIMATE

Sierra Leone has made important progress in the run-up to the elections and the elections themselves.

First, the UN's disarmament program was declared successfully completed on 17 January 2002. A total of 72,490 combatants completed the disarmament program, including 24,352 RUF and 37,377 CDF forces. (Of those disarmed officially, 6,845 were children.) While there remain suspicions of hidden arms caches, UNAMSIL is satisfied that the majority of the weapons, especially heavy weaponry, have been forfeited during this process. A special UN investigative team recently submitted a review of the DDR process to the UN Security Council arguing that disarmament had been successful.

The RUF has been disrupted. Many rank and file soldiers have broken with the RUF Party (RUF-P) leadership over issues of broken promises, unpaid allowances, and allegations of corruption among senior commanders. There are, however, concerns that some former soldiers have not disbanded or returned home but remain concentrated in former RUF strongholds, and there are reports that the RUF chain of command still exists in salient areas like Makeni and Magburaka in the north. Other RUF fighters opted out of the peace process and chose to join RUF commander, Sam Bockarie, in fighting Charles Taylor's war against the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) dissident group. Nevertheless, the lack of weapons and the increasing fragmentation of the RUF, including numerous reports of ex-RUF shifting allegiance to the two main political parties in Sierra Leone (the Sierra Leone People Party—SLPP—and the All Peoples Congress—APC) give the international community and Sierra Leoneans confidence that the RUF poses little threat to stability and peace in the near future.

The government, for its part, has fully extended its authority across the country, although uncertainty remains about the army's continued loyalty and the capacity of the police to fulfill its role of tackling internal security. The police are lagging behind the pace of army reform—in large part because of limited financial assistance.

The International Military Advisory Training Team, led by the British, has reported positive developments in restructuring the army, though they admit that border security is a continuing challenge. The true test will come when UNAMSIL begins to draw down its forces and the newly constituted Republic of Sierra Leone

Armed Forces (RSLAF) are required to fill the vacuum created by the departure of the international forces. Currently, the army is not capable of performing such a task. The UN Security Council plans to review the peacekeeping mission's size, and Secretary General Kofi Annan is expected to make his recommendation on the future of UNAMSIL in September. While UNAMSIL does not need to maintain its present size of 17,500, any future rationalization of the peacekeeping force must ensure that UNAMSIL troops are strategically restructured to patrol key salient regions of Sierra Leone, particularly the eastern districts of Kailahun and Kono, as well as the southern border near Zimmi.

The first round of national elections for President and parliament was held on May 14. The preparation and conduct of the elections was relatively free of unpleasant incidents and violence, with only occasional incidents of low-level violence. Indeed, the many political parties and rallies, and the wide extent of public engagement in the elections, were encouraging signs of the widespread commitment to peace. One major exception to this picture was the questions raised about the impartiality of the National Election Commission—questions supported by ample evidence, such as underage voters being added in SLPP strongholds and the attempt by the National Electoral Commission to disqualify the vice presidential candidate of the APC party.

III. MAJOR CHALLENGES

The newly elected government, backed by its supporters in the international community, faces four key challenges: improving governance and fighting corruption; promoting justice and reconciliation; finalizing disarmament and reintegration of ex-combatants; and coping with the regional problem. The government has 6 months between now and the start of the dry season—when conflict could resume—in which to show signs of change and deliver progress.

Corruption

Let me begin with the corruption that permeates all levels of government and society, was at the core of the problems leading up to the start of the war more than ten years ago, and remains largely unaddressed.

This problem is very difficult, but the U.S. and the international community should not underestimate or throw away the leverage they have. Indeed the international community has assisted the government in implementing a series of controls on corruption through the development of systems of accountability. For example, accounting systems for salaries and budgets has reduced the number of “ghost” employees and decreased the opportunities for padding budgets and diverting funds. Britain and the European Union have played a major role in the establishment of accountability mechanisms for the Ministry of Finance. These accounting procedures and computer programs make it easier to account for the inflow and outflow of funds, and more difficult to divert funds. But other measures are still needed, such as increasing the independence of the judiciary, removing the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) from under government control, and preventing it from becoming, as it increasingly has, a key instrument of Presidential authority rather than an impartial body.

In addition to untying the Anti-Corruption Commission from government control, ICG also strongly urges the U.S. and other donor governments to help foster change from within. Instead of walking away from Sierra Leone, donors must work with reformers, civil society groups and political parties that can act as catalysts for change in the capital and across the country.

Justice/Accountability/Reconciliation

Second, a key aspect of winning the peace involves fostering accountability and justice for wartime atrocities, and reconciliation among combatants and civilians. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and the Special Court provide the two main venues for healing these wounds. The international community, especially the United States, has pushed hard for the creation of the Special Court. There is less confident support among Sierra Leoneans. Some fear that the use of the Special Court will provoke violent responses by former combatants. Others would prefer to move on and forget about the past while using the money allocated to the Special Court for more basic purposes, such as food, housing, and medical needs. Regardless, it is clear that the Special Court will be in operation by the start of the fall. David Crane has been appointed as Special Prosecutor, and funding is available for the first year of operation (funds have been pledged but not yet delivered for the second and third years of operation). The Court is mandated to try those who bear the greatest responsibility for the atrocities; given time and budget constraints on its mandate, the number of indictments is unlikely to surpass two dozen. Most of

those are likely to be RUF leaders, yet most Sierra Leoneans believe that the perpetrators go beyond the RUF leadership and include some key politicians close to the SLPP governing party.

If the Court focuses on only the top 24 perpetrators, then the TRC becomes the only other venue for reconciliation (although there is some thought that street justice may also be the option of choice for some). The TRC is in the start-up phase now and is scheduled to begin hearings in late summer. The main tension between these two institutions is the primacy the Special Court has over the TRC, and therefore the open access of the Court to all proceedings (and therefore information) of the TRC. There is some concern that this distribution of power will weaken the TRC by deterring individuals from testifying.

There are also important concerns that the government is working to bias the TRC, using its veto over the choice of Commissioners to ensure a biased selection that favors its attempts to control the truth. The international community has very little leverage over the selection of candidates for the TRC. The choice of a few Commissioners with a known and strong bias for the SLPP government over other more impartial nominees for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and the appointment of a strong SLPP sympathizer to the post of interim Executive Secretary, suggests a clear strategy to bias the Commission. Although the TRC has a confidentiality clause, the presence of pro-SLPP supporters on the Commission is likely to deter anyone from coming forward to speak against members of the SLPP. UNAMSIL and civil society have also strongly protested legislation which gives Sierra Leone's attorney general the ability to defer or stop TRC proceedings.

The two institutions of accountability, the Special Court and Truth and Reconciliation Commission, are distinct but seek the same common goals of ensuring accountability in Sierra Leone, assisting in bringing sustainable peace and helping to build a culture of respect for human rights. Both institutions have the capacity to contribute dramatically to the stability and longevity of peace, justice and democracy in Sierra Leone. However, their poor designs could reduce the level of support of civil society and the legal community, especially if both institutions are seen as politically-motivated forums for targeting potential political rivals and challengers and blocking the indictment of key government officials for their role in the war.

The burden will fall on Special Prosecutor David Crane, and by extension on the United States which pressed for his appointment, to ensure that government biases do not undermine the running of the Court and by extension the TRC. Sierra Leone's government will present Crane with tough choices and significant attempts at interference.

Even with these potential glitches, the Special Court remains an effective tool for addressing not just national but regional instability. One element of that is the possibility, left open by the Court's mandate, of indicting Liberian President Charles Taylor for his role in sparking Sierra Leone's atrocities. This possibility, if pursued, could significantly increase the leverage that the international community has over Taylor.

DDR Issues

The successful demobilization and reintegration of former combatants poses a challenging task for the Sierra Leonean government and international community. While the former combatants turned in their weapons, they have not yet dispersed and returned to their home communities. This is true of both the RUF and the Civil Defence Forces (CDF), although it is impossible to disperse the CDFs given the fact that most of them fought in their own communities. RUF soldiers remain concentrated in their former strongholds, due to a fear of returning to their home communities and a preference for remaining among friends while there remains the promise of assistance from the RUF party.

Demobilization is needed to break the RUF chain of command, to discourage any thoughts of regrouping for violence, and to encourage the reintegration of these former combatants as productive members of society. The reintegration programme is designed to provide six months of training and a living stipend to former combatants who are actively involved in a training program. But rising concern over the viability of the reintegration fund has already led to clashes. Unless the program receives funding from the international community soon, the fund is likely to be bankrupt by August of this year. This would leave roughly two thirds of those who disarmed without the possibility of completing reintegration training. Many ex-combatants will then see no alternative but to join any of the forces fighting in Liberia's conflict. Already, the government faces a steep challenge in handling the large number of disgruntled, unemployed, former combatants currently in the streets of large towns—and crime rates are reported to be rising.

IV. REGIONAL INSTABILITY

In a very real sense, the war that inflicted such gruesome casualties on Sierra Leone's citizens has not ended—both because the corrupt one-party rule that spurred discontent inside Sierra Leone has been largely restored, and because the regional instability that sparked the fighting has not been dealt with. Peace in Sierra Leone cannot be secured without an end to the civil war in Liberia and its regional implications—and it is to that topic that I would like to turn for the remainder of my statement.

Liberian President Charles Taylor continues, with Libyan support, to push a grand scheme of political change in West Africa, which involves intertwined objectives of achieving a Greater Liberia and asset stripping of the vast natural resource base of the region. For the last 10 years (since his assistance for the RUF's first incursion into Sierra Leone), he has been the key figure in the attempted destabilization of Guinea and Sierra Leone. As long as Charles Taylor remains in power, the entire region will remain unstable. He and his rogue commercial and military allies feed on instability, leaving unaddressed the root causes of regional decay—endemic poverty, the lack of economic opportunity, and a history of parasitic governance.

The threat of Liberia's conflict spilling back into Sierra Leone in the future is real. The armies of Liberia, Guinea and Sierra Leone have largely remained confined to their national territories. But a number of former RUF fighters, who opted out of the disarmament process, are now fighting with President Charles Taylor's forces in Liberia—effectively forming his Foreign Legion. The involvement of CDF fighters in the war is another cause for concern. Numerous reports indicate that some CDF forces have moved into Liberia to join one side or the other in the ongoing conflict. The impetus for this move is money, and the related lack of employment and earning opportunities in Sierra Leone. The flow of ex-combatants back and forth across the Sierra Leone-Liberian border, often with weapons acquired in Liberia, threatens the stability of the border region. Already there are reports of Liberian government forces, among others, conducting raids in Sierra Leone to obtain basic foodstuffs and other goods. The flow of refugees from Liberia into Sierra Leone has also been a strain on the country's already meager resources.

The remarkable intervention of the international community to end the war in Sierra Leone has helped shift the front line of what is a regional conflict away from the capitals of that country and Guinea to within striking distance of Liberia's capital, Monrovia. Liberia's internal situation has been the dynamic that has provided fuel for the broader war, and no peace in the region will be viable until it—and Taylor's agenda—are dealt with more forcefully.

That situation has returned to the spotlight as a result of the recent gains made by the rebel Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD). As this testimony was being written, the LURD has reportedly advanced as close as 25 kilometers from Monrovia. This would be consistent with the LURD's stated objective of moving on the capital before the rainy season begins in June. The key unknown variable is the degree of support the LURD may enjoy inside Monrovia, whether from within the Armed Forces of Liberia army or from the former Black Berets, forces from the interim government of 1990–1994. Any threat from within the capital will surely elicit a dire response from Taylor in the form of arrests, torture and extra-judicial killings of those suspected of support for the LURD.

While relatively little is known about the LURD, ICG believes that it is a serious military force capable of challenging President Taylor's control over much of Liberia. It has received material support from Guinea and from Sierra Leone militias; it is also benefiting from the calculated indifference from Great Britain and the U.S.—all increasingly wary of Taylor's adventurism. However, the LURD is also an organization in flux, without a defined political program or unified leadership, and riven with internal splits. It is a loose coalition of anti-Taylor forces, drawing on a variety of politicians, militia factions, and refugees. Some of them may be interested in treading the democratic path, but for now they, like Charles Taylor, seem only interested in power that comes from the barrel of a gun.

For all these reasons, it is clear that the LURD does not represent any kind of promising alternative to Taylor's rule. That alternative will have to be found within Liberian civil society and opposition groups.

The extension of sanctions by the United Nations Security Council on the government of President Charles Taylor on May 7, 2002 is a welcome sign that the international community recognizes that Sierra Leone's peace remains tenuous as long as Taylor continues to provide support to the RUF. But the United States will have to make a more comprehensive and conscious regional effort if peace there is to be secured. At the moment, Taylor is working hard to use the existing Mano River

Union diplomatic efforts as a framework to demonstrate his commitment to peace, ease LURD pressure, build support for sanctions on Guinea, and buy himself time to launch a counter-offensive. But no process, however illusory, should be allowed to divert attention from the immediate cause of violent conflict in West Africa: Charles Taylor and his commercially-driven regional agenda. The recent extension of the state of emergency gives Taylor added measure to round up suspected LURD supporters in Monrovia and also undermine the possibilities of holding elections in April 2003, although elections can be held as late as October 2003.

The Liberian-driven regional conflict feeds on a region-wide phenomenon of bad governance. Guinea's undemocratic and corrupt leadership, combined with uncertain preparations for presidential succession, is a slowly ticking time bomb. Cote d'Ivoire is also destabilized by governance problems and competition over support for Taylor or various LURD factions. In particular, we believe that the United States should take a hard look at its support for Guinea in this context, and insist that its government take serious and verifiable steps towards democratization, or else risk the end of that assistance. Guinea's serious internal problems need to begin to be addressed, or else it too will inevitably become an element of further regional instability. The U.S. should also press Guinea on the behavior of LURD forces, and to lean on LURD leaders when serious negotiations begin in Liberia.

However, President Conte and Guinea are not the primary cause of the crisis in the region; Charles Taylor is. The conflict in Liberia and instability in the broader region can only end with a new, externally sponsored peace process that includes all the major stakeholders—governments, civil society as well as armed opposition—and achieves a genuinely free and fair election in which the Liberian people have a real choice of who governs them.

V. WHAT SHOULD THE U.S. BE DOING?

I would like to conclude my statement by offering concrete recommendations for the U.S. role in the Mano River region—and for Congressional oversight of that role.

First, in Sierra Leone itself:

The international community must assure the sustainability of the peace that has been so expensively achieved. UNAMSIL's mandate should remain robust and focused on the strategic and at-risk points of the country, but the increased stability of the country and the improved capacity of the army and police should allow UNAMSIL to downsize over the next year. However, any assessment of UNAMSIL's reduction-in-force must take into account the increased instability in Liberia and its implications for Sierra Leone.

Together with other donors, the United States should make a serious commitment to support both anti-corruption campaigns and the development of civil society and political organizations that help in the investigation of corrupt practices—and offer Sierra Leoneans an alternative to one-party rule.

With the prosecutor of the Special Court, David Crane, being an American citizen, the United States must play a leadership role in making sure that the Court is successful—and not undermined by government politicking.

The United States must do its part to provide funding that meets expectations and fulfills commitments for the demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants—particularly focusing on training and employment programs that are an investment in peace and economic prosperity.

Second, the United States has an important role to play in tackling the regional challenges. The U.S. does not have the luxury of ending its involvement in the region. The regional conflict has not ended, and the threat of future instability, casualties, and chaos—with all the opportunities for diamond-smuggling, money-laundering, and other criminal and terrorist activity that implies—is very real. The United States must take the lead through diplomatic initiatives, pressure on the Taylor government, and support for civil society, in encouraging the development of responsible alternatives to Taylor's regime in Liberia. Both pressure and 'principled' engagement will be necessary to obtain a negotiated solution that ends Liberia's conflict and secures fundamental reforms.

This would involve U.S. leadership in a dual track internationally supported peace effort, which would have as its starting point a new and serious peace process aimed at resolving Liberia's civil war. In the context of that effort, a parallel international diplomatic engagement is needed to deal with regional cross-border security by building upon the Mano River Union initiative in this regard. The two issues are deeply intertwined. Liberian opposition forces throughout the region believe the only way they can return to Liberia is through the barrel of the gun, and have found regional support. Similarly, disaffected, impoverished or opportunistic elements from throughout the region, particularly Sierra Leone, have found Charles Taylor to be

a generous godfather, supporting dissident units to destabilize neighboring countries. The internal Liberian conflict must be dealt with as the major contagion in West Africa, while the disputes between neighboring countries must be addressed in order to reduce cross-border support for rebel movements.

Specifically, the Bush administration should:

Lead efforts to form a "Contact Group" which would also include the U.K., France, Nigeria, and others to help create a new and serious peace process for Liberia, backed by more intensive international involvement and pressure. The aim would be to create consensus among key external stakeholders before constructing an internal process involving Liberian stakeholders. Success will depend on whether this group of external actors can unify behind a common approach. Harmonizing France's considerable influence in the region with the objectives of other European states, the U.S., and Nigeria will be key.

Pressure the LURD, its sponsor Guinea and the Liberian government to convene substantive peace negotiations which involve civil society and opposition, and to negotiate a cessation of hostilities in that context.

Demand that the Liberian government implement a program of comprehensive institutional reform, including security sector reform and re-establishment of rule of law to pave the way for free and fair elections. Support should be provided if real, verifiable steps are taken in this regard.

Use the time before the end of Taylor's term to fund and help develop independent Liberian civil society and media institutions, and offer support and protection to independent political voices. Ultimately, such support should be aimed at creating a coordinated effort by donors to support the development of a non-violent "third force" in Liberian politics. This effort would aim to support the return to and/or participation in the Liberian polity by key opposition and civil society leaders, in the context of serious international monitoring of their safety and security.

This will be a long-term process. Unless we address the underpinning of the violence in Liberia, the region potentially faces further fighting and more atrocities which will continue the cycle of death and destruction, while Charles Taylor and his associates—Liberian, regional and beyond—profit from this misery and instability.

Thank you.

Mr. ROYCE. Now we will go to Ms. Nowrojee.

STATEMENT OF BINAIFER NOWROJEE, COUNSEL, HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH/AFRICA

Ms. NOWROJEE. Thank you. I would like to endorse what both of my colleagues have said. The advantage of going last is that a lot of it has been said, so I will try to be brief.

Human Rights Watch has had an office in Freetown for the last 4 years, and a lot of our work has been documenting the unspeakable brutality that has taken place during the war. You can imagine how heartened we are to see the election take place in Sierra Leone. The signs of hope are many: Forty-seven thousand combatants have demobilized; refugees are returning home and being reunited with their families; the diamond revenues are going up and going to the coffers of the government; and on May 14th Sierra Leoneans went to the polls to elect their President and Parliamentarians.

But like my colleagues here have said, the elections do bring peace and security, but they are just the first step. After a decade of civil war, Sierra Leone's state institutions and economy are basically destroyed, and there is a culture of violence, corruption, and impunity that has taken root. And so the international commitment has to remain in order to begin to address those.

The silver lining on that is that the transition period gives a rare opportunity to develop new state structures and the opportunity to do so with strong human rights components integrated into that structure, and to create mechanisms that can secure respect for

human rights. And in that regard there are two important transitional justice mechanisms that will play a key role: The Special Court and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission which will be going forward.

In addition to the rebuilding process within the country, it is important to recognize that long-term prospects for peace in Sierra Leone are dependent on developments in the sub-region. And as Sierra Leone's brutal conflict comes to an end, violence and instability are rapidly escalating in Liberia. I just returned from Liberia, and the neighboring countries having documented war crimes and serious human rights abuses by both Liberian Government forces and rebels from the LURD, including summary executions, rapes, abductions, looting, and burning of villages. In the face of renewed rebel actions, the Taylor government is becoming increasingly intolerant of dissent and remilitarizing the society. There has been a real rise in militia groups.

Another aspect of the spreading conflict is the role of Guinea, and although it is important to recognize that Charles Taylor bears primary responsibility for much of the long-standing violence and aggression in the sub-region, at this time Guinea is also playing a destabilizing role by providing logistical and some military support to the Liberian rebels.

The escalating conflict and growing lawlessness in Liberia has the potential to upturn the fragile peace in Sierra Leone. Combatants are crossing from both sides of the border. Sierra Leonean ex-combatants are crossing into Liberia to fight as mercenaries, and Liberian Government troops and rebels are crossing into Sierra Leone to loot or escape fighting. Sierra Leone could face a security threat since LURD rebel forces are clandestinely operating a supply line along that border, and there appears to be no consistent policy on the part of the Sierra Leone Government or the U.N. peacekeeping mission in Sierra Leone, UNAMSIL, on how to address this problem.

In view of the close links between the Guinea Government and the LURD rebel forces in Liberia, the deployment of UNAMSIL peacekeeping troops on the Sierra Leone-Liberia border raises fears that this area could become a base of operation for the LURD as well, and at a minimum those Guinea battalions of UNAMSIL should be removed from the border. Ideally they should be replaced completely.

The possibility of the Liberian conflict destabilizing the sub-region once again is a dire prospect indeed for a region that has already endured so much war, human abuse and suffering. So it is imperative that the international community remain engaged to establish conditions for a sustainable peace and for protection of human rights in all three of these countries in the sub-region.

I would like to talk a bit about U.S. policy. In many ways U.S. policy has been already contributing in this direction. For example, the U.S. has been involved in strengthening regional peacekeeping efforts. In Sierra Leone the U.S. policy is concentrated on ending the Liberian Government support for the RUF and supporting the U.N. intervention. The U.S. has been the largest contributing Nation for the Special Court on Sierra Leone, which is great.

In Liberia as well, the U.S. has played a strong role. U.S. pressure on the Liberian Government to address human rights abuses has been commendably strong and consistent. Unfortunately, U.S. assistance and support to Liberia's beleaguered civil society community is not as strong as it could have been. Mr. Bellamy just mentioned a bit about how difficult it was to deal with the very weak and cowed political opposition. What he didn't mention was there is a courageous and outspoken human rights community and independent journalists who are being hammered by the Taylor government at this point in time, and much more could be done by the U.S. to help strengthen them.

In that regard I would just like to mention very quickly a small example of this. Tiawan Gongloe, one of Liberia's leading lawyers, was recently brutalized in police custody. Human Rights Watch is trying to bring him here for medical treatment. We fear he has had serious kidney damage. Yesterday the U.S. Embassy in Monrovia issued him a visa, but did not give visas to his family members. Surely he should be allowed to come with his loved ones to receive medical treatment here, and surely that is not too big of a request to make.

Mr. ROYCE. Let me just interrupt you to say that several of us on this Committee have also written a letter to Secretary Powell on his behalf asking for intervention in this regard. And we will follow up again on behalf of the family. But truly the way he was beaten and pummeled in that prison as a journalist speaks volumes.

But let me let you continue.

Ms. NOWROJEE. I would like to mention U.S. policy toward Guinea, because the U.S. has been much less consistent or vocal about condemning abuses of the LURD rebels or speaking about Guinea's flagging human rights record and its destabilization of Liberia. And the U.S. now has an important role to play vis-a-vis Guinea. It is about to begin a long-delayed training program of 3 million U.S. dollars in support for the Guinean military, focusing on border security.

In terms of our recommendations, we believe that sustainable peace can only come to this sub-region if there is consistent pressure on all three of the Mano River Union countries to 1) end the cross-border attacks and illicit weapon flows; 2) to cease support for rebel activity; 3) to respect the rule of law and human rights; and 4) to create state institutions that are transparent and accountable, particularly state security and law enforcement forces.

In addition to the constructive and important efforts that the U.S. has already been engaged in, there are several other things that could strengthen that approach. In that regard, Human Rights Watch recommends the following, amongst other things: U.S. military assistance to Guinea should be conditioned on an end to Guinean support for the LURD rebels. The U.S. Government should call on the LURD to end human rights abuses against civilians. Greater support should be provided to civil society groups and the independent media in the Mano River Union, and the U.S. should continue to remain involved in the U.N. efforts in the Mano River Union to restrict illicit weapon flows and to establish international justice mechanisms.

Without a comprehensive approach it is likely that the conflict in the Mano River Union will continue and ultimately be at a higher cost not only for the citizens of these countries, but also for the international community.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Nowrojee follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF BINAIFER NOWROJEE, COUNSEL, HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH/
AFRICA

Thank you very much for convening these hearings and inviting Human Rights Watch to testify. My name is Binaifer Nowrojee. I serve as counsel with Human Rights Watch's Africa Division. I have been with the organization since 1993. Prior to that, I served as staff attorney on Africa for the Lawyers Committee for Human Rights from 1989 to 1992. I have been involved in human rights research and advocacy on West Africa since 1989.

After ten years characterized by unspeakable brutality and widespread human rights abuses against civilians, the devastating civil war in Sierra Leone between government forces and the rebel Revolutionary United Front (RUF) appears to be over. Human rights abuses in Sierra Leone have significantly decreased following the deployment of 17,000 United Nations (U.N.) peacekeepers.

The May 14, 2002 elections are a significant milestone, and the signs of hope are many: over 47,000 combatants have been disarmed and demobilized; hundreds of thousands of refugees are returning home; civilians abducted from their villages during rebel attacks are being reunited with their families; the government revenue from Sierra Leone's vast diamond wealth has gone up; and on May 14, Sierra Leoneans went to the polls to elect their president and parliamentarians.

While Human Rights Watch is encouraged by Sierra Leone's progress, its long-term prospects for peace are dependent on continued attention, not only to the rebuilding process within Sierra Leone, but also to developments in the sub region. As Sierra Leone's brutal conflict comes to an end, violence and insecurity are rapidly escalating in Liberia. At this time, Guinea is playing a destabilizing role in providing support to the Liberian rebels. The renewal of war in Liberia poses a real threat to sustainable peace and security, not only to Liberia, but also to Sierra Leone and Guinea.

HUMAN RIGHTS CONCERNS IN SIERRA LEONE

Within Sierra Leone, the peace remains fragile. The new government is beginning the process of establishing and consolidating its authority in the face of enormous challenges. The transition period, however, provides a rare opportunity to develop new state institutions with strong human rights components integrated into their structure, and to create mechanisms that can secure and enforce respect for human rights throughout the society.

The deep-rooted issues that gave rise to the civil war—a culture of impunity, endemic corruption, weak rule of law, and the inequitable distribution of the country's vast natural resources—remain largely unaddressed. For decades, the majority of Sierra Leoneans have been betrayed by the state institutions responsible for representing and protecting them; embezzlement and abuse of authority resulted in the near collapse of most government institutions; the army and police intimidated, extorted money from, and sometimes colluded with the rebels; and the judicial system was largely subject to political manipulation and bribe taking, leaving justice unattainable for most.

Unless there is significant reform to Sierra Leone's justice and law enforcement institutions, combined with a committed effort to address the root causes of the war, the recent signs of hope will likely, and sadly, be short-lived. Human Rights Watch believes the following three issues should be among the priorities:

(1) Accountability for Past Abuses

In order to have a future built on respect for human rights and justice, accountability for the horrific atrocities, which have characterized the war, is of paramount importance. Those accused of war crimes also have a right to a fair and speedy trial. Former rebels from the Revolutionary United Front, Armed Forces Revolutionary Council, and Westside Boys continue to be detained without due process guarantees.

During the war, the overwhelming majority of abuses were committed by RUF rebels and former Sierra Leonean Army soldiers (from the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council and later West Side Boys). These abuses included the summary execution of civilians; amputation of limbs; widespread abduction of thousands of civil-

ians who were later recruited as fighters and used for forced labor; the widespread sexual violence against women and girls including individual and gang rape, sexual assault with objects such as firewood, umbrellas and sticks, and sexual slavery; the use of civilians as human shields; and the wanton destruction of property. However, serious abuses were also committed by the government-allied civil defense forces militias, including the systematic use of child combatants and the torture and execution of prisoners, and soldiers from the Nigerian-led peacekeeping force known as ECOMOG (Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Cease-fire Monitoring Group), including the summary execution of suspected rebels and their collaborators.

Two important international justice mechanisms can play an important role in this regard. The Special Court for Sierra Leone, a groundbreaking U.N. effort that combines international and domestic mechanisms and laws, is charged with bringing to justice key leaders responsible for war crimes, crimes against humanity, serious violations of international humanitarian law, as well as certain violations of Sierra Leonean law committed since November 1996. The court is envisioned to try some twenty to thirty of those from all warring factions who have both direct and indirect command responsibility for the most serious abuses and violations. Once constituted, the special court is to be operational for at least three years. In April 2002, the chief prosecutor and the registrar were appointed, and the Special Court is expected to bring its first indictments by the end of 2002. Human Rights Watch believes the Special Court can play an important role not only within Sierra Leone, but also to address the involvement of regional players, such as Liberian president Charles Taylor, in providing logistic, financial, and military support to the RUF.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), mandated under the 1999 Lomé Peace Accord, seeks to establish an impartial historical record of the conflict, promote reconciliation and healing, and make preventative recommendations for the future. The TRC will give victims and perpetrators a forum to address the horrors of the war. Once constituted, the seven TRC commissioners, three international and four Sierra Leoneans, will determine the commission's format. The TRC will operate for one year, after a three-month preparatory phase, with the possibility of a six-month extension.

Despite considerable efforts to establish the TRC—spearheaded by UNAMSIL and the office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights—it has yet to commence operations due in part to serious funding shortfalls and bureaucratic delays within the U.N. In order to be most effective, it should not ignore the conditions that gave rise to the war and give equal attention to abuses committed by all sides of the war, including the collusion between the national army and rebel forces; the clandestine business dealings between rebel forces and businessmen, elected representatives, government officials and peacekeeping forces. Additionally, it should examine the involvement of regional players who provided logistical, financial and military support to rebel groups.

(2) Rebuilding the Judiciary and Law Reform

The government must, as a matter of priority, create a justice and law enforcement system that promotes the rule of law and respects human rights. The Ministry of Justice, the courts, the law enforcement agencies, and the prison administration are all institutions that must be developed to guarantee official accountability.

In order to establish the rule of law, it is imperative that the national judicial system, which has all but collapsed, be strengthened. While there were serious problems with the judicial and legal systems before the conflict, the ten-year war has clearly exacerbated them. At present, the law courts are only functional in the capital and two other provincial towns. There is an insufficient number of judges, magistrates, prosecutors and courtrooms, which has led to huge backlogs, and the prolonged unlawful detention of hundreds. Corruption within the legal system is endemic, and scores of cases, many involving key politicians, are being blocked or protected from further investigation or prosecution. Additionally, legal reform efforts are needed to change antiquated discriminatory laws that do not meet international human rights standards.

The local, or tribal courts, and the often-discriminatory customary law on which they are based, must also be reviewed, revised and properly regulated. An estimated seventy percent of the population relies on customary, or tribal law, which is adjudicated through the local courts. These local courts are often discriminatory, particularly to women, and frequently abuse their powers by illegally detaining persons or charging excessively high fines for minor offences.

Now that the government's ability to generate state revenue has improved, it must show a commitment to the rule of law by providing adequate resources to the judiciary for the hiring and training of quality personnel. The international commu-

nity should also increase funding and provide technical support to human rights groups providing legal aid services to the indigent.

The United Kingdom (U.K.) has since 1998 made a significant commitment to the Sierra Leone legal system through their Law Development Project, which seeks to restore and strengthen the legal institution and update the legal code in Sierra Leone. Human Rights Watch commends this effort and hopes other donors will follow suit.

(3) Training and monitoring of the Army and Police

The national Sierra Leone army and police have over the years been the source of considerable instability, corruption and indeed suffering. From extortion at military and police checkpoints, to rape of women in police custody, to high-level army collusion with rebel forces, to the execution of alleged rebels and collaborators, their acts have enjoyed near immunity from prosecution. Their history of serious and systematic human rights abuses, particularly by the then Sierra Leonean soldiers who in 1997 formed part of the Armed Forces Revolutionary Party and later West Side Boys, is well documented.

Since 1999, the British-led International Military Advisory and Training Team (IMATT) has endeavored to reform, restructure and rehabilitate the army, now called the Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces (RSLAF). Some 14,000 Sierra Leonean soldiers, many former rebels, have now been retrained and are currently deployed countrywide. Some 130, mostly British, Canadian, and Australian officers are, and will for years to come, be embedded into key decision making positions within the Ministry of Defense, military headquarters and battalions and brigades country-wide.

The hands on approach and tight supervision of the newly trained army appears to be rendering results; human rights monitors have received very few reports of indiscipline and blatant abuses against civilians. A few high-level officers and several lower level officers have, in fact, been suspended from their positions for corruption and mismanagement, something that would never have happened in years past.

However, since 1999, the army has been unable to hold court martial boards and try their own cases. In 2001, British advisors and Sierra Leonean officers rewrote the Rules of Procedure and Standing Regulations for Court Martial Boards so as to bring them up to international standards. The new regulations were in October 2001 submitted to the office of the Minister of Justice for approval. However, they have yet to be approved, and as a result no court martial can take place. There are currently eight military personnel, including two officers, who have cases pending. If corruption, indiscipline and impunity within the military are to be addressed, these regulations must be passed and cases involving the RSLAF must begin to be adjudicated.

Since 1998, the Commonwealth secretariat, largely funded by the U.K. government's Department for International Development (DFID), has led a significant effort to restructure and retrain the beleaguered Sierra Leone Police (SLP), including the secondment of a British Inspector General. For decades the SLP was used as a repressive arm of the one party state, and their institutionalized corruption led to considerable mistrust, fear and disrespect. The focus of the current training effort, called the Commonwealth Police Development Task Force (CPDTF), has been on ending political interference of the police, and addressing problems with senior police management, which was saturated with deeply corrupt and unprofessional officers. However, the three full-time staff and nine part-time CPDTF consultants, who are largely Freetown based, are unable to provide sorely needed "hands-on" supervision and mentoring on the basic building blocks of policing. The CPDTF has, however, set up an internal investigation unit to look into complaints of corruption, mismanagement and unprofessionalism, and has commendably dismissed many, and indeed prosecuted several, police officers for corrupt practices. They have also made an effort to establish special units to respond to domestic and sexual violence.

Human Rights Watch continues to receive frequent complaints of corrupt, unprofessional and in some cases abusive practices by police, including the taking of bribes at checkpoints or to investigate complaints; inability to conduct proper criminal investigations; intimidation of local businessmen; impounding of vehicles and fabrication of claims for the purposes of extortion; and encouraging out of court settlements between perpetrators and victims.

While the task of rehabilitating the police force is enormous, and the CPDTF has made significant strides, Human Rights Watch believes the current training approach—which at British pounds 12 million [approximately U.S. \$18 million] for three years is very expensive—is failing to provide the back to basics training and day to day supervision needed to transform the police into a truly professional force. We therefore urge the international community to revisit the current training model

and adopt one that provides for the imbedding of supervisors and trainers into all levels of the police force.

REGIONAL ASPECTS TO PEACE AND STABILITY IN SIERRA LEONE

Prospects for sustainable peace in Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Guinea remain tenuous as the intertwined conflicts continue to spill over the borders, offsetting gains that are made in each country to restore calm. As Sierra Leone's brutal conflict comes to an end, violence and insecurity are rapidly escalating in Liberia. At this time, Guinea is playing a destabilizing role in providing support to the Liberian rebels.

The conflicts of the Mano River Union countries, encompassing Sierra Leone, Liberia and Guinea, have shown a ready potential to overflow and destabilize each other. A long-standing web of shifting military and political alliances exists among the three governments and the various armed opposition groups. Accountability for serious abuses is practically nonexistent, and military impunity in all three countries remains a serious problem. The area is also awash with hundreds of ex-combatants willing to cross over to any side as mercenaries.

THE LIBERIAN CONFLICT AND THE IMPACT ON SIERRA LEONE

Charles Taylor, both as leader of the former Liberian rebel group known as the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) and as president of Liberia since 1997, bears primary responsibility for much of the long-standing aggression and violence in Liberia and the sub-region. For years, Taylor helped fuel the Sierra Leonean conflict through his arming and support of the RUF rebels, as well as facilitation of illegal diamond exports from rebel-controlled areas. In return, when Taylor's government came under armed attack from Liberian dissidents in 1999, 2000 and 2001, RUF forces assisted in expelling them from Liberia.

Only five years after Liberia began a shaky transition to peace, the country is once again immersed in war. Since June 2000, fighters from the rebel Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) have launched repeated hit-and-run attacks moving steadily towards the capital Monrovia.

Both Liberian government forces and LURD are responsible for committing war crimes and other serious human rights abuses against civilians, including summary executions of civilians, rape of girls and women, abduction, and looting and burning of villages. In the face of renewed rebel action, the Taylor government has become increasingly intolerant of dissent and, since the imposition of a state of emergency in February 2002, has intensified its harassment and intimidation of the independent press, civil society groups, and legitimate political opposition groups who have been imprisoned, harassed, beaten and in a few cases, killed.

Despite being subject to an arms embargo continuously since 1992, the Taylor government continues to procure weapons. In some cases, the weapons were forwarded to RUF rebels in Sierra Leone, breaking a second embargo. U.N. investigators have documented a network of arms brokers and transport companies that provided false documents and relied on lax controls in Slovakia, Moldova, Ukraine, and Kyrgyzstan to arrange illegal weapons purchases. In 1999 and 2000, respectively, Burkina Faso and Cote d'Ivoire knowingly provided false cover for arms shipments destined to Liberia.

The illicit flow of arms to Liberia continues. Evidence strongly suggests that a plane that crashed outside Monrovia in February 2002 carried an illegal military cargo for the Taylor government. The flight was one of three suspicious flights from Chad, using planes fraudulently registered in Moldova and filing false flight plans. U.N. investigators were blocked from investigating the crash.

Liberia's illicit arms purchases are often financed through off-budget spending, or payments not accounted for in the budget. For example, income received by the United States-based Liberian International Shipping and Corporate Registry (LISCR) was twice used to pay for Liberia's arms purchases. After LISCR refused to engage in the practice, as of August 2000, other off-budget outlays of maritime funds were utilized. U.N. investigations also established that in 1999 a timber company paid for an illegal arms shipment. In an important move, the U.N. Security Council recently ordered Liberia to audit its shipping and timber revenue to ensure that the funds are no longer misused.

The escalating conflict and growing lawlessness in Liberia has the potential to upturn the fragile peace in Sierra Leone. A growing number of Liberian refugees and combatants are crossing the Sierra Leone border, and the area threatens to become unstable once again. Hundreds of ex-combatants from Sierra Leone, who may later pose a threat to Sierra Leone, have crossed into Liberia to fight as mercenaries either for the Liberian government or for the LURD. Since 2001, LURD forces oper-

ating from Sierra Leone have been clandestinely recruiting and operating a supply line along the Sierra Leone/Liberia border. Liberian government troops and LURD rebel soldiers often cross from Liberia into Sierra Leone for the purpose of looting, to sell on looted goods, to buy provisions, to escape fighting, and, in a few cases, to abduct people who are then forced to work as porters for them. Liberian army deserters are also to be found on the Sierra Leone side of the border, where they could present an additional security threat. There appears to be no consistent policy on the part of either the Sierra Leonean government or the U.N. peacekeeping mission in Sierra Leone, UNAMSIL, on how to address this problem.

There is an urgent need for border security to be strengthened, including screening to ensure that combatants are clearly distinguished and separated from civilians seeking refugee protection in Sierra Leone. The Sierra Leonean government needs to establish an adequate police presence along the border areas, and to establish a status determination body to screen combatants from refugees. Additionally, there is a need for improved policing to ensure that refugees are adequately protected and to guarantee the civilian nature of all refugee camps. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees should ensure as a priority the civilian nature of the refugee camps, increase the number of international protection staff, and work closely with neighboring host governments to establish screening mechanisms at the border to separate Liberian combatants from refugees.

THE ROLE OF GUINEA IN DESTABILIZING LIBERIA

At this time, the government of Guinea is playing a destabilizing role in providing considerable logistical and some military support to the Liberian rebels that operate from Guinea. Evidence indicates that this support is being given with the knowledge and support of high-ranking Guinean officials, including the president.

Domestically, President Lansana Conté remains largely intolerant of opposition and turns a blind eye to frequent abuses by his security forces. A November 2001 constitutional referendum that removed a two-term limit on the presidency, and virtually ensures him of lifetime rule, is widely believed to have been manipulated in his favor.

Guinea's support to the LURD intensified after the Liberian government, assisted by Sierra Leonean rebel fighters and Guinean dissidents, launched a series of cross-border attacks into Guinea in late 2000 and early 2001. They attacked towns and refugee camps containing Sierra Leonean and Liberian refugees, causing thousands to become further displaced and killing and wounding hundreds of refugees and Guinean civilians. These Liberian-led incursions into Guinea were opposed by Guinean government forces, backed by members of Sierra Leonean civil defense force militias and Guinea-based LURD fighters. They pushed back the Liberian and RUF forces, and the Guinean army also carried out helicopter, artillery and ground attacks into RUF-held areas of northern Sierra Leone, killing scores of civilians and burning villages.

In view of the close links between the Guinean government and the LURD rebel forces in Liberia, the participation of Guinean troops in the U.N. peacekeeping mission in Sierra Leone, UNAMSIL, should give cause for concern. The Guinean contingent of UNAMSIL is currently deployed in Sierra Leone's Pujehun District, which borders Liberia, raising fears that this area too could become a base of operations for the LURD, enabling them to strike into Liberia from two directions. Human Rights Watch recommends the replacement of the Guinean forces in the UNAMSIL operation in Sierra Leone with non-West African troops that are not implicated in the sub-regional conflict. At a minimum, the Guinea battalions should be removed from Pujehun District, and not be deployed near the Sierra Leone/Liberia border where the likelihood of their involvement in Liberian rebel support and/or refugee intimidation is higher.

UNITED STATES POLICY

For the past few years, United States (U.S.) policy on Sierra Leone has concentrated on ending Liberian government support for the RUF, supporting the U.K. military actions in Sierra Leone, and providing humanitarian assistance. Additionally, the U.S. pledge of U.S. \$15 million over three years to the proposed Special Court for Sierra Leone was the largest of any contributing nation. The U.S. total humanitarian and emergency contribution in FY 2001, including grants to aid and refugee agencies, through USAID for food relief, assistance to refugees, and development programs was U.S. \$75 million.

U.S. pressure on the Liberian government to address human rights abuses has commendably been strong and consistent. Relations between the U.S. and Liberia deteriorated as President Taylor's role in fueling the war in Sierra Leone became

more evident. In accordance with the U.N. sanctions imposed in May 2001, the U.S. prohibited the importation of Liberian rough diamonds. The Bush administration continued the Clinton policy of isolating Taylor politically and diplomatically, although less publicly. Administration officials have stressed that until Taylor ceases efforts to destabilize the sub-region, U.S. policy will remain unchanged.

The U.S. has been much less vocal about condemning Guinea's flagging human rights record and its destabilization of Liberia. The U.S. has expressed concern about the human rights situation in Guinea in its annual human rights report to the U.S. Congress, but has not made any public statements expressing concern about Guinea's role in supporting the LURD incursion. The closest it came to doing so was in a March 1, 2002 statement in which the U.S. ambassador in Monrovia condemned the renewed fighting in Liberia and called on the Liberian government to take steps to respect human rights and the rule of law. Although it stopped short of naming Guinea, the statement did call on "all parties in the region to cease supporting any group that seeks political change through violence and to respect their neighbor's borders." 11 U.S. Embassy Office of Public Affairs, "Statement Regarding Renewed Fighting in Liberia made by U.S. Ambassador Bismarck Myrick at the American Embassy," March 1, 2002.

The U.S. now has an important role to play vis-a-vis Guinea's support for the LURD. The U.S. is beginning a long-delayed training program for the Guinean military, focusing on border security military to assist that country in defending against the destabilizing activities of the RUF and Charles Taylor in Liberia. In June 2001, the Bush administration notified Congress of its intention to provide U.S. \$3 million in non-lethal training and equipment to the Guinean military to assist that country in defending against the destabilizing activities of the RUF and Charles Taylor in Liberia. Congressional concerns about abuses by the Guinean military led to additional reporting and monitoring requirements. The training is designed in four six-week segments for four companies, but will pause after the first two to conduct an impact assessment, which will include monitoring of the troops' behavior once they are deployed on the border, as well as a human rights assessment. State Department sources state that the U.S. has urged President Conté to curtail his support for the LURD, and that the second phase of the U.S. training would be predicated on a cut-off of Guinean support for the LURD.

Additionally, the U.S. has been involved in efforts to address regional security and peacekeeping efforts. In 2000, a program called Operation Focus Relief (OFR) was initiated by former President Bill Clinton to train and equip seven battalions of West African troops for peacekeeping with the U.N. in Sierra Leone. The training was conducted by U.S. Special Forces. The first phase of the program trained two Nigerian battalions that were deployed in January 2001 to serve with UNAMSIL. The second phase, which ended in August, trained troops from Ghana and Senegal. The third phase, involved three further Nigerian battalions. For FY 2001, OFR was budgeted at U.S. \$24 million in peacekeeping funds, as well as U.S. \$32 million in Department of Defense funds for equipment and transportation. The U.S. also deployed three military officers to work with the Sierra Leone army as part of the British training program. These officers, as well as other U.S. Embassy officials, had some responsibility for monitoring the performance of the U.S.-trained troops. In addition, for fiscal year 2002, Congress approved U.S. \$26 million for the West African Stabilization Program, part of the U.S.'s voluntary peacekeeping operations budget, which includes \$8 million in additional training and equipment for the troops trained for peacekeeping in Sierra Leone, known as Operation Focus Relief.

CONCLUSION

While the election brings much needed peace and security to Sierra Leone, serious human rights issues remain. After a decade of civil war, Sierra Leone's state institutions and economy have been destroyed, and a culture of violence, corruption, and impunity has taken root. The transition period, however, provides a rare opportunity to develop new state institutions that have strong human rights components integrated into their structure, and to create mechanisms that can operate to guarantee, secure, and enforce respect for human rights throughout the society. In particular, the transitional justice mechanisms, the Special Court and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, as well as judicial-rebuilding are important. In addition, continued monitoring, transparency, and accountability among the state security and law enforcement agencies are also key.

Steps must also be taken to address the spreading conflict in Liberia, abetted by Guinea's support of the Liberian rebels. There is likely to be a further escalation in human rights abuses against civilians as the area of fighting widens, causing

more death and displacement in Liberia. As a result, the fragile peace in Sierra Leone could easily be destabilized as a result of a spillover of the Liberian war.

This is a dire prospect indeed for the people of a region that has already endured so much war, wanton abuse and human suffering over more than a decade. It is imperative, therefore, that all possible efforts are made by the international community to establish conditions for a sustainable peace and the protection of human rights in all three countries in the sub region. To achieve this, the international community will need to adopt a comprehensive sub-regional approach if there is to be any hope.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Human Rights Watch urges the U.S. government to work with all relevant parties in the international community to bring sustained pressure to bear on all the Mano River Union countries to: (1) End cross-border attacks and illicit weapons flows; (2) Cease support for armed rebel activity; (3) Respect the rule of law and human rights; (4) Prevent and punish war crimes and other human rights abuses; (5) Create state institutions that are transparent and accountable. In particular, allow judicial independence and ensure that state security and law enforcement forces have clear and public directives governing the duties of its officers, with strict enforcement, and punitive action for violations.
- Continue to sustain attention on institution building that promotes respect for the rule of law and human rights.
- Provide greater support to civil society groups and the independent media in the Mano River Union.
- Condition all U.S. military assistance to Guinea, scheduled to begin in May 2002, on an end to Guinean support for the LURD rebels.
- Continue to call for the maintaining and strengthening of existing U.N.-mandated controls on the flow of weapons that could destabilize the sub-region, and to establish the mechanisms necessary to break the cycle of impunity. Illicit weapons flows into the sub-region should continue to be monitored, and Guinea's role in the Liberian conflict should be investigated and ended. The U.N. should mandate the placement of international military observers and human rights monitors along the Guinea/Liberia and Sierra Leone/Liberia borders to monitor and investigate cross-border attacks.
- Advocate for the replacement of the Guinean forces in the UNAMSIL operation in Sierra Leone with non-West African troops that are not implicated in the sub-regional conflict. At a minimum, the Guinea battalions should be removed from Pujehun District, and not be deployed near the Sierra Leone/Liberia border where the likelihood of their involvement in Liberian rebel support and/or refugee intimidation is higher. Work to secure and get commitments for the deployment of an adequate number of troops along the Sierra Leone/Liberia border to prevent cross-border attacks.

Mr. ROYCE. Let me ask you, Ms. Nowrojee, as you speak about what the international community could do in order to assist in human rights in Guinea, Guinea has a pretty lively independent press, but the government controls the radio there, and most people get their information from the radio. Would the establishment of an independent radio broadcasting system, would that be helpful in terms of building civil society and human rights, in your view?

Ms. NOWROJEE. Absolutely. I think the more access to information people can have in that region, it is important. Most people in that sub-region are glued to their radios all the time, those who have radios, and they are constantly listening to BBC because that is the only place where they receive news from that they feel is impartial or anywhere near accurate. So any efforts to begin to diversify the sources of information would be welcomed and would contribute.

Mr. ROYCE. But specifically developing programs which country by country focus on news within country and carry the voices of political opposition, the case of Charles Taylor, for example, in neigh-

boring Liberia, he is listed as one of the top enemies of press freedom worldwide by journalists. If done right throughout the region, it might give voice to human rights activists on an ongoing basis in a way that the populous would actually hear.

Ms. NOWROJEE. Yes. I would concur with that completely. I think that the more information that people can get access to, and the more voices they can hear that can diversify their ability to make choices about their own lives, the better.

Mr. ROYCE. I thank you.

I wanted to ask Mr. Prendergast, in your testimony you mention the possibility of a newly created Special Court in Sierra Leone actually going through the process of the potential to indict Liberian President Charles Taylor for his role in basically masterminding a lot of the mayhem that went on there.

I was going to ask you how likely you thought that would be that that could come to pass, and how would such an indictment, should it happen, affect U.S. policy toward Liberia?

Mr. PRENDERGAST. Well, Mr. Crane will have to sift through all the evidence—the new special prosecutor will have to work very, very diligently to put the kind of dossier together to bring forth the indictment. Certainly it will provide a great deal of additional leverage to the United States in the context of, as I mentioned earlier, what needs to happen is negotiations to deal with the internal Liberian civil war. And so, indeed, this will be, I think, an important component of U.S. policy going forward, and we should—or the U.S. should be putting as much effort as it can to collect that kind of evidence.

Mr. ROYCE. Thank you.

I was also going to ask Mr. Peterson, at what point does President Taylor forfeit the democratic legitimacy that you suggest he has? At what point in terms of how many political opponents are killed, or how many journalists are tortured, or how many rebel groups are established, at what point does he lose his legitimacy, in your view?

Mr. PETERSON. Well, I think that it is the kind of question that this international tribunal might be helpful in answering. I think the Liberian people first and foremost are the ones that need to answer that question. As I said, there are elections that are set for next year in 2003. If Taylor allows a free and fair process, then I think that the Liberian people should be the best judge of what his behavior has been, whether it has been to destabilize the region or to repress the human rights and civil rights of Liberians themselves.

I think that the United States needs to do really is to focus on trying to ensure that there is free and fair process in terms of elections. If there are no elections, then it will be clear that Taylor's agenda is not democracy and that he has lost his legitimacy.

Mr. ROYCE. I think that, given the treatment of journalists who try to report on what is going on in Liberia, and given the elimination of potential political opponents and the silencing of any other voices, there is not a way for people to get information out. And so I was just going to ask, what are the prospects for fair and free elections, given what has happened in the last few weeks in terms of beatings and assassinations and everything else; what is

the prospect for actually having a free election there? And what is the likelihood that he even holds an election?

Mr. PETERSON. I think that the prospects are worth pursuing. I don't think that free elections are impossible in Liberia by any means, no less so than they were in Sierra Leone. If Sierra Leone could hold free and fair elections after all of the war and mayhem there, then I think Liberia should be also. It is not going to be easy.

Mr. ROYCE. But the difference is that in Sierra Leone basically the RUF were defeated. After so many amputations, people are so galvanized in their opposition, and now with a 17,500-man force on the ground, there is the potential to actually hold an election, where, instead of losing a hand for casting a ballot, you are encouraged to go to the polls. It is sort of the reciprocal situation since it was Foday Sankoh and Charles Taylor who developed the MO of loss of a hand for casting a ballot, so I wondered what the likelihood would be.

Mr. PETERSON. I think it is possible. I really do. And I think that if the only alternative is war and insurrection, then I think the only losers will be the Liberian people.

Mr. ROYCE. Thank you.

I will go to Mr. Payne.

Mr. PAYNE. Thank you. We have about a minute left to vote, but I just would like to thank all of you. We do not have time for too many questions. I do, however, have to just say that I don't know whether another military takeover of Liberia will be the answer either. I somewhat concur with you that for the LURD to take over, it simply means that there is going to be a counter-LURD group 4 or 5 years from now to take over militarily from the group that took over from the LURD group, and that perhaps the only possibility is the fact that we should encourage elections. The last time I think the elections were free and fair, that Taylor just had an overwhelming presence, had money, the election wasn't stolen, the people voted for him. Maybe they voted for him because they wanted the war to end. Whatever the reason, it was not an unfair election.

And I do think that we had an opportunity to work with Taylor at the beginning of his inception; however, I think that the U.S. policy was just anti-Taylor, anti the fact that he won it, and, therefore, our policy just did not do anything to encourage independent groups from being able to flourish and being able to have democracy come alive. We had a window of opportunity that I think the U.S. policy wasted and therefore allowed Taylor to become more entrenched, and then to become more power-hungry, and then to become more involved with the RUF. And so the policy just spiraled downward.

I don't think that to have the LURD take over is going to be the answer because, like I said, there is then going to be another group to come in and take them over, and the people will continue to suffer. There are going to be elections next year. See if they are fair and free, and if they are not, then the mandate is there we have to do something else.

We have about less than a minute. If I lose my vote, I am going to have to see John Prendergast in particular. Thank you. We have to leave.

Mr. MEEKS. I wanted to submit—I am sorry I was not here earlier, but I had an opening statement that I wanted to submit for the record.

Mr. TANCREDO. [Presiding.] Without objection.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Meeks follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE GREGORY W. MEEKS, A REPRESENTATIVE
IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF NEW YORK

Thank you Chairman Royce and my friend, Ranking Member Donald Payne, for calling this hearing today.

Clearly in recent years The Mano (MANO) River Countries of Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea have been characterized by a nexus of political and economic instability, civil wars, and low intensity conflicts. Such conditions are a microcosm of the conditions faced by African peoples in nations and regions throughout the African continent.

It seems to me that as we actively support the electoral process for the people of Sierre Leone, by which most accounts seem to have gone well. It is my hope that we will also reflect and perhaps learn a few lessons from our failures in Sierre Leone about how our policies can either truly help or hinder the abilities of Africans to bring peace to their lives.

Mr. Chairman, it is high time that we begin to fundamentally re-think what we mean by peace and how we think about conflict. Peace is not simply the absence of war or violence. Peace cannot be achieved in one nation while the conditions which sow the seeds for conflict exist in a neighboring nation.

Mr. Chairman, it seems to me that until we understand that war and conflicts are not the problems, but the symptoms of deep seated political, social and economic structural issues within African societies, then we are not seriously talking about sustainable peace in Africa.

At best if we are only talking about elections, sanctions on individual people or nations, or infusions of aid to help those affected by war, then it seems that we are trying to manage conflicts as opposed to helping to empower Africans to resolve them.

If we confuse supporting one undemocratic government against an undemocratic force in the name of supporting peace in Sierre Leone, then we should not be surprised if our actions indirectly sow the seeds of future conflicts in Guinea. I question if this is an optimal approach to sustainable peace in Africa?

Mr. Chairman, it seems high time that we begin to understand that sustainable peace processes in the region and indeed for all African societies can not be imported from the United States, Europe or the international community.

Sustainable peace cannot be magically created by elections. Individual efforts to ban conflict diamonds or the sale of weapons are noble, but they pale in comparison to the scope and nature of the causes of conflicts.

Our aid, trade, economic and security policy actions must ultimately help address both the internal and external structural issues which foster the conditions which make conflicts possible. And such policies must be guided by an understanding that conflicts and wars, are often times different overlapping conflicts over scarce resources, politics and power.

As we explore the many inter-related sources of conflict which plague the Mano River region,

I would hope that our policy approaches would take on more regional and holistic dimensions. And most of all I would hope that we would do a better job in supporting African peoples, particular African women and African youth, to address the underlying structural causes of the conditions which perpetuate conflicts. Thank you.

Mr. TANCREDO. Well, given an opportunity I seldom get, that is to have this gavel in my hand here for a moment, I am going to pose a question which is somewhat more philosophical than practical, but I have so much brain power in front of me, and it seems like an opportunity that I cannot resist, because we sit here, and time after time, hearing after hearing, we are looking at problems

in sub-Saharan Africa, in Africa in general that test our ability to rely upon a template, a template of democracy as a solution to these problems.

And I just wonder, given what we said—I mean, so much of it sounds just like wishful thinking in a way not just for Sierra Leone, but for the region, even many expanding out, that we can ever accomplish our goals of a peaceful and prosperous African continent. And I wonder if I could just ask you briefly, anybody and all of you, to respond to that concern. That is all.

Mr. PETERSON. If I may, in my opening remarks I mentioned if you looked at the West African region in the last 10 years, there has been real progress. I don't think we should be discouraged.

Mr. TANCREDO. They are heading in that direction. Not there yet.

Mr. PETERSON. Mali has also had democratic elections. There is a new President there. Ghana had great elections last year. Senegal had good, free, fair elections. The ruling power stepped down.

You have—but Burkina Faso had elections. They were legislative elections where the opposition made great gains. You have Benin, you have Nigeria, you have got Ghana. I am not underestimating the problems that these countries still have.

Mr. TANCREDO. Especially when we consider that everything seems tenuous put in the context of a regional conflict that could so easily tip everything off the table.

Mr. PETERSON. That is right. It is very tenuous and very fragile. But as Sierra Leone demonstrates, that where the international community has the political will and devotes the resources, that even the worst of these problems can actually be dealt with in a constructive way. And I think that where we can put much more modest resources into some of these situations before they get as far out of hand as Sierra Leone did, then we can save ourselves a lot of money and save a lot of lives and help these countries to make it, you know, the way many of them actually have.

Mr. TANCREDO. I am going to ask John also to comment, everyone actually, especially John in this regard simply because you know how people often think back to their school—their educational experiences and say, I remember one teacher that was just great, stands out in my mind. That is how I think of John in my introduction to Africa, as a matter of fact, on our trip to Sudan. What are your observations?

Mr. PRENDERGAST. I want to try to take the general question that you are asking and focus on the specific issue of today's hearing and say that indeed, Sierra Leone gives us the art of the possible, even in such a—against the backdrop of such recent chaos, and the art of the nearly impossible, what are we going to do about Liberia and the challenge that represents? But I do believe that we have the tools at our disposal in the international community if acting within the region we have a chance.

But that means that we will have to engage more deeply than we are now on the diplomatic side and on the longer-term process of democracy-building, because, as you know, Congressman Tancredo, these elections are just one element of the broader democracy-building strategy. But in this particular case you have a situation which, if there was more diplomatic effort tied to more serious pressure—which is one of the first things you said, there has

to be more pressure on Taylor. The existing sanctions regime is not enough. It is good, a good start. We moved the ball down the field a bit. We cut his sources of support and raised the cost of his doing business in the region and internationally. But we have to ramp up the pressure. That means, just to reiterate, we have to enforce the existing ones and expand the new ones. And the timber and maritime industries is where he is getting his money. We have got to go after those one way or another, and that is going to take congressional pressure and leadership like it did for the earlier set of sanctions.

You guys have led in a lot of these kind of things, and your continuing advocacy will be dispositive, but just ramping up the pressure without a serious diplomatic—without a serious peace process is going to be irrelevant, because there has to be a way to channel Charles Taylor's fear and uncertainty about his own future into gains on the part of those struggling for change in Liberia. And the stakeholders in Liberia have to be part of that. We have to be involved in constructing such a peace process. We have to get our hands dirty.

We suggest a contact group. There are a million approaches to undertake this, but we have to work with the region, with the Mano River Union and with Nigeria particularly in terms of how to craft that process. Because right now Taylor is using the disparate little diplomatic efforts to string everybody along to try to put more pressure on Guinea, rightly so, and really to delay serious action of the nature that my two colleagues have pointed out.

And so I think at this point we have to build the process, build the peace process, but at the same time understand that that may not work. We have to really seriously invest in the independent voices that again my two colleagues have talked about in Liberia that have struggled over the last more than decade now against significant odds to maintain and build networks of human rights organizations, of democracy promotion, civic education organizations and all the kinds of activities that civil society throughout the world promotes, and to build that kind of a third way between Taylor, Incorporated, and between the LURD, a third way that involves elements of the opposition, civil society and those beyond that within Liberia that want to see a way forward. Help establish some consensus because, of course, as in every one of these countries, the divisions within the opposition and civil society are often as bad as within the government, and so helping to create that kind of thing.

It is a two-track approach, build the peace process, but do not put all of your eggs in that basket and invest in this approach, and that is going to take a little bit more resources than we are putting in now and a lot more diplomatic engagement.

Ms. NOWROJEE. Can I just add briefly?

Mr. TANCREDO. Of course, of course.

Ms. NOWROJEE. It sometimes feels that these conflicts are intractable, but if you look at Liberia's collapse after 5 years of peace back into war, it is very explainable. And some of it has to do with a very sloppy international intervention that took place in Liberia. Compare it to a much better model in Sierra Leone, and I think

what we will see in 5 years that Sierra Leone will be in much better shape than Liberia.

And if you look at the international intervention that took place in the last war in Liberia, had it been done differently, it would have been a different place. You had a West African peacekeeping force which had regional politics intervening in the conflict. You had forces that were not well trained, that committed human rights violations themselves. They set up anti-Taylor proxy groups that then took on a life of their own. The U.N. came in, but only with an observer mission that did not have lines of command over the regional peacekeepers. They had no ability to have any power.

The peace accord that led to the peace had an amnesty for fighters, which the international community quietly accepted. Then the international community rushed through an election in their bid to call this a success story without key elements of the peace accord being put in place, including the restructuring of their armed forces and the return of refugees, and just packed up, went home and left the place in Taylor's hands.

Look at Sierra Leone. It is a completely different international intervention: 17,000 U.N. peacekeepers, highly professional, deployed throughout the country. Assistance to restructure and retrain the local security forces. Despite amnesty in the peace accord, the international community said, no, we do not recognize this. We are still going to put in the Special Court and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission; a long-term commitment by the British to stay in key decision-making positions to ensure that mechanisms and state institutions could be built. And look at the difference. In 5 years, Sierra Leone will likely be in much better shape, and in Sierra Leone the likelihood that you will not have a human rights abuser on the scale of Taylor being voted in because of the nature of the intervention.

So I think we made mistakes as the international community in Liberia, and we are living with them today, and Liberians are bearing the front line of that as it descends into war again. But it is not a given that these place will collapse.

Mr. TANCREDO. Thank you. Thank you. Feeling now as imperious with this as I do, I am going to order everything that you have said done immediately.

Thank you all very much for joining us today and for your very insightful testimony.

[Whereupon, at 3:45 p.m., the Subcommittee was adjourned.]

