

History of Sierra Leone Army

The Military of Sierra Leone, officially the Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces (RSLAF), are the unified armed forces of Sierra Leone responsible for the territorial security of Sierra Leone's border and defending the national interests of Sierra Leone within the framework of its international obligations. The armed forces were formed after independence in 1961, on the basis of elements of the former British Royal West African Frontier Force present in the country. The Sierra Leone Armed Forces currently consists of around 15,500 personnel, comprising the largest Sierra Leone Army the Sierra Leone Navy and the Sierra Leone Air Wing. The president of Sierra Leone is the Commander in Chief of the military, with the Minister of Defence responsible for defence policy and the formulation of the armed forces. The current Sierra Leone Defence Minister is retired Major Alfred Paolo Conteh. The Military of Sierra Leone also has a Chief of the Defence Staff who is a uniformed military official responsible for the administration and the operational control of the Sierra Leone military. Brigadier General Alfred Nelson-Williams who was appointed by president Koroma succeeded the retired Major General Edward Sam M'boma on 12 September 2008 as the Chief of Defence Staff of the Military.

The West African Frontier Force (WAFF) was a multi-battalion field force, formed by the British Colonial Office in 1900 to garrison the West African colonies of Nigeria, Gold Coast, Sierra Leone and Gambia. In 1928 it received royal patronage, becoming the Royal West African Frontier Force (RWAFF).

Before Sierra Leone gained independence in 1961 the military was known as the Royal Sierra Leone Military Force. The military seized control in 1968, bringing the National Reformation Council into power. On 19 April 1971, when Sierra Leone became a republic, the Royal Sierra Leone Military Forces were renamed the Republic of Sierra Leone Military Force (RSLMF). The RSLMF remained a single service organisation until 1979, when the Sierra Leone Navy was established. It then remained largely unchanged for 16 years until in 1995 when Defence Headquarters was established and the Sierra Leone Air Wing formed. This gave the need for the RSLMF to be renamed the Armed Forces of the Republic of Sierra Leone (AFRSL).

In 1939 the RWAFF was transferred from Colonial Office to War Office control. Under the leadership of General George Giffard (GOC West Africa) the RWAFF served as a cadre for the formation of 81st (West Africa) Division and 82nd (West Africa) Division. Both divisions saw service during the Second World War serving in Italian Somaliland, Abyssinia, and Burma. In 1947 the RWAFF reverted to Colonial Office control. After the war the RWAFF comprised the Nigeria Regiment (five battalions, stationed at Ibadan, Abeokuta, Enugu, and two in Kaduna, with a field battery of artillery and a field company of engineers), the Gold Coast Regiment, and the Sierra Leone Regiment (including a company in Gambia). When Queen Elizabeth II visited Nigeria in 1956 she gave the Nigeria Regiment the title "Queen's Own Nigeria Regiment".

Despite the approach of independence, the military authorities were very slow in commissioning African officers. For example, at the time of the Queen's visit the 1st battalion of the Nigeria Regiment had only two African officers, both lieutenants, Kur Mohammed (later assassinated with Abubakar Tafawa Balewa) and Robert Adebayo (commissioned in 1953 as the 23rd West African military officer). Johnson Aguiyi-Ironsi was at that time the only African who had advanced to the rank of major, and this accounted for his becoming the first military ruler of independent Nigeria.[citation needed]

The Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces (RSLAF) is the armed forces of Sierra Leone, responsible for the territorial security of Sierra Leone's border and defending the national interests of Sierra Leone, within the framework of its international obligations. The armed forces were formed after independence in 1961, on the basis of elements of the former British Royal West African Frontier Force, then present in the country. The Sierra Leone Armed Forces currently consist of around 8,500 personnel.[2]

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President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah announced in January 2002 that the Sierra Leone Army (SLA) would be unified with the tiny Sierra Leone Air Force and the moribund Sierra Leone Navy to form a reconstituted force known as the Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces (RSLAF).[4]

The President of Sierra Leone is constitutionally commander in chief of the military. The Sierra Leone Ministry of Defence and National Security is in charge of supervising the military. The department is headed by a minister of defence and national security, who is a civilian and a member of the president's Cabinet. The current defence minister is a retired Major General, Alfred Paolo Conteh.

The Military is led by the Chief of Defence Staff, who is in charge of supervising the military and is the highest ranking uniformed position in the country. The current chief of the defence staff is Robert Yira Koroma, who was appointed by president Ernest Bai Koroma in August 2010 to replace Major General Alfred Nelson Williams, who was placed on terminal leave.

The Chief of the Defence Staff (CDS) is the professional head of the RSLAF. He is responsible for the administration and the operational control of the Sierra Leonean military. It is the highest rank military position in the country.

Brigadier David Lansana was appointed army commander of Sierra Leone in 1964. Brigadier Lansana took control of the army from British colonial adviser, Brigadier R.D. Blackie when Lansana's close ally Prime Minister Albert Margai came to power. He came from the Mende tribe as did Margai and conflicts existed between northern tribes, the Krios and the Mendes. In 1967 Margai, who promoted a one party (non-democratic) state was beaten in a general election. Lansana staged a brief coup, arresting Siaka Stevens, the democratic winner of the election and the army was purged of Northern and Krio officers.

In 1985, General Joseph Saidu Momoh, the army commander, succeeded President Siaka Stevens. It is not clear what exactly Momoh's title was but it seems likely that he was the senior Sierra Leonean military officer and held the predecessor to the CDS's post.

Komba Mondeh served as CDS during the NPRC administration of 1992-1996.

Brigadier-General Tom Carew was Chief of Defence Staff from April 2000 to November 2003. He may have been promoted to Major General during his tenure.

Major General Alfred Nelson-Williams is currently the Chief of the Defence Staff. Nelson-Williams succeeded the retiring Major General Edward Sam M'boma on 12 September 2008.

Sierra Leone Army

Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces is located in Sierra Leone

3 Brigade

4 Brigade

5 Brigade

Sierra Leone brigade headquarters

The Army is modelled on the British Army and came into existence after independence in 1961. The core of the army was based on the Sierra Leone Battalion of the Royal West African Frontier Force, which became the Royal Sierra Leone Regiment and later the Republic of Sierra Leone Regiment.

In 1991 the RUF began to make war against the government, and the army went on the offensive toward the end of the year along with troops from Guinea. In 1992 the army was expanded to 6,150 under President Joseph Saidu Momoh in a 'poorly designed strategy that eradicated the few remaining elements of cohesion in the military... recruits were mainly drifters, rural and urban unemployed, a fair number of hooligans, drug addicts, and thieves.' [9] A similar expansion effort after Strasser took over aimed to build the army to 14,000, using young criminals, school drop-outs, and semi-literate youths. 'In consequence the army became further fragmented, leading to the complete breakdown of command and control during the war, and again after the AFRC coup of 1997.' [10]

During the long Sierra Leone civil war which the government fought against the Revolutionary United Front from 1991–2002, the 1992 Sierra Leonean coup d'état brought the armed forces into power again. In 1997 the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council seized power. Over 15,000 perished during the war. After peace returned, the armed forces were slowly reduced in size, from around 13,500 personnel in 2007 [11] to 8,500 in 2010. The British Armed Forces, in the shape of the roughly 100-strong International Military Assistance Training Team (IMATT), is assisting in the formation of the new armed forces. [12] IMATT is slated to down-size to 45-55 personnel by the end of 2010.

Today the army is by far the largest Armed Forces branch, and is responsible for protection of the state borders, the security of administered territories and defending the national interests of Sierra Leone within the framework of its international obligations. It had an active force of about 13,300 personnel circa 2007. There were plans to reduced strength to 8,500 by 2011. However the reduction in strength to 8,500 was achieved by the end of 2009. The force appears to consist of three brigades, 3 Brigade, in the past headquartered at Kenema, but as of 2011 seemingly at Murray Town Barracks, Freetown, which covers the Eastern Province (which probably includes 9th Battalion RSLAF at Simbakoro outside Koidu). From 1985-91 1st Battalion was at Wilberforce Barracks, Freetown. 4 Brigade, at Teko Barracks, Makeni, which covers the Northern Province (including 2nd Battalion RSLAF at Teko Barracks, Makeni, as of 2003), [14] and 5 Brigade, which covers the Southern Province from headquarters at Gondama Barracks, Bo. [15] As of 2002, about six IMATT advisors were deployed with each RSLAF brigade to assist with training, planning, personnel, and operations. [16]

As stability and peace deepened in Sierra Leone, the RSLAF aimed to create a capability to contribute to international peace support operations. Official websites said that. To this end the RSLAF has targeted 2007 as the base year to initiate a Company for Peace Support

Operations for the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the African Union and the UN. This would be gradually increased to battalion strength by 2010. As a demonstration of this desire, a Peace Support Operations Course was introduced into the curriculum of the Horton Military Academy in Freetown. The course was intended to enhance capacity building, and to train and prepare officers of the RSLAF for their future role and participation in international peace support operations, and especially for the proposed ECOWAS Standby Force.'^[3]

The hoped-for initial operational capability date for peacekeeping slipped until late 2009, when a Sierra Leonean reconnaissance company was deployed to Darfur as part of UNAMID.^([3]) International donors and the Government of Sierra Leone provided the \$6.5 million required to equip the unit and build the base camp in-theatre, some 2,300 kilometers inland from Port Sudan.^[2] The contingent is under the command of Lieutenant Colonel S.E.T. Marah.

Despite the enormous resources invested by the UK into security sector reform in Sierra Leone, there are continuing financial pressures. Pay for soldiers is only GBP 45 plus some rice for a private per month, rising to GBP 350 for the Chief of Defence Staff. There are continued serious financial pressures on monthly running costs, with fuel, rations, stationery, and maintenance 'for both equipment and the estate' rarely funded.^[2] Housing is generally of low quality. 'Operation Pebu' planned to build new barracks for the force, was badly planned and thus extremely over-ambitious. As a result, it was cut down to only two sites (Albrecht and Jackson 2009). In 2010 Robertshawe said that 'living accommodation for soldiers and their families is generally appalling with no running water or ablutions and often is a self-built shack or mud hut.'^[2]

Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces

Founded 1961

Current form 2002

Service branches Army

Navy

Air Wing

Headquarters Military Forces HQ, Murray Town Barracks, Freetown, Sierra Leone^[1]

Leadership

Commander-in-Chief President Ernest Bai Koroma

Minister of Defence Alfred Paulo Conteh

Chief of the Defence Staff Brigadier General Samuel Omar Williams^[1]

Manpower

Military age 17

Active personnel 13,000 ^[2]

Expenditures

Budget \$10.6 million (2006 est)

Percent of GDP 2.3% (2006)

Industry

Foreign suppliers United Kingdom

China

United States

Pakistan

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Official sources said in 2012:[17]

Without holidaying, commanders at all levels are steadfast to project on the force outfits and outputs. This line of thought strictly conforms to the dynamics of the strategically, operational and tactical construction of our thinking. Thus, the establishment of Artillery, tailoring and the Armed forces Agricultural Units sit between these initiatives. The translation of these efforts is the Establishment review of 2010. Painstakingly as a force we are striving to catch up with information technology. The Africa Endeavour programme pioneered by the United States of Africa Command (AFRICOM) has however served an eye opener to our communications need both within and out. Our data over HF communication platform continue to play a central role in facilitating communication force wide.

Equipment

Sierra Leone has very limited modern weaponry. The country has a wide variety of used second-hand foreign imported arms. The IISS Military Balance 2009 lists 31 mortars, Carl Gustav recoilless rifles, and seven air defence guns in service.[18] Other army equipment may include the FN FAL (standard infantry rifle), the RPK/RPD standard infantry Support weapon, the L85 (only used by special forces), and the Type 69 RPG.

The SIPRI database states that Sierra Leone ordered two probably ex-Ukrainian T-72 tanks from Ukraine in 1994 which were delivered via Poland in 1995. The vehicles are described as to be operated by the South African company Executive Outcomes. Executive Outcomes has now withdrawn from Sierra Leone, and in 1999 was disestablished. Whether the two T-72s were actually delivered, or their final fate, remains unknown.

Maritime Wing

The RSLN was an arm of the Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces that is responsible sea patrol of Sierra Leone's territorial waters. In 2002 it was merged with the other service branches. Today the naval force has about 500 personnel and operates several small patrol craft and barges. Their primary responsibility is to protect and safeguard the territorial integrity of Sierra Leone's sea. Sierra Leone naval officers are trained by British forces. They received financial support from Britain and China.

On 25 September 2007, eight Guineans Naval officers were arrested by the Sierra Leone Navy for an act of piracy against locally-licensed fishermen inside Sierra Leonean waters.[19] British-trained Sierra Leone naval officers interrupted the high-seas hold-up by armed men in two launches on Sunday, 18 nautical miles (33 km) off the capital Freetown inside the country's 200-mile (320-km) economic exclusion zone. One of the attacking speedboats escaped north towards Guinea, while the other was seized. The eight men arrested were found with AK-47 automatic rifles and bags of fish, including high-value snapper, taken off the Sierra Leone-licensed vessels.

Equipment

7 Type-62 FAC, delivered between 1973 and 2006[20]

3 Pompoli class LSU (delivered from Japan in 1980)[20]

Air Wing

In 1973 the air force was established with Swedish help in the form of two Saab MFI-15 two seat trainers.[21] Saab also supplied two model 300 (269C) light helicopters for additional training with Ghanaian help, plus another was acquired as a presidential transport but was replaced in 1976 by a MBB BO 105. In 1978 both the helicopters and light trainers were sold and the air arm disappeared, the BO 105 was transferred to the civil register in 1985. In 1984 two Aerospatiale SA 355F Ecureuil 2 helicopter entered service with the ministry of defence. Five mercenary operated Mil Mi-24V and two Mil Mi-8 helicopters entered service from 1995.

The Republic of Sierra Leone Air Force was merged with the other services to form the RSL Armed Forces from 2002. Sierra Leone has a very small air component with a limited offensive capability. The status of its equipment is unknown, but the aircraft are not operable.[22]

Current air force equipment

Aircraft	Origin	Type	In service
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Mi-24	Some transferred from Belarus and Ukraine[20]	Heavy attack helicopter	
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Mi-8 Transport helicopter 2[20]

MFI-15 Safari Obtained from Sweden in 1973 Trainer/light attack aircraft 2[20]

Minister of Defence

The department is headed by the Minister of Defence and National Security, who is appointed by the President of Sierra Leone and must be confirmed by the Parliament of Sierra Leone in order to take office. The current Minister of Defence and National Security is a retired Major General Alfred Paolo Conteh, who was appointed by president Ernest Bai Koroma in October 2007.

Mission

Mission Statement The mission of the Ministry is to formulate, implement, monitor and evaluate strategic defence policy for the Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces (RSLAF) that is effective and fostered within a framework of democratic governance.

Objectives

To formulate and implement strategic defence policy; To develop and maintain a re-structured and robust RSLAF that is well trained, well disciplined and well cared for; To equip and provide logistics support to the RSLAF; To transform the RSLAF into an organization that is accountable, incorruptible and subject to democratic control; To continually evolve and improve the RSLAF; To deliver the endorsed Defence Missions and Military Tasks.

Sierra Leone Ministry of Defence and National Security

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Sierra Leone Ministry of Defence and National Security

Agency overview

Formed 1894

Headquarters State Avenue, Tower Hill, Freetown, Sierra Leone

38°53′ 39″N 77°2′ 54″W﻿ / ﻿38.883° N 77.383° W

Agency executive Alfred Paolo Conteh, Sierra Leone Minister of Defence and National Security

Sierra Leone Ministry of Defence and National Security is a Sierra Leonean government department in charge of implementing and supervising the Sierra Leone Armed Forces and the territorial security of Sierra Leone's international border and defending the national interests of Sierra Leone.

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Location

The Ministry of Defence and National Security building is located in State Avenue at Tower Hill in central Freetown, a few distances from the State House.

In Sierra Leone – IMATT to ISAT

In Sierra Leone – IMATT to ISAT thumbnail

By: SEM Contributor on March 29, 2013.

IMATT-ISAT

The International Military Training and Advisory Team Sierra Leone (IMATT) formally end its mission in Sierra Leone on 31 March, 2013. Its successor, the International Security Advisory Team Sierra Leone (ISAT) formally begins its mission on 1 April, 2013.

IMATT has provided training, support and advice to the Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces (RSLAF) for nearly 13 years. During this period, the RSLAF has reorganized itself into a professional and capable military force that focuses on external threats and peacekeeping operations in Africa, and is widely respected within Sierra Leone. The forthcoming deployment of the RSLAF battalion on peacekeeping operations in Somalia is further evidence of this growing capability.

National elections in November 2012, the third set of democratic elections in Sierra Leone since the end of the Civil War in 2002, marked a defining moment for the international community's support to the RSLAF. The conduct of the elections set the conditions for IMATT to draw down and to transition into ISAT.

ISAT will have a much broader remit across the whole security sector and a growing role within the sub-region. It will continue to advise and support the RSLAF but will also provide advice and support to the other agencies within the security sector – the Sierra Leone Police, the Office of National Security, the National Fire Force, the Prisons Department, the Immigration Office, the Joint Maritime Committee and others. ISAT will also work closely with existing DFID and UNDP programmes in support of the Justice Sector.

The transition of IMATT to ISAT marks a further and very significant milestone in the development of the RSLAF. It is also a positive demonstration of the enduring and evolving contribution of the international community to the development of Sierra Leone's security and prosperity and, over time, that of the Mano River Union region.

African Contingency Operations Training and Assistance (ACOTA) Training in Sierra Leone

HASTINGS, Sierra Leone – For Sgt. 1st Class Grady Hyatt, training combat skills to African partner nation Soldiers is a full time job. Hyatt works as a military mentor for U.S. Army Africa with the U.S. Department of State's African Contingency Operations Training and Assistance program known as ACOTA.

Recently, Hyatt assisted in training Sierra Leone Soldiers in a series of combat skills over a two-week period at the Peace Mission Training Center and the Armed Forces Training Center near Hastings, Sierra Leone. Hyatt's instruction was a focused on teaching Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces Soldiers to become trainers. In the U.S. Army, it is known as train the trainer.

Hyatt, working with United Nations partners from the United Kingdom, instructed future trainers in various combat skills to include land navigation, map reading, first aid stations, basic rifle marksmanship, enhanced marksmanship, countering improvised explosive devices and mortar training.

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He explained his role in training Sierra Leone soldiers.

"As a military mentor from USARAF, I embed myself with military counterparts and give them advice on how to perform their jobs. We work on techniques, tactics and procedures that will benefit the unit in the field," Hyatt said.

Hyatt was the sole USARAF military representative. Normally, he is part of a two-man team; paired with 1st Lieutenant Salvatore Buzzurro. He said that working with Buzzurro is an opportunity to model leadership styles for our African partner soldiers.

"As a military mentor and noncommissioned officer, I emphasize that NCOs are essential as trainers, teachers and leaders. When 1st Lieutenant Buzzurro and I work together on these mission our African counterparts see the working relationship between platoon leader and platoon sergeant," Hyatt said.

Hyatt believes the ACOTA training improves and fosters positive viewpoints from host nation residents.

"Soldiers from African partner nations and the local populace have the opportunity to see U.S. soldiers working. When they see us working with dedication, professionalism and displaying goodwill it makes an indelible impression. In some cases, it changes some preconceived notions," Hyatt said.

Hyatt is a former Marine infantryman and a Virginia National Guardsman assigned to 1st Battalion, 183rd Regimental Training Institute, currently on active duty with USARAF.