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Two refugee boys carry a bucket of water in Conakry, 12 February 2001. Guinea provided shelter for more than 500,000 refugees in the late 1990s.

PART II



GUINEA

OVERVIEW

Since Guinea achieved independence in 1958, Sékou Touré and Lansana Conté are the only two leaders to have ruled the country. Although Guinea is one of the few countries in the region not to have experienced civil war, events in the last decade have threatened the country's stability. An army mutiny in 1996 and deadly cross-border attacks in 2000–01 by Liberia-sponsored rebels raised fears that Guinea could face the same fate as neighbouring Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, and Sierra Leone.¹ The volatile regional context led more than one million refugees from these countries to flee to Guinea in the last decade and facilitated the infiltration of armed groups into the country.

Guinea's involvement in the region's conflicts appears to have had an even greater destabilizing effect. Guinean military support to the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD),² and the presence of LURD rebels and Sierra Leonean Kamajors in Guinean refugee camps³ is likely to have motivated Liberian President Charles Taylor in

2000–01 to sponsor cross-border attacks by the RUF, Liberian fighters, and Guinean dissidents called the Movement of the Democratic Forces of Guinea (Rassemblement des forces démocratiques de Guinée, RFDG).⁴

ARMED GROUPS

Guinean dissidents/Movement of the Democratic Forces of Guinea (RFDG)

Origins/composition:

Guinean dissidents known as the RFDG fought alongside Sierra Leonean (from the Revolutionary United Front, RUF) and Liberian fighters during the 2000–01 cross-border attacks.⁶ The total attacking force was estimated to be 1,800-strong.

Leadership:

Army officers involved in a failed 1996 coup attempt against Conté reportedly led the RFDG.⁷ The group's spokesman, Mohamed Lamine Fofana, claimed the group's leaders were dissident Guinean military officers who fled the country after the failed 1996 mutiny.⁸ The International Crisis Group reports, however, that Taylor instigated the 2000–01 attacks.⁹

PART II**Areas of control/activity:**

RFDG raids affected a number of towns located along Guinea's southern border with Sierra Leone and Liberia, including Macenta, Guéckédou, Kissidougou, Pamélap, N'Zérékoré, and Madina Woula.

Sources of financing/support:

The RFDG was backed by Taylor¹⁰ and the RUF (see Sierra Leone).¹¹

Status:

The Guinean military, with the assistance of LURD, was able to repel the 2000–01 attacks only after recruiting an estimated 7,000–30,000 young Guinean volunteers and using massive military force as was illustrated by the January 2001 bombing and partial destruction of Guéckédou.¹² In September 2004 Guinean dissidents, on the other hand, were reportedly paying Liberian fighters USD 150–200 to join them in a bid to overthrow the Guinean government.¹³

Young Volunteers**Origins/composition:**

Responding to a public appeal by President Conté, approximately 7,000¹⁴ to 30,000¹⁵ Young Volunteers were mobilized to counter the 2000–01 attacks by RFDG, RUF, and Liberian fighters.¹⁶ While the Guinean military

handled most of the recruitment process, local authorities, such as the mayor of N'Zérékoré, played a key role.¹⁷

Leadership:

Guinean military/government.

Areas of control/activity:

The Volunteers were recruited in the areas threatened by the rebel attacks (Guéckédou, Kissidougou, Faranah, Dabola, Mamou, Kindia, Forecariah, N'Zérékoré). They are also present in Conakry.

Sources of financing/support:

The Guinean military armed and supported the Volunteers during the crisis.

Status:

Out of the 9,000 ex-Volunteers identified by UNICEF, 3,879 have yet to be demobilized.¹⁸ Others were integrated into the army or into marching bands, or went back to civilian life.¹⁹ A joint UNICEF and Guinean government pilot disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) programme reintegrated some 350 Young Volunteers.²⁰

SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS

Stockpiles

Small arms:

There is no precise data available on the quantities or weapon types distributed by the army to the Young Volunteers. In the town of Guéckédou, which was heavily affected by the 2000–01 attacks, 70 per cent of 2,380 surveyed Volunteers were armed and participated in combat. Ministry of Security data on 222 weapons seized in 2001–03, however, suggests the presence of AK-47s and SKS assault rifles, hunting rifles, 12-gauge shotguns, carbines, Makarov, TT30 pistols, revolvers, and craft pistols.²²

Light weapons:

LURD reportedly seized nine SA-7/Strella-2 surface-to-air missiles from dissidents involved in the 2000-01 incursions.²³

Sources

Domestic:

The Guinean military armed the Young Volunteers, although not all were given a weapon; 70 per cent of the 2,380 Volunteers were armed and

participated in combat.²⁴ Guinea's Anti-Crime Brigade seized 52 craft 12-gauge shotguns between 2001 and 2003,²⁵ which would appear to confirm reports of the existence of illicit small arms production workshops in the country.²⁶

Foreign:

Liberia and the RUF provided armed fighters to fight alongside the RFDG.²⁷ The Guinean military armed the Young Volunteers.

Recovered

DDR:

There has been little effort to disarm ex-Volunteers. As of March 2004, an estimated 2,000 Volunteers had reintegrated in civilian life,²⁸ although the fate of their weapons remains unclear.²⁹ These include the 350 Young Volunteers who participated in a joint UNICEF and Guinean government pilot DDR programme. UNICEF has launched an appeal to demobilize an additional 1,000 Young Volunteers in 2004.³⁰ How to disarm and demobilize former LURD rebels who remain in Guinea³¹ is another concern.³² The Guinean government denies their presence and there is no reliable estimate of their current number.

PART II**Other:**

The Guinean government, with US support, destroyed 21,906 obsolete small arms and light weapons as well as 89,889 rounds of ammunition between 26 September and 11 November 2003. These included AK-47s, portable anti-tank guns, and, 278 Strela-2 surface-to-air missiles.³³

HUMAN SECURITY ISSUES**CAFF****Extent of recruitment:**

An undetermined number of children, some as young as 12, joined the Young Volunteers in 2000–01.³⁴ There are reports that LURD recruited Liberian children as young as 10 in Guinean refugee camps.³⁵ In November 2003, UNICEF estimated that approximately 2,000 Guinean children, of whom about 400 were girls, were in need of demobilization; by March 2004, 350 former Young Volunteers had received vocational training.³⁶

Functions:

See Chapter 6.

Displacement**IDPs:**

The 2000–01 cross-border attacks led to the internal displacement of 250,000 Guineans.³⁷ In May 2003, due to the proximity of the fighting in Liberia, there were approximately 100,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Guinea, primarily residing in the country's forest region.³⁸ In 2004, their number declined to an estimated 82,000.³⁹

Refugees abroad:

Four thousand one hundred and eight Guineans found asylum in industrialized countries in 2002, while 3,421 refugees who had been living in Guinea did the same.⁴⁰

Refugees hosted:

Due to shared borders with countries such as Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea has hosted more than a million refugees over the last ten years.⁴¹ As of September 2003, there were more than 280,000 refugees in Guinea, 60 per cent of whom lived outside camps; 140,000 were Liberian, 30,000 came from Sierra Leone, 7,000 from Côte d'Ivoire, and more than 100,000 were Guinean returnees fleeing fighting in Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire.⁴² UNHCR's voluntary repatriation programme

for Sierra Leonean refugees lasted from December 2000 to July 2004 and assisted 92,944 people to return to their homeland. An additional 1,732 Sierra Leonean refugees have been allowed to remain in Guinea and integrate locally.⁴³ These numbers went down to a total of 73,000 hosted refugees in 2004.⁴⁴

Other violations or abuses

Killings, rape, and torture:

Rebels involved in the 2000–01 attacks perpetrated killings and rapes against civilians and refugees in Guinea during the cross-border attacks.⁴⁵ The RUF is among the additional armed groups who have perpetrated rape, murder, and beatings of refugees and civilians in Guinea.⁴⁶ A UNHCR/Save the Children–United Kingdom assessment team reported widespread sexual abuse of refugee and IDP children. Among the alleged exploiters are humanitarian aid workers.⁴⁷

Other:

Some ex-Young Volunteers are organized in youth gangs and intimidate and threaten the population.⁴⁸ Tougher anti-crime measures implemented by the government since December 2003 appear to have reduced banditry by the ex-Volunteers.⁴⁹

OUTLOOK

The effectiveness of the peace processes currently under way in neighbouring countries will undoubtedly influence the security climate in Guinea. The large number of unattended ex-combatants present in the country also threatens regional stability. Although officials do not lack the will, the resources for disarmament and reintegration are inadequate despite the fact that former Volunteers represent a potential pool of fighters that could threaten future stability. Indeed, reports are now surfacing of young Guineans joining armed groups in Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire.⁵⁰

The remaining presence of former LURD rebels in Guinea is equally worrying.⁵¹ Finding themselves underemployed in Liberia, they cross the border freely into Guinea, where they have reportedly incited ethnically based violence and generally contribute to regional instability.⁵² Rumours abound of Taylor loyalists recruiting fighters in Liberia's Nimba county in an effort to destabilize the Guinean government. This only fuels concerns regarding who will succeed President Conte, who is reportedly in bad health.

PART II

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

		7	Szajkowski (2004, pp. 147, 298).
		8	<i>Le Monde</i> (2000).
CAFF	Children associated with fighting forces	9	ICG (2003).
		10	ICG (2003, p. 18).
DDR	Disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration	11	UNSC (2001, para. 132).
		12	ICG (2003, p. 18).
		13	IRIN (2004b).
IDP	Internally displaced person	14	Seven thousand is the figure used by UNICEF in its planning for demobilization activities for the Young Volunteers. See UNOCHA (2002; 2003a).
LURD	Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy	15	See Part I, Chapter 5: Guinea.
RFDG	Rassemblement des forces démocratiques de Guinée	16	Confidential interviews with Guinean military officials, Ministry of Social Affairs representatives, and UNICEF officials, Conakry, March 2004. As many as 30,000 Volunteers responded to the government's appeal. See Part I, Chapter 5: Guinea.
RUF	Revolutionary United Front	17	ICG (2003, p.18).
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees	18	UNOCHA, (2003b, p. 56).
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund	19	See Chapter 5 on refugee camp militarization in Guinea.
		20	UNOCHA (2003b, p. 18).
		21	Republic of Guinea (2001, p. 6).
		22	Republic of Guinea (2003).
		23	Brabazon (2003, p.9); UNSC (2003, para. 112).
		24	Republic of Guinea (2001).
		25	Republic of Guinea (2003).
		26	Confidential interview with Guinean official, Conakry, March 2004.
		27	ICG (2003, p. 18).
		28	Confidential interview with Guinean Ministry of Social Affairs official,

ENDNOTES

- 1 BBC News (2000).
- 2 UNSC (2003a, paras. 67–68; 2003b, paras. 39–40); ICG (2002, p. 11); HRW (2003).
- 3 ICG (2003, p. 1).
- 4 ICG (2003, p. 18).
- 5 UNSC (2003a, paras. 67-68) ; Szajkowski (2004, p. 298).
- 6 IISS (2002).
- 7 Szajkowski (2004, pp. 147, 298).
- 8 *Le Monde* (2000).
- 9 ICG (2003).
- 10 ICG (2003, p. 18).
- 11 UNSC (2001, para. 132).
- 12 ICG (2003, p. 18).
- 13 IRIN (2004b).
- 14 Seven thousand is the figure used by UNICEF in its planning for demobilization activities for the Young Volunteers. See UNOCHA (2002; 2003a).
- 15 See Part I, Chapter 5: Guinea.
- 16 Confidential interviews with Guinean military officials, Ministry of Social Affairs representatives, and UNICEF officials, Conakry, March 2004. As many as 30,000 Volunteers responded to the government's appeal. See Part I, Chapter 5: Guinea.
- 17 ICG (2003, p.18).
- 18 UNOCHA, (2003b, p. 56).
- 19 See Chapter 5 on refugee camp militarization in Guinea.
- 20 UNOCHA (2003b, p. 18).
- 21 Republic of Guinea (2001, p. 6).
- 22 Republic of Guinea (2003).
- 23 Brabazon (2003, p.9); UNSC (2003, para. 112).
- 24 Republic of Guinea (2001).
- 25 Republic of Guinea (2003).
- 26 Confidential interview with Guinean official, Conakry, March 2004.
- 27 ICG (2003, p. 18).
- 28 Confidential interview with Guinean Ministry of Social Affairs official,

- Conakry, March 2004.
- 29 While Guinean officials claim the army has recuperated some of the weapons that were distributed to the Young Volunteers, there is a consensus that many weapons still need to be collected. There are no statistics available on the number of weapons handed to the Volunteers or on the weapons surrendered after the 2000–01 crisis.
- 30 UNOCHA (2003b).
- 31 UNSC (2001, para.167).
- 32 Reports and key informants suggest the presence of former LURD combatants in the town of Macenta (see ICG, 2003, p. 18) and in the Kouankan refugee camp, where LURD rebels were present during the Liberian conflict and allegedly recruited child soldiers (HRW, 2002).
- 33 Republic of Guinea (2004, pp. 4–5).
- 34 Confidential interview with UNICEF officials, Conakry, March 2004. See also Chapter 6 of this book on CAFF in the Mano River Union.
- 35 HRW (2002).
- 36 CSC (2004).
- 37 UNOCHA (2003b, p. 10).
- 38 Global IDP Project (2004).
- 39 UNOCHA (2004, p. 9).
- 40 UNHCR (2002, p. 317).
- 41 UNOCHA (2003b). See also Chapter 5 of this book on the militarization of refugee camps in Guinea.
- 42 O'Connor (2003).
- 43 UNHCR (2004).
- 44 UNOCHA (2004, p. 9).
- 45 Amnesty International (2001).
- 46 Global IDP Project (2003).
- 47 Global IDP Project (2003).
- 48 UNOCHA (2003b, p. 56).
- 49 Confidential interview with UN officials, Conakry, March 2004.
- 50 Interview with Jean Claude Legrand, UNICEF Child Protection Regional Advisor, Dakar, 4 March 2005.
- 51 See Chapter 5
- 52 IRIN (2004a).
- 53 IRIN (2004b).
- 54 Reeve (2004).

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- IISS (International Institute for Strategic Studies). 2002. *The Military Balance 2002–2003*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. October.
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<http://www.irinnews.org/frontpage.asp?SelectRegion=West_Africa&SelectCountry=Guinea>
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