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The Military of Guyana: Internal Security Training and Roles

by

Dion E. Phillips
Professor of Sociology
University of the Virgin Islands

St. Thomas campus
U.S. Virgin Islands 00802
E-mail: dphilli@uvi.com
Fax: (340) 776-5861

Abstract

This paper focused on the internal security training and roles of the military of Guyana, an arm of the state of only English-speaking country in South America. The key tasks that are undertaken by Guyana's military, namely, the Guyana Defense Force, though both external and internal, are primarily oriented toward a domestic agenda. This is the case because Guyana's border clashes with Venezuela and Suriname have been limited in extent and duration and its resources inadequate to repel any serious external enemy attack. And so, since political independence in 1966, succeeding governments have chosen to address its border disputes largely through diplomatic means. Guyana's military has, among other things, played an important part in the regime preservation of the then ruling party, the Burnham-led Peoples National Congress. However, since the end of the cold war and the concomitant spread of democratization, the GDF has been involved in combating drug trafficking, both on land and at sea and other criminal activities. These activities run the risk of undermining the military's new-found professionalism and lend to the blurring of the roles of the police and the military. Also, the GDF has continued its other non-military tasks of economic development and self-support.

Introduction

This paper addresses four factors relative to Guyana's military, namely, the Guyana Defense Force (GDF). First, it describes its structure. Second, it looks at the training it has received and third, there is an examination of the changing roles of the military from 1966 to 2001ⁱ. It will be shown that after 22 years of isolation, the country has now been incorporated into the United States of America's security programs by way of its security forces participating in training and maneuvers under U.S. auspices. Previously being involved in fraudulent exercises in national elections as well as the uncovering of plots to overthrow the sitting government, Guyana's new internal security emphasis includes a sustained fight against organized crime, including drug trafficking and the protection and support of fishing rights.ⁱⁱ Also, Guyana's military perform tasks normally done by civil organizations and is therefore used in a civil defense role.

Guyana Defense Force

The GDF is organized into the following principal units: Defense Headquarters, 1st and 2nd Infantry Battalion Groups, Artillery Company, Special Forces Squadron, Engineer Battalion, an Air Corps, a Regimental Bandⁱⁱⁱ and a Coast Guard. The heads of all of these units report to the Chief of Staff.

Below the Chief of Staff are two Senior Staff - the Colonel General Staff and the Colonel Administration and Quarter mastering. The former is responsible for, among other things, training and operations. The latter controls procurement, administration, logistics and personnel.

Battalions

The *1st Infantry Battalion Group*, based at Camp Stephenson, is composed of a headquarters company and four regular rifle companies. A 2nd Battalion Group, the GDF's reserve, replaced the Guyana People's Militia in 1997. The Artillery Company, headed by a Major, once located at Camp Groomes, moved to Timehri. It was started in 1998 as a mortar platoon and in 1999 had one canon, one rocket and one service support platoon. A Captain, who takes orders from the Chief of Staff, heads the Special Forces Squadron based at Camp Stephenson.^{iv} Its role is to carry out special operations, long range patrolling and sustained surveillance.

The headquarters of the *Engineer Battalion* is at Camp Stephenson. It was started in 1967 as an assault Pioneer Platoon. Headed by a Major, it was subsequently expanded to battalion strength in 1980. It engages in such tasks as the maintenance of military infrastructure, community facilities and civil defense assignments that include relief after major floods, fires and hurricanes.

The Air Corps

The *Air Corps*, under a Major, is at Timehri, near Guyana's international airport. At one time, it operated six U.S.-built Bell Helicopters and nine light aircraft many of which were sold off rather than repaired.^v By 2000, the GDF aircraft needs were met by a lone helicopter as well as contractors and other agents. Aircraft

provide the main access to the interior. The Air Corps is responsible for reconnaissance, liaison, search and rescue, and transport duties. In addition to Timehri (26 miles south of Georgetown), there are numerous landing strips, including Linden, Ekereku, Saramakauturi, Kwebanna, Phillipai, Lucie and Lethem.

The Coast Guard

Before 1990, a Maritime Corps was in existence. It was at first equipped with steel hulled riverboats constructed locally by the Sproston's Shipbuilding Company. In 1967, it had received four locally manufactured launches on which machine guns were mounted. Presently, the Coast Guard (headed by a Lieutenant Commander) is an integral part of the GDF and reports to the Chief of Staff in all matters affecting its subunits. The Guard is located at Camp Ruimveldt on the Demerara River, and has its own commanding officer.

In addition to its base at Ruimveldt, there are four additional bases, namely, Benaf, Morawhanna, Port Kaitima and Makonria. In 1970, it had a fleet of six vessels (including the Maipuri, its flagship), which attempted to maintain the integrity of Guyana's territorial waters by frequently patrolling the Guyana coast, especially its fisheries zone. Four Vosper Thronycroft vessels acquired from the United Kingdom (UK) subsequently replaced the six vessels, but by 1981, the fleet was composed of rigid raiders and Boston Whalers. In June 2000, the coast guard was boat less and used a vessel from a commercial company, Georgetown Foods, to patrol the country's vast waterways. This was the situation when the Suriname navy was able to enter Guyana's waters without fear of resistance. As part of a recapitalization of its fleet, in 2001 Guyana purchased a 16-year old converted mine sweeper from the UK which is manned by 9 officers and 46 ratings and in April 2001, the Southern Command promised two patrol craft.^{vi}

Territorial Sectors

David Granger points out that Guyana has seven territorial sectors; three of these accounts for coastal-internal security operations and the other four for hinterland- defense border operations.^{vii} Initially, the three companies of the 1st.

Infantry Battalion were deployed in the sugar belt, the bauxite industry for operations; at Timehri on the East Coast of Demerara for training; and at Thomas Lands, Georgetown, for 'standby' or internal security duties.

Presently, the 1st Battalion Group is stationed at Camp Stephenson, Timehri, and is responsible for both hinterland-defense operations and for coastland-internal security operations in support of the civil police, the Guyana Police Force (GPF) when required. The second Battalion Group comprise the Reserve for augmentation of the regular force in times of crisis or emergencies relating to disaster relief operations. There is no permanent deployment of troops for internal security duties except in special situations. For example, in times of escalating violence, the force is deployed on information gathering/intelligence missions in crime-affected areas. This helps to complement the operations of the GPF and to instill public confidence.

Training and Internal Security

The military of Guyana provides training in internal security for its forces. Such training is carried out at the Colonel Ulric Pilgrim Officer Cadet School (CUPOCS) located at Camp Stephenson, Timehri and is an integral part of its curriculum, though in view of its expanded participation in internal security, there is no single course in the regular curriculum devoted to this subject. Specifically, internal security, as a component, is taught in all five of the courses mentioned in Figure 1. In the Officer Cadet Course, internal security studies are offered during the third term for eight weeks of the ten-month syllabus.

Figure 1 - Course Offerings with Internal Security Content
Available at the Colonel Ulric Pilgrim Officer Cadet School

<u>Course Description</u>	<u>Type of Student</u>
Officer Cadet Course.....	Officer Cadets
Section Commanders Course.....	Corporals
Platoon Sergeants Course.....	Sergeants
Junior Command and Tactics Course.....	Lieutenantants and Captains
Senior Command and Staff Course.....	Majors and above

In addition, when necessary, as for example, prior to elections, many of which have required the joint deployment of the police and the military, a special course is run by an Inter-Services School for Internal Security. Staff are drawn from experienced officers from the GDF, the police and the legal community. Such a course is generally of a ten day duration and include Tactical Exercises without Troops.

In view of Guyana's vast interior and its periodic experiences with encroachment of its sovereignty, particularly that of illegal aliens in search of minerals, timber and wildlife, some of whom take up residence in Guyana both "Exercise Green Heart" and "Exercise Iron Weed" provide a latent function for internal security purposes. "Exercise Green Heart" occur in the Essequibo region in August, every two years and includes jungle tactics and survival skills. "Exercise Iron Weed," a field tactical exercise, is designed to assess the standards of operational readiness of the force and takes place every third year.

Internal Security Roles

GDFs Role in Regime Preservation

During the Burhnam years, particularly after 1970, not only was the troop strength and operational structure expanded but the GDF was used for regime preservation at the

polls. Between 1968 to 1980, the GDF, along with the other security forces ritualistically rigged Guyanese elections in order to preserve the PNC regime.^{viii} Janet Jagan, then leader of the Guyana's PPP, describe the electoral process in 1973 as "not an election, but intervention by the army and police to enable the PNC to usurp power by electoral fraud (Jagan 9).

The security forces were used during the 1973 campaign to harass the opposition and to ensure a favorable outcome for the ruling PNC. To this end, after the poll, the ballot boxes were collected by the army and held "for many days" at the GDF Headquarters at Camp Ayanganna, Georgetown, "out of the sight of election agents, candidates, counting agents, and even government-appointed election officials" (Mirror 10).

Personnel from the GDF and other forces were also used directly in fraudulent exercises in the rigging of the 1978 referendum on the need for a socialist constitution as well as the 1980 election. During these and other critical periods, the armed forces were assigned the task of constant surveillance of communities throughout Guyana with the objective of terrorizing the population and preventing demonstrations and other manifestations of opposition to the PNC regime. The PNC even employed soldiers and other unemployed personnel as scabs during the sugar workers strikes in 1977. On this occasion, there was no declaration of a state of emergency that necessitated the security forces coming to the aid of the civil power. However, the PNC justified its action on the assertion that the strikes were political.

Figure 2 shows three other incidences in which the GDF was involved:

Figure 2:

1973 July	On election day, the GDF shot and killed two PPP activists, Jagan Ramessar and Jack Bholanauth, at a polling station at no. 64 village, Corentyne after the closing of the ballot. The killings were carried out during the army exercise to forcibly commandeer the ballot boxes from this PPP stronghold.
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1974 July	54-old Bilal Ato, who was associated with the House of Israel (headed by "Rabbi" Washington, alias David Hill, a fugitive from the U.S.) and which had close connections with the PNC, killed Father Bernard Drake, a 57-year old Jesuit priest with a bayonet while he photographed an anti-PNC demonstration. The Catholic Standard and the WPA reported that the House of Israel had received arms and ammunition from the GDF.
1980 June	Gregory Smith, a GDF-member trained in electronics, planted an explosive device in the walkie-talkie set that killed Walter Rodney, head of the WPA, an anti-PNC party. It has been reported that GDF Chief of Staff Norman McLean visited the U.S. shortly before the assassination of Rodney on a mission to acquire electronic equipment.

In addition, military personnel were frequently used as provocateurs, informers and infiltrators among opposition groups, the Rodney case being an example of the last.

Though many Caribbean governments, not wanting to interfere in the internal affairs of their CARICOM neighbor, looked the other way and failed to condemn the PNC government in Guyana, its policy of employing the GDF in internal duties of a political character was severely criticized both in Guyana and on the international front. As a result, there was not only a loss of public confidence in the government but in the GDF as well.

Military's Role in Uncovering Plots to Overthrow Government

The army has acted in concert with the police in the uncovering of plots to overthrow the sitting government of Guyana. Though it is difficult to uncover the existence of all plots, as shown in Figure 3, six are known to have taken place during the period 1978-1991:

Figure 3 - Plots to Overthrow the Government of Guyana, 1978-1991

- 1978 Former SSU officer, Major Thomas Sattaur, was alleged to have tried to recruit his own army in hopes of attempting to overthrow the PNC government led by Forbes Burnham from the sugar estate region on the west coast of Demerara.
- 1980 Ivan Sookran and four others were charged for allegedly plotting to overthrow the government of Forbes Burhnam.
- 1989 Three PPP members, Bhoj Pertab Singh, Karran Persaud Deokarran and Neville Wordsworht were accused and charged with training people in military drills and in the use of weapons between February and May of 1989 in a coastal village in hopes of overthrowing the PNC-led government of Desmond Hoyte.
- 1990 Ten men, including Anand Sansi, a former GDF lieutenant and Balram Persuad, a former assistant superintendant of police, were arrested and accused of engaging in military-type training and other activities at private logging operation in the Corentyne River in Eastern Guyana owned by Mahindranauth Gomani, better known as 'Chicken Rohan',
- 1990 The WPA alleged that the PNC was building a special secret 1,000 army for the sole purpose of rigging the 1992 election. This activity was conducted supposedly by former senior military officers from their base in Sophia.
- 1991 Two men, Maurice Fernandes and Roy Nanhu, who were arrested at (Sept Timehri International Airport on their return home, were linked to an alleged plot to forcefully overthrow the Desmond Hoyte-led PNC administration. The coup-plot, which included several senior and former army officers, when uncovered, had advanced training plans, a camp and arms.
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The uncovering of these plots often involved the GDFs Intelligence Corps, which worked in concert with the Criminal Investigation Department of the Guyana Police Force and others in the area of political intelligence.

Democratization and the Military, 1985-2001

After Burnham's death in August 1985, though their were continuities, Desmond

Hoyte, Burnham's chief advisor and successor, introduced measures to professionalize the armed forces and to distance them from direct involvement in politics. So much so, that in 1991 GDF Chief of Staff Joseph Singh hailed the "courage, singled mindedness of President Hoyte" and credited him with achieving a "completely different outlook" since he took office. He further remarked that "the closing chapter of the Burnham years was a very worrying time" (Stabroek News 3). As the 1992 election day grew closer, Chief of Staff Singh declared in February 1991 that "he would no longer allow the army's resources to be use for political reasons" (Stabroek News 4). In keeping with this view, he stated that he did not foresee a role for the army in the 1992 election process and added that the police had assured him that they can keep the peace and hence the GDF would be confined to barracks on polling day unless called out because of a crisis.

The democratization of the polity and in particular the depoliticization of the military in Guyana affairs was deepened when the then Guyana president, Desmond Hoyte, who called an election for 5 October 1993, promised that, unlike the past, the armed forces would not cease control of the ballot boxes and that counting of votes would be done at the place of polling, both first in post-independent Guyana.

Though the ethnic composition of the Guyana armed forces, most of whom are black, raised doubts in any expectation of military compliance to a new civilian authority, when the Afro-Guyanese PNC lost the 1992 election, its first since December 1964, the GDF did not intervene as some had anticipated but accepted the civilian authority of Cheddi Jagan, leader of the Indo-Guyanese PPP and acted resolutely to prevent any disruption of the smooth transition of power. The reason for the GDFs non-intervention is best articulated by its Chief of Staff when he stated that

While serving members of the GDF have their personal political preference and are encouraged to exercise their franchise at the national elections, the GDF, as a national institution, is tasked with the safeguarding of the nation's territorial integrity and maintenance of internal stability in cooperation with the civil authorities. It must therefore be organizationally unbiased, apolitical and uncompromising in its quest to preserve its integrity, its cohesiveness and its mission-oriented focus (Guyana Chronicle 20).

In spite of the PPP's antagonistic attitude to the army when in opposition, Cheddie Jagan was able, with the passage of time, to commend the officers of the GDF for their display of professionalism.^{ix}

The GDF continued to play a supportive role in the PPP's attempt to govern and shape the future of Guyana as the legitimate democratic government. This posture was also evident when Cheddi Jagan passed on 6 March 1997 and, in keeping with the Guyana constitution, Prime Minister Sam Hinds, an afro-Guyanese, was sworn in as president.

On December 15, 1997, the occasion of the first general election after the death of Cheddie Jagan, the PPP/Civic, now led by Janet, Cheddi's wife, claimed victory in an election in which there were irregularities and shortcomings. However, when all the election results were in Janet Jagan was sworn-in as president, not in a traditional and formal ceremony at State House but at the Guyana Election Commission (GEC) headquarters, in the presence of the GEC's Chairman, other dignitaries, though this did not include the GDF's Chief of Staff.

The PNC claimed that the election was rigged, a belief that drove Hoyte, the PNC's leader and his supporters to demonstrate the party's dissatisfaction. These demonstrations escalated into riots which crippled commercial activities, especially in Georgetown, and damaged several business places while others were looted. Janet Jagan, for her part, felt that Hoyte was merely using documented irregularities as a cover to preach racism and to incite mutiny. In the case of the last, Hoyte even suggested that the predominantly black armed forces were his kith and kin and so were fighting against another race (Indians), hence inferring that they should not quell disorder and disobey the president. This impasse resulted in vociferous opposition street protests, including the hurling of rocks at the newly elected President Jagan's official car outside parliament building. The demonstrations, at one point, seemed to be pushing Guyana back towards the racial conflict and bloody riots that the country experienced during the 1960s. Finally, an agreement was brokered by CARICOM in which the PPP/Civic promised to return to the polls within three years, an odd concession given the fact that it was convinced that it had won the 15 December election fair and square. The 2001 election, called a year earlier as part of an agreement between government and opposition, saw a repeat of the two previous elections when the army did not intervene in the electoral process though it,

along with the police, were repeatedly called out to chase angry mobs who demonstrated against the election victory of the incumbent Bharrat Jagdeo, whose PPP received a third consecutive term in office.

Against the background that the military of a given country can never be totally divorced from "political" issues - that is, from the exercise of power, the foregoing shows that, unlike the fullblown Burnham years, the GDF, beginning in 1992, restricted its political role in the affairs of Guyana. In so doing, Guyana's military has reverted to a level of political activity in Guyanese politics that existed in the pre-1970 period where the ballot is much more the basis of the transfer of governmental power.

Military's Support of the Police to Control Violent Crime

Previous to 1994, the army did sometimes lend assistance to the police for the purpose of interior operations in an auxiliary capacity.^x However, in March 1995, owing to the wave of violent crime against which the police appeared to be ineffective, Chief Magistrate K. Juman-Yassin suggested that personnel from the GDF should be deployed at certain police stations. This idea did not become a reality until December of that year when, in the face of another upsurge in crime, the police and army launched their inaugural joint anti-crime operations which were proposed by Police Commissioner Laurie Lewis and scrutinized by a Technical Committee of officers from the police and the army (Stabroek News 1). Eleven members of the GDF and 48 officers from the police force participated in the exercise which took the form of road blocks on the East Coast and East Bank of Demerara and raids and searches in several areas within the city of Georgetown, including Alberttown, Albouystown (a slum in southern Georgetown), Cummingsburg and Charlestown. In response to a police officer's objections to the joint crime team, Commissioner Lewis declared "Every human resource that we have in this country must be involved in the fight against crime or we damn ourselves and we damn our children and damn generations to come." (Guyana Chronicle 1).

Two years later, in September 1996, President Cheddi Jagan expressed grave concern about the rising wave of crime that victimized many tourists and called for

a crackdown on armed gangs. "We must and shall stop them. They are giving us a bad name and hampering the development of the country." (Barbados Daily Nation 10). This resulted in the army again cooperating with the police in providing active patrol support through Operation Centipede. This action involved heavily armed police and army personnel who patrolled the city streets of Georgetown, the 26-mile route between Georgetown and the Timehri International Airport which was plagued by a rash of highway robberies that often targeted incoming passengers. Many of the robberies against tourists, residents and businesses, were blamed on deportees from the U.S. and other countries. Other areas patrolled were the East Bank and East Coast Demerara, Lethem, Mabaruma, Tacama and other interior locations. While elements of 4 Engineer Battalion were on stand by to conduct engineering tasks, the GDF Air Corps provided over-flight coverage with helicopter patrol and the coast guard maintained patrols in the Demerara River.

In June 1998, eight to ten soldiers of the GDF at a time patrolled the streets of Georgetown, Guyana's capital for numerous days as fears lingered about more political unrest that transpired in the aftermath of the election. They were called out at a time when President Janet Jagan, Guyana's third and newly elected president, was about to leave for St. Lucia to attend the summit of CARICOM leaders. These patrols followed a week of violent clashes between police and street demonstrators, scores of bomb scares, the destruction by fire of a section of the Ministry of Finance and the hurling of home-made bombs at three other government and private buildings. Even before going to St. Lucia, President Jagan, while attending the Second Summit of the Americas, Santiago, Chile, called on 33 other hemispheric leaders to be on the alert for possible political violence in Guyana (Barbados Advocate 14). This behavior was repeated in 2001, when the police and army were called out to chase away angry mobs demonstrating against the governing party's recent election victory.

A year earlier, the GDF was involved in a protracted search for Guyana's most wanted criminal, Linden "Blackie" London. Eventually, on 8 February 2000, London was killed after holding at bay 300 police officers and soldiers in an 11-hour gun fight. GDF private Lennox Harvey, who was shot in the head when police and military units stormed

London's hideout was later promoted to the rank of lance corporal and subsequently discharged from the army on grounds of disability.^{xi}

Prevention of Drug and other Illegal Smuggling

Marijuana is grown in Guyana's heavily forested interior, especially in the New River area and it is difficult for the police and the GDF to search for marijuana fields using aerial surveillance because the fields are obscured by the rain forest canopy. Cocaine and heroin enter the countries from Brazil, Suriname and Venezuela. After the confrontational postures which characterized Venezuela-Guyana relations in the early 1980s were relaxed, the GDF was better able to cooperate with the police in anti-narcotic raids.^{xii} This was done mainly by providing transport, namely, by helicopters and boats as well as armed support to police eradication teams.

In 1997, GDF soldiers, while participating in a training exercise in east Central Guyana, near the border with Suriname, observed the flight pattern of aircraft and have expressed the concern that there are likely fields utilized by these aircraft to smuggle drugs in and out of Guyana with little chance of interception by law enforcement authorities. They singled out night air drops of drugs into rivers, including the Demerara River, as well as on to one of Guyana's major roadways, namely, the Linden Highway, which links the capital with the bauxite mining town of Linden and surrounding communities. They have even been reports of drugs coming in over river and then by land from Venezuela. In November 1996, a joint police and army investigation team was deployed to a jungle airstrip at Kwebanna in north western Guyana (near the Venezuelan border) after a privately-owned eight-seater Islander aircraft owned by Roraima Airways was seized and hijacked to Colombia by a Guyanese and two Spanish-speaking men (Stabroek News 6). This particular incident is cited as an indication that Guyana is increasingly used as a transshipment point for drugs coming from Colombia to the United States and Europe. And so, there has been speculation that hijacking is linked to drug running. In September 2000, the Guyana government, concerned about reports that there were cocaine manufacturing laboratories in a remote part of the country,

near the border with Suriname and Brazil, investigated a claim by Peruvian president, Alberto Fujimori, that Guyana was used as a transshipment point for arms from Jordan to South American (Barbados Advocate 19).

Maritime Activity

Guyana has 53,000 square miles of offshore territory which it has to protect. Also, its 20,000 square miles of continental shelf attract fishing poachers, smugglers and hydrocarbons on the sea bed are a potential source of hard currency. In 1996, it was estimated that 20 to 25 illegal fishing vessels, including those from Barbados, Trinidad and Tobago and Venezuela, who deplete the fish and shrimp stock, operate daily in Guyana waters.^{xiii} As an example, in August 1997, the crew of the vessel Kevclo were taken into custody by the Guyana Coast Guard for illegally fishing in Guyana's territorial waters and disobeying orders to stop. Everton Brathwaite, one of the four-member crew, was shot in his left leg when the boat disobeyed orders to stop. Again in February 1998, two vessels, the Cayo Norte and the Trinea were apprehended by Lt. Harmon of the GDF Coast Guard, 56 nautical miles north of the Essequibo river mouth with red snapper. Both of the captains were from Margarita, Venezuela (Stabroek News 3). A total of twelve vessels were arrested between January and August 1998 for illegal fishing in Guyana's waters. Contraband trade in Guyana's coastal waters is particularly prevalent between Suriname and the Corentyne, In 1996, smugglers, at least two of whom may have been former coastguard members, shot Lance Corporal Donald Hartman, a member of the GDF coast guard, in the back and escaped by returning to Nickerie in Suriname (Guyana Chronicle 1 & 10).^{xiv} The GDF is also actively involved with other government agencies in an effort to maintain an oil pollution free environment. It has never been involved in the clean-up of an actual oil spill. However, when the Omni cyanide spill occurred in 1995, an advanced party was immediately sent to Bartica to assess the situation. The team reported that there was no need for GDF involvement but soldiers were on standby at the Makouria base, Essequibo, in case their services were requested by the civilian administration. On 2 June 2000, the coast guard patrol on board a vessel owned by Guyana Fisheries Ltd found a cluster of 10 Venezuelan registered vessels fishing illegally in Guyana's exclusive zone.

Assistance to Government in Carrying out Social & Economic Programs

The GDF manifesto states that: 'while the nation is at peace we must ensure that all our soldiers and commanders learn skills and contribute meaningfully to the national and community development' Granger, in his History of the Foundation, Growth and Development of the Guyana Defence Force, emphasizes the need to conduct all affairs within the framework of self-reliance and economic work. Granger underlines the new role for the army that does not reinforce "the principles of capitalism and elitism" but establishes a new order for developing countries where there is a deficit of resources (12 & 13). The GDF has been involved in the development of the infrastructure and participated in a variety of self-help projects and agricultural schemes, construction of roads, airfields, houses and other infrastructure, farming, and other productive endeavors. Between 1994 and 1998, the army has worked on constructing or upgrading the network of roads that link the country: Southern Surama (1993), Kurupukari (1995), Letham to Mabura (1996), and Koraworuki to Mahdia (1998) (Hassim 5). Again, from 1970 to 1998, GDF personnel worked on building their own homes through several self-help projects and helped with a variety of government projects. For example, the force built twenty houses of SNCOs (1994-1995), constructed the Law Faculty building for the University of Guyana (1997), effected school repairs (1980), built the hydro dam across the Tumatuari Falls (1975) and laid several airstrip across the country (1970-1980). The force did assist with the maintenance of government buildings and some of the community development activities carried out by the GDF are in cooperation with U.S. Army teams which provide engineering and medical assistance to several villages along the coastline and in the hinterland. These Joint-Combined Engineer Readiness Field-Training Missions, code-named "New Horizon", were started in 1988 when Guyana abandoned its socialist experiment and opted for closer ties with the U.S. They involve such tasks as the repairing of schools, hospitals and other buildings, including health centers. The 1997 U.S.-Guyana mission was the seventh. Though it was again humanitarian/civic and not military in nature, opposition leaders, including Desmond Hoyte of the PNC, strenuously objected to it being staged in the run-up to the general election. They claimed that the presence of a "foreign army" could be seen as "an effort to intimidate citizens

and to influence the course of the (general elections)." U.S. intervention is a sensitive subject in Guyana where Cheddi Jagan and others charge that the CIA intervened after the 1961 election of the then Jagan-led Marxist PPP.

Self-Support Activities

In view of the high cost of food in Guyana, the GDF has been involved in agricultural activities to produce food for the military establishment. By so doing, the GDF was able to cut 30 per cent off the cost of feeding its personnel. One of the first ventures was the establishment of a 60 acre farm called "Garden of Eden" on the East Bank in the Demerara in 1968 (Scarlet Beret 10). This farm subsequently included an orchard, cattle/swine-rearing and poultry. The farm produces about 60 pounds of gas daily (Stabroek News 10). There is also a biogas digester which was built in 1991 through a joint GDF/Institute of Applied Technology project. It has produced 60 pounds of gas daily. Beside the established farms run by the production unit, rifle company soldiers maintained farm plots in their respective hinterland locations. Other farms have also been established: rice farms on the west coast of Berbice and the East Bank of the Essequibo; a vegetable farm on the East coast of Demerara; a dairy farm on the Linden Highway. In addition, in 1972, two ponds at the Garden of Eden as well as a shrimping boat attached to the Maritime Corps, were used to provide the GDF with a supply of fish.

Conclusion

It was shown that Guyana's military, the Guyana Defense Force (GDF), made up of nine sub-units, including three battalions, has a simple division of labor and that the coast guard is an integral part of the GDF. The 1st Battalion Group, stationed at Camp Stephenson, is responsible for both hinterland-defense and internal security operations, the last in support of the civil police.

Training for internal security activity is carried out at the Colonel Ulric Pilgrim Officer Cadet School. Though there is no single course devoted to internal security, it is a component of five of the courses offered at the CUPOCS. In addition, prior to elections,

special courses on internal security are run by an Inter-Services School for Internal Security Studies.

Relative to the GDF's role in internal security, it was further shown that during the Burnham years, the GDF was, among other things, used to maintain the ruling party, the Peoples National Congress, in power. Two glaring examples of this were the GDF's fraudulent involvement in national elections and the uncovering of six known plots to overthrow the government. However, since the end of the cold war and the concomitant spread of democratization, the last begun by the PNC-led Desmond Hoyte after Burnham's death, the GDF has become involved in "police" operations, especially against drug trafficking. Also, the GDF occasionally help the civilian police maintain public order in times on social unrest, including after elections. In fact, the roles of the police and military have become increasing difficult to distinguish, a development with negative implications for the democratization process. Also, started during the Burnham era, the GDF has continued its other non-military tasks of economic development and self support.

Notes

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Works cited

- . Guyana (previously called British Guiana), the only English-speaking country in South America and a former British colony, became constitutionally independent in May 1966; Sunday Stabroek, "A Soldier's story – raising the flag." 26 May 1996:16A.
- ii In addition to domestic internal security, the GDF has been involved in overseas internal security: Trinidad in 1990 and Haiti, beginning in 1994. The last was the first ever deployment of military forces from the English-speaking Caribbean, including Guyana, on a United Nations Mission. Other roles are protection of its frontier and defense, though Guyana relies heavily on diplomacy in border clashes with Venezuela and Suriname.
- iii Formed in 1966, the small corps of drums had developed into a full-fledged band by 1970. The Guyana Military Band, headed by a Bandmaster, includes military, as well as steel and "string" components.
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- vi Personal communication, Commander Patrick Wallace, St. Kitts and Nevis Defense Force, e-mail message, 14 April 2001.
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- viii Guyana's two major political parties are the People's Progressive Party and the People National Congress.
- ix In addition to a GDF aid-de-camp at the rank of either captain or major, Guyana's presidents, including Forbes Burnham and Cheddi Jagan, are guarded by the police. Previously called the Tactical Services Unit, in 1994, it was redesigned the Presidential Guard. In 1994, concerns were expressed that this body had an under-representation of East Indians; Francis Ferreira, "Who will watch the watchmen?," Guyana Review, December 1994: 22-23.
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- xi Linden London was wanted in more than 15 robberies over 10 years. The GDF, in a statement, following the high-powered battle, said that GDF soldier Lennox Harvey used what it described as great courage to enter the building where the wanted man was barricaded; Virgin Islands Daily News, "Criminal gets hero's funeral," 12 February 2000:7.
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