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The Military of Guyana

Dion E. Phillips

Introduction

This paper addresses four factors relative to the Guyana military from 1966 to 2001. First, it examines the origin and structure of Guyana's military. Next, it discusses the relationship between the civil and military establishments. Then, it treats the strength and training of the security forces. After that, the paper looks at the changing role of the military during the period. The argument is that President Burnham politicized the military making it serve the interest of the ruling party – the Peoples National Congress (PNC) – the government of the day. However, since 1992, restructuring has led to a reduction of manpower. After 22 years of isolation, the country is now 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. The new emphasis includes a more sustained fight against organized crime, disaster relief, and involvement in peacekeeping.

Origin

External threats to the territorial integrity of the then British Guiana and internal unrest were the agents leading to the establishment of the post-independent military forces. Venezuela¹ claimed and still claims

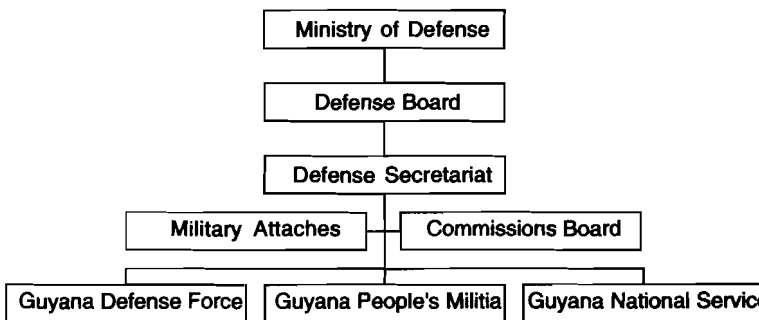
1 In 1999, when Hugo Chavez, a former military leader, was elected president, the issue of the border dispute was re-opened when Venezuelan military aircraft was accused of violating Guyana airspace, a claim which Venezuela denied (Weekly Gleaner 14).

the mineral rich Essequibo, sixty percent of the country, and Suriname continues to dispute ownership of over 6,000 square miles of prime bauxite land². In 27 May 1964, at the height of civil strife in Guyana, the British government established a *British Guiana Special Service Unit* (BGSSU)³, mainly local recruits, to maintain internal security. Significantly, Governor Richard Luyt headed

the unit and not Guyana's Minister of Home Affairs. A parliamentary Act in May 1966, legally instituted the GDF just four days before the actual day of independence on 26 May.⁴ Launched in February 1965 (16 months before independence), it replaced three forces. These were the British Guiana Volunteer Force on 14 June 1948 made up of men who served in the British Guiana Regiment of the South Caribbean Forces, the British Garrison that was sent to the colony in 1953 to aid the local security forces in quelling racial and industrial riots, and the BGSSU established in 1964.

Structure

Figure 1: Structure of Guyana's Military Forces



- 2 In 1995, Suriname submitted ads to newspapers in Guyana showing Guyana as a part of Suriname. The *Stabroek Review* (26 July 1995: 4) considered this as "arrogant, provocative, especially at a time when Guyana had supported Suriname's admission to CARICOM.
- 3 In May 1964, British Guiana Police established the British Guiana Special Service Unit (BGSSU). British police officers commanded and trained the unit to execute military tasks, including the powers of search and arrest. By October 1965, the BGSSU comprised over 200 men, including seven officers who were all trained in England.
- 4 The People's Progressive Party (PPP) first proposed the creation of a 'British Guiana Army.' However, it was the People's National Congress (PNC) that eventually established the GDF.

Boards

The Defense Act gives the Executive President of Guyana de jure authority to commit troops, but de facto authority rests with the Chief of Staff who is responsible for sending these troops into the field. The Executive President discharges this responsibility through a seven-member *Defense Board*.

The Laws of Guyana spells out the composition of Boards. *The Defense Board* comprises the Ministers of Defense, Home Affairs and Foreign Affairs. Other members include the Chief of Staff (GDF), Attorney General, Head of the Presidential Secretariat and the Commissioner of Police. The first appointments of Military Attachés assigned to Brazil and Venezuela in the 1980s did not assume their tour of duty. The first batch of functioning non-resident attachés was accredited in 1998.

According to the Act, *The Commissions Board* comprises the Chief of Staff, the Staff Officer (Personnel, GDF) serving as secretary of the Board, the Chairman of the Public Service Commission, and Commanding Officer, 2nd Infantry Battalion Group. The Commissions Board advises the Executive President on appointments to the officer corps based on selections from candidates applying to attend the Standard Officers Course and the Reserve Officers Course. Also, the President acting in his capacity as the Commander-in-chief of the armed forces, under the Defense Act, is the only person authorized to grant commissions to military officers and to promote them to various scheduled ranks of the force. This was the position under Forbes Burnham and Desmond Hoyte of the PNC and thereafter under Cheddi Jagan, Janet Jagan and Bharrat Jagdeo of the Peoples Progressive Party (PPP).⁵

Guyana Defense Force, 1966–2001

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 Band⁶ and a Coast Guard. The heads of all of these units report to the Chief of Staff.

5 Of Guyana's five presidents (Forbes Burnham, Desmond Hoyte, Cheddi Jagan, Janet Jagan and Bharrat Jagdeo) Burnham was the only one who wore military uniform adorned with the accouterments of a general whenever he attended military events such as parades and dinners.

6 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.

Below the Chief 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 Infantry Battalion Group*, the GDFs Reserve, which replaced the Guyana People's Militia in 1997, is 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.⁷ 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.⁸ 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

7 It was originally the force's Reconnaissance Platoon (1966) but was reconstituted as the Reconnaissance Squadron in 1980. Its designation as the GDF Special Forces in 1990 saw an increase in parachuting and free fall techniques.

8 During the 1970s (with the down turn in the economy), four Bell helicopters were replaced by MI-8 helicopters from the then U.S.S.R. Subsequently with the collapse of the U.S.S.R., the MI-8s were out of commission.

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 paroling the Guyana coast, especially its fisheries zone. Four Vosper Thronycroft vessels acquired from the 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.

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.⁹ Initially, the three companies of the 1st. Infantry Battalion were deployed in the sugar belt,

9 Personal communication, David Granger, 4 January 1993.

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, one 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 comprises 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.

Guyana Peoples Militia, 1976-1987

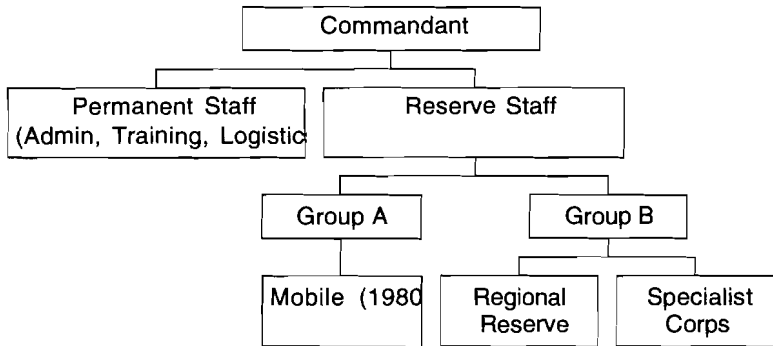
The British Guiana Volunteer Force predated independence and became first the reserve arm of the GDF in 1966 and a regular battalion in 1968. In 1976, another military reserve force was established with headquarters at Camp Ayanganna. Ram (1976) notes that the objectives of the GPM were to "provide a framework on which during a period of rising tensions, mass preparations for emergencies [could] be carried out" as well as "to assist the Army and Police when called upon and to contribute to the economic life of the country." (5-13).

The Government had nationalized the sugar industry, bauxite, banking, commerce and other sectors of the economy. The ruling PNC had declared itself a Marxist-Leninist party and in its external affairs had adopted a pro-socialist line as well as developed close ties with Cuba and other socialist states. Therefore, in response to the complaints of "destabilization by the West" and intimidation by Venezuela, the Guyana masses were organized in the GPM and motivated to defend their country.

As shown in Figure 2, the GPM had its own Commandant, a GDF military officer and a central training base, Camp Seweyo. Also, it had a presence in each of Guyana's ten administrative regions.

Structure

Figure 2: Structure of the Guyana People's Militia, 1976-1997



The GPM had two components: a permanent staff and a reserve staff. The core of the former were full-time GDF soldiers. They provided administrative, training and logistical services. Initially, the second had two subunits: Group A comprised able-bodied citizens under 45 years; and Group B comprised specialists in civil and military defense.

However, under the 1982 reorganization, Group A became the *Mobile Reserve* mandated to provide mobile support for the GDF. The Mobile Reserve comprised five battalions. Because of restructuring, in Group B, women and persons over 40 years of age went into the *Regional Reserve*, organized into lettered companies based on districts. There was also the *Specialist Corps*, organized by specialist areas to reinforce the GDF. Moreover, in 1982-1983, the Region 10 Mobile Reserve received anti-aircraft weapons for air defense of the Bauxite industry and township.

The GPM was decommissioned in 1996, twenty years after its establishment. It had become unwieldy, inefficient and de-motivated. On his return from the Royal College of Defense Studies in 1996, Joseph Singh, then Chief of Staff, submitted to the defense Board proposals for the decommissioning of the GPM and the reorganization of the Reserve commencing with the establishment of the *Second Infantry Battalion Group (Reserve)*.

Guyana National Service, 1974-2000

The administration of the *Guyana National Service* (GNS) was the direct responsibility of the Office of the Prime Minister. Its objectives were to assist with development and defense. It was set up in January 1974 with headquarters at 45 Regent Road, Bourda, under a Director-General. The director had two deputy directors, in charge of administration and production respectively. From its inception, officers of the army and police forces together with personnel seconded from the Civil Service assisted with administration and training at the highest (Gittens 13).

Hope (1976) describes the composition of The *National Service Secretariat*. Its members included the President and other ministers nominated by him to formulate policy for the GNS and give directions. It was composed of five sub-units: the Young Brigade, the National Cadet Corps, the New Opportunity Corps, the Pioneer Corps (formerly the Guyana Youth Corps) and the 31 Special Services Corps. The first training site was at Kimbia about 80 miles on the Berbice River.¹⁰

The GNS reached its peak in the mid-1980s but by then the political and socio-economic problems, evident from the late 1970s, started to exact their toll. Field production and training activities declined rapidly toward the late 1980s and the GNS closed its centers at Tumatumari, Konawaruk, Kimbia Papaya and Koriri. Staffers were sent home in 1990 or deployed to other areas of the public service. In 1995, the GNS conducted a 10 month pioneer vocational-technical program at Kum Kum Training Center on the Linden Highway; a vocational-technical program at Sophia Training Center, and a psycho-social and vocational program at the Orderneenuring Center of the New Opportunity Corps. In contrast to the thousands of youth in GNS programs between 1975-1985, in later years, the program hardly serves 500 annually. On 16 May, 2000, the GNS was discontinued.

Manpower Strength

At its inception in 1965, the GDF had strength of 500; ten years later, in 1977, the strength was 4,000 (a record membership). There was

10 Some of the sites at which GNS programmes were delivered were Kimbia (the first) about 80 miles up on the Berbice River; Papaya in the North West district, Tumatumar and Konawanik in the Potoro, Koriri in the upper Canje Creek on the Essequibo coast.

a corresponding growth in the *Guyana People's Militia* and the *Guyana National Service*. However, over the years, Guyana's financial difficulties and improved relations with Venezuela and the United States of America have resulted in a steady reduction of the size of all military operations. After Burnham's death in 1985, according to Brigadier Joseph Singh, manpower was gradually reduced by the prudent amalgamation and/or undermanning of units in keeping with "the concept of an affordable army" (*Stabroek News* 3).

As shown in Table 1, in 1996 the strength of the GDF was 1,800, less than twice its size in 1977. The Guyana National Service and the Guyana People's Militia dwindled to 350 and 500 respectively. The reduction was the result of normal attrition, with little or no retrenchment – personnel retired or entered other careers. In 1996, the overall strength of the three military forces of Guyana was 2,650 compared to 9,000 in 1977. In 1998, there was a further reduction in the Guyana National Service.

Table 1: Estimated Strength of the Armed Forces of Guyana

Military Unit	1966	1977	1996	1998
Guyana Defense Force	329	4,000	1,800*	1,800*
Guyana National Service	-	4,000	350	300
Guyana People's Militia	-	10,000	500	500
Total	750	9,000	2,650	2,600

* Not including 300 civilian employees in administration and engineer unit.

Civil Military Relations, 1966–2001

During the first four years of the existence of Guyana's military, politicians were cautious about interfering in matters of the internal organization of the armed forces, that is, the army was loyal to the government of the day and did not otherwise get involved in politics. In fact, the force standing orders explicitly prohibited open participation in any political activity.

However, after 1970, the GDF was rapidly purged of the colonial normative structure. Part of the army's new role was loyalty to the government based on an appreciation of the philosophy the People's National Congress (PNC) government. Burnham declared a defense policy that called for the creation of a 'People's Army.' In effect, it meant politicizing the officers and soldiers to support the changes taking place in the country, introducing instruction in the philosophy of cooperative socialism and employing troops on community projects (discussed in a subsequent section). In the interest of these changes, Burnham removed several of the senior officers, namely, Brigadier Clarence Price, Brigadier Ulric Pilgrim, Colonel Carl Morgan, thereby creating some space for the promotion of junior officers such as Brigadier Norman McLean and Colonel David Granger who were pliable and amenable to this new policy thrust. Hence, the GDF was tightly integrated with the ruling party by ideology and policy orientation.

In April 1970, the Trinidad and Tobago Regiment had mutinied and of course it was widely known that other armies in Africa, which had a similar background to that of the GDF, had been involved in disturbances over the previous years. And so, the PNC sought to seek the participation of the GDF in its program to avert any possible collision between the government and the army. Hence, when Prime Minister Burnham instituted the cooperative republic in 1970, he redefined the role of the army and, by so doing, called on it and the police to give unconditional loyalty to him. To this effect, he stated, in an address to officers and new recruits on October 26, 1970, that:

I do not share the British concept that the Army is separate and distinct from everything else and loyal to this Government. If there is any other Government, it is a matter for you to decide about that, but so far as I am concerned I don't want any abstract loyalty. It must be a straightforward loyalty from the top down, and it must also be based on an appreciation of the philosophy of this government. (Burnham 42)

In pursuit of this goal, the Education Corps was organized to promote the national ideology. This unit was responsible for the politicization of the forces. Seminars were started in January 1971 and included lecturers by Government ministers, party leaders, heads of public institutions, army officers and other informed persons. President Burnham in an address to local officers reemphasized that the GDF must be firmly committed to the cause of socialism and that officers were to regard themselves as

important instruments in the socialist transformation of the society. As a consequence, the political and ideological socialization of the members of the military resulted in congruity between the political ideas of the civilian leaders and officers and hence removed the potential of conflict among them.¹¹ In fact, the loyalty of the military appeared to be slavishly given to Burnham himself when in 1977, Brigadier Clarence Price, the then Chief of Staff, GDF, speaking on behalf of the disciplined services at the Second Biennial Congress of the PNC, said:

Comrade Leader, you have shown us the way. It is now for all of us who are interested in the revolution to show this in a tangible manner. We fulfill our security duties faithfully. We know the road mapped out by the party and government is our road. (Danns 175)

During the Burnham years, not only was the troop strength and operational structure expanded but also 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. 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 elections. In making reference to the latter, the Latin American Bureau, a team of international observers, noted that

in some areas [the military's] presence was intimidating. The [ballot] boxes were collected by military personnel who prevented accredited officials of the opposition, sometimes by force or the threat of force,

11 This ritual pledge of loyalty was regurgitated at succeeding congresses by junior officers until Burnham's death in 1985. While addressing a PNC District conference in 1978, Burnham declared "...this nonsense of being professional and not having any part with politics must be discarded forthwith.

from accompanying or following the boxes... Military personnel refused accredited representatives of opposition parties access to the count at gun point in some cases. (83).

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 3 shows three other incidences in which the GDF was involved:

Figure 3:

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 ballot. The killings were carried out in the army exercise to forcibly commandeer the ballot boxes from this PPP stronghold.
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.

During this period, a number of key officers even expressed their displeasure at serving under Chief of Staff Norman Mclean. Not only was he a non-soldier and former police traffic chief who was pitchforked into the position of Chief of Staff, but their overriding objective hinged on his total loyalty to the doctrine of Burnhamism or party paramountcy. And so, under Burnhamism, Guyana did not have a praetorian situation in which military officers played a major political role by virtue of their actual (or threatened) use of force. However, it did fit the "penetration model" of civilian control of the military, articulated by Eric Nordlinger, that the political elite, namely, the ruling party, shapes the beliefs of the military and by so doing has the loyalty and obedience of the armed forces (15).

After Burnham's death in August 1985, Hoyte, Burnham's chief advisor and successor, appeared interested in continuing his legacy. He declared at a party congress, held a few weeks after Burnham's passing, that:

His work was not completed when he died, but he left us precise guidelines for the continuation of that work. It must be the Party's mission, now and in the years ahead, to deepen the process and accelerate the pace of our development along the lines so clearly drawn by him. The leadership of the party is pledged to continue his work. Our ultimate goal must be the same as his - creation of a socialist society in the Cooperative Republic of Guyana. We must affirm our commitment and rededicate ourselves to the pursuit of this objective (Hoyte 15-19).

However, before too long, though there were continuities, changes were introduced, among them being various measures to professionalize

the armed forces and to distance them from direct involvement in politics. Though Hoyte initiated the democratization of the polity, including the privatization of the public sector, he retained Norman Maclean as Chief of Staff for another five years. Economic adversity forced reductions in military spending and the size of some military agencies. Also, these agencies continued to be dominated by people of African descent, though in February 1990, when Major General Norman McLean retired, Hoyte chose Colonel Joseph Singh, a career officer, to be the third Chief of Staff of the GDF, making him the first person of Indian descent to be head of the armed forces. Singh was also retained in that appointment when Cheddi Jagan succeeded Hoyte after the national elections in October 1992.

In 1991, though GDF Chief of Staff Singh hailed the "courage, singled mindedness of President Hoyte" and credited him with achieving a "completely different outlook" since he took office in 1985, he 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's leader, 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.¹²

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 Cheddie 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, Cheddie's wife, claimed victory in an election in which there were irregularities and shortcomings. However, when all the election results were in, acting on advice from the security forces, 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

12 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; "Stepped-up security for Jagan," *Jamaica Gleaner*, 20 October 1994: 12.

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 munity. 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 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 thought it, along with the police, were repeatedly called out to chase angry mobs who demonstrated against the elections 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 Guyaneze politics that existed in the pre-1970 period where the ballot is the basis for the transfer of governmental power.

Training

All recruits – for the army, coast guard and air corps – initially attend a basic training course at the Colonel John Clark Military School (commonly known as the Tacama Battle School) located ninety miles up the Berbice River in the intermediate savannas. "Exercise Green Heart" occurs every two years in August in the Essequibo

region. This includes basic jungle tactics and navigational survival skills. "Exercise Iron Weed", a field tactical exercise designed to assess the standards of operational readiness of the force, takes place every third year (Green Beret 1 & 4). Finally, Jungle Warfare Courses are held at the Jungle and Amphibious Training School in Makouria in the Essequibo twice yearly.

Officers

The Guyana Defense Force started training its own officers in February 2, 1970. The first batch of six officer cadets received their commissions on 22 July 1970, after completing the Standard Officers' Course. The course included an officer cadet from the St. Kitts and Nevis Defense Force, who later became its second Commander.

After 12 years, the *Officer Cadet Division* of the Training Corps, which was responsible for this training, evolved into the first *Officer Cadet School* in the English-speaking Caribbean. The Cadet School, called the Colonel Ulric Pilgrim Officer Cadet School, located at Camp Stephenson, Timehri, (formerly Atkinson Field), was founded in September 1981 (Gomes 10 & 11). Though the Guyana Defense Force continues to send officer cadets, twice a year, to Sandhurst and Dartmouth, the school serves not only to localize training but also reduces the financial burden of having to train personnel abroad. Consequently, in contrast to other Commonwealth Caribbean defense forces, most officer cadet training has taken place in Guyana at Camp Stephenson.

Standard Officers Course

Originally, the course was to provide training for new GDF officers, but from the start candidates from the other Caribbean Community and Common Market states participated. Later the school began to cater for candidates from the *Disciplined Services* in Guyana. In addition to St. Kitts, countries that have benefited include Antigua and Barbuda, Belize and Grenada.

Figure 3 shows the exercises and exchanges which involved the GDF:

Figure 3: Exercises and Exchanges with other Armed Forces

Country	Year	Activity
United Kingdom	1967	British troops assisted in jungle training. First annual exchange program with British army; ceased in late 1970s; large scale contact curtailed in 1980.
	1975	
	1991	Resumption of exchanges; continued on from 1993 to 1995, and from 1997 to 2001.
United States	1990	Annual training and the execution of civic and humanitarian tasks. Before 1996, no sustained contact between GDF and U.S Army
	1990	Exercise Trade winds (ongoing)
	1990	Joint GDF-U.S. training in Guyana
	1993	Jungle Warfare course, GDF training at School Makouria, Essequibo River.
France	1992	GDF platoon attended course, French Equatorial Forest Training Center, Guyane
	1993	
	1994	9th Infantry Marine Regiment from Guyane attended 10-day basic course at Makouria, Essequibo River
	1994	GDF platoon attended course, French Equatorial Forest Training Center, Guyana
Netherlands	1995	Supreme Command Netherlands GDF platoon, 6-day multinational training competition in Aruba
	1995	
	1996-1998	Two Royal Netherlands Marine Corps, training, GDF Jungle and Amphibious Training School

Training of coast guard personnel is carried out at the *Coast Guard Training School* at Kingston. Additional training is also offered to

individuals, depending upon their aptitude and educational qualifications at overseas military institutions. GDF personnel have received training in 22 different countries. These countries not only includes England, the United States of America and Canada, but also such countries as Brazil, India, Nigeria and Venezuela. GDF personnel have received training in the following socialist countries: Cuba, North Korea, China, Romania and the U.S.S.R.

Intra-Caribbean Training Assistance

Over the years, the GDF has trained cadets, NCOs and officers from other Caribbean security forces (McAllister 12, 13 & 15). These include individuals from the St. Kitts and Nevis Defence Force (SKNDF), the Antigua and Barbuda Defense Force (ABDF) and the Belize Defense Force (BeDF). In the 1970s, personnel from the SKNDF completed the Standard Officer Cadet Course, the Section Commanders Course as well as the Drum Major's course in Guyana.

In the 1990s, four officer cadets from the ABDF graduated from the Colonel Ulric Pilgrim School. There are Leroy Brown and Dalton Graham in 1996, and Telbert Benjamin and John Campbell in 1997. In addition, Captains Livan and James have served as Special Projects Officer with the ABDF.

Since 1981, over 15 officer cadets from the BeDF, the first being Glenn Arthur, have completed the GDF Standard Officers Course, a 40-week program for cadets at the Colonel Ulric Pilgrim Officer Cadet School. This course entails jungle and amphibious warfare, administration and military law. GDF soldiers have also rendered assistance to the St. Vincent and the Grenadines Cadet Corps to organize cadet camps and the GDF Coast Guard has received training from the TTDF Coast Guard as far back as 1968.

Roles

The goals of Guyana's military forces fall under five broad categories: security (external and internal), drugs, maritime activity, government assistance, self-support activity and overseas activity. Threats to the integrity of Guyana's borders are real and the primary objective of the

armed forces is to secure the land mass from possible encroachments from Venezuela and Suriname. Guyana, whose neighbors are Venezuela, Suriname and Brazil, is a major transshipment of and to some extent a processing point for drugs. Its geography has in large measure contributed to this reality. There is low population density. Three-quarters of a million people inhabit a 83 thousand-square mile territory - most of whom reside along its Atlantic coast. Hence, wide expanses of land, much of which is largely forested and inaccessible by road, are underpopulated and underpoliced, thus providing tempting conditions for trafficking and other illegal activity. In addition to the massive land area of Guyana, there are numerous surrounding islands, and so it is impossible to police the entire border, especially when one considers the country's limited security resources. In view of the above, army, coast guard and other law enforcement officials are frustrated at their inability to protect Guyana's 1,500 miles of border against trafficking.

Security: Protection against External Threat

The withdrawal of the British Regiment in September 1966 was a signal to Venezuela to attempt to seize the Guyana part of the island of Ankoko which it had claimed diplomatically over the years. The island of Ankoko, situated at the confluence of the boundary rivers Cuyuni and Wenamu, forms the international borders between Venezuela and Guyana. These countries share the island on opposite sides of the border (Braveboy-Wagner 150-151; Government of Guyana, 6; Ramphal 7 & 8). In response, the Burnham-led government of Guyana deployed GDF troops that were based in the sugar belt, to Eteringbang on the eastern bank of the Cuyuni. They were transported in Grumman seaplanes operated by Guyana Airways and landed in small numbers. However, being ill equipped and, at the time, untrained in jungle warfare, the GDF, though committed to the defence of Guyana, was ordered not to attempt to repossess the land (2). The government's choice was to resolve the matter through diplomatic means.¹³ The Guyana government

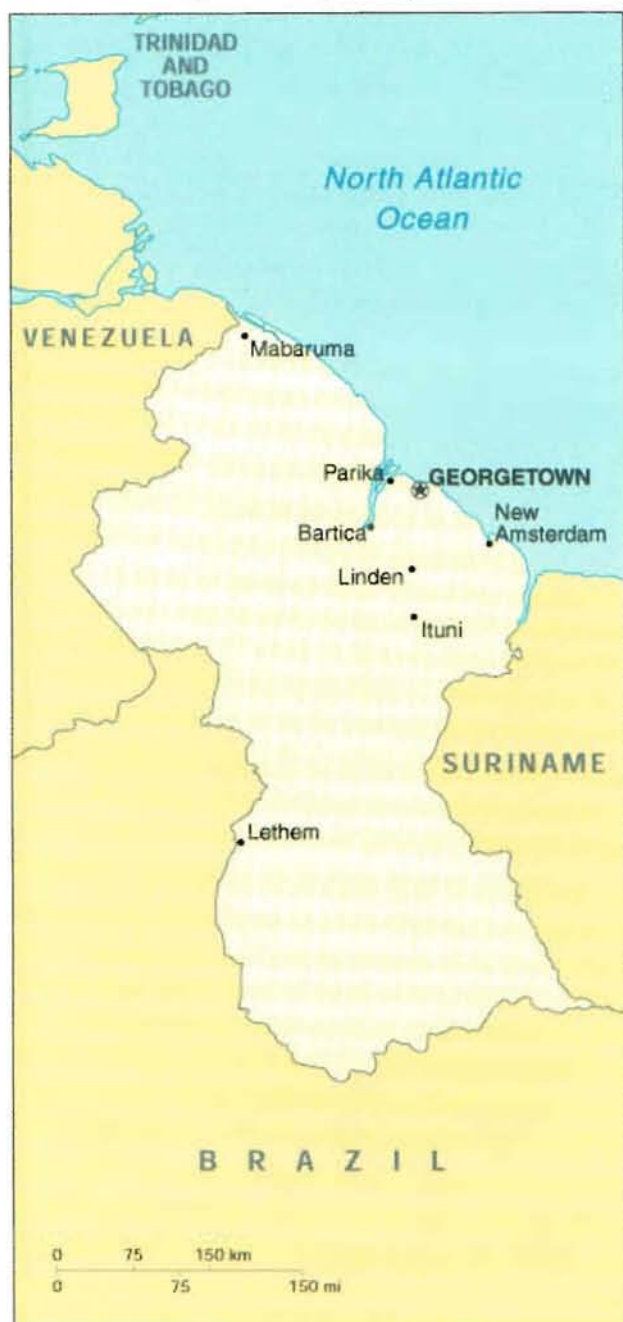
13 On February 1966, nine days before becoming independent, the Geneva Agreement was signed with Venezuela. Among other things, it created a Mixed Commission to seek satisfactory solutions for the settlement of the dispute. Hence, when Venezuela seized Ankoko without warning Guyanese were taken by surprise.

appealed to the international community, including its fellow Anglophone neighbors, to denounce the claim by the Venezuelans. In so doing, Guyana depicted Venezuela as an aggressor which was attempting to dominate a weaker and smaller state. In succeeding years, Guyana has looked to the United Nations as the arbiter of its border dispute.

On the Eastern border, Suriname pressed its claims by the physical occupation of Guyanese territory. In December 1967, members of the Guyana Police Force came upon and expelled a Surinamese survey party which had intruded into the New River District. The following year, Suriname National Army (SNA) troops were brought into the area of Lethem where they had set about the construction of a military camp called "Tigri" and built an airstrip and other installations. On Tuesday, 19 August 1968, a major operation was mounted by the Guyana Defence Force's 1st Battalion to capture the camp. Using the Guyana Airways De Havilland aircraft, troops landed on the incomplete airstrip and, after overcoming some armed resistance, verified the location and put the Surinamese to flight. The new Helio Courier reconnaissance aircraft and the modern infantry weapons and mortars played an important part in giving the Guyanese soldiers the advantage over their adversaries (Government of Guyana 5).

Between 24 December 1968 and January 1969, a group of wealthy cattle ranchers in the Rupununi District in South-West Guyana and supporters of the United Front, an opposition political party, (also seemingly by Venezuelans) planned to secede by organizing an uprising using also the indigenous Amerindians who worked for the ranchers. On 1 January 1969, the secessionists, who had received crash training in weapons in Venezuela took over the district's administrative office, captured the police station and killed or injured several officials in the process. GDF troops were flown into the Rupununi on the same day and the insurrection was quickly suppressed, forcing the dissidents to flee over to the neighboring Brazil and Venezuela. Several of the rebels were, however, captured. A few lost their lives or were injured but the sovereignty of Guyana was restored. (see figure 4 - Map of Guyana)

Figure 4: Map of Guyana



In 1968, Guyana responded to another threat. It was reported that Pedro Beria, allegedly an agent of the Cuban-backed Movement of the Revolutionary Left ((Moveimiento Izquierdo Revolucionario), had entered Guyana from Venezuela and clandestinely met with high-level PPP leaders in Georgetown, purportedly with the aim of exporting the MIR form of armed struggle to Guyana. In reaction to this scenario, GDF troops were deployed to the Barima-Qaini region, the area through which Beria had illegally entered from Venezuela (Burnham 8).

In 2000, comparable only with 1966, when the Venezuelan Armed Forces (Fuerzas Armadas Nacionales – FAN) seized the island of Ankoko by force, it was Suriname’s turn to employ force against Guyana. As shown in Figure 5, Suriname violated Guyana’s air and sea space on at least four known occasions.

Figure 5 – Suriname’s Violation of Guyana’s Sovereignty, 2000

3 June	Naval boats evicted the Toronto-based CGX oil company’s rig from its Eagle drilling site. CGX towed its rig “to a safe place” 45 miles (75 km) south west of the disputed area.
26 June	Defence force aircraft twice flew over Guyana’s southern New River Triangle area.
25 Aug	Four Surinamese soldiers chased a small passenger craft out of the New River Triangle and landed at Scottsburg on the Corentyne coast in an attempt to impound the breached vessel and return it to Nickerie. They fired shots in the air to disperse the crowd, gathered with with bottles and sticks. When members of the Berbice Anti-Smuggling Squad arrived, the soldiers boarded their dinghy and returned to their patrol boat.
13 Sep	Navy arrested 15 fishermen and seized 3 boats off the Corentyne coast in the vicinity of the fishing village, Whim. The men and boats were detained in the Suriname port of Nickerie.

After several weeks of diplomatic negotiations, Suriname declared itself “the power in the river” and failed to accede to Guyana’s demand that the rig be returned to its position. This situation probably encouraged

Venezuela to apply pressure in the Essequibo, its so-called *zona en reclamacion*. After the Guyana government announced that it had signed the 99-year lease on 19 May 2000 with a Texas-based Beal Aerospace Technologies for the establishment of a satellite lunch site along the banks of the Waini River in the Barima-Waini Region, part of the territory claimed by Venezuela, President Chavez objected on the grounds that it could be used for military purposes. The Venezuelan government was also upset over Guyana's granting off-shore exploration licences to two oil companies, Exxon and Chevron. While Chavez declared that his administration had no intension of going to war with Guyana, his foreign minister stressed that Caracas intends to use all legal and diplomatic channels to wrest from Guyana the 61,000 square miles which it losted unfairly under the 1899 Arbitral Award which fixed the boundaries between the two countries.¹⁴

Figure 6 shows that, subsequent to 1968, Guyana has continued to periodically experience encroachment to its sovereignty, particularly that of illegal aliens in search of minerals, timber and wildlife:

Figure 6 - Examples of Encroachment on Guyana's Sovereignty

1982 (Apr)	Brazilian wildcat miners (referred to as <i>Garimpeiros</i>) who were expelled from Venezuela, settled in the Mahdia area of Guyana.
1982 (Jul)	Guyana accused Venezuela of several incursions into its land and air space and complained that a hostile Venezuela patrol had crossed the river border.
1992	GDF increased patrols on Guyana's border with Brazil. These stem from reports that water used by its Amerindian population had been poisoned by the <i>Garimpeiros</i> .
1993	<i>Garimpeiros</i> arrested by the GDF in the gold-rich New Triangle in the south east corner of Guyana. Two aircraft and mining equipment were seized and subsequently returned.

14 In 2000, both Suriname and Venezuela chose to revisit hostilities against Guyana on account of four reasons. One, Guyana's foreign service was known to be in a state of diplomatic inertia; two, there was a lack of bipartisan consensus on the signing of the Beal agreement on 19 May 2000; three, Guyana had failed to consolidate relations with Brazil and four, the military lacked the capability to provide adequate protection.

1994 (Sep)	A Guyaneze mining team, including the head of the Guyana Geology Mines Commission, Brian Sucre, was arrested by armed Venezuelan national guardsmen in the Cuyuni River, which forms the international boundary between Guyana and Venezuela. Though they were released two days later, Venezuela's military authorities temporarily closed its border crossing points with Guyana along the Wenamu and the Cuyuni rivers.
1994	The Garimpeiros built roads and schools on the Guyana side of the border between Guyana and Brazil, particularly at the Monkey Mountain, Orindirik and Maikwak areas.
1997	Thirty garimpeiros were rounded up by the GDF and police in the (Oct) southern Madhia district and deported.

Unlike the pre-1990 period, the level of jungle training of the GDF was adequate and during the years 1992 to 1998, it mounted several operations into the interior against illegal mineral and wildlife poaching (Stabroek News 2). However, after ejection, many of the poachers returned. And so, Guyana has been unable to stop the flow across the border partly because operations to remove poachers are costly and the helicopters that make such operations feasible are often not available.

Though they have been at least six known attempts within Guyana to overthrow a sitting government, one known attempt was engineered from outside of the country. In 1983, a group of Guyanese belonging to a right-wing organization called the Guyana Conservative Party was arrested in Canada and subsequently brought before a court in Cleveland, Ohio, for allegedly seeking to export a cache of arms to Guyana with the aim of removing the Burnham government and assassinating its leaders (Barbados Advocate 2).¹⁵ In an 1984 address to the nation, Burnham's response to this threat was that "... The removal of Forbes Burnham,

15 The leader of the planned coup was identified as Keshewa Keith Monsarar, owner of a Toronto furniture company. Other charged were Thomas Hunsale, Sridatt Lakhani, Parsram Ramrun and Lionel Thalcharchandradeo.

even if it is achieved, will profit the reactionaries and the obscurantists nothing. For if I should go, there are younger and more hardened who will come forward to take my place. Shooting me is a waste, another Rasta gwine take me place. You can't kill a movement" (Burnham 3-4).

Internal Security: Support of the Police and Attempted Coups

Previous to 1994, the army did sometimes lend assistance to the police for the purpose of interior operations in an auxiliary capacity. 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 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. On 8 February 2000, Linden “Blackie” London, Guyana’s most wanted criminal suspect 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 promoted to the rank of lance corporal and later discharged from the army on grounds of disability.¹⁶

Another way in which the army has often acted in concert with the police is in the uncovering of plots to overthrow the sitting government of Guyana. Though it is difficult to uncover the existence of plots, as shown in Figure 7, six are know to have taking place:

Figure 7 - Plots to Overthrow the Government of Guyana

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 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 Persaud, a former assistant superintendant of police, were arrested and accused of

16 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.

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'."

1991 The WPA alleged that the PNC was building a special secret 1,000-size army for the sole purpose of rigging the 1992 election and engaging in related actions. This activity was supposedly conducted by former senior military officers from their base in Sophia.

1992 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 former senior army officers, was uncovered with advanced training plans, a camp and arms.

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.

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.¹⁷ 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 utilised by these aircraft to smuggle drugs in and out of Guyana with little change 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 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

17 A Joint Intelligence Coordinating Centre allows the police and the army to collaborate in such areas as anti-narcotic activity and illegal mining. Guyana's cabinet has also approved a Drug Master Plan; signed a counter-drug over flight agreement with the U.S. and an agreement with the U.K. which provides for cooperation in the investigation of drug trafficking and asset forfeiture; assistance has also come from the Royal Canadian Mounted Police;; Barbados Advocate, "Master Plan in Illegal drugs," 1 July 1996: 6; The Gleaner, "Guyana seen as transshipment, processing point for drugs, 9 April 1997: 12; Francis Ferreira, "Soldiers or Policemen?". Guyana Review, March 1994: 10; Ivelaw Griffith, Drugs and Security in the Caribbean: Sovereignty Under Seige, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997: 75-80.

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 seabed 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.¹⁸ 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.).¹⁹

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

18 At least 20 to 25 illegal fishing vessels operate daily in Guyana's waters. Local fishermen have lodged strong protests over illegal fishing and have called for firm coast guard action. A Japanese firm, Guyana Shrimp Operations, Ltd, operate six shipping trawlers in Guyana waters; Sunday Stabroek, "Japan approached for marine surveillance assistance," 21 January 1996: 3

19 There are reports of harassment of Guyaneze fishermen in the Corentyne River and the coast.

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 the GDFs 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 national and community development. Granger, in his History of the Foundations, Growth and Development of the Guyana Defence Force, emphasizes the need to conduct all affairs within the framework of self-reliance and economic work. He underlies a 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 involvement in the development of the infrastructure and participated in a variety of self-help projects, 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 (1994), Kurupukari (1995), Letham to Mabura (1996), and Koraworuki to Mahdia (1998) (Hassim 5). Again, from 1970 to 1998, GDF personnel have 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 for 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 airstrips several interior locations (1970-1980).

The force also 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. 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.²⁰ 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, dairy farm on the Linden Highway. In addition, in 1972, two ponds at the Garden of Eden as well as a shrimp boat attached to the Maritime Corps, were used to provide the GDF with a supply of fish.

20 Four batches of Guyanese soldiers served in Haiti. The heads of the contingents were Captains Lester Reid, Lt. Col. George Gomes, Captain Ian Alex and Captain Gairy Baird. Colonel Edward Collins served as the commander of Caribbean Battalion III

Overseas Activity

The GDF also assists in times of natural disaster in the Eastern Caribbean and Jamaica (New Nation 15). The Air Corps has flown dozens of rescue and emergency missions. The Army has embarked on a number of overseas and peacekeeping missions. However, Guyana's main contribution lies in the GDF joining the defence forces of the Caribbean in peacekeeping operations, especially in Trinidad and Haiti. A 30-man detachment from the Guyana Police Force visited Namibia from June 1989 to April 1990 as part of the United Nations Special Monitoring Force. There are apocraphal allegations that the GDF was involved in African liberation struggles in both Angola and Mozambique and in a minor insurrection in Dominica in 1979. What is more certain is that GDF officers were involved in planning and executing military strategy that enabled Maurice Bishop and the New Jewel Movement to successfully overthrow the Gairy government in Grenada in 1979 and that they remained to help the regime, particularly, the People Revolutionary Army

A group of rebel Muslimmen in 1990 attempted to seize power in the twin Republic of Trinidad and Tobago (The attempt was thwarted but it left in its wake widespread trepidation, anxiety and confusion). There was a need for additional security forces to help allay the fears of the people and restore stability, so the Guyana Government, together with the countries of the Regional Security System and Jamaica, responded by sending fully armed troops to Trinidad to assist the civil authorities to restore law and order. The 40-member team from the GDF's 1st Infantry Battalion, led by Captain Andrew Pompey, spent two weeks in Trinidad. This was the first occasion that troops from the GDF had become involved in a multinational peacekeeping operation (Denny 1 & 16). The next occasion that GDF troops were deployed overseas occurred in September 1994 when they were dispatched to Haiti to assist in restoring President Aristide to power (Jagan 1 & 16).

Conclusion

Prior to Guyana's achievement of political independence in May 1966, there existed no regular indigenous army. From a one battalion-

size regular force which began with a British and civil defense orientation, it developed into a broad base military institution with three defense forces – the Guyana Defense Force, the Guyana Peoples Militia and the Guyana National Service. These forces represented the regular, reserve and youth arms of the Guyana's national defense system. They were established by the then Peoples National Congress-government, led by Prime Minister Forbes Burnham who drew attention to the border disputes with Suriname and Venezuela to rationalize the increase in operational structure, manpower strength and expenditure. As a corollary of this, Guyana's military became neo-praetorian during the years 1970 and 1991, when the ruling party shaped the beliefs of the military and by so doing the loyalty and obedience of the armed forces, one example of which was its use for regime preservation at the polls for the pro-Afro-Caribbean PNC. However, in the post-Burnham years, Guyana's predominantly black military dumbfounded its detractors when it pledged loyalty to its new political master in October 1992 and acted resolutely to prevent any disruption of the smooth transition of power

Guyana's military has historically provoked vigorous public debate as to its roles in Guyana's circumstances. Prime Minister Burnham (later to become President in 1980) sought during the 1970s, to promote the concept of "a people's army", eschewing the spit and polish tradition and steering in the direction of supporting road-building, engineering projects and enhancing national food security through its own agricultural drive, a thrust that was quite costly. Since 1985, Guyana has scaled down its military to a more affordable force, including the dissolution of the Guyana Peoples Militia and the Guyana National Service. Also, there has been a relative de-emphasis on military duties in favor of non-military functions, two examples of which are the use of the army to help the police in fighting crime, especially the narcotic trade. However, in the year 2000, when Suriname and Venezuela realized that Guyana lacked the means to effectively protect itself, they pressed their territorial claims harder than ever before. Guyana has since begun the process of the recapitalization of the GDF through a variety of means.

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