

van Heerden set up.⁴⁹ While the trials were extra-judicial in that van Heerden was certainly not operating within the Sierra Leonian legal system, his inclusive structure of having local elders present throughout the entirety of the proceedings, expressing their agreement or disagreement with his findings,⁵⁰ strengthened local governance structures and a return to stability.

EO also facilitated the demilitarization of child soldiers in Sierra Leone, many of whom had been drafted by the government, some by the RUF. EO used its helicopters to fly child soldiers it identified back to Freetown, where many were taken to the NGO Children Associated With War, which cared for them. EO also assisted aid agencies in their undertakings in Sierra Leone. Its chairman, Eben Barlow said, 'In Sierra Leone we escorted aid agencies [including, allegedly, two world-famous charities] into the interior: it is incredibly dangerous for them to get on the road and just drive out.'⁵¹

Such activities, particularly the administrative work EO did in the Kono region, seem to fit into what former UN Secretary-General Boutros-Boutros Gali termed peace-building. His report 'An Agenda for Peace,' described the function of post-conflict peace-building:

Peacemaking and peace-keeping operations, to be truly successful, must come to include comprehensive efforts to identify and support structures which will tend to consolidate peace and advance a sense of confidence and well-being among people. These may include disarming the previously warring parties and the restoration of order. repatriating refugees, advisory and training support for security personnel. reforming or strengthening governmental institutions and promoting formal and informal processes of political participation.⁵²

Furthermore, past experience has demonstrated that for peacekeeping missions to be successful, they must establish themselves as credible forces. Due to its superior equipment and robust tactics and attitude, EO was so feared by the RUF that its activities ground to a near standstill after its operations in the Kono region, as discussed above. EO's credibility, in contrast to that of the Sierra Leonian Army, was plainly apparent to Sierra Leonians. One chief said, 'Our soldiers run away even when they have rifles. But these South Africans, when the rebels are there, they go and succeed in decimating them.'⁵³

In contrast, when warring parties do not respect the authority and capabilities of a peacekeeping force, that force may soon find itself compromised. This occurred in Sierra Leone when the RUF took issue with UNAMSIL over mining. The UNAMSIL troops, all from developing nations, lacked the proper equipment, training, and discipline to deal with opposition from the RUF, and were taken hostage all too easily.⁵⁴ The UN hostage incident bears all too similar a resemblance to the ambush of the Sierra Leonian army on the Freetown-Bo road in August 1995. Despite outnumbering the RUF by about three to one, the government troops scattered after the first shots were fired. Even Western troops are not immune to problems, as British troops in Sierra Leone were taken hostage on 25 August 2000, although not by the RUF.⁵⁵ These problems suggest the need for PMCs or other sophisticated military units to provide force-multiplier work to UN peacekeeping troops, especially those from developing nations.