



July 2019

## Key Information

### Sector Size<sup>i</sup>

- 127 PSCs (2016)
- 7,000 PSC personnel (2012)

### Can PSC personnel carry firearms?

Contradicting legislation, however PSCs interviewed indicated that they were not allowed to carry firearms.<sup>ii</sup>

### Montreux Document Participant: No

### International Code of Conduct Association (ICoCA)

- ICoCA Member State: No
- ICoCA Company Members: 0
- ICoCA CSO Members: 0

### Voluntary Principles on Security and Human Rights

- Voluntary Principles State Member: No

### Members of the Private Security Governance Observatory:

- Green Advocates International
- Liberia National Law Enforcement Association (LINLEA)

## Summary

The context surrounding private military and security companies (PMSCs) in Liberia is unique. In the comprehensive peace agreement (CPA) that concluded the Second Liberian Civil War in 2003, the parties to the conflict requested that the United States play a lead role in the organisation of the Liberian Armed Forces restructuring program. The US hired two PMSCs to carry out this process, DynCorp International and Pacific Architects and Engineers, making the Liberian Armed Forces the only military in the world built by PMSCs. Despite this fact, Liberia has not endorsed the Montreux Document.

Alternatively, Liberia has an increasing number of private security companies (PSCs) performing a range of tasks such as providing security to diplomatic missions, government buildings, and large industries. Liberia has a large rubber and logging industry that is protected by Plant Protection Departments (PPDs) of these large companies in order to compensate for the Government of Liberia's inability to provide security and rule of law. In 2006, these plantations already employed a total of 738 private security officers.<sup>iii</sup>

Finally, Liberia is one of the largest flag states for merchant shipping in the world. In response to the rising number of piracy attacks on merchant ships in the Gulf of Aden and the Indian Ocean and the resulting need for security personnel on board to deter such attacks, Liberia issued a document providing guidelines on safely hiring and utilising private security at sea. While the guidelines, released in 2008, were the first laws in private maritime security, they, unfortunately, do not amount to a regulatory framework for PSCs operating on board merchant vessels.

## Legal Framework

PSCs in Liberia fall under the authority of the Ministry of Justice Department of Public Safety. In 2008, the Ministry of Justice released the Guidelines to Organise and Operate Private Security Agencies. These Guidelines require PSCs to register with the Department of Public Safety and lay out other standards of operation such as the carrying of firearms, uniforms, and training.

- [Guidelines to Organise and Operate Private Security Agencies \(Monrovia: Ministry of Justice, Division of Public Safety, 2007\)](#)

# Challenges

Several challenges facing the private security industry in Liberia have been identified including:

## **Insufficient Legal and Regulatory Framework**

Survey responses revealed the view that the Guidelines were either inadequate or impractical to implement. The Department of Public Safety lacks the resources, basic supplies, personnel and logistics to effectively enforce these Guidelines. Despite several companies having violated the Guidelines, very few have been penalized.

## **Other challenges:**

- Low salaries for private security personnel due to the unwillingness of clients to pay necessary fees for services and delayed payment for those services
- Inadequate coordination between national security agencies and the private security sector

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<sup>i</sup> Cecil Griffiths, ongoing research project on private security companies in Liberia, 2016-2017. Also in Marc von Boemcken, "Dealing with private security companies: Options for development cooperation in Timor-Leste, Liberia and Peru" (2012) Bonn International Center for Conversion.

<sup>ii</sup> Ibid.

<sup>iii</sup> Cecil Griffiths, Mapping Study on Gender and Security Sector Reform Actors and Activities in Liberia, ed. Anike Doherty and Aiko Holvikivi (Geneva: DCAF, 2011), 25.