The Anatomy of Ghanaian Domestic Military Operations: Exploring Operations Vanguard and Calm Life

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Abstract

This article focuses on the under-researched and under-discussed domestic security implications in Ghana of military participation in international peacekeeping operations. While there is appreciable awareness and knowledge of the role of peacekeepers in reducing conflict in host countries, very little attention is given to their actions when they return home. The money, training and combat experience emanating from peacekeeping are likely to have considerable institutional, policy, operational (tactics, techniques and procedures) and political consequences in their home countries. In Ghana, especially, peacekeeping training and combat experience provide tools that can be used for internal security interventions. Increasingly, there has been a change in policy in Ghana where the military is involved in several local security operations. This policy shift has seen the creation of a number of joint internal operations involving the military and the police. Based on fieldwork in Ghana, the article explores two major internal operations: Operation Calm Life (to combat armed robbery) and Operation Vanguard (to combat illegal mining). The study shows how diverse dimensions of experience from peacekeeping have practical implications for shaping domestic security provision.

Keywords: UN peacekeeping operations, military, policing, assemblage, Ghana

Résumé

Cet article se concentre sur les implications en matière de sécurité intérieure de la participation militaire aux opérations internationales de maintien de la paix au Ghana, qui sont peu étudiées et peu discutées. Si le rôle des casques bleus dans la réduction des conflits dans les pays d'accueil est bien connu et reconnu, on accorde très peu d'attention à leurs actions lorsqu'ils rentrent chez eux. L'argent, la formation et l'expérience du combat émanant du maintien de la paix sont susceptibles d'avoir des conséquences institutionnelles, politiques, opérationnelles (tactiques, techniques et procédures) et politiques considérables dans leur pays d'origine. Au Ghana, en particulier, la formation au maintien de la paix et l'expérience du combat fournissent des outils qui peuvent être utilisés pour les interventions de sécurité interne. L'armée est impliquée de plus en plus dans plusieurs opérations de sécurité locales en raison d'un changement de politique qui a eu lieu. Ce changement de politique a donné lieu à la création d'un certain nombre d'opérations internes conjointes impliquant l'armée et la police. Basé sur un travail de terrain au Ghana, l'article explore deux grandes opérations internes : l'opération Calm Life (pour lutter contre les vols à main armée) et l'opération Vanguard (pour lutter contre l'exploitation minière illégale). L'étude montre comment les diverses dimensions de l'expérience du maintien de la paix ont des implications pratiques pour façonner l'assurance de sécurité locale.

Mots-clés: opérations de maintien de la paix de l'ONU, armée, maintien de l'ordre, assemblage, Ghana

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Introduction[1]

Ghana has had a long history of contributing to UN peacekeeping operations (PKOs). Considered a stable democracy in Africa, despite a chequered political history of multiple unconstitutional changes of government and military rule, the country has distinguished itself on the international scene by sending peacekeepers to some of the world's most volatile and dangerous conflicts (Aning & Edu-Afful, 2017; Aning & Aubyn, 2013). Ghana's commitment to global peacekeeping has seen its forces serve in over 63 UN PKOs, currently with a total of 2,156 personnel in nine missions, the biggest contributions being in South Sudan, Lebanon and Mali.[2]

Much of the existing literature outlines the history of Ghana's participation in PKOs (Edu-Afful et al, 2019; Asante, 2019; Austin, 1985); the rationale for providing peacekeepers (Aning & Aubyn, 2013); the contribution to West African PKOs (Aboagye, 1999; Birikorang, 2007); the unintended consequences of PKOs (Aning, 2007a); the experiences from peacekeeping theatres (Aning & Edu-Afful, 2017; Kotia, 2015); the rebellion after participating in peacekeeping (Dwyer, 2015); and how the Ghana Armed Forces (GAF) has become a civilian-friendly army due to its peacekeeping activities abroad (Agyekum, 2019). Little, however, has been written about internal security provision when peacekeepers return home (Albrecht, 2022a). This article contributes to the under-analysed literature on military involvement in post-deployment domestic security operations by exploring how Ghanaian peacekeepers' external experiences translate into domestic security operations.

Ghana's peacekeeping activism is shaped by its historical quest to be a leading nation in establishing international peace and security. In 2019, the United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations, Jean-Pierre Lacroix, while discussing the pivotal role of Ghana in enforcing peace and security in other parts of the world, noted that "Ghana is synonymous with peacekeeping" (KAIPTC, 2019). Afele argues that the commitment to international peacekeeping is a desire to "positively contribute towards a lasting peaceful co-existence and security in the world" (2000:1). In practical terms, Bluwey suggests that Ghana's diplomacy is underpinned by values such as "national self-preservation or survival, establishment of power and influences in Africa and the pursuit of world peace through the policy of positive neutrality and non-alignment" (2002:46). Besides, contributing to international peacekeeping has had multiple domestic effects on Ghana's security sector, political governance and the provision of internal security (Aubyn et al, 2019; Levine, 2016).

Internal operations in Ghana certainly mark a departure from traditional peacekeeping, as I explore in greater detail below, but there is a lack of clarity when it comes to definitions of these kind of operations. Do we call them internal operations, with a secondary or supporting role to the police? Are they domestic peacekeeping, as referred to by some local security observers? Or do we refer to them as military assistance to civil authorities (MACA) as many military officers I interviewed for this article did? Whatever the case, within the last two decades, the domestic deployment of the military in internal security operations has been and remains considerable. In 2020, Ghana had 22 internal operations involving the military and over the period 2001 to 2020, more than one-third of GAF personnel were deployed in internal operations throughout the country (Interview, brigadier general, Land Operations, Army HQ, Accra, 13 Nov 2020).[3]

This article shows that the capabilities of the military in dealing with internal security challenges has been sharpened by their years of experience in international peacekeeping and their understanding of local security challenges that have been derived from these experience abroad. At the same time, public perception about their specific mandate and operational engagements remains unclear. The article is divided into four sections. The first section sets out the idea of assemblages as the theoretical framing of the article. This framework enables me to show how the military procedures, tactics, strategies, discourses, logistics and practice of international peacekeeping coalesce and are translated into internal operations. The second section analyses Ghana's peacekeeping experience by tracing the country's participation in international peacekeeping from 1960 to date. The third section comparatively discusses the legal, political and technical basis of internal operations in Ghana with special reference to two operations, Calm Life and Vanguard. These two operations strengthen the existing internal security framework, reflecting the transfer of knowledge from the international to the local context of security provision, information sharing, civil-military relations, protection of civilians,

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[2] https://peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/03_country_and_mission_45_dec_2021.pdf
[3] Currently, the military is engaged in several internal operations across the country including Operation Conquered Fist, Operation Calm Life, Operation Gong-Gong, Operation Halt I and II, Operation Cow Leg, Operation Hunter, Operation Boafo and Operation Sit Down Look.

monitoring and observation. The final section provides a critical assessment of how international peacekeeping operations shape internal operations. Data for this article was gathered from extensive field visits to Tamale, Sunyani, Takoradi and Accra between September 2019 and February 2020. All of the fieldwork data was collected before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Theoretical framing: Assemblages

To understand the intersection between military experiences abroad and domestic security enforcement by the GAF, the idea of assemblages can help to frame how institutional norms, discourses and actors relating to peacekeeping and internal operations interact. As a concept propounded by Deleuze and Guattari (1987), assemblage is used to understand the formation of complex and diverse social and non-social compositions. Deleuze defines an assemblage as "[...] a multiplicity which is made up of many heterogeneous terms and which establishes liaisons, relations between them across ages, sexes, and reigns – different natures" (Deleuze & Parnet, 1987:69).

Assemblages are not structures: elements within assemblages maintain some modicum of independence (Baker & McGuirk, 2017). Assemblages are defined by their diversity in character and content and by their changing relationships. In this regard, the notion of relations of exteriority is central, and new identities are formed through connections (Ballantyne, 2007). Bachmann, Holmquist and Bell argue that assemblages mainly are ad-hoc groupings whose elements are subject to "reorganization and transformation" (2015:17). Assemblages are relational, meaning that they help to sequence multiple heterogeneous entities so that they work together as a whole for a certain period. DeLanda argues that these relations indicate "that a component part of an assemblage may be detached from it and plugged into a different assemblage in which its interactions are different" (2006:10).

Assemblages are fertile as they have the capacity to produce "new territorial organizations, behaviours, expressions, actors and realities" (Müller, 2015:28). Also, there is no dominant entity in an assemblage. Deleuze and Guattari contend that: "Desire constantly couples continuous flows and partial objects that are by nature fragmentary and fragmented" (1987:6). They establish territories as they emerge and hold together by constantly mutating, transforming and separating. Fundamentally, assemblages are territorial both spatially and non-spatially (De Landa, 2006). Ong and Collier posit that "an assemblage is in a constant process of transformation simultaneously de-territorialized and re-territorialized, and can therefore serve to explain emergence" (2005:12).

At the international peacekeeping level, complex assemblages of norms, principles, frameworks and guidelines are collated into policy documents, training manuals, operating procedures and field manuals (Doucet, 2018). Assemblage in this international arena captures how civilian and security staff in UN peacekeeping deliver mandated benchmarks such as security provision, protection of civilians and institution-building (Higate & Henry, 2010). For the most part, the assemblage of multidimensional actors (military, police and civilians) amalgamate to enable achievement of the mandate.

In the context of this article, the assembled character of domestic security provisions enables different security actors with different forms of power and resources to come together to function as a whole in the exercise of their security functions in specific locations. Current internal interventions such as Operation Vanguard and Operation Conquered Fist assemble the experience, conversations and communication carried from the peacekeeping theatre to the local level in Ghana. Besides, the concept helps us to articulate how the sustained participation in international peacekeeping has transformed the way the military as an institution works domestically to support other security agencies of the state to achieve their goals. Additionally, it contributes to capturing how lived experiences of the individual military officers who have been engaged in international PKOs are integrated back home by way of revised domestic assignments (see Albrecht, 2022b; Aubyn, 2022).

As in international peacekeeping, most internal operations take place in volatile environments, meaning that security is the most significant common denominator. The Ghanaian government has assessed that having multiple security actors collaborate and complement each other in the delivery of internal security, specifically the military and police, is essential. Increasingly, these operational environments have become the domain where several norms and values associated with security meet; the location where the global experience of working with different countries, operating under different principles, procedures and frameworks are transferred to local operations in Ghana.

Ghana's peacekeeping experience

Peacekeeping operations have become the singular most important instrument of the UN to maintain international peace and security (UN DPO, 2009). Bellamy et al (2010) argue that whenever peacekeepers[4] are deployed into conflict areas, their presence reduces the possibility of war by about 85%. Since its inception in the late 1940s, the variety of tasks allocated to PKOs, in general, has expanded considerably to absorb the changing patterns of the international security environment and to concentrate mainly on emerging threats to global peace and security (Aning et al, 2013; Wiharta et al, 2012). Structurally, the evolution from traditional to multi-dimensional peacekeeping has resulted in transformed forms of collaboration between the military, police and civilians in addressing the multiple threats that confront a conflict country. Multidimensional peacekeeping addresses the full spectrum of peacebuilding activities, ranging from providing secure environments to monitoring human rights and rebuilding the capacity of the state. In most PKOs, the military remains the largest component and the most vital to the survival of the mission. The functions that the military performs are clearly spelled out in the mandate from the Security Council. In most situations, the primary function is to secure and to create an enabling environment for other components of the mission to operate in.

Ghana's peacekeeping experience can be traced to nearly sixty years of sustained participation and commitment to global peacekeeping. The UN considers Ghana as one of the traditional troop and police contributing countries. Since the United Nations Operation in the Congo in 1960, Ghana has repeatedly used unassailed military power to support the UN and Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in countries going through periods of conflict, including Lebanon, East Timor, Afghanistan, Côte d'Ivoire, Cambodia, Kosovo, Rwanda, Mali and Sudan. For the past six decades, Ghana remains one of the largest and most consistent troop contributors, sending men and women to 35 multilateral peacekeeping missions globally (Interview, colonel, peacekeeping dept, Army HQ, Accra, 18 Nov 2020).

Among the three main types of contributions that troop-contributing countries make – staff officers, military observers and formed units (Coleman, 2014) – Ghana has made contributions in all three. In the UN missions, formed units or contingents include enabling units such as armour, infantry, aviation, engineering, transport and various other support units, some of which can provide logistic, communication and medical support. Traditionally, contingents are tasked to provide security for UN staff, partners, infrastructure and beneficiaries. They are also there to create and maintain stable and secured environments and to collect, transport and store weapons and ammunitions. In fulfilling these task and responsibilities, military personnel engage in confidence building patrolling and quick impact projects, while also providing security for VIPs and protecting UN facilities among other.

The first category of deployed GAF personnel have been with the formed contingents. They have undertaken specialised tasks such as escort/guard duties, long and short-range patrols, securing the environment, and providing military deterrent to would-be spoilers of the peace. Several interviewees for this study emphasised the different roles and tasks undertaken by GAF on international assignments. For instance, a non-commissioned officer (NCO) from United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) highlighted how his Bravo Company conducted both long and short range patrols including foot patrols in close coordination with the Lebanese Armed Forces along the blue line to help maintain calm and stability in southern Lebanon (Interview, NCO, Army HQ, Accra, 12 October 2020). A former air vice-marshal (AVM) recounted how the three squadrons that he was part of used air assets such as A109, Z-9 and Mi-17/171 helicopters to do pipeline and powerline patrols, coastal fishery patrols and ambulance flights during the conflict in Côte d'Ivoire (Interview, retired AVM, Labone, Accra, 8 November 2020).

The GAF's role in missions in Liberia, Lebanon and Cambodia, for instance, was to provide technical support to political mediators conducting negotiations. This support came in the form of monitoring the ceasefire agreement, protecting demilitarised zones, and ensuring an effective disarmament and demobilisation process. Its tactics of establishing cordial relationships with the civilian population have helped to separate rival parties and make arrests as necessary in Congo, Rwanda and Sierra Leone. Additionally, as part of many of these PKOs, the GAF has been tasked with providing a secure environment to allow the mandates of the missions to be implemented. These tasks have been undertaken through the provision of checkpoints, providing armed convoy escort for safety and movement of people and logistics as well as protection of humanitarian personnel and storage sites. Additionally, they have conducted cordon and search operations, crowd control and weapons confiscation.

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[4] Throughout this article the term 'peacekeepers' is used to refer to all categories of peacekeeping personnel associated with peace support operations including military, police, humanitarian workers and private security contractors.

The GAF has also been tasked with securing elections during peacekeeping missions. Ghana contributed to the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) when, for the first time in 1992, the UN added elections as part of a peacekeeping mandate (Stedman et al, 2002; Ekpe, 2009). The GAF has subsequently participated in other international missions involving elections such as the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) in 1999; the United Nations Mission in Liberia in 2003; and the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO). The military's tasks have included protection of electoral sites and materials, providing escort and transportation for election officials and materials, and offering standby protection arrangements in conflict areas such as Bawku, Chereponi and Yendi. An officer with extensive peacekeeping experience recounted how units within the Ghanaian contingent in the Congo mission provided security for presidential aspirants in the 2011 DRC general election (Interview, colonel, peacekeeping dept, Army HQ, Accra, 18 Nov 2020). Another officer who had been on several peacekeeping tours said that there were many lessons learned from situations in which the military played a significant role in providing security for voting centres, helping to transport voting materials and securing elections in Sierra Leone, East Timor, Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire (Interview, brigadier general, Army HQ, Accra, 24 Nov 2020).

The second category of deployed officers are the UN military observers (MILOBs). These are unarmed officers whose primary task within a peacekeeping mission includes monitoring a ceasefire, supervising the disarmament of militias, observing conditions in potential conflict areas and reporting on alleged human rights abuses (UN, 2001). The most effective MILOBs combine core military capabilities of patrolling and weapon identification with investigation, inspection, reporting, communication and conflict resolution and management skills to de-escalate situations. Many of the individual Ghanaian officers that are selected as MILOBs undertake roles such as foot and vehicular patrols; carrying out negotiations when needed; inspecting arms at weapon collection points; and monitoring and reporting on cease-fires, truces and armistice agreements between the conflicting parties (Interview, former MILOB, MINURSO, Accra, 2020). A officer deployed to the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina described their duties:

> Ghanaian Observes were posted to areas such as Sarejevo, Pale, Zepa, Kosovo, […] Goražde We were expected to provide daily reports on patrols, happenings in their operational areas; thus, we reported on whether there had been any skirmishes, sniper attacks, shootings, and generally how the observers were carrying out their duties. (Interview, retired AVM, KAIPTC, Accra, 4 Nov 2020)

These Ghanaian officers have to be knowledgeable about some of the operational statistics and details in the area of operation, for example, the number of trenches that have been moved or improved, where they are located, their depth, who owns them, and where the boundaries are located. In most of the missions that the army has been involved in, soldiers have assumed responsibility for ensuring law and order and have even replaced the local police in some cases.

The third category of military personnel are staff officers. Although technically staff officers are part of contingents, individual military officers can serve in knowledge-based functions, both within the force headquarters and in various specialised positions where they sometimes integrate with other civilian and police components. The common key UN staff functions include personnel, military information, operations, logistics, future plans, communication, training, engineering and civil-military coordination (UN DPO, 2018). The role of staff officers is to break down the strategic objectives of missions into operational and tactical components for contingents and units to perform in the field. One officer with experience in the DRC and South Sudan said that staff officers serving in a peacekeeping operation control and execute operational activities by coordinating and integrating the timely passage of information and orders to units and contingents (Interview, colonel, Army HQ, Accra, 24 Nov 2020). One major with peacekeeping experience from MONUSCO reiterated performing activities such as daily operational briefs, quarterly visits to all major units, monthly operational updates to SRSG and six monthly mission operational capability reviews (Interview, major, Army HQ, Accra, 28 Nov 2020). In his words, staff officers "do the thinking and ask the units and contingents on the ground to implement and ensure that these tasks are actually implemented"(ibid).

Ghana's domestic security dynamics and the role of the military

Within the past three decades, Ghana has witnessed a series of established communal conflicts (Brukum, 1999), and almost every community in the country has experienced some form of conflict over land, chiefly succession or identity (Awedoba, 2009; Tsikata & Seini, 2004). Brosche and Elferversson (2012) define communal conflicts as violent conflicts between non-state actors that are organised along communal identities. Some of these conflicts include tensions and violent clashes between the Nkonyas and Alavanyos and Pekis and Tsitos, among others (Tsikata & Sieni, 2004). Security is essential both for the civilian population and the conflicting parties. In the period between World War II and independence in 1957, the Ghanaian army was mainly used to maintain internal security. The formulation of the constitution in 1992 provided a broader internal role for the GAF, not only to protect Ghana's territory from invasion but also to conduct internal offensive warfare, sometimes in the context of military alliances with other domestic security providers such as the police, immigration and customs.

In most democratic states like Ghana, the deployment of the armed forces internally is a last resort, an exception. However, in the case of Ghana, the use of the GAF is as per the constitution stretched to cover cases of internal security and national development, especially in situations where the Ghana Police Service (GPS) is lacking the competence, manpower, logistics and expertise to act alone. The constitution indicates that "There shall be the Armed Forces of Ghana which shall consist of the Army, the Navy and the Air Force" and they are to "defend the sovereignty of the country from [internal and external aggression] and to be used for other purposes as may be directed by the president" (Article 210, 1 and 3). A brigadier general with extensive experience in IS operations noted:

> The armed forces as a tool in the hands of the commander-in-chief is to be used in creating an enabling environment for normal day-to-day to go on so an average citizen can go about their routine activities without fear of intimidation and in a secured environment. (Interview, brigadier general, National Boundary Commission, Accra, 18 Nov 2020)

Although this is traditionally the role of the police, the GAF is deployed when the situation is characterised by four key elements: (a) when the police force is overwhelmed; (b) when the equipment or weapons being used by an adversary are beyond the capability of the police; (c) when certain expertise, such as bomb disposal, is required and the police do not have that expertise; and (d) when there is cause to believe that the police force is likely to be overwhelmed in the near future.

The decision-making process to deploy the military in internal security, just as with peacekeeping, occurs at two main levels: the political (civil) authority and the military high command. Different political and security considerations feature in the kind of mandate or tasks assigned to the military in these internal operations, such as the nature of the crime, its frequency, public agitation to the ruling class, and political pressure from both internal and external political party relations. In most of these internal operations, lack of a clear mandate from the political level was cited by several military interviewees as a reason for the inability to effectively address internal security concerns. A watertight mandate from the strategic level would improve chances of an effective operation, but it is almost impossible to achieve, because of political pressure and interference by the executive. A brigadier general with extensive peacekeeping experience argued that officers as low as lieutenants and colonels enjoy direct access to the presidency, and as a consequence, more senior officers can be blocked in the performance of their lawful duties (Interview, brigadier general, Army HQ, Accra, 24 Nov 2020). Anecdotal evidence shows that the change of government in 2017 saw acts of indiscipline peak as young officers lobbied Jubilee House (the seat of government) for appointments and transfers.

The approach to the mandating process has always been at the discretion of the political authorities, that is, the executive acting in its own capacity or through the Ghana Armed Forces Council (GAFC).[5] Practical requests for military support are often made by the GPS. Authorisation of internal operations is split among the national, regional and district levels. The national security architecture provides the legal framework for the joint task force in internal security operations. At the national level, the National Security Council (NSC) represents the highest decision-making body for all decisions on internal operations (Act 526, 1996). All regional and district councils are accountable to the NSC. It is headed by the president with the vice-president, relevant ministers and security chiefs, and others that might be determined relevant by the president (Act 526, 1996). The Regional Security Councils (REGSECs) and the District Security Councils (DISECs) operate as committees

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[5] The 1992 Constitution stipulates that the GAFC should be comprised of the vice-president as chair, minister of defence, minister of interior, minister of foreign affairs, chief of defence staff, services chiefs, the senior warrant officer or its equivalent and two persons appointed by the president acting in consultation with the Council of Chiefs.

of the NSC and perform such functions of the NSC at the regional and district levels. The military is represented at both lower levels (Act 526, 1996).

When it comes to matters of defence relating to policy and strategy, and by extension internal deployment and operations, the president (who is the commander-in-chief) is the final decision-maker. However, before any decision is made to initiate or internally deploy officers on operations, a threat assessment is conducted by the three combat commands; namely, the southern, central and northern commands as well as the training command, with support from armoured reconnaissance, artillery, engineer and signal regiments. In recent times, a special forces brigade has been created to help deal with internal and external threats including terrorism (Interview, brigadier general, Northern Command, Tamale, 18 Sept 2020; for more on counterterrorism, see Christensen, 2022). Of the three commands, two are responsible for ten regions while the remaining one is in charge of six.[6] It is the responsibility of these commands to interact with the civil authority and the GPS in the various areas of responsibility to maintain internal security. This security arrangement has been designed in such a way that the entire country is covered in the provision of security.

Security provisions

When conflict breaks out in any part of Ghana, the GAF is mandated to support the GPS to bring stability to the conflict area. Particularly in situations where violence against civilians is recurrent or has the potential to occur, the military is engaged to use field experience from international missions. The GAF can use these experiences in the containment and management of internal communal conflict, and do so less violently than other African militaries. According to a long-serving colonel with experience from Darfur, Côte d'Ivoire and DRC:

> In other African countries when the military intervenes there is so much harm on civilians. But looking at the concept of protection of civilians that the officers have been exposed to […] the military have it in their minds so when they intervene in these communal conflicts they rather help to settle these conflicts without creating harm to the civilian population. (Interview, colonel, Army HQ, Accra, 18 Nov 2020)

In most of the communal conflicts that involve arms, the military is the first to be deployed to protect lives and property. Military capabilities are also used to provide various aspects of logistics, including camp construction, observation post, communication, health, and transportation to help protect locals, monitor disputed boundaries, etc. The GAF has also become part of the Ghanaian electoral security architecture, providing protection for electoral sites, materials and officials. The ease with which these practices take place is a result of years of peacekeeping experiences, most recently from Ghana's engineering contingent in Timbuktu with the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in *Mali* (MINUSMA). One security technique that has been a key feature of most communal conflicts in Ghana is the imposition of curfews. The military as part of these internal operations has been solely responsible for the imposition of these curfews mainly when the GPS is unable, overwhelmed or when arms are involved.

Regarding information sharing, the military component of internal operations has been used variously to detect the root causes of domestic security infractions and to help sensitise and inform local residents on the effects of these security challenges. In recent years, as security threats have become more complex with terrorism, violent extremism, vigilantism, and transnational organised crimes, the military has become even more vital in dealing with internal security (Edu-Afful & Allottey-Pappoe, 2016; Aning, 2007b; Christensen, 2022). The GAF is the most cohesive and best organised security organisation in Ghana and is expected to improve internal security, not least by the public, when it deploys. Several of the officers interviewed emphasised that the GAF has been recognised as the country's only competent institution and the backbone of the state. A platoon commander with one of the internal security operations in the northern region said that there were many lessons to be learned from military involvement in internal operations (Interview, commander, Northern Command, Tamale, 16 Sept 2020). Because of their operational effectiveness, organisational discipline and political neutrality, citizens respond more positively to the GAF compared to other security providers.

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[6] At the commencement of these operations, Ghana had ten political administrative regions. Currently, there are sixteen administrative regions.

Exploring the role of the military in internal operations

In this section, the article discusses the military advanced activities in Operation Vanguard and Operation Calm Life. It offers an in-depth understanding of the roles, purpose, structures, actors, coordination and cooperation within the two operations and how diverse dimensions of experience from international peacekeeping have been 'assembled' and have had practical implications for shaping domestic security provision in Ghana.

Operation Calm Life

Before the turn of the millennium, as a result of escalating violence including armed robbery, murders and assault, there were calls from the general Ghanaian populace for security agencies to get tougher on crime (Aning et al, 2013; Aning, 2007b). In July 2001, under the special powers of the National Security Council (NSC), Operation Calm Life was formed. It was the first joint police-military patrol operation to help combat robbery and violent crime. The two security agencies were allowed to take extraordinary measures to curtail the rising spate of armed robbery. Initially, the operation started in the Greater Accra and Kumasi areas but was later extended to all sixteen political regions in the country due to changing crime trends and the spread of armed robbery incidences nationwide (Interview, colonel, Army HQ, Accra, 2019). Since its inception, due to logistical and manpower constraints, the operation has been relaunched twice (in 2005 and 2017) with strengthened mandates. It has transcended political divides and continued under the leadership of four different presidents heading two political parties.[7] President Akufo-Addo, while relaunching Calm Life in December 2017, assured Ghanaians that his government has the "commitment to our security agencies, so they can effectively carry out their mandate and help maintain the peace and security of our nation in our quest to build a progressive and prosperous Ghana" (Myjoyonline, 2017).

Institutionally, this joint operation is police-led, with the military in a supporting role. The GPS plays its constitutional role of order-making while the military backs them with the needed support. Their ability to collaborate is hinged on similar joint tasks performed on internal peacekeeping operations. The joint operation headquarters is housed at the national, regional and divisional police headquarters. To improve operational effectiveness, a joint Calm Life secretariat has been established to coordinate activities such as joint planning, zoning of areas of operations, deployments, logistical requirement, training and capacity building, reporting, budgeting and funding, and after-action review (Interview, army general, Army HQ, Accra, 2020).

Unlike the UN operations where troops undergo pre-deployment training, troops deployed in Calm Life do not. A situation that can arguably explain the interoperability challenges that have bedevilled the operations to date was highlighted by one colonel with years of international peacekeeping experience:

> The deployment of a joint patrol team without adequate background knowledge of the specific roles and duties of personnel from the composite security agencies constituted a major challenge. […] Personnel were assembled without initial orientation and launched into action without clarity on their operational roles, responsibilities, and rules of engagement. (Interview, colonel, Land Operations, Army HQ, Accra, 20 Nov 2020)

Operationally, deployments are carried through eleven police regional commands. Apart from Central and Eastern regional commands that deploy solely a police team, all the remaining nine regional commands – Accra, Tema, Ashanti, Western, Volta, Northern, Upper West, and Upper East – deploy a joint military-police team. Units or detachments that have joined Calm Life have operated mainly from the mother units and only 'marry-up' with the police in the evening to conduct patrols; as such, they never undergo rotation under this operation, unlike Operation Vanguard. Each of these regional commands is marked into zones for mobile patrol deployment and random spot-checks duties. In 2019, there were 34 zones marked for mobile patrols and 129 snap checkpoints nationally (Interview, colonel, Land Operations, Accra, 2019).

The operational approach employed is similar to hotspot policing adopted in most international peacekeeping (Braga & Weisburd, 2010; Spelman, 1995). This approach requires that interventions are directed at smaller geographical areas such as localities with high crime rates. In the case of Calm Life, day and night patrols are adopted as a robust strategy for crime prevention. Other hotspot methods like increasing the presence of both the police and the military at strategic locations, conducting snap checks, swoops and highway patrols have been incorporated to improve the operation's efficacy. However, the ineptitude of the GPS to consistently conduct end of patrol debriefings has posed a major challenge to the conduct of the operation,

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[7] John Kuffor, New Patriotic Party (NPP) (2001-2008), John Atta-Mills, National Democratic Congress (NDC) (2009-2012); John Mahama, NDC (2012-2016) and Nana Akufo-Addo, NPP (2017-present).

creating gaps in information sharing and after-review action. Concern over leadership constitutes another major challenge to the operation. The question of who assumes command and control of mobile patrol and checkpoints creates an unhealthy rivalry between the GAF and their GPS counterparts.

Calm Life adopts a similar mechanism to international peacekeeping, where both the police and the military assemble the full spectrum of activities, tools, mechanisms and tactics to protect civilians from physical violence (Findley, 2002). The police and the military undertake both confidence-building patrols (mobile, foot and motorbike) and snap checks. Additionally, the GAF complements the GPS's involvement in such operations by undertaking specialised tasks such as cordon and search, helicopter insertion, and arrest of notorious criminals which the military has the expertise to undertake, especially in non-urban settlements.

Operation Vanguard

Mining – particularly gold mining – is one of the sectors that attracts the most foreign direct investment for Ghana, pulling more than USD 4 billion in revenue per annum (UNCTAD, 2019). Yet often gold mining takes place illegally – either without a permit or in restricted areas (World Bank, 2002). Between 2000 and 2017, illegal small-scale mining, referred to locally as *galamsey*, assumed alarming proportions in Ghana. The practice employs both local and foreign miners, and sometimes uses heavy machinery such as excavators and bulldozers. The depletion of surface vegetation and the silting of rivers has led to flooding, loss of biodiversity and farmlands, soil pollution, and general environmental degradation (Majer, 2013). Galamsey is also associated with an increase in rampant crimes (murder, armed confrontation, prostitution, banditry and illegal drug use) and the proliferation of small arms and explosives.

The issue has even assumed a national security dimension, mainly because the Government of Ghana is losing colossal revenue and the critical foreign exchange as a result of smuggling and the destruction of cocoa farms, forest reserves and the pollution of potable drinking water. Ghana's territorial integrity has been threatened but these illegal miners have acquired sophisticated firearms to defend their nefarious activities. Operation Vanguard, a joint military-police task force, was therefore created in July 2017 to combat illegal small-scale mining (see Alhassan & Asante, 2022).

Considering that the GAF is usually tasked to lead joint operations, Vanguard has a distinctive structure and character that bears a resemblance to UN peacekeeping. An inter-ministerial committee – with military, police and civilian components – is responsible for providing strategic direction. Interoperability is essential for all peacekeeping operations (Rivard, 2018). Likewise, for an internal operation such as Vanguard, which had a multidimensional leadership structure and pursues a complex set of objectives, having a close relationship between the military, police and the civilian authorities is important (Aubyn et al, 2019). The display of coordination and interoperability between the inter-ministerial committee and uniform personnel has been instrumental in the gains made in the fight against illegal mining.

In terms of command and control, the operational side is commanded by a military colonel with a chief superintendent from the GPS deputising. The initial deployment of 400 personnel for Vanguard included 245 military and 155 police officers (Awiah, 2017). Ordinarily, most PKOs are land-based, so the army rather than navy or air force performs most of the operational tasks. Unlike Calm Life, Vanguard personnel undergo pre-deployment training similar to that undertaken by Ghanaian peacekeepers before an international mission; however, the scheduled period for pre-deployment training for Vanguard was ten days compared to the five weeks standard for the UN (UNDPKO, 2009).

The operational structure and locations of Vanguard are fundamentally different from Calm Life. In phase one, three forward operating bases were created along areas that were identified as hotspots of illegal mining, namely, Ashanti, Eastern and Western regions. Other regions, such as the Central Region, were expected to be covered in the subsequent phases. The bases were created because communities such as Tarkwa, Aboso, New Abirem and Kyekyewre that the taskforce was supposed to deploy into had no existing military bases. In contrast to Calm Life and international peacekeeping, women were not deployed for Vanguard duties because of the hostile environment of *galamsey*.[8]

International peacekeeping has improved civil-military relations at home and contributed to the professionalism with which the military undertake their domestic functions (Aning & Aubyn, 2013). Yet other

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[8] This invariably reinforces traditional gender divisions in Ghanaian society and perpetuates stereotypes about women's roles contrary to international efforts to ensure that women play an integral role in the security agencies, as stipulated by the UN Security Council's Resolution 1325 (Pruitt, 2016; Kronsell, 2012). For a reflection on women's roles in internal missions, see Atobrah et al (2022).

commissioned and non-commissioned officers interviewed in Tamale argued that, by coming into close contact with civilians, the military in Ghana are beginning to act – and be perceived – more like civilians. As a result of the standard procedures in peacekeeping missions, soldiers have had to adapt their combative approach to a more civilian friendly and a non-combative approach. The result is that soldiers are now seen as less combative and even weak – likely to flee when attacked or retreat immediately after contact with a potential assailant. This invariably has reduced their operational effectiveness as they now struggle to elicit compliance from communities. They are frequently attacked and abused by communities and individuals for undertaking their tasks. The murder of Captain Maxwell Adam Mahama in Denkyira-Obuasi in May 2017, the assault of two soldiers at Dome Faase near Kasoa in August 2020, and another assault of two soldiers in Sunyani in May 2021 are just some examples of community violence towards the military.

However, with regards to dealing with illegal mining, the role of the military in Vanguard has been critical in monitoring, reporting and sharing information on the challenges associated with illegal mining. Vanguard troops conduct static and mobile patrols, seize illegal mining equipment and weaponry, and arrest illegal miners for prosecution, where possible. Since the commencement of the operation in 2017, an estimated 2,244 operations covering reconnaissance patrols, show of force/confidence, confirmatory and monitoring patrols were conducted successfully. Over the one-year period, a total of 1,247 suspected illegal miners were arrested (Aklorbortu, 2018). Since its inception, Vanguard has been able to dominate its areas of responsibility reaching a total of 2,245 towns in 70 districts across five political regions.

These achievements came with strategic constraints, including diminishing cooperation from the mining communities and interference from politicians, opinion leaders and influential individuals in society (for more on the influence of local leaders on policing, see Abdallah & Aning, 2022). Some of the forward base commanders were called and asked to abandon an exercise or activity they were embarking on or release arrested suspects and seized equipment. Indeed, some have been told to avoid certain areas of operations altogether (Interview, former commanding officer, Accra, 2020). The joint operations suffer similar operational challenges as in international peacekeeping, including the ability of the GPS to provide the required personnel with the requisite expertise to handle the assigned tasks (Interview, colonel, Tamale, 2020). As was highlighted by one senior military office:

> [...] so, for instance, you ask the police to bring three investigators and they bring you two investigators and a visibility officer. That shortfall affects or impact on the operations negatively. (Ibid)

Furthermore, many citizens also criticised the operational strategy of Vanguard. The burning of seized excavators and properties of illegal miners from all the operating communities attracted nationwide condemnation (Ghanaweb, 2017; Citifmonline, 2017). However, in supporting the actions of the taskforce, Minister of Defence Dominic Nitiwul stated:

> The law already outlaws mining within the river bodies and 100 metres to each of the flanks of [a] river. If you do any activity there, it is an illegal activity. The President has directed that we clean up the river bodies and like I said, we are not taking any equipment home, we are not seizing any equipment, no equipment will be returned home. It's not like before, where you will seize equipment. They will all be destroyed on-site, it is as simple as that. (Duodu, 2021)

As the above comments show, the instinctive concern for civilians is often tied up with ideas about how professional soldiers should behave. In general, even when pressed, most interviewees admitted that the lack of professionalism in the military might lead to chaos or abuse of civilians. The operational orders of Vanguard allowed GAF personnel in the joint operation to rotate every 60 days in a way that is similar to international peacekeeping. Although the prosecution and convictions have not been commensurate with the number of arrests by the task force, Vanguard continues to dominate in its areas of operations. However, the current lifting of the ban on illegal mining and the lack of clarity on the military's withdrawal from Vanguard should raise concerns about the role that the GAF is expected to play in Ghana.

Conclusion

The Ghana Armed Forces have been invaluable in both external and internal operations. Since 1960, the military has made significant contributions to global peacekeeping in countries such as Congo, Liberia, Bosnia, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali and South Sudan. Institutionally, participating in UN peacekeeping operations that involve 'stabilisation' tasks has provided the military with new operational experiences in diverse, civilian-led missions such as Vanguard and Cow Leg (see Alhassan & Asante, 2022). Experiences gathered from these international operations have been assembled and ploughed back into domestic operations such as Calm Life and Vanguard.

Such internal operations have allowed the military to be close to the Ghanaian citizenry and to ease the 'frosty' relationship that has existed in the past. Participation in such operations has compelled the army to accept international norms about democracy, rule of law, accountability and civilian oversight of the armed forces. The concept of assemblages helped to capture how peacekeeping experiences shape the way military personnel understand and discuss their roles collectively and individually once they return home. The theory enabled an understanding of how international peacekeeping intersects with domestic security provisions within national security institutions. We have come to appreciate how returning military personnel are instrumental in internal operations. More importantly, these internal operations have helped the GAF to support the GPS in ensuring peace and security since the return of democratic rule in 1992. The joint planning and deployment of the military and police have contributed to dealing with the growing incidences of armed robbery and illegal mining.

However, while these internal operations have made some achievements in the arrest and immobilisation of illegal miners, more attention needs to be given to the operationalisation of such internal security arrangements. As long as the GAF remains an effective body ensuring internal peace and stability and enjoying legitimacy from the ruling class, it will continue to make deployments into most of the major internal security challenges of the country. However, there are concerns about the direction of the use of the military in internal security operations, the growing political sensitivity around their deployments, and the absence of clearly defined roles, concepts of operations and rules of engagement.

The same importance and political support given to international operations in terms of training, logistics, deployments, and legal and operational procedures should also be given to internal operations to make it more effective. UN peacekeeping operations have done a lot to improve the quality and professionalism of the GAF. As long as domestic crime continues to grow, and the GPS is unable to effectively deal with these crimes, the military has a constitutional responsibility to support the police to secure the sovereignty of the state. However, the principle of deploying the army (only) under exceptional circumstances should be looked at once again. The continuous use of the military as the first point of contact in internal security challenges raises questions about the orientation and focus of the country's armed forces. It certainly raises questions about the militarisation of internal security in Ghana, and how international peacekeeping experiences underpin it.

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