

CANADIAN WAR MUSEUM

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

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INTERVIEWEE: EARNSHAW: Allan (Jack) Earnshaw

INTERVIEWER: Mike Charrier

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Transcription of Interview Number 31D 4 EARNSHAW

Allan (Jack) Earnshaw

Interviewed 22 November, 2003

By Mike Charrier

INTERVIEWER: Canadian War Museum Oral History Program interview with Mr. Jack Earnshaw. Recorded on 22 November, 2003, at Ottawa, Nepean in fact. Interviewed by Mike Charrier, tape one, side one.

Major Earnshaw, could you please give me your name, rank and date of birth?

EARNSHAW: It's Allan John Earnshaw, Major. Date of birth is 20 April 1954. My service number is V22701997.

INTERVIEWER: You are presently with the.....?

EARNSHAW: I'm presently employed in the Joint Staff, in the Deputy Chief of Defence Staff, in J7 which is training. My current employment title is J7 Exercises 8. I'm the evaluation specialist that works in that particular part of the joint staff.

INTERVIEWER: What does that involve exactly?

EARNSHAW: It involves a number of things. Advice and assistance to the whole of J7 on training matters and on training technology and methodology issues those sorts of things, as well as designing and developing supporting policies and materials to support the evaluation of exercises. Then for each specific exercise I put together -- and we are just getting this cranked up right now -- we are just putting together the evaluation team and tools, the checklists and those sorts of thing involved in training at the strategic level. Obviously inside the DCDS group we take care of NATO exercises, national exercises at the national level, bilateral exercises both NORAD and exercises associated with the American Northern Command. We work closely with the bilateral planning group in that area. So that is sort of the scope of activity that we are dealing with right now.

INTERVIEWER: And how many years of service do you have?

EARNSHAW: In the regular forces I'm in year 26 going on 27. I was also in the reserves for about 4 years before that.

INTERVIEWER: What is your regimental affiliation?

EARNSHAW: Well I've had a number of regimental affiliations. My current classification is Training Development which is a small specialist branch within the Canadian Forces consisting of about 120 people. You find us everywhere throughout the training establishment. Before that, for a period of about six years, I was an Armoured Corps officer in the Royal Canadian Dragoons. Prior to that I was in the 8th Canadian Hussars for about eight years.

INTERVIEWER: In your family background, were there any soldiers or military involvement?

EARNSHAW: In my family background, in the Great War, my great grandfather on my father's side was a miner in WWI. Was involved in the business of digging communication trenches and tunnels, supply tunnels as well as undermining enemy positions.

INTERVIEWER: Was he an immigrant?

EARNSHAW: Yes, he was. He was from Lincolnshire, England. His original profession was miner. When he came to Canada he struck out in new directions and became a farmer.

INTERVIEWER: So you, as a young fella, joined the cadets -- where were you from and so on?

EARNSHAW: Originally, I was born in Thunder Bay and at that time it was called Port Arthur. My father worked from Brewers Retail so we moved fairly frequently. We moved from Port Arthur to Marathon on the north shore of Lake Superior. Moved from there to Wawa and lived there for about ten years. Then moved to Collingwood, went to high school in Collingwood and began my cadet experience. I was a Boy Scout in Wawa and a Cub and joined the Air Cadets briefly in Wawa with 669 Squadron. Then, when we moved to Collingwood, I joined 714 Squadron. My time as a cadet paralleled with my time in high school. I started off as a flight sergeant, then ended up as a WO2 in the cadets. Then we moved to North Bay where I joined the militia. The reserve unit I belonged to was the Northern Ontario Service Support Company which eventually became 26 Service Battalion. That unit exists today. But I was there when that unit was brand spanking new, a nascent organization.

While I was there I went to Nipissing University College which at that time was part of Laurentian University and did my schooling there and then joined the Canadian Forces. I, as I said, throughout that time I was very positively influenced by the leadership in the cadet units. Cadet units we had were WWII vets, observers and pilots and those sorts of things during the war. Then, when I joined the reserves, there were still guys in it from Korea. They set a very good example. In all cases had real wartime experience and real credibility and influenced me very positively towards a life in the military. Ultimately, in about 1978, I decided I would join the Army which was a little strange because I was in the Air Cadets. The recruiters did encourage me to become a pilot but my militia time -- they turned me and I decided to be a soldier.

INTERVIEWER: Why did you choose the Armoured Corps?

EARNSHAW: Well, I wanted to be in the combat arms. Knowing my own strengths and weakness -- I knew that I -- I'm not really super keen -- I'm really good arithmetic but not really good at math. Therefore I knew the artillery was not for me because it involves a lot of data processing. The infantry, I'm fairly athletic but I know the physical requirements to be an infantryman. The Armoured Corps had a great deal of appeal for me. Again, I knew I was able to think on my feet. I knew I wanted to be in a combat arm. I wanted to be an operator of vehicles and equipment and lead soldiers in the field so that is what I wanted to do. I thought that was the perfect fit at the time.

INTERVIEWER: You had a university degree at that point?

EARNSHAW: That's correct.

INTERVIEWER: So you were a direct entry?

EARNSHAW: That's right. I was a direct entry officer. Instead of going OCTP or ROTP using one of the officer training plans, I joined the militia. In those days your militia money could pay for your tuition and books. My options were open right up to the end. When I had chosen the military, it wasn't to pay off an obligation. It was because I was keen on a military career.

INTERVIEWER: So you joined the regular force. And what was your training like?

EARNSHAW: Well, Armoured Corps training is rigorous. Most people who started the training didn't complete it. I'd say that we did our basic training in Chilliwack, British Columbia. That is a standard Canadian Forces curriculum. We weren't then in the hands of the tender mercies of the Armoured Corps.

Of the 32 people that started phase II, I think about 12 of us made it through phase II. That phase involved basic infantry training. Everybody who was a leader in the combat arms has to be able to at least be proficient in leading a section on foot before they can move on to fighting vehicles and other weapon systems. Then we did the vehicles, general purpose. We were the first course to actually use the new AVGP (Armoured Vehicles General Purpose) which is the Grizzly and the Cougar. We took driving and maintenance AVGP as well as gunnery in phase II.

Phase III is where crew commanders are made and we then moved to the Leopard tank. We were the second course -- the course previous to us were the first course to convert to the new Leopard tank. On that course we did driving and maintenance of the Leopard. We did Leopard gunnery and then crew commanding. Again, less than half of the people who started the course actually finished it. Phase III was the crunch course.

Phase IV is where we did armoured troop leading. We actually did that course partly on the Cougar and partly on the M113 armoured personnel carrier which is sort of a big box on tracks. We didn't use tanks because they were being used by the people behind us to be trained on other things. Then when you are doing tactical training, in a lot of cases, you don't actually need the full kit. Phase IV, again quite demanding although the attrition rate was way down. At that point, those of us who remained were proficient in all of our basic duties and we only lost two guys. In the end there was about 15 or 16 of us in the graduation parade. It was a long haul. From there I was posted to Petawawa to the 8th Canadian Hussars as a troop leader.

INTERVIEWER: What year would that have been?

EARNSHAW: '79 - '80 in that time frame.

INTERVIEWER: What happened to you after that?

EARNSHAW: I did a couple of years as a troop leader. Then normal regimental duties, I had the exalted duty of being mess secretary for a little while, regimental intelligence officer and the Regimental Liaison Officer (RLO) in regimental headquarters. At the completion of my first regimental tour I was posted to the regular support staff with the Fort Garry Horse in Winnipeg. I spent three years with the Fort Garry Horse which at that point was a reserve unit. Spent three glorious years in Winnipeg with it. Their function was reconnaissance and we were involved in training. There were about 100 - 105 people in the unit at the time and we were involved in training them in reconnaissance skills. It was a wonderful time, great western hospitality. At that point I was posted to Germany.

I spent a little over a year in Germany because with all the machinations of --- the year in Germany, though, was a remarkable experience because we went through the full cycle of training activities. I was administrative officer and liaison officer in headquarters squadron. Had a number of duties that were very educational. Got to do a lot of the personnel management for all the support personnel in the regiment. You developed a real sense of their trials and tribulations and they things that they lived through. Had a very heavy disciplinary load because as the AO/LO I'm the guy who organizes orders parades. We had some characters in the squadron who participated in these fairly often.

We participated in a number of exercises that took us to the German border. Also out in the ranges. There was also a CAT (Canadian Army Trophy) competition that was on that year. There was very intense training among my comrades. I was there supporting them, preparing for that competition. Canada, even with our equipment at the time, we were competing with the Americans and the Brits who had significantly better machinery, particularly having thermal sights and more advanced gunnery systems. We were able to compete. We didn't win the trophy. We were able to tell a little bit better than our numbers might suggest.

At that time the Royal Canadian Dragoons then rotated back to Canada which cut my full time service in Germany short. Shorter than I wanted it to be. I moved back with the regiment and became a squadron battle captain.

INTERVIEWER: Where?

EARNSHAW: In Petawawa. There are three senior positions in a squadron. There is a squadron commander who obviously commands a squadron and leads it in the field. There is a squadron second in command who, in most cases, handles a lot of the personnel matters and in the field he runs the echelon. He's back in the echelons handling a lot of the administrative matters. Then there is the battle captain who is the operational back up. This goes back to -- the battle captain is understudying the squadron commander and will back him up in combat. The 2IC is out of combat because squadron commanders in fighting are traditionally taking heavy casualties and he requires a backup. It's important to have the second in command as an uninjured back up. They can be moved forward quickly should the squadron commander be injured.

As battle captain I organized -- again it was a competition year for the Ramshead competition -- I organized a gunnery competition. Endless, endless days doing live fire on the ranges, going right from static firing up to live fire battle runs over and over and over again to build up our skills for the competition. Obviously, it's our job to be highly skilled in those things.

I then went away to Staff College for six months to Foxhole U in Kingston -- which is

Canadian Land Forces Command and Staff College -- where young regimental officers learn about the wider business of conducting operations and that's where we learn those things. Then came back as a squadron second in command. Happily, in all of these cases, remarkably, except for my time in Germany when I was in headquarters squadron, when I was in the 8th Canadian Hussars I was in A squadron. Of course, my operational time with the Royal Canadian Dragoons, again I was battle captain and second in command of A squadron. I was privileged -- in my tenure as second in command my regiment went to Cyprus. There I got to run the day to day. We didn't have a battle captain *per se* there but I ran the day to day operation of the squadron on the green line of Nicocia, and it was fairly busy tour.

There were a number of incidents with demonstrations, riots and a number of other incidents that tested out abilities. Unlike the traditional picture of "Pearsonian" peacekeeping, it's not a passive activity. We were very busy at the time. When we got back, I finished my time as second in command of the squadron.

INTERVIEWER: What year were you in Cyprus?

EARNSHAW: In 1989 and that was the 15th year of the Turkish invasion. During the summer when we were there it was very active because of course the Turks were celebrating their liberation. The Geeks were protesting the Turkish invasion. The tensions were running high during that period. When we got back, it was posting time again. I went to the brigade staff of the Special Service Force in Petawawa and I became the G3 plans. I was responsible for the operational plans and preparations of the brigade. I had a large stock of plans there.

There were a number of significant events that took place while I was in that job. Part of the job involved doing reconnaissance. One of our jobs is defence of Canada. I was involved in developing the Arctic reconnaissance missions and developing plans for that. During the Oka Crisis the Special Services Force was heavily involved in operations in Cornwall, while they didn't get the same media attention that the confrontation in Oka did. I was involved as a brigade liaison officer with a team there supervising or coordinating a lot of the activities going on there with the area staff and the police and the SSF units that were down there which were partly the Royal Canadian Regiment and the engineers.

Also there was the Gulf War. We were involved in operational staff duties in support of that. As a planner I was involved in supporting the deployment of the field hospital and the RCR -- Royal Canadian Regiment -- detachment that went off with them as a security detachment. Those are the significant events of that particular tour. At that point I completed that tour and got posted to National Defence Headquarters in the J3 staff where I became an emergency measures planner. And I was also the adjutant of J3 plans organization. I had huge big piles of secret plans sitting on my desk everyday. I was also supervisor of the NATO library. In that job I attended conferences in Brussels and the Cold War was beginning to thaw at that point. There was huge shift in all the plans and preparations that had to be made. I was involved beginning of that.

Concurrent with that, the world was changing and the armoured corps was going through some major changes where plans for expansion were shelved and one of the regiments was being wound down. Therefore, it became necessary to consider my future. I decided I would get a new skill set. I switched to a specialist branch which was the Training Development branch which provides training specialists to schools and training establishments in capital

projects across the Canadian Forces where there is a large training bill. It's important while military people have all done training and they've been involved in the conduct of training, the training development people are involved in all the really boring off line functions like design, development, analysis and evaluation.

INTERVIEWER: Are they what the navy calls "schoolies"?

EARNSHAW: The source of the branch owes a great deal to the "schoolies". In fact, the function of the "schoolies" were also instructors. The modern training developer, while we can do instruction and we have a school where we teach people how to instruct, we are involved in all of the supporting functions. If you want a training program or organization built, we are there to help. In the training world you need people. Most operators are great at running courses but they aren't really good at building brand new training systems or brand new training courses or integrating new training technologies. That's where we come in. That's where we fit into the matrix and that sort of leads us towards the mission that I did in Africa.

My first posting was right back to Petawawa where I was the standards officer at the Royal Canadian Regiment Battle School for two years in Petawawa and two years in Meaford. When a large portion of the school moved, the headquarters and the basic training function moved to the brand new facility in Meaford at that time. All of the infantry stuff that I thought I'd missed when I was in the Armoured Corps, I got to do when I was in the Battle School. I got to do all kinds of interesting high speed, physical stuff. Being a combat arms specialist, I was well suited to that world.

It was four glorious years. It was clear to my masters that I was having far too much fun so they posted me to Ottawa. In Ottawa I moved into a number of training development jobs. Partly consultancy to small capital projects where I would go in take a look at their training, plan documentation and the rest of it. And helping them amend it and improve it so they would get their best bang for their buck when they went to contract and that sort of thing.

I was also involved for a little while in research and development for new training technologies, in particular sharable courseware objects which is taking.... Nowadays a lot of courseware, it doesn't exist on paper. It doesn't exist on slides any more. A lot of it exists as electronic code. You have pictures, lectures, movie clips, all sorts of things that live on your computer on the hard drive. But in a lot of cases may not be in compatible formats. Well, this is a way of adding meta data -- which is a shell of code around that object -- so that you can pick it up and it can be read by a whole wide range of divergent programs or systems. That was part of a very brief part of the project.

Another, developing training design software. We moved on from that and spent a year as a training lead on a capital project -- the Material Acquisition and Support Information System Project -- which is figuring in the news recently because it is, like all software projects, very complex and resource intensive. There are those that believe when there are cost overruns -- in many cases we are developing all new technologies -- that somehow it could have been done easier. It was a very challenging year. Again, I was having far too much fun so I was posted to a policy writing directorate.

At the same time the Minister of Defence at the time, who was Art Eggleton, announced that the Canadians would be participating in an international military advisory training team that

was being set up by the British to rebuild the armed forces of the Republic of Sierra Leone (SL) which is in West Africa. Within about two days of that announcement I was marched into the branch advisor's office, was told that there was a requirement for a young -- not so young -- major to act as the second in command of the team and also as the training and development specialist on the team. I was asked if I'd be willing to go on what we call "ROTO 0" or the first rotation to actual go into the mission area. These are usually very challenging because things usually are not as they seem and don't correspond to the brochure.

INTERVIEWER: What was the date and why do you think you were picked for the assignment?

EARNSHAW: The date was mid July 2000. There was an array of events taking place at the time. There were a couple of reasons why they picked me for the job. Number one, I had just been posted into DTEP2 or the Directorate of Training and Education Policy -- just posted, been posted into a job. I hadn't started it yet. I wasn't being torn away from a project or some important activity that was already under way. That was critical.

I also had a combat arms background and certainly, for the first couple of rotations of this mission, there was an armed threat in the country. They believed that the second in command job -- which wasn't just my speciality -- it also involved force protection. It also involved the security and employment of our own people. They felt it was necessary have a guy with combat arms experience. They felt -- partly because of my performance at the Battle School and partly because of my record in the Armoured Corp -- they felt that I was the person for the job. So it was a combination of being available, having the right qualifications. I think the branch advisor, when he looked at the list of qualified people, felt he had confidence in me and asked me the question.

INTERVIEWER: But were you still Armoured Corps at that time?

EARNSHAW: No, as I said, in 1993 I made the shift from the Armoured Corps to the Training and Development branch.

INTERVIEWER: So the branch advisor is Training and Development Branch?

EARNSHAW: He was Training Development Branch Advisor and, again, there was a position and they were asked to fill it. I happened to be the bunny rabbit in the headlights at that point.

INTERVIEWER: At that time there were a lot of peacekeeping jobs going on and most officers had done several. You had only done one. Do you think that was a factor as well?

EARNSHAW: No, because one of the differences was the job or the slot. The British sent a list of positions that they would have liked to have filled. We were saying we were going to send about ten people on the first rotation. They proposed a number of positions which, in fact, exceeded that number. But one of the positions that they proposed was a hard training specialist position. It called for a person with my qualifications that combat arms officers would not be able to fill. Much the same way that there were other jobs. For instance, there was another officer on the team who was a transport officer -- we will get into that a little bit later -- but he started off as an advisor but ended up actually commanding the transport squadron in Sierra Leone because of a number of factors.

The key item there was -- and, again, in the Canadian Army we were only just becoming used to the idea of specialists. I think even after being in existence for over a hundred years we still have some very Victorian ideas about what officers can and can not do. But in that particular case -- of course, in the British Army they have training specialists who fulfil a whole bunch of different jobs. The job that they were proposing fit the bill for a training development specialist very tightly so that is why I was picked.

INTERVIEWER: So now can you tell me about the Sierra Leone operation itself?

EARNSHAW: OK, it important to understand that the mission as it was originally envisaged was we were going to go in -- there was a bit of background that I was going to go into in just a moment. But our original mission was to go in and advise and assist the armed force that existed there -- the Sierra Leone Army (SLA) -- to become legally accountable. The army had started out as a professional army in the early '60s but had deteriorated at this point to more of an armed mob than a...

INTERVIEWER: A rabble ?

EARNSHAW: Yes, the army had been shattered. It had been defeated. Its leadership was either dead or had fled or had abandoned the army. So it was not in very good shape.

INTERVIEWER: Defeated by?

EARNSHAW: The Revolutionary United Front who were the rebel movement in the country. And that takes us to the original genesis for the mission. It was not a UN mission. It was not a peacekeeping mission. Those are key factors. The mission was being accomplished pursuant to a UN resolution, which was to rebuild and reform the Sierra Leone Armed Forces.

But the actual mission itself was an international initiative led by the British. They formed the bulk of the organization. When we got there, there was about 100 Brits in IMATT. We came in second. We had a team of ten guys. We were the first international people to arrive in November of 2000. We were followed a couple of months after that by two Australians and three Americans. In the subsequent missions, that number of people actually began to widen. For certainly the first few months we were there, we were the I in IMATT. We added the international flavour.

INTERVIEWER: Two questions. IMATT stands for?

EARNSHAW: International Military Advisory and Training Team.

INTERVIEWER: Second question. Why the British background?

EARNSHAW: Well, then, that takes me to a number of items. Sierra Leone had been a British colony. Also Sierra Leone still has very close links to Britain in that -- in fact, Sierra Leone has some economic links to Canada as well. But there are many Sierra Leonian ex patriots live in the UK and they commute back and forth quite regularly. Most people in Sierra Leone do not regard the British as having been horrible colonial oppressors. We were often asked on the streets if they could stay because things had gotten so bad there. There had

been a good relationship between the former colonial power and, you know, a good feeling.

But the reason why the British Forces were there was because the situation had deteriorated very badly. There had been a peace accord that had been brokered by the UN called the "Lome Peace Accord". Again, originally our mission was supposed to be an administrative mission. We were there to be trainers and advisors, in a permissive environment where we wouldn't have to be armed. The Lome Peace Accord which gave rise to our mission, and the UN resolution that originated the mission, actually collapsed in May of 2000 when the Revolutionary United Front who were the main rebel group. There were other rebel groups: the Armed Forces Ruling Council (AFRC), a former Junta that had ruled Sierra Leone, and the Westside Boys who were a criminal gang. They were the remnants of the AFRC were also in existence in May.

But what occurred in May was the RUF were, in spite of the peace accord, plotting a coup. Violence broke out in Freetown when a demonstration was fired on by RUF people who were protecting Foday Sanko[?]. Now this peace agreement, of course, involved putting legal or major rebels into positions in the government. That's why they were in Freetown. With that event, the fighting started again. The RUF attacked the UN troops. Dozens of UN troops were killed. A number of cantonments of UN troops were surrounded and attacked by the RUF. The RUF then went on the attack and were headed towards the capital city of Freetown. The UN was, in fact collapsing at that point. The UN force, which was called UNOMSEL at that point -- The United Nations Observer Mission in Sierra Leone (UNOMSEL) -- was converging back on Freetown and elements were leaving and the Brits intervened. Not as a UN force but as a military fighting force to stop the RUF and restore order. Now they didn't go back and defeat the RUF but they sent in the Parachute Regiment to stabilize and restore the situation.

Now, the UN at that point, in a lot of cases it was set up as an observer mission. A lot of people had made probably incorrect assumptions about the reliability of the RUF and their pledges to lay down arms. And ultimately they didn't. During the summer the RUF also started attacking the neighbouring country of Guinea to internationalize the conflict. While we were getting cranked up to go, obviously the nature of the mission was changing very significantly.

In September the Westside Boys, whom I said were armed remnants of another faction in the country -- they were mostly ex AFRC or ruling forces Council people -- attacked the British and took several British prisoner. During the summer also the Indians launched an attack on the RUF as well to free troops that had been surrounded by the RUF.

INTERVIEWER: These were UN troops?

EARNSHAW: The Indian troops were UN and they were freeing their guys. The Brit troops in September, they were not UN. They were British regulars who were sent in to rescue other British regulars who were there involved in the force trying to stabilize the situation. The British, in this particular case, had UN observers on the ground. There were British people in the UN force but the British force that was there maintaining stability was not part of the UN. They took pains to make sure that it was not part of the UN mission.

The other factor that was happening in the fall was there was great friction between the Indian force commander and his African compatriots. There were accusations of corruption

and inefficiency and the UN force then announced that they were leaving and they were the backbone of the force. Concurrent with that, the Jordanians announced they were leaving. The UN force in the country, while it was very numerous, it was not in very good shape.

There was confusion and one of the key factors in maintaining the situation was the fact that there was a British force there.

INTERVIEWER: Non UN?

EARNSHAW: Non UN.

INTERVIEWER: And the Africans were UN?

EARNSHAW: Yes, the African forces in the country. There were some Ukrainian and Russian units there but they had to do with aviation units that were part of the UN force. The bulk of the UN force, outside the Indians and the Jordanians, were from Africa and were forces of varying quality. Leave it at that. Some of them were very inefficient. Other units were moderately efficient but were not equipped or configured to go and fight the RUF. When we arrived in late November of 2000 there had been a ceasefire called the Abuja Ceasefire.

INTERVIEWER: Could you also spell Lome?

EARNSHAW: Yes. The e is an e acute as in French. The Abuja Ceasefire was in effect. But it was only a ceasefire between the UN, the British forces, the Sierra Leone Army and the RUF. The RUF was still at war with the army of Guinea. The RUF was still receiving support from Liberia. They were getting arms, ammunition and advice from the neighbouring country of Liberia. There was fighting going on in the country not far from Freetown even though there was a ceasefire in place. In addition to that ceasefire, of course, there was a number of components. The Sierra Leone Army (SLA) was in very bad shape at the time. They were not organized into units and formations.

When we arrived, the British had just succeeded in forming two battalions. Our guys were involved in doing the advanced training for those two battalions. Our team had a number of functions. Some of our guys immediately went into the bush to train the units that were being formed. Those were mostly master warrant officers and they were actually in the bush, in the jungle, training African troops who at that time, in November, we didn't know whether we were actually going into combat in days or weeks. But there was a real sense of urgency that we had to get the troops trained.

INTERVIEWER: Because they could be committed the next day?

EARNSHAW: That's right. The other part of the situation was, of course, the SLA -- the Army of Sierra Leone. But there were also two other pro-government organizations. There was the CDF (Civil Defence Force) which were local militia who were armed. While there was officially a ceasefire, the CDF were involved in skirmishes and encounters with the RUF because they were in towns and villages. In spite of the ceasefire the RUF also raided villages for resources. If they needed food or gasoline, they would act as pirates and take it. The villagers would, of course, try to defend themselves. The third group were the Kamajors -- traditional hunting societies from the south end of the country. They wore very picturesque

traditional costumes and were armed with automatic weapons.

INTERVIEWER: We will just stop this side of the tape there. Interview with Jack Earnshaw on the 22 November 2003, end of side one tape one.

END OF SIDE ONE

INTERVIEWER: Canadian War Museum Oral History Program interview with Jack Earnshaw on the 22 November 2003. Tape one, side two.

Getting on with Sierra Leone again, could you explain the list of characters please?

EARNSHAW: This is the personalities in drama, or the factions. We will go friendly forces first. Basically, you have British forces first. We normally refer to them as BRITFOR. There was also the UN forces which are, at that point, UNOMSL had become UNAMSL.

UNOMSL was the United Nations Observer Force in Sierra Leone, or Observer Mission in Sierra Leone. UNAMSL it became the new United Nations...I'm trying to remember -- they were the armed intervention by the UN in Sierra Leone.

INTERVIEWER: You went under one...?.

EARNSHAW: The Canadian Forces contribution there was definitely under BRITFOR. We were part of the British Force that was present in the country. Also, there was the Sierra Leone Army which was in support of the local government but in great need of reform -- in very bad shape. Also, there were other forces that were friendly to the government or pro-government. CDF, the Civil Defence Force, were local armed militia. The Kamajors who were a traditional hunting society who lived in the south, who were armed and very efficient fighters, they were also pro government. On the opposing...

INTERVIEWER: Wait ... so you were part of BRITFOR which was not an UN operation?

EARNSHAW: That's correct.

INTERVIEWER: OK, carry on.

EARNSHAW: As I indicated, in May there was the Lome Peace Accord that had been arrived at about a year earlier. It had collapsed about a year earlier in May of 2000 when the fighting broke out between UN troops and the RUF. The UN was having great difficulties. The British intervened to stabilize the situation.

The factions that were working against the UN and the government were principally the RUF, which had started out as a revolutionary movement back in the early '90s, coming out of Liberia and financed by the neighbouring country who had interests in destabilizing Sierra Leone. It, itself, had degenerated as well and was noted for many atrocities.

Another faction on the other side were remnants of the ruling council, or AFRC, who were essentially Sierra Leone army troops who had not come back to the government, who used to belong to a faction that had formerly run the country. There were also called Westside Boys. The two were almost interchangeable. They were the gang, in many respects, the AFRC people had degenerated into. A good third of the RUF was composed of child soldiers. They

typically would go into villages, get children to kill their parents and then take them off into the woods and employ them as soldiers. They also took other people from the villages, young women and other people to serve them. They also frequently would use people as slave labour to mine diamonds in the south of the country. The diamonds were used to finance their insurgency. As well, they were also noted for committing atrocities. Elections that were being held in the 1990s -- in the wake of the elections the RUF were noted for chopping off the limbs of people. Not killing them but the aim was to demoralize and terrorize people. They would go into villages and chop off limbs in addition to killing people and taking resources. They had long since ceased to be a ideologically motivated group. Were very much working in their own interests and acquiring power and resources.

The other player in the game were the armed forces of Guinea because, in early 2000, the RUF had also sought to destabilize the region by attacking Guinea which is the country to the north of Sierra Leone. Throughout this time, certainly the time we were in Sierra Leone from November of 2000 to June 2001, there was fighting going on between the RUF and the armed forces of Guinea.

There were also other hunting societies who were known as the Donso who were traditional hunters to the north. They were also, in the later part of our time there, starting to become involved in the fighting to the south and west of the country.

To summarize the atmosphere when we arrived. There was a ceasefire in effect but it was very shaky because the CDF, or militia that were aligned with the Sierra Leone government, were having encounters with the RUF. All was not peaceful. The UN was suffering instability because the Jordanian and Indian contingents were leaving. The UN, at that point, were very concerned and were trying to find replacements for those forces. Eventually, they were replaced by Pakistanis and Bangladeshis.

We had an army -- originally when the minister announced we were going to advisors, I think there was assumption on everyone's part that there was, in fact, an army in Sierra Leone. In fact what was there was the remnants of a defeated force. When the RUF invaded the country in about 1992, the Sierra Leone Army was a small professional force of about 4,000 to 5,000, were completely swamped and unable to cope with the fact they were being attacked by a rebel force of over 10,000 people, close to 15,000. The army was expanded very quickly. They were not selective in their recruiting and swiftly the army's discipline began to break down. By the time we got there, the administrative systems had long since broken down. Corruption was endemic. There hadn't been any releases, promotions or leave granted for years. Many of the officers had simply left the army and gone home or left the country. The units, except for the Freetown garrison which were composed of two battalions -- and again they were not the best quality troops. They, in a lot of cases, were in Freetown because they were the most politically reliable troops, which doesn't make them the best at all. We eventually took those battalions, broke them up, reformed them and moved them out into the countryside.

But the army was in very bad shape and many of the officers we were dealing with... . And to paint a picture of where I worked, I worked for a gentleman by the name of Colonel Mani who, in fact, had been a member of the AFRC -- was part of the junta that ruled country in the mid '90s. There was a force that entered the country before the UN called ECOMOG. That's basically the West African Economic Community Peace Keeping Force that arrived in the country. ECOMOG attacked the AFRC drove them into the countryside.

This war had been going on for ten years and there had been many turns. But when the AFRC had been sidelined by the RUF, he became RUF. When he was captured in and around 2000, he had an epiphany, rejoined the SLA. He maintained a bodyguard of about six guys around his office with Chinese machine pistols. Not to protect him from the enemy. Not to protect him from any of the opposing forces, but to protect him from the other colonels down the hall. Those of us who worked in headquarters became aware of the fact that when we would go to their chief of defence staffs O groups in the morning. I began to realize that the gentlemen sitting in that room had been in different factions at different times, had ordered each other's executions, had narrowly escaped each other's clutches and, in some cases, had killed each other's comrades. They were all very pleasant and civil people but there are all these currents running underneath all of this.

Their chief of the medical branch was under investigation for having committed atrocities and I won't give his name. It was not a functional atmosphere. In a lot of cases these guys were not actually involved in the business of running the army. In some cases the reason why they were in headquarters was because they had failed in the field. Some of them had actually abandoned their units in the field. There was a real problem there.

The units, as they existed there, were basically masses of people in places like Murraytown barracks, a place called Benguema which was the former army training centre, a place called Goderich and other cantonments where -- basically -- where units simply converged and they were squatting there. The pay system was extremely unreliable.

I should get into our team. It was composed of ten people. The leader of task force Freetown was a lieutenant colonel, an engineer although he was employed doing G4 jobs. The logistic system had completely broken down. In most cases, was notoriously corrupt. There was myself, and I was involved in the actual training shop, trying to rebuild the training system of the armed forces. When we got there, there was no training system. There was no army training. All of the policies, documentations and materials that we would logically have expected an army to have simply didn't exist.

We had four other members of the team, master warrant officers who immediately became involved in training troops out in the field at Benguema as I mentioned earlier, and another place called Hastings as well as other training sites in the country -- further up country. As the mission evolved, those guys started to become advisors to units in the field. Always bearing in mind that there was an enemy force in the field. The UN was in disarray. In many cases they were not only providing just advice but leadership in the employment of these units. We had one officer, who was a transport officer, who started out -- his official job title was advisor to the transport organization. But when he arrived with the transport organization there were 200 soldiers, about four trucks, and they were not trained. They were not a formed unit. He took that unit and turned it into a transport squadron with the equipment that the Brits sent in. Because the Brits sent in several tranches of trucks to flesh the organization out. But he basically took something and built it almost from scratch, with the assistance, of course, of his Brit sergeant major.

The remainder of the team -- and there were three other guys -- were officially recruiters but they never did any recruiting. They were involved in the personnel administration world. Part of that was the British had actually taken the pay system away from the local armed forces because it was so corrupt. Soldiers seldom saw their money. One of their first jobs was to

kick-start the pay system so that soldiers actually saw their money. In a lot of cases, the money never ever reached them. It would be held up either by officials in the government, officials in the military headquarters, their battalion commanders.

INTERVIEWER: How would they make sure they got the money did they actually pay them....?

EARNSHAW: Our guys were actually physically going out in the field and running pay parades, which could be very exciting affairs. One pay parade, a soldier pulled a hand grenade on the guys that were paying the soldiers. They had to wrestle him to the ground and disarm him. They also were involved in verifying who was actually in the army. There were 16,000 people on the payroll. We didn't know who was in the army because the records had been destroyed. The records were contained in two or three rooms that had been shelled, were covered in debris and animal feces. These guys were basically mining into this and trying to figure out who was actually in the army. In the end, they figured out there were actually about 12,000 people in the army rather than the 16,000 on the payroll.

Just to give you an example, in a lot of cases when the soldiers were killed battalion commanders would not report them as missing or killed. They would simply collect their pay. There were other individuals who were simply fraud artists who had never been enrolled in the army, did as little work as possible and collected pay and rations whenever they could.

There were a number of people who were unfortunates. They were recruited by the army; ie, army was moving through town. They needed extra bodies to carry weapons and equipment and they were dragged along. They didn't have regimental numbers. Other people who were extremely desperate and extremely poor there. If the first brother, who was actually enrolled in the army and had a regimental number, if he was killed then his second brother would step up to bat and fight. If the second brother was killed, the third brother would step up and fight and take his regimental number and name.

INTERVIEWER: And pay?

EARNSHAW: And pay. Those sorts of things. Because most of these soldiers -- the life expectancy when we arrived in the country was 39 years. Disease was rampant: malaria, lassa fever or dengue fever. There wasn't a single local who I worked with who didn't have a member of their extended family die of something while we were there.

INTERVIEWER: The average life expectancy of a native of the country was 39 years?

EARNSHAW: That's correct. There was an extremely high infant mortality. Also, because of the war there was high mortality for other reasons. There was also high mortality for a whole bunch of other reasons. Mortality as a result of the war, the terrible economic conditions because Sierra Leone is one of the countries at the bottom of the UN index. It's a rich country. That's part of the tragedy. It has fish, titanium, aluminum, diamonds. Both alluvial diamonds -- that's the ones you find in the rivers -- and kimberlyte diamonds. That's ones you find in the ground. It has rice. You can grow anything there. And vast stands of timber. The country has resources everywhere. Yet it is incredibly poor because the infrastructure was destroyed and social structures and government structures were corrupt.

Each of the soldiers, in a lot of cases, would have an extended family. The country is

primarily muslim. The style of Islam is very peculiar to sub Sahara Africa, not what we would find in the Arab world. A minority of the soldiers are Christian. The muslim soldiers would have more than one wife, usually two or three wives and children. Again, as I said, infant and child mortality were high. But often the soldier would have two or three wives.

INTERVIEWER: Would they be camp followers?

EARNSHAW: No. In a typical battalion routine in the field, you have caldrons in the centre of the camp where the food was cooked. The food was rice. Each soldier was entitled to a cup of rice a day. Of course, a cup cooks up to a fairly large amount of rice and they were fed only two meals. Either lunch and supper, or breakfast and supper, depending on the battalion routine. The soldier would get half a cup for each one of those meals. But each soldier would get their ration. They'd put their half a cup in the caldron for whatever meal they were getting. Then they'd get their bowl of rice cooked. They'd get a garnish of paste on top of that. A soldier would eat what he needed and the he'd disappear into the bush. The whole battalion would disappear into the woods because their families were all around. Their families would eat whatever else was there.

INTERVIEWER: What was left?

EARNSHAW: Whatever was left.

INTERVIEWER: What about the working language?

EARNSHAW: The official language of the country was English although a minority of people speak it, mostly in and around Freetown. The two major languages are Mende and Temne which are the principal tribes of the country, although there are about 13 tribal languages spoken in the country. The lingua franca or the common language spoken in the country is Krio which is archaic English mixed with Mende and Temne. If you listen to it, hard you can understand it although to our ears the syntax, the order of the words, and the expressions are very old fashioned. But they are understandable. That's one of the few cases if you're speaking to people who speak a slightly different language, if you speak slowly they will comprehend mostly what you are speaking.

INTERVIEWER: So the working language for the instructors would have been English then, or Krio?

EARNSHAW: English, but some of the guys, as they began to understand Krio would use more Krio expressions. The troops would appreciate that. The other thing the administrative guys did, they were involved in DDR (Demobilization - Retraining - Reintegration) proceedings. That could be really scary. That system was very corrupt and inefficient. It was partly a UN sponsored and partially nationally sponsored effort. It was really in bad shape. Some of the guys were exposed to real physical dangers when they were out dealing with people who were supposed to be getting training from the DDR program.

INTERVIEWER: The people being demobilized are the former rebels?

EARNSHAW: Everybody.

INTERVIEWER: Everybody - OK.

EARNSHAW: It wasn't our tour. The tour that followed us. The RUF collapsed and at that time there were some SLA troops -- some CDF demobilized -- most of the RUF were demobilized. But elements of those forces were also brought into the national force. That was again a considerable challenge. When we were there, the RUF were in the field, they were the enemy.

INTERVIEWER: When the pay parade came along, where did the money come for the pay? Was it UN money?

EARNSHAW: No. In fact the money did not come through the UN. The money came through the International Monetary Fund (IMF). IMF funds were being used to finance reconstruction, as well as pay and a lot of the government financing activities. Concurrent with us rebuilding the SLA, there was also a Commonwealth effort. Like actual uniformed Commonwealth people rebuilding the police. The police had been deliberately targeted by the RUF and had been killed by the score, by the 100s, wherever the RUF went. Their aim was to destroy the order in the country.

To summarize, what the team is doing, they are involved in DDR activities. They also became involved in pensions. You are thinking this is all pretty boring stuff. How come soldiers were involved in that? Number one, because those systems had completely broken down. They didn't exist and those were the reasons why -- we had very, very important military reasons why we had military guys doing it and not just civilian administrators, was the fact that -- why you had coups and why they country had collapsed into chaos -- was corruption. Was the fact that people were stealing from other people. The reason why soldiers would wake up one morning and go out and kill their officers and overthrow the government. Those systems were not optional and it wasn't that optional activity. It was something that was in deadly earnest. Throughout our time there, the nightmare scenario was not the RUF -- the RUF attacking was always a consideration because ...

INTERVIEWER: Because you knew.

EARNSHAW: The RUF launching an offensive. We didn't know their state. We knew that they had roughly 15,000 troops in the field. They were sustaining lots of losses at the hands of the Guineans. At the same time, there was an embargo being placed on Liberia which was cutting off a lot their supplies. Their ability to attack was becoming more and more constrained over time before they collapsed. But the thing was, that the RUF was a threat. We also knew that the UN troops, in a lot of cases, if the RUF would have launched an offensive would not have stopped, would not have physically stood in the way of the RUF.

INTERVIEWER: They weren't strong enough?

EARNSHAW: That and, well, in a lot cases -- there were about 13,000 when we were there. But in a lot of cases they had gotten directions from their nations that they were peacekeeping troops. They were not to become actively involved in fighting and therefore, if the RUF were actually launching an attack or actually in an offensive, they would probably move back into their secure bases and stay there or they'd leave. In a lot of cases, they insisted that they were there in support of the Lome Peace Accord and were not there to fight the enemy.

The British forces -- and I should get into that -- IMATT was only part of that. There was a

joint headquarters in the country. BRITFOR was composed of a joint headquarters and in the harbour they had a Royal Fleet auxiliary ship. Its name escapes me right now. I think it was Sir Galahad or one of the Sir series. It was in the harbour. It was the logistics base for BRITFOR -- all of our supplies and rations. We didn't get rations but other parts of the organization did. We lived off the economy. We lived in local housing which is another story.

INTERVIEWER: Which I'd like to get into after.

EARNSHAW: The joint headquarters, there was the Royal Fleet Auxiliary, from time to time throughout our time there, there were British combatants. They would exercise their over the horizon capability; i.e., there was always a ship within two or three days steaming time in the South Atlantic that could arrive. There was also minor warships like minesweepers. I think HMS BEAGLE was there for a short time as well. So naval assets in country. On the jetty right beside the ship, there was a field hospital. Because of the Jordanians and the Indians pulled out, they pulled out the hospital facilities. The medical situation in the country was abysmal. I would say almost medieval in some respects. The field hospital was there to support us because of the high medical risks that we were being exposed to because there was bad air and loads of disease. Very aggressive medical environment.

In addition to that, there was a British battalion of about 300 to 500 troops. So it wasn't a full war strength battalion but of that battalion -- when we were there it started out with the Yorkshire regiment was there initially. Then for most of our tour there were Ghurkas. But that battalion was also doing the bulk of training. They were involved in taking drafts of a thousand people and turning them into two or three battalions. At some point, we had to physically send people out into town to pull officers out of their homes and send them to their units to resume their duties.

To re-form and, in most cases, re-forming battalions from scratch, doing the initial individual training. And then they would be turned over to IMATT. We would do the advanced training. Then we would actually be involved in advising them and we would send them to the front and our guys would stay with those units.

INTERVIEWER: Could you tell me a little bit more about your team, your preparations to go etc...?

EARNSHAW: The team preparation -- and this is a very interesting part of the story because, of course, it's a reflection of the times -- is that initially it was supposed to be a permissive mission in a permissive environment; i.e., the Lome Peace Accord had taken hold. Everything was hunky-dory and we would be going there just to train and not be armed or involved in the operational side of the Sierra Leone Army. I think I have already pointed out that, when we got there, that situation did not exist.

But in July and August, when we were doing our initial preparations -- where we went to the peace support training centre -- and again we knew that we weren't going on a training mission. But that's where pre-deployment training took place. And at that location for two weeks we did the normal preparations where we were all briefed on pay, benefits. We also did cultural familiarization, mines and boobytraps, and an amount of specialty training before we would go to theatre. The cultural sensitivity part of that was very important because I think we were going into an area where there was a very alien culture. The guys on the team,

I'm not sure fully appreciated how strange it might be.

INTERVIEWER: Who gave you that part of the presentation?

EARNSHAW: That was actually given to us by a local person from Sierra Leone who had escaped fighting in 1999 when the RUF was actually in Freetown. They almost had control of the entire country and we were laying siege to the remaining pockets of government resistance in the city.

INTERVIEWER: You felt that was done well?

EARNSHAW: It was done reasonably well.

INTERVIEWER: Yes, and in retrospect could it have been done better?

EARNSHAW: I think for the times it was well done, within the constraints of the resources. Certainly, we could have spent a little bit more time on the cultural orientation. Under the circumstances I think it was adequate. It may not have been absolutely perfect but it was adequate for what we needed.

Concurrent with this was, of course, the staff preparations that were going on at the higher headquarters in Ottawa. The preparations hit a snag. It was the fact that a legal memorandum of understanding had not been established between Great Britain, Sierra Leone and Canada. Lawyers felt that this was very important. As a team, I think most of us were pretty confused because we were going into a place where civil society and the government and everything else had broken down. The ability of the local government to actually adequately recognize these legalities seemed remote. It didn't seem like a practical thing. But it in the current atmosphere in the Canadian Forces, the lawyers had their way. We had to wait through September and then through a chunk of October before we got the word that we were going, wondering whether or the lawyers would actually get this agreement put together.

INTERVIEWER: There were how many Canadians?

EARNSHAW: There were ten of us.

INTERVIEWER: OK.

EARNSHAW: As I said, a lieutenant colonel, I was a 2IC as a major, there were two captains, four master warrant officers and the remainder were warrant officers. Again, my boss was an engineer -- Lieutenant Colonel Bergstrand. There were four master warrant officers.

The one good thing that came out of the delay -- because after the training we went back to our home units. We weren't in contact with each other except by emails and phone calls waiting for the legalities to be sorted out. My boss, Colonel Bergstrand, had an opportunity to go with the staff assistance team. Canadians were already in the country as UN observers on Operation REPTILE. Our operation was Operation SCULPTURE. So two separate operations. But our boss was able to go on a staff assistance visit to those guys. Quickly became apparent that the situation that our mission had originally been formed under did not exist. That we would require medical supplies. We would require more operational

equipment. You know we'd be going in with helmets, flak jackets, GPS -- the ground positioning system. We would also have weapons. Each of us had an automatic carbine with a pistol. Helmets and field gear. It was apparent that the situation was not permissive, that there was still an enemy in the field, That there was a threat of violence. Certainly the situation in the countryside had not stabilized. The police were not fully in control. There was banditry and there were continuing incidents.

In that respect, the delay was opportune because it allowed our Colonel Bergstrand to get into the country and get an assessment of the actual situation. When he had arrived the British had just launched an operation against the Westside Boys to free nine British and Sierra Leone people who had been captured by the AFRC. It was an armed attack. The Brits lost, I believe, one killed and a number wounded. They killed scores of the Westside Boys in the attack and freed the nine prisoners. The atmosphere, certainly when he got there, was not the benign environment that I think everyone had hoped for.

So, in that respect it was a very good thing that there was a delay so that when we reconstituted and arrived with the right mix of equipment and arms etc -- so that we could effectively undertake force protection.

INTERVIEWER: What about ammunition? The ammunition for those weapons is different from the ammunition that other people were using in country. did you bring your own ammunition as well?

EARNSHAW: Yes, we brought several crates of ammunition. We brought lots of it. Now the Brits, in fact, use the same calibre as we do. They have a different rifle but the ammunition itself is NATO standard 5.56mm ball ammunition. So we had the same stuff. They also use 9mm ball ammunition. Although we brought our own anyway. As I said before, the non-IMATT troops I mentioned earlier -- the British Battalion, the RFA, the field hospital and the joint headquarters -- they all lived under canvas or in military compounds that we are familiar with in most of our operations where you have guards and perimeter fencing and all the rest of that stuff.

IMATT, because originally it was an advisory mission, we actually lived in small groups all over the city and in an apartment building that had just been refurbished. There was another area. The British intend to stay in Sierra Leone a long time so there was also other facilities actually being built for IMATT when we were there. We had no access to them.

The housing that we were in, we were in a local house close to the water in a place called Kongo Cross. The Cross, of course, is the same as when you go into Britain where there is a road intersection where there is a traffic circle. So Kongo Cross which is adjacent to the Kongo River has nothing to do with the Congo the country. The house was owned by Lebanese people but, again, the electrical system in the house was faulty. The Royal Engineers forbade us from using the wiring in a number of rooms. Electrical power in the city was intermittent. Power might come on for half a day then go off for two or three days, might come on for a day or two, then go off. The longest, when we were there, the power went out for a week.

INTERVIEWER: So you couldn't have a refrigerator or anything like that?

EARNSHAW: We had refrigerators but it's just if the power went out for a more than a day

or two then you had to eat everything in the fridge. Initially, we had hired a local. But, again, throughout the mission there was at least one or two of us who were ill every week from a variety of ailments ranging from gastrointestinal problems because of the food and the air. The water -- we didn't drink any of the local water. We normally had bottled water that was flown in or we bought. We had to buy our own water. The local water was OK for showering but you didn't dare consume it in anyway.

We had initially hired a local person to do our cooking for us. She cooked really well. But the local food again was a factor in us being ill. There was lots of bars and restaurants opening up after the peace had been established. But none of them had been authorized. We went to them but none of them had been actually given the stamp of approval by the British medical authorities. None of them were up to western standards. I usually ate deep fried stuff. So you knew that everything was dead.

The generator in the building was old. Nothing was grounded. No electrical stuff was grounded. So if you didn't have flip flops on when you were operating stuff you'd be thrown across the room because it was 220 volt. In fact, the house was rewired, and rewired again. After it had been rewired, the guys were going into the showers without their flip flops on were getting zapped. The generator we had in the building was old. It failed frequently. In fact, at one point it blew up. Trying to get people to repair it was a challenge. We actually borrowed a UN generator for a little while but that was not official. We made friends with some of the UN guys and we secured it after giving them a shipment of liquid refreshments. We were able to use the UN generator for about a week or so. Power was very unreliable.

We ended up most of us eating -- there were Lebanese markets that again had opened up and you could get canned goods and other goods at these places. They were either middle eastern stuff or European foodstuffs that people were familiar with. Ultimately, we cooked our own food. We were given a small allowance to go out and buy stuff. We bought our own food. We cooked our own food.

As I said, it was a two story building, heavy concrete surrounded by six to nine foot walls. The tops of the walls had broken glass on them. There were attacks by bandits on neighbouring homes while we were there. We were broken into once. We normally slept with our weapons in the house. Bandits armed with automatic weapons did break into places near our place. As police were saying, there were other IMATT houses that were broken into and people attacked. But where we were armed, we were usually not considered to be a worthwhile target by thieves.

INTERVIEWER: End of side two tape one. Interview with Jack Earnshaw on the 22 November 2003.

END OF TAPE ONE, SIDE TWO

INTERVIEWER: Canadian War Museum Oral History Program interview with Jack Earnshaw, tape two, side one.

EARNSHAW: We had propane gas bottles which we would get on the local economy. Again, on the local economy you had to be careful. sometimes there were shortages of fuel. But we got propane gas bottles. We had stoves that we cooked our food on. We had major problems - the house -- we were in tropical Africa so we had every granularity of ant known to man

from really big ants to tiny, tiny ants. You couldn't leave food out. It always had to be tightly packaged. Insects, of course were a problem because we had malaria carrying mosquitoes and we were taking Meflequin. Throughout the house, there were large insects all throughout the house -- gekkoes, cockroaches, big honking spiders, all the normal stuff that you would find in a tropical environment.

INTERVIEWER: Were there screens on the windows?

EARNSHAW: No. The windows we had were barred with heavy iron bars. We had heavy iron doors on the house and they had been installed because of instability in the country. Each night after the break in we fortified ourselves inside the house every night. We'd lock the doors and we had a small staff of security people who were hired by IMATT. They were just local civilians for security people who lived in the vicinity and were employed for security purposes but more just for warnings. They'd keep an eye on the place..

INTERVIEWER: Were they armed?

EARNSHAW: No, no they weren't.

INTERVIEWER: Who was in the house with you? Was it your whole team?

EARNSHAW: Yes, but as I said, as the mission went on we'd have guys -- in some cases there might be as few as two or three of us in the house because the master warrant officers would be gone. Every morning, if they were in town, they'd get into a truck and they'd be off very early because they had to go over a very bad mountain roads to get to the training sites. Sometimes they'd be gone for three or four days once we started moving up country. They could be gone for days and they could be living in the field.

INTERVIEWER: But, basically, it was a Canadian house.

EARNSHAW: Yes, it was just Canadians in the house, the ten of us. The senior NCOs slept upstairs, there was two to a room. So basically the two warrant officers and the two master warrant officers, and then two master warrant officers, upstairs. Then two captains, myself and lieutenant colonel sleeping downstairs. The last bedroom -- there was six bedrooms in the place but we used one bedroom as a secure lock up and our ops room where we kept our communications and encryption equipment and our administrative supplies. We had another small storage room where we kept our medical supplies and our ammunition and other materials upstairs in a huge iron container. The difficulty, of course, from a security purposes is that the downstairs was separate from the upstairs. There was no way from inside the building that you could get upstairs. But, of course, the senior NCOs told us that if an emergency did happen they'd be downstairs to help us. After the shooting and the screaming had stopped and after they'd had one or two coffees, they'd be down to help us. That was the running joke.

INTERVIEWER: Outside entrance with a stairs?

EARNSHAW: In all cases heavy iron doors on everything because the place had been unstable for a long time. Houses where people had property were fortified.

INTERVIEWER: You slept on cots with sleeping bags?

EARNSHAW: It depended. We were issued beds and bedding when we got there. The beds were actually very nice. They were locally manufactured beds made of nice material and nicely stained. But the mattresses were also locally manufactured and they were just big pieces of foam covered in cloth. I found it impossible to sleep on soft foam. I slept on a cot with a blanket for most of the tour. The heat and the humidity were such -- as I said we had some air conditioners -- a lot them didn't work. The captains' air conditioner didn't work at all for the mission except for the last couple of weeks. We did buy them a fan.

Upstairs two of the three air conditioners worked only intermittently and had to be repaired. The two senior master warrant officers got the one that worked all the time. That was the source of a lot of jokes and ribbing. Down in our room we had an air conditioner that had been Gerry rigged and was not in very good condition and worked intermittently. Again all our beds had bug nets over them. There were nights when we had bug nets, mosquito coils going and the whole works because there were lots of mosquitoes. They were not the ones that were used to. In Canada we have big muscular mosquitoes. There they had very tiny gossy little mosquitoes that are very hard to see. They carry the stuff that kills you. So that was a challenge.

INTERVIEWER: Was there a defensive plan for the house?

EARNSHAW: Oh yes. As I indicated earlier, the primary job that I was there for was to deal with training. As 2IC of the team I was responsible for keeping up to speed on the whole operational situation, for developing a security plan for the establishment. We went over and drew up a plan for checking doors, entrances and exits and crawling through all the nooks and crannies at least once a week to make sure that entry areas are still secure and that everything still worked. And to make sure that at night everybody knew who was responsible for closing what doors and securing whatever facilities there were.

In the day time, our own security guys had run of the building. They had to because we also paid them extra money to keep the place clean because a lot of the guys were away and the place was dusty -- to iron our clothes. A lot of people would say that is rather nasty of us not ironing our own clothes. Because it was hot and humid, you frequently had temperatures in the 30s with 100% humidity, our clothes were being washed everyday. The clothes were not cleaned by machine. They were cleaned by one of the guys out in the back with a rock and water. The uniforms are ironed because when they were drying out in the sun there were insects in the country that would lay eggs on them and you had to iron the clothes. If you didn't, the larva from the eggs would burrow into your skin and make you sick. Ironing clothes wasn't a luxury. It was a necessity.

INTERVIEWER: Did you sleep with your weapon at night?

EARNSHAW: Upstairs they did. Downstairs we had weapons in our rooms, depending on the security situation. Sometimes the Brits would have a force protection plan if things were really unstable. There were sometimes when we were at a higher state of alert, where we would actually have a weapon handy, you know, to hand. Most cases, weapons were within reach and, of course, we had helmets and flak jackets nearby. I was saying the worse case scenario was not an enemy attack but a coup by disaffected elements of the army. That's one of the things that we were really concerned about when we were there.

INTERVIEWER: What about leisure hours?

EARNSHAW: Well, we had the PSP -- Personnel Support Program -- run by the Canadian Forces. We went there, we had a couple of DVD players, a couple of TVs that ran on European voltage. The PSP, they'd ship up paperback books and DVDs. Now we had problems because the power was bad. In fact, we found that not only was it intermittent, sometimes the voltage wasn't right. Sometimes the cycles weren't right. Sometimes it was just dirty -- hard to describe because I'm not an electronics expert. But you could get electricity that will slowly but surely cook your equipment. It cooked some of our stuff eventually.

INTERVIEWER: You said you went somewhere for that or was it at your house?

EARNSHAW: No, we had it in our house. One DVD player and TV on each floor. Basically, as the books came in we distributed them amongst the group and we read the paperbacks. In the security situation there was a place in the city called Aberdeen which is almost an island. It's sort of an Isthmus at the western edge of the city right on the Atlantic, where the UN headquarters was situated. It was heavily guarded. You could only approach it by a bridge. And at the other end by a strand of sand that was running along the beach. The UN had check points along those areas and then there were securer areas within that.

Within that zone there were bars, one or two hotels that were being repainted and fixed up. As time went on, restaurants -- because the UN were there and the restaurants - well, they were nice in appearance but the food was not that good. But there were restaurants and places we could go to get food. There were also local establishments. Part of the problem was that it was a country that had been rich. When stability is restored, these people are great entrepreneurs so there were new establishments springing up as soon as stability was restored.

My favourite place was called Chicken Champ which was a fried chicken outfit. One of the reasons why I liked to go there was because things were, you know -- I would never eat deep fried foods here but there you knew that deep fried food was safe. So that's where we would go. There were restaurants that existed previous to the war that you could go out to. There was one bar called Paddy's that I went to once or twice, but it was like a scene out of Casablanca. It was a very strange place with lots of local officials and Mafia. And other creatures of the evening would hang out with loud music and everything else. But it was within the UN secure zone. It was sort of one of those places that in an individual's career it's interesting to see. But always bearing in mind that these places existed but usually within a 100 metres there would be people living in grass huts, surviving on minimum or no food at all. People living, the further you got out in the bush, living in utterly horrendous conditions.

INTERVIEWER: What about vehicles. Did you each have a vehicle?

EARNSHAW: No. Vehicles were fairly scarce. The British forces there had their own army issue vehicles and equipment. As a unit rotated in, it would bring its associated stores and equipment. Or they would hand stores and equipment over to the next one. Those were what we called the 'green fleet'. They were all camouflaged vehicles.

IMATT, most of our vehicles were brand new, had just been purchased and they were Land Rovers. In physical appearance, the same as the Brit army Land Rovers except our vehicles were painted white and had IMATT logos on them which indicated that They were sort of

inconvenient because in a lot of cases -- because of the situation, the white would have been handy in a permissive environment but, in fact was a positive disadvantage once we actually started moving out into the countryside. There was intense competition for vehicles because there weren't enough vehicles for all the organizations that were operating within the IMATT structure.

Like in the training cell, we had one vehicle that we shared amongst four of us. Sometimes that was handy and other times it wasn't. The trainers out in the field, again vehicles were rearranged and redistributed depending on the operational task. Obviously, when you were going out of town there were different force protection arrangements. Within the city there were certain areas, like Aberdeen, where you could go at night in civilian clothes and not be armed because it was inside the UN zone. It was reasonably secure.

Basically the west end of the city was more secure. But once you started heading downtown towards east end of the city, the number of refugees and enemy sympathizers and thieves and bandits and all the rest of that stuff increased. Essentially, in the daytime going down to the centre of the city -- you could go downtown unarmed -- as the police regained strength and restored control. The east end of the city, at night, you'd be insane to go. There was a curfew from twelve o'clock at night until six in the morning. No one was allowed out. But at night you'd have to be armed. But everywhere else, once you headed out of the east end of the city and out into the countryside, you are armed.

INTERVIEWER: Day or night.

EARNSHAW: Day or night. Out to Benguema, which was on the Freetown peninsula, you would travel in pairs.

INTERVIEWER: Two vehicles?

EARNSHAW: No, two guys in a vehicle. Travel in pairs, both armed, because there was just too much stuff going on and too few vehicles. That was a calculated risk and one or two times -- sometimes there was lower periods of tension when you felt it really wasn't necessary. Then there were other times when it was. Beyond that, though, once you headed out beyond the Freetown peninsula, then normally you'd have to have at least two vehicles. Once you moved beyond a town called Masiaka, you usually had to have not only two vehicles but you needed GPS, HF radios, rations, flak jackets, helmets and you'd also get a infantry escort with two land rovers fitted with .50 calibre machine guns and general purpose machine guns.

INTERVIEWER: These were Brits?

EARNSHAW: Yes British infantry. Minimum number of vehicles beyond that point would be four armed to the teeth. Plus with communications assets because the communications infrastructure in the country had broken down. Once you got out of town you are using either high frequency, HF, or UHF radios or satellite phones to communicate.

INTERVIEWER: Did you make many of these trips outside of town?

EARNSHAW: Most of my time, because we were really concentrating on reforming battalions, most of my trips were to the training sites in Hastings, Benguema training sites.

Out to training sites in the mountains where we were training the force reconnaissance unit or the FRU which is one of the better parts of the SLA. Most of the time I spent out in the field we would go out to training sites. A few times we would go out to brigade headquarters in Masiaka, and other locations. The remainder of the team as the operation went on -- we started out very restricted because in November the security situation was such that neither the authorities in Ottawa -- in fact, the British were really not excited about letting forces going much beyond the Freetown peninsula.

But as the operations went on, members of the team were ranging across all of the government held territories. The first place that our guys went to was in the southwest called Kenema which was the local village. But it was also close to diamond mining areas. As the army was being reformed, we were pushing it out to areas where it would do good if the ceasefire would break down. That was actually facing into vital enemy areas because again our understanding of the operation, we may not have actually led troops in combat, we also realized that if fighting broke out these are things we could not control. But also, we were putting units out where, if the ceasefire broke down and the UN forces were starting to withdraw into their cantonments, that the SLA would have to fight and do its job as the government arm and go out and destroy the RUF. Now we didn't know ultimately if it was capable of that and, happily, we didn't have to find out. Those were the circumstances we were working under.

INTERVIEWER: Possibly they could have been involved not only as advisors but as leaders?

EARNSHAW: Some units had effective leaders. Other units had less effective leaders. In a lot of cases the troops in the unit -- some of these cases our guys or the British -- there were quite a number of British advisors who were out advising engineer units, communication units and all the rest of it. These are the guys -- You came into their country. You set up the courses to re-train them. You are the guys who gave them the equipment. You are giving them effective leadership and discipline and you are getting their own leaders back up to speed or trying to get them. But in a lot of cases these soldiers had been in the army ten years, throughout the war, and didn't trust their own leaders anymore.

As I said earlier, there had been no promotions. So in a lot of cases the natural leaders in an organization weren't wearing the rank insignia. Lot of guys wearing the rank insignia were, in fact, very ineffective. That also led to problems. We had informal and formal leaders. When a unit was going out into the countryside they ended up being very much, by their presence and by having to take control of situations from time to time, they became leaders.

As I said, the young captain who got a CDS commendation -- his name was George Jager -- got our own Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) Commendation because he went there as an advisor and he ended up rebuilding and leading that transport unit. When we were moving units down to Kenema he was in charge of providing the transport and then supervising the movement of battalion and brigade headquarters to that city. He was leading troops in the field. He was also supervising, refuelling, resupply, rotation of units, all kinds of stuff. In his case, he was in a line position. He was leading troops.

In IMATT, and again this is something in the British formal terms -- one of the big difference in the British eyes between BRITFOR and the IMATT were the fact that the British Forces there BRITFOR, the battalion etc. were there as a formed body of British troops. IMATT, on the other hand, a lot of the British officers were actually seconded or actually on loan to the

SLA. In perfectly formal terms, they were not part of the -- or they were IMATT and they were wearing Sierra Leone insignia and cap badges.

From the British point of view, yes they were in the British Army. They were British officers but in strictly formal terms, as an IMATT officer, you are the chief of staff for operations. Like, the Chief of Operation for the SLA was a British officer. In my case, I was the SO2 training in education. But that appointment was not an appointment in IMATT. It was an appointment in the SLA. The slot I was filling was not -- IMATT in and of itself didn't have its own existence except for a small administrative staff. We all occupied positions, mostly -- in a lot of cases -- as staff. There were some who actually occupied line positions -- actually were in positions as leaders.

INTERVIEWER: Like your transport officer?

EARNSHAW: That's right. Exactly.

INTERVIEWER: Can I ask you a few questions? Was there ever a mine threat when you were travelling around the country?

EARNSHAW: No the -- that's one of the interesting parts about Sierra Leone. Yes, there are boobytraps, but the character of the war there was such -- and again we are dealing with a lot of the weapons and equipment that they used and the terrain and the environment -- was more conducive to boobytraps than mines. The only place in the country that was heavily mined was the international airport, called Lungi airport which was under government control. Was surrounded by UN troops because it was a vital point that had to be protected.

INTERVIEWER: So it was mined by the UN?

EARNSHAW: No it had been mined during the course of the war.

INTERVIEWER: OK.

EARNSHAW: The mines hadn't been removed yet. That was the one place where there was a significant mine threat. Most of the threats were -- out in the countryside the infrastructure had been destroyed. The roads, in most cases, once you got beyond Masiaka heading south the road net were just ruts and bogs. Big chunks of the road system during the rainy system were simply impassable. You couldn't get around the country. What had used to be paved roads, maybe 15-20 years ago, just had patches of pavement here and there. But in most cases -- you are talking tropical rainy seasons -- they'd been washed away. In the rainy season infrastructure disappears. So things that were burnt as a result of the war two years ago, especially the more you go out into a jungle environment, but there are towns that we'd go into and they say, "Well, these are houses that were burnt down ten years ago and those were burnt down three years ago." They look the same because the forest had moved in and bamboo was growing all over the place. After one or two rainy seasons the ruins look the same so it was very hard to gauge. I was going into towns and villages outside of Freetown -- there was almost like two countries. The further you got out into the countryside.... You'd go into villages and you'd see kids who were diseased, people who had been mutilated by the RUF. That was pretty unpleasant. They were living in abject poverty.

But even in the units, the military units, their medical situation was medieval. There was a

hospital and we had medical advisors. There were medical supplies slowly but surely being brought in. But we had soldiers dying of gangrene fairly regularly -- soldiers dying of all the normal diseases. But you are out in the field -- the unit aide station would be a bamboo hut, guys lying on straw. If they were sick, you would take care of them. There were two or three medical assistants there who, while well trained, had very little equipment. They'd usually have boy scouts first aid kits, bandages and some aspirins, stuff like that.

INTERVIEWER: If a Canadian got sick, did you know that he would be well taken care of?

EARNSHAW: Oh yes. As I said, there was a field hospital in town. The big challenge if you were up country was getting evacuated back to the hospital. That was the challenge.

INTERVIEWER: Were there helicopters available to?

EARNSHAW: For IMATT and BRITFOR only commercial helicopters. Occasionally, if we could get access to UN helicopters --because we were outside of the UN organization -- we could use them sometimes but not all the time. If a UN helicopter was full, we weren't getting on. If there was empty space, you could sometimes get on. All depended on whether or not people were getting confused because we weren't UN. Commercial helicopters that we rented, they were Russian HIP helicopters (MI 25s or 26s).

INTERVIEWER: You spoke about uniforms and civilian clothes. What, in fact, were the regulations for wearing civilian clothes and what was your uniform?

EARNSHAW: We wore standard Canadian forces combat uniforms. We were probably a year ahead of the change to the new camouflage uniforms. Some of the guys complained that they were heavy but I personally thought that the difficulty in a place like that is that, of course, you want to have a light weight uniform because it is so hot and so humid. But on the other hand, you also need a uniform that gives you protection from thorns and bug bites, and I think I failed to mention the snakes. Even where there was training going on, there were frequent cobra sightings -- loads of cobras there and yellow snakes, and all kinds of interesting poisonous snakes as well as the occasional anaconda. Great big, honking snakes.

INTERVIEWER: You felt the combat clothing was appropriate?

EARNSHAW: We got into discussions about it. Some guys felt there was a need for lighter, tropical stuff. It wasn't really a comfortable uniform. I really didn't like wearing... going out in really hot conditions. The webbing chafes and you get rashes and all kinds of stuff. There was also another insect called the champion fly or acid bug. You got used to swatting mosquitoes and if you swat one of these, though, they were literally full of acid. You end up with blisters, and big blisters and open sores that become infected. So, in fact, having a heavier uniform with everything done up well, on one hand, it's hot. On the other, it provides you with protection. So there is always a debate. Webbing was really heavy. Flak jackets we seldom wear. We kept them handy because if you got into a situation you put them on. But if you had to move, you through them away. They were practical only if you weren't moving.

INTERVIEWER: No question of short trousers or short-sleeved shirts?

EARNSHAW: No. We were issued them but we didn't bring them. Simply because in town we probably could have gotten away with them in the daytime. But, again, our regulations

were such that as soon.... And there, of course, being tropical, the sun comes up at 6:30 in the morning and goes down at 6:30 at night, there is no change. It's not like Canada.

So between 6:00 and 6:30 at night you had to put on long-sleeved shirts, long pants and high socks and the whole works because the mosquitoes came out. You had to cover up anyway and you had to put on mosquito lotion. Sometimes we may not have been as efficient at that as we should have been but the fact was that there was malaria. -- the two kinds of malaria. The encephalitis was the threat there. One of the Canadians on the UN team there -- like there were five Canadians there with Op REPTILE, and ten Canadians with Op SCULPTURE. One of their guys got malaria while he was there. He was in the south of the country and had decided to take a helicopter back to Freetown a day early which probably saved his bacon because he collapsed just as he was getting off the helicopter. With encephalitis, of course. Once it's detected you have about ten, twelve hours to get treated before you croak. He was able to get treatment in time.

We were also taking meflequin. Again, meflequin is a controversial drug. We found that it affected each one of us differently. I had super vivid dreams. My meflequin morning was Tuesday mornings when I would wake up in a rage. But once I figured out it was the drugs, you know.... I had vivid dreams but one morning when I knew that I wasn't myself because the drugs were working in a peculiar way. All of the Brit force, though -- like, meflequin is 90 per cent effective, and they were suffering basically 5 per cent casualties from malaria while we were there which is in line with malaria consumption. There was the occasional malingerer, or individual, who did not take his medicine who inevitably got it.

INTERVIEWER: And they would have to be shipped home?

EARNSHAW: Yes. The normal drill is shipping people out. So that was an omnipresent risk. The other thing, of course, was a real problem. Not with our team because happily the ten men, ROTO-0, was mostly more mature guys. We only had one guy under the age of forty on our team. So we had very experienced people. Amongst the ladies of the evening, the prostitutes, there was a 100 per cent HIV infection rate. Therefore, individuals who chose to socialize with these people were playing with their lives.

INTERVIEWER: What about civilian clothes?

EARNSHAW: In the daytime, in our free time, within the house, normally it was tee-shirts, shorts and flip-flops. It is difficult, again, to describe to Canadians what it's like to be in a tropical environment like that. As on the coast it was usually, the humidity was seldom if ever, except for in the winter time when you got the Harmattan winds that would come down the coast. They come off the Sahara. They are dry, cool air winds. The coldest recorded temperature in Freetown was 18 degrees -- I mean ever.

In daytime we would just be bags of sweat under normal conditions. Few days we had Harmattan winds, with no humidity, it was a real pleasure. Most days you are dressing really light. As I say, as time went on there were places you could go to eat. As time went on, most of us wore trousers, running shoes or hiking boots. You didn't wear light shoes because there were open sewers running down the street. There was garbage everywhere, open sewers. They were only just beginning to rebuild the garbage collection system. People were living in hideously unsanitary conditions. People were defecating in the ditches in front of our house. The only place --- you wore flip flops in the house -- even there you were taking chances with

the environment by not wearing flip flops. But once you got out you'd wear shoes.

Maybe on the beach you'd wear flip flops. When Sierra Leone was a rich place it had great tourist resorts, most of which didn't exist anymore. But they had fantastic beaches. We went to the beaches occasionally. There was a place called Lomely Beach which was a big beach just at the edge of the city which we would go to occasionally. Except the big problem was, you know a big beautiful beach, made millions for the country when it was stable. There were other beaches where there had been resorts, nicest beaches in West Africa. The only problem there of course was the fact you go to the beach there were people pilfering, trying to sell you stuff all the time. They'd take your stuff if you even looked away for a second. Or somebody was inattentive, your personal goods were gone. We didn't go often. It was a real hassle. Again, we only went to the portion of the beach that was in the secure zone.

You had to be careful. There were other places. The troops were training in the jungle or in the mountains. Every once and awhile the guys would be crossing a stream or going through brush or something. There are microbes there. In the streams you get some kind of bloom of a particular bug. The guys would come down with all kinds of horrible nasty diseases.

INTERVIEWER: Where would they go for medical attention?

EARNSHAW: Straight to the British. That's interesting. We had the British Field Hospital there and our UN friends would go to -- there was an Indian Hospital a Troychem[?] hospital and a Jordanian Field Hospital but that's where the UN guys would go. We went to the Brit field hospital. As soon as you were evacuated and then you would get medical care.

INTERVIEWER: What about contact with Canada? As a soldier did you have any contact whatsoever?

EARNSHAW: We had Satphone.

INTERVIEWER: OK, but I mean from a business perspective not from a leisure perspective, from a chain of command?

EARNSHAW: Militarily, we had direct, modern technology. We had a satellite phone with a miniature antenna attached to it We actually taped out an area where we could pick up a satellite and we would communicate officially with NDHQ at least once a day. At night, usually when we got back to the house at the end of the day, we usually set up the Satphone and called back.

INTERVIEWER: Who would you contact?

EARNSHAW: The National Defence

INTERVIEWER: Who?

EARNSHAW: Physically? An individual would be either the duty officer in the National Defence Command Centre or our desk officer, if he was handy. You'd get a duty officer who was on call. If it happened to be in the day time -- and, of course, we were five or six hours out of sync with Canada. If it happened to be while people were still awake, we'd get a hold of Tom Miller who was our desk officer, Lieutenant Commander Tom Miller. He would deal

with situations. We also had -- and it was very interesting -- very quickly after the situation stabilized in the city we were able to send stuff by the internet email. It didn't take them long to set up cell phone towers. The actual land line telephone system was pretty unreliable. We had the internet and it was slow but it was there. We had Satphone by which we could send secure data. We could send secure data by that means as well. By using the local telephone system we could also make phone calls. The most reliable way of getting back to Canada was the Satphone.

INTERVIEWER: Satellite phone.

EARNSHAW: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Could you make personal calls on that?

EARNSHAW: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: So you were allowed to phone home every once in awhile?

EARNSHAW: Well, the rules -- I guess it was basically -- and this was my boss' call. By the strict letter of the law, you have about ten minutes a week. Right beside the Satphone when it was up and active, everybody kept it in the log. You'd record it. So I'd phone home. I think most guys phoned home two or three times a week, usually for two or three minutes but sometimes longer. The whole story -- if somebody's kid is sick or there were one or two deaths in some peoples families and those sorts of things -- well, when emergencies happened we gave people whatever time they needed on the phone. It's the old story. If you are a large contingent, you have hundreds of people trying to get access to one or two phones, then it's not practical. But if you are a small team, like ten guys, DND is paying the same amount of money to keep that phone running. It's not by the call. They are paying for the account whether they use the phone or not. So, for a small team we told the guys try to keep it to about ten minutes a week. But if there is an emergency or an administrative problem, or if mother isn't getting paid or whatever, then we gave them as much time as they needed to sort themselves out.

INTERVIEWER: Interview with Jack Earnshaw on the 22 November, 2003, end of side one, tape two.

END OF SIDE TWO, TAPE ONE

INTERVIEWER: Canadian War Museum Oral History program interview with Jack Earnshaw, tape two, side two.

INTERVIEWER: Could you clarify for me the chain of command for your team?

EARNSHAW: Clearly, within the team it's fairly straightforward. Colonel Bergstrand was in charge and he did the command and control. I was responsible for day to day operations and the security, evacuation plan and any other contingency planning that had to happen. I was usually responsible for that.

Everybody else within the team had specific responsibilities. The transport officer, George Jager, took care of all logistical and financial considerations for the team. Captain

Cunningham, who was the other captain, took care of team welfare. Master Warrant Officer Schaffel was responsible as the RSM for the discipline, dress and deportment of the team. That was the internal line of communication.

For most of the contacts we actually had with National Defence Headquarters, or not, nominally my boss reported directly to the DCDS but clearly that's not practical. But we, for purposes of administration and for purposes of some operational considerations. i.e. when we were sending troops out into the countryside we had to get keep our superiors informed and in some cases look for the official OK to send the guys off. Because we had to coordinate security details and those sorts of things. Those are not real time command and control arrangements. But for administrative and some operational stuff, mostly getting authority to undertake certain operations or efforts. For instance, our guys going out into the country on advisory missions or going out with a particular unit or going out in some cases for resupply and those sorts of things. Resupply or sending a team out into the countryside for verification or for pay. A lot of those guys are heading off into the interior of the country. Were out basically four to six land rovers with machine guns and HF radios so we had to look for permission to get those to go out.

But our day to day chain of command or orders and instructions were from the Brits. Commander BRITFOR was a brigadier general. He commanded both IMATT and the remainder of the British forces in the country. As I said, IMATT was infused within the SLA. We were the nervous system of the SLA, so to speak. There was the British Forces. So Commander British Forces. There two senior IMATT guys that he would talk to. There was Colonel Knapper, British full colonel, was the Chief of Staff (COS) Joint Operations 3 (J3), the head operator. He is the guy who actually planned operations, planned the reconstitution of the units, planned the deployments of the units and moving forward. Also contingency planning, if things fell apart. He was the guy who was directing the planning for counter insurgency operations.

In fact, a lot of our work -- the British were very much focused on counter insurgency operations while we were there. So the IMATT function was very much subservient. We were rebuilding the army with a view to having troops available to fight the RUF if things fell apart. And to quickly regain control of the country if the RUF started to collapse, which is ultimately what occurred. But that's ROTO 1 story and ROTO 2 story. That was Colonel Knapper. He was the COS J3. For operational matters he, through his staff, would give orders or instructions to our guys, particularly Captain Jager, who was involved in operations.

Then there was a British Colonel Dent who was the formal chief of IMATT. But he also gave orders and instructions to most of the rest of us who were involved in training, administration, communications, engineering, all those sorts of things. For operational purposes, the COS J3 would talk to us and for administrative purposes he was chief of staff support. Both of those were appointments within the Sierra Leone Army and we all held formal titles inside that organization.

I had a boss, Colonel Brown, who was a British full colonel, who was a chief of staff training, who came a little bit later on in the mission. But my chain of command, for instance, was to Colonel Brown, Colonel Brown to commander BRITFOR. Commander BRITFOR would give him orders and instructions. When we were there, we were trying to rebuild, not just training. Day to day we were involved in management and resource, all the concerns about running engineering courses, transport courses, communications courses, medical courses, to

rebuild all this stuff. We were also involved in putting together the drafts for the next short term training course; ie., the next 2000 people who were going to go out to Benguema to form Battalion No. 10, Battalion No. 4, Battalion No. 5, Battalion No. 6. Then one or two companies of that thing would also be cut to the navy and become navy troops.

There were parts of IMATT that were in the Sierra Leone navy. In following rotations, in fact, Canadians sent navy engineers to work with their navy which was one big Shanghai-3 patrol boat and a whole bunch of inflatable boats. For the guys who were actually out in the weeds doing advisers -- the advisers and stuff -- their chain of command would be commander BRITFOR, Colonel Knapper, who was the COS J3. Then down to their lieutenant-colonel working for him, Colonel Johnny Rogers. Basically, there was an O Group every morning. Those advisers and trainers who weren't up-country working, we'd all sit around a table and we'd report on what we were doing and they'd give us orders and instructions.

INTERVIEWER: That's a very complex chain of command. Were there ever any clashes between what the Canadians said you could or couldn't do and what the Brit lieutenant-colonel training would tell you to do?

EARNSHAW: No, the Brit lieutenant-colonel operations -- in fact, the position I was in was a lieutenant-colonel slot. But I was still employed as a major. So I reported directly to a full colonel on the training side. And in practice, it wasn't complicated. In terms of perceptions, of course, I think that there will always be when you are dealing with a combined force. Canada, when they sent us, I'm sure had the perception that we were down there and we were training and advising and doing passive stuff.

The British, conversely, when we got there -- and we naturally reported this back up through our chain -- the British were also running a counter-insurgency campaign. We were involved in that counter-insurgency campaign just by being there and by rebuilding the army, by doing all the stuff. We were still doing all the IMATT things that we were sent there to do in accordance with the resolution. But we were not in a stable environment. We were in an environment where the units that we were training, we were sent to the front with the expectation of actually having to fight, or an apprehension that they would have to fight.

There was a psychological operations campaign that was going full swing -- propaganda campaign, information operations campaign. The British had active reconnaissance and other operations going on with the force reconnaissance unit. When you are talking about coming into conflict it wasn't so much coming into conflict with the Brits. Although there were one or two events where our understanding of the situation was different from theirs. Yes, Colonel Bergstrand, our relationship was that if we did have a disagreement with the Brits it was my job, not Colonel Bergstrand's job, to go and talk to Colonel Knapper and close the door. Because he was the good cop. I was the bad cop. I would go in and explain our concerns. He was a smart man and we were able to agree on things when there were conflicts.

Most of our problems came -- if you are talking difficulties with perception -- was our relationship with the UN. Not with the UN Canadians, necessarily, because we saw them fairly often. We actually brought gym equipment with us. We had brought a weight set. We were able to do weights and stuff to keep fit. They would come over and visit us from time to time. But the UN Force -- from our point of view, we were the SLA -- the legally constituted army of the government. This was a point that was even in the agreement the Status of Forces

agreement with the UN. If it was a government controlled zone, we had the freedom to move wherever we wanted to in government controlled zones.

The UN tended to treat us -- again if you have been involved in UN operations -- if you are inside the UN bubble. You say, well, we're the good guys and then there are the opposing forces. There are those RUF guys out there and there is the SLA guys out there and we have to treat both sides impartially. Unfortunately those rules, I think in modern operations -- certainly in the past ten years, -- those rules are becoming much harder and harder and harder to observe. On one hand, the RUF was clearly not a government entity. It was an insurgency. It had degenerated into something more akin to a motorcycle gang or a criminal syndicate than a liberation movement of any sort. It wasn't ideological.

INTERVIEWER: Excuse me for interrupting. But it sounds again like an example where Canada or any other country should not get involved in advisor duties and UN duties in the same environment.

EARNSHAW: There were concerns about that. As I said, with our UN counterparts we got along just fine. With the UN though, the UN were having their problems. They were having major problems. Bearing in mind that they had already left the country once when they were threatened. When things broke down they preparing to leave the country again. But they tended to see us as an opposing force. They didn't like the fact that we were being proactive in reasserting government control in areas where that had been controlled by the RUF. The other difficulty, of course, was that the RUF had actually thrown off the traces. They were no longer operating within the bounds of the UN. They had taken the agreement they had with the UN and attacked the UN. Killed dozens, and dozens and dozens of UN troops in May just months before.

Even there they had violated the peace accord. They had attacked the UN and were being treated probably a little bit better than they deserved to be treated in terms of their status and what they were doing. That is where the conflicts came in.

We had daily communications, meetings and briefings with the UN. But again, the other difficulty with the UN was that a lot of their units were not very well trained. Some of them were very poorly equipped. Some of them were actively in bed with the RUF because the RUF had diamonds. These people wanted to get diamonds. There were people from third world countries who were not managing the resources they were being given effectively. These were hobbling a lot of the UN efforts in that area.

That is also one of the reasons why the British, while they were supporting the UN operation, they were pumping lots of British staff officers into the UN force. There were lots of British UN observers with the force. But they were standing apart from it because it was hobbled by -- I've alluded to a whole bunch of problems that they were having. It wasn't until the RUF itself started to collapse that they were able to make headway. Before that, if the RUF attacked them, they were really not in a position to deal effectively with them. Except for some units. Notable exceptions would be the Indians who fought them. There was a case of a Zambian battalion that were actually mechanized -- they had BRDMs and MTLBs and other vehicles -- ran into RUF on foot, surrendered wholesale. The whole battalion put up their hands and turned all their kit and equipment over to the RUF.

INTERVIEWER: How long were you there?

EARNSHAW: Six and a half months.

INTERVIEWER: Did you get any leave during that six and a half months?

EARNSHAW: Yes, we did. Now I probably took a little bit less than I was personally entitled to but everyone got roughly two weeks leave. Obviously, being a small team -- with most missions, of course, if you have a big team, the minute you get off the airplane -- we're talking about a battalion that's going for six months -- the minute you get off the airplane somebody goes on leave. The days just before you get back on the airplane somebody is finishing up their leave because there just isn't enough time to send everybody on leave, have enough people on the ground and still accomplish the mission. Now in our case, that wasn't a big problem. We were able, over a 2 1/2 - 3 month period, we were able to send everybody away for about two weeks.

INTERVIEWER: And what was the leave arrangements?

EARNSHAW: Normally, some of the guys chose to go home. The air connections were pretty sketchy to begin with. In some cases, you actually either had to take a World Food Program chopper back to Konacre[?] and get back that way. But there was an airline, Sierra Air, that was established while we were there. You could actually go to Lungi Airport, get a flight to London, and then go home. Now in my case I just stayed. Susan, my wife, flew from Canada to the UK. We stayed with friends in the UK and we stayed there for two weeks.

INTERVIEWER: Was that leave subsidized?

EARNSHAW: Yes. That's all part of the....

INTERVIEWER: For both your wife and yourself?

EARNSHAW: No. The only part that was subsidized was me getting to go to wherever I planned to take leave. In accordance with current entitlements, that includes if I wanted to come back here to Ottawa for a week or two. Most of the guys who had kids came home.

INTERVIEWER: What about pay and allowances? Was there any change in your pay and allowances?

EARNSHAW: Yes. We normally got risk. It had been newly re-jigged at this point -- every mission that Canadian troops are on, there is a board that sits and assess two ratings for it, risk and hardship. Risk being the military risk; i.e., your chances of being involved in an ambush or being absconded with, bandits, those sorts of things. And hardship.

INTERVIEWER: Living conditions.

EARNSHAW: Living conditions. And on our mission, of all of the missions of the time, we had the highest rating. Which meant that we got a little more cash each pay to compensate us for those circumstances. It wasn't planned for but, yes, we headed into a zone that was not stable. Definitely the situation could have gotten very bad and that was assessed. We were living on an economy. I know there were political reasons for putting us out on the economy

but we were living in the city of the country that is dead last in the US [UN?] development index. The actual urban conditions we were living in were not that good. We got the risk and hardship allowance. You got the normal foreign service allowance which everybody --- it doesn't matter if you are living in Paris or

INTERVIEWER: Timbuktu.

EARNSHAW: Or Timbuktu, everybody gets foreign service allowance and it's an incentive to get people to do stuff overseas. So we got risk and hardship allowance, FSA. We also got from the British a 30 pound a day subsistence allowance. That is still less than what the UN guys were getting.

INTERVIEWER: Did you feel sufficiently compensated for living out on the economy?

EARNSHAW: Yes, well, I don't know yet. I'm just saying the air quality where we were in the city... ROTO 1 actually moved up the mountain and the subsequent ROTOs are living way up in a place called Lester Park which is way high above the city. It's mountainous there. They are quite distant from where we were. We were down close to the waterfront. The air quality there -- the vehicles were in very poor repair. There are thousands of very crummy old vehicles on the street. People were cooking with coal and wood. The air quality where we were was poor. The air quality was bad. We were also in the miasma of bugs and open sewers and all the rest of that. I felt that whatever they could give us was suitable. That was a major factor. I'll try to be as quick as I can.

INTERVIEWER: Were there any other points that you'd like to cover about the operation in Sierra Leone?

EARNSHAW: OK, as I say, some of the very important things that happened in ROTO 0 in terms what occurred. The bulk of the army -- when we got there, there were two battalions formed through these short term training programs. Our guys had a big part -- the four master warrant officers in particular -- were responsible for a lot of the advanced training that was going on. We started off, there were two formed battalions and when left there were close to nine battalions that had been formed, given a modicum of training. And that was very important. The master warrant officers that were also, towards the end of the tour, not only training, but one or two of them were down in the south, in the field, as advisors. In some cases, actually out patrolling along the border, and other locations, reasserting government control in areas where the army had not been for a long time. Those guys started off with a training role in a narrowly confined area. By the end of the mission, they were making a transition to an advisory role and were actually out on the frontiers with troops in the field. Again a very non-traditional role.

My boss -- I always talk about the J4 stuff -- just to say that he arrived where the logistical system was pretty much broken and corrupt. He established policies and every day he came home with stories of corruption, collusion, bribe and theft that he spent his time trying to restore governance in the system. He worked with huge energy trying to re-establish that. A mundane job but without it the future fate of that country will hang in the balance. The administrative guys faced direct, violent, physical threats in what they were doing, in verifying who was in the army. Actually finding out who was in the army was dealing with the DDA folks and the pensioners. Actually verifying who next of kin were. All of those mundane functions. But that was the source of so much suffering. If you don't take care of

the soldiers, the soldiers go on rampages. They have revolutions. And this was the cancer that was destroying the country. They had very important, significant jobs doing what they did. The successors, to allude to the succeeding ROTOs, the guys were getting much into improving the quality of the army. A lot of them were reintegrating demobilized RUF people in the army and actually building the new armed forces when the RUF collapsed.

There were some hair-raising operations in ROTO 1 where the army moved into places in spite of what the UN was saying because the UN was being reluctant and hesitant to establish government control. But the SLA was pushed forward in any case to re-establish control and wrest it from the RUF. So those are important achievements. The army was being transformed from an armed mob to a formed force and a source of stability in the country. My point: when I arrived there was no training system. There were no functioning schools. There was no functioning education. A good two thirds of the military were either completely illiterate or semi-literate. We were involved in the training and forming of the battalions but also running a wide array of specialist courses and just beginning to touch on the literacy issue.

The other things that I did as a staff weenie, which I think were worthwhile, was there was no training policies. One of my jobs was doing the mundane job of drawing up policies. Drawing up the three-year training plan for the army and its transformation into the armed forces of Sierra Leone. As well as building the master plan and master calendar for rebuilding a training system which is quite distinct, their ability to regenerate themselves and to build a training system where a more reliable and professional army can be built. Those are all things when you are looking at what the team did and what it accomplished. It was a success story. There were many considerations there. Eventually, the RUF was defeated. It collapsed partly in combat with the army of Guinea. It lost in the field. Partly through the embargo imposed by the UN on Charles Taylor who was actively involved in supporting the RUF. Through the efforts of the British Forces and IMATT. All of those things are important things to remember when we are looking at the mission as a whole.

INTERVIEWER: Do you feel that it was all worth while?

EARNSHAW: Two things. Whenever it comes to a mission or an overseas deployment I don't look back; i.e., I don't look at the situation now and say: was it worth it? There are people who came after me who may have changed things I did or may moved on in different directions from where we moved. I focus on the mission as it was at the time. Yes, in that context, I believe it was worthwhile.

INTERVIEWER: Have you followed the situation in Sierra Leone since you were there?

EARNSHAW: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Is it a better country?

EARNSHAW: Yes it's been stable since the RUF has collapsed. It's been stable now for almost two years. One of the perennial difficulties of peacekeeping or stability operations when the UN leaves or the focuses of international community diminishes, the thing can fall apart. If the international community does not maintain a presence or an interest in the country, it will not for the foreseeable future automatically kick itself into gear and run itself. If we leave, there is an excellent chance that it will collapse.

INTERVIEWER: What about the army itself? Has the army improved considerably?

EARNSHAW: Yes. I've talked to my successors and in just a couple of weeks the guys in ROTO 4 are going to be getting off the airplane. ROTO 5 will be getting on. The problems that we were dealing with was just trying to get something cobbled back together, trying to get something that looks like an army into the field. Things that they are dealing with are officer training, rebuilding staff courses, formalizing personnel policies and the training regime. They, I think, are doing the job that people pictured us doing originally initially, we weren't able to do because I think the situation that was anticipated was not the situation that materialized on the ground. There have been definite improvements. If we withdrew our support tomorrow and said, "You are on your own," they'd probably hang together for a few years. But they are not at the point where they'd be self sustaining or self-regulating for sometime to come.

INTERVIEWER: Did you get involved in the briefing of the teams that followed you?

EARNSHAW: I have been involved in briefings. But not that many briefings. Certainly offering advice and assistance to individuals who sought it yes - a lot - but not formally.

INTERVIEWER: You feel that the teams that followed you were better prepared than you were in going over?

EARNSHAW: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: What about medals and decorations? I understand you received a special decoration as a result of that operation?

EARNSHAW: It wasn't a simple thing. Officially their people who were in IMATT were seconded to the armed forces of Sierra Leone. The British have other organizations called BMATTs (British Military and Advisory Training Teams) in other parts of the world. They don't get medals for what they do. But the local government may award them an independence day medal or an a commendation medal or some other expression of appreciation. If the local government gives them something, well then, more often than not Her Majesty's Government will allow them to wear it. Well, in Sierra Leone the situation wasn't as advertised. So for the period of the war, from the time we were there to the actual armistice, which was in 2002, all members of teams who were there up and until July of 2002 received the British Operational Service Medal.

It's a new name for a medal. The Operational Service Medal is the same sort of status as old General Service Medals or Campaign Service Medals which the Brits used to issue with bars. For instance, the Campaign Service Medal of 1961 is still issued for Northern Ireland and this medal replaces it. The big difference is that from now into the future, each mission that this medal is issued for has different ribbons, but the medal is the same.

The British Medal, for instance, for Iraq may choose to have an individual campaign medal for that particular one. There are other ones, for example, Afghanistan. The British troops in Afghanistan will get the same medal we did for Sierra Leone only they get it with a different ribbon.

INTERVIEWER: So you got that medal and you are allowed to wear it?

EARNSHAW: Yes. It is approved by the Canadian government. The British government has to go through Government House. The honours and awards committee at Government House sits and considers each proposal from a foreign country for medals and in this case it was approved. There has also been staff action through the Canadian system --through Canadian honours and awards committee for other foreign award. That is still ongoing because, of course, the guys that were there after July 2002 don't receive anything. In our case, because we were there under an exceptional set of circumstances, the mission that was advertised was not the one that we were actually engaged in. We received a British campaign medal for the time we were there.

INTERVIEWER: Did you also get some sort of award from the Sierra Leone government?

EARNSHAW: Yes. Some of us, but only ROTO 0. The Sierra Leone government, because we were there on the fortieth anniversary of their independence day, some of us got the independence medal which is a local decoration. But we are not allowed to wear that. That's considered to be a private honour. In accordance with Canadian regulations, you can't get more than one, certainly for UN operations and for a lot of modern campaigns. Like, for instance, the Gulf War. In some cases, Canadians got awards from -- they got the Canadian campaign medal -- but they also got awards from Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. I can only wear one of those and the other two are private decorations that they can keep on the mantle piece or in the shadow box at home. So that more or less falls in the same category.

INTERVIEWER: How do you feel that this experience in Sierra Leone has affected you personally?

EARNSHAW: There are a number of things. First of all, on the professional level, these are the sorts of things that you spend your life preparing for. And to be offered an important position for the first rotation for a mission in a challenging environment is a rare privilege, is a rare thing. From that point of view, it's something I will treasure or remember for the rest of my life. This was a significant event in my life.

From a family point of view, it's one of those things where.... anyone of these overseas times, and again when I was in Germany, both my wife and I were in the service. My first year of marriage, Susan was posted in Winnipeg and I was posted to Europe. So for most of our marriage we have been separated because, up until recently, Susan was in the service. If your marriage survives the separation, usually it's a little bit better. A lot of them don't and I think in that regard if I wanted to go away again, Susan has a hammer under the bed to break my knees before I get out the door. I'm not sure she 'd let me go off to go do something like that again.

Personally, it was as good experience. Coming back from it one always expects that the transition would be smooth. I think for some of us it wasn't a smooth as we thought it would be for the sort of mission it was. I was saying earlier when you got out into the countryside it was a very picturesque country. The people tend to be quite nice and pleasant but when you see the things that they've done to each other and the people there who are living by the skin of their teeth, and meeting people who you know won't be with you us for much longer, that does affect you in negative ways. It's been a few years now and I think the transition back to life -- the experience was fulfilling. It was privilege to have participated in. It will stay with

me for the rest of my life.

INTERVIEWER: And you'd recommend it for other young officers?

EARNSHAW: Well, again, I'm not sure that I'm young. For that kind of a mission, I'd suspect you'd want someone a little more mature. Advisory duties of that nature, yes. I think under similar circumstances I would recommend it as an opportunity for others.

INTERVIEWER: Thank you for a very wonderful interview. Interview ends with Jack Earnshaw on the 22nd of November 2003, interviewed by Mike Charrier.

TRANSCRIPT ENDS