



Open Liberia, Inc.

'Harnessing Local Knowledge For Open Governance, Sustained Democracy'

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Press Statement

Samuka V. Konneh | Executive Director, OLiberia | Friday, Oct. 27, 2017 @ 11am

Good morning ladies and gentlemen of the press; and on behalf of Open Liberia, I welcome you all to this important press briefing. First, Open Liberia joins the rest of Liberia to congratulate the Liberia National Police (LNP) and other security sector players for the level of responsibility so far during these tedious electioneering activities. However, that's not today's intent. The today briefing is intended to reveal to the public findings of a non-academic research we commissioned to look into the logistical wellbeing of the LNP as part of the overall police reform process, especially so when our nation braces itself to usher in a new political dispensation. Our enumerators visited 32 depots in Montserrado County, but only 26 accepted to participate in the study. 6 depots refused to participate – even though they expressed appreciation for the study because logistics, whether available or not, indiscriminately affect their performances. The findings listed here are contained in the report title: **Stranded Law Enforcement - Over A Decade After The Accra CPA, LNP Still A Dream Hard To Live.**

1. Our study finds that all of the functional operational logistics belonging to the LNP, including vehicles and motorbikes as well as administrative equipment and supplies such computers, internet, uniforms, baton, spray guns etc are all only assigned at central headquarter on capitol Bypass – leaving stations and depots completely strangled to effectively work – such that depots in Montserrado County are unable to respond to more than one crime reported at the same time.

As a result of this imbalance in the distribution of police resources, 73% of respondents to the study said they are unable to respond to multiple crimes reported at the same because they do not have any vehicle, motorbike or tricycle. Seven depots, including Joe Bar, New Kru Town, Gobarchop, Bong Mine Bridge, VOA, Doe Community and Logan Town, said they are capable of responding to multiple crimes at the same – however, they do not have a vehicle, motorbike or any moving machine to facilitate such response. In fact, not a single one of the depots surveyed, even those that did not participate in the study, reported receiving vehicle, motorbike, tricycle or base radios within the last three years – thereby leaving their performances at the mercy of citizen-complainants.

2. That if there is an incident on police stations similar to what happened at Redlight station in 2015 involving motorcyclists, there is absolutely no chance of containing it by these depots; and the consequence may even be deadly during these elections period. This is because the depots lack the necessary operational logistics to respond to a reported crime, let alone prevent or contain an attack.

LIFE STORY: Our study reveals that the reason motorcyclists were able to set ablaze and destroy the Redlight depot was because incessant calls made to central headquarters on Capitol Hill for support did not yield any result. Calls were placed from the station ahead of the cyclists' attack and from Zone 9 Base in Jacob Town for reinforcement and mobility support. Officers interviewed said no reinforcement came because there was no vehicle ready at central to convey the officers that were on standby. So, neither did officers on the standby at Zone 9 Base nor those at central quarter joined their colleagues at Redlight to prevent or repel the attack. At the time

of the attack, there was no live weapon, no tear gas, no riot control gadgets at the station; and the number of officers on duty was very minimum.

3. That police officers have not received uniform supplies for several years – largely depending on the person spoken to. But the timeframe ranges between two and ten years. Several officers said that they have not received any uniform since their graduation 10yrs ago. Respondents say they have been purchasing their police uniforms from the local markets. Only Redlight Container Site and Bong Mine Bridge depots say they received uniform supplies about seven months ago.

LIFE STORY: For example, a police officer assigned at the Doe Community depot says he has been using his uniform for ten years now. He was given the uniform during his graduation from the national police academy.

4. Although all respondents agreed that they ought to respond to reported crimes within almost 30mins, it currently takes the police up to one hundred eighty minutes or three hours sometimes longer, to respond to a reported crime in its own neighborhood; and if the crime is reported in a location that is a little farther, it takes them several hours to respond - which they significantly attribute to the lack of operational logistics.

LIFE STORY: Such delay can have serious injuries or life-threatening implications. For example, officers at Old Road Vai Town police depots narrated the horrifying experience of a teenagers who was gang-raped by seven men that came to their home at Smythe Road to armed-rob. The rape survivor and her family called the police for rescue but they did not respond in time because there was no vehicle or motorbike at that time of the night. So, the armed robbery went on; and unfortunately ended with a teenager getting being gang-raped. Still, because the police did not respond in time, the armed robbers cum rapists escape without any trace.

5. Our study also found out that as simple as it may seem, policers assigned at depots do not know when they ought to receive office supplies and operational logistics - which in effect leaves rooms for doubt and suspicion.
6. Finally, we gathered evidence that officers at many times abandon duty posts at certain hours of the night due to cold, lack of electricity and lack of firearms to protect themselves against potential intruders – also leaving many vehicles not inspected. They also leave duty posts when it rains due to lack of raingears. However, this has improved with the provision of raingears to some officers last month.

CONCLUSION

As we submit these findings to the public through you, our dear colleagues, let it be known that OLiberia’s intent for this and all subsequent research and advocacy activities is to support the sustenance of progress made over the years; and to begin to prepare the political environment for the next dispensation, no matter the winner of the presidential elections in a few days, that Liberia has come a long way and intends to steer clear of its horrible past.

It’s no Liberian’s hope that the progress made so far would be a target of the next government, as it’s been the situation in our history. We long that the next government will build-upon and create enabling environments for open governance and sustained democracy; and we, OLiberia are happy to be part of the process that finds solution.