

# Guyana defence force in national development

[Technology](#), [Development](#)



## THE GUYANA DEFENCE FORCE IN NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT: CIVILIAN-MILITARY RELATIONS - SOME PERSPECTIVES

The case for the Guyana Defence Force to be involved in national development is enshrined in the birth of the Force and it is articulated as the third part of the Force's tripartite role: 1. "Defend the territorial integrity of Guyana. 2. Assist the civil power in the maintenance of law and order when required to do so. 3. Contribute to the economic development of Guyana." [1] The question then has to be, how will the Force be most effective in fulfilling this role.

This essay contends that good civil-military relations with government and non-government organisations are critical to the successful fulfilment of this role. To demonstrate the relationship between successful national development activities and good civil-military relations, I will examine areas of development the Force can be most effective and show that the level of effectiveness will be driven by the quality civil-military relations in the said area. What then are the areas of development that the Guyana Defence Force can be most effective?

The following areas of development were selected because the military role and level of success is easily measurable: 1. Engineering - infrastructural work; road construction, housing projects for low income earners, etc. 2. Health services - medical outreaches; military doctors, dentists providing service in hinterland areas, etc. 3. Education - military personnel both soldiers and civilians are employed as teachers in hinterland areas where there are limited schools, etc. 4. Economic - military personnel being employed on economic projects; such as the establishment of micro-industries, for example, farming. . Administrative - Officers are seconded to

<https://assignbuster.com/guyana-defence-force-in-national-development/>

administrative positions in government agencies and even the other Services of the Joint Services. 6. Aviation - Augmenting the transportation of people and goods to the hinterland regions. Throughout most of its history the Force has been involved in national development by way of executing engineering projects particularly in the areas of hinterland roads and bridges construction. Also, the construction of low cost housing and airstrip rehabilitation are other areas where the Force participated in engineering works.

This commitment to national development by way of executing engineering projects was highlighted in " Guyana's Draft Second Development Plan, 1972-1976 which assigned specific responsibilities, to the Engineer Corps, for the construction of hinterland roads and bridges, the upgrading of airstrips and projects such as the rehabilitation of the hydro-electric power station at Tumatumari"[2] The success of the Force involvement in these ventures is commendable, however, the Force was unable to remain committed to such ventures as a single source agency as time progress. This was due to lack of resources; both human and mainly material.

Therefore, one can argue that a civil-military relation framework by way of partnership with a government or non-government would have enhanced the Force's longevity in its commitment to such ventures. This was not lost to the Force administration and is exemplified in the Force's most recent commitment to engineering projects as detailed in the Stabroek News. " Five ranks of the Guyana Defence Force (GDF) received keys to new homes at Tuschen Housing Scheme, East Bank Essequibo last week as part of a an

ongoing partnership between Habitat for Humanity Guyana; the Ministry of Housing and the army to assist ranks with affordable housing. [3]

Noteworthy is the commitment of government or non-government organisations to have such partnerships with the Force in this sector, as detailed in the same article, “ Chairman of the Management Board at Habit for Humanity, Alex Graham remarked that the GDF has the capacity to play an integral role in various aspects of the housing response while pointing out that the army can also help in the building of homes for persons outside the GDFfamily. ”[4] This demonstrates that there is clear recognition by non-government agencies that good civil-military relations are beneficial to both parties.

Further the Force will not be required to singlehandedly seek out and forge these partnership. The Force has a rich history of providing medical services to rural and hinterland villages as part of its medical outreaches. The Force has been impressive in its support to national development in this sector by providing free medical and dental care to thousands of Guyanese. This is not surprising since common to most underdeveloped countries is the lack of capacity to provide quality medical services as you move away from the cities and main towns.

This is the case in Guyana and its exasperated by our demographics, terrain in hinterland areas and the lack of adequate transportation facilities to hinterland and rural areas. The support by the Force in this sector has continued throughout its existence and remains source of kudos as highlighted in the following excerpt from Stabroek News. “ Close to 200

Upper Berbice River residents benefited from dental and general medical care when a team from the Guyana Defence Force (GDF) Medical Corps hosted an outreach exercise there recently.

According to the army, residents said they were grateful for the exercise and expressed the desire for a doctor to visit at least once per year. "[5] The quality and level of success gained in this sector can be improved with better civil-military relations with government and non-government organisation. Similar sentiments in regards to the value of these relations were expressed by the Chief of Staff in his 2011 Command Directive. " In 2011, I plan to establish statecraft partnerships with the Ministries of Education and Health. "[6]

The use of military personnel to augment the efforts of the Ministry of Education to provide education at any level and in any area of the country has not been a feature of the Force for any substantive period.

Notwithstanding this, one can argue that the efforts by the Force to educate its ranks directly impacts on national development. Since when members of the Force return to civilian life their level of technical and vocational education will have a direct impact on how they are integrated to the country's labour force. Therefore the Force's commitment to educating its ranks underscores its efforts to national development in this sector.

However, the efforts of the Force to educate its ranks have had its own challenges. The main challenge was the ability of the Force to establish a system that linked educational development with the evolution of soldier's careers. " As part of their promotion standards, soldiers are required to

attain specified levels of academic education but these standards had to be waived since no formal means existed for upgrading soldiers' education. "

[7] The importance of good civil-military relations to enhance the Force performance in this sector has been underscored by the recent efforts by the Force in launching of its Academic Education Programme. 8] This coupled with the Career Development Plan [9] and the advent of " promotion examinations for promotion up to the rank of major" [10], underscores a recognition by the Force that civilian input and to an extent civilian oversight is critical to success in this sector. Also, the aforementioned planned statecraft partnership with the Ministry of Education and the fact that Force Education Department is staffed primarily by civilian teachers, establishes the importance of good civil-military relation for the strengthening of the Force's capacity in this sector.

The Force direct involvement in economic activity in support of national development is demonstrated with its involvement in agriculture. The Force Agriculture Corps has the mandate to produce mainly poultry, pork and eggs to augment the Force's ration requirements. Throughout its history from since the establishment of Agriculture Corps the Force had measured success in this sector. This success is termed measured since in Guyana's Draft Second Development Plan, 1972-1976, the Force " was tasked with the development of farms at Onverwagt in Berbice, Butenabu in Mahaicony, Vergenoegen in the Essequibo, and at Garden of Eden in Dememerara. [11] However, presently the Force only has one farm at Garden of Eden in Dememerara. Hence, after existing in excess of three decades the Force Agriculture Corps has not achieved the capacity to provide the Force with its

ration requirements of meat, eggs and vegetables. The lack of fulfilment of its potential in this sector can be attributed to the lack resources; both human and material. The Force performance in this sector can improve via partnerships with government and non-government organisations. The establishment of such civil-military relations will impact positively on the Force performance in this sector.

To this end the Force continues to pursue such partnership as demonstrated with the Force involvement in “ the national pig-breeding programme, a joint effort between the Ministry of Agriculture and the Guyana Defence Force”[12]. The Force at various period of its existence seconded mainly officers and in a few cases other ranks to government and non-government organisation. Officers were primarily seconded to administrative positions in government agencies and even the other Services of the Joint Services.

This practice helped in National Development by making managerial and administrative skills readily available to beneficiary government agency. The Force involvement in this sector illustrates the value of good civil-military relations both to the Force and the Nation. This is underscore by the fact that military officers have attained high ranking appointments, namely permanent secretary and currently Accountant General at the Ministry of Finance. The Force since its early days of existence played a pivotal in aviation in Guyana. The Force helped in the pioneering efforts in aviation in Guyana.

Aviation is arguably the first area where the value of good civil-military relations and the capacity of the Force to positively impact on National

Development were demonstrated. [13] However, as the civilian capacity developed in this sector the Force was seen as having a negative impact in the commercial viability of this sector. I am of the view that the deterioration of civil-military relations in this sector helped in fostering this perception of the Force. There remain numerous areas in this sector where the Force, the private sector, and government and non-government organisations can benefit from good relations.

No one entity can satisfy the commercial, security and safety requirements for aviation support in Guyana. The wide expanse of hinterland settlements, the limited aircraft and technically trained personnel suggests that there is room for all stake holders to make a positive impact in this sector. The Guyana Defence Force recognises and accepts it has a role to play in National Development. This is exemplified in the many initiatives and projects the Force has been involved throughout its existence primarily in Engineering, Health Services, Education, Economic, Administrative and Aviation Sectors.

The question of how the Force will be most effective in fulfilling its role of contributing to National Development has been answered. The Force must embrace partnership with government and non-government agencies in those sectors where we are poised to make an impact on National Development. This pursuit and ultimate realisation of good civil-military relations will enhance the Force capacity to contribute to national development activities. REFERENCES Best G. A. R. (2010) Career



Development Plan Guyana Defence Force. Guyana Defence Force Best G. A. R (2011) Chief of Staff Command Directive.

Guyana Defence Force Granger D. A. (1975) The new road. Guyana Defence Force. Granger D. A. (2005) A brief history of the Guyana Defence Force. Free Press. Huntington, S. (1957). The soldier and the state: theory and practice of civil-military relations. Cambridge, Belknap Press of Harvard University Press. Johnson, J. (1981). The role of the military in underdeveloped countries. New Jersey, Princeton University. Greenwood Press Reprint . Lehmann, D. (1979). Democracy and development in Latin America: Economics, politics and religion in the post-war period.

Temple University Press. Smith, K. A. and Welch, E. C. (1974). Military role and rule. Massachusetts, Duxbury Press,. Tachau, F. (1974). The developing nations (What paths to modernization? ). New York, Dodd, Mead and Co. Thompson W. S. (1983). The third world: Premises of U. S policy. San Francisco: JOS Press. ----- [1] Granger D. A The New Road A Short History of The Guyana Defence Force - 1966 -1976, 1975 pg 47. [2] Granger D. A A Brief History of the Guyana Defence Force, 2005 pg75. [3] Stabroek News Sunday, June 15, 2008. 4] Stabroek News Sunday, June 15, 2008. [5] Stabroek News Tuesday, August 17, 2010. [6] Best G. A. R Chief of Staff Command Directive 2011, pg 22. [7] [8] Stabroek News Saturday, April 10, 2010. [9] Best G. A. R Career Development Plan Guyana Defence Force, 2010 pg17. [10] Best G. A. R Chief of Staff Command Directive 2011, pg 39. [11] Granger D. A A Brief History of the Guyana Defence Force, 2005 pg74.

[12] <http://www.gina.gov.gy/archive/daily/b080407.html> 2011-10-30. [13]

See Granger D. A A Brief History of the Guyana Defence Force, 2005 pg75.