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# **MILITARY STRATEGY FOR OPERATION GAMBIAN FREEDOM (RIVER GAMBIA)**

## **OVERVIEW**

Yahya Jammeh has ruled the Gambia with an iron fist for the past 19 years. Despite the efforts of the local opposition in the Gambia and the sustained pressure from Gambians living abroad, Yahya has been able to entrench himself and control every facet of Gambian life by using the elements of fear and brutality. Over the past 19 years, Yahya has managed to silence any opposition to his misrule and uses a tactic of divide and rule to maintain his grip on power. Newspapers and Radio stations are forcefully shut down with government media outlets the main sources of news denying Gambians any outlet to air their grievances. International bodies such as the European Union and ECOWAS have all sought to encourage democracy, free and fair elections and respect for human rights to no avail.

In October of 2013, without any consultation with the rubber-stamp parliament of The Gambia, Yahya unilaterally withdrew The Gambia from the Commonwealth of Nations accusing that body of being a colonial relic and further claiming that Britain, in conjunction with the United States, have been destabilizing The Gambia and undermining his government. Yahya has faced sustained pressure from International Human Rights groups, a vocal Diaspora group, the European Union and the United States, all seeking to engage him on his human rights record and to make democratic changes to his government. All the above have not yet been enough to make Yahya Jammeh succumb to pressure. His typical response is for the USA/ EU or international rights groups to go to hell. Diplomatic activities by the international community, media operations by online media houses outside of the Gambia and few within, continue to expose the brutal nature of the Jammeh regime. Efforts by civil society organizations as well as dissidents across the globe, especially in America, Europe, and Senegal all add-to the pressure on Yahya Jammeh's government to live up to international human rights standards or give up the country for good.

Though the pressure could be felt within the government, president Jammeh blatantly refuses to budge and continues to cause havoc and mayhem in the country. However, recent activities by dissidents such as the New York protest against Yahya Jammeh at the United Nations 2013 summit, occupation of the Gambian Embassy in Washington DC by the Democratic Union of Gambian Activists (DUGA), protesters and pressure from the online media has led the government to take desperate measures to ensure its survival. The press release issued by the government on October 4, 2013 on the activities of the Diaspora Gambians against the government, the withdrawal of Gambia from the Commonwealth on October 3, 2013, the direct and public attack on the United States and United Kingdom as well as the negative branding of opposition politicians are all examples of how desperate the Yahya government is getting.

It is apparent that whilst the efforts mentioned above are taking their toll on Yahya Jammeh and his government, they must be supported by additional measures such as the use of military instruments to ensure the success of the ongoing struggle to topple Yahya Jammeh's regime. This is to ensure that the efforts of the international community, civil society organizations, dissident organizations, opposition parties, online media houses and individual Gambians do not go in vain and to also make sure the country is freed from the tyranny of Yahya Jammeh. This will further ensure Gambians enjoy the freedoms they have been yearning for in the last 19 years.

## **CONCEPT AND OVERVIEW OF THE STRATEGY**

Yahya Jammeh's dictatorial government has not only denied Gambians freedom, but also their basic rights, and continues to pose a threat not only to the Gambian people, but also the international community and regional neighbors. Yahya Jammeh is a thorn in the flesh for everyone associated with Gambia. His latest move to unilaterally withdraw the Gambia from Commonwealth has isolated the Gambian people further and denied them the privileges they should enjoy like any other civilized country.-Efforts by all key players in the struggle mentioned above all fell short of forcing Yahya Jammeh to relinquish power for a democratic transition.

Approaches such as demonstrations, media revelations on his government's activities, dialogues, and sanctions were some of the few tactics being used against Yahya Jammeh and his government. However, the approaches and solutions to the Gambia's problems must be holistic because the threat posed by Dictator Yahya Jammeh and his government is sophisticated and multifaceted and cannot be solved by the current measures alone.

History has shown that dealing with dictators and dictatorships require a multidimensional strategy that safeguards citizen rights, fights government corruption, strengthens rule of law, and improves transparency. Cognizant of this fact and knowing that the dictatorship in the Gambia follows the same path like any other previous one in other countries in Africa and around the world, this strategy is therefore centered around a multidimensional and multi-pronged approach which harnesses all the available instruments aimed at balancing and integrating all available tools to curtail the tyranny of Yahya Jammeh and bring to an end his suppressive regime.

The strategy lays down an approach to raise awareness about the security, political, social, economic and international threat posed by Yahya Jammeh as an individual and his government as an institution. It outlines possible multilateral actions to be used in order to eliminate the existence and influence of Yahya Jammeh's government and its means of survival and ensure transition from dictatorship to democracy. The strategy is aimed at pursuing four logical lines of effort; Intelligence Gathering, Pursue and Strike, Capture or Kill and Transfer of Power. This will be accomplished through a holistic and coordinated approach utilizing the military, intelligence, information, financial, and diplomatic instruments to be implemented by a task force composed of civilians, ex-military members outside the country, other entities, and local partners residing in the Gambia, some of whom will be providing intelligence reports. The team will ensure the planning and coordination of all activities to ensure the provision of the necessary logistics, information and intelligence and give clear direction and directives for the implementation. The end of the strategy will be geared towards bringing to an end the suppressive regime of Yahya Jammeh and a transfer of the country to democracy whilst ensuring the security of the citizenry and the territorial integrity of the Gambia as enshrined in the country's original or appropriately modified constitution.

### **GAMBIA GOVERNMENT'S CENTER OF GRAVITY (COG) AND CRITICAL VULNERABILITY (CV)**

While implementing the strategy, the team should be aware of the COG and CV of the present government to help make better operational plans. Jammeh's government uses the fear factor as his main COG to deny the general population of any credible move against his government. His grasp of the army and its main weaponry at his disposal stored at the State Guard are used to intimidate his opponents both within and outside the Gambia. His continuous divide-and-rule tactics have paid off well so far to ensure no single group of people can form a team capable of carrying out any sustainable operation or campaign against him and his government. In terms of CV, the growing discontent amongst the general population can easily blow up and drive people against him with even the most minimal opportunity. His continuous isolation from the international community means that any open and credible opposition against Yahya Jammeh's government will gather international support and recognition. Most importantly, the growing disloyalty and discontent within the Gambia Armed Forces (GAF) constitutes a key weakness to the government due to its heavy reliance on GAF and other security apparatus for his suppressive actions. It can therefore be deduced that the Jammeh's government's CVs constitute the growing discontent and disloyalty amongst the population and the GAF and security apparatus, his isolation on the global platform and the opposition from the Diaspora. The strategy will therefore critically look at these COGs and CVs and employ them to its advantage to ensure a successful outcome.

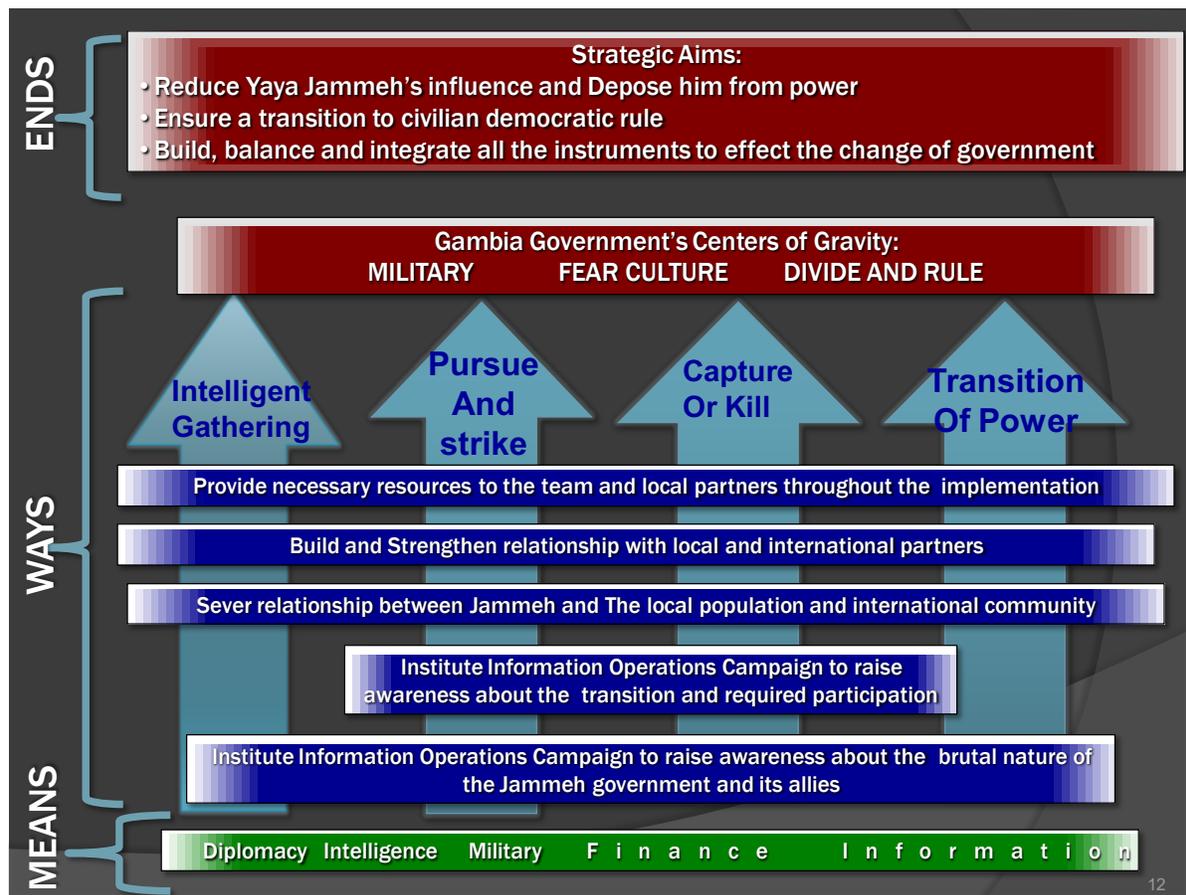
### **ASSUMPTIONS**

The following assumptions are made about the strategy and the current situation on the ground to help make informed decisions during the planning, refining, and implementation of the strategy. These are:

- The team will operate in an atmosphere of trust.
- The willingness to take reasonable, low-level risk will be accepted by all team members and those affiliated with the operations.
- There will be no resistance from GAF or any other security force.
- The change of government will receive unprecedented support from the population and the international community.
- The necessary resources will be made available on time for the implementation of the entire strategy.
- The local partners will cooperate throughout the implementation of the strategy and will not divulge any information about the operation to the government.
- There is no counter operation from any party either within or outside the country during the implementation phase.
- There will be a smooth and immediate transition from the military operation to civilian control.

## EXECUTION

This strategy will employ a holistic and comprehensive approach that will harness all the instruments mentioned earlier in a coordinated posture to counter the threats posed by Jammeh and his government as shown in the figure. It is aimed at ending the regime of Jammeh and his tyranny. Diplomacy, intelligence, military, finance, and information will be used at all level to include local, international and Diaspora Gambians, to help achieve the end-state of this strategy.



## END-STATE

The ultimate goal of this strategy is to bring to an end the dictatorial regime of Yahya Jammeh. In addition, the strategy will try to reduce the influence of Jammeh's government on the population both within and outside the country even after its demise. It is also aimed at ensuring a transition of the country to a democratic civilian rule by handing the affairs of government to civilian technocrats in a timely manner. Finally to achieve all this, the strategy will seek to bring together all the instruments of military, intelligence, information, and finance to bring Jammeh's government down by building, balancing and integrating all those instruments in a consolidated fashion through the task force with civilian oversight.

### **WAYS; LINES OF EFFORT (LOE) AND MEANS**

The fight against dictatorship, human rights abuse and suppression requires a concerted effort and various ways due to the dynamic nature of dictators. Dictators keep changing their tactics and techniques towards their citizens and the international community to ensure their survival due to the continuous pressure from the population, international community and individual organizations. This strategy will therefore institute various ways at both local and international levels across all spectrum of society to ensure its success. Intelligence gathering, pursue and strike, capture or kill and transition to civilian government are some of the ways that the strategy will employ.

**INTELLIGENCE GATHERING:** This will be an ongoing activity; before, during and after the operation to ensure timely and relevant information is available for informed decision-making. Movement, location and activities of Jammeh and his top aides will need to be provided as and when required. Furthermore, activities of the military, especially its leadership and other security forces at all entry points into the Gambia and within the country will need to be constantly made available. Update on the arms available to State Guard and their locations and movement will need to be provided and at the time required.

Entry points are very important for the movement of personnel at all times and so information regarding porosity of these locations and activities thereof is critical for our entry into the country. Obvious entry points such as the airport, Amdalai, Farrafenni, Darsilami, and Sibanor will all need to be avoided for obvious reasons. Also, the vulnerability of Jammeh and his top aides depends on what activities they are involved in and their locations at specific times, which will be pertinent to the conduct of any operation. To achieve all these, a coordinated approach by the local partners and agents will be necessary to ensure timely and accurate information is made available to the team at all times during the whole process. Resources needed for constant communications either through the Internet or VOIP services will be provided to the local partners to facilitate this. The local partners will need to ensure their own safety and security by making sure the Gambian authorities do not detect their activities in anyway. They will also ensure that their activities are coordinated to avoid duplication of effort during the process and should ensure a centralized reporting system is in place so that everyone will be kept informed about each other's activities.

**PURSUE AND STRIKE:** Deposing Jammeh from power will require boots on the ground inside the Gambia. The team will have to pursue him and identify the best possible opportunities and time to carry out the strike. Based on the timeline, the team will strike when and wherever it feels necessary without unnecessarily endangering the lives of the ordinary citizens or causing unnecessary chaos or destruction. The opportunity that avails itself to strike will be based on available intelligence and the resources at hand necessary to accomplish the mission. It can be assumed that the two best probable opportune times will either be striking at the State House or when Jammeh is on the move. Therefore, patterns of his activities will need to be updated by minutes and hours by the local partners to ensure the strike team does not have to waste valuable opportunity that may present itself.

However, it is important to note that the activities of the team should be kept to the minimum to avoid any suspicion or leave any traces behind. Also, the timing should ensure that wherever the strike is to be conducted, it be a targeted strike to avoid unnecessary damage and avoid unruly behavior by rogue elements. It is also

important to note that each mentioned probable opportunity presents their unique challenges. Whilst Jammeh may be more vulnerable on the move, the activities of the team if they have to strike at this point will require more and better coordination between the operation site and Banjul, the hub of government activities. A strike in Banjul on the other hand, will require better coordination but also more resources and a greater risk. All these need to be factored into when the final decisions is to be made for the operation to be initiated.

The probable opportunity will require a rigorous intelligence gathering and constant communication to ensure the timing is right and the mission is accomplished. Also, the activities and location of Jammeh's top aides will need to be made available during these times as they too will need to be subjected to either being arrested or otherwise killed.

**CAPTURE OR KILL:** The Main Effort of this operation is to depose Jammeh and capture him. In the event the capture fails for unforeseen reasons, he must be killed. His influence must be completely eradicated at all cost, which means he must be out in a position of non-interference and detached from his means. Whether capture or kill is actually implemented depends on the circumstances at the time of the strike. It should however be noted that whatever the circumstances, collateral damage should be avoided or minimized at all costs. Also, the top and close aides as well as Jammeh sympathizers will need to be arrested, or killed if necessary while the operation is being carried out. This includes those in the military as well as other security services. The team will direct the activities of the army and intelligence services through the Chief of Defense Staff and the Director General of the National Intelligence Agency respectively; both of who will be under the control of the team. As soon as the operation is confirmed successful, the team will fully command the Army and the NIA to ensure that no counter operations or intelligence activities are carried out. All activities will need to be brought under control as soon as viable to avoid chaos and unruly activities of the security and to ensure the safety and security of the civilian population.

Critical infrastructure will need to be guarded, secured and brought under the control of the team to ensure continuous operation and provision of services. The Airport, GAMTEL facilities, NAWEC facilities, GRTS complexes, Ports and all border posts are critically important and should be secured. This period will equally require crisis management and information needs to be made available to the citizens and the international community to avoid speculation and communication blackout. The military and security services need to be assured of the success of the operation in order to ensure that they remain calm and under control. The team needs to assert itself as the authority and ensure there is security for the people and all government institutions.

To ensure the success of this phase, a coordinated approach by the parties is essential including constant information sharing throughout the operation. Vigilance is required to ensure the credibility and good intentions of the team are not jeopardized. The involvement of the local people and trusted elements within the military and security apparatus is critical at this point for information gathering and mop up operation. The local partners will be required to arrest and detain Jammeh's partners and also to ensure constant contact with all local military commanders across the country. The security of the state house is key; therefore, the immediate installation of a commander from within our team to ensure there is command and control is essential. In addition, a designated location will be identified and guarded by the local partners for the detention of all arrested personnel to limit their influence on the operation. Information regarding all Jammeh sympathizers within the military especially and other security services will be provided and constantly updated to help keep them away from the system to avoid them influencing the operation in any way. The success of this phase means the success of the strategy and will therefore remain the core of the operations.

## **TRANSITION TO CIVILIAN GOVERNMENT:**

### **RISK ASSESSMENT**

Every strategy is without risks which must be taken into consideration during its implementation. Several factors which come to play may be beyond the control of the actors involved in putting the strategy to work.

Therefore, the following risks are identified and assessed which needs close attention as the strategy is being implemented.

**ENDS/MEANS MISMATCH;** For a successful strategy, the means must support the ways to achieve the ends. However, there may be instances when this correlation produces an unintended outcome due to unforeseen circumstances as a result of the activities of the adversary. Should a mismatch be identified between the ends and the means, the strategy should be reviewed and redirected so that the means support the ends. Because it is a major strategy, there may be issues with funding, personnel and intelligence for full implementation of the LOE. Should this happen, the team should review the strategy to conform to the existing situations on the ground.

**UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES:** There may be instances when the outcome of the strategy is not what it intends to achieve. If the efforts of the strategy do not depose Jammeh, eradicate his influence and ensure the country is on a path to a democratic state, then the strategy will need a rethink and reevaluated to ensure its proper implementation to achieve the desired end-state. The reasons for such unintended consequences should be analyzed and corrected for further implementation. Additional unintended consequences such as the inability to capture or kill Jammeh and he absconds and wants to launch a counter operation against the country over a period of time, insecurity within the country and civil unrest will all be considered in the planning phase.

**RESISTANCE AND CONFRONTATION:** It is assessed that during the implementation, there may be pockets of resistance especially from Jammeh loyalists who would not mind going down with him. Such a move will resort to a major irregular warfare tactic of sabotage and disabling all the close influential aides of Jammeh and their means where possible. If not, a tactical withdrawal without leaving traces will be necessary and the pursuit of the backup plan and a revisit of the strategy.

**ALLIANCE WITH REBELS:** A worst-case scenario that is very unlikely but assessed is Jammeh forming an alliance with the MFDC rebels to come to his aid during the operation. Whilst this is far from real scenario, it can pose a grave threat to the timely implementation and success of the strategy. This is a probability since Jammeh has been a major sponsor of this group since his coming into power and they will be more than willing to reciprocate his good gesture by fighting to keep him in power. This will require the revisit of the strategy to a major information campaign to draw the support of the entire population and the military for a full military operation against the rebels and Jammeh to contain such a move.

## **CONCLUSION**

The Gambian people have had enough of Jammeh's terror, suppression, denial of freedom, human rights abuses, and detentions without trial, disappearances and murder for the past 19 years. Unless something is done about it, the trend will continue and the country will slide into civil war like Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Ivory Coast did in the late 1980s through 2000s. The consequences of this could be grave and will cost entire generations to pull the country back on its feet. Moreover, a civil conflict in The Gambia could potentially spill into Senegal and other neighboring countries given that Yahya is known to support the MFDC rebel group fighting the Senegalese government. It is against this backdrop that this strategy is being initiated to devise ways to bring to an end to the dictatorship and tyrannical regime of Yahya Jammeh and put the country on the path to a democratic state. A holistic and coordinated approach involving the instruments of power namely; Diplomacy, Information, Military, and Economic will be utilized to achieve the ultimate objective of deposing Yahya Jammeh and establishing democracy back in The Gambia. A team of Gambian civilians, Gambian ex-military, current Gambian Military personnel, and other entities are overseeing the implementation of this strategy. The involvement and participation of local and international partners is crucial. To that end, cooperation from the local population, military and security forces, civil society groups, regional and international partners is paramount. Therefore consultation with these partners will be necessary during all phases of the planning and implementation to make sure no gaps are left which could affect the final outcome of establishing democracy in The Gambia.