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Visiting U.S. Congressional Delegation Calls on President Johnson-Sirleaf

Front Page Africa [5], Fri, Aug 12, 2016

Monrovia - President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf has described the U.S. Army Special Military intervention with the Armed Forces of Liberia "Operation Onward Liberty" (OOL) as a successful mission.

"Operation Onward Liberty" was officially chartered in 2010 and was described as a U.S. Marine Corps Africa-led operation comprised of joint U.S. Service personnel who mentored and advised the Armed Forces of Liberia in order to develop a national military that is responsible, operationally capable, and respectful of civilian authority and the rule of law.



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Senator Markey, President Sirleaf, Representative Bass and Representative Maloney

According to an Executive Mansion release, the Liberian leader thanked the Government of the United States of America for authorizing the "Operation Onward Liberty" and for the many support rendered Liberia and the Armed Forces of Liberia in particular.

She pointed out that with the support of the U.S. Government and the mentorship received from the U.S. Army and the Michigan National Guard, Liberians are proud of the Armed Forces of Liberia, describing the force as a professional, discipline, loyal and well trained.

"With all of the support that has been given the Armed Forces of Liberia by the U.S. Government and Army, our military is truly a force for good", President Sirleaf noted.

She further noted the AFL is not only a protective force, but a force with professional competence and capacity that has enabled its members to be involved with civil works such as road construction, agriculture, healthcare services, and general construction, amongst others.

She praised authorities of the Ministry of National Defense and the High Command of the Armed Forces of Liberia for developing and maintaining a capable and professional army respected by the Liberian people and

the international community.

President Sirleaf expressed the government's commitment in supporting the AFL and added that the end of 'Operation Onward Liberty' is not an end to the partnership between the U.S. Government and Army with Liberia and the Armed Forces of Liberia.

"I know that the partnership will continue and that there will be opportunities for members of the Armed Forces to make professional travels to the U.S. and those members of the U.S. Army will continue to make visits here and provide services to members of the AFL", the Liberian leader indicated.

In separate remarks, Defense Minister Brownie Samuka and AFL Chief of Staff Brig/Gen. Daniel Ziankahn acknowledged the success of "Operation Onward Liberty and pointed out that the interventions under the program has added value to members of the AFL who were directly impacted by the mentorship and other processes.

They thanked President Sirleaf and the U.S. Government for the initiative and expressed confidence in the AFL with regards to their capacity and professionalism.

U.S. Ambassador Christine Elder highlighted the significance of "Operation Onward Liberty" and noted that the U.S. Government was pleased to have been part of efforts aimed at developing the Armed Forces of Liberia into a professional institution capable of protecting Liberia and performing other valuable services to the Liberian people.

In a related development, President Sirleaf on Thursday held talks with a 3-member Congressional delegation from the United States of America.

The Congressional Delegation headed by Democratic Senator Edward Markey of Massachusetts, also included Representative Karen Bass, a Democratic Congresswoman from California and Representative Carolyn Maloney, a Democratic Congresswoman from New York.

The Congressional Delegation was also accompanied by U.S. Ambassador to Liberia Christine Elder, Dr. Susan Blumenthal, wife of Senator Markey, Mr. Philip McGovern, Senior Policy Advisor to Senator Markey amongst others.

President Sirleaf earlier welcomed the Congressional delegation to Liberia and expressed gratitude for all of the support to Liberia by the Government of the United States of America.

She acknowledged the long-standing traditional ties between the two countries and outlined some of the developmental challenges still being faced by Liberia.

She also pointed to the many successes of her administration and praised the U.S. Congress for being a reliable partner during the years of reconstruction and peace-building.

The Liberian leader told the visiting U.S. Congressional delegation that focus is now on the agricultural sector with emphasis on diversification and industrialization and the empowerment of small-holder farmers.

She also noted that there was a great deal of prospect for the tourism sector, nothing that infrastructure remains a major impediment in maximizing the outcomes of the sector.

She indicated that more efforts will be applied to the educational, health and energy sectors as Liberia continues with its development drive and urged the U.S. to continuously stand with Liberia during its rebuilding process.

For his part, Congressman Edward Markey who has been a member of the U.S. Congress for 40 years pointed out that they were honored to be in Liberia and for the opportunity to meet with Liberia and Africa's first female President and Nobel Laureate.

"We have come as partners and friends to Liberia and to say how we intend to work with you and Liberians to build a 21st century economy here. Helping you build a strong healthcare system after the devastating Ebola

crisis is also critical to U.S.-Liberia relationship”, Congressman Markey pointed out.

He called for emphasis to be placed on telecommunication, energy and petroleum as the country seeks to build a 21st century economy. The Congressional delegation praised President Sirleaf for pushing hard to make Liberia a Power Africa country.

“As you know, Liberia was not among countries selected for the Power Africa Program. Your strong leadership qualities which led you to have pushed so hard saw Liberia being listed as a beneficiary. You are indeed a great leader doing a wonderful job in Liberia”, Representative Karen Bass noted.

Representative Carolyn Maloney told President Sirleaf that she bears the aspirations of all women across the world and thanked her for being a great female leader on the African continent and the world at large.

To read the full piece from *Front Page Africa*, click [here](#) [5].

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