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(MONROVIA, LIBERIA – Thursday, February 11, 2016)

President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf has acknowledged implicit confidence in the ability of AFL and security forces to effectively execute their duties in a post-UNMIL era as evident by their levels of preparedness. According to an Executive Mansion release, the Liberian President, who is also Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL), was speaking at programs commemorating the 59th Armed Forces Day celebration at the Barclay Training Center (BTC); a day set aside by an Act of Legislature to honor our gallant men and women serving in the nation's armed forces.



She paid homage to those who made the ultimate sacrifices in

their service to the nation and people. She said the AFL has unique capacities that it can bring in supporting civil authority, particularly in the country's development efforts as the AFL has demonstrated over the years, with the recent acquisition of engineering equipment from partners that they have a vital role to play in the reconstruction of our country. However, President Sirleaf warned that government must continue to strengthen border control mechanisms and remain vigilant against the negatives that will affect the peace and stability of our nation and people. "We must not waiver to protect ourselves against extremism and the consequences of terrorism; noting that we must be better informed and ensure effective coordination and preparedness between and among our military and civilian law enforcement agencies against any action that affect our peace, security and stability," she stressed. She praised the efforts of the AFL contingent on peacekeeping duties Timbuktu, Mali, a very volatile and dangerous mission; stressing, "Our hearts go out to them and we look forward to proudly receiving them upon the end of their mission." The Commander-in-Chief thanked all members of the



Armed Forces of Liberia for being a “Force for Good” by exhibiting

discipline, dedication to duty, commitment to the responsibility of protecting the country’s territorial integrity. “The gallantry exhibited by you in executing your mission and tasks such as your deployment in MINUSMA, your support through Operation Restore Hope, as well as Operation White Shield, Operation Fielder Blizzard, rehabilitating our community roads are worthy of commendation, appreciation and recognition,” she emphasized. President Sirleaf reiterated that the challenges the country face today is an embodiment of the path her government began nearly eleven years ago; taking bold decisions to change things and restore public confidence in our Military and Security Sectors. She indicated that it had not been easy, against the background of constraints of limited resources and technical inefficiencies; however, in spite of it all, her administration did not waiver. “We all were collectively firm in the belief that our intentions were for the future benefit of our citizens,” the Liberian leader stressed, adding, “The investments we have made in the military and our security sector, with the strong support of our partners, have given all of us the reassurance of a safe and secured



The Commander-in-Chief commended Defense Minister, Brownie Samukai, Jr.

and his team for the exemplary leadership in making our armed forces a “Force for Good”. She said, “Your efforts in transforming our military have garnered the credibility and respectability both at home and abroad.” In the same vein, President Sirleaf thanked the AFL Chief of Staff, Brigadier General Daniel Ziankhan, for his outstanding leadership and sense of discipline and direction that has engendered the confidence of the Liberian people. “General Ziankhan, you make us proud,” she said. The Liberian leader thanked all members of the Armed Forces of Liberia for their discipline, dedication to duty, and commitment to the responsibility of protecting our territorial integrity. She also paid tribute to the importance of the families of the men and women who serve our country and personally thanked them for their continuous support that is positively imparting the performance of our troops. President Sirleaf thanked the Special Representative of the Secretary General, H.E. Farid Zarif, and the UNMIL leadership for the support, training and assistance to our security sector. She described their role as crucial in getting us to where we are today urged the Special Representative to convey to all troops contributing countries Liberia’s gratitude for supporting the peace thus far. She also commended Chinese Ambassador Zhao for his leadership and support of his government to the Armed Forces of Liberia. “This partnership has culminated into training opportunities and the donation of several engineering equipment, as well

as a fleet of military trucks and other supplies to strengthen the operational capacity of the AFL. China has remained engaged in supporting our development agenda, and making donations of much needed equipment and supplies to the AFL,” she said.

Delivering the Keynote Address, Foreign Minister Marjon Kamara, said she is confident that Liberia can provide security and maintain peace after the inevitable departure of UNMIL. “I believe sincerely that we can and, indeed, we must,” she said. She however, warned that the security of the state and the maintenance of peace in the post-UNMIL era will not and should not rest with the military alone. Reflecting on history, she said, sustainable security and continuing stability in this country will be defined more by the efforts all Liberians make - as a government and as a people - in addressing national challenges such as youth unemployment, reducing inequalities in income and opportunities, reconciliation and national healing, decentralizing social and security services, improving the quality of education, maintaining the enabling environment for investment, providing incentives for investors with some g

rowth promotion privileges for Liberian investors, among other things. “Ultimately, it is the legitimacy that the people bestow on the state and their well-being as possessors of their country that institute actual fortification of security,” she pointed out. Foreign Minister Kamara reminded Liberians that the transition of UNMIL puts Liberia at a crossroads. “We are being closely watched by the international community, to see if the years of reform and investments in democratic processes, including security sector reform will indeed yield sustainable peace. Our partners have high expectations of us. We must not fail them, and we must not fail ourselves,” she strongly warned. She indicated that cooperation and coordination between military and civil law institutions are key in the post-UNMIL environment; noting that the military can be useful in multidimensional ways in that environment. “Apart from having our soldiers render much needed support – for example, in helping to rehabilitate roads and carrying out health sensitization – there is need to give more attention to the military in terms of the promotion of peacebuilding. More time and action should be dedicated to identifying and supporting structures that buttress peace in order to avoid a relapse into conflict,” she suggested adding, that this includes continuing efforts to put equity at the core of all national endeavors and to substitute greed and selfishness for generosity and public service ethics. She also called on government to devise a comprehensive communications strategy to change what seems to be a common perception among Liberians that the country’s future is fragile and the departure of U



UNMIL will precipitate violence and conflict. “This is a psychological conundrum that we have to quickly address through communicating shorter and clearer messages to our people about the transition and what it means for the country,” Minister Kamara emphasized, as many Liberians think that by June 30 this year Liberia’s relationship with the UN will come to an end and that there will be absolutely no UNMIL personnel left in Liberia. She indicated that some Liberians do not believe that Liberians have the ability to secure ourselves. “We must make our people understand – even if it means communicating in our local dialects – that there will remain a reduced UNMIL presence of military personnel and civilian police beyond June 30. However, security responsibilities once performed by UNMIL will now be solely in the hands of state security. Our people have to know that they too have a responsibility to respect the authority of our law enforcement institutions,” the Foreign Minister pointed out. Meanwhile, during the program, several recipients received this year’s Armed Forces of

Liberia Distinguished Service Order for their immeasurable contributions and services rendered our Armed Forces. Touching on the honor bestowed on them, the Commander-in-Chief, President Sirleaf, said, "They have brought honor and credit to themselves, their families and their respective countries for their services rendered the Armed Forces of Liberia." Those honored included the Keynote Speaker, Foreign Minister Marjon V. Kamara; former Nigerian Ambassador to Liberia, Her Excellency Chigizie Fidelia Obi-Nnadozie; First Commander of US AFRICOM, retired Lt. General William "Kip" Ward; retired Colonel Chie Gaye who has served the AFL for 50 years rising to the rank of Band Master; ECOWAS Mentor from the Ghana Armed Forces, Lt. Colonel Michael Kwadwo Opoku; and ECOWAS Mentor from the Ghana Armed Forces, Lt. Colonel Emmanuel Opare Nyante. Responding on behalf of the awardees, former Nigerian Ambassador to Liberia, Obi-Nnadozie said it's an honor that has placed them on the list of other esteemed recipients. For non-nationals, the significance of this award cannot be overemphasized. "We are grateful to be officially recognized as members of the Liberian family. We are happy for this recognition and will not abuse the faith that Madam President and the good people of Liberia have repose in us and will continue to be champion for Liberia where ever fate takes us," she promised. She said, for her, the award had deepened her resolve to take admonition of the hero of all African women, including H.E. President Sirleaf, and going back to Nigeria and the world as an Ambassador for Liberia and heighten her firmness and love for this great country. In his update to the Commander-in-Chief on activities of the AFL, Defense Minister Samukai reported that the AFL continues to be a "Force for Good" defending the territorial integrity of Liberia, participating in national reconstruction and outreach activities, and contributing to regional and international peace. He reported the signing of an Memorandum of Understanding with China for military equipment and supplies valued at US\$3 million; reminding her that last year, China contributed nearly US\$4 million worth of engineering equipment to the Engineering Company of AFL. Likewise, the AFL has signed a Letter of Agreement with the United States Government for 17 tactical military vehicles and spare parts to the AFL worth US\$3 million. The US Government has also donated two addition boats to the Liberia Coast Guard. Minister Samukai also noted that the welfare



they are committed to pension policy put in place.

He reported that

the pension account of the AFL has more than US\$1 million in its account as of January 2016 and expect that amount to grow to over US\$3 million in the next 10 years. "The implementation of this policy will ensure that military personnel has some level of income protection in addition to their pension benefit at the end of their military service. As UNMIL turns over security responsibilities to the Government of Liberia in the next 140 days, Defense Minister Samukai assured the Commander-in-Chief that the operational readiness of the AFL is being upgraded and the morale of the troops is all time high. He noted that regionally, they have been able to maintain cordial relations with Liberia's neighbors and have engaged them on security cooperation and coordination. "We are in the planning stage to engage our neighbor Cote d'Ivoire in order to develop concept of operations for the two countries to conduct confidence military operations in the border areas of Cavalla River and other areas of mutual interests," he reported; noting that this operation will minimize suspicion, strengthen confidence and enhance national security.

Click to read or download a copy of the addresses delivered:

1. Speech by Her Excellency Madam Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf [1]

2. ARMED ^[2]FORCES DAY KEYNOTE ADDRESS DELIVERED BY MARJON V. KAMARA MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS ^[2]

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