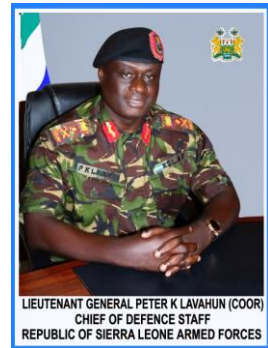


STATEMENT BY THE CHIEF OF DEFENCE STAFF AT THE SIGNING CEREMONY OF THE STATE PARTNERSHIP PROGRAMME BETWEEN THE REPUBLIC OF SIERRA LEONE ARMED FORCES AND THE UNITED STATES – MICHIGAN NATIONAL GUARD AT HEADQUARTERS JOINT FORCE COMMAND COCKERILL BARRACKS FREETOWN ON 12TH SEPTEMBER 2024



PROTOCOLS

The Honourable Deputy Minister of Defence- Col {Rtd} Muana B Massaquoi

His Excellency The United States Ambassador to the Republic of Sierra Leone, Ambassador Bryan David Hunt

Director General Ministry of Defence, Mr. Mohamed Daboh

The Adjutant General of the Michigan National Guard – Maj Gen Paul Rogers

Our Esteem Special Guest – Brig General Folleh, Chief of Staff, Armed Forces of Liberia

The Commander Joint Force

Distinguished Representatives of Ministries, Department & Agencies and other Government Functionaries

General – Ranking Officers- here present

Members of Delegation, the Michigan National Guard & the Armed Forces of Liberia

The Forces Sergeant Major – RSLAF

The Senior Enlisted Adviser – Michigan National Guard

Distinguished Invitees,

Members of the Fourth Estates

Officers, Men & Women of the RSLAF

Good Morning All! It is with great pleasure and honour for us at the Ministry of Defence/RSLAF, that we are gathered here this morning, for the historic Signing Ceremony of the Letter of Intent for a State Partnership Programme between the Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces and the United States – Michigan National Guard.

Let me at the outset express on behalf of the Senior Management of the MoD/RSLAF, our profound appreciation to the Embassy of the United States in Freetown, for their commitment to the RSLAF for the United States – States Partnership Program with the Michigan National Guard.

Sierra Leone's aspiration for this State Partnership Program (SPP) has spanned over a period of five years, since our first application for this esteemed relationship and partnership {on 10th April 2019}. Therefore, today's Signing Ceremony is a historic day, made possible through the support of the United States Embassy. Distinguished Guests, let me also convey our gratitude to the Adjutant General, Michigan National Guard and his dedicated staff, for diligently working the pathway with us - the RSLAF, to signing today's Letter of Intent for the SPP.

Today's ceremony further signifies the recognition of Sierra Leone as a trusted ally and like-minded partner of the United States. This partnership therefore, is not just a strategic alliance, but represents a demonstration of our shared values and vision for the future. A partnership that will significantly contribute to building an enduring relationship and networks that will foster robust collaboration, enhanced security and defence cooperation and deepening interoperability between the United States and Sierra Leone and most particularly between the Michigan National Guard and the RSLAF.

It is our hope that after today's signing ceremony, the State Partnership Program shall remain enduring and beneficial to our respective countries. We are therefore inclined to engage in a constructive manner, working hand in hand with our Michigan partners united in purpose and resolve with our aim of increasing security and defence cooperation, developing security and defence capabilities and promoting regional stability amongst others.

On this note, the RSAF has envisioned a number of priority actions that will define the contours of our collaboration in the future; these include:

- a. The need to work closely with Michigan National Guard to establish a trilateral security cooperation framework including the Armed Forces of Liberia that enhances our collective defense capabilities.
- b. The need to formulate tailored capacity-building initiatives to be implemented, in order to bolster the operational effectiveness of the Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces (RSLAF).
- c. The need to prioritize the harmonization and customization of training programs focused on crisis response and humanitarian assistance, preparing security operatives to respond effectively to national and regional emergencies.
- d. Establish a sub-regional security framework to support regional peace and security initiatives in our shared environment; capable of addressing transnational threats and ensuring stability.
- e. Moreover, we will need to facilitate economic and developmental initiatives and models designed to strengthen national resilience and promote sustainable growth.
- f. The need to actively promote cultural exchange and community engagement programs that will foster bilateral/trilateral/multilateral relations and deepen the cooperation and commitment between and among our respective armed forces.
- g. The need to develop transformative actions to achieve gender parity, with increased commitment, visibility and commitment.
- h. The need to develop a competent NCO and SNCO corps that support and strengthen the RSLAF's main body to achieve effective operational and professional competences in the delivery of security for Sierra Leone. It involves building the foundation of infantry elements; squad, section and platoon levels competencies. The key strand in this plan is to partner with other third party SPP nations through Michigan National Guards (MING) like LATVIA to deliver Training the Trainers package for Sierra Leone.

Let me therefore at this stage also honor our esteemed guest, General Folleh from Liberia. Your presence here today highlights the importance of our collaboration and shared commitment to peace and security not only within the State Partnership Community, but also in the Manor River Union.

Distinguished Guest, Ladies and Gentlemen, as we sign this partnership agreement, I have great faith in our resilience as a union, and could not wish for more dedicated partnership through time and space. On this note, let me conclude by reminding us that as we sign the State Partnership Program today, it indicates that we have committed ourselves to the principles of collaboration, mutual respect, and unwavering support based on a common ideal. This in actual sense implies that we have agreed to stand together through the golden years that lie ahead, and together we will build a stronger, safer, and more prosperous future for the people of Sierra Leone, Liberia and the United States.

I send our warmest wishes and extend hands across the Mano River to the people of the Republic of Liberia, and across the Atlantic Ocean to the people of Michigan State and the USA at large, as we are in this together.

Once again, **thank you** for making this dream a reality. God bless!