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MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
TOWER HILL
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NEWS RELEASE

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"LOYALTY IS NOT HIV/AIDS", DEPUTY DEFENCE MINISTER TELLS SOLDIERS

Freetown, Sierra Leone, May 25, 2018 - The Deputy Minister of Defence, Colonel (Retired) Simeon Nasiru Sheriff has appealed to the rank and file of RSLAF to refrain from political utterances and demonstrate unflinching loyalty to the new government.

Addressing over 1,000 military personnel yesterday at Hockey Pitch in Wilberforce Barracks, Freetown, the Deputy Defence Minister said loyalty must change as long as governance has changed. He reiterated that once the people have chosen a new government, each and every military personnel is constitutionally obliged to support the people's new government.

"Loyalty is not HIV/AIDS. Loyalty is NOT a permanent health condition like the killer disease that one cannot change till death. As military personnel, your loyalty has to change from one democratically elected government to the other", the Deputy Defence Minister emphasized.

Speaking about "The New Direction" agenda for RSLAF, the Deputy Defence Minister said the government is committed to making progressive reforms of the military with focus on professionalism, depoliticization and equipping the force to enhance operational effectiveness.

Highlighting the key target areas, Colonel (Retired) Sheriff said the first priority of the government is to improve the Terms and Conditions of Service (TACOS) for all ranks. He stated that the TACOS would address five key areas, namely, progressive salary scale, annual leave allowance, gratuity and pension matrix, welfare and resettlement plan for post military life.

The Deputy Defence Minister further said the government is also committed to providing adequate housing facilities for military personnel and their families by constructing new accommodation where necessary and rehabilitating existing ones. He suggested the establishment of the Armed Forces Project Management Committee on Barracks Construction to ensure the full utilization of all monies allocated for barracks construction and rehabilitation.

Colonel (Retired) Sheriff assured that the government would work towards mechanizing and modernizing the RSLAF to enable the institution to generate revenue to contribute to non-traditional military functions such as relief, disaster interventions, agriculture and road construction. He stated that the plan could be achieved by revamping such units as the Maritime Wing, the Armed Forces Agricultural Unit and the Engineer Regiment among others.

The Deputy Defence Minister emphasized that the government would ensure a more transparent and value-added participation in the Peace Support Operations (PSO) around the world. On this note, the Chief of Defence Staff, Lieutenant General Brima Sesay disclosed that RSLAF had now been earmarked as the main ECOWAS Standby Force for any subsequent operations in the sub-region.

Colonel (Retired) Sheriff disclosed that the government is going to implement the tri-service arrangement to reflect the Army, Navy and the Air Force so as to meet the constitutional obligations of the military. He further disclosed the upgrading of healthcare delivery for both serving and retired personnel and their dependants.

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