

BACKGROUND TO THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE JOINT FORCE COMMAND

The response to the call for a reform in our security sector began immediately after the end of our civil war, with the enactment of the National Security Act of 2002, which established the Office of National Security (ONS) in the same year. The Armed Forces whose size had increased from 3,500 in peacetime to 17,000 during the war began a down-sizing process, which brought about the restructuring programme to meet the aspirations of the people in their quest to address the hurdles of the post-conflict environment.

On 21 January 2002, a new Ministry of Defence was established as a joint civilian and military entity. The then Defence Headquarters (DHQ) was re-organized into HQ Joint Force Command (JFC) responsible for Operations and Joint Support Command (JSC) responsible for Administration and Logistics; whilst the name Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces (RSLAF) was pronounced by HE President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah, replacing the name Armed Forces of the Republic of Sierra Leone (AFRSL). In 2003, this organization was further amended and the JSC was integrated into the JFC structure. The mission statement of the Joint Force Command is: to provide the operational command and control of the RSLAF with the appropriate capabilities in order to accomplish its Defence Missions and Tasks.

JOINT FORCE COMMAND STRUCTURE

The JFC is composed of the HQ JFC, Air Wing, Maritime Wing, three (3) Infantry Brigades, a Training Group Command, Support Units and Force troops.

- a. **Brigades.** HQ JFC has under command three (3) Infantry Brigades commanded by Colonels. Each Brigade has 3 Battalions, and Forward Patrol Bases (FPBs) to enhance effective joint RSLAF/SLP border control operations, and

company size reserve to reinforce the FPBs as and when required.

- b. **Headquarters Joint Force Command.** HQ JFC is headed by a Brigadier General who is charged with the operational command and control of the 3 arms and services namely: Army, Maritime Wing and Air Wing. He has two principal staff officers: the Chief of Staff (COS) and the Deputy Chief of Staff (DCOS), both of colonel rank. They have respective Branch Chiefs of Lieutenant Colonel rank working under their supervision: COS has a Chief of Operations (Chief Ops) and a Chief of Plans (Chief Plans) whilst DCOS has a Chief of Personnel (Chief Pers) and a Chief of Logistics (Chief J4). These Branch Chiefs also have Staff Officers Grade 2 (Majors) and Grade 3 (Captains) under their supervision. HQ JFC has 2 Joint Operational Centres (JOC 1&2). JOC 1 houses the Chief Ops and all operations staff officers, whilst JOC 2 houses the Chief J4 and all logistics staff officers.

- c. **Brigades.** HQ JFC has under command three (3) Infantry Brigades commanded by Colonels. Each Brigade has 3 Battalions, and Forward Patrol Bases (FPBs) to enhance effective joint RSLAF/SLP border control operations, and company size reserve to reinforce the FPBs as and when required.

- d. **Training Group Command.** The Training Group Command is also commanded by a Colonel and responsible for the management of all internal career courses/training in the RSLAF. The units under this command are: Armed Forces Training Center (AFTC), Peace Mission Training Center (PMTTC), Armed Forces Education Center (AFEC) and the Horton Academy (HA).

- e. **Air Wing.** The JFC continues to maintain the Air Wing as one of its arms and services as enshrined in our constitution. However, this unit is dormant at the moment due to lack of airframes and equipment.
- f. **Maritime Wing.** The Maritime Wing has its HQs at Murray Town and its main base at Government Wharf. It also has Forward Operating Bases (FOBs) in strategic areas along our coastline.
- g. **Support Units and Force Troops.** These provide the necessary admin, logistics and operational support for the JFC to accomplish its missions and tasks. Such units include: Army Engineers, Joint Logistics Unit (JLU), Joint Communications Unit (JCU), Joint Medical Unit (JMU), Joint Provost Unit (JPU), Artillery Unit, Forces Reconnaissance Unit (FRU), Forces Intelligence and Security Unit (FISU) and the Electronic Warfare (EW) Troops.

The HQ JFC brings the land, maritime and air components together under the command and control of the Commander Joint Force who is responsible for the planning and conduct of all RSLAF operations. The creation of the JFC ensures unified command and control of RSLAF troops and efficiency in the use of resources to safeguard the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Sierra Leone.

In pursuance to its defense missions and tasks, the Joint Force Command conducts a 3-strand annual cycle namely: Training, Operations and Regimental Duties.

- a **Training.** Effective and efficient training is critical to the generation of a capable force with the capacity to undertake a range of operations. For the RSLAF to be able to meet the demands of its defence missions and tasks, HQ JFC embarks on

providing continuous training for its personnel ranging from individual, collective to specific training. Over the period the courses required to develop career of both officers and men have been provided by this HQ through the support of the Ministry of Defence (MoD).

(1) **Individual Training**. This is conducted as Levels 1 & 2 training at battalion HQs to refresh officers and men on basic infantry skills.

(2) **Collective Training**. This is Level 3 training conducted at the Brigade Battle Schools (BBS) for companies and platoons in order to enable them to deploy and operate effectively in both internal and external operations.

(3) **Specialist and Career Training**. This HQ also embarks on providing the requisite training for its officers and men on various specialist and career courses both internally and externally through the support of MoD.

b. **Operations**. Consequent upon the Security Sector Reform and the establishment of a new National Security Architecture, attempts were made to redefine the operational roles (missions and tasks) of the RSLAF both internally and externally.

(1) **Internal Security Operations**. This is recognised as a police responsibility, with military intervention only when absolutely necessary. The rules and procedures governing the RSLAF's intervention in IS are outlined in a special Military Aid to Civil Power (MACP) document which is currently under revision as Military Aid to Civil Authorities (MACA) document. This is to comprehensively cover all range of assistance open to the military in an IS environment.

(2) **Border Control Operations**. Securing our borders by land, sea and air is the major responsibility of the RSLAF. We therefore conduct regular joint patrols with the Sierra

Leone Police (SLP) along our international borders to deter external aggression and cross-border crimes.

(3) **External Operations.** The RSLAF has been engaged in peacekeeping operations since 2009 with 5 successive deployment of a Sector Reconnaissance Company in the United Nation-African Union Hybrid Mission in Darfur (UNAMID) in Sudan till 2012; and currently a battalion in the Africa Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), which commenced in April 2013. There is an ambition to deploy troops once again in UNAMID in the not-too-far future, but up to a battalion this time.

c. **Regimental Duties.** After engaging in training and operations, personnel are also equally deployed on less intensive administrative and ceremonial duties within their units. In this last strand of the JFC Cycle, they are as well given time-off to proceed on annual leave to recuperate themselves and report back for duty.