



REPUBLIC OF SIERRA LEONE ARMED FORCES

POLICY ON ABSENCE WITHOUT
LEAVE (AWOL)

By Command of the
Defence Policy Committee

May, 2012

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
TOWER HILL
FREETOWN

RSLAF PERSONNEL POLICY DOCUMENT – DEALING WITH AND REPORTING ABSENCE WITHOUT LEAVE (AWOL)

General

1. A soldier or officer shall be deemed Absent without Leave (AWOL) when he/she has not reported for duty within 24 hours period without reasonable cause.
2. When the absence is first reported, the Unit Commander is to ensure that a search within the camp and the accommodation area is conducted to determine whether the personnel is on or off the camp. A written statement is to be produced confirming this has been done.
3. If the personnel could not be found, an absentee report is to be submitted immediately to the Fmn/Unit Orderly Room by the RSM/BSM.
4. After 72 hours of absence the Fmn/Unit's SO3 G1/Adjutant is responsible to signal an AWOL to the AFPC in the format at Appendix 1.
5. If the personnel fails to return to the unit by the 21 day point, a Board of Inquiry (BOI) is to be convened and is to be held and completed between 22 and 25 day of absence. An example of a Convening Order is at Appendix 2.
6. When the BOI is completed, the report is to be signed by the President and members and given to the Unit Commander. An example of the report is at Appendix 3.
7. Where the BOI finds the personnel to be AWOL or have other findings, a record of the report is to be entered in the unit Service Book that records all such inquiries.
8. Where admin discharge is recommended, the authority to strike off strength is not the BOI report except it is being followed by a duly completed RSLAF Form 130A and endorsed by the CJF for ORs and the CDS for Offrs.
9. The BOI report is to be submitted through the appropriate chain by the Fmn/Unit Comds, whose unit the AWOL personnel concerned is serving. This should be submitted no later the 25th day of absence. By this time the personnel's salary is placed on suspense by AFPC.
10. The completed RSLAF form 130A is to be submitted to HQ JFC J1, copied to AFPC together with the BOI report before the 30th day.
11. Once endorsed by the CJF for ORs and CDS for officers, HQ JFC J1 is to forward to AFPC the BOI report with the completed Form 130A under a formal request to admin discharge the personnel in question before the 34th day.

Action on Return from Absence

12. If the personnel is subsequently found not to be AWOL within the period of 21 days after an AWOL signal has been dispatched, a 'CANCEL AWOL' signal is to be sent using the format at Appendix 4. The reason for the cancellation is to be clearly stated.
13. When a personnel returns from a period of AWOL (Within 21 days), the unit is to send a 'REJAB' signal, an example of which is at Appendix 5. This must be followed by a disciplinary action taken against the soldier for being AWOL.
14. Personnel returning from a long period of absence (over 7 days) may be remanded in custody, within the current regulations, until he has been dealt with by the Unit Commander.
15. Once the BOI has been completed, no REJAB/Cancellation should be sent afterwards. Should the soldier have a genuine argument for not being on AWOL, he/she should seek redress.

AWOL Cases Related to Study Leave

16. For those on overseas Study Leave, the Guide to Managing Study Leave defines AWOL thus:
- a. Failure to report for duty in 14 days after the expiration of an approved Study Leave as recorded in the Return of Service (RoS).
 - b. When Progress report are not received for the personnel by the start of the new academic year (preferably October).
 - c. When the student or his/her institution is contacted and no response is received in 30 days.
17. In the circumstances that any or all of these conditions are applicable, the supervising officer (DDTER/CO AFEC/Unit Comd) will initiate the study leave AWOL procedure which will be followed by:
- a. Legally pursuing the individual, diplomatic means will be used to arrest, detain and deport those on overseas.
 - b. Apply for the immigration department to withdraw the right of the individual to use his/her passport.
 - c. BOI for all cases of AWOL while on overseas study leave once completed by the relevant authorities must be published and gazetted.
 - d. Study Leave AWOL cases are not entitled to discharge benefits. Legal action will then be taken to recover all issued military kits and monies spent on sponsorship (cost of tickets, course fees, salaries, rice/ration, and medical) with 10% interest in the case of RSLAF sponsorship.

AWOL Register

18. Units are to maintain an AWOL Register containing the details of AWOL, CANCEL AWOL, REJAB and BOI convening orders and findings. An example of an AWOL Register is at Appendix 6.

Action Required by AFPC

19. On receipt of reminders on the continued AWOL of a serving personnel, AFPC is to place the personnel's salary on suspense after 25 days of AWOL.

20. Upon receipt of a BOI Report including the RSLAF Form 130A endorsed by the CJF for ORs and CDS for Offrs, AFPC is to effect administrative discharge of the Soldier/Offrs and subsequently SOS from RSLAF.

21. AFPC is to produce and submit a monthly data query on all personnel who are AWOL exceeding 21 days and 35 days for which a BOI action has not been taken. AFPC is to disseminate same to the affected units through the HQ JFC J1 and copy D Def Pers.

22. AFPC is to retain and maintain proper record of the BOI report and RSLAF 130A Form into the individual's P/file.

23. AFPC to submit to the D Def Pers the names of all those personnel who have been administratively discharged, for publication in the national gazette by the Director General, MOD.

Proforma/Check List for Fmn/Units on the AWOL Process

24. It is necessary to keep track on action required by all in cases of AWOL. To this end, attached is Proforma Check List to guide Fmn/Units Commanders on the action required when dealing with AWOL cases.

25. In the events of negligence and failure to follow the correct AWOL and Administrative Discharge procedures, this Proforma will be use to judge the Fmn/Unit Commanders whenever. the personnel seeks redress and win the case.

Appendices:

1. ___ Example of the Signal to be sent to the AFPC Reporting the AWOL of a Soldier.
2. ___ Example of a Convening Order for a Board of Inquiry.
3. ___ Example of a Report of a Board of Inquiry.
4. ___ Example of a REJAB Signal to be sent to the AFPC Reporting the Return from AWOL of a Soldier.
5. ___ Example of a Cancel AWOL Signal to be sent to the AFPC Reporting the Return from AWOL of a Soldier.
6. ___ Example of an AWOL Register.

CHECK LIST FOR FMN/UNIT ADMINISTRATION ACTION WHEN HANDLING AWOL INCIDENTS

Occurrences (a)	(b)	(c)	Action		Remarks (f)
			(d)	(e)	
First and Second Day of AWOL	Search of Unit/Camp	Search any Known abode other than MQ	Written Report submitted by unit RSM/BSM confirming the personnel has not been seen within the camp		Cross-checked by Adjutant/SO3 G1 Officer
Third Day of AWOL	AWOL rpt sent to AFPC	Info JPU/Local SLP	Info JMU	Report submitted by Fmn/Unit's SO3 G1/Adjutant	Cross-checked by DCOS/Unit 2 i/c
8 Days of AWOL	Reminder sent to AFPC	Info JPU/Local SLP	Info JMU	Report submitted by Fmn/Unit's SO3 G1/Adjutant	Cross-checked by DCOS/Unit 2 i/c
14 Days of AWOL	Reminder sent to AFPC	Info JPU/Local SLP	Info JMU	Report submitted by Fmn/Unit's SO3 G1/Adjutant	Cross-checked by DCOS/Unit 2 i/c
21 Days of AWOL	Fmn/ Unit Comd Convene BOI		BOI Period (22 - 24 days of AWOL)	BOI Team	Checked by By Fmn/Unit Comd
25 Day of AWOL	Submit BOI Report to Fmn/ Unit Comd	Fmn/ Unit Comd examine Rpt and fills Form 130A and report entered in the Fmn/Unit service book.	Fmn/Unit Comd to fwd BOI Rpt with 130A to HQ JFC where admin Disch is recommended, for CJF endorsement for OR and CDS for Offrs.	HQ JFC(CJF) or MOD (CDS) Reviews the BOI report and the 130A and instruct AFPC to SOS the personnel NLT 28 days of AWOL. AFPC place the AWOL pers salary on suspense.	Followed up by Fmn/Unit Comds, HQ JFC-Ch Pers and DCOS.
35 Day of AWOL	AFPC to SOS the Personnel AFPC to produce a monthly data capture of all personnel on AWOL in excess of 21 Days				Checked by CO AFPC D Def Pers to cross check DG MOD's responsibility
	All Administratively Discharged Personnel must be Gazetted				

EXAMPLE OF THE SIGNAL TO BE SENT TO THE AFPC REPORTING THE
ABSENCE WITHOUT LEAVE OF A SOLDIER

Date Time Group: 030900 Z JAN 03
Precedence: PRIORITY
From: Unit
To: Formation HQ (Note 1)
AFPC
JPU
SUBJECT: AWOL SIGNAL

1. 19192345 CPL KAMARA K (Number, rank and name of absentee)
2. 35 Bn, A Coy, Port Loko (Unit, sub-unit and location)
3. 01 JAN 03 (Date of absence)
4. 4a Wilkinson Road, Freetown (Known addresses where the soldier
15 Loko Street, Port Loko might be located ie family, friends)

Note:

1. The unit must send a copy of the signal to all these addressees as action addressees. Failure to inform AFPC and JPU will delay administrative action.

EXAMPLE OF A CONVENING ORDER FOR A BOARD OF INQUIRY

CONVENING ORDER

BY

LIEUTENANT COLONEL K K KAMARA
 COMMANDING OFFICER 35 BATTALION
(Note 1)

SERIAL No 45 *(Note 2)*

PORT LOKO

01 JAN 03

References

- A. RSLMF Act 1961, Section 121 (as amended).
 B. 35 Bn Signal Message dated 121300Z DEC 02. *(Note 3)*

INTRODUCTION

1. A Board of Inquiry, composed as under will assemble at the Sergeants Mess on Fri 4 Jan 03 to investigate and report on the circumstances surrounding the absence without leave on 9 Dec 02 of 19191919 Pte Alpha K.

COMPOSITION

2. President *(Note 4)* SL999 Captain K Abdulai
- Members *(Note 5)* SL998 Lieutenant J Bangura
 19191717 WO2 Conteh D
 19191616 SSgt Foyoh S
- Witnesses *(Note 6)* 19191515 WO2 (RQMS) Jalloh B
(Note 7) 19191414 Sgt Kamanda J
 19191313 Pte Kargbo D

TERMS OF REFERENCE

3. The Terms of Reference are as follows:
- a. To investigate fully and report on the facts leading to the absence of 19191919 Pte Alpha K.

A2 - 1

RESTRICTED

- b. To investigate whether or not he has self-deployed himself to another unit.
- c. To investigate whether or not his salary has been signed for during his absence.
- d. To investigate whether or not he has a weapon signed out from the armoury and list any other military kit that he is in possession of.
- e. To investigate the number of days he has been AWOL.
- f. To investigate whether or not he has been admitted to any medical facility and is too ill to report to a military unit. This is to be done in writing or signal format to JMU and the subsequent written or signal reply submitted with the witness statements.
- g. To investigate whether or not he was subjected to any form of harassment or intimidation.
- h. Any other relevant information that maybe useful to the Board.

BOOKS OF REFERENCE

4. The following books and manuals will be required for the Board:
 - a. Royal Sierra Leone Military Forces Act 1961 (as amended).
 - b. Bible and Quran.

MISCELLANEOUS

5. All evidence is to be taken on oath.
6. The Chief Clerk is to ensure all stationery, books, manuals and documents are provided.

FINDINGS, OPINIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7. The Board is to indicate its findings, express opinions and, where relevant, make recommendations. Three copies of the Board of Inquiry is to be submitted to the Commanding Officer on Mon 7 Jan 03

K K KAMARA
Lt Col
CO

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Distribution:

External:

Information:

JSC
AFPC

Internal:

Action:

All Board of Inquiry Members and Witnesses
Chief Clerk
Sergeants Mess Manager

Notes

1. *The Unit Commander is to convene all Boards of Inquiry.*
2. *The Serial Number of the Convening Order is to be the next Part One Order Serial Number.*
3. *Reference B is the initial AWOL signal sent by the unit.*
4. *The President of the Board is to be of Captain rank or above and, in the case of officers, must be of at least one higher rank than the subject absentee.*
5. *There must be at least 3 members on each Board. A member must be a minimum of SSgt rank.*
6. *The following witnesses are mandatory for every AWOL Board of Inquiry:*
 - a. *RQMS or representative who can give evidence as to the weapons and kit that the accused may be in possession of.*
 - b. *The soldier's Pl Sgt or Cpl who is to give evidence as to when the soldier was last seen and what steps have been taken to discover where he may now be.*
 - c. *A known friend or colleague of the soldier so that he may give evidence as to the soldier's state of mind or of anything that may have been said prior to his absence.*
7. *Other witnesses may be as follows:*
 - a. *Medical Officer when the soldier has failed to report back to the unit after a period of sick leave.*
 - b. *Provost Sgt when the soldier has escaped from custody.*

A2 - 3

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EXAMPLE OF A REPORT OF A BOARD OF INQUIRY

35 Battalion
Port Loko

See Distribution

4 Jan 03

REPORT OF A BOARD OF INQUIRY INTO THE ABSENCE WITHOUT LEAVE OF
19191919 PTE ALPHA KK

References: *(Note 1)*

- A. 35 Bn Convening Order Serial No 45 dated 1 Jan 03 (copy attached).
- B. RSLMF Act 1961, Section 121 (as amended).
- C. 35 Bn Signal Message dated 121300Z DEC 02 (copy attached).

INTRODUCTION

1. A Board of Inquiry was convened on Fri 4 Jan 03 at 35 Bn Sergeants Mess, Port Loko to investigate the circumstances into the Absence Without Leave of 19191919 Pte Alpha KK.

STATEMENTS FROM WITNESSES *(Note 2)*

- 2. Statements were obtained from the witnesses below and are attached to this report:
 - a. 19191515 WO2 (RQMS) Jalloh B.
 - b. 19191414 Sgt Kamanda J.
 - c. 19191313 Pte Kargbo D.

FINDINGS AND OPINION OF THE BOARD

- 3. The Board found that 19191919 Pte Alpha K K was admitted to 34 Fd Hospital on 1 Nov 02 and released on sick leave on thg 10 Nov 02 and failed to return to either the hospital or unit.
- 4. The Board also discovered that 19191919 Pte Alpha K K was in possession of military kit which is listed in the witness report of WO2 Jalloh. He was not in possession of a weapon.
- 5. The Board also discovered that 19191919 Pte Alpha K K had been for some time planning to join his family who had emigrated to Gambia.

A3 - 1

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6. It is of the opinion of the Board that 19191919 Pte Alpha K K had for sometime been planning to absent himself without leave to join his family in Gambia and has no intention of returning to Sierra Leone.

RECOMMENDATIONS

7. That the Military Police be empowered to search the known address of 19191919 Pte Alpha K K in order to retrieve any military kit he may have left behind.
8. That 19191919 Pte Alpha K K be Struck Off Strength to the Y List.

K ABDULAI
Capt
President

J BANGURA
Lt
Member

D CONTEH
WO2
Member

S FOYOH
SSgt
Member

Notes:

1. *The Convening Order and AWOL signal should always be quoted in the Reference. A copy of both those references should be attached to the report.*
2. *Each witness statement is to be on separate pieces of paper and are to be signed and dated by each individual.*

A3-2

RESTRICTED

EXAMPLE OF A REJAB SIGNAL TO BE SENT TO THE AFPC REPORTING THE
RETURN FROM ABSENCE WITHOUT LEAVE OF A SOLDIER

Date Time Group: 250900 Z JAN 03
Precedence: PRIORITY
From: Unit
To: Formation HQ (Note 1)
AFPC
JPU
SUBJECT: REJAB SIGNAL

- | | | |
|----|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1. | 19192345 CPL KAMARA K | (Number, rank and name of absentee) |
| 2. | 35 Bn, A Coy, Port Loko | (Unit, sub-unit and location) |
| 3. | 01 JAN 03 | (Date of absence) |
| 4. | 24 JAN 03 | (Date returned from absence) |
| 5. | Apprehended by the civil police | (Reason why the soldier returned) |

Note:

1. The unit must send a copy of the signal to all these addressees as action addressees. Failure to inform AFPC and JPU will delay administrative action.

EXAMPLE OF A CANCEL AWOL SIGNAL TO BE SENT TO THE AFPC
REPORTING THE RETURN FROM ABSENCE WITHOUT LEAVE OF A SOLDIER

Date Time Group: 250900 Z JAN 03
Precedence: PRIORITY
From: Unit
To: Formation HQ (Note 1)
AFPC
JPU

SUBJECT: CANCEL AWOL SIGNAL. REFERENCE (ENTER DTG AND
REFERENCE DETAIL OF ORIGINAL AWOL SIGNAL)

- | | | |
|----|-------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1. | 19192345 CPL KAMARA K | (Number, rank and name of absentee) |
| 2. | 35 Bn, A Coy, Port Loko | (Unit, sub-unit and location) |
| 3. | 01 JAN 03 | (Date of absence reported) |
| 4. | Reason for Cancel AWOL | (Unit admin error, sick etc) |

Note:

1. The unit must send a copy of the signal to all these addressees as action addressees. Failure to inform AFPC and JPU will delay administrative action.

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APPENDIX 6 TO
ANNEX A TO
AFBI 001/2003

EXAMPLE OF AN AWOL REGISTER

Ser	No	Rank	Name	Date AWOL	DTG AWOL signal	DTG Cancel AWOL/REJAB	Date and Ser No of BOI Convening Order	Date BOI to Formation HQ	Recommendation(s)/Remarks
(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)	(e)	(f)	(g)	(h)	(i)	(j)
1	12345678	SSgt	Bangura S	150202	180900Z FEB 02	230900Z JUN 02	7 Mar 02 Ser 01	16 Mar 02	Dismissal
2	56789121	Cpl	James D	170202	200900Z FEB 02	210900Z FEB 02	None	None	AWOL Cancelled - Sick
3	12124553	Pte	Sesay T	180202	160900Z FEB 02	None	10 Mar 02 Ser 02	19 mar 02	Remains AWOL, Dismissal

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