

RSLAF'S PARTICIPATION ON FOREIGN MISSIONS

Due the concept of interdependence as a result of globalization, countries big or small, weak or strong are all seizing the opportunity to forge alliances and corporations with or seek help from each other in pursuance of national interests. Such alliances usually cover a wide range of mutually beneficial issues; and may also include mutual military cooperation and support. The extent to which a country relates with others is often prescribed in her foreign policy. The military is a major means by which a country pursues its foreign policy goals. Thus, in a bid to partially actualise her foreign policy, Sierra Leone has been participating on foreign missions, particularly peacekeeping, all over the world. These are as outlined below:

a. Previous Participation on Peacekeeping

(1) As stated earlier, the RSLAF's first participation in peace support operations (PSOs) was as far back as in 1960 in the Congo (now DR Congo). Between 1991 and 1998, the RSLAF contributed troops under the Economic Community Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) initiative to bring peace to neighbouring Liberia. Three successive battalions were rotated during that period. The first contingent was among the force that prevented Charles Taylor from taking over Monrovia. The last contingent returned home after the 1997 AFRC Coup.

(2) The RSLAF also deployed staff officers, military observers (MILOBs) and arms monitors in the UN Mission in Timor Leste (UNMIT), UN Mission in Nepal (UNMIN) until their closure in 2011; a medical team to the Gulf War in 1998 and rotated five (5) Sector Reconnaissance Companies (SRCs) in the United Nations-African Union Hybrid Mission in DARFUR (UNAMID) from 2009 to 2011. Additionally, the RSLAF also deployed staff officers in the United Nation Mission in South SUDAN (UNMISS).

b. **Current Participation on Peacekeeping.** The RSLAF continues to maintain about 28 staff officers, MILOBs and arms monitors in UNAMID, United Nations Integrated and Stabilization Force in Abeyei (UNISFA), United Nations Integrated Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) and the United Nations Multi-dimensional Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA). Furthermore, the RSLAF currently contributes a battalion (850 officers/soldiers) and 6 staff officers to the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM). The RSLAF's area of responsibility in this latter mission was recently upgraded to a Sector commanded by a Sierra Leonean Sector Commander of Brigadier rank.

c. **Future Participation on Peacekeeping.** Having made a mark on peacekeeping, the RSLAF continues to receive invitations to either participate in new

missions or increase its troops where it already has presence. This however hinges on availability of resources. Some of the offers open to the RSLAF are:

- (1) A Maintenance Platoon (50 personnel) or Force Protection Company (250 personnel) in MINUSMA.
- (2) A Battalion (850 personnel) in UNAMID, Sudan.
- (3) A Mechanized Infantry Company (150-250 personnel) in Guinea-Bissau.
- (4) A Mechanized Infantry Company or a Battalion in Central African Republic (CAR).

d. **Other Foreign Missions.** The RSLAF has also deployed officers on foreign missions other than peacekeeping. These are:

- (1) Defence Attachés (DAs) to Sierra Leone Embassies in New York and Liberia. DAs to China, Ethiopia, UK and Nigeria are under consideration.
- (2) Liaison Officers (LOs) to the Guinean Armed Forces, Kenyan Defence Forces and the UN Support Office to AMISOM (UNSOA).
- (3) A Staff Officer to the ECOWAS Secretariat in Abuja.

e. **PSO Training.** Training for PSO takes place at the Peace Mission Training Centre (PMTC) at Hastings. The Sierra Leone Battalion (LEOBATT 2) which will relieve the current one (LEOBATT 1) in AMISOM has almost completed training and will be ready for deployment in early July 2014.