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PRESS RELEASE

MILITARY OBSERVERS AND STAFF OFFICERS CONFERRED WITH UNITED NATIONS PEACE KEEPING MEDALS.

A total number of fifty three (53) military observers (MILOBS) and forty one (41) staff officers currently serving in the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) were recently conferred with the United Nations Medal of Honor, at the Force Headquarters Mammy Yoko Hotel. The ceremony which commenced with prayers from both the Christian and Moslem faiths was graced by the Deputy Force Commander Brigadier General Paul Kwabena Opoku

Speaking on behalf of the Special Representative of the Secretary General (SRSG) and the Force Commander, the DFC noted that it was an honor for him to be the Reviewing Officer at this year's second quarter Joint Medals Parade for MILOBS and Staff Officers. Brig. Gen. Paul Opoku pointed out the multinational nature of the mission, noting that "A glance at the number of able military officers mustered here for this ceremony reveals the diversity in the nations involved in seeking a permanent solution to the crisis in Sierra Leone". Seventeen (17) different nations were represented at the medal parade "The people of Sierra Leone and the international community hold you in high esteem for your dedicated service" he added. He urged the medal recipients to be committed to their duties, in order to ensure that the peace existing in Sierra Leone is enduring. "I will like to emphasize that in spite of the gains we have made; there is still a lot of work to be done before handing over security primacy of the entire country to the Government of Sierra Leone". The DFC

also reminded all, of UNAMSIL's Adjustment, Drawdown and withdrawal (ADW) plan, stating that the security primacy of both the Northern and Southern provinces was handed over to the Government of Sierra Leone which has resulted in the Force transmuting from 3 Sectors to 2 Commands. He emphasized that "These are all signs of



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the confidence we have imparted to the local security forces to take over from us eventually”. Brig Gen Opoku harped on the need to ensure that all security measures were put in place before the security primacy of the entire country would be handed over to the Government of Sierra Leone. “UNAMSIL is duty bound to assure the people of Sierra Leone that their security is our priority” He said.

The DFC also commended the contributions made by the Peace keepers in ensuring the prevalent peaceful atmosphere in Sierra Leone, which he said, was due largely to their excellent monitoring role and efficient staff work in the mission. He expressed delight for their immense efforts in ensuring that the recent Local Council Elections were held successfully.

The United Nations Medal of Honor is awarded to military personnel who have completed ninety (90) days of meritorious service in a mission.

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