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PRESS RELEASE

UNAMSIL LAUNCHES OPERATION BLUE VIGILANCE PHASE II

The United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) on Monday, 17 November 2003, started the second first phase of “Operation Blue Vigilance”, a military exercise conducted in collaboration with the Sierra Leone Police (SLP) and the Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces (RSLAF). The objective of Operation Blue Vigilance is to increase UNAMSIL forces and the national security agencies’ presence along the border with Liberia, thereby preventing potential infiltrations of Liberian combatants into Sierra Leone. Operation Blue Vigilance Phase I was conducted between 20 October and 2 November 2003.

Sector East Commander, Brigadier General Sajjad Ahmed Bakhshi, on 18 November, inspected the security arrangements at various crossing points along the Sierra Leone border with Liberia. During his visit, Brig Gen Bakhshi requested the commanding officers of Pakistani Battalions (PAKBATT) 7, 8 and 9 to review their contingency plans to reaffirm UNAMSIL’s operational capability. He also reiterated the need to identify areas requiring better coordination with the Sierra Leone security agencies.

Information gathered at the end of the first phase of Operation Blue Vigilance was handed over to UNAMSIL Sector East and to Sierra Leonean security agencies to carry out joint ground operations. Operation Blue Vigilance Phase II is also supported by air patrols from the Ukrainian and Russian aviation commands.

Operation Blue Vigilance Phase II should be completed on 1 December.

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