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**PRESS RELEASE**

**ACTING FORCE COMMANDER VISITS NORTHERN  
COMMANDER, NIBATT 17**

*Freetown* - Deputy Force Commander and Acting Force Commander, Brigadier General Paul Kwabena Opoku Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> July visited the Commander of the Northern Command of the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL), Brigadier General Alhaji Nuhu Bamalli and the nineteenth Nigerian Battalion (NIBATT 17) in Freetown.

During a short briefing, Brigadier General Opoku, Brigadier General Bamalli said the United Nations' intervention in Sierra Leone had brought relief to the people of the country. He said confidence-building measures and specific peacekeeping duties in line with the UN's Mandate and Rules of Engagement were being carried out.

On the security assessment of Northern Command, which comprises troops from Bangladesh, Ghana, Kenya and Nigeria, Brigadier General Bamalli said current security concerns pertained to the proceedings of Special Court, the activities of various youth groups comprising unemployed youths and ex-combatants who were still aggrieved over the disbursement of money by the National Committee for Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (NCDDR) and the hike in prices of essential commodities. He, however, assured the Acting Force Commander that contingency plans had already been put in place in case of any eventuality.

On building the capacity of the Government of Sierra Leone, he informed that the Sierra Leone Police (SLP) and the Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces (RSLAF) were being systematically built up for challenges ahead of them once UNAMSIL eventually withdraws. This was being done through the conduct of joint operations, patrols and training, as well as sensitizing the local population on the eventual drawdown of UNAMSIL.

Northern Command was also planning to transfer security responsibility of the Western Area to the SLP and RSLAF through the Provincial Security Committee (PROSEC) Western Area by 22 September and to the Government of Sierra Leone by 4 October.

Brigadier General Opoku said he had confidence in the capabilities of the Northern Command and emphasized the need to remain vigilant.

Earlier, the Commanding Officer of NIBATT 17, Lt. Col. Steve Ovadje informed Brig. Gen Opoku that the battalion as had carried out training in weapons handling as well as conducted a seminar on military ethics for senior members of the RSLAF aimed at sensitizing them on military ethics, human rights and the Rule of Law. He said the battalion had, through its Provost Officer, organized lectures for the RSLAF Military Police with two sets having passed out so far.

Lt. Col. Ovadje said NIBATT 17 was carrying out a series of humanitarian projects, including renovation of the Youth Development Centre at Wilberforce in the west end of Freetown and the Police Post at Kissy in the east; the donation of food stuff and other materials to the less-privileged in society including the King John VI Home for the Aged and Elderly at Kissy and the Development Orphanage and Vocational Education Centre (DOVE) at the outskirts of Regent.

On Quick Impact Projects (QIPs), he said his battalion had undertaken renovation work on the Parade Ground at the Wilberforce Barracks, the construction of a dispensary at the Aberdeen Amputee Camp and the provision of furniture for three schools in Freetown.

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