

**UNITED NATIONS MISSION IN SIERRA LEONE
(UNAMSIL)**

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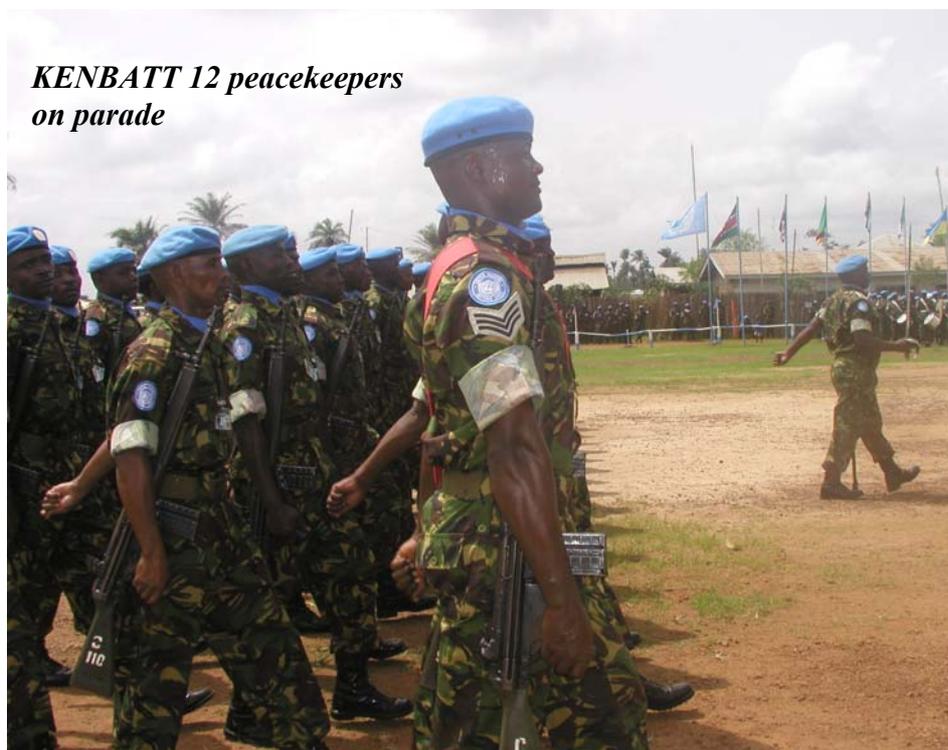
1 June 2004

PRESS RELEASE

**SRSG, FC AND COMMANDER NORTHERN COMMAND DECORATE KENBATT12
PEACEKEEPERS**

Freetown – The Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General (SRSG) in Sierra Leone, Ambassador Daudi Ngelautwa Mwakawago together with the UNAMSIL Force Commander, Maj. Gen. Sajjad Akram and the Commander Northern Command, Brig-Gen. Nuhu Bamalli, today decorated with UN Medals 958 peacekeepers (including 59 officers) of the twelfth Kenyan battalion (KENBATT 12) at a colourful ceremony at Masiaka, northern Sierra Leone.

In his keynote address, Ambassador Mwakawago said he was delighted to be invited to the ceremony, which is held for peacekeepers who have completed a 90-day period unblemished. “It is therefore gratifying to note that you have carried out your duties and responsibilities professionally with diligence and devotion,” he said adding, “I would like to congratulate the Commander, officers, men and women of KENBATT 12 on this auspicious occasion.”



***KENBATT 12 peacekeepers
on parade***

The SRSG noted that Kenya had been participating in peacekeeping missions since 1976 and that in Sierra Leone the participation of the East Africa nation's troops was vividly brought to light when in May 2000 they “played a prominent role” that led to the release of some UNAMSIL troops who had been taken hostage by the then Revolutionary United Front rebels, an operation in

which, he said, four Kenyan soldiers lost their lives.

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As the Medal Parade coincided with Kenya's 41st Independence anniversary, Ambassador Mwakawago expressed profound congratulations to the Kenyan contingent in UNAMSIL and to all Kenyans in Sierra Leone on the occasion of Madaraka Day as their independence day is called. He commended the contingent for its humanitarian activities such as the construction of churches, mosques and schools in their areas of deployment. "Your contribution in construction of these facilities will no doubt serve as part of your permanent legacy in this country," he concluded.

Welcoming the guests, Kenya's Contingent Commander, Col. Charles Tai Gituai noted that two medals would be conferred posthumously and asked everyone present to observe a moment of silence in their memory. He gave an historical background to Kenya's independence, adding that the parade would be the last function before the departure of his troops.

"We are proud to be part of UNAMSIL'S success", he said; adding that he was honoured to have as guest of honour, the SRSG.

Highlights of the parade included singing and cultural dance by pupils of Masiaka town, a traditional display by the KENBATT 12 peacekeepers, climaxed by a tree planting by dignitaries including the SRSG, the Force Commander and the Commander Northern Command. Also present at the ceremony were the Deputy Force Commander, Brig-Gen Paul K. Opoku; Chief of Russian Aviation, Maj-Gen Ivanov Viktor and Brig-Gen Ahmed Sajjad Bakshi, Commander of UNAMSIL's Southern Command.

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