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PRESS RELEASE

SRSG, FC DECORATE RUSSIAN AVIATION PEACEKEEPERS WITH UN PEACE MEDALS

Freetown - The Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General in Sierra Leone, Ambassador Daudi Ngelautwa Mwakawago, together with the UNAMSIL Force Commander, Maj. Gen. Sajjad Akram yesterday decorated one hundred and fifteen officers and men of the Russian Aviation Unit serving in the UN Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) at a colourful ceremony at the international airport town of Lungi, northern Sierra Leone. They were also joined by Sierra Leone's Ambassador to the

Russian Federation, Mrs. Melrose Kai-Banya and the Russian Ambassador to Guinea and Sierra Leone, Igor Ivashchenko. Addressing the recipients of the peace medal, who included their unit commander Maj. Gen. Peter Kazak, Ambassador Mwakawago said the peacekeepers deserved to be decorated after a "distinguished and meritorious service"



especially in the last three months, and urged them to do even more as the drawdown phase of UNAMSIL required "more flying hours and more vigilance" with the troop level now at 10,500 peacekeepers. He praised the Russian peacekeepers for providing "armed escort for ground convoys, air reconnaissance, air cover of other UNAMSIL operations" and for undertaking "deterrence patrol mission along the borders of Sierra Leone and its neighbours", which have included 900 flights amounting to 1,100 hours since last September. The SRSG said the appearance of the Russian helicopters alone "contributed significantly to a quiet and stable situation [that] succeeded in deterring potential mischief-makers along the border".



The SRSG said the medals, awarded to UN peacekeepers who complete 90 days unblemished, were being awarded to the Russians “in recognition of your professionalism, gallantry, sacrifice and devotion towards the realization and consolidation of lasting peace in Sierra Leone”.

In her statement, Sierra Leone’s Ambassador to the Russian Federation, Mrs. Melrose Kai-Banya congratulated the peacekeepers, saying they were awarded a significant date to Russian soldiers - Russian Armed Forces Day.