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LAST CONTINGENT OF PEACEKEEPERS LEAVE SIERRA LEONE

Freetown, Sierra Leone, 15 December 2005 --- 290 Pakistani soldiers, representing the last contingent of the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) troops, left Freetown today for their home country Pakistan.

The Pakistani contingent who had left the Hastings Transit Camp yesterday amid cheers and expression of appreciation from the locals, left Lungi International Airport aboard Askari Aviation Airline at exactly 09.38 hours to reunite with their families which they left back home.

The departure of the Pakistani contingents marks the end of one of the biggest mission that at its peak commanded 17,000 troops from over thirty countries, and whose estimated cost is put at approximately \$ 3 billion.

Many of the repatriating peacekeepers expressed satisfaction for been part of the success story of UNAMSIL. "We are going home with our heads high because we are not only associated with one of the most successful peacekeeping mission, but we have actually contributed to the success of UNAMSIL", said one of the peacekeepers.

The Special Representative of the Secretary General for Sierra Leone, Ambassador Daudi Mwakawago, paid glowing tribute to all peacekeepers for their selfless contribution in laying a solid foundation for peace and security for Sierra Leone. "You have contributed in laying a solid foundation for peace and prosperity for the people of Sierra Leone, posterity will reward you all for this noble service to humanity," he said.

The SRSG also used the occasion to thank all troop contributing countries for their prompt response to the Secretary General's call for troops.

Within this week alone, the Nigerian, Jordanian, and the Bangladesh contingents left Sierra Leone for their home countries after a successful tour of duty with UNAMSIL.

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