

SPEECH DELIVERED BY
MAJOR GENERAL DANIEL DEE ZIANKAHN, JR. (RTD.)
MINISTER OF NATIONAL DEFENSE

ON THE OCCASSON MARKING
65TH ARMED FORCES DAY
11 FEBRUARY 2022

BARCLAY TRAINING CENTER
MONROVIA

His Excellency, George Manneh Weah, President and
Commander-In-Chief, of the Armed Forces of Liberia

Madame Vice President

Mr. Speaker and members of the House of Representatives

Mr. President Pro-tempore and members of the Liberian Senate

His Honor the Chief Justice and Associate Justices of the Supreme
Court,

Mr. Keynote Speaker;

Members of the Diplomatic Corps;

Past and present government officials here present;

The Dean and members of the Cabinet;

Maj/Gen Paul Rogers, Adjutant General of the Michigan National
Guard,

B/Gen Zieden, Chief of Staff of the Latvian National Armed Forces

Heads of other Security Apparatus

The Chief of Staff,

Officers, Non-Commissioned Officers, Enlisted and Sailors of the
Armed Forces of Liberia

Family members of our Gallant Men and Women in Arms

Members of the fourth Estate

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

It is my distinguish honor to welcome you all to the Barclay Training Center as we commemorate yet another Armed Forces Day, a day set aside in the history of our country and dedicated to honoring and expressing our gratitude, admiration and support to these extraordinary men and women of our military and all those who have answered the noble call to service but lost their lives in defense of our country. Let me personally acknowledge the presence of Gen. Paul Rogers and B/G Zieden, of the Michigan National Guard and the Latvian National Armed Forces. Thank you for joining us.

Your Excellency, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

As we commemorate this day, it gives me great pride to report to you in particular Sir, and the Liberian people in general, on the affairs of the ministry of National Defense and the Armed Forces of Liberia.

Your Excellency, few months ago, you dedicated the 14 Military Hospital, a facility constructed by the engineering company of the Armed Forces of Liberia, which was initially commissioned as part of our COVID response efforts.

The success of our national response to the COVID 19 outbreak can't be mentioned without the professional competence of the

men and women in arms who provided strategic support in our fight to contain this deadly virus.

Thank you, Mr. President for your strategic vision to construct a military hospital the first of its kind in the history of both our nation and the Armed Forces of Liberia.

Your Excellency, about four months ago, the Armed Forces of Liberia successfully executed a joint exercise with other security institutions in the country. The exercise, code named, "Operation Watch Over", was intended to restore the confidence of our citizens and reassure our neighbors that our territorial sovereignty remains peaceful. The success of that mission became a tangible litmus test as a result of the quality of training our partners have impacted into the Liberian Armed Forces and their preparedness to execute mission upon orders.

Similarly, Your Excellency, in August of 2021, a platoon minus of the AFL Quick Reaction Force successfully participated in a multi-National Exercise, "the Northern Strike", in the State of Michigan. As I speak Mr. President, another Platoon size of the AFL is currently in the State of Texas participating in Exercise, "External Evaluation".

These exercises and scenarios bring out the realistic challenges of planning, supporting, coordinating, and executing missions under very difficult circumstances, involving multiple agencies as well as local administration.

Having said this, your Excellency, allow me to proudly present 2Lt. Scott Collins a graduate of the United States Military Academy, West Point, USA. 2Lt. Collins is the first graduate of the new Armed Forces of Liberia making the total of Liberians to graduate from this institution three in number.

Let me express on behalf of the Chief of Staff, men and women of the Armed Forces of Liberia; our profound appreciation to our partners for the continuous support to the Armed Forces of Liberia through training opportunities as well as mentorship. These opportunities provided to our military have enhanced their professional competence and made them a "Force for Good".

Your Excellency,

Consistent with your vision and intent to improve the living conditions of our men and women in arms, I am pleased to report that the Ministry of National Defense has received fundings for the renovation of various military facilities in order to decongest the over crowdedness of the EBK Military barracks.

While these funding will assist in providing immediate relief and improve the living condition of our troops, we still have more to be done.

Consequently, additional budgetary appropriation has been made in the 2022 fiscal year to ensure full implementation of decongesting our military barracks in order to provide a suitable and conducive living conditions for our service personnel and their families. Through your instrumentality, your Excellency, the AFL has received some command and Troop carrying vehicles which are very essential to enhance the smooth mobility of our troops. Thank you sir.

Your Excellency, on January 4, 2022, the Armed Forces of Liberia begun its recruitment process as a call to service for qualified Liberians meeting the recruitment criteria to enlist in the AFL. This rigorous process will continue throughout the country and cadets will be chosen on order of merit. Individuals wanting to enlist into the Liberian military will undergo an independent vetting process, reflecting our commitment to the respect of basic human rights, integrity, commitment and the core standards of our military values.

That said, Your Excellency, I want to give special commendation to the outstanding performance of the Liberian contingent serving in

the United Nations Multinational Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) as they continue to demonstrate the highest level of professionalism, commitment and dedication in supporting the people of Mali while performing some of the most dangerous operations in that West African Country. As part of the exercises in preparation to rotate the current Liberian troops, the Armed Forces of Liberia began pre-deployment training on 28 December 2021. This training is being conducted with the support and guidance of ECOWAS mentors, United States Military personnel as well as French and British Special Forces. These exercises are intended to provide strategic guidance, regimentation and discipline to our men and women in arms as they prepare for deployment.

Your Excellency, Distinguish Ladies and Gentlemen,
Few months down the road, we will be entering our political season, a period that requires all Liberians to demonstrate their constitutional rights to affiliate, campaign and vote for a person or party of their choice. While the AFL prepares to support civil authority and other security organizations to ensure an uninterrupted political process, let me make it clear that the Armed Forces of Liberia remains Apolitical. Our military facilities will not be a place for political gatherings and individuals or vehicles entering our facilities will not be permitted to display political

paraphernalia; we call on all Liberian politicians to demonstrate love and respect for the Liberian military by abiding by these rules as set forth by the Chief of Staff and the high command of the AFL.

To the families of our military personnel, you have been instrumental in our success and we want to extend our heartfelt thanks and appreciation to every family member of our soldiers, sailors, NCOs, and officers for their continued support and encouragement. You the families are the pillar of support we seek in building the morale of our troops. Thanks for being a part of this worthy cause.

To the men and women in arms, past and present, as we honor you today, I encourage you to continue your patriotism and commitment to being the people's army. It's a mission that you were called to execute and it demands unparalleled excellence. No doubt our Sub-Region is volatile, from violent Extremism to Coup-d'états. Today, more than ever before, Liberians look up to you to be that Protective Force rather than an interruptive Force. You are the beneficiaries of the great legacy provided by those who came before you, and it is your task, not only to uphold that legacy, but also to pass it on to those who will come after you. I THANK YOU and WISH YOU HAPPY ARMED FORCES DAY!!!!

