

**SPEECH DELIVERED
BY
MAJOR GENERAL DANIEL DEE ZIANKAHN, JR. (RTD.)
MINISTER OF NATIONAL DEFENSE, R.L.
ON THE OCCASION MARKING 66TH ARMED FORCES DAY CELEBRATION
BTC, MONROVIA**

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

Madame First Lady.

Madame Vice President.

Mr. Speaker and Members of the 54th Legislature.

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

Her Honor, the Chief Justice, and Associate Justices of the Supreme Court.

The immediate Former President of the Republic of Liberia, Her Excellency Madame Ellen Johnson Sirleaf;

The Chairmen on Defense from the Liberian Senate and House of Representatives.

The Doyen and Members of the Diplomatic Corp.

The Dean and members of the cabinet.

Current and former government officials here present.

The Keynote Speaker, Maj/Gen Pablo Estrada.

The CDS of Cote d'Ivoire, Lt/Gen. Doumbia, the Assistant CDS of Sierra Leone, Brigadier General Bangura, the Army Deputy Chief of Staff of Guinea, Col. Diakite.

Heads of other Security Institutions.

Heads of Religious and Civil Society Organizations.

Distinguished Guests,

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

The family members of our Gallant Men and Women

Members of the Fourth Estate

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

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Every year, for the past half century and still counting, this day has been set aside to remind us of the many sacrifices made by our men and women wearing uniforms. It presents the tangible accomplishments for which our nation has remained strong amongst the comity of nations. However, we are also enlightened about the challenges they face when executing their constitutional duties.

On this note, I am pleased to welcome everyone both physically and virtually to this auspicious program which demonstrates our gratitude, admiration, and support to these extraordinary men and women of our military and all those who have answered the noble call to duty but lost their lives in defense of our country. I want to personally take this time to welcome and thank our Keynote speaker, Maj/Gen Estrada. Thank you General.

Your Excellency

Today's celebration is special not only to me, but also to the men and women of the Armed Forces of Liberia in more ways than one. Today marks both the 66th anniversary of the Armed Forces of Liberia and the 6th under this administration covering the period 2018-2023. I remain extremely grateful for allowing me to captain this strategic ship up to this point. Your immense support to the Ministry of National Defense and the Armed Forces of Liberia under my watch continues to enhance our development and capacity to execute our duties and improve our performance on the local and international scene.

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That said, Your Excellency, kindly permit me, to report on the recent affairs of the Ministry of National Defense and the Armed Forces of Liberia.

Your Excellency, consistent with your vision and intent to improve the living and working conditions of our men and women in arms, last year you mandated and provided funding for the construction of additional housing units and five (5) multi-purpose bathroom facilities within the Military Barracks. I am pleased to report that these projects are at 80 percent completion. When completed, these facilities will significantly mitigate the housing and sanitation needs of the AFL. Additionally, almost all assistant Ministers and directors within the Ministry of Defense as well as key commanders from the AFL are fully mobile, THANK YOU SIR.

Your Excellency, Distinguish Ladies and Gentlemen

During the last Armed Forces Day celebration, Your Excellency directed the recruitment of additional 1,000 soldiers into the Liberian Armed Forces. I am pleased to report that the first batch of 176 recruits has completed both the Initial Entry Training and Advance Individual Training from a pool of over 2,000 potential recruits. Furthermore, 24 officer Candidates and 10 professionals, mainly medical doctors are presently being given specialize training. This process is the sole initiative of a national venture which ranges from financing, recruitment, vetting and training respectively.

Your Excellency, our troops in Mali continue to serve with distinction. It is worth noting that for the first time since we began

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our Peacekeeping Operations in Mali, the Government of Liberia has contributed and committed to supporting our troops through budgetary allocation.

The gallant men and women are performing at the highest tactical and operational levels in that sisterly country. These achievements reveal the unmatched dedication, commitment, and professionalism of the AFL on the international front.

Your Excellency,

In accordance with the AFL promotion policy, the Ministry of National Defense has collaborated with the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning to promote qualified officers and enlisted personnel of the AFL to their next higher ranks. The promotions of these personnel has been completed by the Armed Forces of Liberia. This has heightened the morale and esprit de corps of our men and women in the Armed Forces while implementing their constitutional mandate.

It is my honor to report the full standardization of all schools operating under the Ministry of National Defense guidance. The Gray D. Allison High School at the BTC Barracks and the Linda Thomas Greenfield Junior High School at the EBK Military Barracks are benefitting from this process which has created a decent learning environment for our military personnel dependents. Accordingly, for the past three academic years, our 12th Graders from the Gray D. Allison High School have a 100% WASC Exam passing rate, and few of our students earned Division one (I).

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Being cognizant of the premium which you and our International partners place on gender mainstreaming within the security sector, we have established a Gender and Social Inclusion Department. To date, a gender policy has been produced, followed by awareness at every military installation across the Country.

I want to thank our partners, especially the UN family for standing with us in achieving this milestone.

Your Excellency, Distinguish Ladies and Gentlemen

The Armed Forces wouldn't have reached this far alone without the help of our international partners. To our International Partners, you are pillar in our development drive. We are and will always be appreciative of your continuous support to the Ministry of National Defense and the Armed Forces of Liberia. Special thanks to the U.S Government, India, China, Egypt, Nigeria, and Ghana.

On behalf of the Chief of Staff and the men and women in arms, I will like to express my highest level of gratitude to the Legislative branch, especially both houses' committees on Defense, Security, Intelligence and veterans Affairs, for your oversight and guidance which continues to portray the AFL as a 'Force for Good'. I also extend my deep appreciation to the families of these brave men and women. Your enormous sacrifices are immeasurable and serve as the foundation upon which our military has survived. Bravo!

As we draw closer and closer to the General and Presidential Elections come October 10, the Armed Forces of Liberia will remain apolitical.

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In this vein, we want to admonish every political actor, irrespective of your political affiliation, to remain peaceful and civil during this heated process. We encourage you to pursue your dreams of becoming whatever you want, but the sad reality is that, your dreams, ego and aspirations, will more often than not, fall short of the collective will of the electorates. Our passionate plea will be, don't dare cross that Democratic Red-Line beyond the collective will of the people if your dreams fall short by perpetrating violence. You can rest assure, we will stand by the expressed will of the people in line with the constitution of Liberia.

Finally, to the men and women in arms, as we honor you today, we extend our heartfelt thanks and appreciation to you for your loyalty, dedication, sacrifice and patriotism in ensuring the safety of our nation and its people. Remain focused on the mission and demonstrate supreme gallantry and professionalism through affirming your loyalty and services to the State as your patriotic obligation and constitutional responsibility in defending and preserving our common patrimony. Continue to be the standard bearer of the security sector and Remain a Force for Good.

HAPPY ARMED FORCES DAY!!!!!! THANK YOU