

REMARKS

BY

HIS EXCELLENCY DR. GEORGE MANNEH WEAH

PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF LIBERIA

AND

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF

OF THE

ARMED FORCES OF LIBERIA

AT THE

66TH ARMED FORCES DAY CELEBRATION

THE BARCLAY TRAINING CENTER

CAMP JOHNSON ROAD

MONROVIA, LIBERIA

FEBRUARY 11, 2022

Madam Clar M. Weah, First Lady of the Republic of Liberia;

Mr. Speaker, Mr. President Pro-Tempore, and Members of the 54th Legislature;

The Dean and Members of the Cabinet and other Government Officials here present;

Our Distinguished Guest Speaker;

The Doyen, Excellencies and Members of the Diplomatic and Consular Corps;

Mr. Chief of Staff, and the Gallant Men and Women of the Armed Forces of Liberia;

Former Officials of Government;

Traditional Leaders, Chiefs and Elders;

Political and Business Leaders;

Religious Leaders;

Members of the Fourth Estate;

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen:

Let me begin by thanking the Almighty God for giving us the grace to be here today to commemorate the 66th Armed Forces Day, a day which has been set aside to honor the gallant men and women serving in the Armed Forces of Liberia.

On this day, we also remember and pay homage to those who, through their service in these Armed Forces, have made the ultimate sacrifice for our Nation and its Peoples.

Today, we recognize and celebrate sixty-six (66) years of the unflinching dedication of our dear Armed Forces of Liberia to the protection of this Nation. It is indeed an honor to be the Commander-in-Chief of these great Armed Forces, and it is therefore both a pleasing duty, and a proud privilege, to celebrate with you all on this auspicious occasion, in this capacity.

**DISTINGUISHED GUESTS, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:**

Let me now take the opportunity to thank this year's Keynote Speaker for the 66th Armed Forces Symposium, in the person of Ambassador Stephen Rodriguez, the United Nations Development Program Resident Representative to Liberia, for the splendid speech delivered by him. Mr. Resident Representative of the UNDP, we take due note of the recommendations and suggestions you have proffered in your address, entitled "Fostering Effective Stakeholders Engagement for Sustainable Democracy", which has given us much food for thought.

Let me also take this time to appreciate this year's Distinguished Service Order (DSO) recipients, in persons of Colonel Washington Bower (Retired) and Lieutenant Colonel Nathaniel Nah (Retired), who served our country tirelessly as pilots in the former Armed Forces of Liberia.

I am made to understand that our Guest Speaker today, Major General Pablo Estrada, Commanding General of the 46th Military Police Command of the Michigan National Guard, also once served here in Liberia in 2010 with Operation "Onward Liberty", in providing mentorship for the New Armed Forces of Liberia. We want to welcome you back home to Liberia, Major General Estrada. Your leadership at the Michigan National Guard is gratefully acknowledged for the support and assistance you have given, through mentorship and training, which have benefitted our Armed Forces.

On behalf of the Government of Liberia, I would also like to express our gratitude to the Government of the United States, through the Office of Security Cooperation (OSC), for its continuous support of the AFL. The contributions of China, Bangladesh, and Egypt are also gratefully acknowledged.

The Government of Liberia is also grateful to the Republic of Ghana, Nigeria, and Sierra Leone, for contributing personnel to the ECOWAS Advisory Training Team (EATT), which has been serving in an advisory capacity to the AFL, and also for offering training slots to the AFL. Your mentorship and support have contributed immensely to the restructuring and professional development of the Armed Forces of Liberia.

#### DISTINGUISHED LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

Each Armed Forces Day is celebrated under a theme that is carefully chosen to serve as a path that harnesses efforts for the AFL's future training needs and responsibilities. This year's Armed Forces Day theme, "Inter-Agency Collaboration: Working Together for Peaceful Elections", is particularly important as we get closer to the Presidential and Legislative elections that are going to be held in October this year.

Historically, the celebration of Armed Forces Day in Liberia is a long-time tradition that is borrowed from the United States of America. I have learned that, in 1954, Colonel Francis M. Dean, the then Assistant Chief of Staff and Intelligence Officer of the Armed Forces of Liberia, using the United States concept, conceived the noble idea and recommended that a day be set aside yearly as "Armed Forces Day" to honor the members of the Armed Forces of Liberia.

I am also told that the 11th of February in each year was then set aside by an Act of the Liberian Legislature to be observed as Armed Forces Day, in recognition of the bravery and sacrifice of troops of the Armed Forces of Liberia who had ended a mutiny that took place on February 11, 1909.

Since that time, our dear nation has been through a lot of struggles, but time after time we have come out stronger, better and more determined to create a better Liberia. We

therefore use this day to champion and honor the past and present members of the Armed Forces of Liberia, because there cannot be a strong democracy without a professional military.

As Commander-in-Chief, I have implicit confidence in the ability of our troops and security forces to effectively execute their duties. I have progressively monitored the achievements of the Armed Forces of Liberia and I have no doubt that it is on the right path to greatness, both locally and in the international community.

There are unique capacities that the AFL can bring in supporting civil authority, particularly in our development efforts as a nation. First, and foremost, we must continue to strengthen our border control mechanisms, and remain vigilant against the negatives that could affect the peace and stability of our nation and people.

Similarly, we must not waiver to protect ourselves against extremism and the consequences of terrorism. Accordingly, we must be better informed, and ensure effective coordination and preparedness between and among our military and civilian law enforcement agencies, against any action that could affect our peace, security and stability.

Today, our flag is being carried proudly by our soldiers in the troubled regions of Timbuktu, the Republic of Mali, the Republic of Sudan and the Republic of South Sudan. Other countries where our troops are making contributions to peacekeeping include the Republic of Guinea Bissau and the Democratic Republic of Congo. These are all very Volatile, Uncertain, Complex and Ambiguous (VUCA) missions. Our hearts go out to them, and we look forward to proudly receiving them safely back home at the end of their missions.

**DISTINGUISHED LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,**

Let me thank Major General Daniel Ziankahn (Rtd.), the Minister of National Defense, and his able team for the excellent leadership they have manifested in making our Armed Forces a "Force for Good". Your diligence and dedication in transforming our

military have earned you credibility and respectability both at home and abroad. In the same vein, let me thank you, Major General Prince C. Johnson, III, Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces of Liberia, for your outstanding leadership and sense of discipline and direction that has engendered the confidence of the Liberian people. Congratulations!

I know how important the family is to the men and women who serve our country. I want to personally thank all of our military families, husbands, wives, children, and extended families, for their continuous support, which positively impacts the performance of our troops.

I wish to thank all members of the Armed Forces of Liberia - a "Force for Good" - for your discipline, dedication to duty, and commitment to the responsibility of protecting our territorial integrity, and for the gallantry exhibited by you in executing your missions and tasks wherever you are deployed.

**DISTINGUISHED GUESTS, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:**

I would like to mention the Recruitment Drive for new members to join the Armed Forces, which began in 2022. This is ongoing, with 2,335 successful applicants from the five regions.

The first batch of recruits and Officer Cadets training began in October last year at the Armed Forces Training Command, comprising of 176 recruits and 24 officers. The first batch graduated from the Initial Entry Training in December of last year, and they completed the Advance Individual Training at the end of last month at the Barclay Training Center.

Significantly, we have involved the Armed Forces in infrastructural development in the country to ensure it contributes its quota to meeting the needs of Liberians, even while conducting its security operations. I must say that the Armed Forces has lived up to

this opportunity and has been instrumental to numerous infrastructural development efforts of the Government so far.

The Engineer Company has been actively involved in the construction and reconditioning of feeder roads and bridges, as well as pedestrian walkways in some towns and villages of our country. These projects are well-structured and up to international standards.

Also significant was the medical outreach offered to the Liberian people by the Armed Forces in Po River, and the clean-up campaign undertaken by the Armed Forces personnel in Du Port Road Community as part of the Armed Forces Day Celebration.

For these few reasons, Fellow Liberians, we should count ourselves lucky for having such a result-oriented Armed Force. Thank you so much, our heroes!!

Government is aware that all these achievements have occurred even with the numerous challenges faced by the Armed Forces, including inadequate funding, a lack of manpower, inadequate accommodation for personnel, and insufficient codified policies for administering military justice.

However, let me assure you that my Administration is making all concerted effort to address these challenges. For example, just recently, I approved the Court Martial Regulation for the Armed Forces, which will greatly assist the administration of military justice in Liberia. Many such regulations will come on board in the coming days.

Similarly, as we strive to meet the logistic needs of the Armed Forces, we are also making effort to meet our training needs, by building more capacity for the Armed Forces training institutions. In this regard, the Armed Forces of Liberia is in the process of establishing its Non-Commissioned Officers Academy at the Armed Forces Training Command at Camp Sandee Ware. This Academy will not only increase our Military capacity, but will also foster and strengthen regional and international ties with foreign militaries.

Last year, during the 65th Armed Forces Day Celebration, I promised you, as your Commander-in-Chief, to construct twenty-five (25) apartments to ease the accommodation challenge in the AFL. The project commenced with the construction of two (2) blocks of five (5) apartments in Camp Tubman, Gbarnga, Bong County, and one (1) block of five (5) apartments at the Forward Operating Base (FOB) Buchanan, Grand Bassa County.

The construction works for these apartments are currently ongoing, and are being implemented by the Liberia Agency for Community Empowerment (LACE), and being constructed by Building Material Center Incorporated. Two (2) blocks of five (5) apartments each are expected to be constructed in the vicinity of the 14 Military Hospital to serve as accommodation for doctors.

Furthermore, I am pleased to say here today that the officers of the Armed Forces have ably served their Country and humanity. I therefore ask all Liberians to join me in thanking the Chief of Staff, Major General Prince C Johnson III, his predecessor Honorable Minister of National Defense, Major General Daniel Dee Ziankahn (Rtd) and the entire Officers Corps for ably steering the affairs of the Armed Forces of Liberia. Your exemplary leadership of the Armed Forces of Liberia is well appreciated.

**DISTINGUISHED LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:**

Despite the challenges in the growth process, we shall continue to make favorable policies to support the Armed Forces to grow in strength and might. We will continue to look into the future with new hope and aspirations as we expand our efforts. We understand that there will be challenges in the performance of our duties. However, we ask all Liberians to continuously see the Armed Forces as a true representation of the Liberian people.

Equally, our dear soldiers must remain the "People's Soldiers" as they perform their duties in like manner. I therefore charge Liberians in all walks of life to support the Armed Forces to always conduct its functions as a professional military that serves the collective interest of all Liberians.



MY FELLOW CITIZENS:

The challenges we face today as a Nation is an embodiment of the path we began about five years ago. We have taken bold decisions to change things and restore public confidence in our Military and Security Sectors. It has not been easy to achieve this, especially when viewed against a backdrop of limited resources and technical inefficiencies. In spite of it all, we did not waiver. We all were collectively of the firm belief that our intentions were for the future benefit of our citizens. The investments we have made in the military and in our security sectors, with the strong support of our partners, have given all of us the reassurance of a safe and secure society, as we come closer to the General and Presidential elections that will take place this year.

To the members of the National Legislature, we also extend our deep appreciation for upholding your constitutional mandates in supporting the Armed Forces of Liberia. At the same time, I commend the Defense Committees in both the House of Representatives and the House of Senate. Thank you for your support to the Armed Forces of Liberia in many forms. As a responsive government, we will continue to work with you to ensure the best for our Armed Forces.

My fellow Liberians, I wish to conclude by thanking you again for your invaluable support to the Armed Forces of Liberia, which has shown itself as a "Force for Good" and is respected both locally and internationally.

I wish our Armed Forces and the entire Liberian populace a Happy 66th Armed Forces Day Celebration. May the Almighty God bless Liberia, and bless us all.

I thank you.