

REMARKS

BY

HIS EXCELLENCY DR. GEORGE MANNEH WEAH
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF LIBERIA

ON THE OCCASION OF THE OBSERVANCE

OF THE

64TH ARMED FORCES DAY

BARCLAY TRAINING CENTER

MONROVIA, LIBERIA

FEBRUARY 11, 2021

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

Madam VP, Jewel Howard Taylor, Vice President of the Republic of Liberia;

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

The Chief Justice and Associate Justices;

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

Maj/Gen. Daniel Dee Ziankahn

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;

My Fellow Liberians;

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen:

We gather here today to commemorate Armed Forces Day, a day set aside to celebrate our Men and Women in Arms for the many sacrifices they make in protecting our Country, and also to remember our fallen heroes who have paid the ultimate price in defense of this Nation.

At this time when the world is plagued by a pandemic that continues to take the lives of millions, I am thankful to the Almighty God for sparing our lives in these stressful times. To all our visiting guests, we are glad to have you join us, despite the tedious COVID-19 traveling protocols imposed around the world.

Please stand and join me now, and let us pause for a moment of silence for all those who have lost their lives to this deadly disease.

PAUSE FOR MOMENT OF SILENCE

May their souls rest in Perfect Peace, and may Light Perpetual shine upon them.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

I would now like to say a special word of thanks to our Keynote Speaker, Rev. Dr. Samuel B. Reeves, Jr., Senior Pastor of Liberia's historic Providence Baptist Church, for the inspiring message that he brought us today, which has given us much food for thought.

He has reminded us that, despite the difficulties we have faced as a Nation, we have shown that through unity, we will always have the strength and resilience to overcome difficult times.

DISTINGUISHED LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

The theme of this year's Armed Forces Day Celebration is:

“The Military in Sustaining Democracy”

This theme reflects the critical role that our Armed Forces play in support of our democratic values and in defense of the freedoms that we enjoy. Through their selfless service, these gallant Men and Women in Arms provide the enabling environment in which peace and stability can be maintained, and development and progress can be attained.

Today, our military has developed into a force with the requisite training, professional competence, regimentation, and discipline to execute their Constitutional mandate, and we are proud of them.

Our Armed Forces are recognized as a Force for Peace, as is evident by their maintenance of a perfect peace since the withdrawal of the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL).

In addition, our military is serving with the United Nations Mission in Mali to restore peace, and they have been recognized and commended for their discipline, training, and fitness to serve. In just a few years, Liberia has been transformed from a country which REQUIRED peacekeepers, to a country which PROVIDES peacekeepers. I applaud and salute you for this.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

The AFL is also an important participant in the implementation of my Government's development agenda, the Pro-Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development (PAPD). It has played a frontline role in different development initiatives across the country, ranging from construction works on the 14th Military Hospital, collaboration with the Ministry of Public Works on road repairs and rehabilitation, and renovation of houses in our barracks around the country.

As Commander-in-Chief, I envisage the expansion of their participation to other key areas of national development. Through the Minister of Defense, I have instructed the deployment of the Engineering Company and the Agriculture Company into their respective areas of expertise to further support the efforts of the Ministry of Public Works and the Ministry of Agriculture.

The Engineering Company, in partnership with the Ministry of Public Works, will conduct an assessment for the implementation of quick impact strategic interventions on roads throughout Liberia that are critical to the survival of our people. This will facilitate movement of our citizens and enable our farmers have access to markets during the rainy season, thus reducing the high cost of locally-grown commodities.

This partnership will harness the potential of the Engineering Company of the AFL to ensure the timely completion of this task.

The Minister of Finance is hereby instructed to provide the necessary support and ensure future budgetary allocations for the purchasing of earth moving equipment. The AFL will maintain technical presence and provide relief on other parts of these roads.

Meanwhile, the threat of food insecurity continues to pose a challenge to our national security. That is why we must leverage the potential of our Military to undertake the supplemental production of rice and other basic vegetables to meet local demand and reduce reliance on expensive imports.

In this regard, I have been informed by the Minister of National Defense that coordination with the Ministry of Agriculture is ongoing and there are plans to partner with the National Bureau of Veteran Affairs where the knowledge and skills of our veterans can be utilized.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

Our troops also provide routine medical support to public health education, comprising family planning and HIV/AIDS awareness, and to communities and areas within the vicinities of their barracks. They have also been part of the first response during emergency and disaster situations.

For example, given the unique capabilities of the Armed Forces of Liberia, at the beginning of the COVID-19 outbreak in Liberia, I ordered the AFL, through the Minister of National Defense, to deploy members of the

Medical Company to support our health care practitioners. I also ordered the immediate commissioning of the 14 Military Hospital as part of our national efforts to contain the rapid spread of the virus.

Additionally, our troops were called upon to enforce health regulations that had been put in place to prevent the spread of the disease. They also supported contact-tracers by closing all county borders to ensure that movements between counties were restricted.

As a result of their effectiveness, the virus was prevented from spreading throughout Liberia, and many counties reported very few or no cases. They also supported health care practitioners at the 14 Military Hospital as part of our national efforts to quarantine patients and contain the rapid spread of the virus.

Today, partly because of the robust support provided by the Armed Forces, Liberia is one of the countries with the lowest number of cases and deaths from the coronavirus. As Commander-in-Chief, I reaffirm my commitment to strengthening their capacity and supporting their response capabilities to deal with other national emergencies.

The Armed Forces of Liberia will continue to support the Ministry of Health and the National Public Health Institute of Liberia, while maintaining discipline and professional competence to accomplish their national mandate.

DISTINGUISHED LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

The welfare of the men and women of the Armed Forces of Liberia remains a top priority of my Government. We will therefore continue to ensure that living conditions of our soldiers reflect the standard of services they deliver to this nation.

Moreover, we will also ensure that renovation work at major military facilities are completed to de-congest the over-crowdedness at the EBK barracks and other military facilities currently in use, while at the same time improve basic social services at these facilities so that our soldiers can live

comfortably with their families.

At this juncture, I would like to recognize and appreciate the efforts of my dear wife, the lovely Madam Clar Marie Decontee Weah, First Lady of the Republic of Liberia, who, out of her concern for the welfare of our men and women in arms, and mobilizing her own resources, has constructed a modern Vocational Training Center at the EBK military barracks for the Military wives of the AFL. Thank you madam.

This facility, which should be completed by the end of this month, will provide a purpose-built classroom building to allow military wives to train and study simultaneously with their children during the daytime, rather than having to wait until the children come home before using their school building in the evening. Thank you, Madam First Lady.

DISTINGUISHED LADIES AND GENTLEMEN

We acknowledge with deep gratitude the mentorship and assistance that the AFL has received from our development partners in the form of direct financing and logistical support. We are grateful for the sustenance of our men and women in arms over the years. This training and critical support have helped build the credibility, efficiency and professionalism of our military as an effective Force for Peace.

Special appreciation is extended to the United States Government, the People's Republic of China, the United Nations, and our ECOWAS Mentors who supported our military's efforts during the height of this pandemic. It is your support that has helped to bring the AFL to this level of recognition.

To our military families, we appreciate your continued support to the men and women of our troops. You play a meaningful role in the gains and successes we have made over the years. I thank you!

Finally, to our men and women in arms, you are an important pillar of our national security architecture. Therefore, you must always demonstrate your professionalism and integrity as the People's Army, thereby strengthening the respect and trust that you deserve from your fellow Liberians. You must complete every task with a renewed sense of

patriotism and loyalty to country.

Let me assure you, gallant men and women in arms, of my Government's fullest support as you carry out your patriotic duties. You are a vital pillar in sustaining the peace and stability of our Country.

God bless you, and God bless Liberia.

Happy Armed Forces Day!

To you all, to further celebrate this day, I would like to inform you that this afternoon, there will be a friendly football match between the Army and Lofa County, who recently won the National County League. You are all invited.

However, the question to be determined is: **WILL THE MEN IN ARMS DEFEAT THE HUNTERS OF WOLOGISI MOUNTAIN?**

Come one, come all, and find out the answer to this question.

Happy Armed Forces Day.

I thank you.