



**Address by His Excellency, Julius Maada Bio,  
President of the Republic of Sierra Leone,  
Minister of Defence, and Commander-in-Chief of  
the Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces.  
Wilberforce, Freetown, Sierra Leone, Monday  
18<sup>th</sup> February 2019.**

Honourable Vice President,

The Lord Chief Justice,

Her Worship, the Mayor of the Municipality of  
Freetown,

Ministers of Government Present,

Members of Parliament Present,

Members of the Diplomatic and Consular Corps,

Members of the Republic of Sierra Leone Armed  
Forces,

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

Good Afternoon

I am delighted to be here today both as our country's  
democratically-elected President and as a man who  
proudly served in our Republic of Sierra Leone  
Armed Forces.

Today is a day of reflection as we remember, with deep gratitude, the ultimate sacrifice of those who have laid down their lives for this country and in the pursuit of global peace. Through two World Wars, through 11 years of war in our beloved Sierra Leone, through peacekeeping operations from the Congo to Timor Leste, from Monrovia to Somalia and Darfur, our brave men and women have fought bravely and made the ultimate sacrifice. We remember their duty and their service to nation and to humanity. We remember their gallantry; we remember their sacrifice. We pray for God's blessings and for their peaceful eternal rest.

We remember with respect and deep pride the service of those who were wounded during their service to nation. Your scars are emblems of courage, to be carried with honour and deep pride because they remind all of us, what you so proudly laid on the line for nation and for humanity.

We also remember with deep reverence and gratitude the families of those who have fallen, are wounded, those who served, and are serving this our great Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces. You represent the best of humanity and you have, in every deed and act of courage, taught us again and again what bravery, sacrifice, and love for nation mean. To

the widows and dependants, I want to take this opportunity to extend my heartfelt condolences to you for being reminded, by this day, of the loss of your loved ones. Our memories of their service stretch across landscapes, though watered by tears of the grief of parting, are furrowed deeply with imprints of their proud moments of service and sweat.

As we celebrate service and sacrifice on this Armed Forces Day, let us also remind ourselves that we owe you servicemen a tonne of gratitude and an obligation to restore the honour and the dignity of our Armed Forces. I therefore want to be the first to show my

deep appreciation to all active members of the RSLAF who are currently engaged in border operations at the Forward Patrol Bases and the Forward Operating bases, and in security operations across the country and abroad. I congratulate and thank all of you for your commitment. I urge you all to maintain the momentum and remain steadfast as you continue to professionally and instinctively carry out your constitutional roles. We, the citizens of this our great Republic, will in turn, not forget your welfare and the welfare of your families who survive you.

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen, I have had the distinguished honour to serve in the Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces. I feel, know, and recognize the stresses and hardships of military service. Rest assured that I have always considered my own life and heart to be inextricably connected to the RSLAF. My heart always expands with joy, and pride when other nations sing our praises. I may now be President, but the Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces shaped and polished me into what I am today. My duty and commitment is in service to this our nation; and my heart is forever with the Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces.

As I have said, your service and sacrifice are unique; your dedication and loyalty, exemplary. As President of this Republic and Commander-in-Chief of The Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces, it therefore gives me great pleasure to announce a number of immediate interventions to improve the conditions of service of all serving and retired men of the RSLAF who honourably served and are serving their nation.

1. Terms and Conditions of Service (TACOS) -

Starting this year, members of the RSLAF will benefit from the enhanced salary pay, which has also been rolled out to all public sector service

workers. Henceforth, your annual leave allowances will be normalized to reflect your gross pay. This is in recognition of the unique nature of your service to this nation.

2. Under the New Direction, the previous amount paid to the RSLAF as 'Monthly Running Costs' (MRC) and 'Rations Cash Allowances' (RCA) have been reviewed. My Government has concluded that the previous amounts paid to you were insufficient to support your welfare and other needs. In recognition of your great service to our nation, I have authorized the Government's

recommendation that these costs be reviewed upwards. ‘

3. Furthermore, in support your well-being, I have also authorized the recommendation that the MRC of the Joint Medical Unit (JMU) be increased by 100%. This increased budget allocation to the Joint Medical Unit will facilitate the maintenance of hospital equipment, and other undertake infrastructural improvements in support of your welfare.

4. Furthermore, the provision of adequate housing facilities for all service personnel and their families is still a strong priority of my

government. This plan will incorporate the rebuilding of Wilberforce Barracks. I also encourage the military leadership to take strong action in evicting illegal occupants off military property as a matter of urgency. Once this is complete, we would review the stabilized situation and plan in a purposeful way how to cater for adequate housing.

5. The Defence council has approved the transformation of the RSLAF into a Tri-Service organization with a separate but unified Army, Navy, and Air Force. This will be implemented as part of our long-term strategic goal to be

commenced within the next five years. Alongside this, we also plan to develop and properly resource the RSLAF's specialist units such as the Armed Forces Agricultural Units (AFAU), Engineer Regiment (Engr Regt), Electrical and Mechanical-Engineers (EME), the Armed Forces Technical and Education College (AFTEC), the Joint Medical Unit (JMU), and the Tailoring Unit. This will help each of the specialist units to develop their capacities in order to support food security, skills and human capital development, construction, and to generate revenue for the military. These specialist units will also be

particularly strengthened and capacitated to contribute towards disaster and emergency relief interventions.

6. My government has reviewed the conduct of our preparations for previous peacekeeping missions and concluded that significant lessons can be learned. As I speak, we still have no formed units and no contingent-owned equipment to support our participation in any potential peace support operations abroad. We must remedy this mistake urgently. In the medium term therefore (in the next two years), under the New Direction, we will establish an effective Peace Support Operations

(PSO) contract management platform. This will include a sustainable equipment maintenance regime for all vehicles and equipment. This will go in hand with a strong commitment to continually train and prepare the RSLAF for Peace Support Operations. We will partner with the International Security Advisory Team (ISAT), the African Contingency Operations Training Assistance (ACOTA), and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to identify deployment opportunities. The goal, in the shortest possible time, is to develop our capacity towards Peace

Keeping Operations as quickly as we can and start with small scale deployments either in partnership with other troop-contributing countries or as a stand-alone force.

7. The undignified practice of supplying the military uniforms on the eve of elections as a political tool and to make political gains will end immediately and forever. Additionally, there have been problems in enforcing dress code regulations in the RSLAF because, in the majority of instances, officers and soldiers buy their own uniforms out of their meagre salaries. My administration has started to issue the Republic of Sierra Leone

Armed Forces with a new set of uniforms and my Government will endeavour to issue the brave men and women of our armed forces with your necessary dressing apparels from time to time.

You are assured that as the economy improves, considerable progress will be made in this regard.

My plan is simple: every one of our gallant men and women of our armed forces must look sharp, smart, and soldier-like, in befitting uniforms.

8. With the support of the United Kingdom (UK) government, through the International Security and Advisory Team (ISAT), I have sanctioned the special female recruitment drive in the

RSLAF. As we leverage the benefits of international relations especially with the continued invaluable support of ISAT, our RSLAF is undoubtedly outstanding among military forces in the sub-region for giving equal opportunity to every Sierra Leonean to serve irrespective of their gender. My aim is for our women to constitute 25% of the Army in line with best practices all over the world. This recruitment drive begins to close the gender gap and opens up possibilities for women to serve their country as proud and distinguished members of our armed forces.

9. On behalf of the Government and People of Sierra Leone, let me also acknowledge and thank the Government of the People's Republic of China for a grant of 50 million Chinese Yuan equivalent of 7.3 Million United States Dollars. The grant will be used to enhance the Jetty at Government Wharf to provide for dry-docking and a slip way facility. In addition, my Government will use part of the grant to refurbish Myohaung Officers Mess in a corporate style as befitting the status and dignity of officers of the RSLAF. My Government intends to also use part of the

grant to give a modern facelift to the Hockey Pitch.

10. Based on recommendations by your commanders as endorsed by your Chief of Defence Staff, I, as Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, have confirmed a number of promotions. The promotions recognize meritorious and outstanding service and they are meant to motivate and inspire the men and women of our armed forces to continue serving with commitment and excellence.

As a nation that inherited a bankrupt economy, you all do recognize that we continue to face competing challenges across our country's economy. There are strong competing priorities in human capital development, healthcare and food security. I therefore ask for your understanding and patience, as we work towards satisfying all of the RSLAF's needs. I therefore advise you, individually and collectively, to continue to uphold the good reputation, fortitude, and loyalty of the RSLAF that is praised at home and abroad. Desist from any and all actions that may cast a shade over the glory that all of us have acquired and sustained over the years. I publicly commit here today

that my Government will continue to do everything in its power to render the support and recognition you and your families deserve for your faithful and meritorious services to this nation. I am also fully confident that you will, by the dignity of your actions and conduct, demonstrate to the country and the world that the RSLAF deserves to be recognized as a truly professional force for good.

Let me conclude by entreating you our servicemen and women to continue to display discipline, loyalty and a high sense of commitment to your acclaimed

slogan, “Serving the nation.” May *Allah Subuhana Wataallah* continue to bless us all. I thank you all.