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(UNAMSIL)*

**PRESS RELEASE**

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**UNAMSIL FORCE COMMANDER TOURS SIERRA LEONE'S BORDER AREAS**

*Freetown* – The Force Commander of the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL), Lt. Gen. Daniel I. Opande, from 11-13 June toured the border areas along Sierra Leone's eastern province to assess the security situation in light of growing hostilities in Liberia.

The tour took the Force Commander to the towns of Daru, Kailahun and Joru, as well as the border towns of Koindu, Yanga, Buedu, Dawa, Bomaru and Baiwala in Kailahun District, where he held consultations with commanders of UNAMSIL, the Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces (RSLAF) and the Guinean Army deployed along the three countries' common borders.

In Yanga, which is along Sierra Leone's border with Guinea, Lt. Gen. Opande was informed by the officer commanding the Guinean forces that since the beginning of rebel activities in Liberia, there has been no threat to security within his area of responsibility, but noted with concern the growing influx of Liberian refugees.

In Buedu, another border town between Sierra Leone and Liberia, the Office Commanding Delta Company of Pakistani Battalion 2, Maj. Tahir Sultan, informed Lt. Gen. Opande that since the beginning of the year, eight rebel incidents have been reported within its area of deployment. These included the recent defections into Sierra Leone of troops from the Armed Forces of Liberia and Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD).

The Force Commander also visited the RSLAF border platoon at Bomaru in the town of Baiwala where the platoon commander informed him that his troops were closely monitoring the security situation and that there had been no unusual occurrences in the area to date.

In all his visits along the border areas, the Force Commander urged his troops to maintain constant vigilance to ensure that the border remained safe and free from armed incursions. He stressed that Sierra Leonean returnees and Liberian refugees must be properly screened to prevent the flow of weapons into Sierra Leone. He appealed to local communities to remain law-abiding and to assist national security agencies as well as UNAMSIL in

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maintaining peace by identifying and reporting those who might threaten the peace to responsible authorities.

“While you can be assured of the co-operation of UNAMSIL in the maintenance of peace, you must also ensure that peace prevails amongst yourselves,” the Force Commander said, emphasizing that there could be no development without peace.

The Force Commander also visited the towns of Moyamba, Tongo Fields and Bo to bid farewell to peacekeepers from Nepalese Battalion 2, Zambian Battalion 3 and the Guinean Battalion who have completed their tour of duty. After commending them for their sacrifices in restoring and maintaining peace in Sierra Leone, he implored them to remain good ambassadors of UNAMSIL and also to use the knowledge they have acquired here to serve their respective countries.