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PRESS RELEASE

UNAMSIL STEPS UP PATROLS ON SIERRA LEONE BORDERS AS DISARMAMENT BEGINS IN LIBERIA

Freetown – The United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) has stepped up its patrol activities along the borders of Sierra Leone with Guinea and Liberia, in the context of its ongoing “Blue Vigilance” exercise. The increase in air, ground and riverine patrols along the borders is part of contingency planning related to the commencement of the disarmament exercise in Liberia and aims at preventing any illegal cross-border movements of personnel and materiel into Sierra Leone. It is particularly important to interdict attempts to smuggle, relocate and hide weapons and military equipment in Sierra Leone, at a time when UNMIL forces are poised to expand their presence and control in Liberia, especially towards the border areas.

UNAMSIL, in collaboration with the Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces (RSLAF) and the Sierra Leone Police (SLP), is now carrying out a vigorous, around the clock, patrol program, on land, air and river.

The tempo of foot and vehicle patrols, air patrols by MI24 helicopter gun ships and MI8 armed observation helicopters as well as river boats has increased.

These patrols are conducted in daytime and at night, using night-vision equipment and sensors as well as illumination devices such as flares, for surveillance and border monitoring operations.

The local population will be made fully aware of these operations so as not to be alarmed by the increased security and military activities along the borders and the utilization of illumination pyrotechnics. A robust “Blue Vigilance” is part of the UNAMSIL Standard Operating Procedures to ensure the security for Sierra Leone by controlling all cross-border movements.

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