



UNMIL/PIO/PR/101

Press release, 28 August 2006

UNMIL Namibian Contingent awarded United Nations peacekeeping medals

Sinje, Liberia – The Force Commander of the United Nations Mission in Liberia, Lieutenant General Chikadibia Obiakor, on 25 August at their Headquarters in Sinje, Grand Cape Mount County, decorated the peacekeepers of the Namibian contingent with United Nations medals for maintaining peace and security.



The UNMIL Force Commander awarding one of the female Namibian peacekeepers in Sinje.

Photo: Michal Broza/UNMIL

Recognizing the contribution of the Namibian contingent towards peace and stability in Liberia, Lt. Gen. Obiakor conveyed the gratitude of the United Nations to the peacekeepers. “Liberia is considered one of the more challenging peacekeeping environments in the world, so your job is not an easy one. You provide invaluable service by ensuring overall security in Grand Cape Mount County,” the Force Commander said, adding that the Namibians play an important role in monitoring movement on the Babangida highway towards the border with Sierra Leone, as well as providing security at the Guthrie Rubber Plantation, which was recently re-possessed by the Government of Liberia.

Lt. Gen Obiakor stressed that Liberia has witnessed significant progress since 2003. “Our job is not finished. UNMIL will continue to be vigilant and work to provide a secure environment to allow the recovery of Liberia to go forward. UNMIL will intervene robustly to deal with any attempt, from any quarter that threatens the security of the State,” he pointed out.

The Force Commander asked the blue helmets to remember uphold the UN Code of Conduct and the overall dignity of the Mission. He reiterated the UN Secretary-General’s policy of zero tolerance for sexual abuse and exploitation and stressed it had to be fully respected.

Putting Namibia’s contribution to UN peacekeeping in historic perspective, the Force Commander noted that “in 1989, a United Nations peacekeeping mission, UNTAG, was deployed in Namibia to monitor South Africa’s withdrawal and to provide electoral assistance. Three years later, in 1993, Namibia itself began contributing peacekeepers to the United Nations and is currently serving in six countries worldwide, including Liberia. Today, Namibia is serving side by side with many countries that once helped them – this time to help Liberia recover from the devastation caused by 14 years of war.”

The Commanding Officer of the Namibian Contingent, Lt. Col. Moses Bongolo Shapwanale, said it was a remarkable day for him and his soldiers who for the first time in their lives had received the UN Peacekeeping medals and assured that his contingent would remain dutiful in the discharge of its responsibilities. He said he was very proud that 102 uniformed women served currently in the Namibian contingent, the highest number among all contingents in Liberia.

The Ceremony in Sinje was attended by the UNMIL high military command, including the Deputy Force Commander, Maj. Gen. Muhammad Tahir, the Military Chief of Staff, Brig. Gen. John Forkuo, and the international and local communities, including Grand Cape Mount Superintendent, Catherine Watson-Khasu. She lauded the peacekeepers for ensuring that peace and security was maintained in Grand Cape Mount County.

Namibian peacekeepers were first deployed in Liberia in February 2004. Since then, thousands of Namibian blue helmets have served in Liberia, including 609 at present.