

International Day of UN Peacekeepers-2008

Message received from the officials of different UN missions

MESSAGE



SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE
TO
UN SECRETARY GENERAL
UNMIL, LIBERIA

I am delighted to address this goodwill message to our Bangladeshi peacekeepers and indeed to the people of Bangladesh on the occasion of the International Day of UN Peacekeepers. At the outset I would like to pay tribute to the Bangladeshi Peacekeepers who have sacrificed their lives for building peace in Liberia. I express my sincere appreciation to all the members of the Bangladeshi Contingent for their contribution in restoring peace and stability in Liberia under the banner of the United Nations. Bangladesh is a troop contributing country of long standing. The contribution made by the UNMIL, Bangladeshi Peacekeepers is very important to the UN and the people of Liberia. Bangladeshi Contingents are deployed in several locations throughout the country, where they face numerous challenges in accomplishing their tasks. However, with dedication and professionalism they have performed brilliantly and earned the gratitude of the Mission and the communities they serve.

I convey my thanks and appreciation to the Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh for providing us with personal who have served with bravery and commitment to advance the peace process in Liberia.

Ellen Margrethe Leth
Ellen Margrethe Leth

MESSAGE



FORCE COMMANDER
UNMIL, LIBERIA

It is with great pleasure that I send this goodwill message to the people of Bangladesh on the occasion of International Day of UN Peacekeepers. In the annals of the pursuit for global peace, it is well known that Bangladesh is amongst the foremost country to be mentioned. This is as a result of its large contribution and participation in UN Peace Keeping Missions globally. In UNMIL the Bangladeshi Contingents have contributed to the restoration of peace and stability of Liberia. They have successfully earned the confidence of the population, winning the hearts and minds of the Liberian people. This has been achieved through the fields of vocational training, agricultural farming, and the provision of humanitarian services. As the Force Commander of UNMIL Forces, I am satisfied and fully commend with the performance of all members of the Bangladeshi Contingent. It is indeed a matter of pride to have such a professional commanding under my Command. I sincerely appreciate their sense of responsibility, commitment to service and their professionalism.

Let me also use this avenue to thank the Bangladeshi Army and the Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh for contributing a team of professional soldiers with vibrant leadership for UNMIL. I acknowledge the unwavering spirit of the Bangladeshi Sector in meeting up with the expectations of UNMIL Headquarters in fulfilling the UN mandate. Hence, I congratulate all Bangladeshi Peacekeepers for their commendable service here and in all other peace keeping missions and wish them continued success in peace building around the globe.

3. Long live Bangladeshi Peacekeepers, long live the peace loving people of Bangladesh. May God's Blessings be.

C. OBIAKOR
Lt. Gen

MESSAGE



FORCE COMMANDER
UNMIS, SUDAN

Bangladesh Contingent has been performing effectively in UN Mission in Sudan (UNMIS) by frequent military activities. Its engineers have constructed airstrips, culverts, roads and helped UNMIS to establish its bases. 22 years of war, mines, and explosives are abundantly scattered all over in Southern Sudan and in the Southern Sudan and the Bangladeshi De-miners have so far demined a total area of 146,000 sqm, in addition to an area of 700,000 sqm which has been cleared to the civilian population from the hazards of unexploded ordinances. The Level-II Hospital has also been doing a very good job, not only in terms of treating UNMIS patients, but also by actively involving themselves in the community. The only riverine unit in the history of the UN Mission from Bangladesh Navy is serving in the mission with utmost dedication and professionalism. The Bangladeshi Contingents are thus an effective part of UNMIS.

Stanislaus Tembo
Stanislaus Tembo

UNMIL & PEACE - PROSPERITY OF LIBERIA AN OVERVIEW OF CONTRIBUTIONS OF BANGLADESHI PEACEKEEPERS

Although Bangladesh is a late starter in taking part in Peacekeeping Operations under the UN banner but she has been a leading Troops Contributing Country in the world. Bangladesh started the journey in 1988 when she sent 15 Military Observers in United Nations Military Observer Group in Iran-Iraq (UNMOG). Performance of the Bangladeshi Peacekeepers further encouraged the international community to utilize the peacekeeping operations of the country for peacekeeping operations around the globe. The matter got a upward swing when Bangladesh Armed Forces took part in the Gulf War. With a span of two decades, many a times, Bangladesh could secure the topmost rank as a Troops Contributing Country. As on today, Bangladesh ranks second, contributing 9,046 peacekeepers who are deployed in 12 Missions covering 12 countries in the world.

It is not a matter of complacency that Bangladesh is known internationally in many remote parts of the world just because of her contribution in peacekeeping operations. Sincerity, dedication and professionalism of the Bangladeshi peacekeepers helps maintaining high demand for Bangladeshi peacekeepers in the international forum. In this regard, first hand experience of each members accumulated through serving in the Chittagong Hill Tracts is of great help. Bangladesh Armed Forces could master the art of winning 'Hearts & Minds' which is essential for the success in Peacekeeping Operations. Human qualities, rich cultural practices, religious guidances along with total respect towards local culture and heritage of each Bangladeshi peacekeeper enabled them to become too favorite to the general mass. This in fact has made the job easy, high yielding with a high probability of success.

Among all existing missions, UNMIL (United Nations Mission in Liberia) still remains a major one with more than ten thousand people working for a comprehensive peace caused by 18 years of civil war.

Liberia is a tropical country located on the Atlantic coast of West Africa bordering Sierra Leone, Guinea and Ivory Coast. Liberia is a green country with an area equal to two third of Bangladesh. The land is too fertile but underutilized.

The country is full of natural resources (gold, diamond, iron, timber etc). Few salient statistics of Liberia:

Full name: Republic of Liberia.

Population: 3.8 million (UN, 2007).

Capital: Monrovia.

Area: 99,067 sq km (38,250 sq miles).

Climate: Equatorial and humid (Jun-July), Rainy Season (Oct-Nov).

Temp: 24°C - 26°C.

Languages: English, 29 African languages.

Literacy rate: 38.3%.

Major religions: Christianity 30%, Islam 20%, indigenous beliefs 50%.

Ethnic groups: Kpelle, Gio, Krahn, Kru, Mandingo and Mano.

Life expectancy: 45 years (men), 47 years (women) (UN).

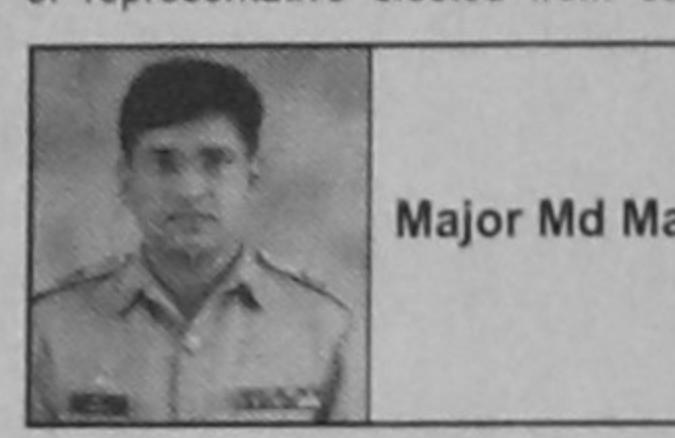
Monetary unit: 1 Liberian dollar (L\$) = 100 cents. 60 L\$ = 1 USD.

Main exports: Diamonds, iron ore, rubber, timber, coffee, cocoa.

GNI per capita: US \$130 (World Bank, 2006).

Liberia is Africa's oldest republic, but it became better known in the 1990s for its long-running, ruinous civil war and its role in a rebellion in neighbouring Sierra Leone. Although founded by freed American and Caribbean slaves, Liberia is mostly made up of indigenous Africans, with the slaves' descendants comprising 5% of the population. Practice of multi-party politics exist in Liberia with the presidential form of Government. The

president is elected for six years through general election. There are 15 counties and each is administered by a President nominated County Superintendent through District Commissioners in the districts. One Senior and one Junior Senator are elected from each county. One house of representative elected from each



Major Md Masudur Rahman, psc

districts / Legislative areas. To be elected in any of those elections one must secure more than 50% of casted votes. Traditional justice system and hierarchy in the form of paramount chief, Clan chief, Town chief, Village chief exist side by side.

Liberia was relatively calm until 1980 when William Tolbert was overthrown by Sergeant Samuel Doe after food price riots. The coup marked the end of dominance by the minority Americo-Liberians, who had ruled since independence, but heralded a period of instability. By the late 1980s, arbitrary rule and economic collapse culminated in civil war when Charles Taylor's National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) militia overran much of the countryside, entering the capital in 1990. Mr Doe was executed. Fighting intensified as the rebels splintered and battled each other, the Liberian army and West African peacekeepers. In 1995 a peace agreement was signed, leading to the election of Mr Taylor as president. The respite was brief, with anti-government fighting breaking out in the north in 1999. Mr Taylor accused Guinea of supporting the rebellion. Meanwhile, Ghana, Nigeria and others accused Mr Taylor of backing rebels in Sierra Leone. Matters came to a head in 2003 when Mr Taylor - under international pressure to quit and hemmed in by rebels - stepped down and went into exile in Nigeria. Around 250,000 people were killed in Liberia's civil war and many thousands more died fighting. The conflict left the country in economic ruin and overran with weapons. The capital remains without electricity and running water. Corruption is rife and unemployment and illiteracy are endemic.

A Comprehensive Peace Agreement was signed in Accra by all warring factions in September 2003. The United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) was established by Security Council Resolution 1509 (2003) of 19 September 2003. UNMIL's mandate includes some major aspects:

- Support for Implementation of the Cease-fire Agreement.

- Protection of UN Staff, Facilities and Civilians.

- Support for Humanitarian and Human Rights Assistance.

- Support for Security Sector Reform.

Pakistan, Bangladesh and Nigeria are the three major Troop Contributing Countries in UNMIL. Bangladesh till today has approximately a Brigade size force undertaking a variety of peacekeeping activities aimed at maintaining secured environment so that other events can be undertaken for stabilizing the war torn country. Bangladeshi peacekeepers involves both from fighting and supporting units including a number of Military Observers and Staffs at different Headquarters.

Bangladesh Battalion-1 was one of the first elements of UNMIL that came into Liberia in 2003 and was deployed in Monrovia. Thereafter with the rotation

of BANBATT-1, 03 battalions were deployed in Bong, Grand Bassa and Nimba County with Sector Headquarters at CARI Complex in 2004. Since then, Bangladesh Sector had been operating under UNMIL with three battalions/contingents and all other associated elements of the Sector. One of the contingents that

was looking after Grand Bassa County (BANBATT-12) was withdrawn after 30 January 08. At present BANBATT-14

(27 Bangladesh Infantry Regiment) is deployed in Bong County and BANBATT-15 (20 Field Regiment Artillery) is deployed in Nimba County. Both of the counties carry more importance to the Country / Government as well as the UNMIL due its communication network with neighbouring countries, availability of natural resources, number of population vis-à-vis political power / sensitiveness and number of ex-combatants residing in the areas.

Bangladesh Sector elements during its tour of duties, has performed intense operational activities. Manning of static and mobile Check Posts, escorting convoys and VIPs, maintaining on MSR and other roads and culverts, conduct of extensive patrols within own area of responsibilities including the remote areas are some of our routine tasks. Bangladesh Force have conducted numerous joint patrols with other UNMIL stakeholders in the form of anti-drug operations, provision of security to UN and important personnel and assisting the local administration. We have also conducted joint exercises/meetings with ONUC at different times. Special operation includes- monitoring and reporting of rubber movement, checking of suspicious UNHCR vehicles involved in illegal trafficking, increased security presence at major rubber plantation areas, joint patrols along Guinea and Ivory Coast borders, materializing ban on business of scrap metal etc. Major efforts are invested for operations aiming at curtail accesses towards easy money which could be used to finance in the procurement of arms and ammo vis-à-vis increasing government revenue to have a strong fiscal policy of the Government.

Bangladesh Sector always pays due attention for the significance of CIMIC activities in order to win hearts and minds of the Liberians. Bangladesh follow an integrated strategy where all stakeholders and peace partners are brought to a common platform. Bangladesh Sector focuses on the ex-combatants realizing them as the prime potential troublemakers in the path of progress. CIMIC activities encompass arranging of vocational training, developing agricultural farms, out-reach medical treatment, giving lectures in different forums including university etc. Bangladeshi peacekeepers never hesitate extending any kind of assistance as requested by the Government (both central and local) as far primary security tasks are not compromised. A notable venture undertaken by the Bangladeshi peacekeepers is the construction of 'Bangladesh Square'- a composite site with vocational training facilities, children part, playing field along with a monument of the sacrifices made by the Bangladeshi Peacekeepers for the stability and development of the war ravaged Liberia. This type of project would encourage local Liberian to take

charge of their own lives successively. "Be self dependent and help yourself" is the idea being tried for its spontaneous propagation at all levels of the society. The bi-directional policy of "Win the hearts and minds of the people" and "Be self dependent and help yourself" remain the guiding principle of different CIMIC activities.

Today, improving the economic indicators of the country have become the most challenging task for the Government. Surprisingly, even after five years, there is no public utility services (electricity, water, sewerage etc), poor road communications remains (virtually there is only one all season road in the country), educational infrastructure, weak (monopolistic / duopolistic / abnormally imperfect) market mechanism etc make the environment a fragile one. The newly elected Government severely lacks its capacity to rule the country. Thus, Liberia continues to remain relatively dangerous, unstable and unpredictable at the local level. Although the Disarmament Demobilization (DD) process is officially over, it is very likely that, some weapons and ammunitions have been retained by a number of ex-

combatants. The ex-combatants still possess some discontent over UNDP's handling of their post DD rehabilitation. Many of the ex-combatants are awaiting re-integration benefits. The lure of economic opportunity in Monrovia has created a major rural to urban population shift. Recent deal by Mittal Steel and the lifting of ban on diamond mines have brought added dynamics in the economic process but it is yet to have a reckonable impact on its fiscal health. The effect of Charles Taylor's Trial in the International Court of Justice, seemed to have allayed worries, but certainly not over, and might affect the overall security situation on being awarded with any kind of punitive verdict.

Criminal activities in the form of petty theft, armed robbery, looting, carjacking etc are common in Monrovia. But now a days it has spread to remote areas also. The criminal threat is assessed as 'in a low to medium scale'. Failure or slow progress in peace initiative in Ivory Coast might have a spill over effect on Liberia. Land Issue of the county especially in Bangladesh Sector is still in a complicated and volatile mode. As the refugees return, the land problem is becoming acute day by day. The reluctance of the Government in this respect is adding fuel to stability in many areas.

By ethnicity, all the West African countries are connected to each other. Bangladesh Sector has borders of 210 kilometers with Ivory Coast and 215 kilometers with Guinea. Along the long stretch of the border, there are number of entry points. Due to bad communication network, domination of the bordering areas is extremely difficult. Porous nature of the border facilitates cross border legal and illegal activities and makes it vulnerable to any spill over effect from Guinea and Ivory Coast. There is always a spill over effect of an incident taking place

in any of the surrounding countries. Despite all, the country is becoming more and more stable day by day but all elements of instability remains.

UNMIL has grown to its maturity considering its commencement and security situation. Its consolidation phase (1st phase) ended on 31 December 07. During this phase, in addition to day to day security operations, Bangladeshi peacekeepers accomplished the following:

- Disarmament and Demobilization: In Bangladesh Sector, total 29,900 ex-combatants (Men-20,206, Women-6,664 and Children-3,048) were successfully disarmed (29% of the national total). In addition to that, 9,314 weapons (33%), 11,613 UXOs (35%) and 9,57,695 rounds of ammunition (15%) were also collected.

- Voter Registration: Out of 1,421 Voter Registration Centre, Bangladesh Sector was responsible for 476 Centres (33%). 35% of the voters were from the assigned sector. Bangladesh Sector could successfully register 3,98,463 voters from three counties which was 50% more than the election held in 1997.

- Conduct of National Parliamentary Election: Out of 1,421 polling precincts, Bangladesh Sector was responsible for security and logistic support of 451 polling precincts three counties. Out of

those, 76 were inaccessible in Sector area of responsibility.

- Conduct of Run-off Election: Bangladesh Sector undertook a comprehensive operational and logistical activities which was smooth and proper.

The drawdown phase has started on 01 January 08 with a withdrawal phase planned to take place from 01 January 11. During the final year of the Consolidation Phase, Bangladesh Military Forces ensure the security of Liberia whilst moving to an "Overwatch Strategy". This involved a change of emphasis from the domination of towns, routes and strategic infrastructure using guards, bunkered positions and static check points (CPs), to a more fluid and flexible posture using increased patrolling and snap vehicle check points (VCPs). To implement this on the ground, static CPs are being progressively removed unless they assisted Gol officials in carrying out the internal monitoring of sanctioned goods, or cross-border movement and patrol programmes were designed and put in place to

continued to ensure the security of Liberia whilst moving to an "Overwatch Strategy". This involved a change of emphasis from the domination of towns, routes and strategic infrastructure using guards, bunkered positions and static check points (CPs), to a more fluid and flexible posture using increased patrolling and snap vehicle check points (VCPs). To implement this on the ground, static CPs are being progressively removed unless they assisted Gol officials in carrying out the internal monitoring of sanctioned goods, or cross-border movement and patrol programmes were designed and put in place to

protect the ex-combatants (XC), some of whom are still awaiting reintegration benefits, and unemployed youths who are concentrated in the capital and urban centres. Reportedly there are hidden arms cache maintained by ex-combatants in the remote and inaccessible areas.

Civil unrest is the result of tensions that have been building over a period of time including labour disputes, land issues and the dispensing of traditional justice.

Sudan is the biggest country in Africa with an estimated population of 40 million. The widely diverse demographic features, uneven distribution of resources over the geography, modalities of power sharing, the role of region in the state, concept of self determination and unevenness of basic infrastructure are the sources of conflicts in Sudan since 1956 when it got independence. The recently ended north-south Civil war since 1983 was the result of the breakdown of the 1972 Addis Ababa agreement. The two decade long fighting between the Sudanese Government Forces (SPLA) and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A) caused two million dead, four million uprooted and some 600,000 fleeing as refugees. In 1993 Inter Governmental Authority for Development (IGAD) took regional initiative to bring peace in Sudan. Since 1997, UN started augmenting the IGAD initiatives. In 2002 the initiatives started observing progress that resulted into signing of a total of six Protocols by May 2004. After the signing of Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) by Ali Osman Taha,

create a more subtle, but equally pervasive effect. Section and Platoon positions are being decreased and forces are being increasingly grouped into Company patrol bases, located in "Overwatch" positions on the outskirts of towns. Bangladesh Sector is going to adjust 5-6 camp locations to match the strategy developed by the Force Headquarters. UNMIL Force will be positioned to begin Phase 2 of the



Drawdown in early 2009 where the entire Liberia will be divided into 02 (two) Sectors. Security of important government infrastructure, UNMIL and designated convoys as well as UN international staff, aid workers, and civilians under threat of violence continues to remain as priority tasks. In addition, Bangladesh Sector is assigned to cater to a company strength to reinforce the Ivory Coast / Guinea border areas to control influx of refugees.

Bangladesh Sector, while working as part of UNMIL is encountered with a number of complex situations:

Tribal influence remains strong in all aspects of life and tribal leaders enjoy great respect in the communities. Their word is often taken as law. Ethnic and communal rivalries have long been a source of conflict in Liberia, made worse by the 14 years of strife.

During Civil War, reportedly many people were displaced from their land who on return found their properties being occupied by others. The Government is trying hard to solve the issue in an amicable manner. It is one of the major negative factor for sustained security and stability.

There are still dangers posed by ex-combatants (XC), some of whom are still awaiting reintegration benefits, and unemployed youths who are concentrated in the capital and urban centres. Reportedly there are hidden arms cache maintained by ex-combatants in the remote and inaccessible areas.

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