



ERU Passes the Halfway

The elite component of the Liberia National Police (LNP), the Emergency Response Unit (ERU), has now passed the halfway mark with 80 LNP officers from Class Four recently completing the special training and thus bringing the total strength to 287 ERU officers since training of this selected unit began in mid-2008. The ERU now also benefits from an exclusive Command Center.

The ERU is being trained to deal with crimes which may require the use of firearms. Members are trained to deal with armed criminals, violent crimes in progress, hostage situations and armed terrorists activities. They also deal with riot

control, engage in anti-crime patrol in crime prone areas and provide assistance in major disaster situations.

Addressing the graduates on completion of the three-month intensive training at the LNP Training Academy, Deputy Special Representative for Rule of Law Henrietta Mensa-Bonsu reminded the graduates that it was now time for them to transform their abilities into practical service to their community. The ERU officers have inherited the hopes and dreams of all Liberians who seek to live in a safe and secure environment, she said, and cautioned them against the abuse of their strength and power which could bring shame and dishonour to the unit.

While assuring the Liberian Government of UNMIL's continued assistance in training, reforming and restructuring the LNP, the UN Deputy Envoy noted the immense contribution and continued commitment of bilateral partners to the development of the ERU, most especially the Governments of the United States and Ireland.

Making remarks at his first ERU graduation ceremony since becoming the LNP Inspector-General, Marc Amblard reminded the newly trained ERU officers that the tasks, expectations and sacrifices ahead of them were huge but urged them to serve Liberia with diligence, respect, dignity, discipline and honour.



ERU graduates demonstrate their skills

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The Political and Economic Counsellor at the US Embassy, Steven Koutsis, who represented his Government at the ceremony, reminded the audience of the recent visit there of the US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton who promised additional US financial support for training the LNP in next year's budget, including additional support to the ERU. "You are about to embark on a mission to protect your country and its citizens against dangers that only you are trained and equipped to face; you are right to hold your heads high, but not with arrogance," the US diplomat said.

Project Manager Damon Brown confirmed that an additional 107 applicants



President Sirleaf with senior UN officials at the graduation

have been recruited for enrollment in Class Five, expected to commence training shortly. He noted that there has been difficulty in recruiting more women. To date, there are only three women in the ERU. "We have had women recruitment drives and information seminars so women can understand that not only will they be involved in directed patrols and the like, but there are different operations like logistical support, communication and different things we would like to have the women here for," he said.

Meanwhile, a new LNP-ERU Command Centre has been dedicated and turned over to the Liberian Government. President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf said the dedication of the Center is an attempt to move one step further in Government's efforts to enhance human security. "By these facilities, our ERU who have been professionally trained and are in the process of being properly equipped will be able to meet those unexpected and unwanted circumstances in which they have to deal with the infringement of rights, disturbances of the public peace – lawlessness," she said.

President Sirleaf praised the UN and the US Government for being major partners in the process of strengthening the ERU. She stressed that the ERU remains a unit of the LNP, which must gain the confidence of the public by working with them and partnering with communities to

enable citizens obey the law, respect their dignity and help them become law abiding citizens.

At the dedicatory ceremony, US Ambassador to Liberia Linda Thomas-Greenfield said the nearly US\$1 million Centre will serve not only as a place for the ERU to operate from but also a testament to the ongoing partnership between the US and Liberian Governments, and the UN in the development of the LNP and its ERU. The 12-office Centre, its communications set-up and the upcoming training of the fifth class will mark the completion of the initial US commitment in 2007 to develop the skilled unit through a US\$5 million authorization. Since then, the US Government has committed US\$2 million more to advance the development of the ERU and by extension the LNP. The US commitment to the development of LNP is expected to increase in the coming months.

The Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ellen Margrethe Løj, noted that the opening of the Command Center will serve as a significant enabler for the ERU to improve upon and sustain its capabilities to deliver timely and effective police response to critical incidents and serious crimes. She noted that over the period the ERU has acquired professional policing skills that go beyond the fundamentals of operational policing. ♦