



Bangladeshi peacekeepers impart engineering skills to their AFL counterparts

BANENGR-12/UNMIL

Soldiers Learn Engine Skills from Peacekeeper

First Lieutenant Daniel Holman, Jr., a member of the 1st Engineering Company of the Armed Forces of Liberia's 23rd Infantry Brigade, is elated at the training he has received from the UN Mission's Bangladeshi Engineering Contingent (BANENGR-12). "The training was rewarding because it developed our capacity and skills in a number of critical areas of our discipline which will become essential to the reconstruction and

development of our dear country when the United Nations peacekeepers depart," he told UN FOCUS.

Holman, Jr., was part of the 60-member AFL engineering company that successfully completed a 12-week training with the BANENGR-12 contingent. They completed eight weeks of training in combat engineering and another four weeks of specialized training.

The specialized training involved soldiers being trained in three specific engi-

neering areas – horizontal, vertical and sapper. The horizontal group received training in road reconstruction and maintenance, building bridges using culverts, operating heavy vehicles and earth moving equipment. The vertical group was taught various aspects of building construction, masonry and concrete works, carpentry, plumbing and electrical installation; while the sapper group was trained to handle UXOs and other aspects of combat engineering.



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Engineering Officers

Besides, the AFL engineering company officers' corps was taught engineering tactics, intelligence and support planning.

Staff Sergeant Keita Musa, Jr., one of the graduates, praised the BANENGR-12 for going the extra mile in imparting the knowledge to them sometimes through practical demonstrations due to the language barrier. "I really want to clap for the Bangladeshis due to this major challenge. They did all they could to share their experiences and knowledge with us which is

good for our training as a new engineering company," the youthful soldier said.

As the newly trained, over 2,000-strong AFL is expected to shoulder full responsibility for the security of Liberia when the peacekeepers eventually leave, it was a strategic decision to institute joint training exercises between the peacekeepers and the AFL soldiers to take advantage of the skills of the peacekeepers while they are still in Liberia. And the training began with the engineering company stationed at Camp Tubman near Gbarnga, Bong County.

During two weeks leading up to Liberia's 26 July Independence Day celebrations in Gbarnga, Bong County, in 2009, the BANENGR-12 began mentoring the newly trained young soldiers. They were spread to three different work locations along with their Bangladeshi counterparts whose tutoring was centered on road reconstruction, laying culverts for building bridges, and training in operating heavy vehicles and earth moving equipment.

They worked along with the BANENGR-12 in constructing the Bailey bridge that was dedicated at Nyanforleh River, in Salala District. More recently, they worked with a contingent of Pakistani engineers during the construction of another Bailey bridge near Sinji, in Grand Cape Mount County.

At the launch of the Sinji Bridge recently, Deputy Public Works Minister for Technical Services Jenkins Mends-Cole praised the AFL engineers. "I'm touched and overwhelmed by your smart approach in responding to training acquired from UNMIL in the launching of this Bailey bridge. I'm proud of your determination to learn at such a high speed," he said.

The BANENGR-12 Contingent Commander, Lt.-Col. Abdul Hamid Saddar was delighted with what he saw of the new AFL engineers. "The standard of the Company was excellent. They took their lessons – both in the classroom and practical – seriously," he told UN FOCUS.

At their graduation ceremony, the AFL engineering graduates demonstrated their newly acquired military engineering techniques and tactics by displaying their ability to use hand power tools while remain-

ing calm under stress. They also conducted assault river crossing and obstacle breaking operations, mine laying and clearing operations, as well as executing target demolition.

UNMIL Sector B Commander Brig.-Gen. Rahman Muhammad Majibur, reiterated UNMIL's increased desire to see Liberians take care of the country's security. "We would like to see the AFL and other security agencies take full charge of the country's security and other law and order situations," he said. Brig.-Gen. Majibur, also the Bangladeshi Contingent Commander, reminded the newly trained engineers that their profession is full of challenges which can only be overcome by professional efficiency, sheer hard work, and dedication.

Liberia's Deputy Defense Minister for Operations, Dionysius Sebwe, expressed the Liberian Government's gratefulness to the UN Mission, especially the peacekeepers of BANENGR-12, for the training. "We are grateful for the mentorship and training opportunities we continue to receive from our international partners," he said, assuring Liberians that in addition to its core mission, the new AFL will play a major role in the country's reconstruction and development.

The AFL Command Officer-in-Charge Maj.-Gen. S.A. Abdurrahman described the new AFL engineering unit as a "path finder that will lead the way for Liberia's recovery and reconstruction." He told them that, military engineers are an important component of every army in the world. "They are the first to go the battlefield, and the last to leave," reminding them that as the pioneer engineers of the new AFL, they have a huge responsibility to go to every nook and corner of Liberia to open up the country for development.

Recently, at the 53rd anniversary of Armed Forces Day, President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf praised the efforts of the AFL Engineering Battalion, and hoped to see more collaboration with other partners. "We want to see the AFL Engineering Battalion working alongside the Ministry of Public Works in opening up the hinterland through the construction of bridges and culverts and in logistics support where necessary," she said.

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