



United States Mission Sierra Leone
Public Affairs Office

Press Release

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***U.S. Africa Command Kicks Off International Maritime Exercise:
“Full Speed Ahead” for Sierra Leone Maritime Security***

During March 16-29, 2018 the U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM) is sponsoring “Obangame Express,” an in-port and at-sea maritime exercise designed to enhance maritime security across West Africa. The exercise includes over 30 partner nations, as well as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS). The exercise is designed to improve cooperation and information sharing, and to refine tactics, techniques, and procedures among participating nations.

The “Obangame Express” exercise will be based on realistic modern-day scenarios, such as piracy, illegal fishing, and hijacking. During the exercise, the Maritime Joint Operations Center (JOC) in Murraytown will be asked to identify simulated illicit acts and share tracking information with other MOCs throughout the region. The exercise will also test each nation’s ability to patrol their economic exclusion zone and detect and prosecute illegal activity. Sierra Leone’s Joint Maritime Committee will exercise anti-smuggling, anti-piracy, and illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing operations with the support of several warships from Spain, Canada, and Morocco. A U.S. Navy helicopter will also be flying in as part of the exercise.

This year’s exercise will mark the second year that Sierra Leone will participate in the at-sea portion. A highlight of this year’s program will be a key leader exchange between Rear Admiral Shawn Duane, the Vice-Commander of U.S. Sixth Fleet, and senior leaders from Sierra Leone’s maritime security sector. They will be discussing the vital importance of securing the sea from threats in order to ensure the economic prosperity of Sierra Leone’s waters.

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