

ADDRESS BY

MR. J. A. B. ...
OFFICER IN CHARGE OF THE PASSING OUT PARADE OF OFFICER CADETS OF THE SPECIAL SHORT SERVICE COURSE 2 FROM THE REPUBLIC OF SIERRA LEONE, NIGERIAN DEFENCE ACADEMY
SATURDAY, 20TH JULY 1995

Members of the Staff of the Nigerian Defence Academy
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**THE PASSING OUT PARADE OF OFFICER CADETS OF THE
SPECIAL SHORT SERVICE COURSE 2 FROM THE REPUBLIC OF
SIERRA LEONE, NIGERIAN DEFENCE ACADEMY**

It is a privilege to be invited to address you on this important day. The passing out parade is a significant event in the life of every officer cadet. It marks the end of a period of intense training and the beginning of a new chapter in your lives. As you stand before me today, you are not only representing your own country but also the Republic of Sierra Leone. It is my duty to commend you on the excellent performance you have shown during your time at the Nigerian Defence Academy. I am confident that you will continue to uphold the high standards of your respective nations and contribute to the peace and stability of the world.

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THE PASSING OF THE BARRONETS OF THE
SPECIAL SHOT AT RYCE COLLEGE & FROM THE REPUBLIC OF
SERRA LEOE, AFRICAN DETROIT & ACADEMY

ADDRESS BY
HIS EXCELLENCY, PRESIDENT OLUSEGUN OBASANJO
ON THE OCCASION OF THE PASSING OUT PARADE OF OFFICER
CADETS OF THE SPECIAL SHORT SERVICE COURSE 2 FROM THE
REPUBLIC OF SIERRA LEONE, NIGERIAN DEFENCE ACADEMY
KADUNA, SATURDAY, 24TH JULY, 1999

Your Excellency the President of Republic of Sierra Leone
The Senate President, Federal Republic of Nigeria
Speaker of the House of Representatives
State Governors
Honourable Ministers of Nigeria and Sierra Leone
Presidential Special Advisers of Nigeria and Sierra Leone
Honourable Members of the National Assembly
Honourable Speakers and Members of State Assemblies
The Chief of Defence Staff of Nigeria and Sierra Leone
Service Chiefs of Nigeria and Sierra Leone
The Commandants, Nigerian Defence Academy
Your Royal Highness
My Lords Spiritual and Temporal
Your Excellencies Members of the Diplomatic Corps
Staff and Cadets of Nigerian Defence Academy
Passing Out Cadets of the Special Short Course 2
Distinguished Guests
Ladies and Gentlemen,

For the second time in two months, we are witnessing the graduation of cadets of the Special Short Service Course from the Republic of Sierra Leone. Today's occasion marks another significant milestone in the rich history of the Nigerian Defence Academy. It is a strong affirmation of the bond of solidarity and friendship between Nigeria and other African Countries. It will be recalled that in May this year, 81 officers graduated under Course 1. Today, some 100 officers are graduating under Course 2. The ultimate aim is to train some 500 officers for the Sierra Leonean Armed Forces.

May I therefore congratulate the Commandant, officers, staff and soldiers of the Academy on this auspicious occasion. Equally deserving of commendation are the support staff from the Republic of Sierra Leone who blended so well with their Nigerian colleagues to impart the necessary training for today's graduation. I am delighted that in addition to the training of our regular combatant officers

which includes cadets from some African Countries, the Academy has taken up the additional challenge of training officer cadets solely from the Republic of Sierra Leone. This effort fully vindicates the objectives for which the Academy was established.

On an occasion like this, one must salute the courage and perseverance of the graduating cadets. Having survived the rigours of physical and mental training in one of the most outstanding military institutions in the world, you must understandably feel proud as you transform from officer cadets to commissioned officers. The colourful, highly ordered parade we have just witnessed, marks the culmination of several weeks of intensive training. You now have all the requisite physical and mental qualities of officers and gentlemen.

When you return to Sierra Leone, you must put to work the fine qualities you have acquired here which earned you the commission as officers. You must always remember that the same qualities are required of you if you are to be successful in your chosen career. There are no substitutes for loyalty, hardwork, dedication, perseverance and obedience to lawful authority. You must never exhibit the opposite qualities.

The Armed Forces of Sierra Leone, as indeed the rest of Africa, is the dawn of a new era, there are tremendous challenges ahead, unity, peace, stability and prosperity have eluded your great country for far too long. The human and material costs are simply monumental. Other countries in the West African sub-region continue to render what assistance they could to help a brother in need. You will agree with me that this can only be a temporary solution. The onerous responsibility of peace keeping carried out by ECOMOG under the umbrella of ECOWAS, is only a stop-gap measure. A disciplined, loyal, patriotic and professional national Armed Forces are a crucial component in the long-term resolution of the problems of Sierra Leone in particular and Africa as a whole. You must bear this in mind as you return to your country. Nigeria will continue to play a constructive role in Sierra Leone in aid of domestic effort at the resolution of the conflict. You must play positive role in this direction.

The recent Lome Peace Agreement provides more than a window of opportunity. It holds the promise of the kind of permanent solution we all hope for. I wish to urge the various groups in Sierra Leone to ensure that this Agreement sticks and works. Remember that you have no other country but Sierra Leone. Remember also that other countries cannot bring peace to your country unless you yourselves want it and work conscientiously for its attainment.

At this juncture, let me restate that Nigeria will continue to play active roles in the resolution of sub-regional and global conflicts within the framework of ECOWAS, the Organisation of African Unity and the United Nations. Our declared intention to withdraw Nigerian troops from Sierra Leone should not be misconstrued for abandoning our Sister State at its continuing hour of need. Recently, we issued new operational guidelines to our forces in Sierra Leone consistent with the Lome Peace Agreement. While we remain committed to a phased withdrawal of our troops, we have interest in the stability of the new Government of National Unity and the successful implementation of the Peace Agreement. We shall continue to assist in any way we can to realize these lofty objectives.

The root cause of much of Africa's problems is developmental. A most critical condition for development is a government which is open, transparent, humane and participatory. Nigeria in particular and Africa as a whole have been traumatised by bad governments and mismanaged to the point of desolation and penury. For far too long, our Armed Forces have been pre-occupied with matters for which they have neither training nor constitutional legitimacy. This trend has been ruinous to the nation as well as the Armed Forces. At the risk of repeating what I have already said, let me sound a note of warning to any serving personnel who thinks that he is in service as a gateway to a political appointment. Such personnel is advised to leave the service in his own interest because there is no place any more for the political soldier.

After recent changes in the composition of the officer corps of our armed services, I received assurance of support from members of our Armed Forces for our effort to restore professionalism. I am glad that the message has been received loudly and clearly. Let me therefore repeat here, for the benefit of our prospective officers now undergoing training as cadets in this Academy, that this is an institution for the training of professional soldiers, not future dictators. It is not too early for those who cannot conform to withdraw. You must shun political ambition and imbibe the culture of loyalty and dedicated service. You must remember that your interest as professional soldiers is better served by permanently subordinating yourselves to constitutional authority instead of subverting it.

For its part, Government will continue to support the military in discharging its constitutional responsibilities. The material needs of all the services will continue to be provided within available resources. Similarly, the welfare of service personnel will continue to receive attention.

Once again, I warmly congratulate the officer cadets of the Special Short Service Course 2 from the Republic of Sierra Leone on this very happy occasion. You will soon be commissioned as officers of your national Armed Forces. I am confident that by your physical and mental training, you are capable of resisting partisan and sectional pressures. I am equally confident that you will not be dissuaded from the task of your nation's renewal after the traumatic events of the last one year. Remain unflinchingly loyal to your oath. This is the path to personal and national glory. There is neither reward nor honour in doing the contrary. I wish you success in your chosen career.

Finally, I wish to express my most profound gratitude to the Government and people of Sierra Leone for the continuing confidence in the quality of training in the Nigerian Defence Academy. For any country to train up to 500 officers of her Armed Forces in another country goes beyond friendship. It is an affirmation of brotherhood. We shall not fail you and you are most welcome.

Your Excellency the President of the Republic of Sierra Leone, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, I thank you immensely.