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JOINT PRESS RELEASE

by the Government of Liberia and the United Nations Mission in Liberia

UNMIL HANDS OVER HUMAN REMAINS TO GOVERNMENT OF LIBERIA

MONROVIA – Today, the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) handed over the partial skeletal remains of 27 individuals to the Government of Liberia. The remains had been kept by UNMIL at the request of the Government of Liberia. The handover was presided over jointly by Inspector General of the Liberian National Police, Gregory Coleman, and United Nations Police Commissioner, Simon Blatchly.

The remains were recovered from 7 locations during a joint investigation “Operation South” conducted by the United Nations Police (UNPOL) and the Liberia National Police (LNP). The investigation opened in January 2004 following the discovery of remains in Maryland and River Gee Counties. The Operation was conducted pursuant to the recommendation in a report by the [United Nations Secretary-General \(S/2003/875\)](#) that UNMIL and the Liberian authorities collaborate to investigate serious violations of international humanitarian law and other serious crimes. The investigation gathered information and evidence, including declarations from witnesses, and found that the remains may be related to possible extrajudicial killings carried out in Liberia by armed groups in or before 2003.

Since their discovery, the remains were stored in a sea container originally located on the grounds of the John F. Kennedy Hospital in Monrovia, where its contents were being examined by a joint team of forensic experts. In 2013, the container was moved to UNMIL’s logistics base for safekeeping. In light of the successful security transition on 30 June 2016 and the progress made in peace and stability in Liberia, it was recently agreed that Liberian authorities make necessary arrangements to take full custody of the remains.

Following the handover by UNMIL, the remains will be preserved in a metal container pending further investigation, and in the meantime be interred in a designated, marked grave at the Disco Hill Cemetery in Margibi County today, Friday, February of 17, 2017.

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