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U.S. Naval Forces Europe Band Visits Sierra Leone

“Five-Star Brass,” a member of the U.S. Naval Forces Europe Band, visited Sierra Leone from October 9-14 to forge cross-cultural connections through music by entertaining, educating and interacting with Sierra Leoneans from all walks of life. Before an audience including youth and women’s groups, local musicians and other dignitaries, the five-person band entertained a packed courtyard at the residence of the United States Ambassador to Sierra Leone for their first performance on October 10. At that event, they were joined by the Ballanta Academy of Music’s Brass Band, and it was one of the highlights of their visit.

The band also held workshops with students of the Prince of Wales School and members of the Ballanta Academy of Music’s Brass Band to teach and share experiences with their fellow musicians in Sierra Leone. Following the workshop, Five Star Brass also performed for 800 pupils of the Milton Margai School for the Blind, the Ronsab Preparatory School, and the International School in Freetown. They played a variety of tunes, and even included a few pop and rock songs. After their performance at the Freetown School for the Blind, Assistant Director of the U.S. Naval Forces Europe Band Robert Coats said, “We are just happy to provide fun for the kids, and I believe they enjoyed it.” They also performed for a mixed audience at the Balmaya Entertainment Center and at the Freetown Wilberforce Military Barracks.

In addition to their well-received performances, the band donated USD 5,000 worth of musical instruments to a Sierra Leonean music group.

After an extremely rewarding trip, the group departed on October 14 to Naples, Italy, where they are currently based. The Five-Star Brass Band visited Sierra Leone as part of the African Partnership Station (APS), a program designed by the U.S. Navy's Global Fleet Station to enhance regional and maritime safety and security in West and Central Africa. APS has supported 112 band performances in nine

countries for an estimated 41,500 people. In addition, APS has conducted partnership programs in 15 West and Central African nations in which more than 1500 maritime professionals participated in over 1700 course sessions. For more information on APS, please see

<http://www.africom.mil/getArticle.asp?art=2510>.

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