



*Embassy of the United States of America*  
Public Affairs Office

**PRESS RELEASE**

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**U.S. Sponsors Conference on Maritime Security**

The Defense Attaché Office at the United States Embassy in Freetown and U.S. Naval Forces Africa sponsored a Joint Maritime Commission Stakeholders Conference on February 21 at Country Lodge. This conference was intended to facilitate Ministerial level interagency coordination to improve maritime security. U.S. Ambassador Michael S. Owen and Rear Admiral Kenneth J. Norton, representing U.S. Naval Forces Africa, were present. Ambassador Owen encouraged the stakeholders to make the most of this opportunity to coordinate their efforts: “When your citizens can freely navigate and harvest the seas, and when criminals are prevented from depleting the resources that are your rightful heritage as Sierra Leoneans – then conditions for business development will improve across the board, as will prospects for continued peace and democratic growth.”

The conference took place under the auspices of the U.S. Africa Partnership Station (APS). APS is an international security operation initiative, facilitated by the U.S. Naval Forces Europe-Africa and other international partners, aimed at strengthening global maritime partnerships through training and other collaborative activities in order to improve maritime security in Africa. The APS mission is focused on combating the illegal trafficking of drugs and persons, safeguarding natural resources such as fossil fuels and fisheries, and deterring piracy.

For more information, please see <http://www.naveur-navaf.navy.mil/apshome.html>, or visit the APS Facebook page at <http://www.facebook.com/AfricaPartnershipStation>.