

Over 1,000 UPDF soldiers retire

BY TADDEO BWAMBALE

Fifty-seven-year-old Jamila Aol walked over to a green tent inside Bombo Military Barracks in Luwero yesterday, where she deposited all the combat gear she has donned as a soldier for the last 25 years.

For the mother of five, who lost her husband while she was on tour of duty five years ago, leaving the army will mark the start of a new life she can hardly imagine.

"I have done my job and I am returning home. I want to spend the rest of my life with my children," she said in an interview with *Saturday Vision* at a ceremony held for hundreds of soldiers leaving the army.

Her military career, which she leaves at the rank of sergeant, started shortly after she joined the Local Defence Unit (LDU), a security organ set up in the early 1990s.

Aol's tall and lean frame beguile her combat experience seen through tours of duty in several countries, including in South Sudan, the DR Congo and the Central African Republic. Aol, who hails from

WHAT UPDF VETERANS SAY



COL. LAWRENCE KITTS
I joined the army in 1965 after undergoing a military training course in Jinja. Over the years, I have held numerous positions in the army. When I look back, many of my colleagues in the early days are no more. My fellow veterans should uphold discipline at all times.



COL. JACOB LOUMO
I joined the army in 1968. I later went for training in Greece. In 1981, I helped Gen. Salim Saleh to escape to Kampala and meet resistance fighters. I joined the army with Moses Ali, who is now a General. I hope to retire into farming.



MAJ. CHARLES SSEMAKULA
I am proud to have served as a soldier for 36 years. I joined the National Resistance Army. The UPDF has undergone a lot of changes. At the start, there was no army but today, we have a good force. I encourage soldiers to co-operate more with civilians.

Kitgum district, was one of 1,010 officers formally retired from service or honourably discharged by the Uganda People's Defence Forces (UPDF).

Although her name was

not read out among those of about 50 senior UPDF officers who received their discharge certificates and marched in a ceremonial farewell to the force, one tribute did.

The Chief of Defence Forces,

Gen. David Muhoozi, in his tribute speech, implored the retirees to share their experiences that could help improve the army.

"I oblige you to put down your memoirs to contribute to



Denis Mugarura, a former mechanic with the UPDF

our archives. We treasure your experience and encourage you to share your leadership whenever need arises," Muhoozi stated.

Most of those retired or discharged, started their careers as early as the post-independence era, which Muhoozi said reflected the UPDF's diversity and tolerance.

He advised the retirees to live exemplary lives through discipline.

In their next life, Muhoozi encouraged the veterans to be proactive and seek out opportunities to transform their lives and said the army leadership would engage them whenever need arises.

"Many opportunities are available.



Jamila Aol

Do not go and lock yourselves in your houses and call it the end of life. If anything, it should just be the beginning," he said.

Muhoozi promised that reforms being carried to streamline the army's pension system would ensure that benefits are paid on time in accordance with stipulated guidelines. Col Joseph Nambale, representing the head of UPDF land forces, appealed to the retirees to exhibit good conduct characteristic of the army's virtues.

"Whatever you do, let it be a reflection of the discipline of the army. Be above the ordinary and be good ambassadors of the UPDF," Nambale said.