

**Tuesday, 7 November 2016**

*Parliament met at 2.09 p.m. in Parliament House, Kampala*

PRAYERS

*(The Deputy Speaker, Mr Jacob Oulanyah, in the Chair.)*

*The House was called to order.*

COMMUNICATION FROM THE CHAIR

**THE DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Honourable members, I welcome you all to this special sitting and we know its purpose; Hon. Dr Maj. Gen. Julius Oketta passed away on Saturday at Kadic Hospital in Kampala. He has been the Vice-Chairperson of the Operation Wealth Creation and he was also serving as the Director of National Emergency Coordination and Operations Centre at the Office of the Prime Minister.

Hon. Julius Oketta represented the army in the Eighth and the Ninth Parliaments, a position he quit early this year to concentrate on the issue of Operation Wealth Creation.

From 1989 till 1993, Gen. Oketta served as a Division Commander of the Sixth Division of the National Resistance Army. From 2001 until 2003, he served as the Chief of Logistics and Engineering in the Uganda People’s Defence Forces (UPDF). In 2003, he served as a Uganda Liaison Officer in the Republic of Sudan. The following year he served as the Head of the Procurement and Disposal Unit at the Uganda Ministry of Defence.

From 2007 until now, he acted as the Director of National Emergency Coordination and Operation Centre in the Office of the Prime Minister. In Parliament, he was a member of the Committee on Commissions, Statutory Authorities and State Enterprises.

In September 2014, Gen. Oketta was nominated to join the African Union led Humanitarian Mission to address the threats of the Ebola virus to the continent and he was awarded a medal of honour by the President of Liberia for his endless efforts in the fight against Ebola. We shall miss Gen. Facki Julius Oketta. May his soul rest in eternal peace.

I have other communications and messages that I will read. There is one from the Speaker of Parliament, Rt hon. Rebecca Kadaga, and another from the Speaker of the East African Legislative Assembly, which I will read once the processes begin. Thank you, Members.

*(Entrance of the late hon. Dr Maj. Gen. Julius Oketta Facki)*

*National Anthem.*

*East African Community Anthem.*

LAYING OF WREATHS

MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION OF PARLIAMENT TO PAY TRIBUTE TO THE LATE HON. DR MAJ. GEN. JULIUS OKETTA FACKI, FORMER UPDF REPRESENTATIVE IN PARLIAMENT

**THE DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Before the Prime Minister comes on the floor, let me recognise dignitaries in the VIP Gallery. I notice people I know: hon. Ojok B’Leo, formerly Kioga MP; Butele Anthony, Brig. Gen. Charles Otema, hon. Otengo Rebecca, hon. Byenkya Nyakaisiki, hon. Akol, hon. Bahane, hon. Bernard Mulengani, hon. Mariam Nalubega, hon. Sarah Netalisire, hon. John Livingstone Okello Okello, hon. Sarah Lanyero, hon. Sarah Kataike Ndoboli, Members of East African Legislative Assembly (EALA), hon. Chris Opoka, hon. Nusura Tiperu, hon. Sarah from Kibuku, hon. Epetait, former Member for Moyo District, hon. Mugambe from Nakifuma, former Member for Yumbe, hon. Huda Oleru, hon. Bihande from Bukonzo, Brig. Gen. Kaitirima, and hon. Alice Alaso. I will be making more recognition as I familiarise with the faces.

Honourable members, I have some condolence messages that are addressed to the Speaker that I would like to read. The first one is from the Speaker herself addressed to the Deputy Speaker. It reads:

“*It is with a heavy heart that I write this condolence message from Rabat in Morocco, where I am leading a parliamentary delegation to the African Parliamentary Union.*

*The death of Gen. Oketta came as a great surprise. In recent weeks, I have been working with him on the improvement of Operation Wealth Creation and he was due to give me feedback.*

*Gen. Oketta’s commitment to the country cannot be questioned. He began work in the liberation movement in the dark days of Idi Amin in the 1970s.*

*He served under the command of “Save Uganda Movement”, and his code name was “Facki” and he has never looked back. He grew through the ranks to the level of Major General; a man who always had a smile on his face and became synonymous with handling of disasters both within and outside the country.*

*I remember with pride, his selfless deployment to West Africa especially in Liberia during the Ebola crisis. He went on duty under the hospice of African Union and battled with other Ugandan colleagues to bring down the prevalence of Ebola, creating a safe environment for all.*

*I can only describe him as an officer and a gentleman. He was among the finest that Uganda has produced. One of his hallmarks was the respect for authority and despite his rank, each time he entered my office, he would declare the submission of the military authority to the civilian authority repeatedly.*

*My sincere condolence to Mrs Oketta and the children and the great African fraternity and to the Commander in Chief of the UPDF and officers and men and women that had the privilege to work with him. Rest in peace.”*

The other is from the Speaker of EALA. “*On behalf of EALA, and on my own behalf, I express heartfelt condolences and sympathy to the family, the Government and citizens of the Republic of Uganda following the shocking and sudden death of Maj. Gen. Julius Oketta, which occurred on 5 November 2016 in Kampala.*

*The passing on of Maj. Gen. Julius Oketta is a huge loss to the country and a blow to several initiatives he was leading. The Republic of Uganda and the East African Community Region has lost an extremely reliable and committed officer.*

*As the Army Representative in Parliament, the late Maj. Gen. Oketta, was articulate, courageous, and a fearless legislator. We all hold fond memories of Maj. Gen. Oketta’s contribution in Parliament towards improving the welfare of the citizens of this country. May his soul rest in eternal peace.”*

There is a condolence message also from hon. Nambooze, hon. Sanjay Tanna former Member of Parliament and the rest are addressed to the family and I am not entitled to read them here. Honourable members, this House will rise at 5.30 p.m.

2.39

**THE PRIME MINISTER AND LEADER OF GOVERNMENT BUSINESS (Dr Ruhakana Rugunda):** Thank you very much, Mr Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to move a motion for a resolution of Parliament to pay tribute to the late Maj. Gen. Julius Facki Oketta for his dedicated service to the nation. The motion is moved under Rule 47 of the Rules of Procedure of Parliament.

*“WHEREAS Parliament learnt with profound shock of the death of the late Maj. Gen. Julius Facki Oketta, which occurred on Saturday 5 November, 2016 at Kadic Hospital Kampala;*

*AND WHEREAS the late Maj. Gen. Julius Facki Oketta was born on 10 March 1956 in Pabo Sub County, Amuru District and attained several military and academic qualifications, including a PhD in Management from New Port University in the United States;*

*AND WHEREAS the late Maj. Gen. Oketta was an illustrious member of the Eighth and Ninth parliaments, who is remembered as an articulate and effective representative of the Uganda People’s Defence Forces;*

*NOTING with appreciation the role he played which was significant in the development of Uganda; and the various senior positions of responsibility that he held both within and outside the army and within and outside the country;*

*COGNISANT of his invaluable experience and guidance in conducting efficient emergency operations in and outside Uganda, wherein he participated in continental and global emergency operations; for example, he was a member of the advisory group of the United Nations Central Emergency Response Fund and worked as the director for the National Emergency Coordination and Operation Centre in the Office of the Prime Minister;*

*APPRECIATING his intellectualism, discipline, innovativeness and leadership skills that saw him appointed to head the African Union Support to Curb the Ebola outbreak in West Africa; a mission he successfully accomplished, handing him a medal by the Liberian President, Her Excellency Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, for his starring and distinguished effort;*

*AWARE THAT the late Maj. Gen Julius Oketta, at the time of his death was the Deputy Chief Coordinator of UPDF and spearheaded Poverty Eradication Programme, Operation Wealth Creation and aimed at eradicating poverty through improved agriculture;*

*SATISFIED THAT the late Maj. Gen. Julius Oketta indeed dedicated all his life to the liberation, stability, unity and development of Uganda as well as Africa and served his country with dignity and humility and therefore deserves the recognition of this Parliament and this country;*

*NOW, THEREFORE, be it resolved by this Parliament as follows:*

1. *That Parliament collectively conveys its deep condolences to the bereaved family, relatives and friends, His Excellency the President, the international community, the Uganda People’s Defence Forces and the people of Uganda at large for the huge loss of a distinguished son of Uganda, Maj. Gen. Julius Oketta.*
2. *That this Parliament takes cognisance of the dedicated service and contribution that the late Maj. Gen. Julius Oketta has, in the course of his illustrious life, rendered to the people of Uganda and Africa as a freedom fighter, intellectual and a Member of Parliament representing Uganda People’s Defence Forces.*
3. *That this Parliament collectively prays to the Almighty God to sustain the bereaved and grant our departed colleague and comrade, Maj. Gen. Julius Oketta eternal rest.”*

Mr Speaker, I beg to move.

**THE DEPUTY SEPAKER:** The motion is seconded by the Leader of the Opposition, Member for Kilak North, Amuria, Nakifuma, Fort Portal Municipality and Kalungu. Would you like to speak to your motion, honourable Prime Minister?

**DR RUGUNDA**: Mr Speaker, I would like to thank you, because in your messages and initial communication on our departed brother, you brought out some of the main issues concerning this motion that I am going to speak to. There may be some re-highlighting of some of the remarks that have already come out.

Mr Speaker, death has occurred again and robbed us of a great Ugandan; a servant of the people, a dedicated and selfless colleague, Maj. Gen Julius Facki Oketta.

We are indeed all saddened by this sudden demise that occurred in the early morning hours of Saturday, 5 November 2016 at Kadic Hospital in Bukoto, where he had been rushed after complaining of chest pain.

Mr Speaker, the country and Africa has lost a seasoned, respected and experienced army officer whose skills and abilities were important in Uganda’s transformation.

Maj. Gen. Julius Oketta has been one of the most distinguished and highly regarded officers of UPPDF who use their skills and talents across the board. From the battle field to public health management, humanitarian work to empowering communities, and from legislation to supporting farmers through Operation Wealth Creation and many other initiatives that he was involved in.

The late hon. Maj. Gen. Julius Oketta was born on 10 March 1956 to the late Mzee Paul Alipayo Oketta and the late Nadelama Acomo of Pabbo Sub-county, Gulu in the present day Amuru District.

His academic journey saw him rise from Lacor Primary School in 1965, through Pope Paul VI Secondary School-Anaka, Lira Town College and Gregg Secondary School in Gulu, Ndejje University for a bachelor’s and master’s degrees and on to Newport University in the United States, where he obtained a PhD.

Mr Speaker, the late Maj. Gen. Oketta’s commitment to service in the army, while at the same time advancing his academic pursuits, encouraged a number of young university graduates to join the forces. His example has contributed to the professionalisation of the army.

Mr Speaker, the late Maj. Gen. Oketta – lying before us here –did not only excel in academics, but also in military career training where he accomplished several professional courses. He was a graduate of the Senior Command and Staff College, Kimaka in Jinja, the Mechanised Infantry Brigade in Russia, the Young Officers’ Course in Tanzania and the VIP Security Management Training from Havana, Cuba, among others.

Mr Speaker, the late hon. Maj. Gen. Oketta was multi-skilled and a great professional. He first joined the Uganda Police Force before joining the army in 1979 as a private. He rose through the ranks from private to Major General.

By the time of his demise, the late hon. Julius Oketta held a number of portfolios and responsibilities, both in and outside the army. He held several commanding roles in the army, rising to the level of the Commanding Officer of the Sixth Infantry Division in Karamoja.

Later, he was Chief of Logistics and Engineering of the UPDF. From there, he headed the Procurement and Disposal Unit of the Ministry of Defence. In all these roles, Maj. Gen. Oketta served with honesty and distinction, leaving footprints of good performance.

Mr Speaker, the late Maj. Gen. Oketta retired from the army in 1992. However, because of his unique attributes and experience, at the height of the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) war in Northern Uganda, there was demand for his services back in the forces. H.E. the President deemed it fit and recalled him into the army, which he willingly accepted. He was, thereafter, deployed in many operational and combat areas.

In addition, he was Uganda’s Liaison Officer to implement the protocol between the Government of Uganda and the Government of Sudan on the war against Joseph Kony.

In recognition of his exemplary leadership, the UPDF elected Maj. Gen. Oketta to Parliament, where he served from 2006 to 2016. As honourable colleagues will know, Maj. Gen. Oketta has been an effective legislator.

Mr Speaker, the late hon. Maj. Gen. Oketta was a multi-skilled, multi-talented and an all-round person. Because of these exceptional traits in him, H.E the President gave him additional responsibilities of promoting Operation Wealth Creation.

I have interacted with him on a number of assignments in his capacity as National Coordinator of Emergency Operations in the Office of the Prime Minister. I can tell you that when you had Maj. Gen. Oketta in the lead, you would rest assured that the task would be accomplished well and on time.

Mr Speaker, Maj. Gen. Julius Oketta was a firm believer in Pan-Africanism and he walked the talk of his belief. For instance, when the deadly Ebola epidemic broke out in West Africa in 2014, Maj. Gen. Oketta accepted the assignment by the African Union to head operations to curb the deadly epidemic in Liberia and West Africa. He accomplished the assignment with great success, the reason President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf of Liberia awarded him a medal in recognition of his service.

Mr Speaker, even with all these academic, military, leadership and international accomplishments, Maj. Gen. Oketta remained humble and down to earth. This is a lesson for all of us to learn from.

Cause of death

Mr Speaker, the hon. Maj. Gen. Oketta died at Kadic Hospital in Bukoto, where he had been rushed for further management after complaining of chest pain earlier in the night of Friday, 4 November 2016. Post-mortem reports indicate that he died of massive pulmonary embolism, which means a blood clot in the lungs.

Most of the cases of pulmonary embolism occur because a clot leaves, often the legs, goes up into the heart and is pumped into the lungs and the vessels in the lungs are blocked by this clot. This compromises the breathing and, therefore, leads to death. It is a problem well known, especially when people have heard what they call “deep vein thrombosis”.

This morning, I had discussions with the Chief of Medical Services of the UPDF and yesterday I also had discussions with the family who indicated that our departed comrade had had problems of clotting before. This appears to have been the cause of this tragedy.

The late hon. Maj. Gen. Julius Oketta is survived by a widow, Mrs Stella Oketta and nine children: five boys and four girls.

Mr Speaker, I take this opportunity to convey my sincere and heartfelt condolences to the widow, children, family, H.E the President and Commander of the Armed Forces, the UPDF and the people of Uganda on the loss of this giant and distinguished son of Uganda.

May the Almighty God rest his soul in eternal peace.

**THE DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Thank you, Rt Hon. Prime Minister. I have hon. Joseph Kifomusana, former Member of Parliament. He is in the Gallery. I also have the Commissioner of Police, representing Operation Wealth Creation, Commissioner Hillary Odoch. You are welcome.

2.59

**THE LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION** **(Ms Winfred Kiiza):** Mr Speaker, I rise to second the motion to pay tribute to Maj. Gen. Julius Facki Oketta who passed away on the day communicated by the Prime Minister.

Mr Speaker, talking about the friend lying before us here may be hard. It gives you sad feelings to speak about a friend you know is of a rare character that very few Ugandans have. The friend we are bidding farewell to is a fine gentleman, an amiable officer, a skillful servant, passionate figure, a resolute Ugandan and an epitome of humility.

The cruel hand of death is on us yet again. At the prime age of 60, Gen. Oketta is lying here motionless. To the family, the widow and the children, kindly accept our sincere sympathies as the Opposition in and outside Parliament, the people of Kasese that I represent, the Rwenzururu Kingdom where the Gen. Oketta worked, the Acholi Parliamentary Group and the entire population of Acholi, the Uganda People’s Defence Forces, the multitudes of Ugandans here and abroad who are all grieving; we sincerely grieve with you.

In Gen. Oketta, I met an icon of excellence just like the Prime Minister has said. A smart officer both in dressing and in character, a charming personality, a distinguished patriot, firm legislator and an astute Christian, a family man, a preacher of the Gospel of Christ; that is the gentleman lying before you here – *(Applause)*

Mr Speaker, at his level of leadership and career achievement, he never dropped his desire to seek for knowledge. He acquired a Doctorate of Philosophy, in addition to two masters and a Degree of Philosophy, several diplomas that we may not mention. It is not common to majority of us most especially when we have got jobs which we think will earn us bread on table. It is a challenge to us and a lesson to many of us.

Mr Speaker, Gen. Oketta traversed the hills and valleys of this country promoting household income through the Operation Wealth Creation but flashed no academic credentials before him. He was ready to serve irrespective of the situation. He was a model farmer and willingly shared his experiences and expertise. Despite the challenges and the designs deficit in Operation Wealth Creation, he served with zeal and love for duty not for the sake of fulfilling an appointment.

Mr Speaker, his commitment and loyalty spoke volumes. As a commander under the Uganda National Liberation Army (UNLA) like you have heard, he fought the National Resistance Army (NRA) uncompromisingly. He used the same zeal and force to defend the NRA which later turned into UPDF when he crossed over from the UNLA. He had total commitment to national duty.

Mr Speaker, many times we have been told about the disciplined army that was created under the National Resistance Army as opposed to the undisciplined forces of the previous armies without exception. The life and times of Gen. Oketta and many other officers that joined the NRA which later turned into UPDF from the Uganda National Liberation Front have disapproved this narrative that we still have fine officers who served during those armies that they have always referred to as cruel; we would like to salute you brother. They have been some of the finest, dedicated, disciplined and humble officers.

Gen. Oketta trademark statement of respecting the civil authority will never get out of our minds. *(Applause).* When I received the news of his death, I was in West Nile on an oversight function. All I remember lingering in my memory was the salute he would give whenever he would find each one of us and the greeting would be “I respect the civilian authority”. What did this mean? He believed and truly espoused the notion that the army is the people’s servant. In essence, he gave true meaning to the Uganda People’s Defence Forces. This was in sharp contrast to some other men and women in uniform who brandish rank to disempower the unarmed civilian. Oketta, you will always be remembered for your humility and unreserved respect for the civil authority.

Mr Speaker, Gen. Oketta has served this country and beyond its borders with a legacy and unwavering commitment. He ably coordinated the emergency operations in the Office of the Prime Minister, he clearly demonstrated unmatched passion for response to disaster situations in the country regardless of which area was under threat. He also quickly responded to calls for emergency action even when there was seemingly glaring risks that were attached to the job, the most vivid example being in Liberia when Ebola wiped out a section of the population. Gen. Oketta was there because duty called.

When floods ravaged the people of Kasese and Rwenzori region, Gen. Oketta still moved because duty called. I still remember when he came there with hon. Musa Ecweru and we were faced with a crisis of supplies from Government, at times we would sit down and quarrel but this fine man over here, even amidst that quarrel – of course I would be abusing Government for not taking care of my people - he would still stand up and salute, and say, “civil authority, take heart.”

You would never find Oketta getting annoyed and it would be hard for you to annoy him. You would never hear him complaining even when he would be mistreated, he would never complain. He was always at peace. That is when I came to believe that he was a staunch Christian. I know right now, he is at peace with his God. His state was just to be peaceful.

Gen. Oketta mobilised the local contractors in Kasese to voluntarily go and de-silt River Nyamwamba though it was too much for them. They helped to put systems in place in Kilembe Mines Hospital, where he himself worked by example by holding the hoe and the spade to remove the debris that was in the hospital. The people of Rwenzori are heavily indebted to you, Maj. Gen. Oketta. Not only did he do that but he also led a community sensitisation initiative unreservedly.

I vividly remember when he pointed here on the floor of the House on 16th July 2015 the inadequacy of medical information in the remote parts of the country. He even put the minister to task to come up with statistics and responses on health. He forced the minister to constitute a team to come up with statistics of diseases and epidemics that are in the countryside and educate the people so as to enhance surveillance on them. He truly had a large heart.

His energies were not only confined to the army or the areas he served, but for the voices that would not come out. Mr Speaker, Dr Maj. Gen. Oketta equally staked his whole life to ensure that the welfare of our soldiers is guaranteed. I remember hon. Odonga Otto also attested to this in Parliament when he mentioned that his voters who were soldiers in Somalia came to him because they had not been paid. Dr Maj. Gen. Oketta rushed there very fast to ensure that the situation was rescued. The soldiers in Pader who had reported this matter, I am sure, must be grieving with the family.

Dr Maj. Gen. Oketta, your curtain has fallen down and your life on earth has ended, but your legacy will shine on especially to those who value humility, dedication and commitment to service.

To the family, you will never find another Oketta, but I would like to tell you that Dr Maj. Gen. Oketta has left much more than a family. Many of us were very close to him as if he was a member of our families. His humility, respect for humanity, loyalty and putting service above self are some of the issues we shall miss in this gentleman.

Dr Maj. Gen. Oketta, God gave you to us and He has taken you away. You have lived your life like a candle in the wind and this world is a stage. Each one of us comes and plays his or her part and goes. You played your part, Julius. May your soul rest in eternal peace.

**THE DEPUTY SPEAKER:** We have a second seconder and that is hon. Reagan Okumu from Aswa County.

3.12

**MR REAGAN OKUMU (Independent, Aswa County, Gulu):** Thank you, Mr Speaker, for giving me this opportunity. I rise to second the motion moved by the Prime Minister and Leader of Government Business.

Mr Speaker, at a time like this in Africa, emotions rise and certain facts come out, but these are lessons for those living so that they may correct the past and improve the future. These are lessons we learn on occasions like this.

Before I say anything else, I would like to say I totally agree with what the Prime Minister and Leader of Government Business and the Leader of the Opposition have said. However, I also would like to add that we are not all perfect. Always, when we come like this, we talk about the good side only and forget to talk about the bad side. I would like to ask those who are still living that if Dr Maj. Gen. Oketta stepped on your toes; it is high time you forgave him.

Mr Speaker, I would not like to go into many things, but Dr Maj. Gen. Oketta served this country. He was among those liberation forces which constituted UNLF. Later, when I come to my conclusion, I will reflect to you how some of these challenges continue to stress officers who are in the service because of where they belonged in the past. Some were in either FRONASA or *Kikosi Malum*. The forging of the national army has not been easy and has caused a lot of stress especially to those who have sacrificed their lives to serve this country.

Dr Maj. Gen. Oketta served Uganda irrespective of the different forces he belonged to. When he joined UNLA, he was a resilient fighter. For those NRAs who were in Masaka, you remember that commander. All over the world, you will never defeat any unit in any warfare for such a long time and they do not surrender. However, Dr Maj. Gen. Oketta who was the adjutant of Masaka under the command of Lt. Col. Olanya Ojara resisted.

He was a resilient fighter. He knew that Ugandans were fighting among themselves. An understanding was reached and instead of turning their guns on one another, Dr Maj. Gen. Oketta was among those officers who aided NRA to capture Kampala at the end of it all. It was because they were not fighting foreign enemies. These were internal wars.

Many of you remember the friction that continued between NRA and UNLA because of the different forces that merged together at a very difficult time. Others were not trusted. Some of those things persisted up to today where some people prefer to label themselves as “historicals” at the expense of those who joined later. This is the reality we must talk about because the stress continues to affect our officers who are in service. In life, when you are stressed, it is a big problem. It will affect you and any little sickness can take you.

Mr Speaker, Dr Maj. Gen. Oketta had his contribution at the Sixth Division. Before that, he had a very critical contribution at Corner Kilak. For those who knew what was taking place at Corner Kilak; if Lakwena were to be organised fighters, it was going to be difficult for the UPDF. Corner Kilak was captured with a lot of catchment of arms. The only small unit that remained behind was that of Dr Maj. Gen. Oketta and because of his resilience, he contained the situation and asked for more reinforcement. That is how the situation was saved.

When the President visited him and found out what he had done, he was sent for training in Russia. When he came back, he went to Eastern Uganda first as a brigade commander and eventually as the Sixth Division Commander. He had his contribution for those who were there, but again because of the differences of where he belonged, he was stressed and he opted to retire early at the rank of a Lieutenant Colonel and went into private business.

This was a gentleman, Mr Speaker, who was very unique. There are officers here who are put on *“Katebe”* and they complain, but Dr Maj. Gen. Oketta would never complain. He would find something to do. He would go out into his private business satisfied to the dismay of many who would ask, “He is not complaining, what is he up to?”

When Gen. Oketta retired, the situation in the north could not help. I was a young student who had just graduated from university at that time and we used to go and complain to hon. Betty Bigombe. The war was bad and roads were impassable. I went to hon. Betty Bigombe and challenged her that maybe if she got an Acholi officer, it would be of help. She challenged me asking, “Who is that?” I said, “Why don’t you bring Gen. Oketta? She answered that he was retired.

I told hon. Bigombe, “If President Museveni can bring back Gen. Salim Saleh for service, why not Col Oketta?” She then asked me to go and draft a letter. Indeed, I drafted a letter that she signed and the President redeployed Col Oketta who became the Reserve Force Commander for northern Uganda. He did a tremendous job and many of you know that things were not possible but roads opened and people were able to move.

He hurt his hand and that caused him problems because his structure was parallel to that of the Fourth Division. It caused him a big problem. There was envy and the leadership of the Fourth Division did not like that at all. Many allegations came on him that perhaps he had a different plan.

That unit was disbanded and they were all integrated under the Fourth Division. Again he was left hanging but he never complained; he did his part. He was such a humble officer. He told me, “Reagan, now that I have done my part, I want to go into politics but support me.” Many of you may not know that he comes from the clan where my mum comes from. Therefore, he came and asked for my support as a nephew.

I told him, “No, I am not going to support you. Remain in the military where we need your service. I am going to support Ocula.” Indeed, I supported Ocula and not him. We are relatives and we remained friends. Eventually, he was promoted to brigadier and he came to Parliament.

However, one thing that I would like us all to appreciate from the life of Maj. Gen. Oketta is that high level of humility. At one time, my colleague, hon. Ocula, with a group of people in Amuru, organised a group of people to go and harass Maj. Gen. Oketta. Civilians were armed with sticks while the general had his escorts who were armed with pistols. They were mocking and beating him. He wept and he called me saying, “I wish you were here to see how a general is being caned.” He had the guards and he would have done anything but he said, “Can you organise and reconcile me with hon. Ocula?” This is something, which I did.

How many generals can do that? That is the level of humility. One time the girlfriend of a general also ran to him with her guards. He turned back because he was an accomplished general. He knew what to do when it came to that. I would like us to copy this as we continue to live because it is not easy to forge a nation.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank, in particular, two army officers. The first one is the President of Uganda, Gen. Yoweri Museveni and the other one is Gen. Salim Saleh because they relieved Gen. Oketta of a lot of stress from the pressure that he was undergoing; pressure from within the UPDF.

There are some people who never saw these people eye to eye because they were regarded as UNLA but I would like to take this opportunity to say, let us not stress our officers. There is too much stress piled on officers for two reasons: one, where you come from; were you in NRA, UNLA or FEDEMU? The segregation goes on like that.

This is a reality, which must be told. That is why some people call themselves “*historicals*”. Uganda is a sovereign nation. Whoever comes to serve this country serves the sovereignty of this country. Whoever is in uniform should be respected as such. They are nationalists who are serving our country irrespective of where one was yesterday or today. They are all in uniform serving our country. These officers have fought many wars and lost families. They have not been in touch with their relatives so if you add stress to them, they will not live for long.

Secondly, there is also electoral stress. Let me be frank about this. During elections, officers are called. There is a caucus of generals outside and somebody is the chairperson of that caucus. You are told to go and get votes from your areas. This is unacceptable. If you do not get votes from your area, you do not get deployment and promotion. This is unacceptable and as a political leader, I would like to sound this as a warning. It must stop. This is adding stress.

Why must you stop an officer who is sympathetic to the regime from talking to Reagan Okumu who is in the Opposition? And you take that as an exception, until otherwise, that there is a problem. The problem our officers continue to face is this and that is why I am very grateful to the President and to Gen. Salim Saleh for trying to intervene in these areas. However, this is something that is continuing and it must stop. Whether somebody was in UNLA, FEDEMU or is coming from the north where people do not vote NRM, please respect them and treat them as generals of equal status. We are all citizens of this country.

Mr Speaker, I thought I should say this because opportunities for saying this may not be there. At a time like this, we must state the facts. We must respect and treat all our men in uniform as equals. We must give them all the honour as people protecting the sovereign right of this country and not hide in denial of certain things.

I thank you, Mr Speaker. Our condolences go to the family. It is not always easy. You will always live there and people will say so many words of comfort; we shall do this and that but put your hope in God.

We would like to thank you, Mr Speaker, on behalf of Parliament, for having offered this opportunity to give honour to Maj. Gen. Oketta. I think that in the whole sub-region, Maj. Gen. Oketta was the only major general that one would talk about. It will take time to get another general and many people know that for one to become a general is not an overnight thing. It is a long process and the country spends a lot in training and other things.

However, as a nation, we shall get there and overcome it. May the soul of the late Maj. Gen. Oketta rest in eternal peace. Thank you, Mr Speaker. *(Applause)*

**THE DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Thank you, honourable members. The motion I would like to propose for your debate is a tribute motion to the late hon. Maj. Gen. Julius Facki Oketta and particularly that this Parliament resolves as follows:

1. That Parliament collectively conveys its deep condolences to the bereaved family, relatives and friends, His Excellency the President, the national community, the Uganda People’s Defence Forces and the people of Uganda at large for the huge loss of a distinguished son of Uganda, hon. Maj. Gen. Julius Oketta.
2. That Parliament takes cognisance of the dedicated services and contribution that the late hon. Maj. Gen. Julius Oketta has, in the course of his illustrious life, rendered to the people of Uganda and Africa as a freedom fighter, an intellectual and a Member of Parliament representing the UPDF, and
3. That this Parliament collectively prays to the Almighty God to sustain the bereaved and grant our departed colleague and comrade, hon. Maj. Gen. Julius Oketta, eternal rest.

Honourable members, that is the motion that I propose for your debate and debate starts now with the following rules. This is a quasi-military situation. *(Laughter)* Being in charge of this, I would like to issue the following orders. If it was another meeting, I would have said, may the soldiers now fire at will. However, given that this is a House where people would like to speak for as long as they desire, we will cap it with some limitations.

Honourable members, you will be speaking for a time not exceeding five minutes. This House should have risen at 5.30 p.m. but we shall extend it to 6.00 p.m. because of the motion and the secondments that have taken quite some time. We shall speak for five minutes but if you can speak for less, that is also fine.

3.30

**MR ADOLF MWESIGE (NRM, Bunyangabu County, Kabarole)):** Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. We are all convened here today to pay our respects and tribute to our fallen comrade, Maj. Gen. Julius Oketta, who, as you all know, up to early this year, was one of us in this august House.

We all remember how Maj. Gen. Oketta contributed calmly and how his articulation of issues, especially those related to national and regional security, helped and informed this honourable House in our legislative work.

Mr Speaker, let me, on behalf of the Ministry of Defence and Veteran Affairs, salute Maj. Gen. Oketta for his selfless and enduring devotion to the liberation of people’s lives, as has been demonstrated here, not only against the armed aggressors but also against natural catastrophes and human epidemics.

His leadership role in emergencies, for example, during the landslides in Bududa District and the floods in Kasese District, saved the lives of many Ugandans.

Mr Speaker, Maj. Gen. Oketta will remain in the minds of many Africans for his astute role, which he played when he was selected to head the African Union Support for Ebola Outbreak in Liberia. His experience and zeal for humanitarian work saved multitudes of lives of our African brothers and sisters against the deadly Ebola epidemic that had reached such a level that called for continental intervention.

It was, therefore, not by accident that he earned himself an award from the President of Liberia. This was a well-deserved and meritorious recognition for his selfless service.

Mr Speaker, the works and deployments of the late Maj. Gen. Oketta demonstrate the full meaning and character of UPDF as a professional army. I, therefore, would like to clarify to hon. Reagan Okumu that promotion in the UPDF is not based on tribe or political party affiliation but on merit. That is how Maj. Gen. Oketta rose to the rank of general.

The good brains behind our Constitution wisely mandated the UPDF to preserve and defend the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Uganda, to cooperate with civilian authority in emergency situations and cases of natural disasters and to engage in productive activities for the development of Uganda.

As you have already heard and will continue to hear, Maj. Gen. Julius Oketta did not only participate in warfronts in the field but also handled office duties, including becoming the Chief of Logistics and Engineering in the UPDF. He also sat in this august House as a representative of the UPDF and contributed to parliamentary legislative work.

He also worked under the Office of the Prime Minister where he handled routine technical and administrative work. He participated in a diversity of emergencies both nationally and internationally and at the time of his demise, he held a Doctorate in Philosophy and had focussed his energies on Operation Wealth Creation, which is a programme to fight poverty in the whole country.

Maj. Gen. Oketta was, therefore, a very good example of an accomplished UPDF professional general and we shall all greatly miss his contribution. May the Almighty God rest his soul in eternal peace. I thank you very much.

3.35

**MR JOSEPH SSEWUNGU (DP, Kalungu County West, Kalungu):** Thank you, Mr Speaker. I also send my condolences to the family.

In 1985, I was in senior two and the NRA had just captured Masaka where the fallen Maj. Gen. Oketta worked. We only came to learn when we were young that in Masaka Barracks there was a man known as “adach”. Indeed, this man gave a hard time to the NRA in Masaka and some people used to say that the bullets he would shoot would make the noise “oketta”. *(Laughter)*

I have only heard about two people in my life; the first was the father of a boy that I studied with in St. Savio Junior School. People would say that his late pilot father called Guweddeko would fly a jet and write his name in the air. The second was Maj. Gen. Oketta whose bullets would make the sound ‘oketta’.

This gentleman that we are paying respect to has been a real soldier. It is one thing to wear a uniform and another to fit into the uniform. When you talk about Maj. Gen. Oketta and the way he has risen *– (Interjection) –* yes, anybody can wear a uniform. There was a teacher in a school that I was heading who used to be the smartest but speaking English was his weakness.

When you talk about Maj. Gen. Oketta, he knew the army and that is why, when he saw that he could not move any further, he surrendered in Masaka. Something very important is that he moved with the Government that came into power.

Mr Speaker, this gentleman entered the army in senior four but has died with a doctorate. He was somebody who thought about people, the Government and also himself, which is very important.

The defence minister was polite when he said that ranks are not given in an arbitrary way but there are people that we can say do not deserve their ranks. Maj. Gen. Oketta deserved his rank and more.

I would like to ask what the Government is thinking concerning senior soldiers who fought for this country right from before the NRA to date. I used to teach at the Military Police but whenever I would go to the Officers’ Mess, the officers there would say, “*Mwalimu* Ssewungu, have a cup of tea, use this telephone, have some transport money.” These things are no longer there. I have never seen teachers with special fields or special homes where they go and do sports but soldiers are supposed to have them and that is happening all over the world. What is happening with Uganda’s UPDF? This gentleman has died and you are now thinking of how to get money for his wife.

Mr Speaker, in Tanzania, a senior soldier like Maj. Gen. Oketta and Ivan Koreta, who is seated in front of me, Gen. Katumba Wamala and others of that rank are planned for by Government ahead of time. By the time they retire, they are given a house and gratuity. Afterwards, they are incorporated into the civil service because they have served the nation.

However, here we are with Maj. Gen. Oketta. His wife is going to start moving around to get some money. This should have been done early enough.

What I am asking this Government is to go back to the former system. Learn from what Kenya and Tanzania are doing. In such a system, Gen. Moses Ali would not be here. He would retire and enjoy himself *–(Laughter)–* because he is a senior soldier.

Finally, Mr Speaker, I would like to send a word of thanks to the wife of Maj. Gen. Oketta. If you have ever served in the army, you will know what that means. Soldiers do not sit in one place but move from Lira to Kilak to Kalungu – you heard he was in West Africa working on Ebola. They are like Members of Parliament who are not permanent at home. You are always moving between your constituency and Parliament and you have no time for the family.

Mrs Oketta, you are now also a general because you have managed to look after your husband. We send our condolences to you. Thank you very much for all you have done for this gallant son of Africa.

Maj. Gen. Oketta, may your soul rest in peace. We shall continue praying for you as you go to meet with the Father and one time, we shall find you there. May his soul rest in peace. *(Applause)*

3.40

**LT COL (RTD) BRIGHT RWAMIRAMA (NRM, Isingiro County North, Isingiro):** Thank you, Mr Speaker. I support the motion to pay tribute to the late hon. Maj. Gen. Dr Julius Oketta.

Mr Speaker, there are times when people die and you do not know what to say about them. Hon. Maj. Gen. Oketta’s record is so wide and if I am given time, I can speak for four hours. However, since I have five minutes, let me try to condense it.

Mr Speaker, Oketta was a man of immense character. For those of you who knew him, he was honest and loyal. He was very friendly and very pleasant. He was full of purpose. I tried to remember – You know, people tumble in the course of their lives but last night, I tried to recall if I ever found Maj. Gen. Oketta wanting and did not find any single occasion.

He was very smart, both in the brains and in dress. If he put on the uniform, he would put it on properly. When he put on formal dress or casual, it would still be done properly. He had enormous abilities. He was one of the highly trained military officers we have, he was very brave and result-oriented.

He was a skilled fighter; you heard the mover of the motion and the people who spoke before me mention that. His abilities were very rare and we shall miss them. He was disciplined and a role model. The late hon. Oketta served in UNLA, NRA and UPDF.

I heard the honourable member talking about indisciplined previous armies. I have heard from people who were in Masaka at the time who can testify that Maj. Gen. Oketta was a disciplinarian. Even when soldiers were doing a lot of dirty things, he stood up against them. He served in NRA and got rapid promotions. He has died a UPDF officer and a nationalist.

Being a nationalist is not by simply coming here and talking. No, it is about how you live your life. Look at his family. I think his wife comes from the west. All of you know that the late Maj. Gen. Oketta would interact with all of us regardless of where you came from. He would attend functions from Arua to Kisoro, from Rakai to Bunyoro. Therefore, it is not about talking. He practiced nationalism and, therefore, he was a role model. He was very schooled with a PhD and very few of us have them.

Mr Speaker, the last time I met Maj. Gen. Oketta was when he was moving from the Prime Minister’s Office and I was coming from there to Parliament. He said, “I salute the civil authority.” His trademark was “civil authority”.

He said, “Minister, why are you walking down?” I answered, “What about you?” He laughed it off and said, “We need to walk otherwise we shall develop these conditions like heart diseases. Sitting in one place can cause a problem”.

He was passionate about wealth creation where he had his last assignment and he was working closely with Gen. Saleh. I happened to be chairing an inter-ministerial committee where we were discussing the future of wealth creation and how to improve it. He was very passionate about it and he was urging me to finish so that we can do the final round.

I hope that those who are working on this programme will honour him *–(Member timed out.)*

**THE DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Let us stick to five minutes, please. When I give you exceptions then we will not be able to stop it.

3.46

**MR JAMES KAKOOZA (Independent, Kabula County, Lyantonde):** Thank you, Mr Speaker. I would like to be a witness for the gentleman lying here.

One time, the late Maj. Gen. Oketta came to Masaka town and I approached him and said, “What is happening here? People are dying in the barracks.” This was because the rebels had cut off the food supply. I told him, “Why don’t you join this side?” He said, “My principles are clear, I am serving a Government and I am under the command of civil authority.” This was the driving principle of this man and that was his character.

I met him again after the war and he had a daughter in Seeta High School. Whenever we met, he would smile and encourage me. I remember one time we were in the corridors and the journalists had talked about wealth creation. He asked them, “You people are writing about this topic but do you know what happens in it?” He taught one of the journalists here how to farm to make a living in life. This boy is still here. He started with five pigs and now he has 50 pigs. This is the gentleman we are mourning today.

At 60, the country needed him most because of the experience and the expertise that he had. This man was the only person we could consult regarding all challenges, be it in war or anything else because of his experience. He had a unique character in that he was corrupt-free. He served in various capacities where there was money involved and there was no scandal.

I was a Minister of Health when the Bududa incidents happened. We had meetings and there was a lot of money involved but this man could account for each coin that he used. *(Applause)* That is a rare character; you know human beings with money are like fat near fire. They melt.

However, the General had a unique character. Somebody has mentioned that he was non-discriminative. You know, being non-discriminative does not come by merely talking. It comes with experience. When you get exposure, you learn and indeed, the General was a performer wherever he was assigned duties. We have missed him and we will never see him again. May his soul rest in peace. *(Applause)*

3.50

**MR MEDARD SSEGGONA (DP, Busiro County East, Wakiso):** Thank you, Mr Speaker, for giving me this opportunity to speak about a colleague that I have known for the last six years at close range. I stand to support the motion by the Rt Hon. Prime Minister and basically for two reasons: one, to celebrate a life that is well lived by one of us.

A lot but not enough has been said about the humility of the late hon. Maj. Gen. Julius Oketta. I remember, with fondness, one day when I had occasion to meet him at the entrance to the House and we were being searched. I commented that he should be searched more because he was more dangerous than I. He turned around and said, “Unless you want me to be stripped and to have everything removed from me because I am myself a weapon.” We smiled and parted.

At another occasion, I met him and provocatively called him, “*Askari*”. I turned to look at him in order to see his reaction and he said, “Here I am, Sir.” I said, “You are not complaining?” And he replied, “No, because that does not take away my rank and I remain committed to serving civil authority.”

For the last six years, whenever I would see hon. Julius Oketta, I would prepare myself for a salute. It is not something that many soldiers do, even when they know that we are part of that civil authority. I salute him for that.

Mr Speaker, this gentleman was appointed to spearhead Operation Wealth Creation and he moved across the country to create wealth in other people’s pockets. He never took that operation into his pocket and I salute him for that. *(Applause)*

I had occasion to visit Amuru amidst the complaints of land grabbing, together with a team led by hon. Cecilia Ogwal. I moved from Apaa to Joka and the slogan was, “Apaa, our land up to Joka.” When I came back, I told him about that and he said, “Well, nobody will grab our land.” I asked him to explain more and he said, “No, I have only said that nobody will grab our land.”

Let me talk about the long service and I would like to find fortification in the words of the Rt Hon. Prime Minister and those of hon. Bright Rwamirama. I also would like to agree with hon. Adolf Mwesige that promotions in our professional army, the UPDF, are not based on tribe and anything like that.

I would like to agree with hon. Rwamirama that promotion is on merit. The hon. Maj. Gen. Oketta was a second lieutenant in 1979 when we were fighting to bring down the government of Gen. Idi Amin Dada. He retired and was recalled to the army in 1992. My colleagues and I were in senior two then.

One of the colleagues with whom we were in senior two is now a major general. Oketta, with close to 40 years in service, with his education, discipline, training and deployment in those operational areas, which we have been told about, has died at the rank of a major general. That is promotion on merit in my country.

I think the earlier we talk about it, the better. The Chief of Defence Forces (CDF) is here and I will be very happy to die after seeing promotion based on merit. There must be a well streamlined criterion in the law. This man should not have been a major general now. Somebody must talk about it.

Finally, I thank the Prime Minister for speaking at length about the post-mortem report because talking about the post-mortem report, amidst speculations that have been here whenever we lose generals, was very important. I thank you because it will take away the speculations of foul play.

However, why would there be speculation when we lose generals? I now speak as part of the Government; I am an officer of Government. That must also stop because the fertility created by the situation for speculation must be erased and there is nobody to do that.

With that, Mr Speaker, I invite everyone to support the motion to pay tribute and to thank the fallen comrade for the contribution he has made to our country. It has been immense, for which we shall continue to miss him and his service. My brother, may your soul rest in eternal peace. *(Applause)*

3.56

**MR DENIS OBUA (NRM, Ajuri County, Alebtong):** Mr Speaker, I rise to salute you for issuing the operational orders and for giving me an opportunity to pay tribute to the late hon. Maj. Gen. Dr Julius Oketta, a man who demonstrated the modern traits of a military officer in this millennium: humility, simplicity, respect for all and discipline.

In paying tribute to him, where he cannot speak for himself, I want to talk about two things: one, his dream as the deputy commanding officer of the Operation Wealth Creation and I bring my humble proposal, in terms of amendment to the prayers of the motion moved by the Rt Hon. Prime Minister.

Mr Speaker, the late hon. Maj. Gen. Dr Julius Oketta had a dream and his dream was to ensure that Operation Wealth Creation gets a legal framework for its operation and that is a dream that must be achieved.

Rt Hon. Prime Minister, you are the mover of the motion and at the same time, Leader of Government Business in Parliament. This Parliament has the mandate of making laws. The late Maj. Gen. Julius Oketta had a dream to ensure that we do not operate in an ad hoc manner but in a streamlined manner with a legal framework highlighting what Operation Wealth Creation will be doing.

Secondly, Mr Speaker, in consideration of the fundamental contributions made by the late hon. Maj. Gen. Dr Julius Oketta in the liberation of Uganda from the time he was in the Uganda National Liberation Army (UNLA) to NRA and to the UPDF, rising through the ranks from a private to a major general at the time of his death, cognisant of the fact that Maj. Gen. Oketta fought a good fight at the continental level at the time when you and I could not accept to fly to Liberia, with dedication and sacrifice, he was part of the AU mission to Liberia in the fight against Ebola.

Looking at the fact that Maj. Gen. Oketta did not only stop at the national and continental level, even at the UN we have been watching him and he contributed to this country, I would, therefore, like to move this proposed amendment to the prayers highlighted by the Rt Hon. Prime Minister. Given an opportunity, I will give justification in all fairness.

My amendment is that Parliament urges His Excellency the President and Commander-in-Chief of the UPDF, the UPDF high command and the UPDF Promotion Board to posthumously promote the late Maj. Gen. Oketta from the rank of Maj. Gen. to the rank of General.

This is an advisory note to the Commander-in-Chief and to the Promotion Board of UPDF. It has implications, especially on the dependants, when he is promoted because he deserves it. We are not asking for what he does not deserve. The sacrifices and dedication he made to fight, dodging bullets during the day and night up to the time of his death - I strongly believe that if this particular proposal is incorporated, we shall now need to engage his former colleagues.

The Chief of Defence Forces (CDF), Gen. Tumwine, Gen. Koreta and Maj. Gen. Oketta were all in UNLA. In fact, the current leadership of the UPDF is from UNLA and this is a fact –*(Member timed out.)*

**THE DEPUTY SPEAKER:** We will deal with that when adopting the motion.

4.01

**COL. FELIX KULAYIGYE (UPDF Representative):** Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. I am rising to second a motion that is talking about a patriotic Ugandan; a Ugandan that gave his service to this country, not because he was earning a salary but because he had a sense of duty and purpose. A general whose character every Ugandan would like to follow. We should therefore ask, “Would you like to follow yourself?”

I would like to state that as a subordinate, I loved working with Maj. Gen. Oketta. He was very resoluteyet humane. In fact we knew that when he was serious, people would fear him but he always spoke with a smile on his face and that gave one assurance. He was visionary yet willing to account even to the subordinates of what he was doing. A few of us do that.

The late was very transparent. Each time you met Maj. Gen. Oketta, he would tell you what he had been doing and what he intends to do. He was good to his superiors and subordinates. People have said he would not grumble. We do not grumble; you wait for your commander to take the next decision.

Maj. Gen. Oketta was not a hypocrite. What you saw is what he had in his heart. Some of us smile with you but, like the death of Julius Caesar**,** a knife is hidden at the back. Maj. Gen. Oketta did not have that character in him.

Mr Speaker, the major general lying before us was a soldier and a commander. Those who served with him in battle will tell you this and I am here to report that actually, UPDF is not short of those generals that have surrendered their lives in the line of fire.

Concerning promotions, my colleagues are here and they will speak because I think we have been provoked to answer.

Mr Speaker, I am one of those who do not give value to speaking good things after somebody has befallen. Can this Parliament take a stand that when a Ugandan makes very significant contributions, as Maj. Gen. Oketta presented this country very well, we have occasion to give them the recognition they deserve when they are alive? Thank you, Mr Speaker.

4.05

**BRIG. INNOCENT OULA (UPDF Representative):** Thank you, Mr Speaker. I rise to support the motion. Death has again struck. You will recall that in a space of less than two years, UPDF has lost four generals. Sometime back, we brought the late Gen. Aronda’s body here. After that, Gen. Levi Karuhanga drove himself to Nakasero Hospital for check-up and he never came back. We were in a meeting of the senior command in Entebbe when after the meeting, Gen. Bamuze fell down and he was rushed to Nakasero Hospital. He was pronounced dead minutes after arrival. This is the fourth general we have lost.

Maj. Gen. Oketta was a selfless officer, a listener and a leader who served with passion and total commitment. Whenever he was given assignments, he would ensure that he accomplished them successfully and he never failed in any mission throughout his life. In the civil and public spheres, he would do his best to ensure that he accomplished what he set out to do.

The late was not only a leader in the military. You have just heard here that by the time Maj. Gen. Oketta died, he was the director in the Prime Minister’s Office in charge of emergency response. That is a civil office. Last year, he went to Liberia and as hon. Obua said, if it was one of us who was sent there, we would not have accepted because it was a fight against Ebola.

Concerning Ebola, I was of the view that, why should a military officer be sent? Why not a medical doctor? However, Maj. Gen. Oketta took it upon himself and succeeded. You heard it from here.

For those who have known him and for us who have stayed and worked with him, you would think that Maj. Gen. Oketta had never fallen sick due to his hard working nature. Even when he was sick, you would find him at his desk doing what he does best; working.

I have a testimony that I would like to share with you. In the Ninth Parliament I was in the lobby here and I met Maj. Gen. Oketta. He told me to sit down because he wanted to talk to me but I declined because for us in the army, when your senior is still standing, you cannot sit. I told him the reason I could not sit and he insisted that I should sit because he had a problem to share with me. I asked him what it was and he told me that the previous day, he had undergone an operation on his spine at Nakasero Hospital. However, the following day the officer was here at Parliament working.

When he looked at me, he saw that I had doubts on my face. He turned, unbuttoned his jacket, displayed his back and told me to check. When I checked, I found four drilled fresh holes just above the waistline. He did that to show me that what he was saying was true because he could not sit. He was standing because he had been advised by the doctors not to sit *–(Member timed out.)*

**GEN. TUMWINE:** Mr Speaker, can I request that I give half of my minutes to our brother to finish?

**THE DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Okay, then you will have three minutes.

**BRIG. OULA:** Thank you, General. That is how we work in the army; the juniors are always taken care of.

Maj. Gen. Oketta was a God-fearing person and I got to know this just a week before he died because I had an encounter with him. We had gone to his office to take some people there who wanted to meet him. However, he told us that we could not meet at his office and proposed a meeting the following day at 6.00 a.m. in the vicinity of Christ the King Church.

I went there the following morning at a quarter to 6.00 a.m. and sat in my car waiting. As soon as it clocked 6.00 a.m., I called him. He told me that he was in the church and requested that I wait for him. That is the general who lies before us here.

He was not only a church goer but even his deeds showed that he was a God-fearing person. If anybody went to him with a problem, he would not leave them without solving it or talking about it. That is the general I am talking about.

General, you have done your part and you have left us with all that you were supposed to do. The only thing that we shall remember you by is to continue with your work that you have done and accomplish it. We thank you. May your soul rest in eternal peace.

4.13

**GEN. ELLY TUMWINE (UPDF Representative):** Mr Speaker, I stand to second the motion but on a different note. In Africa, we fear death and we respect it. Can I emphasise the point of celebrating the life of our brother? This is because at one point in time, all of us will die so you better get ready for that moment. I am also ready. Generals do not seem to say bye as you people would wish. Rather, they go very fast.

Therefore, I request that we look at the life of Maj. Gen. Oketta that God allowed him to have with us and celebrate it. I wish to extend my condolences to the family. I was away so I have not been with you for the last two days; I just came back this morning.

I also wish to extend my condolences to the great family of the UPDF, to this family of Parliament and the greater family of the people of Uganda for which the late Maj. Gen. Oketta tirelessly worked up to his last day.

I would like to describe Maj. Gen. Oketta as a soldier’s General, as a people’s General, as a farmer’s General, as an academician’s General, as a conservationist for our environment General and as an internationalist and a Pan Africanist.

For the general as a soldier, I have had the opportunity to counsel all these generals, senior officers and juniors of the UPDF when they were at their highs or lows. Maj. Gen. Oketta was one who would tell you what he thought. Due to his loyalty and discipline, he would always seek advice on what to do. As I guided him, he would ask me if I thought that is what the Commander-in-Chief would like him to do. If I told him yes, that is what he would do.

He was loyal, disciplined and ready to sacrifice himself for his country. Before he went to Liberia, he disclosed that he was actually the one who had volunteered. When he went, to cut the story short because of time, we got phone calls from West Africa thanking the UPDF for the best officer they had ever had in that whole operation because he run it very well. *(Applause)*

Recently, when we were about to go for the parliamentary elections, Maj. Gen. Oketta told me that his name was not going to appear because he had been given an assignment that he loved most; that of wealth creation.

As a general of the people, hon. Oketta spent his life, the last 30 years that I have known him - Whenever there was anything that the people in his area in particular needed, he was at the forefront.

When we were in Kimaka together, we started a tree planting project and he was among the people who supported me immediately. He kept taking seedlings to the people in his area to plant. Whenever there were seeds, we sometimes get these seeds, he was always involved in the activities of his community *–(Member timed out.)*

**THE DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Please wind up.

**GEN. TUMWINE:** Mr Speaker, I am winding up. I attended his graduation at Ndejje University last month. That is when I last embraced him. The vice chancellor called him up and gave him a prize because the university was thanking him for being an exemplary person and it made me very proud.

4.18

**GEN. EDWARD KATUMBA WAMALA (UPDF Representative):** Mr Speaker, I also rise to support the motion. Already, a lot has been said. However, I would also like to make a few remarks as well as corrections. One is that we have overcome and left behind us the issue of who came from which army, as far as the UPDF is concerned.

I am a product of the UNLA, which Maj. Gen. Oketta, Gen. Oula and Gen. Tumwine served. This is a national army, as I speak. With all the imperfections still with us as the UPDF, we have made strides. UPDF is one of the armies within the region where people are coming to do case studies of how we have managed to integrate various armies and various combatants into the national army, including the LRA.

As I speak, we have combatants who have been in the LRA, holding officer ranks in the UPDF. Therefore, let us forget about what has happened and move on.

The second correction I would like to make is that when Maj. Gen. Oketta was a lieutenant in Masaka, the commanding officer at that time was the late Tibamuleke and not Olanya Ojara.

Mr Speaker, to me Maj. Gen. Oketta has been an accomplished officer. He is one officer who has served with a lot of diligence and commitment. He has had a positive attitude about work. Whatever work you give him, he will go and work. Therefore, the issue of whether he was in the best of positions or the worst of positions does not arise as far as he was concerned. I actually feel sorry that people are talking negative things, which I do not think that Maj. Gen. Oketta would like to hear about his performance and about his role in the army and also in the nation.

When he was given Operation Wealth Creation, I cannot forget when I went to close the first course in Makerere and my friends from the media said, “You people in uniform, what have you come to do in Operation Wealth Creation, which is an agricultural sector? What do you understand?”

I am happy that today, much as Maj. Gen. Oketta is gone, to say that with people like Maj. Gen. Oketta, I told the media that the UPDF has never failed and we shall not fail. Maj. Gen. Oketta has led Operation Wealth Creation to the levels where it is now and I think the future is bright, if the legal issues are addressed as already referred to by hon. Obua.

Maj. Gen. Oketta was a good combatant and also a peace maker. He contributed enormously in the dislodging of the holy spirit movement of Alice Lakwena in the north. Among the battles he is remembered for was the one in 1987 when the late Dr Maj. Gen. Julius Oketta heroically broke the backbone of the holy spirit forces; the defensive position in Corner Kilak in Pader.

Again, in 1987, he, together with other forces, was able to fight a very decisive battle in Busoga, defeating the holy spirit movement. Maj. Gen. Oketta again contributed during the fight against Kony forces in 1993 in Alero. It was a very good battle and he showed very good leadership in the battle.

He also commanded the battle of Olamunyu, following the enemy massacre of the people in Atiak on 20 April, 1995. He has been an officer who accounts for his rank, not just the ranks on the shoulders. If you gave him a task, be it in the battle field or in any other areas, he would accomplish it.

When we went to the Prime Minister’s Office in disaster preparedness, people thought, what does an army general know about disaster? I think hon. Ecweru is here to tell us, and I think he has already done so, how much he contributed in that field.

Maj. Gen. Oketta was one of the most educated UPDF officers and a well-defined professional in all his accomplishments, both in Uganda and beyond. He was a results-oriented person.

For those of us who are in the Operation Wealth Creation Committee of Parliament, you may recall the day he led the team to that committee and how he articulated what Operation Wealth Creation was doing and how it was going to contribute in changing the level and standard of agriculture in our country.

Mr Speaker, Maj. Gen. Oketta as you have already heard, has been a very humble person - *(Member timed out.)*

**THE DEPUTY SPEAKER:** General, your time is up. Thank you.

4.24

**MR ABDU KATUNTU (FDC, Bugweri County, Iganga):** Thank you, Mr Speaker. On behalf of the people of Bugweri County and indeed on my own behalf, I would like to extend our heartfelt sympathies to the family, the widow and the children of Julius. More importantly, Mr Speaker, I would like to thank you for giving us this opportunity, as a House, to be recalled from recess to pay tribute to our fallen colleague because it is not every day.

In that box, lies the golden child of this country, an army officer by perfection, a state military officer and not a regime military officer. The difference between the two defines who a professional soldier is; that you can rise from all regimes and serve your country in a non-partisan way.

This is the reason why we can see former Members of Parliament who were in the Opposition, like the hon. Alice Alaso, the former secretary general of the major opposition party, coming to pay tribute to Maj. Gen. Oketta. This signifies what even the Opposition thinks about Maj. Gen. Oketta.

He respected the national colours he put on. In these third world countries and armies, soldiers do not respect the colours they put on. You are national soldiers, you are our soldiers. This is the Uganda People’s Defence Forces, which should be able to outlive the current regime and serve the next because there will be a regime, come what may, in future; another regime, which is not NRM.

Therefore, if we have people like Maj. Gen. Oketta, as a country we need to be proud of them. He was a decent man, he was a civilized military officer. They are not many.

What I have been hearing today are not lies but the truth, unless you did not know Maj. Gen. Oketta. What he epitomised is humility. Until you knew that he was a general, you may wish to imagine that he did not have the pips on his shoulders and imagine that he is an ordinary soldier.

He had a background with my late father in the Save Uganda Movement (SUM). At a personal level, he used to call me, “son” because of that relationship he had with my father in SUM. From SUM to UNLA to NRA to UPDF, he was serving his country and not necessarily the political leadership at that time or in those various regimes.

Gen. Katumba Wamala, if you had a real officer, it was Gen. Oketta. We may not say that about some of your officers because we know what they do. What they do does not only hurt them but also hurts the country because they abuse the trust and confidence, which we have in our national army.

Mr Speaker, this gentleman was an intellectual. When he heard that I had been designated as chairperson of the Committee on Statutory Authorities and State Enterprises, he compiled a list of all the institutions and he told me to meet him at a washing bay on Lugogo Bypass. He asked me why we have all these institutions and yet some of them are doing the same thing. He told me, “If you have this responsibility, why don’t you harmonise them?” and he gave the example of Uganda National Roads Authority, Uganda Road Fund, Ministry of Local Government Road Fund, Ministry of Works road toll fees and various institutions doing the same things. This is duplicity and wastage of public money. (*Member timed out.*)

4.30

**MS BETTY AMONGI (UPC, Oyam County South, Oyam):** Thank you, Mr Speaker. I stand to second the motion. I learnt of the death of Maj. Gen. Oketta in Gulu on Saturday morning. I had gone to Amuru on Friday and the first stopover I made on my way to Amuru was on the farm of Maj. Gen. Oketta.

The team that toured Amuru with me was taking me through the history of the land and one issue struck me about Maj. Gen. Oketta on that Friday. I was told that Amuru District Land Board had issued him more than 20,000 hectares of land but when the issues of land became problematic, he went back to the district and told them he was sacrificing land on one side of the road, which was over 10,000 hectares, for the people of Amuru. He chose to retain land on the other side of the road, which is about 10,000 hectares, according to what I was told.

He was a major general and he had the capacity to retain all the land that he was allocated. However, because people were complaining that they were coming from war and they wanted land to be re-distributed, he decided to forego the bigger chunk of this land and remain with the smaller one.

When I was appointed a minister, I met this man and he congratulated me. He came to my office, where he saw a flag and a portrait of the President behind me. When he sat down in my office, he asked me to turn behind which I did. He asked whether I saw what was behind me and I said “No”. He asked me to look properly and I said that there was a portrait of the President. He then said, “Look properly, there is a flag behind you. That man in the portrait is serving that flag. You, seated here, you are serving that flag. That is what I want you from today onwards to understand. You are seated here serving that flag and the portrait behind you is serving that flag.”

I got thinking about what he said and I thought to myself, the President of the country is serving Uganda and this man is telling me that I am supposed to serve this country. That is the man lying here. It means that for him, service was serving Uganda. He always advised each one of us and he remained an embodiment of a non-partisan professional soldier as stipulated in the Constitution, as you have heard from both sides of the House. He served everybody.

The embodiment of a professional soldier was manifested in this man. Today, we escort you in dignity and pride. As for me, as I serve this country, I shall always remember those words - service to the flag - and the flag is escorting you today. Rest in eternal peace.

4.35

**MS FRANCA AKELLO (FDC, Woman Representative, Agago):** Thank you, Mr Speaker. I am dumbfounded this afternoon as we pay tribute to our gallant son that lies before this House.

On Friday, the Public Accounts Committee, which I serve, had a whole day of meetings from 9.00 a.m. till 10.00p.m. However, as I drove back home, my husband, who has been upcountry in his village home in Adilang, called me. I had seen so many of his calls but I did not have an opportunity the whole day to speak to him. He said he had been trying to reach me but there were scanty funny messages he was seeing on Facebook. He asked me to crosscheck because he did not want to believe that Maj. Gen. Oketta had died. That is how I received the message of the death of our fallen son, Mr Speaker.

The late Maj. Gen. Oketta called me on Wednesday evening to remind me about the commitment he had made last year to the people of Agago about multiplication of cassava cuttings. He called me and said, “You civilian authority…” - as he has usually called us – “…have you prepared the 10 acres for early planting next year as you promised to help multiply cassava cuttings for your people?”

Mr Speaker, I am trying to give this as a background to show and also to confirm the commitment of the late Maj. Gen. Oketta to civilian authority and his selfless service to this country. In whatever position he served in his country, he still spared time after his work, even at night, to call an individual Member of Parliament because he had made a commitment. I thought this deserved mentioning. I would like to thank him because as the honourable Gen. Tumwine said, we should celebrate the life of the late Maj. Gen. Oketta. I would like to celebrate it because he was serving this country.

Mr Speaker, as we went to bury hon. Odonga Otto’s father, I was sharing with my colleagues what I went through as a little girl being abducted three times by the LRA. I do remember hon. Oyet, who also at one point served in the auxiliary forces called Kilil, was trying to share with us his experiences in Kilil as well. I do remember him mentioning the name of the late, saying that if there is someone who served this country so diligently and contributed highest to the end of the LRA war, and whom we should give respect to, it is none other than Maj. Gen. Oketta, who is lying here. Hon. Oyet is here and he can attest to that.

Mr Speaker, when I received the news of the death of the late-(*Member timed out)*

4.40

**MR STEPEHN MUKITALE (Independent, Buliisa County, Buliisa):** Thank you so much, Mr Speaker. Condolences from the Kingdom of Bunyoro, the neighbouring and mother kingdom. I would like, as an independent, to agree entirely and support the motion moved by the Rt Hon. Prime Minister.

Mr Speaker and colleagues, we celebrate the life of a God-fearing general. In Rotary, we talk about service above self; he was a servant leader who was now working on transformational leadership in Operation Wealth Creation. Colleagues, when I saw this pan-Africanist patriot, who served as a paramedic during the challenges of Ebola in West Africa as if he was a doctor from *Médecins Sans Frontières,* being rolled in with a portrait, I thought to myself that all of us here will one by one come through the same door. What is important is the legacy we leave.

Maj. Gen. Julius Oketta was a symbol of the ugly past we do not like. Some people are still living in denial. I would like to encourage the Tenth Parliament to own our ugly past and move away from the denial stage. There are gallant sons of this country who served the Uganda Army of Amin and were never allowed to practice after that. There are gallant sons of this country who served the UNLA and never got a chance to serve this country. As the Tenth Parliament, we should not allow this to happen to our gallant sons of UPDF. Mistakes have been made and they should not be repeated. If you continue denying them, we shall repeat those mistakes.

As a young man, when this country was in conflict I was trading in Congo. I found mechanics from good departments of the Ugandan army – the mechanized brigade- in Bunia, Goma, Auzi, Wacha. We were told here last time that our pilots are just retiring from Gadhafi’s airforce and some have been serving other airlines. It is unfortunate that we have again gone through recruiting another brand of other citizens to do the same jobs.

In other armies, some of those departments do not go with the regime. Stop having wishful thinking; the rebellion and conflicts in this country for about 30 years were fuelled by those soldiers who were abandoned. I know those who came from Bunyoro to join the NRM and I know the northern war was also largely fuelled by them. Why don’t we have a moment of truce? We do not have to do it the South African way. Why don’t we state some facts that a general in Acholi has gone and we may not get another one in the next 20 years? If we are leaders worth our name as the Tenth Parliament, the challenge is ours not to wish off.

I am an advocate of nation building and national dialogue; I do not think it is too much for us to audit the army and the police and ask if we represent the national composition as the Constitution says. It is easier to do it when we are still in charge; otherwise, it will be done, God forbid, the way others have done it.

Let us just have the courage to own our ugly past. Gen. Katumba is here, he can bear witness, and Gen. Saleh if he was here - In Buliisa, I had eight senior officers who were in Monduli with Gen Katumba -*(Member timed out)*

4.46

**LT GEN. HENRY TUMUKUNDE (EXOFFICIO and Minister for Security)**: Mr Speaker, maybe it is important that we thank you for calling all of us here to give special honour to Maj. Gen Oketta. I would like to support the motion as moved by the Rt Hon. Prime Minister.

I would like to quote Theodore Roosevelt: *“If there is not the war, you don’t get the great general; if there is not a great occasion, you don’t get the great statesman; if Lincoln had lived in times of peace, no one would have known his name now. Comrades, let us keep the struggle.”* I think this is the only time that an American leader mentioned anything about a struggle.

Mr Speaker, I was appointed a division commander in northern Uganda and as soon as I got there, Ebola broke out. Maj. Gen Oketta was the reserve commander and therefore the most senior officer next to me. I heard people are worried about ranks. The general who crossed Kagera from Tanzania was not necessarily the most senior officer appointed. Some of these things do not have to worry you so much. Gen. Mayunga was not the Chief of Defence Forces of the Tanzanian Peoples Defence Forces.

When I went to the north, I called Maj. Gen Oketta to the headquarters. This was a time when Gulu was besieged by war. We had IDPs and minimum medical facilities. Lacor Hospital was the only functional facility. We had very strong opposition, meaning that mobilising the population in this kind of situation was extremely difficult. I sat with Maj. Gen. Oketta and discussed how we were going to handle that situation. Every minute that passed, the situation was getting worse. I am trying to tell you about the dedication of the commander that we have here.

With Maj. Gen. Oketta, night and day, minute and second we were running around and at no time would I look behind thinking this officer was acting contrary to the general good. When we lost one of the most prominent doctors, Dr Lukwiya, I saw him shed tears. He was an extremely courageous person and I had never seen him shed tears before. However, I was with him and we faced it all together, even mobilizing at that time to move a motion to make sure that we save our people from dying. We worked together with Maj. Gen. Oketta and that, for me, is what I recall as his greatest moment of maximum performance.

I do not think it is fair to try and label Maj. Gen. Oketta as having not been very well treated. He was, of course, very well treated. He was not treated a certain way because of where he came from. He was treated very well because he was a grand performer. I would like to tell you that he was a grand performer. *(Applause)*

It is in these kinds of circumstances where you test leaders; that is where you test generals’ resilience and leadership. I can give you my assurance and word, – I would have lost a lot if I did not mention this – that in all these difficult times as we invited people to support us and everyone was dodging because they feared Ebola, I was with this man all through, day and night.

Honourable members, when such an officer dies, it is always right that we honour him. I am satisfied beyond reasonable doubt that hon. Oketta has been truly honoured. Let no words follow his soul that are not correct like sectarian utterances and the like. These things happen to many of us and it is not because of where we come from. In his own exceptional case, he was a distinguished officer of this army, and I can tell you without mincing words that there will be few of them that shall be created in this form and content. You can really look at the quality -*(Member timed out.)*

4.52

**MR MUSA ECWERU (NRM, AMURIA COUNTY, AMURIA):** Mr Speaker, first of all, I rise to support the motion moved by the Rt Hon. Prime Minister. In doing that, I would like to state that no amount of time is adequate for us to eulogise this legendary man, the late Maj. Gen. Julius Oketta.

Given the limited time available to me, Sir, allow me to just state two things, the first being a personal experience as a beneficiary of Maj. Gen. Oketta’s courage. I was posted to Gulu, after Nebbi, as a Resident District Commissioner (RDC). Mr Speaker, Gulu then was a big district and I served all of you there. I went there with a lot of zeal to do mobilisation and sometimes I did not listen very much to my generals. Lt Gen. Tumukunde was my division commander and I would go to him and say, “I want to go and mobilise in this corner of the district.” Lt Gen. Tumukunde would tell me, “Do not go there yet because the situation is not very good”, but I would insist that I could go and many times I risked.

This time round, I went to Anaka to do my mobilisation against the orders of Lt Gen. Tumukunde. The enemy, the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA), decided that they must either capture me alive or at least kill me. However, while I was in Anaka, Lt Gen. Tumukunde and his team were monitoring and they got to know that LRA had already prepared an ambush between Anaka and Gulu – that area around Koch Goma.

This man lying here went to Lt Gen. Tumukunde and got equipment and sent me a message to us not to leave Anaka until he comes. He came with a force and cleared the way, literally fighting for over 45 minutes. It was 45 minutes of constant engagement between the people who wanted to take me either dead or alive and the man who was not my blood brother but committed to setting me free. After clearing the place, he got me in Anaka.

Of course, I was dumfounded because I had only five bodyguards. He told me, “You are not going to sit in your pick-up truck; you are going to sit in my mamba. I have been directed by the division commander to take you up to the division headquarters”. My small car had to follow. He brought me to safety and probably, that is why I am able to stand here today. That was Maj. Gen. Oketta. *(Applause)*

I did not know that many years after, I would become a Member of Parliament and a minister responsible for emergencies. In 2006, President Museveni was kind to make me a minister and I stood here to accept the responsibilities for emergencies. I sat with Prof. Nsibambi, the then Prime Minister, and Prof. Kabwegyere to design the National Emergency Coordination and Operation Centre (NECOC). We realised that the only group that could help us lead this centre would be the army.

Prof. Nsibambi and Prof. Kabwegyere directed me to write to the Ministry of Defence requesting them to second an officer to drive the process of the establishment of the NECOC. Gen. Aronda replied by deploying a general to our office. When I was told that it was Maj. Gen. Oketta coming, I thought our paths had met again. Indeed, Maj. Gen. Oketta came and many people thought he had been demoted by coming to the NECOC. However, the man came with enthusiasm and zeal and said “this is where I belong”.

Mr Speaker, in 2007 Teso experienced very devastating floods and the country declared a state of emergency. Maj. Gen. Oketta and I were directed to go and establish a forward office at the national flying school in Soroti; the honourable Maj. Gen. Oketta provided all the guidance and inspiration. The UPDF was kind to give us a helicopter and the UN gave us helicopters and in our humble way, we made a difference.

As if that was not enough, my in-laws in Kasese experienced floods in 2013. There is one thing about this man, and I want to say this so that some of the technical people who might be here can hear - Many technical people will want per diem and fuel even to respond to an emergency. However, Maj. Gen. Oketta would call us and say, “Mr Minister, I will go with whatever is in the tank. If there is any reinforcement, it will get me in the field.” *(Applause)* He became the face of humanitarian work -*(Member timed out.)*

**THE DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Your time is up. Please, wind up.

**MR ECWERU:** Mr Speaker, there are very many things to say about this man – the floods, the Bududa crisis and above all, what they have said about the African Union. However, I can say that I am happy to see smart officers here. One statement was made - a smart man physically, a smart man in the head and a smart man in the heart. Maj. Gen. Oketta was very humble. How I wish we could see many like him.

I can tell this country that a humanitarian worker has died. In his death, for some of us who have been patriots working with him there is a feeling of emptiness. I hope God will raise many people who will fill the void. May the soul of Maj. Gen. Oketta rest in eternal peace.

4.58

**MR PETER OGWANG (NRM, Usuk County, Katakwi):** Mr Speaker, I rise to second the motion. A lot has been said about the late Maj. Gen. Oketta. I would like to give my account about the late because I worked closely with him in the Committee on Presidential Affairs in the Ninth Parliament. He served the committee for five years.

Mr Speaker, first of all, I would like to begin with a request to your office and I am also happy that I am a member of the Parliamentary Commission. When I saw a DVD being played with the late talking when he was in this august House, it was just about three or four clips. I would like to request your office and mine to try to do more about recording Members’ contributions and what honourable members discuss in the committees of this august House.

My chairperson, hon. Fred Mwesigye, is here. The late in our committee was a consultant. The late was the only person who could stand to pour water in order to cool situations on controversial issues that arose in the committee. The word he would use was “civil authority”.

Mr Speaker, I remember there were two controversial issues. One of them was the resettlement of the Bukwo and the Kween people. The committee visited those areas with Maj. Gen. Oketta. He sat in the van well aware of the bad roads in those places. When we reached there, the situation was very pathetic. I left the committee as the vice-chairperson but from what the late Maj. Gen. Oketta saw in that area, he came back – Rt Hon. Prime Minister, this is for you. Up to now, the problems in Bukwo and Kween are still persisting; could you help the late Maj. Gen. Oketta to address those problems?

Mr Speaker, within the committee, issues of Kampala Capital City Authority (KCCA) arose, and I recall whenever there were disagreements in KCCA and we called them to interface with the committee, the late would always remind the people about what Kampala is. He would say that Kampala is the capital city of Uganda; it is on record.

What am I trying to say here? Mr Speaker, it is true that the late died when he had just been posted to handle Operation Wealth Creation. While attending committee meetings, one major thing the late Maj. Gen. Oketta interested me in very much was to go into farming as a young man. He would always ask me, “Do you have land?” This is the most painful time for me and my family - the demise of Maj. Gen. Oketta. Hardly two weeks back, Maj. Gen. Oketta called me and said, “Ogwang, I have a programme to move into Teso sub region. I would like to begin mobilising farmers to help us handle Operation Wealth Creation; do you have land?” That was his question to me.

I had a meeting scheduled tomorrow with Maj. Gen. Oketta in his office. Now, here I am today mourning a great friend, a leader who would respect authority irrespective of age. Maj. Gen. Oketta was a leader and a soldier. I would like to make a request to the generals here. I normally read in the newspapers that you build units in various upcoming barracks. It is my humble appeal that Maj. Gen. Oketta is named in one of the barracks in this country as one great leader who served in the Uganda People’s Defence Forces.

Mr Speaker, Members have also talked about promotions. Honourable colleagues, I think let us not use this forum to talk about promotions in the UPDF. Can we give Maj. Gen. Oketta a befitting farewell other than using this forum to talk about promotions? We are entitled to come here and move such motions but for today, let us pay respect to the late Maj. Gen. Oketta. I say all this for God and my country. May his soul rest in eternal peace.

5.04

**COL (RTD) FRED MWESIGYE (NRM, Nyabushozi County, Kiruhura):** Thank you, Mr Speaker. It is very sad that we mourn our great comrade here. We learnt of his death and we got shocked.

Mr Speaker, I got to know Maj. Gen. Oketta in 1979, when we met at a training school in Havana. From that time, tribe and rank never separated us. We remained friends although we were separated by unclear circumstances in 1981, but when we joined up in 1985 in Masaka, we again became friends.

Mr Speaker, Maj. Gen. Oketta helped us as NRA to recapture Mbarara, which had proved to be a bit difficult. He was among a few officers who went with us to negotiate the surrender of Mbarara. He had forgotten and put away all the differences we had at that time; we became one.

Maj. Gen. Oketta worked with me in the Committee on Presidential Affairs. As my colleague has said, he was very tenacious, consistent, committed and passionate in whatever he did. He loved this country. He was a very courageous general but very humble. As the Leader of the Opposition said, he was indeed the epitome of humility.

Mr Speaker, Maj. Gen. Oketta was a true Ugandan. All these things you are saying about tribes, ranks, promotions were never in his vocabulary. Maj. Gen. Oketta was an officer, he was a general and he was a gentleman.

When Maj. Gen. Oketta went to pursue his education, he shared with me and encouraged me to go for further education. I went to Makerere University and we were always in touch. We shared a lot in common. We shall miss a friend as the family of UPDF, as the family of this Parliament and as the family of all Ugandans.

We have lost a great man, a great leader and great cadre. It is not easy for anyone to be called a cadre. You can be called a leader but not a cadre. Maj. Gen. Oketta was a cadre. He was very versatile. He could be deployed anywhere and anytime. That is a sign of a cadre – someone who never complains wherever he or she is deployed even where you think it will not be befitting. That is a sign of being a cadre. Maj. Gen. Oketta was a true cadre, he was a true leader and role model to many of us. We shall live to remember his legacy.

Mr Speaker, we are here to pay tribute to a great comrade but not to criticize. It is absurd and he would not have loved that. Therefore, we should try to emulate what he has been striving for if we really loved Maj. Gen. Oketta. Let us try to help his family wherever we meet them. I would like to call upon the family members; we may not remember you tomorrow but when you meet us, please say you are a relative of Maj. Gen. Oketta and we shall help you as long as we live. May God rest his soul in eternal peace.

5.09

**MS LILLY ADONG (Independent, Woman Representative, Nwoya):** Thank you, Mr Speaker. Allow me join my colleagues in paying tribute to my brother, the calf of an elephant as we used to fondly call ourselves. You know, Acholi’s symbol is an elephant, so each time he met me, he would call me the daughter or calf of an elephant. Today, he is gone.

I convey my condolences to the family. To the widow, be strong; it has happened. He will never come back but he will live within the family. Be courageous and carry on with his spirit. I know all these friends who are sitting here will be there to stand by you when you are in need.

A lot has been said about my brother but I will only say a few things. I would like to thank him for setting standards for what a people’s general should be like. His humility did not have boundaries. He would always bow down and say, “I respect the civilian authority”, whether you joined Parliament today or you are smart or not.

I also would like to thank him for being an exemplary army officer at that rank who showed that you can still be great and people can remember you even if you do not grab for yourself all the wealth of this country. We will remember him for that. He lived a simple life in the UPDF but he was tough where he was supposed to be hard as duty demanded.

I also would like to thank him for keeping the image of the UPDF and carrying the flag of the country high wherever he went. He never joked about anything he was given and I thank him for that. That is the standard we will live to cherish.

I must say I walk with my head high because I come from the region he came from and he did his work without anything that stained his image. I would like to encourage the family to walk with their heads high. He served and left a good legacy without any court cases against him. Therefore, he left us with no encumbrances. Maybe if they are there, then they are yet to come but they are not known to us yet.

I also take this opportunity to thank H.E President Yoweri Museveni for having the insight to professionalise the army, which gave the opportunity to my brother to rise from senior four to where God took him from. It is not easy to be a serving army officer and read at the same time. For us here in Parliament, given the pressure and nature of our work, we may not read and yet opportunities are there but the UPDF is doing it.

I also would like to thank everybody who supported him and made his work easy and those who came out boldly in praising him. I invite people to come with us to send him off in his home in Amuru. May God rest his soul in eternal peace.

5.13

**MR FRANCIS MWIJUKYE (FDC, Buhweju County, Buhweju):** Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. I rise to support the motion.

Mr Speaker, there is what they call a sense of entitlement. When most people get to high ranks, it gets to their brains and they speak as if they are from Mars. He was not one of those. You hear people in some offices saying, “We shall crush you”. I would like to speak as the commander of the civilian authority, the unarmed forces; we see these things but we would like to salute him for being a good man even with a big rank.

We are also concerned as civilians that the most popular officers in the army die just like that of stomach pain, chest pain, lung problems and heart failures. Unfortunately, the army representatives are not very patient like him. I do not see most of them here. Maybe the Minister of Defence and the Army Commander needs to find out why most of the best army officers die just like that. Otherwise, we are concerned. Somebody asked how generals could die just like that. I would like to salute him once again and wish him eternal rest.

**THE DEPUTY SPEAKER:** I would like to now deal with the new Members of Parliament.

5.16

**MR ONESIMUS TWINAMASIKO (Independent, Bugangaizi County East, Kibaale):** Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. I support the motion moved by the Prime Minister and Leader of Government Business to pay tribute to the late Dr Julius Oketta. The death of Maj. Gen. Oketta is indeed a big loss to the people of Uganda and the whole continent.

Before joining Parliament, I was in the media practice and we used to write a lot about Maj. Gen. Oketta - not the bad side but the good one. It is because these days what mostly attracts the media is negative stories like corruption, but we used to write about Maj. Gen. Julius Oketta on a positive note.

Mr Speaker, Maj. Gen. Oketta was a very courageous man who contributed much towards the stability and liberation of this country. The general lying here in Parliament commanded many operations as earlier said by the Prime Minister and Leader of Government Business, the Minister of Defence, and the Leader of the Opposition, hon. Winifred Kiiza. He commanded operations against the LRA rebels and the ADF and he succeeded. He commanded operations against Ebola in West Africa and now West Africans are living in an environment free of Ebola. He commanded the operation of rescuing the lives of people who had been trapped in the Bududa landslides and Kasese floods. The late Maj. Gen. Oketta had now been commanding an operation against poverty in this country.

The Bible says in II Timothy 4:7, “*I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race and I have kept the faith*”. Maj. Gen. Oketta has fought a good fight and he has finished his race as a legislator and a freedom fighter. Maj. Gen. Oketta, rest in peace.

5.19

**MR JAMES WALUSWAKA (NRM, Bunyole West County, Butaleja):** Thank you, Mr Speaker. I learnt of the death of Maj. Gen. Oketta on Saturday at 9.00 p.m. when I was in Mbale at the mortuary trying to get the bodies of 11 people - citizens of this country who perished in a motor accident along Tororo-Mbale Highway. They were going to Butaleja and a trailer rammed into their taxi. They told me at that time that Maj. Gen. Oketta had died. I took heart and said let me first bury the citizens from Butaleja and then I will go and pay tribute to the general.

Mr Speaker, I thought Maj. Gen. Oketta was an engineer because he helped the engineering fraternity a lot. Floods and landslides are problems that are handled by engineers and this gentleman really did what was required of him in handling these problems. When I was still a technical officer, I was part of a technical team and I analysed soil samples because of the slope failure in Bududa and Gen. Oketta was there.

Mr Speaker, we have lost Maj. Gen. Oketta at a time when the country needs him most. Projects like the Standard Gauge Railway need officers with the same military training, where when it is time to look for faults and rectify them, they do not say, “I am sick” or “I am going to see my country home, my family”. It is unfortunate that Maj. Gen. Oketta has gone.

Mr Speaker, as a country, we have lost Maj. Gen. Oketta and I pray that his family gets what they desire. I feel bad when a family of such a colleague is tossed here and there. I will come here on the Floor of Parliament and speak; even if I hear *wolokoso,* I will consult with the area Member to find out whether they have been handled and I will come here. However, I know this is *kisanja hakuna muchezo,* meaning “term of no jokes”; I know the President is going to handle that because this is *kisanja hakuna muchezo*.

Finally, Mr Speaker, as a church elder in the Seventh Day Adventist Church, I would like to say that the Bible says that we should not mourn as those without hope. Maj. Gen. Oketta is resting and I know we shall meet him again. May the Good Lord rest his soul in eternal peace. For God and my country.

5.23

**MR HERBERT ARIKO (FDC, Soroti Municipality, Soroti):** Mr Speaker, indeed, I would like to join my colleagues in paying tribute to an illustrious son of Uganda.

The late Maj. Gen. Oketta was an icon of pacification. At the height of the rebellion in Teso, when no one could move out of Soroti Town, when nobody could probably travel by car, he was posted there as brigade commander. The late Maj. Gen. Oketta brought in a different perspective to the pacification of Teso. He engaged the people of Teso in discussion and negotiation about their grievances. He brought the NRA, whom we in Teso regarded as “Orugeny”, meaning “tall and thin people”, because of the attitude we had.

He led us to have a different perspective of the army and slowly by slowly, the leaders and elders of Teso began to speak not only with Government but also with NRA, until we had some of the generals or senior army officers of the then Uganda People’s Army (UPA) come out. A case in point is the late -(*Interjection*)- Hon. Hillary Onek, I am not yet - The late Jesus Ojirot surrendered at the time when the late Maj. Gen. Oketta was brigade commander.

He was a man full of compassion. The school where hon. Musa Ecweru went to, Teso College Aloet, witnessed an incident in March 1989 when the NRA were ambushed and they suffered a number of causalities. The reaction then of the army was to go for an operation in which all the teachers, students and the people neighbouring the school were rounded off and taken to do “*Chuchuma”,* meaning frog-jumping, around the Soroti county headquarters.

For the whole day, right from morning to sunset, the students and teachers of Teso College Aloet and the local community were going through punishment for the ambush. When Maj. Gen. Oketta heard about what had happened, he went there and asked, “Who did this and who authorised this kind of operation? I direct that all the students and the teachers be released and they go back to school.” Probably without that kind of approach, Members of Parliament like the hon. Cosmas Elotu may not have been here because they were students of Teso College Aloet. He was a man who thought about people and he saw that those that were innocent and were not part of the war should not have been punished for what was going on in Teso then.

He was a political commissar who knew how to combine aspects of the military together with changing the mind-set of the people. Mr Speaker, the late Maj. Gen. Oketta, whom we mourn here today, introduced, together with the late Tom Apila, what we used to call “Friday classes” in Soroti. Every Friday at 3.00 p.m. everyone, regardless of which area you came from, had to go to Soroti public gardens and there were politicisation programmes on what the cost and probably the benefit of peace would be like. That way, people now started to think differently from what they had been previously.

I know that some people may not know this, but was ringing on the background of the then ruthless approach of the 65th battalion, needless to mention the massacre of over 30 people around Otuchopi by the Alpha Brigade. However, when Maj. Gen. Oketta came, he said “There shall be an end to an approach of what was called then “*Kifagio”,* meaning a broom. I know that the people of Teso mourn a gallant Ugandan who came and relieved them of the worry of what was being called or threatened as *Kifagio*.

He was a disciplinarian. At the height of the rebellion in Teso, people used to die, even in the middle of Soroti Town; as long as there was a brawl, you would be killed. I recall, young as I was then, there was a girl called Taaka who lived in Kengere where I grew up. She was killed by a soldier and a court martial was put in place. I recall that it was about 5.00 p.m. and that soldier was killed by firing squad after it was confirmed that he was the one that killed Taaka. After this, people started to think that it was not about “us” and “them” and we probably needed to take a different approach that would bring peace. He was a social – *(Member timed out.)*

5.29

**MR EDWARD SEMBATYA (NRM, Katikamu County South, Luweero):** I thank you, Mr Speaker. I also rise to support the motion moved by the Prime Minister.

I knew the late Maj. Gen. Julius Oketta as a disciplined man and humble army officer. During the Eighth Parliament, he came to one of our accounts offices where I was working then, requesting for some information on his emoluments. However, he found us busy discussing some issues with the staff and he said, “Sir, I am sorry that I have found you busy but will you allow me to wait in the next office until you finish the discussion?” I replied that I would serve him first and then we could continue with our discussion. I was very surprised to find such a senior army officer and MP so humble and respectful to Parliament staff. This is a great man that we have lost.

The President was busy last week monitoring Operation Wealth Creation in my Katikamu County South constituency. Maj. Gen. Oketta was the deputy to Gen. Salim Saleh in Operation Wealth Creation. The people of Luweero and Nakaseke have high hope in the programme and we are going to miss his service. May the Almighty God take care of his family and rest his soul in eternal peace.

**THE DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Honourable members, we have 30 minutes to close. Can we now reduce the time to three minutes? If I go by five minutes, then not all of you will be able to speak. I will stop at 6.00 p.m. on the dot. So do we do three or five minutes?

**HON. MEMBERS:** Three minutes.

**THE DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Three minutes. I thank you.

5.32

**MR CHARLES ENGOLA (NRM, Oyam County North, Oyam):** Mr Speaker, I rise to support the motion. I propose that Maj. Gen. Oketta should be a hero. His name should enter the roll of heroes in Uganda. *(Applause)*

I knew Maj. Gen. Oketta from far back as 1982 when he was still a foot soldier and I was his commander. He did a few tremendous things that shocked me. The first rank that I gave him was corporal because he was a good driver who saved a child whom we narrowly missed crashing with our car. He was able to lift the car on one side by driving on two tyres over the child. We all thought the child had died but when we stopped, we found that the child was alive and unharmed. All this happened at the time we were going to rescue police officers who had been hit by the first bomb in Makulubita. We narrowly crashed that child, so there and then I told him that from that day, he was a corporal. By the way, we used to call the late Facki.

When we returned, I recommended him to go for a junior officer’s course in Nakingweya where he excelled and attained the rank of second lieutenant. He was later posted to Masaka where he surrendered from. He also convinced me while I was in Mbarara to surrender. *(Applause)* Col Mwesigye was there and he witnessed this.

As a senior officer, Col Mwesigye picked the two of us and we signed a memorandum of understanding not to fight the NRA. Col Mwesigye split us; he decided to make me his Aide de Camp (ADC) and Oketta would join the group because I had trained him. I am a specialist in air defence and artillery and I had trained him very well in air defence. *(Applause) (Member timed out.)*

**THE DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Please, prepare to wind up.

**MR CHARLES ENGOLA:** The bombs that could sound like his name were a result of my training of Maj. Gen. Oketta and I am very proud of him.

There are two issues that I am left with. When hon. Oketta went to Bududa, he again called me to look for ways in which we could support the people of Bududa. This assured me that Maj. Gen. Oketta was not in the army for himself or for tribal issues like what some Members were saying here. He was there for humanitarian issues. He did the same in UNLA and continued to do so until the time of his death in the UPDF.

The Operation Wealth Creation is a success. Many of us failed NAADS at the district level where I was for 10 years. Maj. Gen. Oketta and Gen. Salim Saleh were now streamlining things. Had Maj. Gen. Oketta worked along tribal grounds, he would be working in the north and I would not be the Minister of State for Defence today. I am a Langi from the north. *(Applause)* I can comment about so many people here. Here is the Minister of Health; if it was tribalism, do you think this Government would have allowed the health minister to come from the north? This House should stop this issue of tribalism. Let us continue to develop the country. I thank you.

5.38

**MS SUSAN LAKOT (UPDF Representative):** Thank you, Mr Speaker. I rise to support the motion. I would like to begin by appreciating all the Members who have contributed.

I want to say behind every man, there is a strong woman. I would like to appreciate Mrs Stella Oketta who often remained at home when the General was serving the nation or the continent. Last year in 2015, for six months he was not at home and Mrs Stella Oketta was at home taking care of all the issues at home. That is why he continued doing his work knowing that back at home, all was well*. (Applause)*

Mr Speaker, the late honourable Maj. Gen. Oketta worked with me in the Ninth Parliament. He never addressed me by name; he always called me “my sister”. The late Maj. Gen. Oketta was there for everybody, but especially for the civil authority. When I remember the issue of Bududa, I have never seen any general going to handle issues of disaster. Now that he is lying before us here, I wonder what the people of Bududa are thinking in regard to operations of disaster preparedness because Bududa is one of the most disaster prone areas.

I have tried to look around but I see there is a dilemma in finding a replacement in regard to disaster operations because *– (Member timed out.)*

5.42

**MR JULIUS OCHEN (Independent, Kapelebyong County, Amuria):** Mr Speaker, this afternoon I stand here to mourn this man. The man that we are paying tribute to is a true Ugandan. If you have listened to people speaking about him, they have said almost all.

However, I would like to remind them that this man got the principles he was practicing from a good government. It is the UPC Government that trained this man. *(Laughter)* The UPC Government recommended him for training in Monduli in Tanzania. The generals that were introduced here were all his colleagues in Tanzania under the UPC guidance. That is the reason why a few of them have remained generals and they are very few with very rare character.

Mr Speaker, when the NRA came to power in 1986, when President Museveni posted Rwakatare, the Central Government Representative (CGR) by then to Soroti, when all efforts went to Soroti because of the war down there, there was an NRA soldier called Katagara who ruthlessly massacred people in Teso. As I speak, over 50 mass graves are there and up to now, the government in power has not permitted the people of Teso to open those mass graves. It was the late Oketta who came and halted the massacre.

Can you imagine, we have mass graves of 500 people which have not been opened? Whatever has been said about Mukura and the rest is nothing. The NRA soldiers under Garang and others massacred people in Teso and I can show you those mass graves *– (Member timed out.)*

**THE DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Honourable member, your time is up. Let us hear from Kilak North.

5.46

**MR ANTHONY AKOL (FDC, Kilak North County, Amuru):** Mr Speaker, not only am I cousin to the late Maj. Gen. Oketta but I am also his brother because our mothers come from the same clan.

Mr Speaker, I am reading a very funny book, *Tuesdays with Morrie*. The book is about an old lecturer who was diagnosed with a disease that was eating his muscles. He was about to die and he had to teach one of his students how to die. The lessons were about love, work, the community, family, aging, forgiveness and the seventh lesson was about death.

The graduation was to be concluded with a living funeral. He organised a funeral where he called all his friends to come to his home and talk about the good and bad things about him. He listened to them, - instead of waiting when you are dead and then they start to praise you - he laughed and at some point he would cry as he listened to them. Today, we have sung all the praises of Maj. Gen. Oketta when he is dead and he is not listening. However, I am glad we have the family in the gallery and I wish at this point to recognise them.

The last time I met the late Oketta, I was with the Prime Minister of the Republic of Uganda in Lira for the World Food Day celebrations. We discussed a lot concerning the people of northern Uganda, including the silos - the issue of food storage so that there would be no hunger in this country any more.

My last meeting with him was in his office on 20th July. He was preaching reconciliation and he started on the 31st of last year when we all knelt down in Amuru as leaders to plead with Bishop Odama that we should reconcile. This life is about forgiveness. If we have wronged one another, this is the day when we should reconcile as the leaders of Amuru. At that time, I was not even elected. This should be a lesson to the people of Uganda and the leaders to preach reconciliation, and that it is a must for the country to have peace.

Mr Speaker, the people of Amuru demand for a few things today: One, he died a serious farmer who was helping the country; we would like the Government to put up at least an agricultural institute in Amuru in memory of the late Maj. Gen. Oketta. *(Applause)*

There is something very important, depending on one’s culture; in the Acholi culture, when you lose a relative, that is the day you speak the truth and that is why hon. Reagan Okumu was telling the truth. *(Member timed out.)*

5.49

**MR JOSHUA ANYWARACH (Independent, Padyere County, Nebbi):** Thank you, Mr Speaker. On behalf of the people of Padyere and on my own behalf, I would like to second the motion to pay tribute to the fallen General.

Mr Speaker, I met Maj. Gen. Oketta in 1999. He was in Gulu and we were students of Layibi College. He made it a point every month for all student leaders to descend on the Gulu District Farm Institute and he would speak to the student leaders. I remember him one time and the then LCV chairman, Peter Odok W’Ochieng, and many others - I think even Otema was there - and the topic of discussion was “Militarism as a means of achieving state power: Is it possible in Uganda now?” That was the question he raised.

He really circumvented the motion and analysed how difficult it was for anyone in northern Uganda to think that they can start a war against this government and succeed. He gave examples of the neighbouring countries, which he said must be ready to support a rebellion against Uganda. In this case, he analysed South Sudan, DRC and others. He then talked about how as young boys, they were throwing bombs in places in Kampala around 1977 and 1978 to disorganise Amin. He said that even the guerrilla warfare tactics would not succeed.

We went back to Layibi College and told our colleagues, and at that time the LRA was very popular. We told them that this thing can never succeed, we had better change our minds. The student body almost rose up against us. They abused us and said we were compromised.

I think hon. Otto was also there as a member of the Acholi Makerere Students Association (AMSA). Hon. Otto had just lost an election as guild president in Makerere, so he was a firebrand and attacking them seriously. However, Maj. Gen. Oketta was calm and neutralised all our arguments. That is when I gave maximum respect to this fallen general.

When I came to Parliament and met him, I told him how he motivated me, how he spoke to my soul and I felt I should become a leader like him. However, I would not become a military man because I fear the gun more than anything else - *(Laughter) -* but I was happy that at least I am here. Immediately, Maj. Gen. Oketta called me, “Omera” -

**THE DEPUTY SPEAKER:** What does that word mean?

**MR ANYWARACH:** Omera means brother. I would call an Acholi Owora, meaning a distant brother. I would call a Lugbara Nera, meaning uncle. I would call a Langi Ole, meaning distant friend. However, this gentleman would look at an Alur and say, “Omera” - *(Member timed out.)*

5.52

**MR ALEX BYARUGABA (NRM, Isingiro County South, Isingiro):** Thank you, Mr Speaker. I join my colleagues to support the motion.

Mr Speaker, I got to know the fallen general in the Eighth Parliament and more so in the Ninth Parliament when I was heavily involved in disaster management issues. I was with Maj. Gen. Oketta in Bududa, in Kasese and also in Kween. We got very close. The last time I met him was when he had just left Parliament. He sat me down and said, “I am leaving this part to you; you have got to carry on.” Of course, I could not and I do not think that I will fit in his shoes; they are too big for me. He was such a great man.

Mr Speaker, in the world they say the best thing you can do as a human being to exalt God’s love to humanity is to do a little bit of sacrifice for the good of others and not yourself. Maj. Gen. Julius Oketta distinguished himself in this. He exposed his life by taking extreme risks for the good of others. Honourable members, how many of us can risk de-mining those unexploded ordnances in the hills of Omoro? He did it. How many of us could risk going to West Africa at that time - remember how it was - to support and help in the efforts of fighting the deadly Ebola disease? He did it. How many did it from among us? Not many of us could take such a risk.

The honourable Maj. Gen. Julius Oketta gave distinguished service to Uganda and all humanity with extreme humility. You and I will always remember those words, “I salute the civilian authority” and he would bow a little. None of us will ever forget that. Julius Oketta, an army general, an honourable Member of Parliament, a peacemaker, a husband, a father, guardian angel for the weakest and most vulnerable. He was a very distinguished gentleman, not only in uniform but even in civilian clothing. You would just wonder - *(Member timed out.)*

5.56

**MS LUCY AKELLO (FDC, Woman Representative, Amuru):** Thank you, Mr Speaker. I rise to support the motion and as a Member from Amuru, I will basically say “thank you” to everyone because we have been overwhelmingly supported by the messages that have been coming from you and that have comforted us. Thank you very much.

While coming very early this morning to pay tribute to my son- Many people may wonder why I call him my son. I was the last to join the Ninth Parliament and I remember sitting there with Maj. Gen. Oketta and he said, “Mummy, I think you do not know me very well; let me now introduce myself to you. I look at you with a lot of respect and as such, I will treat you with respect.”

The last time I saw him was two weeks ago. He was seated in his nice car and as I moved past him, he got out of his car and said, “You are just bypassing your son”. He got out of his car to greet me and that is humility and it is something rare. I would like to thank him for that.

I also would like to thank his wife, Stella, and the children for being patient with the General. If you had not been patient, perhaps he would not have achieved all these things that are being talked about today. As we lay him to rest on Wednesday, we will be comforted by the kind words that have been said here.

There is perhaps something that has not come out very clearly, which I saw in Maj. Gen. Oketta, and that is the fact that he was a time keeper. In all the functions that I have attended in Amuru, I tried my level best to be among the first people to arrive. However, every time I got there, as long as the General was expected to attend, I would find him seated and he has always challenged me to keep time.

He was a smart man, like others have said, whether in military fatigue or civilian wear. I remember that day we talked for long as if he was telling me goodbye. I told him, “Son, you are really smart”. He replied, “How can I not be smart? If I am not smart, you will pinch my cheeks.” In Acholi, if you want to discipline a child, you just pinch them a little and that is a sign of love, and that is what he was referring to.

As we pay tribute to Maj. Gen. Oketta today, as Amuru District we are again down because we received the sad news of the demise of our great son, Dr Abongomera,the former chairman, Amuru District Service Commission. This is a big loss to us as a district and I ask of you all to pray for Amuru and her people. This is because as we pay tribute to Maj. Gen. Oketta, Dr Abongomera’s body is lying in Nsambya and we also wait to bury him.

Finally, I would like to stress what hon. Akol said and that is about reconciliation – (*Member timed out.*)

6.00

**MS CATHERINE LAMWAKA (NRM, Woman Representative, Omoro):** Thank you, Mr Speaker. I rise to support the motion. I would like to thank the Parliament of Uganda for ensuring that the body of the late Maj. Gen. Oketta lies here before us today as we debate. All that has been said about the late Maj. Gen. Oketta in today’s sitting is quite befitting.A sitting of this nature is befittingto the man lying before us today.

Mr Speaker, when we speak about patriotism in Uganda today in general, the late Maj. Gen. Oketta has lived it throughout his life. This is a man who gave his life to serve his nation and put his country first, his life, family and other things later. When we speak about nationalism in Uganda today, reading from the conduct and behaviour of the late Maj. Gen. Oketta who is today lying before us here, all of us could tell from his approach when doing his work that he has really been a nationalist.

Mr Speaker, today I share with honourable members one vivid memory when I was just appointed the Resident District Commissioner (RDC) of Pader in 2010. Maj. Gen. Oketta sat me down and said, “Let your humility earn you greatness but not the authority in that office”. Indeed, I saw a lot of sense in that. He was a great man but he earned his greatness through humility. When we today debate and pay tribute to Maj. Gen. Oketta, his example of life gives us courage as public officers and as Members of Parliament but tomorrow when we die, what will people remember about us.

Maj. Gen. Oketta will be remembered for the legacy that he left while serving the nation. He will be greatly missed by his family, clan, sub region where he comes from, Uganda as a country but also Africa as a continent. He earned us pride as a country through the contribution that he made outside Uganda. On Wednesday, he will be laid low in the grave but I must say in this House his legacy will stand tall above all of us. May the Good Lord rest the soul of Maj. Gen. Oketta in eternal peace.

6.04

**MR LYANDRO KOMAKECH (DP, Gulu Municipality, Gulu):** Mr Speaker, I rise to support the motion raised by the Prime Minister to pay tribute to Maj. Gen. Oketta. In all the service that he rendered to this country, one thing that comes out clearly is integrity. He was one of the few senior officers to advise us, the young leaders. I remember when he told me that if you would like to join politics, have integrity and invest in sticking to issues that pertain to the country and not individuals. I will never forget that.

A month ago, he advised that I must invest in coffee farming and that he had ordered Lt Col Achoka to supply to me 1,000 seedlings. As we speak, all the seedlings been planted in a place called Koch because of the late Maj. Gen. Oketta.

I will remember Maj. Gen. Oketta from a song by Bob Marley called “*Buffalo Soldier”.* He was a buffalo soldier in all his contributions. I remember when we were developing the National Disaster Policy, he was at the core of the formulation of the National Disaster Policy in this country and Members are here to testify to this.

He also said that since there was a draft peace policy in the Office of the Prime Minister, why don’t we ensure that this comes out? I am very happy that the Prime Minister is here because that is one of the issues that he insisted on, that the National Peace Policy should be concluded. He jokingly said that in order to have peace, you must be ready for war and that is why we need this policy in place. However on the other side, he said that in the defence of this country, there are soldiers ready for war as well but we need both so that we have a country we can enjoy forever.

Lastly, I would like to make a request; memorials are very important. If you remember Maj. RoddyPorter, who served in the British Army, he is still remembered after a whole town was named after him. Why don’t we think very hard about this and have a memorial school named after him. This is because he considered education as a very important pillar in the family. We, therefore, request the Government of Uganda, if possible, to have the Maj. Gen. Oketta Memorial School in Amuru - (*Member timed out.*)

6.07

**MR ALEX RUHUNDA (NRM, Fort Portal Municipality, Kabarole):** Mr Speaker, my utmost condolences to the family. I feel saddened, inspired and challenged.

When I sat here, I imagined being in one of the best classrooms to learn more about what we have lacked so much in Africa and that is what Maj. Gen. Julius Oketta stood for. I do not know whether others have the same feeling because we have some bad people; I do not know how they feel when they listen to things being said about such good people. Sometimes, I imagine that maybe when you are too good in this country, you die of a heart attack.

I told one of my friends that I cannot join the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) because I will die. This is because the moment I see people stealing taxpayers’ money, I feel so bad. This is now something we have to reflect on. We can say whatever we want to say but if we do not go deeper into our hearts, repent and learn from this good man, we will not have honoured him.

It will be very shameful for people to come and give accolades to this man and yet the next day they are doing very bad things. This man saved your life, this country and he worked tirelessly. I do not understand those who are here and do not respect him and his deeds. I am, therefore, here to give testimony after listening to the Members.

It is my appeal, Mr Speaker, that we have a documentary about this noble man in our library. Our young people are suffering because they have run short of role models. They are confused with many names such as “poor youth”, just because they cannot identify with men of high standing and integrity like the man lying there.

That is why I had to leave Fort Portal to come and pay my last respects to this man. I will also go and attend the burial and pay my last respects because I respect good people and I love good Africans, who have a heart to liberate us from poverty. Thank you very much, Maj. Gen. Oketta. I know where you are, God will reward you abundantly.

6.11

**MR VINCENT SEMPIJJA (NRM, Kalungu County East, Kalungu):** Mr Speaker, thank you very much for giving me this opportunity to bid farewell to my brother, Maj. Gen. Oketta. I would like to support the Rt Hon. Prime Minister on this motion and thank him and everybody who has said very good words in eulogising this great son of Uganda.

Mr Speaker and Members, I saw Maj. Gen. Oketta in Masaka but I will not go into detail on that. What I would like to say is that we have been working together with Maj. Gen. Oketta. He has been the deputy operations commander since March 2016 for Operation Wealth Creation (OWC). We call them coordinators; the top coordinator is Gen. Salim Saleh and the deputy has been Maj. Gen. Oketta.

I saw Maj. Gen. Oketta practice his commitment to work, which the honourable members have mentioned here, because I was working with him. On 16th October, we held the World Food Day celebrations in Lira and the Rt Hon. Prime Minister was the chief guest. We marched through the streets of Lira with Maj. Gen. Oketta carrying banners under the theme, “*The climate is changing. Food and* *agriculture must too*.” Imagine a general of Oketta’s status and all his achievements! That should have been left to politicians but he was there throughout. We walked through the streets up to Ngeta research institute, where the Prime Minister met us.

The next day, we were supposed to have a meeting in Entebbe and by 8.00 a.m., Maj. Gen. Oketta was already there. The permanent secretary arrived at 8.20 a.m. and I arrived at 8.30 a.m. He told me, *“Hon. Minister, I have to be here before you so that I receive you as I salute you.” - (Member timed out.)*

**THE DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Honourable members, I am closing debate.

6.16

**MR CHARLES ANGIRO GUTOMOI (FDC, Erute County North, Lira):** Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. I feel really sad because I have lost my last friend in the army. They were only two; the first one was Maj. Gen. Rwigyema and now the late Maj. Gen. Oketta.

When we were liberating Lango and Acholi and we were in the bush for two weeks, he requested me to join the army but I told him I am a civilian authority. While he handled the gun, I told him I would handle verbal guided Scud/Patriot missiles and we managed.

I told him I would call him “General” because of the nature of our work here. On the 1st of this month, through the advice of the Rt Hon. Prime Minister, I wrote to His Excellency the President of the Republic of Uganda, Yoweri Kaguta Museveni. I addressed him and requested him to honour Oketta as a general. In my reference here, I write “Gen. Oketta” and not Maj. Gen. Oketta because that is the name I gave him while we were in the bush.

I think what we have said here is true because of three things: through good work in classes, good work in churches and through the clinics he went through, he was a nationalist and a hero of this country. I am glad that I have managed to come and pay tribute to my late friend.

To the family, take it to God and that will be good for you. Many things can be said here and after here, but please take all these cases to God. You will be very blessed and then ably rewarded. May the soul of my good friend, *Omera*, rest in eternal peace. Thank you very much.

6.17

**MR HILARY ONEK (NRM, Lamwo County, Lamwo):** Mr Speaker, the family of Maj. Gen. Oketta and dear colleagues, I knew Maj. Gen. Oketta when he was still a teenager. The manner in which he behaved was different. He was very responsible and we thought that was because of that period, but he carried on. He even became such a great leader in the country, in the army and also in our society. This was a great man whom we should honour. To me, he is a hero. There are many people who are declared heroes but this one is a real hero and our Parliament should recognise him.

When he worked with us in the Office of the Prime Minister, he transformed disaster management. When the National Emergency Coordination and Operations Centre (NECOC) was introduced, he developed it further with a lot of equipment and forecasting mechanisms, which enabled us to forecast disaster before it befell our people.

Under his management, we even put in place early warning systems for floods in Butaleja and in the Mt Elgon area. We have installed gadgets which monitor the movement of the soil on the rocks there so that we can act in advance; before landslides occur, we can mitigate and re-stabilise.

He did all that and I thought we would continue with him but all the same, because of that high quality service that he gave to our people, I think his Excellency the President decided that he goes to the critical area of fighting poverty. He started on a good note but unfortunately, we cannot argue with God; he chooses when to take someone, very often leaving the bad ones behind. We know that he is in God’s hands.

My appeal to my colleagues is that let us escort our comrade decently without introducing politics at his funeral. I have heard some tendencies coming in from that direction. Let us leave him pure – the hero that he is - and send him off. However, we need to find some way of having a memorial, something like a school or an institution named after him, so that at least in our country *– (Member timed out.)*

**THE DEPUTY SPEAKER:** You have a very short time, honourable member for Gulu.

6.20

**MS BETTY AOL (FDC, Woman Representative, Gulu):** Thank you, Mr Speaker. I just came from Gulu; I arrived this afternoon to pay tribute to this gallant son. The news of his death was received in Gulu and Acholi sub-region– If you remember when the late Oyite Ojok died, it was almost like that but at least for the late Oyite Ojok, it was an accident, a helicopter crash. However, for Maj. Gen. Oketta, people are really wondering and have been asking questions.

I am so happy because when I came, I thought that we must be here as people from Acholi sub-region; even people will be few, at least we will be here to say something about our brother. I would like to mention two things and one is about just being his neighbour. He constructed in senior quarters where I live up to now, but I think he sold his property. During construction of his building, very many times he came to my home to interface with us. I was not yet a Member of Parliament; I was nobody but he did not care. What he cared about was that he had a good neighbour. That is the human heart that the fallen brother had. If we can emulate him, I think Uganda would be enough for all of us and it would be very peaceful.

The second thing I would like to say about him concerns Operation Wealth Creation. You know how critical that project is to us. Some of us have been very critical of it. He came to me and said, “My sister, I am now with Operation Wealth Creation. We know that there are a lot of issues in that programme but we are going to try and improve on the weak areas. Please, stand with us; do not criticise it too much.” Because he was very diplomatic, his diplomacy alone softened my heart and I said I would go slow on Operation Wealth Creation.

Lastly, I would like to talk about the medical personnel; please help us. This thing called a blood clot is finishing our people. Why should blood clots finish our people? Is it the discovery, which is very technical or too difficult, because somebody walking and very energetic will be pronounced dead the next minute? That is why people received the news and it appeared like it was an accident that killed him. It did not appear sickness because one would have first heard of it.

I was woken up by some people that required me to confirm to them the news and that was before 6 O’clock on Friday *- (Interjections) -* Yes, it was Saturday. They called me and I said that let me also try to consult and confirm. I am now asking the medical people: is it the science that is very difficult? Let us put our heads together again and try to find out how we can help our people on this issue of blood clots. Even hon. Okecho, who was here in the Eighth Parliament, died of a blood clot – *(Member was timed out.)*

**THE DEPUTY SPEAKER**: Thank you, honourable member for Gulu. Let us close now. Honourable members, I would like to thank you.

Maj. Gen. Oketta died on the morning of Saturday. We had a meeting in the Deputy Speaker’s boardroom at about 11.00 a.m. and we gave guidance on what should happen. I called the Prime Minister, we consulted and he said that he would confirm but in my heart, I knew that this would happen. So, I immediately gave instructions to this institution that we should only prepare for the call from the Prime Minister to confirm that Parliament will be recalled.

It was about 3.00 p.m. when the Prime Minister called to confirm that indeed Parliament would host the body of Maj. Gen. Oketta. Imagine from 3.00 p.m., they started drafting the letters and sending them out; that was on Saturday afternoon. We had only Sunday and now on Monday morning, you are here. Thank you very much. *(Applause)*

I would like to thank you very much for this response; it is a demonstration of solidarity and it is a statement that speaks louder than the words that you have used here. The rivers that divide us, the little names that we give ourselves are not deeper than the blood that connects us as the people of this country. We need to celebrate that. I am really grateful as somebody who has been in charge of this House since he died.

Let the records show that in the VIP gallery this afternoon, we had hon. Mukasa Mbidde from EALA, hon. Nakawuki Susan from EALA, hon. Menya Gerald, former Member of Parliament and also hon. Nsanja Robert, former Member of Parliament.

The brief on the programme that we will move on from now is as follows: The body of Maj. Gen. Oketta will leave this Parliament and go to his house in Najeera, Kkungu. That is where the vigil will be held. This will be the first time that his body will go to his house. Please join the family this evening and be there. There will be a short mass and all those things.

Tomorrow, initially you had been given a time of 9 O’clock but I have been advised that tomorrow there will a requiem mass at Our Lady of Africa in Mbuya and it will start at 10.00 a.m. After that, the body will be flown to Gulu. At 2.00 O’clock in the afternoon, there will be viewing of the body at the district council hall of Gulu District where all the eight districts of Acholi sub-region have decided to come and hold their meetings in preparation to receive the body. Therefore, those of you who can leave tomorrow, you can leave early - those who are going to attend mass - so that by evening, you can be there.

Burial will take place on Wednesday and mass for the burial will start at 10.00 O’clock in the morning at his home. You go past Lacor Hospital, past Lacor Seminary and you will find a big home where he will be laid to rest. Of course, you cannot get lost. That road, courtesy of President Museveni, is now high-class tarmac. From here all the way, there is no single pothole until you reach Maj. Gen. Oketta’s home. Congratulations to the Government. Therefore, if you have a small car, do not worry; it will take you there without any problem. Please, be there by 10 O’clock so that we can start mass.

This is also to inform you that there will be transport. Two buses will be leaving this Parliament at five on Wednesday morning. If you intend to use the transport provided by Parliament, please be here by 5 O’clock so that you can be taken there and brought back. That is the announcement I wanted to make.

Honourable members, one time I heard a preacher who said the following and I am sure it is subject to amendment now because it was said long time ago: “When we are born, we are faced with two choices, to be born a man or a woman; however, if you are born a man, you have two choices, to become a civilian or a soldier.”

Let me start properly. He said, “You have two choices, either you are born a man or woman. If you are born a woman, you are lucky. If you are born a man, you have two choices, to become a soldier or remain a civilian. If you remain a civilian, you are lucky. If you join the army, you have two choices, to go to the battlefield or to work in the office. If you work in the office, you are lucky. If you go to the battlefront, you have two choices, to die or to live. If you live, you are lucky. If you die, you have two choices, to go to heaven or hell.”

Gen. Oketta was born a man and chose to be a soldier. Initially, he chose not to work in the office and went to the battlefield and he fought there. He was lucky he did not die. Was it luck or the skills that he had or God? He left the battlefield and fought Ebola, but he survived and he fought all kinds of wars with guns but survived. He left and came to start working in offices. He still fought against poverty and anything that was threatening the wellbeing of the people of this country; he still fought not with guns but with words and skills. When there were natural disasters, he was there.

Therefore, his death was not in the battleground but God said, “Finish all those things; I will be waiting for you when you accomplish your mission, the purpose for which I set you aside and gave you to Uganda.” Therefore, He came on a day nobody was expecting, out of a cause nobody even knows - a simple blood clot creeping in his veins got logged in his lungs and that is how he died. God has said, “I sent you there, you have delivered, come to me”.

Therefore, honourable members, we celebrate the life of Gen. Oketta, known to many of us and who we will miss really very fondly but he has served this country to his best. No tribalism, non-partisan but holding the flag high and flying it like the wind would allow him to. We celebrate his life and as he goes, may the winds that have taken him carry him to the Almighty and the Almighty, we pray, grants him eternal rest.

Honourable members, I now therefore put the question to the motion that tribute be given to Maj. Gen. Oketta. Rt. Hon. Prime Minister, this debate has revealed two things; one, is the issue of giving a framework that can guide the conduct of Operation Wealth Creation, some legal framework. It was actually proposed; I do not know whether there will be time to do it in this motion or you take it up as Government and see how to handle it. The other issue, which has not been responded to, is whether somebody can be promoted posthumously. Those issues are in your docket and at an appropriate time, you will see how to handle them.

Honourable members, can I put the question to this motion now? I put the question to the motion-

1. That Parliament collectively conveys its deep condolences to the bereaved family, relatives and friends, H.E the President, the international community, the Uganda People’s Defence Forces and the people of Uganda at large for the huge loss of a distinguished son of Uganda, the honourable Maj. Gen. Julius Oketta.
2. That Parliament takes cognisance of the dedicated services and contribution that the late Maj. Gen. Julius Oketta has, in the course of his illustrious life, rendered to the people of Uganda and Africa as a freedom fight and intellectual and a Member of Parliament representing the Uganda People’s Defence Forces.
3. That this Parliament collectively prays to the Almighty God to sustain the bereaved and grant our departed colleague and comrade, Maj. Gen. Julius Oketta, eternal rest.

That is the motion that was framed and proposed by the Prime Minister.

**MR AKOL ANTHONY:** Mr Speaker, as the people of Amuru and northern Uganda, we want to remember Maj. Gen. Julius Oketta. I suggested that since he liked agriculture and he was a farmer, a memorial school, especially an agricultural institute, be put up in his memory in Amuru District.

**THE DEPUTY SPEAKER**: That was also contained in this debate, but the substance of the motion was that. Can I put the question to this motion? Rt Hon. Prime Minister, we have also been reminded of the recognition that should be given to Maj. Gen. Julius Oketta in form of a school named after him, in memory of his life and service to this country. Honourable members, I now put the question to this motion.

*(Question put and agreed to.)*

*The East African Community Anthem*

*The National Anthem*

*(Exit of the late Maj. Gen. Julius Oketta)*

**THE DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Honourable members, I just want to say thank you again. Please, join us for tomorrow’s mass and also in Amuru District after Lacor, like I described earlier. That is where he will be laid to rest on Wednesday morning. This special sitting is now adjourned.

*(The House rose at 6.40 p.m. and adjourned sine die.)*