

# **The Aceh Monitoring Mission – an Innovative Approach to DDR**

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## **Background to the Conflict**

In the beginning of the 17th century, the Islamic Kingdom of Aceh, centred around the capital Banda Aceh on the northern tip of Sumatra, became the most powerful state in the region. From the second half of the 17th century however, Aceh's influence gradually declined. In 1873 the Acehnese began a long and very bloody war against the Dutch colonizers.

After Indonesia declared its independence, the nominally still existing sultanate of Aceh was abolished and the territory incorporated into the province of North Sumatra. Because of persisting heavy protests by the Acehnese people, the Indonesian government was forced in 1959 to grant Aceh a greater degree of autonomy. However, despite the special status, the government successively strengthened its grip on Aceh's huge natural resources (particularly gas and oil), pocketing the majority of the profits and leaving the locals impoverished.

In 1976 a descendent of the Sultan's dynasty, Hasan de Tiro, formed the Free Aceh Movement (*Gerakan Aceh Merdeka, GAM*) and declared Aceh independent. The Indonesian government under then President Suharto decided to fight the GAM with military means.

Following a surge in GAM activities in 1989, President Suharto declared Aceh a special military zone and sent massive troop reinforcements. The ensuing civil war led to massive human rights violations committed by both sides such as killings, disappearances, rapes, torture and forced displacement of tens of thousands of Acehnese. 15,000 people are said to have died. After a peace initiative under the aegis of the Geneva based

*Henri Dunant Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue* had failed in 2003, then President Megawati again favoured a military solution and imposed martial law in Aceh (it was downgraded to civil emergency a year later). A turning point was the Tsunami that struck Aceh on 26 December 2004, killing more than 200,000 people and affecting the local population and the armed forces (Tentara National Indonesia, TNI) alike. This disaster led to the opening up of the province – which, until then, had been de facto closed to foreigners – for international relief personnel.

New negotiations started under the auspices of the so called *Crisis Management Initiative* (CMI) that was financed from the EU Commission budget. Chairman of the CMI was former Finnish President Martti Ahtisaari. In those negotiations the Government of Indonesia (GoI) and the GAM finally reached an agreement for a peaceful, comprehensive and sustainable solution to the conflict in Aceh and on 15 August 2005 signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in Helsinki.<sup>1</sup>

## **The Provisions of the MoU**

The MoU covered inter alia the following topics:

- political reforms in Aceh (including the promulgation of a new Law on the Governing of Aceh granting significant autonomy within the Indonesian state and the holding of free and fair local elections);
- a commitment by the GoI to adhere to international human rights standards;
- amnesty for and reintegration of GAM members into the society;
- appropriate security arrangements for the implementation of the MoU provisions: the GAM undertook to demobilize all of its 3.000 troops and the decommissioning of all 840 arms as well as ammunition and explosives. The GoI committed to withdraw all elements of non-organic military and police forces (i.e. forces

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<sup>1</sup> See Memorandum of Understanding between the Government of the Republic of Indonesia and the Free Aceh Movement, available at [http://www.consilium.eu.int/uedocs/cmsUpload/MoU\\_Aceh.pdf](http://www.consilium.eu.int/uedocs/cmsUpload/MoU_Aceh.pdf).

sent as reinforcements to local troops that are not normally based in Aceh, leaving behind only 14.700 organic military forces and 9.100 organic police forces;

- establishment of the Aceh Monitoring Mission, and
- agreement on a dispute settlement mechanism.

## **The Aceh Monitoring Mission (AMM) – Mandate and Structure**

The Aceh Monitoring Mission (AMM) was a civilian mission within the framework of the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP). Nevertheless many monitors had a military background, which was in line with their tasks. Political control and strategic guidance of the AMM was exercised by the EU's Political and Security Committee (PSC) under the responsibility of the Council of the EU. The mission integrated monitors from five member states of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN), namely Thailand, Malaysia, Brunei, The Philippines and Singapore. The integration of monitors from a regional organisation in an EU mission was an absolute novelty.

Pieter Feith from The Netherlands, a veteran of peace missions in Africa and the Balkans and advisor to Javier Solana, was seconded from the EU Council Secretariat to become Head of Mission. He had three deputies, one of them from an ASEAN nation. The AMM established a headquarters in Banda Aceh and 11 District Offices in different parts of Aceh.

About two thirds of the monitors came from the European Union member states, Norway and Switzerland, whereas the rest came from the five participating ASEAN countries. In the first phase of the process, which formally started 15 September 2005, the AMM was composed of 226 unarmed men and women.<sup>2</sup> Later on, these numbers were reduced significantly.

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<sup>2</sup> Austria sent two observers, one from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and one from the Ministry of Defence.

The fundamental objective for the AMM was to assist the Government of Indonesia and GAM in the implementation of the MoU. To do that, its mandate consisted of eight areas of work, as defined by the EU Council<sup>3</sup>:

- Monitoring the demobilisation of the GAM as well as monitoring and assisting with the decommissioning and destruction of its weapons, ammunition and explosives;
- Monitoring the re-location of non-organic military forces and non-organic police troops;
- Monitoring the reintegration of active GAM members;
- Monitoring the human rights situation and providing assistance in this field in the context of the tasks defined above;
- Monitoring the process of legislation change;
- Ruling on disputed amnesty cases;
- Investigating of and ruling on complaints and alleged violations of the MoU;
- Establishing and maintaining liaison and good cooperation with the parties.

AMM monitors were unarmed and wore recognisable civilian mission attire with clear mission identification markings. Monitors conducted their monitoring tasks by patrolling and communicating with both parties, and by carrying out inspections and investigations as required.

The costs of the mission were financed from the EU CFSP budget (EUR 9.3 million) and – following an ad-hoc arrangement – by voluntary contributions of EU Member States and participating countries (EUR 6 million). The preparatory phase of the mission had been marred by controversy over financial issues, as the CFSP budget for 2005 proved insufficient to cover all the costs. Because of resistance by at least one EU member state and the Legal Service of the Council, no funds from the European Community's external assistance budget could be used.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Council Joint Action 2005/653/CFSP of 9 September 2005 on the European Union Monitoring Mission in Aceh.

<sup>4</sup> cf. International Security Information Service (ISIS) Europe, Aceh Monitoring Mission: a new challenge for ESDP, European Security Review No. 27, Brussels, October 2005, p. 2; Anne Deighton and Victor Mauer (eds), *Securing Europe?*

## **The Implementation of the AMM Mandate**

The political aspects of the AMM went well: A new Law on the Governing of Aceh, incorporating provisions of the 15 August 2005 peace agreement, was drafted in consultation with broad sectors of the Acehnese public and the GAM, enacted by national parliament and then signed by the President of Indonesia on 01 August 2006.

Finally, after several postponements, the first-ever direct local elections were held on 11 December 2006. A former separatist rebel fighter, Irawandi Yusuf, secured a comfortable majority and was inaugurated as the first directly elected governor of Aceh on 08 February 07. The elections were monitored by European Union election observers who generally confirmed that they were free and fair.<sup>5</sup>

The primary task of the AMM, however, was monitoring the demobilisation of the GAM; the decommissioning and destruction of its weapons, ammunition and explosives; the relocation of non-organic military and police forces, as well as the reintegration of active GAM members (demobilised fighters as well as amnestied prisoners). The following part will have a closer look at these aspects of the mission.

### **Decommissioning Operations**

In Aceh, unlike in the Balkans, the EU was not engaged in a traditional decommissioning operation entailing investigations into the number and location of arms to collect and destroy. Its task was merely to supervise the surrender of a specific quantity of armaments already agreed on by

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Implementing the European Security Strategy, Zuercher Beitrage zur Sicherheitspolitik Nr. 77, Zuerich, 2006, p. 48f.

<sup>5</sup> cf. European Union Election Observation Mission in Aceh, Statement of Preliminary Conclusions and Findings, Banda Aceh, 12 Dec 2006. The European Union Election Observation Mission was not part of the AMM, but was organized by the European Commission.

the parties and stipulated in the MoU, and to destroy the weapons collected.

Four integrated but separate *Mobile Decommissioning Teams* (MDT's) were responsible for decommissioning and proving to the GoI the destruction of GAM weapons. This was done in four stages between September and December 2005 with a target of 840 weapons collected in parallel with the relocation of non-organic TNI and Police. Four days before the start of each stage, 'corridors of free movement' for the GAM to centralize their weapons were established. These corridors were free of TNI and Police.

Witnesses from the GAM and the GoI were present to view the quantity of weapons and their destruction. The weapons included revolvers, assault rifles and grenade launchers. The required quality of weapons had been agreed on in a forum attended by all parties, the so called *Commission on Security Arrangements (COSA)*: The barrel, the breech and critical working parts had to be intact. The AMM decided whether to accept or disqualify a weapon. The GoI had the possibility to dispute the accepted weapons, but the final authority to decide in disputed cases rested with AMM. The role of District Offices in decommissioning was to provide support as requested through AMM Headquarters. Each stage was concluded when the collection target number of weapons was reached. The GoI was then informed and ordered the TNI and Police withdrawal of their proportion of forces.

The most important point was that the decommissioning was effective and on time. The four stages were enormously significant cornerstones within the MoU. They demonstrated a true and irreversible commitment by the parties, particularly to sceptics at the political level, and allowed the TNI and police sufficient time to carry out their redeployment.

### **The Re-Location of TNI and Police**

The disarmament and demobilisation of the GAM was inextricably linked to the reduction of the military and police presence in Aceh. As

already mentioned, the figures for the removal of the TNI and the Police were laid down in the MOU. The TNI priority for withdrawal was based on tour length, although a proportion of the non-organic forces from specialised units irrespective of tour length were included. A schedule for withdrawal was provided to AMM. Monitoring re-location was conducted by developing three different, but related activities:

- The monitors had to confirm the current force levels' 'baseline' as a precondition for the TNI and police withdrawal plan. GoI is naturally sensitive to international interest in its security forces but Article 5.7 of the MoU granted the AMM freedom of movement in Aceh.
- Monitoring the withdrawal: This relied on good liaison with the TNI and Police for detailed dates and timings of the movement of personnel at district level. Monitors needed prior knowledge of the locations, size and nature of units to be withdrawn and the equipment to be moved as well as the point of embarkation. In total 25,890 soldiers and 5,791 police officers were relocated out of Aceh.
- Confirming the end state of forces: This was part of the *Final Assessment of Compliance* that the Head of Mission submitted to the parties, the EU, ASEAN participating States and to Chairman Ahtisaari.

### **Monitoring Reintegration and Human Rights**

AMM interpreted its Human Rights monitoring mandate in a narrow sense: Monitors only dealt with human rights violations related to decommissioning, demobilisation and reintegration. Other violations were directed to the *Indonesian National Commission of Human Rights* or NGOs working on human rights issues.

In a presidential decree announced on 30 August 2005, amnesty was granted to 1,500 GAM political prisoners as well as a general amnesty to former members of the GAM. The prisoners were released from prisons in Aceh and Java and provided with an immediate reintegration package

(medical assistance, support to return to home villages, cash and in-kind support). This program was funded by the European Commission and implemented by the *International Organization for Migration* (IOM) on behalf of the GoI. Through discussions facilitated by AMM, the parties consensually agreed that there are no disputed amnesty cases under the MoU.

In the MoU reintegration is defined as providing short-term measures and support (“economic facilitation”) to three main groups: former prisoners, combatants, and ‘affected civilians.’ In addition, the MoU speaks about longer term measures including employment, social security and plans for wider community support. The reintegration process was significantly slowed down because other social groups which felt they were victims of human rights violations, also put forward claims. This problem was finally resolved with financial assistance of the *World Bank* combined with a community-based decision making process. Of course, reintegration is a long-term process, and continued assistance after the departure of the AMM is essential. The European Commission will continue to support the peace process in Aceh with various long-term programmes aiming inter alia at police reform, justice sector reform and enhancing the capacity of the local public administration.

### **The End of the Mission**

Overall, the Aceh peace process worked very well: GAM guerrillas turned in the required number of weapons. The Indonesian military withdrew its troops according to the schedule. The threat of militia violence has not materialized. Amnestied prisoners returned home without incident.

On 15 December 2006 the AMM came to an end. All tasks assigned to the mission by the MoU of 15 August 2005 had been completed. While there are still challenges (especially economic ones) ahead, sceptics on all sides have begun to change their minds and for the first time in decades lasting peace and stability in Aceh seem attainable.

## Conclusions

The EU's involvement in Aceh is a good example of how the different instruments of the first and the second pillar can be used in a coordinated manner to provide a real contribution to consolidating a peace process and to ensuring the sustainability of a political settlement.

The AMM, which was organized under the second pillar, has to be considered an extraordinarily successful mission. A number of reasons for this success can be identified: Firstly, the political and social preconditions were favorable to a sustainable resolution of the Aceh conflict. Both parties to the conflict had functioning structures and chains of command. The members and followers of both parties were equally affected by the Tsunami and most were tired of the conflict.

In addition, there were other important factors connected to crisis management:

- the MoU provided for a realistic framework;
- the timetable for the disarmament of GAM and the withdrawal of military and police forces was strictly adhered to by all parties;
- a precondition for this was that the AMM was operational on the very first day of the peace process; never before had a mission been deployed more quickly (despite some initial disagreements over the budget);
- another decisive point is that the collected weapons were destroyed on the spot, thus avoiding dangers connected to transport and storage.

These points represent essential lessons learned and should be taken into account in designing and implementing future DDR operations.