

Ongoing UN Operations and New Challenges in Peacekeeping

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It's a great pleasure and honor to address such a distinguished audience from a country with a long history in UN operations and many of you having served in UN Peacekeeping Operations. In the next half hour I will give you a quick overview of the ongoing UN Operations and I will share a few ideas that we have developed recently at UNHQ to respond to new challenges in peacekeeping. After my two years in New York, I now hope to see these ideas come to life during my current assignment in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

These new ideas and responses are particular essential in times where the UN has been deliberately targeted and during UN peacekeeping operations where the borderline between war and a peacekeeping operation is not always obvious. Before moving to these topics, let's first have a quick glance at the challenges we face today but we can only do that in relation of UN operations some 10-15 years ago. At that time DPKO was formed and faced with immense problems in the world. Also a time when Military Observers were looking through binos in areas with a well defined peace accord or cease fire agreement.

Unprecedented Surge in Peacekeeping: 18 UN Missions with more than 65,000 uniformed peacekeepers

Our times are referred to today as times of an ‘unprecedented surge in peacekeeping’. A UN mission map shows the current deployment of these missions in the world: 18 as of today, 9 of which are concentrated on the African continent. This is how the UN continues to facilitate complex and fragile peace processes and to maintain significant progress in the face of incredible challenges. As one can see, UN troops are fully deployed in Africa, between India and Pakistan, the Middle-East, Cyprus, Georgia, Kosovo and Haiti. The missions in Sierra-Leone, Timor-Leste and Ethiopia-Eritrea are being downsized as planned.

Last year, while still deploying the 15.000 troops for Liberia, we had to start-up three new complex operations in Côte d’Ivoire, Burundi and in Haiti, almost simultaneously between April and June.

Meanwhile, in the Democratic Republic of Congo, dramatic events have led the Security Council to enforce the MONUC’s mandate and to authorize a significant increase in the military and police components. With an overall strength of some 17.000, MONUC is now the largest UN peacekeeping operation ever in terms of strength, deployment, budget, challenges. For the first time in the UN peacekeeping history, MONUC has established a full fledge Military Division with its Divisional HQ, three powerful brigades in Ituri and North & South Kivu plus a large helicopter fleet, an impressive

engineer capacity and special forces in order to conduct military operations under Chap VII in the most troublesome Eastern part of Congo. This is a major change in the peacekeeping by which the Organization is provided with the adequate military means to implement a sort of enforcement mandate with strong RoE which results with a more aggressive posture by the UN troops and a high tempo of sometimes deadly operations.

A new mission is deploying in Sudan as we speak, a country slightly larger than Congo that is the size of Western Europe. Though the mandate so far will cover the North-South agreement, we will have to find solutions how to merge the operations with Darfur where the African Union led mission is facing major hurdles. Finally we are keeping a close eye on Iraq where we have deployed a UN Guard Unit to protect a UN civilian team that is there to assist the Iraqi interim government. These 18 operations represent over 65,000 uniformed peacekeepers and over 10,000 international and local civilian staff.

Complexity of current mandates

The complexity of the current mandates of our missions highlights the need for integration of the different components of the missions. Planning, integrating, directing, advising and managing the safety and security of all the personnel and assets involved are stretching the UN capacity to the limits. Key is to generate sufficient troops, prepared, trained, equipped and adequately supported, to do an extreme difficult task in challenging

circumstances. Nevertheless, this surge in demand for Peacekeeping operations can be seen somehow as a welcome sign, a sign that opportunities are emerging to help put an end to ongoing conflicts. But the concentration of demands will undoubtedly stretch the capacities of the entire system, not only in addressing adequately all threats to peace, but also in guaranteeing a consistent engagement of the international community.

Solidify the Foundations for Peace

But let's not forget that peacekeeping operations are called to assist always when peace is fragile. The operations must include longer-terms strategies to solidify the foundations for peace. If this is not integrated to the post-conflict exit strategies, it sets high risks for failure, and the UN might unfortunately have to return again, as it has done in Congo, Liberia or in Haiti.

Before we define what is needed to mount a successful UN mission, let's have a sense of under what circumstances we deploy our troops today. A fragment from the New York Times some time ago on Liberia is illustrative:

‘At times today it was difficult to distinguish the fighters on this side of the bridge from those on the other side. They wore the same clothes, the same wigs. They carried the same weapons. (Fighters on this side have a penchant for spray-painting their guns.) Neither side seemed to have any purpose beyond defeating the enemy. All sides said they were tired of fighting. One soldier, wearing

dirty soccer cleats, described how he came to this side of the bridge. Last February, he was captured by government forces and sent to fight. Then he was captured by rebels and sent to a training camp for three weeks and then sent to fight again. He said he found his former commander and had him executed’.

Essential Field Intelligence

What can be expected in a complicated operational environment, where consent is only partial or limited to one or two of the parties to the conflict? Political developments may have improved the security situation, but a country remains very unstable as armed groups, militia and criminal elements may be present throughout. More likely than not, exact figures regarding the strength of the various armed groups, which may include large number of child soldiers and paramilitary personnel, are not available.

It is exactly here that field intelligence assets are needed, to find out where the spoilers are and what their intent is. ‘Intelligence’ long time has been a word hard to accept in the peaceful UN world. Still it is a sensitive issue, as openness is the name of the game. In fact, information gathering never has been the problem in UN Peacekeeping: our UNMOs are top-class HUMINT people.

It is the analysis, evaluation and distribution phase where we continue to experience difficulties. Poor intelligence means you will not have the right forces with the right

equipment at the right time and the right place. This has too often resulted in casualties - peacekeepers lives - as we have seen in Rwanda and Somalia, or the lives of innocent civilians – the genocide in Rwanda and massacres at Srebrenica serve to illustrate this.

An intelligence capability is a priority for all UN missions and efforts in this regard can only be achieved if they are seen in the overall context of effectiveness. This can only be achieved if the senior leadership within a mission is able to make fully informed decisions. For this to occur mechanisms for information management and analysis and the production of accurate intelligence assessments must be in place.

Joint Mission Analysis Cell (JMAC)

The cornerstone in improving this capability is the establishment of what we now call the Joint Mission Analysis Cell. It is an integrated civilian and military structure, incorporating representatives, military and civilian, from key elements of the mission. The task of the JMAC is “to provide the expertise to handle information, conduct and present analysis and provide advice at a level that will ensure that decisions are made with awareness of all available and relevant factors.” It should be capable of providing in-depth current and longer term analysis of all issues affecting the mission.

The JMAC will be responsible for collection, coordination and analysis of information and distribution of the intelligence with a priority to support the decision

making process of the SRSG, the Senior Management Group and the Force Commander. It will also provide advice to the mission headquarters staff more generally. As such, the JMAC is at the heart of any operation, be it humanitarian, DDR, police, civilian or military and it requires highly trained intelligence professionals to provide the intelligence processes and analysis capabilities.

The UN has become a Target of Political Violence

After the disaster in Baghdad - the attack that killed 22 staff, the recent ambush in MONUC on Bangladeshi peacekeepers that killed nine, and other tragic incidents, we are forced to acknowledge that the UN has become a target of political violence, challenging the long-held perception that we were protected by our flag and by our status as an impartial actor.

This new security reality provided a compelling rationale for security reform. The current UN system is terribly fragmented, with disparate security entities and offices both at headquarters and in the field. The Secretary-General has therefore proposed to create a single, integrated security management system. It will unify the existing offices of UNSECOORD, the Security and Safety Services and the security component of DPKO. It is designed to ensure that we are organized to provide reliable threat and risk analysis, fundamental to security, especially in volatile, constantly changing circumstances.

UN Strategic Reserve (SR) and Complementarities of this Initiative with the EU “battle-group” Initiative

Currently the only way to react to an emerging crisis in a mission area is through an ad-hoc decision on a new mandate with an expanded force, or to request external assistance from the international community. The political and force generation process required to deploy additional units can take too much time to allow a reaction in the critical early stages of a crisis. As a result of this delayed reaction crises often deteriorate, risking mission collapse and requiring an even larger or more capable force to deal with them.

The lack of a reliable reserve or reaction capability for responding to crises remains a major obstacle to the effectiveness of UN peacekeeping operations. In order to fill this gap, the Department for Peace Keeping Operations (DPKO) has developed the concept of a Strategic Reserve (SR), a mission-specific, pre-planned and rapidly deployable “over the horizon force”.

The Strategic Reserve would be held in a troop contributing country (TCC) with prior agreement of this country to deploy to certain, specific UN missions. It would be deployed on the recommendation of the Secretary-General and under Security Council authority for a specific task or duration. The Strategic Reserve must be equipped, trained and prepared to deploy into Chapter VII environments. Once deployed, the reserve would be placed under UN command and control and rules of engagement.

DPKO explores the modalities of such an initiative with member states, and has formed a working group which will address a broad spectrum of concerns and will be utilized to further work out the details of such an initiative in the nearest possible future. The working group will also take steps to build on the complementarities of this initiative with the EU “battle-group” initiative and the African Standby Force initiative. Essentially, however, the SR proposal’s key advantage is that TCCs would seek political agreement in advance to deploy to specific UN missions; thereby diminishing the response time after a crisis erupts.

MONUC - High Tempo Operations, the use of Military Aircraft, Night operations, the use of Special Forces, and Attack Helicopters

Let me say a few words in my capacity as GOC E-Div MONUC. A few challenges from a Marine with his boots in the mud and his nice New York suit back home. I will not list all the day to day challenges. But what are the most important challenges that we face in MONUC that has a wider effect for the future of PK. I would like to mention three: First, how to carry out operations under Chapter VII with UN rules and regulations that are designed for Chapter VI. Secondly, the importance of Security Sector Reform (SSR) and thirdly, the issues of peace building and peace keeping.

High tempo operations, the use of military aircraft, night operations, the use of Special Forces, and attack helicopters, operations with multinational composite

units at battalion level with a Chapter VII mandate require flexible logistic procedures and flight safety rules and regulations. As of today, the UN administration is not capable of allowing the use of national flight safety rules of the TCC. Administrative procedures are very inflexible and most of the time virtually impossible to change. DPKO has been made aware over the last few months that not only in MONUC but also in Haiti and other missions, operations are hampered and hindered by these factors. Changes should be brought into operation in order to fulfill the mandate effectively.

If a failed state on its knees, want to get back on its feet and talk coherent, armed forces, police, customs and the judicial system should be properly organized. It is part of the exit strategy of the UN. In most missions this task is done by a lead nation. However, the UN can not sit idle and watch where things are going wrong. Lead nation and the UN should work closely together in order to set up and implement the programs for the SSR.

Last challenge is the combination of Peace building and Peace keeping. In my view it should go hand in hand, concurrent and not sequential. Quick Impact projects, hearts and minds campaigns, using spare military engineer capacity to the maximum effect to assist in encouraging the local economy, rebuilding school infrastructure, road reconstruction etc. in combination with keeping the peace is what is happening today in our missions. In this concurrent approach, peacekeepers must be versatile, combining a strong military posture to deter and defeat spoilers/ armed groups to a smoother attitude to build confidence among a frightened population.

Once security conditions are good enough and vigilance mechanisms are in place, all other peace keeping operations components, the UN family, NGO, partners and donors can assist the political process including the reform of the Security Sector, the Army integration and the preparation of free and transparent elections with post electoral stability. At the same time the humanitarian assistance can be delivered, the Human rights abuses be investigated, internal displaced persons be settled, refugees be back home, former fighters be demobilized, disarm and reinserted (DDR), local development be encouraged. The multi-dimensionality and complexity of any modern peacekeeping culminates when regional factors and cross borders issues influence significantly the local and national situation. In the Congo, illegal exploitation of resources and weapons smuggling are challenged by the UN arms embargoes and the presence of foreign combatants like the FDLR affect deeply the whole peace process. PKO must then address both issues and coordinate with other international or local partners.

In addition, our peacekeepers are confronted with new tasks including the training/ mentoring of the new local army or police to implement sensitive tasks of the mandate like for example the support of the new national forces poorly sustained in their combat operations in a challenging environment.

We have touched upon issues related to the tactical and operational level and moved to more strategic issues. It is certain that all these levels have seen changes and will see more changes in the near future. Peacekeeping over

the last few years has also seen many changes and has shown many faces, from the friendly food distributing blue-beret, to the less friendly UN attack helicopter. All these faces have brought a sense of peace and stability to parts of the world where it is needed mostly, a peace that is certainly worth fighting for.