FIRST AID TO A RATTLESNAKE?

Established to assist the resolution of Africa's perhaps most intractable conflict, the United Nations Organisation Stabilisation Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) is a testing ground for peacekeeping strategies. After sixteen years the results are in, and they are mixed.

Dr. Alix Valenti

Training forms a key component of the MONUSCO mission with troops practising how to deal with riots and public order situations © MONUSCO

An armoured MONUSCO convoy prepares to move out. Tracked armour has proven particularly important to support manoeuvre over unforgiving terrain © MONUSCO

"I am leaving with three feelings," said the Special Representative of the UN Secretary General (SRSG) in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Martin Kobler. "The first feeling is satisfaction, the second is a feeling of real pride but the third feeling is one of frustration." Set in what is arguably one of the most complex conflicts in Africa, the United Nations (UN) mission in the DRC has undergone numerous changes of mandate (and name) to adapt to a context where blurred distinctions between intra- and inter-state conflicts have led to sixteen years of satisfaction, pride and frustration.

In fact, as Ben Shepherd, consulting fellow at the Royal Institute of International Affairs, a London-based think tank, observes, "the stakes are high for the mission in the DRC, it is under a lot of pressure to show that peacekeeping can succeed in any context". As a result, the UN mission in the DRC has served as a testing-ground for a number of military innovations, with mixed results.

THE CONUNDRUM

The DRC, located at the centre of Africa, is also one of the continent's largest countries, boasting a vast amount of human (it is home to nearly 80 million people) and natural resources. Yet, according to the US Central Intelligence Agency's *World Factbook* it is also one of the countries with the lowest Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita in the world whilst having one of the highest GDP real growth rates. These stunning contradictions, combined with a history that weaves in the complex intricacies of not one but six African countries' post-colonial challenges, have created a fertile ground for the most intractable conflict on the continent.

In 1994, a new government was established in the Rwandan capital Kigali following the end of the genocidal civil war in Rwanda between April and July 1994, during which up to one million ethnic *Tutsi* and moderate *Hutus* were massacred by members of the majority *Hutu* population. The end of the genocide and the formation of a government by the Rwandan Patriotic Front, which had taken control of the entire country by 18 July 1994, brought the genocide to an end. Fearful of reprisals in post-genocide Rwanda, approximately 1.2 million Rwandese *Hutus* fled to the north-eastern Kivu regions of the DRC, home at the time, amongst others, to many ethnic *Tutsis*. In the mid-1990s, Laurent Desire Kabila, who had been politically aligned with the DRC's first Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba, returned to Zaire (as the DRC was then called) to lead a movement against the country's dictator Mobutu Sese

The MONUSCO mission has blazed a trail in its use of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles, such as the Falco, to support its operations © MONUSCO

Seko. In 1996, Mr. Kabila joined forces with *Tutsis* from eastern Zaire and, aided by Rwanda and Uganda, succeeded in capturing the DRC capital Kinshasa in 1997, thus becoming its president after Mr. Sese Seko fled into exile in Morocco on 15 May 1997. These events set the scene for the conflict that eventually led to the establishment of the UN peacekeeping mission in the DRC.

In 1998, a rebellion erupted against Mr. Kabila's government, backed by Rwanda and Uganda, in the Kivu regions (*see above*). To support President Kabila in his fight against the rebels' ever-increasing control over the country's eastern regions, neighbouring countries Angola, Namibia and Zimbabwe deployed troops. While their efforts remained relatively unsuccessful, rifts emerged in 1998 within the rebel movement between the Congolese Liberation Movement (CLM) rebels, supported by Uganda, and the Rally for Congolese Democracy (RCD) rebels, backed by Rwanda. This conflict opened up room for the UN Security Council to call a ceasefire in the rebellion that had by then slowly morphed into a conflict involving six countries, and to request the withdrawal of foreign forces.

The Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement, which involved Angola, the DRC, Namibia, Rwanda, Uganda and Zimbabwe, was signed in July 1999, and in November 1999 the UN Security Council established the United Nations Organisation Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUC) to ensure that all its provisions were respected. MONUC's mandate has since then been subjected to a number of changes. Indeed, as the DRC prepared for its first free and fair elections after 46 years of independence from Belgium, MONUC's mandate was extended three times (in 2004 and 2008) to provide support to the Government of National Unity and Transition, all the while maintaining as its core focus, chiefly the protection of civilians.

Eleven years after the implementation of MONUC, however, the tensions in the Kivu regions kept increasing as Congolese and foreign armed groups took advantage of power and security vacuums. The continued unrest "speaks eloquently to the lack of political will to bring back the state across the whole country," says a DRC-based analyst who prefers to remain anonymous. In response to these challenges, in 2010 the Security Council established MONUSCO. The new mandate therefore focused UN efforts on the stabilisation of the volatile regions of the country, in cooperation with the Armed Force of the DRC (FARDC), allowing the mission to "use all necessary means to carry out its mandate."

In April 2012, a major crisis hit the country as a new rebellion unfolded in the north Kivu region, leading to the taking of Goma (the main city of the resource-reach East) by the M23 rebel movement (*see below*) under the eyes of UN military troops limited in their actions by their mandate. These events led to representatives of eleven countries in the region signing, in February 2013, the "Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the region," which laid the basis for a renewal of the MONUSCO mandate and the establishment of the Intervention Brigade (IB). Acting within a mandate created "on an exceptional basis, without creating a precedent or any prejudice to the agreed principles of peacekeeping," the IB is allowed to "carry out targeted offensive operations ...either unilaterally or jointly with the FARDC ...to prevent the expansion of all armed groups, to neutralise these groups, and to disarm them."

COORDINATION

The MONUSCO mission, on paper at least, has an impressive order of battle. According to the UN, a total of 19784 uniformed personnel support the mission, as of June 2015. This includes 18232 military person-

Hosted by

Ministry of Defence of The Republic Indonesia

INDO DEFENCE 2016 EXPO & FORUM

incorporating with

INDO AEROSPACE 2016 EXPO & FORUM

featuring INDO HELICOPTER 2016 EXPO & FORUM

INDO MARINE 2016 EXPO & FORUM

INDONESIA'S NO.1 OFFICIAL TRI-SERVICE DEFENCE, AEROSPACE, HELICOPTER, AND MARINE EVENT

2 - 5 NOVEMBER 2016

JIExpo Kemayoran, Jakarta - Indonesia

www.indodefence.com

Official Publications and Show Daily

IHS Jane's

IHS Jane's Defence Weekly

Official Online Publication

SHEPHARD

Supporting Publications

ARMADA INTERNATIONAL

DEFENCE and SECURITY of INDIA DSI

ASIAN MILITARY REVIEW

NAVAL FORCES INTERNATIONAL FORUM FOR MARITIME POWER

MILITARY TECHNOLOGY MILTECH

Organised by

Showing The Way !

Napindo

PT Napindo Media Ashatama

Jl. Kelapa Sawit XIV Blok M1 No.10, Billy Moon Pondok Kelapa, Jakarta 13450, Indonesia

Tel: +6221 8650962, 8644756/85, Fax: +6221 8650963 | E-mail: info@indodefence.com

The deployment of the Falco UAV represents a watershed in UN peacekeeping operations

nel and 462 military observers, plus 1090 police. These military personnel are drawn from a total of 49 countries. Of particular importance to the deployment are the armoured vehicles which these respective nations have contributed.

A total force of 407 combat vehicles has been supplied by 14 nations. Key to supporting the mission are its deployed Armoured Personnel Carriers (APCs) and Armoured/Infantry Fighting Vehicles (A/IFV). Such platforms bring important tactical and psychological benefits. Firstly, given that APCs and A/IFVs can carry personnel and, in the case of the latter, are often equipped with a medium-calibre weapon so they can provide a powerful response with the means to deploy troops rapidly to trouble spots, and then to support those troops once they are in contact. At the same time, deploying APCs and A/IFVs is arguably less provocative than deploying Main Battle Tanks (MBTs). For more information on APC and A/IFV developments around the world, please see Stephen W. Miller's 'Light Entertainment' article in this issue. As peacekeeping and peace enforcement operations around the world have learned, MBTs can often be detrimental to the all-important 'hearts and minds' battle where a deployed international force may be trying to win the support of the local population, with the corresponding risk that such efforts can be jeopardised by the use of overtly aggressive platforms such as MBTs.

Unsurprisingly, an array of APCs and A/IFVs have been deployed in support of MONUSCO. These include the BAE Systems/United Defence M-113 tracked APC family vehicles. These are used by the armies of Benin, Egypt and Pakistan to support their operations. Despite the vehicle design being over half a century old, having been introduced into US Army service in April 1962, it continues to be an ideal platform for supporting low intensity and peacekeeping operations. Similarly General Dynamics Land Systems' (GDLS/formerly MOWAG) Piranha family of wheeled APCs/AFVs are in significant use supporting MONUSCO. For example, the Belgian Land Component (the ground force element of the Belgian armed forces) employs the Piranha-IIIGENIE/FUS variants of the vehicle to provide mobility and troop transport.

Belgium's deployment of these vehicles is reinforced with the deployment of GDLS Piranha-I six-wheel drive AFVs which were acquired from the Canadian Army in 2008. These vehicles were rebuilt by Chilean contractor FIMAE *sans* their Cadillac-Cage one metre (three feet) turret which mounts a 7.62mm and 12.7mm machine gun. Other combat vehicles deployed to support the force include the BAE Systems Mamba and Casspir mine-resistant, ambush-protected vehicles in extensive use with the South African Army (SAA). These vehicles, which were designed specifically to support the SAA have shown their worth in supporting peacekeeping operations throughout Africa. Finally, Russian/Soviet Union-designed APCs have been deployed to

Air support forms a key component of the MONUSCO mission, with the Ukrainian Air Force supplying Mil Mi-24 helicopters to provide close air support © MONUSCO

9th International Defence Exhibition and Seminar

IDEAS 2016 PAKISTAN

ARMS FOR PEACE

22 - 25 November, 2016

Karachi Expo Centre

www.ideaspakistan.gov.pk

Organized by	A venture of	Supported by	Endorsed by	Event Manager
DEFENCE EXPORT PROMOTION ORGANIZATION	GOVERNMENT OF PAKISTAN	PAKISTAN ARMED FORCES	TRADE DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY OF PAKISTAN	BADAR EXPO SOLUTIONS

Official Publisher of Show Daily

ASIAN MILITARY REVIEW

Media Partners

ARMADA INTERNATIONAL · ARMSCOM · IHS · SDA · DEFENCE TURKEY · MSI · COPYBOOK · DEFENCE REVIEW ASIA · DEFENCE 21 · DEFENSE

IDEAS SECRETARIAT

C-175, Block-9, Gulshan-e-Iqbal Near Aziz Bhatti Park, Karachi. Tel: (92-21) 34821159, (92-21) 34821160 Fax: (92-21) 34821179

Email: info@ideaspakistan.gov.pk

assist the mission in the form of the Arzamas Machinery Plant BTR-80 APCs which have been in extensive use with the Bangladesh Army.

Alongside the armoured vehicles discussed above, in 2013 so as to improve intelligence gathering, the UN authorised the use of the first ever Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) in a peacekeeping operation in the form of the Selex Falco UAV. At a cost of $13 million per year the UN only flies them individually, for limited periods of five hours, to gather information on hard-to-reach areas. However, these particular aircraft have experienced challenges with the humid environment of the DRC causing a lack of availability during African rainy seasons, according to UN sources. "Military hardware is only as good as the user," says the Congo-based analyst, "and even UAVs need human intelligence to interpret information and make decisions," including when to fly them. That said, the deployment of the Falco represents a watershed in UN peacekeeping operations and this aircraft, along with other UAVs, could be increasingly deployed to support such missions in the future. Compared to operating inhabited fixed- and rotary-wing reconnaissance aircraft, platforms such as the Falco offer a more cost-effective alternative. They may also help to contribute to building up a detailed 'pattern of life' intelligence picture for an area where a peacekeeping mission has been deployed.

Having the correct type of *materiel* is but one challenge. Complications over sovereignty, confusion between international and national accountability, and the interference of domestic politics, means that UN peacekeeping in these contexts is often limited to the role of fire-fighting in countries showing little political will to receive such support, and to bring their conflicts to an end. As a UN official once reportedly observed, "Helping the (DRC) is like giving first aid to a wounded rattlesnake."

The MONUSCO peacekeeping mission has worked closely with local militaries and militia organisations as it has worked to bring peace and stability to the DRC © MONUSCO

FAILING IN A COMPLIANT WAY?

There exists a wealth of literature outlining the many failures of the UN during its sixteen years in the DRC. On the ground, a large share of the population also fails to understand how conflict can still be affecting their daily lives, despite the DRC having been the subject of one the most expensive peacekeeping operations in UN history. But the sources interviewed for this article all agree that, for all the flaws outlined above, MONUSCO has had non-negligible successes such as ousting the M23 group which operated in the eastern DRC and displaced large numbers of civilians in 2012 when it led a rebellion against the DRC's government, allegedly with Ugandan and Rwandan governmental support. MONUSCO in general has succeeded in stabilising the country, creating a modest opening for dialogue as well as room for the majority of people to resume their lives.

"The main issue with the UN," says Mr. Shepherd, "is that it needs to manage expectations," a sentiment echoed by all sources interviewed for this article. Established and renewed on the basis of a series of ambitious peace-building goals MONUSCO's military successes were doomed from the start to be limited by UN political wrangling. In the eyes of the population of the DRC, MONUSCO is failing to bring peace, albeit in a way compliant with its articulated goals.