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Lessons Learnt During the South African Early Deployment in International Peacekeeping Operations

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Abstract

Since the establishment of democracy in South Africa in 1994, it was only a matter of time before South Africa and the South African National Defence Force would participate in international peace missions. When this occurred in 1999, the defence force, particularly the staff at the Joint Operations Division, was largely unprepared for such a deployment, requiring personnel to adapt rapidly – amidst institutional changes as part of democratic reforms, and the restructuring of command and logistical frameworks. The deployment in support of the United Nations mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo presented numerous challenges that had to be addressed for a successful outcome. The study on which the article is based, examined these challenges and the planning measures of the Joint Operations Division staff employed to overcome them. These strategies were recorded and used for future deployments. The study focussed on the personal experience of the author while serving as a member of the Joint Operations Division staff.

Keywords: United Nations; South African National Defence Force; Joint Operations Division; Peacekeeping Operations; United Nations Manual on Policy and Procedures for the Reimbursement of Contingent-Owned Equipment; Challenges and Logistics

Introduction

In 1999, the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) was tasked to participate in international peace missions, which necessitated that the SANDF had to be acquainted with new doctrine and procedures, and learn new lessons. These included the mandate of the mission (concept, tasks and structure in terms of Chapter VI or VII of the United Nations Charter), memorandum of understanding (wet or dry lease of commodities) (see later in this article), United Nations (UN) logistics support to missions, letters of assist (LOA), UN standards, UN Manual on Policy and Procedures for the Reimbursement of Contingent Owned Equipment (COE Manual), and deployment arrangements. It was particularly the staff at the Joint Operations Division (J Ops Div) that was at the forefront of the learning cycle. While many members of the SANDF had attended peacekeeping courses, there was no central point where the knowledge was available. The peacekeeping expertise and assistance provided by Norway with regard to the competition and negotiation of the UN memorandum of understanding (MOU) was extremely helpful. The SANDF was not alone in facing new challenges in preparing for participation in international peacekeeping operations. In an article 'Sierra-Leone – Lessons Learnt by the Nigerian Army' by Brig.

Gen. KTJ Minimah provides details of the lessons learnt by the Nigerian Army during its deployment to Sierra Leone.[1]

The study on which this article is based, aimed to explore the lessons that had to be learnt and the challenges experienced by the SANDF during the initial participation in international peace missions, and focussed on the period 1999 to 2003. The article primarily focusses on the author's personal experience as a member of the J Ops Div staff during this period.

Background

After the Second World War (1939–1945) and the Korean War (1950–1953), the South African Defence Force (SADF), like several other armed forces with roots in the British system, remained largely a conventional force. In 1966, the SADF became involved in the Border War, also known as the Bush War, which took place along the border between what was then South West Africa (now Namibia) and Angola. While the war was primarily a counterinsurgency (COIN) conflict, several conventional operations occurred during its course.[2] The sustainment of deployed forces was primarily managed by the maintenance unit stationed at Rundu in northern South West Africa. This unit was supported by local industry in, South West Africa while additional logistical support from South Africa was provided via air, road, and rail transport. The Border War ended in 1989.

Following the conflict, military units returned to their home bases with battle-worn equipment. Some of these units were retrained and re-equipped for urban operations to address the increasing unrest in various parts of South Africa, particularly during the late 1980s.[3] Minor new equipment was introduced to these units.

On 27 April 1994, South Africa held its first democratic elections. In political circles, there were high expectations and assumptions that long-term peace had come to Southern Africa. The newly established SANDF primarily focussed on integrating the nine statutory and non-statutory forces into a unified military structure.[4] During this period, the SANDF prioritised the successful integration of these forces and the training of new personnel rather than external operations. In some respects, the SANDF was downsized, including the decommissioning of critical logistics platforms, such as the C-160 Transall aircraft.[5] Despite these changes, the fundamental structure of the SANDF remained that of a conventional force.

The advent of democracy in South Africa placed the country in a perceived position as a patron for the peoples of Africa, particularly for the people of the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC). In this regard, and due to international expectations, significant pressure mounted on South Africa to establish its presence in the international and regional arena.[6] Moreover, following the successful negotiated democratic transition from apartheid, the Mandela administration had significant credibility to become involved in conflict management in Africa.

After the new dispensation in South Africa in 1994, it was only a matter of time before the country was requested to participate in international peacekeeping missions, such as those led by the UN. The SANDF had to undergo a steep learning curve to transition from counterinsurgency operations to international peacekeeping operations,[7] such as those conducted by the UN.

The notion of a "millennium of peace" was shattered in September 1998 when unrest in Lesotho necessitated the deployment of the SANDF alongside the Botswana Defence Force (BDF) under Operation Boleas.[8] The Joint SADC Task Force had to deploy on very short notice, with little or no mission readiness training. The Task Force Commander received his orders on 16 September 1998, with the intervention set to commence at 05:00 on 17 September 1998.[9] Although this intervention in Lesotho was the baptism of fire in peace operations for the SANDF, it was not a UN peacekeeping operation. The study reported on here thus focussed on lessons learnt regarding UN peacekeeping operations.

The Establishment of the Joint Operations Division

Initially, the newly established SANDF was structured along the lines of the old SADF, particularly in terms of its command structure.[10] The Chief of Joint Operations (CJ Ops) was established on 1 April 1998 at the military-strategic level, where all operations were planned and directives issued. Additionally, five Regional Joint Task Forces (RJTFs) – North, East, South, West, and Central – were established as decentralised regional headquarters in South Africa to conduct internal operations.[11]

The incipient Joint Operations Division (J Ops Div) comprised two Chief Directorates. The Chief Director of Operations Development (CD Ops Dev) was responsible for contingency planning and doctrine development, while the Chief Director of Operations (CD Ops) oversaw operations, force preparation, and training. The logistics section reported to the Director of Operations (D Ops), under the CD Ops. At this stage, the J Ops Div structure proved effective, since forces were primarily deployed for internal purposes, mainly border control. The five RJTFs were staffed with operational and logistical personnel, and largely fulfilled the role of an operational headquarters.[12]

The Evolution of UN Peacekeeping Operations

While the term "peacekeeping" does not appear in the UN Charter, Marrack Goulding, United Nations Under-Secretary General for Political Affairs characterised peacekeeping as

> Field operations, established by the United Nations, with the consent of the parties concerned, to help control and resolve conflicts between them, under United Nations Command and Control, at the expense collectively of the member states, and with military and other personnel and equipment provided voluntarily by them acting impartially between the parties and using force to the minimum extend necessary.[13]

Soon after 1947, peacekeeping became a pragmatic instrument to manage conflict in a divided world where major players in the international system nevertheless sometimes shared a common interest in containing regional conflicts, preventing them from escalating into wider confrontation.[14]

Between 1945 and 1987, UN peacekeeping operations primarily aimed to uphold ceasefires, stabilise situations on the ground, and create conditions conducive to resolving political and diplomatic conflict resolution. These missions typically involved military observers and lightly armed troops tasked with monitoring agreements, reporting violations, and fostering confidence between parties, with deployment dependent on the consent of those involved.[15] A notable example was the UN Operation in the Congo (ONUC), established in 1960 after the mutiny of the Congolese armed forces, which initially provided military assistance to the Congolese government until local forces could assume responsibility. Subsequent mandate changes authorised the use of force to prevent civil war and expel mercenaries from Katanga, marking the first use of combat aircraft in UN history.[16] Despite its enforcement-like actions, no evidence suggests ONUC operated under a formal UN Charter Chapter VII mandate, raising the question of whether this was an oversight.

Between 1988 and 1996, UN peacekeepers faced severe violence and widespread human rights abuses, most notably during the 1994 Rwandan civil war,[17] alongside escalating humanitarian crises that displaced large populations and drew increased involvement from non-governmental and volunteer organisations. While most missions remained focussed on observing and verifying peace agreements, a limited number were mandated under Chapter VII of the UN Charter to address situations involving intra-state rather than inter-state conflicts,[18] with only two missions in this period relating to the latter. Four operations were authorised under Chapter VII during this time:

- The Unified Task Force (UNITAF) in Somalia (December 1992);
- Operation Turquoise in Rwanda (June 1994);
- The UN Mission in Haiti (UNMIH) in July 1994; and
- The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation-led Implementation Force (IFOR) in Yugoslavia in December 1995.[19]

Up to 1997, most UN peacekeeping operations were deployed under Chapter VI[20] of the UN Charter, focussing on verifying, monitoring, and observing peace agreements. While some post-1997 missions retained this role, the majority were authorised under Chapter VII to carry out specific tasks, including the use of force under defined conditions.[21] Following the 2000 Brahimi Report, which evaluated the capacity of the UN for effective peace operations and recommended improvements, there was a marked increase in such mandates, with half of the 20 missions authorised since 1997 falling under Chapter VII. In the next section, key concepts and documents to enable UN peacekeeping operations are discussed.

Important Documents and Concepts for UN Peacekeeping Operations

The mandate of a UN mission is the document of the UN Security Council that authorises the specific mission. This document provides the strength and structure of the force, the mandate of the mission, the specific chapter of the UN under which it acts, and the funding of the mission. It is of paramount importance that the content of the mandate is clearly understood at all levels, from technical to strategic, as it could have an influence on the deployed forces of the specific troop-contributing country (TCC), especially if the forces are deployed under a Chapter VII mandate.

The UN MOU is the legal document between the government of the TCC and the UN, confirming the responsibilities of the parties, including reimbursement to the TCC. Such an MOU comprises the following sections:[22]

- **The main document**: Approved by the General Assembly (GA), any amendments require GA approval. This section contains information on the mission; the stakeholders to the agreement; definitions; documents constituting the MOU; purpose; application; contributions by government; reimbursement and support from the UN; general and specific conditions (environmental condition factor, intensity of operations factor, hostile or forced abandon factor, and incremental transportation factor); claims by third parties; recovery; supplementary arrangements; amendments; settlement of disputes; and entry into force.
- **Appendix A – Personnel**: This part covers requirements, reimbursement, and general conditions for personnel.
- **Appendix B – Major equipment provided by the government (TCC)**: Addresses requirements and reimbursement rates, general conditions for major equipment, verification and control procedures, transportation, mission usage factors, loss and damage, and special case equipment.
- **Appendix C – Self-sustainment provided by the government (TCC)**: Refers to requirements and reimbursements, general conditions for self-sustainment, verification and control procedures, transportation, mission usage factors, and loss and damage.
- The other appendices included the performance standards for major equipment (appendix D), performance standards for self-sustainment (appendix E), definitions (appendix F) and guidelines for TCC's (appendix F). The latter is usually distributed separately.

The deployment of major equipment in support of UN peacekeeping follows two primary models:

- **Dry lease**: A contingent-owned equipment (COE) reimbursement system in which the troop or police contributor provides equipment for the mission, while the UN assumes responsibility (or may arrange for a third party) for its

maintenance. Under the dry lease, costs associated with categories of deployed minor equipment are reimbursed. Dry lease equipment may be operated either by the equipment-owning country or another country. The contractual relationship is between the UN and the equipment-owning country and/or the UN and the equipment-operating country.[23]

- **Wet lease**: A COE reimbursement system in which the troop or police contributor provides, maintains, and supports the deployed major equipment, along with associated minor equipment. The contributor is entitled to reimbursement for providing this support.[24]

Additionally, a TCC may deploy unique equipment, referring to any special equipment or consumables not covered under standard self-sustainment rates. Such items are managed on a bilateral, special-case basis between the troop contributor and the UN.[25]

During UN peace operations, TCCs are also reimbursed for self-sustainment, as determined following agreement on certain aspects:[26]

- Negotiations between the UN and troop or police contributors determine the capabilities to be provided by the UN and the contingent. The UN identifies and requests self-sustainment capabilities that it cannot provide. Troop or police contributors however retain the right to offer certain self-sustainment services, which are considered during the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) negotiations. The UN ensures that all self-sustainment services provided by a contributor meet minimum operational capabilities, are compatible with those of other troop or police contributors where necessary, and incur costs comparable to what the UN would otherwise pay.
- Only those services explicitly agreed upon in the MOU as provided by the troop or police contributor are reimbursable every month, at rates specified in Chapter 8 of the COE Manual, and based on actual troop strength, up to the personnel ceiling set in the MOU.
- If a contingent uses major equipment for self-sustainment support, it is not entitled to major equipment reimbursement but only to self-sustainment reimbursement. In cases where a troop or police contributor provides services, such as communications, medical, or engineering support at force level as force assets, they may however be entitled to major equipment reimbursement. In contrast, the same services at unit level would be classified as "minor equipment" and would fall under self-sustainment reimbursement. Such distinctions are generally negotiated and recorded in Annexes B (major equipment) and C (self-sustainment) of an MOU, where applicable.

Communication between the UNDPKO and the SANDF

In August 1999, Colonel (Col.) Johan van der Walt from the J Ops Div joined a small delegation on a visit to the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (UNDPKO) in New York, hosted by the South African Permanent Mission at the UN. The visit aimed

to improve understanding of UN peacekeeping processes due to limited South Africa (SA) knowledge in this area. Meetings with high-ranking officials highlighted the UN Security Council control over peace mission mandates and emphasised the importance of non-member states engaging with countries on the Security Council. Additionally, the visit underscored the significance of interaction with the UN Secretariat.[27]

The National Office for the Coordination of Peace Missions (NOCPM) gained momentum following the visit to the UNDPKO. An interim SA interdepartmental forum, the Peace Mission Coordinating Centre (PMC), was established in June 1999 to coordinate South African assistance to missions in the DRC. Despite initial challenges, the NOCPM was expected to become the official coordinating body, replacing the Joint Peace Operation Coordinating Centre (JPOCC) as outlined in the 1999 White Paper on South African Participation in International Peace Missions (hereinafter referred to as "the White Paper").[28] The NOCPM mission included facilitating, coordinating, and executing peace missions, with objectives, such as strategic analysis, liaison with international organisations, and ensuring compliance with international law. The NOCPM had to include representatives from various departments, although funding and staffing remained challenges. The SANDF created interim structures known as 'operational teams' to assist the NOCPM and address immediate needs; however, a permanent team of experts was necessary for effective coordination in peace missions.[29] To the best knowledge of the author, this never materialised.

During the author's attendance at the COE Manual Review in 2001, he met the staff of the South African Permanent Mission to the United Nations, and was introduced to several personnel at the UNDPKO. It is important to note that, at the time, no military attaché was deployed at the Permanent Mission to the UN. Instead, a civilian staff member was responsible for attending all UNDPKO meetings. As a result, communication from the UNDPKO was relayed via the Permanent Mission directly to CJ Ops. This created challenges, as all information received had to be conveyed to the NOCPM representative at the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA), which created delays. This usually took place during monthly meetings.

Funding for Peacekeeping Operations

South African participation in peace missions requires parliamentary approval for funding, though the role of the legislature is limited to individuals directly employed by the UN or seconded by relevant departments. Parliamentary acceptance of the White Paper serves as sufficient authorisation for departments to fund such participation, provided that participation aligns with their annual budgets. Bridging finance is necessary for UN operations to cover initial costs and delays in UN reimbursements. For non-UN operations, alternative funding mechanisms, such as collateral or third-country contributions, should be explored. In principle, the DFA had to lead in securing funds, with the Department of Finance authorising expenditure upon instruction from the President or Deputy President, while the Departments of Defence and Safety and Security (at the time) were responsible for budgeting pre-deployment and six-month post-deployment costs.[30]

During the planning phase for a peace mission, the various divisions within the SANDF and the Department of Defence (e.g. finance, personnel and logistics), as well as the services (Army, Air Force, Navy, and Military Health Services) are involved. The Personnel Division determines e.g. the various allowances that will be paid to the deployed personnel, and the Logistics Division determines the logistic support, while the various Services determine their requirements.

Once the budget is approved, it is allocated to J Ops Div to manage it. Should a service require items for a peace mission, it is responsible to do the basics of obtaining quotes. The latter is usually done using the Central Procurement Office. The service then submits a financial authority against the relevant serie code on the budget after which it is approved and the order is placed.

Preparation for Peacekeeping Operations

One of the earliest instances of SANDF engagement in peacekeeping operations was during the SADC peacekeeping exercise, Exercise Blue Hungwe, held in Zimbabwe in 1996. Subsequently, in 1999, South Africa hosted the SADC peacekeeping exercise, Exercise Blue Crane, at the Army Battle School near Lohatla. This exercise included elements from Namibia (which transported limited equipment to South Africa by rail), Botswana, Swaziland (now Eswatini), Tanzania, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.[31]

Since 1994, several SANDF members have attended peacekeeping courses at various international institutions, such as:

- The Lester B Pearson Canadian International Peacekeeping Training Centre in Cornwallis, Canada; and
- The SADC Regional Peacekeeping Training Centre in Harare, Zimbabwe; as well as others.

Upon returning to their respective units, their acquired knowledge was however not centralised or utilised for doctrine development.

Following Exercise Blue Crane, the staff of CJ Ops, with the assistance of the UNDPKO, conducted a course for military observers and staff officers to prepare personnel for rapid deployment in peacekeeping operations. This proved to be the correct decision, as the first request to deploy a staff officer came in August 1999 with the deployment to the United Nations Organisation Stabilisation Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUC). This was followed by the request to deploy staff officers and military observers to the United Nations Mission in Eritrea and Ethiopia (UNMEE), and the Organisation of African Unity Mission in Eritrea and Ethiopia (OLMEE) in 2000 under Operation Espresso.[32]

In 1999, with the promulgation of White Paper on South African Participation in International Peace Missions, this White Paper became the national guiding document that dictates the participation of the SANDF in peace missions. According to the White Paper, South Africa will participate in peace missions that include peace support operations, preventative diplomacy, peacemaking, peacekeeping operations, peace enforcement, peace building, humanitarian assistance, and humanitarian intervention, each with its definition.[33] Within the context of the White Paper, the role of the military in peace missions involves the conduct of peace support operations, which include activities where the military operates in support of the political, diplomatic, and humanitarian objectives of the broader mission. These tasks comprise the separation of combatants, disarmament of irregular forces, demobilisation and transformation of regular and irregular forces into a unified army, assistance with reintegration into civil society, and assistance with elections for new governments.

With the reality of a possible deployment, the NOCPM, then part of the DFA, in cooperation with the Chief Policy and Planning (CPP) of the Defence Secretariat, decided late in 2000 to bring Major (Maj.) Barnjé Giské, a peacekeeping expert from Norway, to South Africa to assist with preparation for potential deployment. He spent two weeks with the author at J Ops Div in Pretoria. During this time, Maj. Giské shared his knowledge on the MOU that needed to be compiled between the UN and the Government of the Republic of South Africa for the upcoming deployment to the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). This proved invaluable, and greatly assisted during the first negotiations with the UN. It is of paramount importance that everyone in the decision-making chain understands the contents of the MOU. This includes the conditions under which the personnel are deployed, the major equipment that will be deployed, as well as the self-sustainment for which the country will be responsible, and the reimbursement that the country will receive.[34] With regard to the reimbursement, CJ Ops had to annually submit a report in February to the National Treasury reflecting the reimbursement due and reimbursement received.

During January 2001, the author attended the review of the COE Manual at the UN Headquarters in New York. Here, he learnt about the various categories of major equipment and self-sustainment, which had to be included in the MOU between the government of South Africa and the UN. He further met with several members of the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations, which proved invaluable for future communication with the UN.

Initial SANDF Deployment in Support of MONUC

In terms of UN Security Council Resolution 1291, dated 24 February 2000, the United Nations Organisation Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (known by its French acronym MONUC) was increased to 5 537 military personnel and up to 500 military observers. The mandate of the mission was the implementation and monitoring of the ceasefire, liaison with all parties, and facilitating humanitarian assistance.[35] The mission was deployed under Chapter VII of the UN –

> [A]nd may take the necessary action, in the areas of deployment of its infantry battalions and as it deems it within its capabilities, to protect United Nations and co-located JMC [Joint Monitoring Committee] personnel, facilities, installations and equipment, ensure the security and freedom of movement of its personnel, and protect civilians under imminent threat of physical violence.[36]

The latter was very important and the staff at the J Ops Div brought it to the attention of their superiors. Notwithstanding that the forces being deployed were not combat forces, the possible impact on them was brought to the attention of their superiors.

Following a request from the UN, the first SANDF member was deployed to Kinshasa on 7 September 1999 as the Capital Liaison Officer for MONUC. This marked the beginning of Operation Mistral, the contribution by the SANDF to the UN mission in the DRC (then MONUC).[37]

In a letter dated 9 May 2000, the UN requested that South Africa consider deploying several support elements for MONUC, including six movement control teams, four airfield crash and rescue teams, eight cargo handling teams, three logistics loading teams, four fuel-servicing units, two medical emergency teams, four water purification teams, and a meteorological service element.[38]

After completing feasibility studies, a team from the SANDF travelled to the United Nations Headquarters (UNHQ) in New York to discuss potential deployment by South Africa. Following the visit, the UN requested the deployment of the following support for MONUC:[39]

- Six air-cargo handling teams, each comprising eight members with the necessary equipment;
- Two airfield crash rescue and firefighting teams, each with seven members and associated equipment;
- An aeromedical evacuation team, consisting of two doctors and four operational medical practitioners; and
- A small headquarters and support element of 20 members.

The unit was designated the SA National Defence Force Specialist Contingent (SANDFSPECC). In preparation for deployment, a small team conducted a reconnaissance of the area.

Special cargo handling equipment, including a transfer bridge and two aircraft loading capabilities known as K-loaders,[40] had to be procured as part of the air-cargo handling teams. This equipment was not standard in the SANDF, so personnel received training at the South African Airways (SAA) training centre. No technical personnel were trained in the maintenance of this equipment however.

Following several delays in the deployment of SANDFSPECC, the UN requested in April 2001 that the Aero Medical Evacuation Teams of SANDFSPECC be urgently deployed to Kinshasa. The SANDF responded immediately, with the South African Air Force (SAAF) providing a Hercules C-130 aircraft. The team and elements of the Headquarters Unit (HQ Unit) deployed on 6 April 2001. At the time, the SANDF was unaware that it needed to request a Letter of Assist (LOA) from the UN to obtain reimbursement for the flight. Another lesson was learnt, and a post-flight request was submitted, and reimbursement received.

The UN deployed the remainder of the SANDFSPECC personnel and equipment in April and May 2001. Another challenge arose with the deployment of the transfer bridge to Kinshasa, which required a special flight using an Antonov 124 aircraft. Before this, photographs and detailed measurements of the transfer bridge had to be sent to the United Nations Logistics Base in Brindisi, Italy. The logistics base then constructed a special ramp that was used for loading and offloading the transfer bridge from the Antonov 124 aircraft.[41]

As the small teams were deployed to various locations, the SANDF was not required to provide accommodation. The teams stationed at the Iveco Base outside Kinshasa were supplied with Weatherhaven[42] accommodation. The Command Team also had Weatherhaven offices provided by MONUC. These teams initially received a special allowance of US$25.00 per day, which they used to purchase meals at the local restaurant within the base. This special allowance was suspended in early 2002 when the SANDF was requested to deploy catering personnel to staff the kitchen facility provided by MONUC at the Iveco Base.

Soon after the air-cargo handling teams had been deployed to outlying bases in Mbandaka, Goma, Kalemie, and Kisangani, a challenge arose regarding food rations. Some of these teams were deployed alongside other MONUC battalions, whose dietary requirements differed from those of the South Africans. Following negotiations with MONUC HQ, these teams were permitted to submit a separate food indent.[i] The SANDF was then required to provide stoves and fridges to enable the teams to prepare their meals.

To support the deployment, the SANDF instituted a biweekly flight operated by the SAAF using either a Boeing 707 or a Hercules C-130 aircraft. Initially, these flights were assigned UN flight numbers, which facilitated obtaining flight plans. Another challenge was that the flight with the Hercules C-130 from Air Force Base (AFB) Waterkloof to Kinshasa took between three and four hours. This led to a further challenge, as the aircraft did not have a toilet facility. This was overcome with the temporary installation of a chemical toilet in the cargo hold of the aircraft. Later during the deployment, the SA military attaché to the DRC became responsible for securing flight clearances.

[i] A food indent is a request for rations/food submitted by a unit and/or sub-unit.

Another challenge was that all SANDF-deployed vehicles were right-hand drive, suited to SA left-lane road conditions, whereas the DRC follows right-lane traffic rules. Drivers and co-drivers had to adapt to driving on the right-hand side, relying heavily on their co-drivers. Another challenge was that the local language was French. Once deployed, however, it became evident that Swahili was more commonly spoken among the local population than French, which provided a practical means of communication for SANDF troops who picked up basic Swahili relatively easily.

South Africa agreed to deploy under the Wet Lease in the DRC. The SANDF therefore had to deploy with its equipment and maintain it, resulting in reimbursement under the MOU. Thanks to the visit by Maj. Giské as well as the author's attendance of the COE Manual review early in 2000, the author and the staff at the J Ops Div could compile the first MOU with the UN per the UN standards, and briefed all involved. Once all had been briefed, a small team travelled to UNHQ between 2 and 7 April 2001 to negotiate the first-ever MOU between South Africa and the UN. At the first meeting, the team was informed that the air-cargo handling teams would no longer be required, as the UN had appointed a civilian company to manage air-cargo handling. Since South Africa had already spent a significant sum on procuring cargo-handling equipment, the team withdrew from the meeting. They were however later requested to return, and the air-cargo handling teams were ultimately deployed. The MOU was signed by the SA government and the UN.

The Initial SANDF Deployment to Burundi

The negotiations held in Arusha, pursuant to the Declaration by the Participants in the Burundi Peace Negotiations – signed on 21 June 1998 and involving all parties to the Burundi conflict ("the Declaration of 21 June 1998") – were conducted under the facilitation of the late Mwalimu Julius Kambarage Nyerere, and subsequently the late Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela, representing the states of the Great Lakes region and the international community. These discussions included consideration of the potential deployment of a military force, with particular emphasis on the provision of security for returning leaders classified as very important persons (VIPs).[43]

Over the period 25 September to 5 October 2001 Maj. General Jan Lusse and members of J Ops along with representatives of Ghana, Nigeria and Senegal, deliberated on the concept of the deployment of a military force in Burundi. After the defence ministers of the various countries involved in the peace process had accepted the proposed plan on 10 October 2001, the 43rd South African Brigade Headquarters (43 SA Bde HQ) was tasked with planning for the deployment, which had to be in place in Bujumbura to provide protection by 1 November 2001.[44]

Immediately, there was resistance from the South African Army regarding the serviceability of the major equipment and how it would be sustained over such a vast distance.[45] As the political decision had been made, the SANDF had to deploy, and vehicles had to be repaired.

The Operations Movement Centre, which was established at AFB Waterkloof, had to expand rapidly to manage the additional increase in the movement of personnel and equipment. The same applied to the Field Post Office, Immigration Office, and Movements.[46]

There was a lack of concise intelligence regarding the deployment area,[47] which contributed to the challenges for the higher echelons to get the contingent ready and deployable, in essence, a "rush job". The Directorate Force Preparation and Training (DFPT) of J Ops, was uncertain how to structure a mission readiness training (MRT) programme for the Burundi deployment and subsequent missions. The DFPT had to address the following questions that emerged:

- What should the training objectives be?
- How should the MRT block programme be structured, and with which kind of subjects?
- What should the end state be?[48]

It needs to be pointed out that the SANDF was not the first to experience these challenges, since the Nigerian Contingent (NIGCON) experienced similar challenges during its deployment to Sierra Leone, as part of the initial Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) peace support operation in 1997, and later with the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) in 1999.[49]

Another challenge at the time was how to get all the equipment to Burundi on such short notice. The largest airlift operation ever undertaken by the SANDF was about to take place. With the assistance of the SANDF Procurement Centre and Armscor, several strategic lift aircraft were chartered. These included an Antonov 124 (AN 124) and Ilyushin 76 (IL 76) aircraft.[50] Another challenge was getting all the personnel to Burundi, given the limited capability of the SAAF. An SAA Boeing 747 aircraft was chartered to airlift all the personnel to Bujumbura. The deployment was labelled the South African Protection and Support Detachment (SAPSD).

It is interesting to note that, as South Africa would initially deploy on its own, it sought international support and endorsement for the unilateral deployment. This was obtained from the UN via UN Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 1375, dated 20 October 2001, in which it –

> [E]ndorses the efforts of the Government of South Africa and other member states to support the implementation of the Arusha Agreement and strongly supports in this regard the establishment of an interim multinational security presence in Burundi, at the request of its government, to protect returning leaders and train an all-Burundi protection force.[51]

The South Africans were not welcomed with open arms by the Burundi Armed Forces (FAB). The FAB deployed some of its elements close to the South Africans near the international airport. It is not certain whether the FAB saw the South Africans as a security threat or whether they simply wanted to intimidate them.[52] The SANDF faced many challenges with logistic delays and errors with procurement:

> Much of the equipment supplied proved to be outdated and/or had reached the end of its life cycle. Only with tender love and care did the SAPSD manage to keep some of the equipment functioning. But valuable lessons were learnt and for the first time in a long time, the SANDF came into contact with the realities of a potential future battle area, albeit for peacekeeping operations.[53]

On the ground in Burundi, a dilapidated facility named the "Palace Base" was occupied by the VIP protectors and the headquarters staff. This facility had to be renovated by the personnel deployed. A headquarters facility across the road was rented. This facility was initially rented for US$17 000 for the first six months and escalated to US$30 000 subsequently. In addition to these costs, the municipal monthly services were in the vicinity of US$7 000 per month. As this deployment was not part of the annual defence budget, it had to be funded from the approved budget. Additional funding was provided later.[54]

The air and logistics support elements were deployed in tented accommodation at Bujumbura International Airport. These were the same tents used by the SADF during the Border War. As mentioned, there was no time for the engineers to prepare the area, and it was flooded with the seasonal rain in Bujumbura. Only then could the engineers prepare the ground to establish a proper tented town. The same applied to the landing zones for the helicopters.

For the first few weeks, the deployed personnel were on ration packs until the necessary facilities could be established at both bases. With the assistance of the deployed logistics elements, fresh rations were procured from local sources, the same used by the Burundi Armed Forces. Very soon, it became evident that the local supplies could not meet the requirements of the deployed forces. The quality of available local fresh food deteriorated and soon dried up, resulting in fresh rations having to be airlifted to Bujumbura.[55] This placed an additional burden on the SAAF.

While spare parts for all the Toyota vehicles deployed (e.g. soft-skin four-wheel-drive vehicles) could be sourced from the local Toyota dealer in Bujumbura, there were no spare parts available for any of the other deployed vehicles (e.g. SAMIL logistic vehicles). Spare parts for the latter had to be obtained from the SANDF logistic stores in South Africa.[56]

The deployment in Burundi now shared the biweekly sustainment flight operated by the SAAF with the deployment in the DRC. While it initially did not have a major influence on the Burundi deployment, it would soon change with the deployment of the larger force in the DRC. This resulted in more regular flights, some only in support of the mission in Burundi. As there was no SA military attaché in Burundi, the deployed headquarters had to facilitate the overflight and landing clearance.

Initially, the 43 SA Bde HQ acted as the rear headquarters for the deployment in the DRC. As the rear headquarters, it acted as the "operational headquarters" and was responsible for the day-to-day communication between the operational area and the 43 SA Bde HQ. With the deployment of the latter brigade to Burundi, this task was now transferred to the 46 SA Bde HQ, stationed in Johannesburg.

Storing second-line ammunition in Bujumbura soon became a problem in the high-humidity environment in Burundi. This was due to the strict SANDF regulations and considerations for the safety of the civilian population. The water-damaged ammunition had to be disposed of and replaced, which was costly.[57]

On 1 May 2003, the mission became an African Union mission, namely the African Union Mission in Burundi (AMIB), with a South African as the force commander, an SANDF contingent, and elements from Mozambique. During the AMIB deployment, harbour patrol boats (HPBs) from the South African Navy (SAN) were deployed by chartering IL-76 aircraft. The HPBs were used for patrols on Lake Tanganyika. They deployed with their own transportable logistic support unit (TLSU). On 1 June 2004, the mission in Burundi became a UN peacekeeping mission, known by its French acronym, ONUB (United Nations Operation in Burundi), again with a South African as force commander.

Peacekeeping Operations and Logistic Coordination Meetings

At the request of the J Ops Div, a weekly logistic coordination meeting was instituted soon after the deployment to Burundi. These meetings took place on Tuesday mornings in the J Ops Div conference room in Blenny, Pretoria. Various services and divisions attended, with the meetings initially chaired by the CD Ops, of the J Ops Div. All logistical challenges were discussed, and attempts to resolve them were considered. With the establishment of the Joint Operations Headquarters (J Op HQ) at Blenny in 2003, which worked directly with operations at operational level, the meetings continued under the chairmanship of the Director of Peace Support Operations of the J Op HQ, with attendance from the services and divisions remaining unchanged. Participation was later expanded with the second deployment to the DRC and Sudan, with deployed contingents joining via satellite links.

Second SANDF Deployment to the DRC

As part of phase three of MONUC, still under Mandate 1291 dated 24 February 2000, South Africa was requested in June 2002 to consider the deployment of:

- A task force (1 100 personnel);
- An aviation regiment (200 personnel, nine utility helicopters, and four attack helicopters);
- A support group (539 personnel, HQ Unit, engineer company, level-one medical facility, various engineers, a ferry unit, and a water purification platoon);
- An airfield support services unit (297 personnel); and
- A level-two hospital (50 personnel).[58]

A well-drilling unit was later added. After feasibility studies, South Africa offered to deploy the task force headquarters, the infantry battalion group, the engineer company, the headquarters support unit, the well drilling unit, and the ferry unit. These units would all be deployed in Kindu on the Congo River in the Eastern DRC.[59]

As the requested forces were combat forces, the possible impact of the Chapter VII deployment on the SANDF deployment was brought to the attention of the hierarchy by the J Ops Div staff. This included the possibility of injuries and/or casualties due to the actions taken under the Chapter VII mandate of MONUC, which included that it –

> [M]ay take the necessary action, in the areas of deployment of its infantry battalions and as it deems it within its capabilities, to protect United Nations and co-located JMC personnel, facilities, installations and equipment, ensure the security and freedom of movement of its personnel, and protect civilians under imminent threat of physical violence.[60]

Immediately, some challenges were identified. The most significant challenge was the generic composition of a UN infantry battalion compared to that of the SANDF. The standard SANDF infantry battalion comprises three rifle companies, whereas the UN battalion comprises four rifle companies. The South African Army (SA Army) decided to add a fourth rifle company from the Reserve Force units. This brought additional challenges, as these members had to be made combat-ready and trained to a level acceptable for deployment. As the SANDF did not have a well-drill unit as a standard formed unit, equipment had to be procured, and engineers trained. The deployment was less successful, and the unit was returned some 12 months after deployment.

Another challenge that arose during the negotiations of the MOU was that in the SANDF doctrine, every rifle company would deploy with its own armoured personnel carriers (APCs). The UN initially however only agreed to deploy APCs for one rifle company. Following lengthy discussions, it was agreed that APCs for two rifle companies would be included in the MOU. The APCs therefore had to be used by more than the two

companies. This influenced the reimbursement, as only APCs for two rifle companies were included in the MOU.

In an article by Maj. Gen Patrick Cammaert, former UN commander of the Eastern Division in the DRC, published in *Africa Security Review* by the South African Institute for Security Studies (ISS), he emphasised the importance of being well prepared for modern "robust" peacekeeping operations, and stated that peacekeepers should be trained for 'fighting in a war'.[61] This serves to illustrate the importance of being properly prepared before deploying into a peacekeeping operation. Being properly prepared is put in context by the fact that more than 50 per cent of all peacekeeping operations that have been mandated by the UNSC since 1999 have been mandated with UN Chapter VII tasks.[62]

For this MONUC deployment, the main equipment, weapons, and ammunition had to be taken out of long-term storage at the Mobilisation Centre (Mob Centre) (previously 7 Division Mobilisation Centre) at De Brug near Bloemfontein and made serviceable to meet the UN standards. This included painting all the vehicles for deployment – white. This process started in October 2002. This mobilisation necessitated that all technical personnel be deployed to the Mob Centre to ensure that the vehicles were made serviceable. Some of the spare parts required were not immediately available, while others were not available at all. Risks had to be accepted in various aspects, such as vehicles with oil leaks and an incomplete table of technical equipment (TOTE). After some delays, the UN inspectors inspected and cleared the vehicles for deployment.[63]

For the mission in the DRC, various other items had to be procured that were not available in the logistic system, with some personal equipment that were not part of the standard SANDF scale of issue. This included the procurement of Land Rover vehicles in various configurations.

As none of the staff of the DFPT of J Ops had worked with the UN before or had done any UN courses, it was uncertain which type of mission readiness training had to be prepared. This was further complicated due to the lack of guidelines for the expected outcome of the deployment. As the SA contingent would remain under operational command of the SANDF and come under operational control of the UN force commander, there were some uncertainties regarding what had to be reported to the SANDF and what to the UN.[64]

The UN-designated personnel and equipment from the SANDF deployed into the mission area by air, sea and road. Personnel were airlifted from Bloemfontein directly to Kindu in the eastern DRC. All the main equipment (e.g. vehicles, camping equipment and such) was moved by road from Bloemfontein to the Durban harbour from where it was transported by sea to Dar es Salaam. Aircraft of the UN then airlifted the equipment to Kindu. The personnel arrived well before the equipment. The personnel deployed to Kindu were initially accommodated in a large building in the city. Sustenance was provided through ration packs supplied by MONUC. By this time, the SANDF had adopted the new Weatherhaven-style accommodation, which was suitable for the environment in the DRC.[65]

By the time the equipment arrived in Kindu, the MONUC operational plan had been amended, requiring the main equipment to be redeployed to locations in North and South Kivu. The ferry unit, utilising part of a floating bridge, became a crucial component, as it was the only means of crossing the Congo River. Consequently, it was responsible for facilitating all UN traffic that required passage across the river.[66]

The SANDF task force took time to adapt to the MONUC bureaucracy and operational systems. Many control measures were over-implemented by field officers concerned about job security, and substantive component logistic functionaries who could only be described as risk-averse. Unfortunately, this led to several differences in the interpretation and implementation of standard procedures between the SANDF task force staff and MONUC officials until a mutual understanding was established. Sub-contractors, e.g. the Ukrainian MI-17 helicopter crews, took no risks, and if it were not for the robust support from the Indian Air Wing, many operations would not have taken place.[67]

Support from South Africa in terms of spare parts and other consumables (E-class items)[68] was slow, as was the case in Burundi, with many items simply out of stock. Managing logistic reserves, as required by the UN system – such as maintaining a seven-day supply of ration packs for the entire contingent – proved challenging. When ration packs with an expiry date within a few months were received, they either had to be consumed or written off. To consume them while maintaining the required consumable ration pack reserve, special permission had to be obtained from the Mission Chief Administrative Officer, whose primary concern was cost containment.

In defence of the UN, it should be noted that most of the personnel at the MONUC Kinshasa Mission HQ had never operated in a Chapter VII mission before and were unfamiliar with troops deploying into the field. In their view, all troops were expected to return to base for lunch and dinner.[69]

The deployed SANDF task force established a special team for UN wet lease inspections, which travelled throughout the theatre to assist in preparation. Once the inspection date was confirmed, the team visited all sections to ensure that major equipment and self-sustainment measures met UN specifications. This proactive approach ensured that the task force met the minimum requirements for the first year, securing reimbursement as per the MOU.[70]

The SANDF Deployment to Darfur

The SANDF Operation Cordite in Sudan began as part of the African Union (AU) Mission in Sudan (AMIS), with the SANDF initially deploying staff officers and military observers in July 2004.[71] In 2005, this deployment expanded to include an infantry protection company and an explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) unit. On 1 January 2008, the mission transitioned into a hybrid operation, the United Nations–African Union Mission in Darfur (UNAMID) with the mandate to protect civilians, facilitate delivery of humanitarian assistance, mediate between the parties on the basis of the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur, and support the mediation of community conflict.[72]

Similar challenges to those encountered in other missions arose. An additional complication was the requirement by the Sudanese government that overflight and landing approval requests be submitted at least one week in advance. This posed a significant logistical constraint, as urgent equipment could not be added to the cargo manifest[ii] on short notice. Close coordination was necessary among all parties involved in securing overflight approvals.

Analysis of the SANDF Participation in International Peacekeeping Operations

As mentioned earlier in this article, the SANDF had to learn several new lessons, concepts and doctrines. This was largely the responsibility of the staff at the J Ops Div. Fortunately, most of the staff were veterans from the Bush War with years of operational and logistics experience, which made the learning curve somewhat flatter. They were able to brief the various command levels on the impact of the various deployments. These staff members were also the first to present lectures at the Peace Mission Training Centre when it was established in 2007.

One of the biggest challenges the SANDF faced as it became involved in peacekeeping, was that none of these operations were budgeted for initially, and they had to be funded from the running budget of the SANDF. Later, funds were specifically allocated for peacekeeping operations and ring-fenced. This was first implemented for Operation Mistral during the deployment to the DRC. Furthermore, all reimbursements received from the UN were paid directly to the Treasury.

All lessons learned during the deployment of the SANDF task force to the DRC were recorded, enabling future deployments to be briefed during the mobilisation phase. The example set by the task force with the SANDF special team for UN Wet Lease Inspection however appears to have faded, as reimbursements received, dwindled in later deployments. To the best of the author's knowledge, this remains a significant issue, as deployed equipment is not maintained to the required standard as prescribed in the MOU.[73]

Initially, there was some uncertainty regarding the deployment of personnel who were HIV-positive, specifically, whether they were permitted to deploy or not. This ambiguity contributed to difficulties in filling all the posts for the deployment to Burundi and later the infantry battalion to the DRC. This was due to the stringent standards from both the UN and the SANDF. The UN clarified the matter in a discussion at the UN General Assembly.[74] The current position in the UN is:

> The UN does not exclude HIV-positive personnel from serving in a mission because of their HIV status. Department of Field Support (DFS) does require that all uniformed peacekeepers be offered voluntary confidential counselling and testing (VCCT) prior to deployment. This should not be interpreted as a requirement for

[ii] A cargo manifest is a list of all the cargo destined to be loaded on a specific aircraft.

> mandatory testing. That the VCCT has been made available and should be stated in the certificate of health.[75]

In the SANDF the uncertainty regarding HIV-positive personnel remained. Following challenges by various organisations, such as Section 27, South African Security Forces Union (SASFU) and AIDS Law Project (ALP) resulting in a court case in the Pretoria High Court in 2008, *DefenceWeb* reported on 29 April 2009 that the SANDF would shortly finalise new AIDS policy, which would allow personnel with HIV/AIDS to deploy on external missions.[76] This policy was finalised in late 2009.[77]

Several social challenges arose during peacekeeping deployments, as members were deployed for six months and received substantial allowances from the SANDF. Only a small portion was paid to deployed members in cash, while the remainder was deposited into their bank accounts alongside their salaries. Some members returned home to find their funds had been misused by e.g. their spouses. As experience improved, members received formal financial briefings on managing their allowances. The author understands that deployments now extend to 12 months. While the author could not yet verify it, it appears that the UN requirement is that TCCs should deploy for nine months.

Discipline was another challenge. Despite briefings by the Legal Section of J Ops, many deployed members encountered legal issues with both the SANDF and the UN. This primarily involved cases related to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA) in the MONUC and MONUSCO[iii] missions in the DRC. Such cases have been a continuous challenge for the SANDF. For example, according to an article in *DefenceWeb* on 7 August 2018, titled 'Six South Africans Implicated in the Latest UN SEA Report', members of the SA contingent deployed in support of MONUSCO were implicated in SEA-related incidents.[78]

The deployment of helicopters presented additional challenges. Helicopters were not deployed as major equipment under the MOU but rather through an LOA, requiring the TCC to submit monthly claims for flying hours. A key issue was defining when a flying hour commenced, with the UN interpretation being "when the wheels leave the tarmac".

Another challenge was claiming the expenditure of ammunition during operations conducted under the Chapter VII mandate. Determining the exact number of rounds fired during engagements proved particularly difficult.

As the medium-transport capabilities and serviceability of the SAAF reduced, the SANDF became progressively dependent on chartered flights to deploy forces on non-UN missions and sustain forces deployed on all peace missions. Overall, this would become increasingly expensive for the organisation, especially in terms of opportunity costs during crises.

Sustaining forces over vast distances remains a significant challenge, exacerbated by the financial constraints of UN peacekeeping structures. The UN makes provision for the

[iii] United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

deployment of additional personnel for the TCC to maintain the major equipment, but without reimbursement. This can be done under paragraph 8 of the MOU:[79]

> Any personnel above the strength authorized in this MOU are a national responsibility, and not subject to reimbursement or support by the United Nations. Such personnel may be deployed to the [United Nations peacekeeping operation], with prior approval of the United Nations if it is assessed by the troop/police contributor and the United Nations to be needed for national purposes, for example to operate the communications equipment for a national rear link. This personnel shall be part of the contingent, and as such enjoys the legal status of members of the [United Nations peacekeeping operation]. The troop/police contributor will not, however, receive any reimbursement in respect of this personnel and the United Nations will not accept any financial obligation or responsibility in connection with such personnel. Any support or services will be reclaimed from reimbursement due the troop/police contributor.

On 28 November 2007, the Peace Mission Training Centre (PMTC) was officially opened at the SA Army College in Thaba Tshwane, Pretoria. This centre provided a central hub for accessing and facilitating all aspects of peace missions. Initially, staff from J Ops conducted most of the training and lectures. Even after retirement, the author was requested to present lectures at the centre. Later, the British Peace Support Training Team (BPSTT) was deployed to the centre, sharing their experiences in peacekeeping with students. The overall work of the BPSTT (formerly known as the British Military Advisory and Training Team or BMATT) since 1994; however, came to an end in December 2017, including the involvement of the BPSTT in SANDF peacekeeping training at the PMTC.[80]

As previously noted, there was no centralised organisation for peacekeeping information. Consequently, the staff involved in the initial deployment had to develop procedures as the process evolved. Thanks to a visit by Maj. Giské, the author was able to brief staff at strategic and military-strategic level on the importance of the MOU. Col. Johan van der Walt and the author were key figures to whom others turned for guidance. They conducted numerous presentations at strategic, military-strategic, and operational level, and also visited political delegations. They led the peacekeeping module at the Joint Senior Command and Staff Course at the SA National War College, and frequently responded to parliamentary enquiries. The success of the initial deployments and peacekeeping missions was largely due to commitment and professional leadership at all levels.

As the SANDF gained experience in peacekeeping operations, there was a realisation that key personnel, including commanders and support personnel, required certain training and experience to perform optimally in such operations. It was, for example, recommended that personnel identified for possible UN peacekeeping deployments complete the following UN POTI[81] courses[82] (subject to confirmation of availability at the PMTC):

- Officers Commanding:
  - Introduction to the UN system
  - Principles of peace support operations
  - Commanding peacekeeping operations
  - Ethics in peacekeeping

- Support Personnel**:**
  - An introduction to the United Nations System: Orientation for serving on a United Nations field mission
  - Logistical support to United Nations peacekeeping
  - Operational logistical support of United Nations peacekeeping: Intermediate logistics
  - Advanced topics in United Nations logistics: The provisioning of troops and contingent-owned equipment (COE) and the method for reimbursement.

Future Participation of the SANDF in Peacekeeping Missions

The 1999 White Paper on South African Participation in International Peace Missions states:

> In terms of the mandate of the SANDF, participation in international peace missions is a secondary function. The "Growth-Core Force Design" recommended in the Defence Review "provides for participation in peace support operations at the level of up to one infantry battalion group".[83]

Unfortunately, this was not adhered to, as by 2003, three infantry battalion-sized deployments were engaged on peace missions. These were Operation Mistral in the DRC,[84] Operation Fibre in Burundi[85] and Operation Cordite in Sudan.[86] These deployments placed significant strain on logistical support for the deployed forces and affected reimbursement from the UN.[87]

In addition to these deployments of formed units, numerous other deployments of staff officers and military observers have occurred since 2000. These include Operation Espresso in Eritrea and Ethiopia (November 2000–August 2008),[88] Operation Amphibian in the DRC (August 2002–June 2004),[89] Operation Sunray in the DRC (June 2002–September 2002),[90] Operation Montego in Liberia (October 2003–January 2005),[91] Operation Pristine in Côte d'Ivoire (July 2005–December 2006),[92] Operation Curriculum in Burundi (January 2007–November 2009),[93] Operation Induli in Nepal (April 2007–July 2009),[94] and Operation Bongane in Northern Uganda and Southern Sudan (June 2007–July 2009).[95]

What, then, is the future of the SANDF participation in peace missions? It is recommended that the SANDF withdraws all formed units from current peace missions as a matter of

urgency. Instead, staff officers and military observers should be deployed to as many peacekeeping missions as feasible. Upon their return, they should report to the PMTC to document their experiences for future reference. The SANDF should revert to the original policy outlined in the 1999 White Paper, which envisages the deployment of a single, properly equipped infantry battalion with all elements of logistical support in place. This may necessitate the deployment of additional technical personnel to maintain the vehicles, ensuring optimal reimbursement from the UN.

Conclusion

The transformation of the SANDF into a pivotal contributor to international peacekeeping operations necessitated profound institutional adaptation following the South African democratic transition. This process involved integrating diverse military factions, restructuring command and logistical frameworks, and shifting focus from internal security to regional and UN peace missions. Despite early operational challenges, such as those encountered during Operation Boleas in Lesotho (1998), the SANDF progressively enhanced its capabilities, drawing critical lessons that continue to inform its modern peacekeeping strategies.

The increasing prominence of South Africa in international peacekeeping reflects its growing responsibility within global security frameworks from 1999 to 2003. The transition from a national defence force to a regional stabilising entity required diplomatic negotiations, doctrinal evolution, and refined logistical coordination. Initial difficulties in UN engagements were mitigated through policy development and equipment reimbursement negotiations, bolstering the operational readiness of the SANDF and positioning South Africa as a significant contributor to African peace support initiatives.

The early participation of the SANDF in international and regional peacekeeping operations between 1999 and 2003 represented a critical period of transition from training exercises to operational deployment. Engagements, such as Exercises Blue Hungwe and Blue Crane, alongside initial UN missions, exposed both opportunities and significant challenges, highlighting the necessity of rapid adaptation to new doctrines, UN procedures, and complex logistical and administrative requirements. The experiences of this formative period emphasise the importance of institutional learning, structured knowledge management, and international collaboration, with external guidance proving invaluable in bridging early expertise gaps.

These early missions also revealed structural and institutional limitations within the SA coordination mechanisms, including insufficient staffing, funding, and dedicated military representation in multilateral forums. The establishment of national frameworks, such as the NOCPM, demonstrated intent but lacked the sustainable capacity to engage with UN peacekeeping processes fully. Practical experiences with mission mandates, memoranda of understanding, and reimbursement mechanisms underscored the critical need for strategic coordination, doctrinal clarity, and informed negotiation. Collectively, these lessons laid the foundation for the evolving role of South Africa in peace missions,

demonstrating that operational preparedness must be matched by institutional capacity and effective multilateral engagement to achieve meaningful contributions to international security governance.

The financial and administrative arrangements underpinning participation by South Africa in peace missions reveal the complex interplay between political authority, departmental responsibility, and operational requirements. While parliamentary approval provides the overarching mandate, the practical execution of funding relies heavily on interdepartmental cooperation, particularly between the Department of International Relations and Cooperation (previously Department of Foreign Affairs), the Department of Finance, and the Department of Defence. The mechanisms for bridging finance and cost recovery highlight the inherent challenges of aligning national budgetary processes with the reimbursement structures of the United Nations. Furthermore, the layered involvement of SANDF divisions and services underscores the logistical and procedural demands of peacekeeping operations, where clarity of roles and efficient procurement practices are essential. These arrangements demonstrate that effective participation in peace missions depends not only on political will but also on robust financial planning, disciplined coordination, and institutional agility to meet both national obligations and international commitments.

Sustainment and logistics – or the lack of these – are often the cause of success or failure. While the SANDF did everything possible to ensure that the deployed forces were sustained, the lack of the knowledge of the UN system affected the initial deployment of the SANDF task force. The experiences of the SANDF task force within MONUC illustrate the complex interplay between bureaucratic procedures, logistical constraints, and operational effectiveness in peacekeeping missions. The initial difficulties in adapting to UN systems, compounded by risk-averse practices and inconsistent support chains, highlight the importance of streamlined processes, reliable supply networks, and clear communication between all actors. While challenges were evident, particularly in relation to logistics and sustainment, the eventual development of mutual understanding and the critical assistance from partners, such as the Indian Air Wing, demonstrate that cooperative engagement remains essential for the success of multinational peace operations.

With the SANDF choosing to deploy under the “wet lease” agreement, the maintenance of major equipment is a priority, not just to ensure that reimbursement is received, but also in order for the deployed forces to execute their given tasks. The deployment of additional personnel under paragraph 8 of the MOU should seriously be considered.

Through strong leadership and professionalism, the SANDF successfully navigated its initial involvement in UN and AU peacekeeping operations. The obstacles encountered, from logistical delays to institutional gaps, were addressed through adaptive strategies and international cooperation. By using these experiences, South Africa has established itself as a credible leader in African security, poised to enhance its contributions to continental and global peacekeeping frameworks.

Endnotes

* Captain (SAN) CH Ross (SA Navy Retired) joined the SA Navy in 1983 as a Logistic Officer. After various postings in the SA Navy, he completed the SA Army Senior Command and Staff Course in 1998, after which he was posted to the Joint Operations Division as Senior Staff Officer: Logistics for Maritime Operations in 1999. In 2001, Captain Ross attended the review of the Contingent-Owned Equipment (COE) Manual at the United Nations (UN) Headquarters in New York. Later the same year he was the only uniform member in the team that negotiated the first memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the UN in New York, after which he was appointed as Senior Staff Officer: Peace Support Operations (UN). During this posting, Captain Ross was a member of the team that negotiated all following MOUs with the UN. In 2007, he was awarded the Certificate of Training in United Nations Peace Support Operations by the UN Department of Peacekeeping. In 2008, he became the first member of the SANDF to be elected as a co-chairperson of one of the three working groups during the review of the COE manual.

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42 Weatherhaven is a redeployable camping system developed for use by the armed forces of Canada, and was introduced to the SANDF during its initial deployment to the DRC. The systems can be linked to provide larger accommodation units if required. The local tent manufacturer, Redeployable Camping Systems, is currently a subsidiary of the parent company, Weatherhaven, and supplies these systems to the SANDF as well as several defence forces across Africa.

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65 Col Jan Henning (SA Army ret), report submitted via e-mail.

[66] SANDF, *South African National Defence Force, Joint Operations Division*, 187.

[67] Maj Gen Lawrence Smith (ret), report submitted via e-mail.

[68] E-class items are those items that are consumable or expendable, and that cannot be repaired when they become unusable for the purpose for which they have been acquired. These items are accounted for in accordance with the e-class accounting system. SANDF Stores Instruction; Volume A3: Unit Stores Accounting. Pamphlet 2: Unit Accounts and General Accounting Procedure.

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[83] South African Government, 'White Paper on South African Participation in International Peace Missions', 3.

[84] SANDF, *South African National Defence Force, Joint Operations Division*, 174.

[85] SANDF, *South African National Defence Force, Joint Operations Division*, 206.

[86] SANDF, *South African National Defence Force, Joint Operations Division*, 214.

87 Personal experience of the author who, from 2001 to 2008, was responsible for reporting the reimbursement received versus die reimbursement per the MOU to the National Treasury every year.

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92 SANDF, *South African National Defence Force, Joint Operations Division*, 217.

93 SANDF, *South African National Defence Force, Joint Operations Division*, 217.

94 SANDF, *South African National Defence Force, Joint Operations Division*, 220.

95 SANDF, *South African National Defence Force, Joint Operations Division*, 221.