

# PEACEKEEPING OPERATIONS: THE ZIMBABWEAN EXPERIENCE

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## INTRODUCTION

The collapse of the Soviet Union was greeted with hopes for a more stable and secure international environment. International security in the preceding era had been characterised by confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union, permeating in regional conflict. Expectations were soon dashed when dormant ethnic, territorial and other differences erupted with a ferocity unknown during the past fifty years. Yugoslavia, Somalia, Rwanda, Georgia, Tadjikistan, Liberia and Angola, to name but a few, were engulfed by national conflict. The revival of national strife culminated in the breakdown of central governments, excessive civil and military casualties, and thousands of people fleeing and seeking refuge in neighbouring states. This undermined regional stability and international peace and security, prompting the United Nations to become involved in the normalising of the situation.

The evolving concept of peacekeeping serves as the United Nations' mechanism for conflict control under these changed circumstances. It involves the deployment of a peacekeeping force by the UN, constituted by member states. The deployment is not aimed at overt military action, but at providing assistance to parties involved in a struggle, which are unable to make peace themselves.

Peacekeeping operations are exercises in political dialogue that occur in areas where local political and administrative structures have broken down and are contested. The nature of these operations has specific implications. Before peace keepers are dispatched to any area of conflict, the UN has to secure consent for its intended activities from all contending parties. Furthermore, peace keepers have to observe local laws, rules and cultures and have to be scrupulously impartial from the start of the operation, especially in their relationship to all parties involved in the conflict.<sup>1</sup>

Conflict zones also attract the attention of the world's media. This places great pressure on participating troops, who act as UN agents, as well as ambassadors for their respective countries. Successful operations, therefore, depend on the utilisation of a trained and disciplined force as peace keepers. The calibre of soldiers in the force has to be considered carefully. It must consist, especially at the level of non-commissioned officers, of trained soldiers capable of taking decisions under pressure, often in isolated areas and occasionally under circumstances of extreme personal danger.



In August 1994, in Somalia, a sub-unit of 139 Zimbabwean soldiers, while guarding 456 refugees, was overwhelmed by a local militia force of 3 000, using a 'human shield' of women and children deployed in front of the advancing militia force, who then proceeded to relieve the Zimbabwe National Army (ZNA) contingent of its weapons, radios, vehicles, personal items, including watches and cash before taking the refugees hostage. Some of the equipment taken included UN assets under the control of the sub-unit at the time. During this incident, one Private Themba Moyo resisted when being disarmed and was promptly shot dead. The ZNA field commander relented and allowed his men to be humiliated as he felt, if he had ordered his forces to resist, carnage would have ensued, especially amongst the unarmed women and children. This example demonstrates the potential implications of an isolated decision by a lone soldier on the whole peacekeeping operation, a fact which must be recognised by all levels of participants.

Experience has shown further that rapid developments in a conflict area generally complicate the initial formulation of specific deployment instructions for a peace support operation by the UN. These normally consist of broad political intentions that must then be translated into achievable military objectives. These objectives must furthermore be flexible in order to provide for the possibility of an expanded role to meet changes in the situation.

This chapter places the focus on African perceptions of peacekeeping operations and in particular on Zimbabwe's involvement in peace support operations on the African continent, namely in Somalia. Sources include interviews with practitioners and media reports of operations.

## **ZIMBABWE'S ROLE IN PEACEKEEPING IN AFRICA**

Broadly defined, the functions of a peacekeeping force include the following:

- maintenance of cease-fire agreements;
- assistance with the disengagement or withdrawal of forces;
- provision of buffer zones between opposing forces;
- restoration of central or local governments; and/or
- the provision of infrastructure, including political and administrative functions.

The integration process that took place after Zimbabwe's independence in 1980, with the assistance of the British Military Advisory and Training Team (BMATT), established a well-trained and disciplined military force, necessary characteristics for peacekeeping. According to the Zimbabwe Defence Force Commander, Lieutenant General Vitalis Zvinvashe, the force proceeded to establish its operational capability and credibility, amongst others, in operations in Mozambique and on the Beira Corridor road and rail route. During these operations, the ZNA's overall behaviour earned the force international recognition and respect.

Against this background, Zimbabwe first participated in UN Continental Observer and Peacekeeping operations by dispatching observers to Angola during UNAVEM II that commenced in June 1991.



The performance of Zimbabwean observers to UNAVEM II in Angola, consolidated the positive light in which the country and its forces was held regionally and internationally. This eventually culminated in the request for Zimbabwe to play a more significant role in Somalia.

Observers have also been sent to the UN Mission in Rwanda, (UNAMIR), established in October 1993, and are still in place. Lastly, Zimbabwe had the second largest contingent after India, in the recently aborted UNOSOM II in Somalia. Peace keepers were evacuated in March 1995 because their activities were not consented to by the jostling Somali parties. Extricating a UN peacekeeping force in this manner provided new insights that may benefit the ever evolving doctrine on peace support operations.

Currently, the country is prepared to dispatch peace keepers to Malange, Lunda Norte and Lunda Sul, three provinces in Northern Angola, where troops will form part of a 7 000 strong peacekeeping force made up of contingents from Brazil, Bangladesh, India and Uruguay.

## **UNAVEM II<sup>2</sup>**

Zimbabwe's first peacekeeping experience was as observers in Angola, participating in the UN force which monitored the disengagement of government and UNITA forces and the simultaneous withdrawal of Cuban and South African forces. The mandate was extended for 17 months after May 1991, to enable the UN force to supervise the electoral process that included gathering both MPLA and UNITA at the designated Assembly Points.

The Military Observer Mission of 350 men had its own command structure, led by a Chief Military Observer with headquarters in Luanda. He also commanded verification teams, grafted onto existing personnel, from states which had brokered the agreement, namely the US, Portugal and USSR, as well as attachments from the MPLA government and UNITA. Six regional headquarters were answerable to the Chief Military Observer, within which 46 Assembly Points had been designated with five staff members assigned to each. Twelve critical areas were identified and were agreed on by the contesting parties. These included ports, airfields and border crossing points where each party deployed its own observers to act alongside UNAVEM personnel.

The initial phase of the operation went smoothly but problems were experienced in the second phase. During preparations for the elections in late 1992, it became clear to peace keepers that distrust and an unwillingness to abandon conflict persisted among the parties vying for political control of the country. It complicated the initial task of the observers. Developments in the operations also called for observers to take on other roles than simply the verification of numbers as was initially expected of the observers. For example, both parties claimed and accused the other party of reporting lesser numbers and were prepared to recognise UNAVEM figures only. Based on these accusations, Verification Teams in UN utility helicopters checked a reported 20 000 strong secret UNITA army in the area of Cuando Cubango in June 1992. They reported evidence that both sides had forces several hundred strong which still operated outside the agreed Assembly Points.



Monitoring and observing in Angola highlighted problems pertinent to UN troop strengths, weapons unaccounted for and the need for demobilisation. However, the observers were inadequately structured to address these issues. Furthermore, the contending parties did not submit to and co-operate with the international forces.

Even in these operations with their limited impact, the performance of the small Zimbabwean detachment endeared it to local factions and the international forces in Angola alike. It earned the nation a credible reputation that led to its selection for becoming more actively involved in Somalia. It also led to a further invitation to participate in UNAVEM III in Angola after Dr Jonas Savimbi publicly accepted the 1992 election results in Cape Town on 18 May 1995, and thereby endorsed the Lusaka Agreement.

## UNOSOM II

Zimbabwe was requested by the UN early in 1992, to join more than twenty other countries in a coalition force to be deployed in Somalia where peace had broken down after the ousting of President Siad Barre. The country agreed to provide a battalion strength force.

The command and control of the coalition forces fell under the UN Secretary-General for Operations through his appointed local commander in the Somali UN operation. To the advantage of the ZNA forces, Major General Mike Nyambuya of the ZNA was appointed as Deputy Commander, UNOSOM II, and a ZNA contingent was responsible for UN Headquarters communications in Mogadishu.

The United Nations International Task Force (UNITAF) undertook *Operation Restore Hope* prior to the deployment of the UN force. The operation was aimed at securing control of sea and air ports and the capital, Mogadishu, to facilitate humanitarian relief efforts. The force consisted of contingents from the United States, France, Australia, Britain, Italy and Belgium that were scheduled to complete their task by 4 May 1993, when control would be transferred to UN forces.

When Zimbabwe was requested to provide an infantry battalion, a reconnaissance team consisting of five field ranking officers was dispatched to Mogadishu early in July 1992, to prepare for deployment. Simultaneously, the unit started re-training and rehearsing aspects dealing with the control of civil disobedience, cordon and search operations and fighting in urban areas. Furthermore, subjects dealing with physical and other conditions in Somalia were also covered, to prepare soldiers to function effectively as peace keepers. These included details of its geography, environment, political history, the nature and present state of the conflict, and cultural and religious aspects.

Several important facts emerged. Somalia had a harsh environment and water was not readily available. Communication, roads and other infrastructure were also not fully developed. A high percentage of the population were illiterate. Every household was armed with an assortment of weapons, such as pistols, AK-47's, PPSH, G3 and M16 rifles. The presence of RPG 7 anti-tank and ground to air missiles as well as land mines, could be expected. The unit was



appraised of the importance of the diverse religious beliefs in Somalia, an unfamiliar aspect in Zimbabwe with its majority of Christians.

UN procedures were thoroughly reviewed. Some of the aspects that were emphasised were the UN stipulation of a minimum period of six months for the deployment of forces, after which they could be rotated or withdrawn. Each soldier was expected to plan his affairs in accordance with this. The use of minimum force and general rules of engagement (ROE) as defined by the UN, were analysed with the emphasis on interpretation of the concept 'self-defence'. Finally, the difference between the concepts of peacemaking and peacekeeping was clarified, as troops were going to be involved in both types of operations.

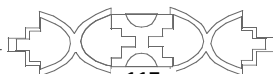
The ZDF Commander reported, after visiting troops in Somalia in early 1993, that the deployment of the unit was delayed, except for a company of 163 men due to a lack of clarity regarding its task by the UN. Further delay was caused by the fact that Zimbabwe lacked transport aircraft for external deployment of forces. This necessitated co-ordination between the UN, the US and Zimbabwe, before men and equipment could be air-lifted into the operational area.

On 15 January 1993, Major Vitalis Chigume and 162 men arrived in Mogadishu to join UNITAF, operating under US Command. The sub-unit was immediately deployed to help to provide perimeter security around Mogadishu airport which was located in the US Humanitarian Relief Sector. UNITAF subdivided Somalia into Human Relief Sectors (HRS), with different countries responsible for each: France and Australia were responsible for the Baidoa HRS, Belgium for the Kismayo and the US and Italy for Mogadishu.

The Zimbabwe company took up defensive positions and commenced limited patrolling in the area. Shortly thereafter, they were allocated an additional area extending to two villages (Waberi and Hammas Jib Jib) near the sea and airport. In the execution of its expanded role and in an effort to establish links with the local community, the unit set up meetings with local elders. This was in line with UN procedures and the conceptualisation of the operation that call for three specific tasks to be undertaken at this stage. These were meetings to determine local concerns, attempts to resuscitate local forms of government and the establishment of security committees.

Through these efforts contact was made with local elders and subsequently committees representing each interest group or clan were established. District security committees representing all primary clans or groups were set up and requested to report all incidents of a security nature to the unit. The Somali Elders Committees and District Security Committees co-operated with the sub-unit and started reporting on the activities of bandits. Information on their operations, locations and the whereabouts of mines and ambushes started to flow.

The Zimbabwean troops were at ease with this type of operation through their experience during Rhodesia's bush-war; where liberation movements had sought to supplant the Rhodesian government structures in contested zones by introducing their own structures, complete with an elaborate security



system. For the average ZNA soldier a reincarnation of this earlier participation presented itself in Somalia. In implementing operational concepts, most members of the force could function with little supervision.

It is in this context that the availability of detailed information about conflict areas prior to deployment emerged as a requisite for the constitution of a force. Given information on the availability and kinds of weapons in the area of conflict, an effective component to counter each category should be included. In this respect, a mine clearance and booby-trap defusing team at the level of sub-units would have been an important part of the peacekeeping force. Moreover, successful peacekeeping operations have an almost immediate impact on subsequent operations. Once the local community has confidence in a force, the control of local bandits is diminished and the community becomes increasingly open and secure in their collaboration with the peace keepers. To this end, an intelligence cell, capable of collating and processing combat intelligence, becomes indispensable. It can determine the timely deployment of the force, saving valuable time and resources and ultimately making a positive impact in the shortest possible time. It can also enhance the focus of operations undertaken by the force. Although the ZNA sub-unit in Somalia was to achieve this, it was only possible by drawing from their own history and by sheer good fortune.

As goodwill among the local people increased, the ZNA started implementing the next phase of Civil and Military Affairs projects (CIMA) that included mine clearance, opening blocked roads, re-establishing medical facilities and water points, with the assistance of US Combat Engineers and French medical personnel, in conformity of UN guidelines.

The reopened roads and subsequent improvement in security were soon reflected in the increased mobility of local people and the resumption of commercial activities. It was also during these early stages of the operation that the ZNA, more through frustration than by design, stumbled onto a unique opportunity that was to become their hallmark during the operation: the establishment of schools.

Children in the area where the ZNA operated, followed UNITAF patrols begging for food and snacks that were usually part of the ration packs of First World forces. However, for the ZNA, surviving on a workman's 'rat-pack', these luxuries were absent. When the children failed to procure any 'goodies', they became aggressive, throwing stones and harassing the patrols continually. In exasperation, it was suggested that the establishment of a school might get the children off the streets and stop them from pestering the patrols. When this idea was broached with trepidation to the Elders Committee, the commanders were pleasantly surprised at the enthusiasm of parents who proceeded to implement the idea with a minimum of delay, much to the relief of the soldiers.

On 5 February 1993, the men were given an additional responsibility to escort food convoys, as well as to provide security during its distribution from the Mogadishu port to centres further inland. The performance of the contingent was clearly winning the confidence of UNITAF Headquarters which requested, a few days later, that they relinquish their present peripheral duties and be reassigned to clear the notorious Baakara Market in Mogadishu, at the time



the largest illegal centre for the distribution of arms and ammunition in Somalia.

The Baakara Market operation commenced with the establishment of a secure point in the Hotel East Africa in the heart of the market by the company commander with two platoons. The reserve platoon and company headquarters were located in an old milk factory some distance away. The strategy was to dominate the area through foot and mobile patrols, as well as road blocks and house searches. The ZNA came to Mogadishu with Puma armoured personnel carriers that provided the necessary personal protection but proved difficult to manoeuvre in restricted areas. Patrols and searches were repeated in concentric circles in order to eventually cover the whole area.

The results of the exercise were spectacular. It included the capture of over 300 mortar bombs, twenty land mines and ten machine guns in a single haul. Apart from the recovery of weapons, the operation succeeded in restricting the illegal sale of armaments with negligible loss of life.

At the same time a conference took place in Addis Ababa on 2 March 1993 at which sixteen Somali political parties and factions signed a memorandum of agreement of consent for the commencement of the UN peacekeeping operation. Sections of the agreement that were relayed to the ZNA field contingent included the consent of Somali factions to submit numbers of their respective forces to UNOSOM II, the registration of weapons and equipment, and the gathering of their forces at Assembly Points. In retrospect, while the agreement was guaranteed by the threat of military force used by UNITAF against violators, these conditions undermined the ethos of peacekeeping and partly explains the subsequent failure of the initiative some two years later.

In the transition from peacemaking to peacekeeping, the US Command handed over to the UN Task Force Commander on 5 May 1993. However, in the opinion of the ZNA field commanders, this made little difference in the conduct of operations for troops on the ground.

On 3 June, the ZNA sub-unit was again deployed to rural Baidoa HRS under the French Brigade. They were to maintain the free flow of traffic on the roads and preserve the existing infrastructure of air-fields, roads and water points. The reputation of the unit preceded it in the area and on arrival, soldiers were greeted with a rousing welcome by Somalis. This is indicative of the fact that peacekeeping operations are transparent and carried out with as much advance warning as possible, in an attempt to procure the co-operation and involvement of the local people.

However, the continued changes to tasks revealed another angle of UN operations to the Zimbabwean commanders. Forces from other countries were deployed to fulfil a specific task. It determined their structure and they could therefore not be deployed elsewhere. For example, Sweden, Greece and Romania provided medical support, while Egyptian troops were responsible for airport security. These contingents could only serve within their initial deployment responsibilities and specialisation, unlike the ZNA contingent.



## PROBLEMS OF CO-OPERATION AMONGST COALITION FORCES

The Zimbabwean field commander in Somalia also had occasion to lead a coalition force in military operations for a short period with mixed results.

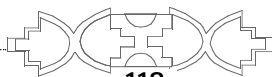
The first problem arose where certain forces refused to carry out what they considered to be dangerous operations.<sup>3</sup> At first, when contingent commanders were assigned with what they felt were dangerous tasks, they attempted to circumvent these by turning to their national governments for clarification, thereby effectively paralysing the operation. It invariably resulted in governments interfering in the UN operation, undermining the control of the Task Force Commander and on more than one occasion, it culminated in the deterioration of the situation on the ground.

The second area where differences emerged was in the levels of training. This was further exacerbated by different types of weaponry, equipment, radios and vehicles used by the various forces. In the execution of the ZNA's plan for a particular operation, certain contingents refused to do foot-patrols, preferring the safety of their amply available armoured cars. This was in keeping with their overall doctrine and therefore could not be blamed entirely on individual sub-unit commandos. Unfortunately, however, effective co-ordination was sacrificed.

Thirdly, problems arose with the interpretation of UN rules of engagement. Assessment of a hostile act or intention and establishing the appropriate minimum force to be applied, varied from one national force to the next. This eventually determined which forces the Somali people were to attack openly. Because some engagements lacked measured response, major encounters ensued that eventually required diplomatic intervention. To confirm the feelings of the Somalis towards some of the peace keepers, Pakistan forces were ambushed in Mogadishu on 5 June 1993. On the first day ten were missing, 25 killed and 54 wounded. General Farah Aideed's supporters soon appeared on television screens across the world dragging the mutilated bodies of Pakistanis in the streets. On 3 October eighteen US soldiers were killed and 75 were wounded. Two helicopters were also shot down and one of the pilots held hostage. Once more, some of the dead were unceremoniously dragged in the streets. Following this series of clashes against the major powers in the Coalition Force, a rumour surfaced and spread that the Italians were aiding and abetting a particular Somali political faction. It was, however, never proven.

The effects of activities in Somalia on the sacrosanct principle of impartiality was catastrophic. *"All hell broke loose with both war-lords and ordinary Somalis questioning the impartiality of the whole UN Coalition Force."*<sup>4</sup> As a consequence, all major contributing nations were forced to withdraw completely from Somalia by the end of March 1994.

Meanwhile, between 26-28 June 1993, the rest of the ZNA Battalion arrived aboard Air Zimbabwe flights with their equipment already docked at the Mogadishu port. They were to be ready to operate by 6 July. The sharp end of the unit was composed of three rifle companies and a support company which



included a 81mm and 60mm Mortar Platoon, an Assault Pioneer Platoon and a Reconnaissance Platoon.

The battalion also had substantial support elements comprising motor transport, electrical/mechanical/engineering, regimental police, logistics, signals and medical platoons.

The total strength of the battalion was 939 soldiers excluding 5 Policemen who were assisting with re-establishing the Somali Police Force.<sup>5</sup> A further key element to emerge in the composition of the Zimbabwe force was the attachment of about 150 Somali Auxiliary Forces to assist in local contacts and engendering confidence in the community.

The tasks of the battalion, rotated every six months, continued to centre around denying free flow of weapons to warring parties in Mogadishu, ensuring food distribution and Humanitarian Relief efforts as well as encouraging the emergence of local civic structures to take over the responsibility of providing an environment of peace and security.

## LOGISTICS

UN peacekeeping operations are extremely expensive to mount and sustain. Initially, costs are borne by member states, which are only reimbursed after submitting statements of costs incurred to the UN. Because the bureaucratic process is slow, most countries find it difficult to bank-roll the UN from limited national resources.

In August 1993, Zimbabwe's Ministry of Defence revealed that it cost Z\$19 million to send one battalion to Somalia for the stipulated six month period. According to UN rates, which the Ministry pointed out were based on Canadian and American salaries, each soldier was entitled to US\$ 988, while, in fact they were only paid US\$ 335 per month, in addition to their normal pay at home.

Zimbabwe had to deal with long lines of logistical support in Somalia, where little infrastructure existed. Perishables such as milk and vegetables had to be purchased outside the operational area.

The Company initially deployed in January 1993 benefited from being air-lifted with their vehicles to Mogadishu by the US Command in Harare. On arrival, the troops were supplied with fuel, oils and medical support by the Americans. After UNOSOM II took over on 5 May 1993 and the subsequent departure of the US Command, the sub-unit had to fend for itself.

An air bridge had to be established between Harare and Nairobi using scheduled flights, mostly Air Zimbabwe, for ferrying men, equipment, rations, clothing and spares to a location where logistics vehicles in Somalia could collect the equipment and distribute it in the field. It is therefore important for states undertaking UN peacekeeping operations to be aware of exactly what the UN will do in the areas where operations take place and what the home government is responsible for.



## AVIATION

The initial deployment in January 1993 of 163 men was undertaken by the US Command using C130 Hercules aircraft to transport men and equipment. Later, batches of 150 men were deployed, using Air Zimbabwe, while heavy equipment and vehicles were dispatched by sea through the port of Beira.

After the initial three months of deployment, the troops were entitled to a three-week period of leave in Harare and batches of fifty men were taken home on scheduled Air Zimbabwe flights from Nairobi. The Air Force of Zimbabwe failed to play a role in the operations, despite sending teams to assess their possible participation, due to the lack of long range transport capability in their aircraft inventory. However, future operations may see them included, following the US offer of at least two C130 Hercules aircraft each to Zimbabwe and Botswana, with four offered to South Africa.

## MEDICAL SERVICES

A system of graduated 'levels' of medical care was established in Somalia with the Medical Service of the unit constituting the first level. The ZNA Medical Wing established a clinic at Afgooye, in Lafole Village, 25 kilometres west of Mogadishu, in the same location as Battalion Headquarters. The facilities were open to the local community and readily available to Zimbabwean troops. In retrospect, it is clear the hospital could perhaps have been used by the ZNA to build confidence by using local people to fulfil certain functions. Level Two medical care, catering for more serious cases, was located at the French Brigade Headquarters, under whom the ZNA's area of responsibility fell. UNOSOM II Headquarters in Mogadishu hosted Level Three medical facilities for the entire peacekeeping force.

Several medical issues emerged through cases treated by the ZNA hospital unit. Eighteen members of the Force were found to have arrived unfit for service and suffering from various ailments. The sense of adventure implicit in serving in remote countries, as well as personal financial rewards, had prompted most of these not to report maladies. They succeeded in passing medical examinations in Zimbabwe, but soon after arriving on location, their conditions worsened in the harsh Somali environment and they had to be repatriated. A more thorough and exhaustive pre-medical regime was then put into place in Harare, coupled with severe warnings of disciplinary measures for any would-be peace keepers who tried to deceive medical authorities in the army. Secondly, as a direct result of soldiers not observing basic hygiene and not taking prophylactic medicines, 75 cases of diarrhoea, mostly emanating from drinking untreated water, were attended to. Another 33 men succumbed to malaria. Fungal skin infections were contracted by 183 men. Finally, the soldiers' diet also presented the medical team with an acute dental problem necessitating attention. A complete dental unit was eventually deployed to provide treatment. Statistics on the nature of diseases and their occurrence are important, as any deterioration in the physical conditions of troops can overwhelm and undermine the unit's capacity to provide humanitarian relief efforts.

## **LEGAL ASPECTS**

During UNITAF operations, governments constituting coalition forces were responsible for settling their forces' disputes with the Somalis. The local ZNA commanders soon discovered the disconcerting fact that other contingents had elaborate legal representation and readily available resources to settle most issues on the spot, based on their previous experience with peacekeeping operations.

The Zimbabwean troops' 'problems' with the local community included one of their drivers losing control of his vehicle and crashing into a residential house causing considerable damage. In another incident, a soldier used a stick to chase away children harassing him in his defensive position. The stick struck one of the children in the eye. The child did not seek immediate medical attention and a few days later, "was taken to hospital where the eye was gauged out". Lastly, during clearance of the Baakara Market in March 1993, a woman died and young boy was injured as a result of the conduct of operations. As late as 3 January 1995, representatives of the families were making inquiries from the Zimbabwean Liaison Officer in Somalia seeking US\$ 64 000 'blood' money or compensation for the dead woman and unspecified amounts for the boy.

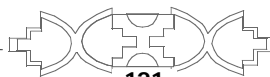
The Zimbabwean troops' problems with local communities included, among others, a number of accidents in vehicles and injuries. When ZNA troops caused damage or injury during operations, owners of damaged properties, bereaved relatives and parents approached the unit seeking compensation. Some of them, in a bid to speed up compensation, harnessed the media to voice their demands. This embarrassed the unit, which could not deal with these claims on the spot as the other contingents were capable of doing. Zimbabwean troops instituted boards of inquiry, whose findings and recommendations led to compensation by the Government, which presumably passed costs on to the UN.

## **CHAPLAIN'S SERVICES**

The credentials of the person occupying this position is crucial in the context of peace support operations. A balanced, non-fundamentalist character, able to minister to diverse religious beliefs among his home troops, as well as to communities in the operational area, has been found to be the answer in recent operations. The Zimbabwean unit was accompanied by the Reverend Thomas Jambanja, who found converts among off-duty Zimbabwean and American forces and baptised 47 of the former on the Mogadishu beach. Problems emerged, however, in counselling soldiers who lost loved ones at home, mainly wives and children, before the logistics for repatriation of these men were in position.

## **WELFARE SERVICES AND PUBLIC RELATIONS AMONG SOLDIERS**

Internal interest in the politics of peace support operations increases visibly when a state becomes involved in such an initiative. While the nation takes a close interest in the participation of its forces, soldiers operating in other areas of the world need to be informed about developments at home. In Zimbabwe,



keeping the nation informed and justifying the country's involvement in this new international venture was not fully appreciated initially. This resulted in the Minister for Health, Dr Timothy Stamps, to call for the withdrawal of forces from Somalia and the redirection of funds to more pressing domestic problems, such as health care services. Stamps articulated a view that was also expressed in other sections of the society, and it was evident that insufficient domestic information was available. Following the involvement of the ZNA in other operations, such as in Mozambique and during hostilities in Southern Africa, when justification was taken for granted, little effort was spent in explaining the deployment of the ZNA in Somalia.

Following the Stamps episode, however, a belated but concerted campaign was conducted in the press, and on radio and television, that provided information on the political and material benefits accruing to the nation as a result of its participation in peacekeeping operations. Popular radio programmes were transmitted, airing correspondence with forces in the field and mail, local newspapers, other reading material and videos were regularly delivered to the forces by commercial flights. Sporting activities, including football, were undertaken with other coalition partners.

At Army Headquarters, a special office dealing with queries about pay and other issues was set up and computerised to improve efficiency. A blanket exemption was also submitted to the Income Tax Department on behalf of the men in Somalia.

The soldiers in Somalia could choose between two destinations for rest and relief. The UNOSOM Social Welfare Department offered limited access to Kenya's holiday resorts to all contingents. Zimbabwean soldiers unlucky enough not to be able to go to Kenya were sent back in batches for rest periods in Harare at the expense of the UN. They became eligible after the first three months of deployment under UN procedures.

Subsequent to the death of soldier Moyo, the Government decided that dependants of soldiers killed in the line of duty during peacekeeping operations were entitled to US\$ 50 000.<sup>6</sup>

## **HUMANITARIAN RELIEF PROJECTS**

The ZNA renovated and resuscitated a textile company capable of employing 2 000 people, and two hospital wings, as part of specific humanitarian relief projects in Somalia. The latter was carried out with funds raised by the troops from the UNOSOM Humanitarian Division. A boys' orphanage in Lafole and one for girls in Afgooye were also opened. The Battalion Headquarters Hospital was also regarded in part as a humanitarian relief project. The Zimbabwean public relations officer, Captain Alphios Makotore, introduced another innovation from Zimbabwe. The food for work programme used food obtained from the World Food Program and tools from UN Food and Agricultural Organisation to employ people productively. Within two days of the launch of the programme, 300 people had registered. The initiative to obtain aid from non-government and other organisations, had a favourable impact on the whole operation.



## WITHDRAWAL OF UNOSOM II FORCES FROM SOMALIA

Following the acrimonious relations that developed between the major contributing nations and Somali's, the Security Council authorised a decrease of forces from 28 000 to 18 000 in February 1994. The absence of forces in some areas brought about the immediate resurgence of militia forces with their "technicals" or civilian vehicles used as platforms for medium range weapons. The remaining UNOSOM II forces attempted to spread themselves out in a bid to maintain security at key air, sea and road lines of communications.

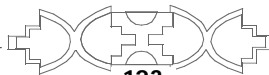
With the continued absence of an agreement from the Somali faction, the Security Council further reduced the force to 15 000 in September of the same year, providing for their complete withdrawal in six months if agreement was not reached. Concurrent with the declaration, *Operation United Shield* was set up to plan for their withdrawal. Discussion and plans for a possible withdrawal, however, had been on the drawing board of the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) in New York since June 1994. The aim was to remove manpower from Somalia, while simultaneously retrieving UN property to the value of US\$ 170 million, spread over 12 000 square kilometres, criss-crossed by poor roads and infrastructure.

With the emphasis on security and flexibility, three plans were produced, namely *an emergency plan, a hasty plan and a deliberate plan*. These plans catered for the scheduled movement of men and equipment from remote operational areas to Mogadishu and then to their countries of origin. The choice of the plan to be used depended on the security situation. Furthermore, withdrawal was to be undertaken in such a manner that the multinational structure of UNOSOM II was retained to the end. Withdrawal was scheduled to begin in stable areas and then spread to more volatile zones, where the stabilising presence of forces was needed until the end of the operation. Contrary to the initial stages of the operation, a minimum of information on forward planning was made available to withdrawing forces.

From October 1994 scheduled rotation of contingents was stopped and repatriated soldiers were not replaced. Withdrawal from stable areas to Mogadishu and then home, commenced inconspicuously. US Combat Support Teams (CST) bearing specialist equipment that would cater for any type of withdrawal, were introduced in early February 1995.

In one of the unstable regions, the arrival of US support boosted the Zimbabwean forces' confidence in certain aspects of the wider withdrawal operation that they felt were doubtful. Rehearsals to acquaint troops with specialist equipment also began. These training exercises proved to play a crucial role in the actual withdrawal operation.

In practice, the retrieval of assets proved problematic as a result of the UN requirement that all items be accounted for and returned, irrespective of the state they were in. The cost of transporting certain inventories exceeded their value, raising questions about the inflexibility of certain UN procedures. This was further compounded by an instruction to withdraw a large number of UN military vehicles in a bid to reduce the organisation's military profile. These were replaced by locally hired transport which was very unreliable. ZNA field



commanders contended that a degree of flexibility should be allowed by the UN at various levels of command, enabling individual commanders to use their own judgement in decisions on the cost effectiveness of recovery or abandonment of equipment.

The fourth phase of the deliberate withdrawal plan dealt with the reduction of staff and equipment in the UNOSOM II Task Force Headquarters in Mogadishu. NGO's were warned to take note of the UNOSOM force reduction and were advised to make their own withdrawal plans in conformity with UN guidelines.

Problems in the instructions for the operation allowed the assets of 'other Coalition Partners' not to be taken into account. For example, it appeared that a complete Moroccan field hospital was left intact in the area as plans for its evacuation were not made initially. Furthermore, there was no policy guideline indicating what should be done with large quantities of surplus ammunition that could not be transported in the vehicles available. Lack of co-ordination in planning the withdrawal of suitable military vehicles was at the root of later transportation difficulties.

The final phase of the withdrawal, which went off without a hitch, was covered by French, Italian, Malaysian, British and US ships lying just off the Mogadishu coast in March 1995.

## CONCLUSION

The UN, through its member states, has found itself severely extended in the marshalling of peace keepers and logistics<sup>7</sup> in areas of Africa where conflict has flared up. Traditionally, most African states did not possess or develop the capacity to deal with peace support operations. Debate has centred on attempts to establish a readily available *standing peacekeeping force* or to develop this capacity in some of the existing forces. The attendant lack of infrastructural support has hampered efforts to identify potential structures of support that can be expanded. Suggestions have been made to set up UN warehouses to provide for the enormous amount of resources consumed by peace support operations that have to be brought in from outside operational areas at great cost. There has also been a drive to identify states that can be used as *logistics centres*, that could readily establish road, sea and air bridges, capable of supplying support to forces in the field.

The US, in an apparent move to strengthen Southern Africa's capacity to deploy forces to other parts of the world, has offered a number of aircraft to several countries in the region, signalling that it views the region as having the potential and political stability to enable it to support those parts of the African Continent experiencing conflict.

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The assistance of the Zimbabwe Defence Forces in researching this paper is acknowledged. Several ZDF reports were studied and interviews were conducted with a number of high-ranking officers. Reports include those by Major Chima, Major F. Mhonda, Major Peter Madzande, Major C. Gwanetsa, Colonel Colin Moyo, Lieutenant Col. E. Bandama, Brigadier Mashingaidze, Brigadier H. Bonyongwe and Major General Mike Nyambuya. Interviews were con-



ducted with Lieutenant General Vitalis Zvinvashe, Brigadier Khumalo, Lieutenant Col. Kasirai Tazira and Major Vitalis Chigume. Colonel Trust Mugoba, a final year BA Honours student at the University of Zimbabwe, acted as research assistant on the project. Interpretations and opinions expressed in the paper, however, are the responsibility of the author.

- 1 United Nations, The Blue Helmets A Review of United Nations Peace-keeping, United Nations, New York, 1990, pp. 5-6.
- 2 *Ibid.*, p. 8; Observer Missions are a category of Peacekeeping Operations.
- 3 *Ibid.*, p. 7; Johan Hederstedt *et. al.*, Nordic UN Tactical Manual, Jyvaskyla, 1992, p. 31.
- 4 According to Lt. Col. Kasirai Tazira, the first Commanding Officer of the Battalion deployed in Somalia at the end of June 1993.
- 5 United Nations, Peace-keeping Update: December 1994. Information Note, United Nations, New York, 1995, p. 158.
- 6 Interview, Lt. Gen. V. Zvinvashe, Harare, 11 March 1995.
- 7 UNOSOM, in taking over from UNITAF, inherited 8 000 logistical troops, reflecting the complexity of the support frontiers.

