

PRACTICAL CHALLENGES TO SOUTH AFRICAN PEACE OPERATIONS

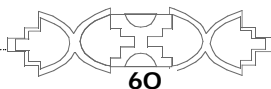
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INTRODUCTION

The debate on peace operations is developing steadily within South Africa. While it is at present spearheaded by the work of various defence thinktanks within civil society, issues pertaining to peace operations are increasingly being debated within both the defence and foreign affairs communities in South Africa and the wider Southern African region. Major challenges confront planners of future peace operations. The political sensitivity towards possible South African participation in peace operations is evident if the caution of the South African Cabinet in becoming involved in this arena is analysed. This is further emphasised by the expression of regional insecurities related to South Africa's hegemonic profile in Southern Africa. This sensitivity, however, is also brought about by the relative novelty of peace operations for the South African armed forces in particular and the South Africa defence community in general. Typical challenges in the formulation of defence policy include the type of force required for deployment in peace operations, the training of such a force, and the development of a doctrine for use by South African armed forces in future multilateral peace operations.

In the light of prominent policy challenges facing planners of peace operations, it is, however, often the practical 'nuts and bolts' challenges that are ignored. These include those issues encountered 'in the field' by contingents involved in previous peace operations that can easily be avoided through judicious planning and preparation for anticipated deployment in the future. These potential problems can range in scope from formulation and standardisation of Rules of Engagement within a coalition on the one hand, to basic checkpoint tactics on the other. Peace operations can disintegrate as a result of a number of factors at both a macrocosmic and microcosmic level.

- At a macrocosmic level, peace operations can be bedevilled through domestic political pressure; the absence of adequate policy formulation and political will within a member state prior to its participation in an operation; the absence of sufficient international authority supporting the peace operation in question; and the existence of irreconcilable ethnic or factional divisions amongst the belligerents themselves.
- Many peace operations fail at a microcosmic level because of *practical* factors, most notably those operational inadequacies related to the *inconsistent application of Rules of Engagement, poor soldier discipline,*



poor personal and installation security, inadequate intelligence, poor training, and inadequate negotiations skills of personnel.

The aim of this article, therefore, is to outline the *practical challenges* that are likely to face South African personnel involved in future peace operations. While it focuses primarily on challenges facing the deployment of the Army in peace operation scenarios, especially in the light of the importance of this arm of service in executing peace operations, it also acknowledges the fact that any peace operation involves other arms of service as well, with a range of practical problems that affect all parties concerned.

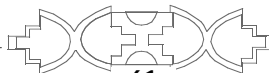
WHAT IS MEANT BY PEACE OPERATIONS?

Peace operations (the generic term used to describe all peace support operations in this article) have evolved substantially since the first deployment of unarmed UN observers to monitor the truce between Israel and its new neighbours in 1948. These peace monitoring tasks gradually gave way to the deployment of lightly armed, defensively oriented, UN 'blue helmets' in a variety of more tenuous environments including Katanga, Cyprus and Lebanon in the 1960s and 1970s. However, it has been the emergence of peace enforcement operations that has both problematised the doctrine and application of classic peacekeeping measures and that necessitates a definition of the various forms of peace operations. Three definitions are outlined below.

Peacemaking is normally the preserve of politicians and diplomats and involves the use of skills such as *negotiation, persuasion and non-military coercion* to achieve a settlement. When these tools prove inadequate to the task, military means can be employed to stabilise the environment within which a solution is being sought. As such, peacemaking provides the political framework within which military force is applied and, hence, provides the political aim for the operation in question.

Peacekeeping is the more common form of peace operation and involves the use of military forces to maintain a negotiated truce and facilitate a diplomatic/political resolution to a specific conflict. Peacekeeping operations can take the form of monitoring cease-fires, arms control, disengagement and demobilisation. Peacekeeping operations can take place on a unilateral, bilateral and multilateral basis, as well as under the aegis of an organisation such as the UN. Peacekeeping operations are characterised by the emphasis placed on restraint, their self-defensive posture and normally presuppose the existence of a cease-fire. As in peacemaking, the political objective of the operation is of paramount importance.

Peace enforcement involves the use of military force to secure an end to hostilities between belligerents so that a political and/or diplomatic solution to the conflict in question can be sought. Peace enforcement operations do not presuppose a cease-fire and rely on offensive tactics and weaponry to accomplish the mission. Peace enforcement operations are normally beyond the scope of the command and control capabilities of the UN and are more frequently carried out unilaterally, in coalition, or via a structure such as the UN or the OAU.



There is, however, an increasing *grey area* emerging between the conceptualisation and application of peacekeeping and peace enforcement operations. This is manifest in the changing nature of post-Cold War conflicts and the requisite strategies, doctrines and operational procedures required to execute and/or anticipate these operations. The exact contours of these distinctions are not yet apparent, but consideration needs to be given to these factors.

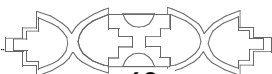
PEACE OPERATIONS *VERSUS* TRADITIONAL WARFARE: SOME CAUTIONARY REMARKS

The experience of other nations in peace operations at a macrocosmic level has revealed a series of generic problems related to the planning and conduct of peace operations. These typically relate to the distinction between the conduct of classic warfare and the conduct of peace operations.

Peace operations often run contrary to the classic principles of war. A number of obvious examples can be cited in this regard. Soldiers are normally accustomed to clearly defined military and political objectives. In classic military situations, swift and decisive action, coupled with thorough planning, leads to a defined and tangible victory. The success of a classic conventional operation is measured by the extent to which the military commander manages, through the use of initiative, to accomplish these objectives. In peace operations, however, the military objectives tend to be more diffuse in nature. *Here the issue is not so much a decisive and tangible victory, but rather the securing and maintenance of consensus amongst opposing forces. As a result, peacekeepers must play an impartial role and must provide the environment within which consensus between belligerent parties can be reached. Their role thus tends to be symbolic rather than offensive.* The offensive role in peacekeeping operations is also understated - although it only receives limited expression in peace enforcement operations. Most modern militaries place a high premium on the offence and this is reflected in the principles of war that underpin traditional warring. Peace operations, however, often involve the use of armed forces in roles that are either defensive (the UN forces in the Lebanon for instance) or often non-military in nature, for example refugee resettlement and disaster relief. The skills required to fulfil these roles are patience, fortitude and a high level of political understanding. The adoption of a classic military posture in these operations may be disastrous both for the force in question and the participating nation itself.

Furthermore, military personnel involved in the planning and conduct of peace operations require an understanding of the bureaucratic politics of UN peace operations and the extent to which this influences UN preparation for and participation in peace operations. *The multi-national nature of UN peace operations and the often inadequate communication that exists between the political and military leadership precipitate a range of problems in the sphere of command and control, logistics, finances and communication. A peace operation contingent must anticipate these problems and prepare accordingly.*

As far as possible, a *clear mandate* should be provided to the force in question. The Ministry of Defence and Secretariat should attempt to reduce



any ambiguity in the proposed mandate as proffered by Cabinet and, in collaboration with the armed forces, provide as concrete a mandate as possible.

Both the Commander of the proposed force and his staff, if identified, should be incorporated into the planning of the operation as soon as possible. The more familiar the commander and his staff are with the proposed country in which they will be deployed, the more effective the force will be.

The formation of an effective network with participating nations prior to the commencement of the operation is important. This will provide timely intelligence on the expectations, capabilities and limitations of the countries with which such a peace operation force will be dealing.

If possible, South African involvement in peace operations should occur in incremental phases. This will allow it to accumulate and develop the necessary expertise upon which to build doctrine. Provision of logistical support in the initial stages of its involvement will provide time for soldiers to prepare for more intense operational involvement.

Regardless of differences in institutional culture, training opportunities at overseas academies and institutions should be utilised. In the absence of an established doctrine and accumulated experience of peace operations, virtually all exposure to peace operations will initially be of value.

Prior to committing forces to peace operations, careful consideration must be given to those medium term additional tasks that the armed forces will be involved in. The variety of secondary functions that the SANDF is presently fulfilling, most notably border protection, internal security, maritime protection and protection against internal military threats to the constitutional order, could escalate in future and accordingly require increased force levels. Personnel deployed in peace operations could, in the context of escalating military commitments, reduce manpower available for other critical tasks.

Existing capabilities within a defence force should be considered prior to deployment. Capabilities within the SANDF, for instance, should be carefully assessed prior to the deployment of a force in Africa and enhanced through a judicious combination of skills. The integration of Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK) and military personnel of the former TBVC countries into the SANDF, for example, provides a future peace operation force with distinct advantages in the form of linguistic capabilities and representation. The experience of the former SADF in internal security operations, on the other hand, equips such a force with many of the skills required in peace operations, such as minimum force requirements, rules of engagement and defensive posture.

Armed forces involved in peace operations need to develop a doctrine that is applicable to their own needs. The South African armed forces should either develop, adopt or synthesise a peace operation doctrine that is appropriate to Africa in general and to future SANDF needs in particular. While “reinventing the wheel” must be carefully avoided, other models should not be appropriated without critical consideration.

A threat perception appropriate to the threats facing peace operations



personnel should be developed. Classic threat perceptions are inadequate in this regard, as they lack the scope and range of contradictions that characterise the fluid threats faced by peace operations personnel in situations of intra-state and inter-state conflict. These can include anything from civil disturbances to car bombs.

PROBLEMS EXPERIENCED ON THE GROUND: FROM RULES OF ENGAGEMENT TO CHECKPOINT TACTICS

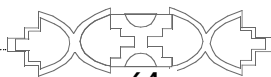
Practical problems encountered by peace operations contingents in the field are basically related to force preparation prior to deployment (training, linguistic capabilities, composition of force, etc.), and to the conduct of own forces during deployment (soldier discipline, security awareness, negotiation skills, relations with other members of the multilateral alliance, relations with the belligerent parties, etc.).

PREPARING FOR DEPLOYMENT: THE IMPORTANCE OF TRAINING

In the training of peace operations personnel, emphasis should be placed on imparting those conceptual and technical skills required of the force in the anticipated deployment scenario. Many of these skills are substantially different from those required for conventional warfare and, as such, also require instructors who are both familiar with the curriculum and who can use innovative situational training exercises to train their students. The words of Sir Brian Urquhart in his book *A Life in Peace and War* express this difference pithily when he states: "*Peace-keeping depends on the non-use of force and political symbolism. It is the projection of the principle of non-violence onto the military plane. It requires discipline, initiative, objectivity and leadership as well as ceaseless supervision and political direction.*"

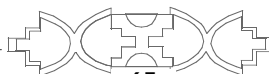
While the question of political direction referred to in the quote falls largely outside the scope of this article, the practical dynamics relating to discipline, initiative, objectivity and leadership relate fundamentally to both the training and deployment of a peace operation force. The following can be regarded as critical training issues:

- The development of *situational training scenarios* that reflect the likely operational circumstances within which peace operations personnel will be deployed. The development of such training exercises should be done in close collaboration with the operations and planning staff to ensure that the training is as close to the "real thing" as possible.
- As stated above, peace operations differ in terms of mission, character and training from conventional military operations. Personnel require training in the principles of consensus which underpin most peace operations and should be psychologically prepared to 'lose face' under certain circumstances. Critical skills in this regard include the skills of *negotiation and mediation*. These require impartiality, patience, tolerance and compassion from those likely to be involved in negotiations. Critical factors involved in a negotiation scenario include the extent to which negotiators have familiarised themselves with the problem at hand, their level of planning and preparation for the negotiation scenario, and the manner in



which they conduct negotiations. *Extensive use should be made of conflict resolution experts and training simulations.* A growing body of knowledge in this sphere already exists in South Africa and has been used, with considerable success, as part of both the South African Police Service's community policing programme and the training of community facilitators in general.

- *Language capability* is a major obstacle in most peace operations. As far as possible, personnel should be familiarised with the basic greetings and customs of the country or affected area. If sufficient warning is given, mother tongue speakers from the 'affected' area can be identified and used within the peace operation contingent in question. A thorough attempt must be made to brief all personnel on the political, cultural and linguistic features of the country where they will be deployed. Failure to understand and appreciate cultural nuances inherent to the country concerned can undermine the efficacy and perceived impartiality of peacekeepers.
- Personnel should be familiar with the 'political' dimension of peace operations. This would include an exposure to and an understanding of the political and practical contours of multilateral deployment and its implications for the Standard Operating Procedures of the member state in question. It would also include an understanding of the importance and implications of maintaining good civic relations within the affected country for the behaviour and bearing of peace operation personnel.
- The principles of international and humanitarian law have direct relevance to peace operations and should be understood by all personnel participating in peace operations. According to the report of the UN Secretary-General to the Security Council in 1993, seven items of international humanitarian law are binding on all personnel participating in peace operations and are reflected in the following provisions of International Humanitarian Law (IHL):
 - The four Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949 for the protection of the victims of war.
 - The Hague Convention respecting the Laws and Customs of War on Land the Regulations annexed to this of 18 October 1907.
 - The Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide of 9 December 1948.
 - The Charter of the Nuremberg International Military Tribunal of 8 August 1945.
- An understanding of these laws and their implications for the conduct of personnel in armed conflict should be ensured during training. All personnel intending to participate in peace operations (whether in an operational, staff or support role) should have, at least, a theoretical understanding of the provisions of IHL. The primary target audience during the training period should be those members who will lead the force on the ground, such as section leaders, platoon commanders and company commanders. It is



furthermore advisable that the relevant legal advisor is conversant with the principles and implications of IHL and is involved in both the planning and the operational phases of the peace operation. The legal advisor should have a suitable senior rank to be able to work as the force commanders' advisor during the operation. The successful utilisation of a legal advisor in a peace operation depends, to no small extent, on the relationship between the Commander and the advisor. Ideally, the legal advisor should be seen as an integral component of the force and not as an 'interfering busybody'.

- It should be acknowledged at all times that peace enforcement and peacekeeping require different training emphases. In addition to those outlined above, peacekeeping requires training in the nature of peacekeeping; mine/booby trap training; patrolling; checkpoint operations; media liaison; supervision of cease-fires; the maintenance of law and order; and the rebuilding of infrastructure. On the other hand, peace enforcement requires training in the following areas: enforcement of UN sanctions; protection of the rights of minorities; protection of humanitarian relief efforts; separation of warring factions; disarming belligerent parties; restoration of Law and Order; and cordon and search tactics.

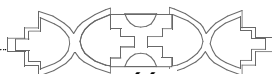
The SANDF, given its experience in internal peace operations within South Africa, has accumulated considerable experience in those points raised above and could use this experience to great effect within identified peace operations.

THE OPERATIONAL DIMENSION: ENSURING THE ACCOMPLISHMENT OF THE MISSION

The introduction has mentioned that it is often the operational difficulties encountered in a peace operation that either limits its ability to accomplish its objectives or, alternatively, scuppers the operation in its entirety. More specifically, the violation of Rules of Engagement (ROE), failure to follow drill procedures in emergencies, poor interpersonal skills, and a lack of knowledge of basic mediation and negotiation skills of peacekeeping forces, often contribute to the alienation of both the belligerent parties and their support base. It is instructive, therefore, to consider specific operational factors in mounting a peace operation.

Standardisation and inter-operability of systems, equipment and procedures are essential in all multinational forces. These should entail mutual respect for allied partners, understanding of the capabilities of the force in question, continuous liaison between allied partners on all levels, and unanimous effort around a commonly agreed mission. Precisely how this can be effected will depend on the particular operation and the nature of the participating forces within the alliance.

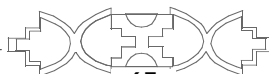
Rules of Engagement (ROE) are essential to both the political and operational success of a peace operation. Indiscriminate or uneven application of force can alienate the civilian population and lead to attacks on the peace operation force by members of belligerent parties. The result of such actions could be the political embarrassment of countries participating in the effort, and the discrediting of the operation in its entirety. The following factors are important in this regard:



- ROE should be designed to allow soldiers sufficient latitude to act in self-defence while simultaneously ensuring that indiscriminate force is not used against belligerent parties or the civilian population.
- ROE should be simple enough to understand, yet should provide a clear gradation of the force required to defuse, defend or resolve certain operational circumstances.
- ROE and subsequent amendments should be distributed to every member of a peace operation force and every effort should be made to ensure that these are understood by participating personnel.
- Prior to deployment, extensive use of training simulations can be utilised to reinforce the importance of ROE. A variety of creative simulations can be adopted, for example defensive retreats from crossfire and skirmishes at checkpoints.
- ROE should be standardised within the national force deployed in a peace operation. Failure to do so can lead to the undermining of the cohesion and morale of such a national force. Similarly, it should be acknowledged that multilateral alliances consist of different armies with different traditions and, consequently, different rules of engagement. ROE within a multilateral alliance should be standardised as far as possible, during both the operational and the planning phases.
- The observance of ROE in conflict situations critically depends on the quality of leadership in a force. This demands the identification and development of quality NCO leadership and experience and its ongoing development.

Discipline is critical in a peace operation force, particularly in the light of the demanding and challenging operational situations to which peace operation personnel are exposed. The maintenance of high levels of discipline will require a co-ordinated effort that incorporates regular and continuous briefing of personnel deployed in the force, issuing of clear and simple orders, maintenance of high levels of morale, and the maintenance of a professional and visibly neat appearance in the eyes of the local population.

The conducting of negotiations will constitute an important element of a peacekeepers' duties. Both good training and a sound negotiating strategy will be critical to the success of negotiations and mediation. Negotiators could ensure success through the constant maintenance of impartiality in the presence of members of belligerent parties. A realistic appraisal of the extent to which negotiations can be effective will also be of assistance. In a situation of conflict, negotiations may be limited in their ability to resolve a conflict, but may achieve success in other areas, such as the establishment of transparency, development of trust, provision of a framework for future discussions, etc. Negotiators should familiarise themselves with the problem at hand. This presupposes an understanding of the roots of the conflict, the issue being contested, and the goodwill (or lack thereof) of belligerent parties. The scope of the peace operation force's authority should be determined. Intervening in a conflict that extends beyond the mandate of the force in question could



potentially raise a host of political and military problems. It should further be ensured that the negotiating style is inclusive and “user” friendly. The adoption of a rigid, managerial style, can alienate belligerent parties and stereotype the peace force as arrogant and prescriptive in its methods. This is a common problem often encountered in the interface between military and civilian cultures. Care should be taken to ensure that all decisions are recorded and reflect the consensus between all parties in the negotiating process. With the conclusion of negotiations, the agreements reached between the parties involved should be publicly conveyed to all those present.

Disarmament and checkpoint tactics feature prominently in all peace operations. Both have to be handled with sensitivity in order to ensure that the safety of both the peace force and the local population is secured. The local population and/or members of belligerent parties should be treated with respect and courtesy at all checkpoints and during all searches. Vigilance will have to be maintained at all times and will require a high level of discipline and familiarity with procedures. The latter places great emphasis on drill work and prior training for all personnel involved. Members of the peace force should deport themselves in a manner that is not seen as threatening or intimidating. Care should be taken not to raise one’s voice, to be courteous, to use non-threatening body language, to greet people in the local language as far as possible, to be patient at all times and to respect local customs with regard to women, children, and the dignity afforded elders and/or people of prominence.

Personal awareness is important in any conventional operational scenario. It is equally important in a peace operation scenario, particularly when personnel are deployed in densely populated urban environments. The experience of the captured peacekeepers in Yugoslavia in May 1995 supports this reality and highlights the necessity to remain constantly alert and vigilant, whether with regard to one’s own security or the security of others. It follows that the movement of off duty peace operation personnel should be limited and a regular check on personnel whereabouts should be maintained. Routine security drills and the lack of vigilance that accompanies this should be avoided. Personnel should rather execute random security measures to foil attempts to attack the enemy force.

Related to the above, is the question of *Installation Security*. The deaths of 261 US marines as a result of a car bomb in Beirut in the mid-1980s highlighted the vulnerability of military installations in contested territory. Bases should be built where they can be defended, not where they are otherwise convenient. Despite the fact that soldiers will be committed to the observation of ROE, this should not limit their ability to defend themselves against attacks. It is recommended that guard complements include military personnel from all nations and not a sole member state. This will avoid member state personnel from developing ideological or religious attachments to either one of the belligerent parties. It will also avoid the targeting of a single member state in the alliance by a hostile force.

Effective communication between all members of the participating alliance should be ensured, particularly when viewed against the different military traditions, doctrines, capabilities, and cultural features of the alliance in question. This prioritises the role of *liaison officers*. Such officers should be of

sufficient seniority to work with senior commanders from other armed forces, should report directly to the commander of the force from which they are drawn, and should preferably have a proven linguistic capability.

Intelligence gathering constitutes an inseparable component of every operation. However, a peace force is constrained in its ability to gather information by its lack of familiarity with the terrain within which it is deployed and the extent to which information gathering can be perceived as a hostile act by the belligerent parties. Every item of operational intelligence becomes vital and, as a result, reliable human intelligence sources should be used.

Peacekeeping and peace enforcement operations are not always successful. *Contingency planning must be made for the possible evacuation of the force.* This should be prepared prior to deployment, should be updated once the force is physically deployed, and should cater for all possible forms of evacuation - air, land and sea and using force to withdraw if necessary.

CONCLUSION

The successful participation of the South African armed forces in peace operations will be determined, to no small extent, by the political will underpinning projected involvement, the choice of arenas within which military personnel will be deployed, the level and type of deployment approved, the effective preparation of the force in question and the extent to which that force maintains adequate cohesion and discipline in the face of often arduous and demanding operational situations. Most of the practical problems referred to in the concluding section of this article are army-centred by nature. Some, however, can be applied to all arms of service - for example, standardisation of equipment within a coalition, effective use of liaison officers, soldier discipline and installation security.

Policy, planning and operational problems will undoubtedly be encountered in the initial stages of involvement. Indeed, this is an inevitable feature of all new deployment responsibilities. However, the combined experiences and capabilities of the different integrating South African armed forces, and the considerable moral leadership which the country enjoys internationally could equip the South African armed forces with an advantage which other armed forces do not possess.

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NOTE: This article was written in the author's personal capacity and does not necessarily reflect the opinions of either the South African Department of Defence or the SANDF.

