

THE AU MISSION IN BURUNDI

Technical and Operational Dimensions

HENRI BOSHOF AND DARA FRANCIS

Introduction

The Central Organ of the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution mandated the deployment of the African Mission in Burundi (AMIB) on 2 April 2003. The mission, intended for an initial period of one year and subject to renewal by the Central Organ, depends on the subsequent deployment of a United Nations (UN) peacekeeping force to be mandated by the UN Security Council as envisaged in the agreement. South Africa, Ethiopia and Mozambique are expected to contribute troops to the AMIB force. The AU mandate outlines the force levels, the mission statement, the mandate tasks, concept of operations, logistic support and command and control structures. This mandate was largely based on the preliminary outline provided by the Military–Strategic Technical Planning Team (MSTPT) during January 2003. The outputs were used to brief the Ministers of Defence of South Africa, Ethiopia and Mozambique, as well as all signatories to the ceasefire agreement, with the exception of the CNDD-FDD of Nkurunziza.

Force structure

The AMIB peacekeeping force is composed of:

- a force from Ethiopia (1 battalion, plus 2 additional companies totalling 980 men);

- a force from Mozambique (1 strengthened company of approximately 280 men); and
- a force from South Africa (1 x battalion, plus 2 additional companies: totalling 1,600 men).

South Africa, having been chosen as the lead nation, has appointed Major-General SZ Binda as the force commander, while Ethiopia appointed Brigadier-General G Ayele as the deputy force commander.

Mission statement

The AMIB is to deploy within 60 days of the provision of a mandate to supervise, observe, monitor and verify the implementation of the Ceasefire Agreement, in order to further consolidate the peace process in Burundi.

Mandate tasks

The AMIB was mandated to:

- act as liaison between the parties;
- monitor and verify the implementation of the ceasefire agreement;
- facilitate the activities of the Joint Ceasefire Commission (JCC) and the Technical Committees responsible for the establishment of a new National Defence Force and Police Force;
- facilitate safe passage for the parties (during planned movement to the designed assembly areas);

- secure identified assembly and disengagement areas;
- facilitate and provide technical assistance to disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) processes; facilitate the delivery of humanitarian assistance;
- co-ordinate mission activities with the United Nations' presence in Burundi; and
- provide VIP protection for designated returning leaders.

Crux of the mission

The crux of the mission is to safeguard the cantonment areas and to provide technical assistance to the disarmament and demobilization process.

Mission structure

The Mission will include a military component and a limited civilian component. The head of the mission, Major-General SZ Binda, will operate under the auspices of the AU. The mission's military component will include formal military units, joint liaison teams (JLTs) as well as military observers (MILOBs). It is estimated that the total strength of the mission will not exceed 3,500 military personnel, including up to 120 MILOBs.

Military component

The military component will include infantry units for safeguarding the cantonment areas and assist in the demobilisation, disarmament and reintegration processes (DDR). There will also be a protection and reaction element responsible for VIP and HQ's protection, as well as a rapid reaction element. In addition, provisions were made for a maritime element, an aviation element and a support unit.

Deployment concept

The Armed Forces of Burundi (FAB) has the following perspective on the phasing and implementation of the ceasefire agreements:

Phase 1: Continuation of cantonment and DDR process for CNDD-FDD (Jean Bosco

Ndayikengurukiye) and Palipehutu-FNL (Mugabarabona);

Phase 2: Cantonment and DDR of CNDD-FDD (Nkurunziza) once they have committed themselves to the process; in addition, partial confinement of FAB elements not involved in operations may be possible at this stage;

Phase 3: Cantonment and DDR for Palipehutu-FNL (Rwasa) once they have signed a ceasefire agreement and committed themselves to the process;

Phase 4: Once there is a comprehensive and lasting cessation of hostilities, FAB will be partially confined to their base areas in order to comply fully with the agreement.

In addition, it was recommended that a phased deployment be followed to make provision for those signatories who are ready for the envisaged DDR process, and to provide AMIB protection elements for the deployment of the African Union's MILOBs.

Recommended cantonment areas

As a first step towards the disengagement of troops, the agreements specify that both rebel and government forces be cantoned in zones supervised by the AMIB. These zones are to be determined by a commission composed of representatives of the parties and of the AMIB. In any event, the MSTPT has already suggested the following cantonment areas:

- Babanzu Province: Muyange
- Murumvyu Province: Buyarumu
- Rutanu Province: Buhingu
- Rugigi Province: Bweru
- Muyingu Province: Buhinyusa

Rules of engagement

The rules of engagement (ROE) are based on international law and the principle of self-defence. The ROE will focus on the protection of mission personnel as well as equipment. The authority to adjust the ROE will be vested in the Head of Mission in conjunction with the Force Commander but only after consultation with the mandating authority.

Command, control and communications

As previously discussed, the AMIB is authorized and deployed under the auspices of the African Union. The following command and control structures have been defined:

- The AMIB shall function under the overall direction of the head of the mission, Ambassador Bah, who shall be the special representative of the chairperson of the AU Commission. AMIB Headquarters will be established in Bujumbura;
- Reporting: The head of the mission and the AMIB force commander are to provide the first report on progress towards the implementation of its mandate no later than three months after the establishment of the mission. In addition, these reports shall be submitted to the Central Organ on a regular basis and at least every six months. It is still unclear how the AU will respond to the progress reports or how it will evaluate and address the various problems that may arise during the mission.

Risks and concerns concerning the deployment of the AMIB

Security

Security concerns are largely related to entry and exit criteria. The biggest concern for military planners relates to entry criteria. The ideal scenario, eminently political, would be the achievement of a ceasefire between all major actors. In addition, there should be genuine political will to start the DDR process. However, as was previously pointed out, not all parties have signed the ceasefire that does exist, and not all the signatories uphold it. Furthermore, even those that have signed it refuse to respect it and others, therefore, also don't respect the ceasefire. The CNDD-FDD (Nkurunziza), for example, has yet to make contact with the Technical Planning Team. Meanwhile, they have been continually engaged in military confrontation. A similar situation characterises the Palipehutu-FNL, which has not signed the ceasefire agreement and is also engaged in war. This has affected

FAB participation in the DDR process. As a consequence, political guidance is required to determine whether or not the AMIB military forces should be deployed. This is especially the case if the prevailing security situation at the time of imminent deployment degenerates.

Mandated tasks versus potential threats

The mandate provides for tasks related to safeguarding the cantonment areas and to provide technical assistance to the disarmament and demobilization process. However, none of these mandated tasks make provision for enforcement measures and procedures. As was previously discussed, the ROE are based on self-defence and the use of force beyond self-defence is limited to ensuring the security and freedom of movement of AMIB personnel, and to protect civilians under imminent threat of physical violence. The Force Commander retains direct control over the use of force under these circumstances. If the conflict between the rebels and the FAB continues, the AMIB will be sidelined and will have no mandate to intervene.

Finance

The estimated cost of the mission is (USD) \$165,000,000 for one year. The AU determined that troop contribution countries would pay for the first two months of deployment. In addition, the AU has created a special fund where donations for the mission will be deposited. However, Ethiopia has already indicated that it will not be able to deploy before receiving sufficient finances. Both Mozambique and Ethiopia have only partially deployed as a result of the lack of funds.

Conclusion

With the AMIB military planning in its final stage, it is very important that the process facilitator remains engaged in the political process. The CNDD-FDD (Nkurunziza) must be persuaded to adhere to the ceasefire agreement and become part of the Military Technical Planning Team. In addition, as a result of the close relations that Nkurunziza has with Tanzania, it is foreseen that this country will become more involved in the mediation and facilitation

process. International pressure must also be exerted on the FNL (Rwasa) to encourage it to become part of the ceasefire agreement. In fact, the deliberations in Switzerland can be used as a starting point to get the FNL involved in the process again.

Moreover, if conflict continues in Burundi, it will be very difficult for the AMIB, with its limited mandate, to fully deploy and accomplish the tasks it has been mandated for. The CNDD-FDD (Nkurunziza) has threatened to

attack the mission if it moves into its area of operations: a threat that must be taken seriously and addressed as soon as possible. A meeting of the Burundi initiative, led by Ugandan President Museveni, is urgently needed in this regard. In fact, the AMIB should be aware that its role would very likely be transformed into that of peace enforcer rather than peacekeeper. In practical terms, this represents the difference between using force and projecting credible force.