

THE UNITED NATIONS MISSION IN BURUNDI (ONUB) *Overview*

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The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) on 21 May 2004 unanimously adopted Resolution 1545, authorising the deployment of a UN Operation in Burundi (ONUB), acting under Chapter VI, for an initial period of six months. The mandate given to ONUB was the result of a series of formal requests made by the president of Burundi and by the mediation team, led by South Africa's Deputy President Jacob Zuma, for transformation of the existing African Union Mission in Burundi (AMIB) into a UN peacekeeping operation. Following a multidisciplinary assessment mission to Burundi from 16–27 February 2004, a favourable recommendation was given to the UNSC for the approval of a peacekeeping force for Burundi.

Similar to the approach taken with the UN Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUC), ONUB has been conceptualised as a fully fledged multifunctional mission and given responsibilities in areas which transcend traditional peacekeeping activities. ONUB's mandate includes:

- ensuring respect of the ceasefire agreements through monitoring implementation and investigating violations;
- promoting the re-establishment of confidence between Burundian forces by monitoring and providing security at their pre-disarmament assembly sites, as well as collecting and securing weapons and military material as appropriate;
- contributing to the dismantling of militias as called for in the ceasefire agreements;
- carrying out the disarmament and demobilisation of combatants as part of the national programme of disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR);
- monitoring the quartering of the Armed Forces of Burundi (FAB), as well as the disarmament and demobilisation of elements that need to be disarmed and demobilised;
- monitoring, to the extent possible, the illegal flow of arms across the national borders, including Lake Tanganyika, in co-operation with MONUC and, as appropriate, with the group of experts referred to in paragraph 10 of Resolution 1533;
- contributing to the creation of the necessary security conditions for the provision of humanitarian assistance, and facilitating the voluntary return of refugees and internally displaced persons;
- contributing to the successful completion of the electoral process stipulated in the Arusha Agreement, by ensuring a secure environment for free, transparent and peaceful elections to take place;
- protecting civilians under imminent threat of physical violence, without prejudice to the responsibility of the transitional government of Burundi;
- ensuring the protection, security and freedom of movement of UN personnel, facilities, installations and equipment;

- co-ordinating and conducting, as appropriate, mine action activities in support of its mandate;
- providing advice and assistance, within its capacity and subject to carrying out tasks stipulated above, to the transitional government and authorities to contribute to their efforts;
- monitoring Burundi's borders, with special attention to the flow of refugees, as well as movements of combatants (especially in the Cibitoké Province);
- carrying out institutional reforms as well as the constitution of the integrated national defence and internal security forces and, in particular, the training and monitoring of the police, while ensuring that they are democratic and fully respect human rights and fundamental freedoms;
- proceeding with electoral activities;
- completing implementation of the reform of the judiciary and correctional system, in accordance with the Arusha Agreement;
- ensuring, in close liaison with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the promotion and protection of human rights, with particular attention to women, children and vulnerable persons, and investigating human rights violations; and
- co-operating with the government and authorities of Burundi, as well as their international partners, in the extension of state authority and administration throughout the territory, including civilian police and judicial institutions.

Headed by a special representative of the UN Secretary-General (SRSG), the operation includes expertise in all areas required to facilitate the implementation of the outstanding provisions of the Arusha Agreement. In this regard, the SRSG chairs the Implementation Monitoring Committee and the Joint Ceasefire Commission, which report directly to the force commander. The force headquarters of the mission will have a brigade structure, with its headquarters in Bujumbura and battalions operating in four areas of operation—namely, Bubaza, Gitega, Makamba and Cibitoké—in addition to Bujumbura. Furthermore, the UNSC has authorised

ONUB to use all means necessary to carry out its mandate in areas where its armed units are deployed and in co-ordination with humanitarian and development agencies present.

In terms of force levels, ONUB will comprise a military component of 5,650 including five infantry battalions, 200 military observers, 125 headquarters staff, aviation transport capability, a transport element, an engineering element, a maritime element, a special forces component, a level 3 hospital and, finally, a military police unit. It also includes an expected 120-strong civilian police component in addition to a civilian component. While force generation for ONUB has been delayed as member states have been slow to respond, on 1 June 2004 AMIB's 2,612 troops were 're-hatted' as ONUB troops, giving the mission its core force component. At present, ONUB has a total troop deployment of 3,312.

Of relevance as regards some of the regional dimensions of the conflict in Burundi, the mission will exchange liaison officers with its sister mission in the DRC (MONUC), and both missions will share information, particularly relating to cross-border movements of armed groups, refugees and arms flows across national borders. Military observers will be located along the border with Tanzania, especially in Makamba, Ruyugi and Musinga, where most returning refugees are expected to cross into Burundi. Depending on the security situation, a military observation team could also be deployed in Cibitoké Province to monitor the cross-border movement of armed groups.¹

From its inception, ONUB's most immediate priority was to take over and reinforce the role performed by AMIB—in fact, after an initial consolidation period in Bujumbura, troops were deployed to strengthen former AMIB contingents. As the security situation improves, the force is expected to extend its operations into the more sensitive area of Cibitoké. As to the planned concept of operation, ONUB has deployed a battalion to Gitega and Bubanza; one company remains in Bujumbura and will build up to battalion strength, being responsible for Bujumbura

Rural and Bururi. The mission has already deployed more than 100 observers, in teams of four to six personnel depending on task and location, in a total of 20 to 30 teams. Initially, the teams will support the DDR process, including at disarmament centres, and will monitor the confinement to barracks of the FAB.

With the possibility of an election at the end of October 2004, it is crucial that ONUB be staffed to the full. Only a fully staffed ONUB (including the expected maritime,

special forces, military police, headquarters' protection and engineering elements) will be able to successfully execute the mission's planned concept of operations.

Notes

- 1 Extract from Report of the Secretary-General on Burundi, United Nations, New York, 16 March 2004.