

# THE UNITED NATIONS MISSION IN CÔTE D'IVOIRE (UNOCI)<sup>33</sup>

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The United Nations Mission in Côte d'Ivoire, MINUCI, was established on 13 May 2003 by UN Security Council Resolution 1479. It was deployed in the field alongside ECOWAS forces (ECOMICI) and Licorne force. All three forces operated with different mandates, with none assuming the leading role in the peace operation in the country. This situation posed some challenges. The Licorne force was hampered by questions about its accountability while ECOMICI was hampered by shortages in manpower, equipment and logistical support. Having determined that the situation in Côte d'Ivoire continued to pose a threat to international peace and security in the region and acting under Chapter VII of the UN Charter, the Security Council, by its resolution 1528 of 27 February 2004, decided to establish the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI) as from 4 April 2004. UNOCI replaced MINUCI, which had essentially been a political mission.

## Planning

The Military Planning Service (MPS) of UN DPKO had commenced planning for the military component of the mission months in advance of the adoption of Resolution 1528. As with all forward-planning, the MPS planning process was guided by a number of basic assumptions. In the case of Côte d'Ivoire, these were as follows:

The Government and Forces nouvelles would continued to participate in the Government of National Reconciliation;

Security guarantees for UN personnel and equipment would be provided by the Government and Forces nouvelles;

There would be respect by other countries and Ivorians for Côte d'Ivoire's territorial integrity;

The Security Council would authorize a UN force operating under a Chapter VII mandate;

The French military presence would remain in Côte d'Ivoire alongside UN peacekeepers;

The new mission would involve a continuation and expansion of the functions that MINUCI had been carrying out;

ECOWAS contingents would remain in theatre, to be re-hatted as UN peacekeepers; and

The deployment of UN forces would be throughout the territory of Côte d'Ivoire.

The structuring of the force was based on a number of envisaged tasks, which had become evident from the dynamics of operations conducted hitherto by ECOWAS, LICORNE and MINUCI. Importantly, the lessons of previous missions, particularly in Sierra Leone, were taken into account during planning. Prime among these were the need for a properly structured force capable of achieving success, and avoidance of an incremental build up of the UN force.

One of the issues that had not been germane to similar mission planning processes was the issue of the relationship between the UN operation and the French Licorne forces – particularly Command and Control arrangements. Three key points were made in this regard:

Licorne would provide a guaranteed quick reaction force (QRF) in support of the UN Force Commander;

On deployment, QRFs would resort under Tactical Command (TACOM) of the UN (sector) commander in whose area they operated; and

A permanent liaison structure would be established as early as possible.

## **Mandate and mission**

The Security Council indeed authorized UNOCI to use all necessary means to carry out its mandate, within its capabilities and its areas of deployment, and provided the mission with a broad, multifunctional mandate as stipulated in paragraph 4 of resolution 1528 (see Appendix D to this report).

In paragraph 11 of resolution 1528, the Security Council authorized, for a period of 12 months from 4 April 2004, the French forces to use all necessary means in order to support UNOCI in accordance with the agreement to be reached

between UNOCI and the French authorities, and in particular to:

- Contribute to the general security of the area of activity of the international forces;
- Intervene at the request of UNOCI in support of its elements whose security may be threatened;
- Intervene against belligerent actions, if the security conditions so require, outside the areas directly controlled by UNOCI; and
- Help to protect civilians, in the deployment areas of their units.

UNOCI is thus a complex operation. It is part of an emerging trend in UN peacekeeping in which the UN force is actually a hybrid of two or three different peace operations that are subsumed under - or operate in tandem with - the UN. Three key words underline the UNOCI mission. These are **transformation** (of the ECOWAS forces) **absorption** (of MINUCI) and **cohabitation** (with the French forces.) The success of the UNOCI mission will depend on how well these three factors play out.

The new UN force has rehatted ECOMICI as part of the expanded UN operation, and has streamlined its relationship with Licorne force, which should now play a more or less supportive role to the UN force in pursuit of its mission. UNOCI will assume responsibility for monitoring the parties' compliance with the Comprehensive Ceasefire Agreement, building confidence between the parties and providing support to the Government of National Reconciliation in the implementation of the DDR programme and maintaining security in order to establish the conditions to enable the full implementation of the Linas-Marcoussis Agreement.

UNOCI's Force Commander intends to conduct a phased peacekeeping operation in Côte d'Ivoire, with the initial focus on monitoring security along the Zone of Confidence (ZOC) and provide support to the activities at the DDR sites in close co-operation with the French forces. Once the DDR phases are completed, the ZOC will be abolished and the forces will be re-deployed throughout the country in order to widen the UN presence and to assist all UN Agencies and other organizations' peace support and humanitarian operations. In the interim, UNOCI will monitor closely the ceasefire agreement in the ZOC.

UNOCI will maintain close liaison with French forces, and also establish and maintain a close liaison with all other military actors in the country. The force will act positively to build trust with the Ivorian population. On the other hand, it will adopt a firm posture, show determination and react robustly within the ROE to meet any incidents or provocations.

## **Force preparation, transition, and build-up**

UNOCI forces have been well prepared for their mission. Pre-deployment training for staff officers was conducted at the KAIPTC in Accra, Ghana from mid March to early April 2004; this really contributed to a smooth take-over from MINUCI headquarters in Abijan. Pre-deployment training for military observers and team leaders was also presented in Bamako, Mali, while pre-deployment training for the formed units or contingents was presented in the TCCs by the UN DPKO.

An added advantage is the fact that MINUCI military liaison officers transformed into military observers for UNOCI. This served, as it were, as a very effective 'launching pad' for UNOCI operations. Similarly, the re-hatting of ECOWAS forces was characterized by a smooth transfer of authority and lent a good deal of continuity. On 4 April 2004, Maj Gen Abdoulaye Fall of Senegal, former commander of the ECOMICI force, was appointed Force Commander of UNOCI.

By the end of May 2004, troop strength stood at 3,004 out of a total authorized strength of 6,240 military personnel. About half the troops in place were former ECOMICI contingents from Benin, Ghana, Niger, Senegal and Togo. The remainder of the force comprised 63 officers at mission headquarters, 123 military observers, 171 members of the French engineering company, 305 members of the advance party of the Bangladesh contingent, and the 726-strong Moroccan contingent. One infantry battalion and one engineering company from Bangladesh, and a Pakistani transportation company are expected to be deployed by the end of June. All troop deployments, with the exception of helicopter unit, are expected to be completed by the end of July 2004.

Despite good planning, pre-deployment training, and a smooth transfer of authority, UNOCI has encountered significant limitations at the operational level. For example, the logistical support system could not keep pace with the growth of UNOCI, despite the delays in the arrival and deployment of the full complement of forces. There is a long chain of command, and there are multiple tasks to be executed by an under-strength force. These tasks have, inevitably, been delayed. However, it is expected that UNOCI will reach its full complement by July or August 2004.

Compounding the challenge of force generation has been the unacceptability to Ivorian parties of certain troop contributing countries. The Forces nouvelles, for example, have objected to the participation of Ukrainian (helicopter unit) and Angolan troops, on grounds that troops or mercenaries from both countries' force have fought alongside the Côte d'Ivoire government against them.

The UNOCI budget was also received late; the Pre-Mandate Commitment Authority (PMCA) was received only on 24 March 2004.<sup>34</sup> These limiting factors have combined to make extant time-frames unrealistic, which may become a serious issue in view of unrealistic expectations of UNOCI from the populace.

## Challenges ahead

The establishment of UNOCI was based on a number of assumptions, in addition to the initial planning assumptions already mentioned. First, that the New Forces would renew its commitment to the peace process. Second, that the opposition parties would shelve their planned demonstration for March 2004. And third, that there is an agreement among all the parties on the need for peace in Côte d'Ivoire. The reason for these assumptions is that UNOCI cannot perform its mandated task (that is peacekeeping) in a situation of "neither peace nor war". In the absence of these assumptions being met, it is unsurprising that UNOCI has already encountered problems in the pursuit of its mandate, most of which are related to a political impasse in the country with respect to the implementation of Linas-Marcoussis.

Sensitising the population and members of Civil Society Organisations on the peace process and the role of UNOCI has been equally challenging. For example, on 31 May 2004, out of impatience with the apparently slow pace of the peace process, a large rally was held in Abidjan by civil society and political leaders with the apparent aim of pressuring the UN and French forces to disarm the anti-government rebels. In Bouaké, a counter demonstration organized by rebels called instead for elections to be held, and for President Gbagbo to resign from office. It is clear that the population is insufficiently informed about UNOCI, in particular with regard to the limits of the mandate. Better public information is therefore crucial to prevent further disappointment in the population and abuse by parties to the conflict.

Another critical area of challenge is the need for all the forces (especially the New Forces) to restart dialogue. Liaison activities of UNOCI with FANCI, Forces nouvelles and the Licorne force are being strengthened. Special emphasis is being

placed on operational co-ordination, in particular with the Licorne force.

UNOCI and the Licorne force will operate together with separate but permanently liaised command and control structures. UNOCI Forces will not be placed under French command. However, French forces may be placed under UN tactical command in specific circumstances. Co-ordination will be achieved through an effective liaison structure, with an exchange of Liaison Officers down to battalion level. Movements of French Forces will be co-ordinated with UNOCI at all times, and a QRF will be provided by French Forces to UNOCI for the whole duration of the mission and throughout Côte d'Ivoire.

## Conclusions

With the Ivorian peace process stalled at the political level, and the force not yet really put to the test, it is obviously too early to generate a comprehensive list of lessons from the operation. However, it is possible to relate a few factors, both positive and negative, that have impacted on the early life of the operation.

On the positive side, it must be said that the rapid deployment of UNOCI forces when it became appropriate to do so is commendable. More than a third of military personnel and observers were in place in the first few weeks after the Security Council passed the resolution setting up the mission.

Moreover good economy of effort between the various neutral forces and organizations was achieved, thanks to an interactive and complex planning process. There is good co-operation between UNOCI and French Forces; and the mission has been on the forefront of innovation - in the creation of integrated support systems (ISS), and in the command structure of UNOCI (in terms of a single chain of command).

On the negative side, it is clear that logistical support was inadequate, and that this needs to be in place before deployment or it should be deployed with the forces. This problem was compounded by a shortage of funds for the mission in the critical start-up phase, a situation which could have been improved by effective utilization of the PMCA mechanism. Moreover, while the ISS was a good idea, there was a poor understanding of this system by both civilian and military mission components.

Though UNOCI is still in its early stages and is confronted with many challenges, these challenges are not unique to UNOCI. The UN DPKO has been working

hard, across a number of new missions, to overcome the limitations and negative aspects noted above. Despite the challenges, UNOCI has already made a positive impact on the Ivorian peace process by making its presence felt, and will continue to facilitate the implementation of peace in Côte d'Ivoire. There must, however, be peace to keep in the country. The UNOCI force will come into its own, and really begin with meaningful operations once the political impasse has been unblocked and the DDR process commences in earnest.