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### **Report on Wilton Park Conference WP973**

## **ROBUST PEACEKEEPING: EXPLORING THE CHALLENGES IN DOCTRINE, COMMITMENTS AND CONDUCT OF OPERATIONS Thursday 14 – 16 May 2009**

An initiative of the Office of Military Affairs/Department of Peacekeeping Operations,  
United Nations, New York  
and supported by the Governments of Canada and the United Kingdom

### **Summary**

1. Senior military officers from over 30 of the major troop contributing countries (TCCs) to United Nations (UN) peacekeeping operations, ambassadors and representatives of the five permanent Member States of the UN Security Council (UNSC), senior officials from the UN and regional organisations, together with international peacekeeping experts met to discuss the key challenges in strengthening UN peacekeeping (see Appendix I for list of participants).
  
2. The conference aimed to:
  - share information with TCCs and other partners on the demand for robust peacekeeping, and develop a common understanding of robust peacekeeping requirements;
  - explore the impediments and limits to robust peacekeeping operations;
  - assist the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) and Office of the Military Adviser (OMA) in identifying priorities in planning future peacekeeping missions.
  
3. Key points discussed at the conference included:
  - recognition of the changed nature of conflict, and general acceptance that conditions on the ground require different ways of thinking and acting,

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**Page 1 of 8**

although the fundamental principles of peacekeeping remain the same; a 'strategic guidance note', explaining robust peacekeeping philosophy and response expectations from TCCs would be useful;

- greater consultation between the UNSC, TCCs and the Secretariat is needed from the earliest stages of mission preparation and throughout deployment of a peacekeeping force;
- the need to reduce caveats in Memorandum of Understanding(MoUs);
- operational requirements for robust peacekeeping include: flexibility and mobility of troops; strategic reserves; remedying gaps in capacity such as air assets, theatre and tactical levels intelligence, interoperability, command and control, mission-specific training and responsive delivery of operational support.

#### **What is robust peacekeeping and why is it needed?**

4. UN peacekeeping operations have rapidly expanded over the last decade, and are constantly evolving. Contemporary conflicts are overwhelmingly intra-state, not inter-state disputes, involving competition for control of population as much as territory, and deliberate targeting of the most vulnerable, women and children. A traditional static presence of peacekeeping forces to observe and monitor compliance with the end of hostilities is no longer a sufficient response. The fundamental principles of peacekeeping remain the same: consent, impartiality and the use of force only in self-defence or in defence of the mandate. At the same time, a paradigm shift is needed to enable peacekeepers to deter or prevent 'spoilers' derailing peace processes, or those who threaten the mission or local population. As underlined in the *Report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations* (Brahimi report), when UN forces are sent to uphold the peace "they must be prepared to confront the lingering forces of war and violence, with the ability and determination to defeat them". Whenever there is a UN presence, local people have an expectation it will provide protection.

5. There is broad consensus that robust UN peacekeeping is not and can never be an instrument of peace enforcement. Rather, it comprises the tactical show or use of force to change behaviour and create conditions for a political process. Thus

it is not only a military issue, but a political and economic one. It aims to further a broader strategy to achieve a transition from conflict to peace and strengthen fragile states, a strategy backed by the UNSC and TCCs. It is also an attitude of mind, demonstrating the UN stands firm and is not to be intimidated. A 'strategic guidance note' explaining robust peacekeeping philosophy and response expectations from TCCs would be useful.

### **The role of the Security Council**

6. Security Council mandates, as provided in its resolutions, have moved faster and further than the tools with which to implement these mandates. Well-crafted mandates should be matched to political strategy and resources, with realistic goals. Resolutions would benefit from greater clarity in identifying the strategic objectives and desired end-state, rather than detailing tasks at the tactical level. From this framework the Secretariat can develop the concept of operations (CONOPS), rules of engagement (ROE) and force proposals.

7. Greater consultation with TCCs needs to take place, on a defined and formal basis, both prior to and during deployment. One way in which this may be instituted could be to implement the two-step process articulated in the Brahimi report, which has not been pursued. Once realistic mission requirements have been outlined and agreed to, the UNSC should leave its authorising resolution in draft form until the Secretary-General confirms that he has received troop and other commitments from Member States sufficient to meet those requirements. A two-step process would provide information and clarity for TCCs in the briefings to their governments as to the tasks, resources (human, equipment and financial), and risk analysis. It could lead to TCCs obtaining a greater awareness of the situation in theatre, as well as the implications of the mandate, CONOPS, ROE and force proposals, gaining broader acceptance. Improved consultation at an early stage with regional organisations active in peacekeeping could also be advantageous.

8. There is a need to strengthen political-military communications, for the UNSC to be better informed of what it needs to know about the conditions for a mission, and to refine what it asks the military to do. Non permanent members of the UNSC, new to

the Council's workings and with fewer resources, may benefit in particular from more adequate provision of information. To increase the level of knowledge and better formulate mandates for robust peacekeeping through an authoritative process the assistance of the Military Staff Committee could be sought. There should be greater burden sharing to maintain a political consensus on peacekeeping, as well as to ensure sufficient supply of specialised assets, with UNSC members prepared to put their own forces where others are invited to deploy.

9. With greater consultation of TCCs at an early stage, more flexible MoUs may be negotiated, with fewer caveats, if any, on troop or equipment restrictions, which hinder operational effectiveness. MoUs should be coherent, and their provisions known to the Force Commander (FC) and subordinate commanders.

### **The role of TCCs**

10. Greater TCC involvement from the outset of mission preparation, and more buy-in from them, should assist TCCs in better selecting appropriate commanders who are capable not only in their national setting but can work in a multilateral and UN environment. It should also help to ensure that troops are properly trained prior to deployment, including in the use of force beyond self-defence; there should also be scenario training, to demonstrate the full spectrum of threats troops may face in contemporary peacekeeping, including the protection of civilians and in situations where gender-based sexual violence is prevalent. Mission-specific training is required, including familiarisation with the cultural environment and sensitivities of the situation to which troops are to be deployed. An understanding of these issues needs to be communicated not only to senior officers, but at all levels, including among patrol leaders. TCCs should also be committed to in-mission training, when FCs may run scenario exercises with commanders to tease out any inconsistencies in interpretation of the mandate, and especially ROE. There is a need to ensure contingents have access to training areas and ranges to allow them to maintain their military skills in the mission area. This can have valuable side effects, as if training is seen to be robust and effective, word will spread among the local population that a particular contingent is to be taken seriously.

## **The role of OMA/DPKO**

11. More communication, information sharing and coordination between TCCs and the Secretariat will build greater confidence and awareness of the interests and concerns of each. The OMA could benefit from more TCCs seconding their best officers to reinforce the military expertise available there, and further contribute towards a closer relationship without TCCs aiming to exercise day-to-day control. With long overdue reinforcement of the OMA currently underway, the OMA should aim to incorporate the strengths of the Strategic Military Cell established for the UN Interim Force in Lebanon but integrated into one unit for all missions, enabling cross-fertilisation of mission experience.

12. There should be more institutionalised dialogue between OMA/DPKO and TCCs on training, possibly including the establishment of a standing or ad hoc special advisory training support team for guidance to both military and civilian authorities in TCCs on what is required to prepare troops adequately for deployment. OMA/DPKO should also play a stronger role in validating pre-deployment training by TCCs, providing advice on training policies, guidelines and curricula, as well as performance standards. Optimal use should be made of UN or regional training centres, particularly with a view to mission-specific training, and the International Association of Peacekeeping Training Centres should be involved. OMA/DPKO training assistance should also be continued in-mission, to promote common doctrine or standards to help contingents in achieving greater interoperability. Constant dialogue between OMA/DPKO and TCCs is required post-deployment, including threat assessment and risk analysis, with updates as conditions change on the ground. In consultation with TCCs the OMA should also develop a concept that would introduce Operational Readiness Tests of both Force Headquarters components and contingents in the field.

13. Delays in deployment need to be addressed. A two-step approach at the UNSC should not contribute to this, as speed on paper is not the same as speed in implementation. OMA/DPKO should be encouraged to undertake contingency planning. Past efforts by DPKO to secure a standby force have not been accepted

by Member States; an alternative could be to have contingents at national level prepared for deployment at short notice. Quick deployment of a mission's military headquarters may also be possible, with contributions from one or more Member States, presumably core interested parties, and perhaps assigning some of the staff of a reinforced OMA, to create a nucleus into which additional staff could subsequently be plugged. Regional organisations are also addressing the need for rapid deployment. The African Union (AU) is establishing five regional standby brigades, and the European Union (EU) has already created battlegroups to improve rapid response capability. For the UN and regional organisations to cooperate more effectively in rapid response arrangements a number of issues need to be addressed for harmonising bridging and entry operations.

### **Operational requirements and capacities**

14. Flexibility in operational conduct is essential, especially when tasked to execute robust operations. A mobile military presence is required, through day and night patrols. There needs to be the capacity to escalate as the situation requires; showing adequate force can in some circumstances obviate the use of it. Sufficient in-mission reserves should be available at the operational and strategic levels to act as reinforcements, or as responders, in a crisis situation. Effective Command and Control (C2) is paramount for the successful pursuit of a mandate, yet there remains room for improvement. Despite the basic principle of 'Unity of Command', varying national caveats are imposed on UN peacekeeping forces. Parallel chains of command, linking field contingents to national headquarters, are an impediment to carrying out robust operations. Engaging TCCs in the formulation of a mandate, CONOPS and ROE (see paragraph 7) is one way to aim to overcome parallel command structures. Deploying homogeneous brigades is another, which also addresses problems of interoperability. Yet the involvement of multiple TCCs in an operational theatre also has advantages and configuring military components and units to be deployed should be taken on a case by case basis.

15. A comprehensive framework for intelligence gathering and analysis is needed; actionable, or in-theatre, intelligence is necessary to know where to apply force, and the greater the intelligence capacity, the more deployment can be planned wisely,

and pre-emptively. Situational awareness will also minimise uncertainties and reduce risks. A fusion of satellite imagery, unmanned aerial vehicle reconnaissance photos, ground surveillance radar outputs, tactical signal intelligence as well as human intelligence is extremely relevant for a FC who is required to operate in an environment where a lack of information could have severe politico-military repercussions. Member States should recognise the need for UN missions to have such an intelligence capability.

16. Robust peacekeeping requires robust equipment, and a responsive and full range of logistical support. Critical sea, air and land-based platforms for tactical lift, close support, reconnaissance and medical evacuation are necessary. Air assets that are tasked by FCs and able to operate in robust environments are vital to the speed of action, and initiatives underway to improve the tasking of military aircraft should be supported. Not only more specialised force multipliers such as utility and attack helicopters and fixed-wing surveillance assets able to operate day and night are needed, but key enablers like engineers, transport and logistics units. Credible firepower has a deterrent effect, and, the stronger the deterrent, the less likely it will be used. Where needed, more crew-served indirect-fire weapons such as mortars or medium-sized howitzers, and direct-fire weapons such as tanks, should be fielded.

17. Delivery of support in theatre needs to be more flexible and substantially improved. The Department of Field Support (DFS) is undertaking a review of its own procedures, its culture of client support and the wider issue of the UN's rules and regulations. In some instances, this will require the General Assembly to delegate more responsibility and authority to mission administrators to take decisions on the ground. It is widely recognised that rigidity in UN policy and systems affects troops' morale and operational effectiveness.

18. The impact of negative publicity on the outcome of a robust action can also be detrimental to staff and troop morale. No matter how professional a robust operation, there is always the potential for collateral damage. Effective information operations, and the necessary facilities, should be integral to peacekeeping missions, and a public information strategy part of the military planning process. Media can assist

and shape public perception in support of mandate implementation. Community outreach through a multi-faceted civilian-military, and operational unit level, response to security threats should be encouraged; the message of how the mission is implementing its mandate should be factored into every public interface point.

### **Importance of leadership**

19. The importance of senior leadership cannot be overemphasised. Special Representatives of the Secretary-General and FCs have considerable political and military autonomy. Close cooperation between military and civilian components are needed for an integrated mission, and the incumbents of these posts should exemplify this approach. Robustness is also a shared responsibility, such as through Joint Protection Teams which operate in the UN Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUC).

20. The best candidates should be appointed for such posts, without bending to political pressures. Region and sector commanders, who could be selected by the UN, should be inspiring leaders. Appointments need to be timely, and an ad hoc or standing selection board could be envisaged for senior appointments. Instituting a senior mentor programme could facilitate quicker and more satisfactory hand-overs for senior personnel.

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21. The first UN peacekeeping mission was authorised by the UNSC over 60 years ago. UN peacekeeping continues to evolve, both conceptually and operationally, to meet new challenges and political realities. As noted in the Brahimi report “For preventive initiatives to succeed in reducing tension and averting conflict, the Secretary-General needs clear, strong and sustained political support from Member States. Furthermore, ... no amount of good intentions can substitute for the fundamental ability to project credible force if complex peacekeeping, in particular, is to succeed. But force alone cannot create peace; it can only create the space in which peace may be built.”

**Isobelle Jaques**  
**May 2009**



Wilton Park Reports are brief summaries of the main points and conclusions of a conference. The reports reflect rapporteurs' personal interpretations of the proceedings – as such they do not constitute any institutional policy of Wilton Park nor do they necessarily represent the views of rapporteurs.

## **Appendix I**

### **LIST OF PARTICIPANTS**

Major General Joseph Narh ADINKRAH; Chief of the Army Staff, Ghana Army, Accra

General Martin Luther AGWAI ; Force Commander, United Nations-African Union hybrid operation in Darfur, El Fasher

Lieutenant Colonel Arnold II ALTUNA; Military Policy Development Officer, Office of Military Affairs, United Nations, New York

Major General Deepal ALWIS; Chief Field Engineer, Sri Lankan Army, Colombo

Jens Winther ANDERSEN, Chief Policy Doctrine and Liaison, Office of Military Affairs, United Nations, New York

Tony ANDERSON, Deputy Director, Peacekeeping and Peace Operations Group, Department of Foreign Affairs, Ottawa

Major General Mamdouh BADRAN; Director of Operations Research Centre, Ministry of Defence, Cairo

Anthony BANBURY, Assistant Secretary-General, Department of Field Support, United Nations, New York

General (Retired) Maurice BARIL; former Chief of Defence Staff; Consultant, United Nations, Ottawa

Colonel Mark BIBBEY; Military Adviser, Permanent Mission of the United Kingdom of Great Britain & Northern Ireland to the United Nations, New York

Major General (Retired) Patrick CAMMAERT; Former Commander, Eastern Division, United Nations Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUC); Former Military Adviser; Consultant, The Hague

Chris CAMPBELL, Head, Peacekeeping Team, Conflict Group, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, London

Rear Admiral Eric CHAPLET; Chief of Planning, Center for Planning and Conduct of Operations, Ministry of Defence - Armed Forces Staff, Paris

Lieutenant General Abdul-Rahman DAMBAZAU; Chief of Army Staff, Nigerian Army, Abuja

General Ramiro DE LA FUENTE BLOCH; Commanding General, Bolivian Army, La Paz

Major General Felicio DE LOS SANTOS; Commander, Peace Operations Army Command - Uruguayan Army, Montevideo

Lieutenant General Carlos Alberto DOS SANTOS CRUZ; Former Force Commander, United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH); Commander, Brazilian Army, Sao Paulo

Alan DOSS, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, United Nations Mission in Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUC), Kinshasa

Efrat ELRON, Senior Fellow, The International Peace Institute, New York

General Abdoulaye FALL; Chief of General Staff of Senegalese Armed Forces, Ministry of Armed Forces, Dakar

Major General Agha Muhammad Umer FAROOQ; Commandant, School of Infantry and Tactics, Pakistan Army, Quetta

Major General (retired) Robert GORDON; Senior Adviser, Challenges Forum, Challenges of Peace Project/Folke Bernadotte Academy, Pewsey

Major General Claudio GRAZIANO; Force Commander, Head of Mission, United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), Tyre

Jean-Marie GUÉHENNO, Former Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, United Nations; Senior Fellow, Brookings Institution, Centre on International Cooperation, New York

David HAERI, Special Assistant to the Under-Secretary-General, Department of Peacekeeping Operations, United Nations, New York

Major General Carlos HOLGANZA; Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations, J3, Armed Forces of the Philippines, Quezon City

Victoria HOLT, Senior Associate and Co-Director, Future of Peace Operations Program, The Henry L. Stimson Center, Washington DC

Commissioner Andrew HUGHES; UN Police Adviser; Director, Police Division, United Nations, New York

Lieutenant General Shahron IBRAHIM; Chief of Staff, Malaysian Armed Forces, Ministry of Defence, Kuala Lumpur

Isobelle JAQUES, Programme Director, Wilton Park, Steyning

Corinna KUHL, Acting Chief, Peacekeeping Best Practices Section, United Nations, New York

Brigadier General Bob KULIMA; Military Adviser, Permanent Mission of the Republic of Zambia to the United Nations, New York

Brigadier General I Gede Sumertha KUSUMAYANCA; Head, Peacekeeping Centre, Armed Forces, Jakarta

Alain LE ROY, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, United Nations, New York

Lieutenant General David LEAKEY; Director General of the European Union Military Staff (DGEUMS), Council of the European Union, Brussels

Brigadier General LEE Jeong Ha; Head / Director, PKO Centre; Commandant, Joint Forces Staff College, Seoul

Major General Antonio LI GOBBI; IMS Assistant Director for Operations, NATO HQ, Brussels

Lieutenant General Jasbir Singh LIDDER; Commandant, The Infantry School, Indian Army, Mhow

Ann LIVINGSTONE, Vice President, Research, Education and Learning Design, Pearson Peacekeeping Centre, Ottawa

Lieutenant General José Luis LÓPEZ ROSE; Chief of Joint Staff, Ministry of Defence, Madrid

Ambassador Augustine MAHIGA; Permanent Representative, Permanent Mission of the United Republic of Tanzania to the United Nations, New York

Lieutenant General Temba Templeton MATANZIMA; Chief of Joint Operations, South African National Defence Force, Pretoria

Major General Gerson MENANDRO GARCIA DE FREITAS; 5th Subdirector of Staff, Brazilian Army (G5), Brasília

Colonel Jacques MORNEAU; Military Adviser, Permanent Mission of Canada to the United Nations, New York

Lieutenant General Muhammad Abdul MUBEEN; Principal Staff Officer, Armed Forces Division, Dhaka

Edmond MULET, Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Department of Peacekeeping Operations, United Nations, New York

Colonel William Bryan NORMAN; Chief, Military Planning Service, United Nations, New York

J Scott NORWOOD, Deputy Director for Global Security Affairs, The Joint Staff, J-5, Washington DC

Major General Patrick NYAMVUMBA; Chief of Operations and Logistics (J4), Rwanda Defence Force, Kigali

Lieutenant General Chikadibia OBIAKOR; Military Adviser for Peacekeeping Operations, United Nations, New York

Brigadier-General Soumanou OKE; Deputy Chief of General Staff, Beninese Armed Forces, Cotonou

Lieutenant General (Retired) Daniel OPANDE; Former Force Commander, United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) and United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), Nairobi

Major General Maurice Otieno OYUGI; General Officer Commanding, Kenya Army, Nairobi

Major General Erdal ÖZTÜRK; Chief of Plans and Operations Division, Turkish General Staff, Ankara

Colonel Vadim PIVOVAR; Assistant to the Defence and Military Attaché, Russian Defence Attaché Office, Embassy of the Russian Federation, London

Major General Ash POWER; Head, Military Strategic Commitments, Department of Defence, Canberra

Major General Pasquale PREZIOSA; Chief of Military Policy and Planning Department, Italian Defence General Staff, Rome

Babu RAHMAN, Conflict Team Leader, Research Analysts, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, London

Lila Hanitra RATSIFANDRIHAMANANA, Permanent Observer of the African Union to the United Nations, African Union, New York

Brigadier General Bipin RAWAT; Commander, North Kivu, United Nations Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Goma

Brigadier General Juan José RUIZ MORALES; Chief of Staff in Command, National Defence Force, Guatemala City

Andrew SAMS, United Nations Policy Officer, Ministry of Defence, London

Major General Jonathan SHAW; Assistant Chief of Defence Staff (International Security Policy), Ministry of Defence, London

Major General Zheng Bai SHI; Director General, Peacekeeping Affairs Office, Ministry of National Defence, Beijing

Colonel Ian Robert SINCLAIR; Chief of Staff, Office of Military Affairs, United Nations, New York

Lieutenant General Nand Kishore SINGH; Director, General Staff Duties, Integrated Headquarters of Ministry of Defence Government of India, New Delhi

Colonel Noddy STAFFORD; Chief, J5 Plans, United Nations-African Union hybrid operation in Darfur (UNAMID), El Fasher

Major General Yohannes Gebremskel TESFAMARIAM; Head, Department of Peace Keeping, Ministry of Defence, Addis Ababa

Rear Admiral Antonio TORRES; J-5 Strategic Plans and Policy Director, Joint Staff, Buenos Aires

Colonel Mahamane TOURÉ; Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security, Economic Community of Western African States, Abuja

Nicolas VON RUBEN, Acting Director of Mission Support, United Nations Mission in Sudan (UNMIS), Khartoum

Colonel Jun Hui WU; Section Chief, Peacekeeping Affairs Office, Ministry of National Defence, Beijing