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## A MONGOLIAN BATTALION IN UNMISS: LESSONS FOR CANADA'S PARTICIPATION IN MALI

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# **A MONGOLIAN BATTALION IN UNMISS: LESSONS FOR CANADA'S PARTICIPATION IN MALI**

## **AIM**

1. This service paper explores the nature of support provided by Mongolian peacekeepers and provides lessons learned by the Mongolian Armed Forces (MAF) during the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) that can be applied to the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) by Commander Canadian Joint Operations Command as the Canadian government looks to re-engage in United Nations (UN) operations abroad. The Mongolian battalion's support of the UN mission happened at a time when the UN's need was great and is likely to continue. There are currently 110,000 UN peacekeepers<sup>1</sup> deployed by nations from around the world.

## **INTRODUCTION**

2. Mongolia agreed to contribute troops to the UN with an understanding that this would likely increase national pride and Mongolia's influence on the international stage<sup>2</sup>. The Mongolian deployment of a peacekeeping battalion to South Sudan, its largest deployment in recent years, has demonstrated that the MAF is a reputable and skillful force that has built a capacity for diverse mission sets within the spectrum of peace support operations. Mongolia's participation in the UNMISS operation is the MAF's first time sending a battalion size of troops outside of Mongolia<sup>3</sup>.

3. The CAF can learn from the MAF's UNMISS experience and lessons learned. Of particular note is the importance of pre-deployment training conducted as a multinational exercise, increasing female peacekeepers, and the requirement to conduct comprehensive language training early. CAF also can learn from the MAF's interaction with local population and governmental organizations in support of peace and security.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **South Sudan**

4. The South Sudanese Civil War is the conflict between government forces in South Sudan and the opposition forces. The United Nations has peacekeeping contingents in the country as part of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS)<sup>4</sup>. The region

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<sup>1</sup> United Nations Peacekeeping, "UN peacekeeping: A Year in Review," last accessed 25 Oct 2018, <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/un-peacekeeping-year-review-0>.

<sup>2</sup> B. Bayarmagnai. LTC, "Challenges facing Mongolia's participation in coalition military operations" (U.S. Army War College studies paper, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania, 2005), 2.

<sup>3</sup> D. Ariunbold. LTC, "Why has Mongolia Chosen to Participate in Peace Support Operations?" (Naval Postgraduate School Thesis, Monterey, California, 2012), 22.

<sup>4</sup> Øystein H. Rolandsen, "Another civil war in South Sudan: the failure of Guerrilla Government?" *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, 9:1, 163-174, (January 2015): 163. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/17531055.2014.993210>.

the MAF is operating in is in the north, near the international border with the Republic of Sudan.

### **United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS)**

5. Almost 15,000 peacekeepers, police, security and civilians personnel from more than 60 different countries are working to prevent violence against civilians and to secure sacred places throughout the country<sup>5</sup>.

### **Mandate**

6. The Security Council has extended the mission mandate of the UNMISS until March 15, 2019, demanding that parties end the violence and signaling its intention to consider all measures, including an arms embargo, against those obstructing peace in the war torn nation<sup>6</sup>.

### **Mongolian Battalion's Mission.**

7. Establishing a legal framework and a decision-making process to participate in peacekeeping operations at the strategic level was one of the biggest challenges for Mongolia. Because Mongolia has always been surrounded by large powerful nations it is important for Mongolia's leadership to demonstrate on the international stage that it has a competent armed force. Mongolia's relationship with its neighboring states has always had a great impact on Mongolia's political and economic life<sup>7</sup>. Mongolia's ability to conduct international peacekeeping increases its position in the world while at the same time strengthens international peace and security. The decision making process within Mongolia leading up to the UNMISS peacekeeping operation has been well organized, which has enabled an accelerated operational planning and preparation process.

8. The UNMISS requires a lot of funding for training, maintenance, and equipment. Mongolia has limited economic ability to support the mission and operational demands need to be highlighted early in the planning process. Colonel D.Ariunbold, of the Mongolian Army, states in his thesis that "operational funding issues need to be well-articulated in order to maintain consistent and adequate financial support for pre-deployment and deployment<sup>8</sup>".

9. UN peacekeeping and coalition operations need sufficient number of military personnel from each contributing country as well as logistical support for their deployed troops. Following the communist regime, the MAF was downsized significantly, and as a result, the MAF now faces the challenge of satisfying manpower requirements for peace support operations. The substantial increase in Mongolian military contribution in peace

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<sup>5</sup> United Nations Mission In South Sudan, "About UNMISS," last accessed 12 Oct 2018, <https://unmiss.unmissions.org/about-unmiss>

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> D.Ariunbold, "Why has Mongolia Chosen ...", 24.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 18.

support operations in the last decade has exacerbated this challenge<sup>9</sup>. However, participation in peacekeeping operations has bolstered the MAF's military training, educational institutions, equipment, and most importantly, the readiness of military units. When participating in peacekeeping operations, soldiers must maintain the highest standards of professional ethics and discipline in order to effectively conduct peace-making and peace-building activities<sup>10</sup>.

10. In 2013, Mongolia's President, Tsakhiagiin Elbegdorj, became the first Asian leader to visit South Sudan since their independence<sup>11</sup>. During a meeting with MAF troops and UN staff in the Bentui, the Mongolian president urged his troops to promote peace and contribute to the development of South Sudan, one of the world's poorest and youngest countries in the world. Tsakhiagiin Elbegdorj told his soldiers to "Contribute to world peace by fulfilling the tasks given by the UNMISS and supporting the government of South Sudan... You must perform your duties very well to make your contribution for the peace-building process for South Sudan"<sup>12</sup>. It was a very big show of support from the highest level of the Mongolian government.

11. The military's relationship with the public in Mongolia has improved dramatically as a result of their successful participation in peacekeeping operations. The MAF has learned that civil-military relations must be carefully managed, and that cooperation, shared interest, and information sharing between public relations with military bureaucracies are important for a successful decision making process in peacekeeping operations<sup>13</sup>.

## **Language Skills**

12. Language is an important enabler of mission success. English language skills was one of the critical problems the MAF faced while conducting the personnel selection and screening process. Human resource staff must be able to identify who has experience in peacekeeping missions or coalition missions and English language skills. Language skills are important when operating with other international forces in peacekeeping operations. All personnel, in particular the command teams, need to understand and communicate in the official language of any peacekeeping operations<sup>14</sup>. The shortcomings of English-speaking personnel have made for some difficulties such as an inability to liaise with NGOs, local populations or other mission partners.<sup>15</sup> Battalion staff officers should have an in-depth knowledge of the English language and international law as they must constantly interact with United Nations and local police officers, exchange

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 27.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 30.

<sup>11</sup> Sudantribune, "Mongolian president visits peacekeeping forces South Sudan," last accessed 11 Oct 2018, <http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article45561>.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> D. Ariunbold. LTC, "Why has Mongolia Chosen...", 30.

<sup>14</sup> Mendee Jargalsaikhan, Col, "Mongolia's Peacekeeping Commitment," (National Defence - Intelligence College, Discussion Paper Number Fifteen, Washington DC, 2007), 18.

<sup>15</sup> B.Bayarmagnai. LTC, "Challenges facing Mongolia's..." 14.

information, and work with English documentation. It is important to identify who needs what language training well in advance of any deployment.

### **Training Exercises**

13. The MAF has hosted the peacekeeping exercise Khaan Quest, which is Mongolia's largest annual multinational exercise. The Mongolian Armed Forces considers this exercise to be its most important annual military training event, providing an opportunity for the country to showcase its capacity to play a key role in regional peace support operations. The MAF has also used these international peace support exercises to increase their cadre of skilled soldiers<sup>16</sup>.

14. The purpose of this training is to exercise with multinational peacekeepers and increase the overall ability to successfully conduct and support an UN peacekeeping mission. A Mongolian battalion conducts this exercise as part of their pre-deployment training prior to deploying to South Sudan. The battalion staff, mostly operation level officers, conduct command post exercises with, platoons, and squads conducting field training exercises. It gives all participants a perspective of the big picture of the UNMISS peacekeeping operation, including lessons learned from previous rotations.

15. There are several training objectives during the pre-deployment exercises. It provides soldiers with a South Sudan threat brief in order to present the threats faced by peacekeepers and provide a realistic appreciation of the environment in which peace support operations will be conducted. The training scenario provides a mission objective and gives participants an opportunity to conduct a dismounted patrol in a high threat environment.

16. During pre-deployment training, Mongolian troops practice securing a site and protecting civilian populations. Soldiers operate a check point, traffic control point and conduct operations to ensure the safety of the local populace. They also secure a humanitarian designated site in accordance with the rule of engagement (ROE) and UN mandate<sup>17</sup>. They conduct convoy escort operations along a designated route, react to contact and protect coalition forces and civilian population. Soldiers practice protecting vulnerable groups such as women, children and targeted groups. Soldiers improve their knowledge of the international interoperability and military readiness and develop common tactics, techniques and procedures. Deploying in a specific mission area should be complemented with specialized training to prepare troops for specific threats<sup>18</sup>. The pre-deployment training provided the Mongolian battalion the experience necessary to ensure success in South Sudan.

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<sup>16</sup> B.Bayarmagnai. LTC, "Challenges facing Mongolia's...", 10.

<sup>17</sup> Mongolian 7<sup>th</sup> Battalion, "Монгол Улсын VII ээлжийн мотобуудлагын батальоны ажиллагааны туршлага, сургамж" (Mongolian 7<sup>th</sup> Battalion's experience and lesson learned report,) 2018,

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

## Supporting the Community

17. Every Mongolian battalion rotation in South Sudan interacted with local populations and governmental organizations. The MAF completed numerous projects with locals such as, rehabilitating and renovations of local schools<sup>19</sup> and hospitals<sup>20</sup>, enabling better health services and education for locals. Also female peacekeepers organized some programs with local school girls encouraging them to be good citizens and giving them hope for the future<sup>21</sup>.

18. MAF peacekeepers protected and assisted in the distribution of humanitarian assistance such as food, clean water, shelter, and healthcare to millions of displaced people in South Sudan. The goal was to create a safe and accessible community for people to return to. The mission included monitoring and reporting on human rights violations and violence, especially on vulnerable groups, such as women, children and those susceptible to sexual and gender-based violence. The purpose of this mission was to establish long-term peace in South Sudan. It does so at the national and subnational levels, with political, religious, traditional and community leaders, as well as at the grassroots level with communities and individuals across the country.

19. To support the peace process, the MAF uses its competent forces to safeguard peace, creates conditions for assistance, and monitors and investigates human rights abuses. The peacekeepers from Mongolia prosecute the people who are kidnapping and trafficking victims. Supporting the local communities and government was essential to securing peace in the area.

### What they said about Mongolian battalion.

20. The head of UNMISS, David Shearer, stated “Mongolian peacekeepers have led the way in terms of a robust UN force in South Sudan.” David Shearer also ended his special message saying that “Mongolia’s female peacekeepers are critical because they reduce the chances of sexual exploitation and abuse. They empower women in local communities; provide a greater sense of security for women and act as role models”<sup>22</sup>.

21. It is important to know that the influence of Mongolian military on peacekeeping operations goes beyond the soldier’s numbers and deployment percentages<sup>23</sup>. António Guterres, UN Secretary General said that as Mongolian peacekeepers are highly valued for their skills and competency among international

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<sup>19</sup> United Nations Mission In South Sudan, “UNMISS News,” last accessed 20 Oct 2018, <https://unmiss.unmissions.org/mongolian-peacekeepers-rehabilitate-school-pariang-county-unity-state>.  
<https://unmiss.unmissions.org/unmiss-completes-renovation-pariang-primary-school>.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., <https://unmiss.unmissions.org/unmiss-monbatt-renovates-hospital-bentiu>.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., <https://unmiss.unmissions.org/search/node/Mongolian%20battalion?page=2>.

<sup>22</sup> Asia by Africa, Jeremy Luedi, “How Mongolia is changing peacekeeping in Africa and beyond,” last accessed 14 Oct 2018, <https://www.asiabyafrica.com/point-a-to-a/mongolia-peacekeeping-changing-africa>.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.



soldiers, the UN will support the proposals forwarded by the Mongolian Prime Minister in all spheres<sup>24</sup>.

22. The former head of UNMISS, Hilde F. Johnson said “We are really pleased with the troops’ performance, we think it’s great that the President is coming to visit them and support them<sup>25</sup>”. Colonel Bat-Erdene Batkhuu as the 6<sup>th</sup> rotation battalion commander has said:

The peacekeepers had taken strong action to maintain a safe and secure environment for the people of South Sudan. That action included rescuing approximately 50 internally displaced people from attempted abduction, preventing the harassment of women and children at a nearby farm, and robustly defending the Protection of Civilian site when a large crowd of youths tried to breach the perimeter<sup>26</sup>.

### **Possible lessons relevant to Canadian troops in Mali.**

23. Today the Canadian Armed Forces contingent is involved in UN peacekeeping operations in Mali, and its role is somewhat different from Mongolian battalion in the UNMISS Operation. However, the lessons learned by the MAF in South Sudan still can be applied.

24. Since many Canadian soldiers are bi-lingual, Canada will not have the same difficulties as Mongolia in communicating during their deployment in Mali. However, Canada should consider other potential peacekeeping locations for future operations and they should start language training early. For example, in Middle East’s population mostly speak Arabic language and in eastern and south eastern Africa, they speak Swahili as a local language<sup>27</sup>.

25. Also multinational peacekeeping exercises are important to increase the cadre of trained soldiers. For instance the MAF conducts the peacekeeping exercise to increase the overall ability to successfully conduct and support UN peacekeeping mission. The training exercise conducts both command post and field training exercises providing realistic experiences in peace support operations.

26. Mongolian female peacekeepers significantly increased over the last decade and they have had a significant impact on the conduct of peacekeeping operations. Increasing women’s participation is not only a matter of gender equality but also increases operational effectiveness. Increasing the percentage of female participation from zero to five percent has been demonstrated to significantly decrease the incidents of sexual

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<sup>24</sup> Montsamemn, B.Amarjargal, “Prime Minister holds first meeting with UN Chief,” last accessed 14 Oct 2018, <http://montsame.mn/en/read/130045>.

<sup>25</sup> The Niles, Waakhe Simon, “Mongolian President becomes first Asian premier to visit South Sudan,” last accessed 12 Oct 2018, <http://www.theniles.org/en/articles/archive/1701/>.

<sup>26</sup> United Nations Mission In South Sudan, Francesca Mold, “Mongolian peacekeepers awarded UN medal in South Sudan,” last accessed 14 Oct 2018, <https://unmiss.unmissions.org/mongolian-peacekeepers-awarded-un-medal-south-sudan>.

<sup>27</sup> The Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica, “Swahili language,” in Encyclopedia Britannica.

misconducts and abuse<sup>28</sup>. Further, female peacekeepers can often make inroads with female local community members and children in ways their male counterparts cannot.

## **CONCLUSION**

27. The Mongolian battalion throughout the peace support operation in UNMISS has demonstrated their ability to fulfill their commitment to the peace-building process. From the first battalion deployment, the MAF has been collecting and studying overall lessons learned in peace support operations and relating them to upcoming commitments. The MAF is constantly updating its planning process and tactics as it considers future commitments in order to work more effectively with the UN and its allies.<sup>29</sup>

28. The CAF can learn from the MAF's UNMISS experience and lessons learned. Of particular note is the importance of pre-deployment training conducted as a multinational exercise, increasing female peacekeepers, and the requirement to conduct comprehensive language training early. CAF also can learn from MAF's interaction with local population and governmental organizations in support of peace and security.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

29. Recommend Canada consider the following lessons learned from Mongolia's UNMISS:

- a. Increase female Peacekeepers participation during deployments;
- b. Conduct a pre-deployment multinational peacekeeping exercise;
- c. Conduct early and comprehensive language training; and
- d. Plan for developmental opportunities with local communities and governmental organizations.

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<sup>28</sup> Asia by Africa, Jeremy Luedi, "How Mongolia is changing peacekeeping...".

<sup>29</sup> D. Ariunbold. LTC, "Why has Mongolia Chosen...", 36.

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