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INVESTMENT IN INTELLIGENCE GATHERING TECHNOLOGY : A CRUCIAL NEED FOR UN MISSIONS FOR THE PROTECTION OF CIVILIANS

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JCSP 44

Exercise *Solo Flight*

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Introduction

United Nations (UN) Peace Keeping Operations (PKO) is a product of the cold war. Its role has always been to provide diplomatic support to warring parties in order to help resolve conflicts peacefully. Initially, Military Observers and lightly armed soldiers would monitor and report on activities near the border between two states, ensuring that ceasefires were observed. As the cold war ended, the UN shifted from inter-state conflict to intrastate conflicts and civil wars.

As PKO evolved and new challenges are faced, its successes are continually overshadowed by failures. The most notable failures are the significant losses of life from incidents such as the Rwandan genocide in 1994, the Srebrenica Massacre during the Bosnian War in 1995 and, more recently, the ongoing violations of human rights in South Sudan. While there were many contributing factors that lead to the failure in those missions, this paper will focus on the military force and how it can better respond to threats. With attention rightfully being placed on the preservation of human life, there is pressure on the UN to provide a deterrent and, if required, an effective intervention should there be a threat to civilian population. In missions where the Protection of Civilians (POC) can no longer be assured by the host nation, the UN needs to invest in intelligence and information gathering technology in order to enable the Military force to adequately protect civilians within the mission area.

This paper will establish the value of intelligence in PKO and how better information is more effective than bolstering troop strength and capacity, specifically

with regards to POC. It will then discuss Human Intelligence (HUMINT) as the UNs traditional method for gathering information and how lack of infrastructure and political influences can render it ineffective. Finally, it will present technology as a viable force multiplier despite challenges and obstacles. Throughout, the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) will be used as a case study as POC is a primary mandate for that Operation and it highlights many of the challenges discussed in this paper.

Value of Intelligence for POC

The value of information and intelligence cannot be understated in any operation. Historically, for UN PKO, it has certainly been underutilized. With a focus on diplomatic engagement to the peace process and placing the responsibility of protecting civilians firmly onto the host nation, it is understandable why that capability has remained underdeveloped. Increasingly, however, some governments, like South Sudan's, have proven themselves to be unable or unwilling, to provide adequate protection to civilians; even being guilty of human rights violations themselves. As a result, mandates have changed and since 2015, "protection of civilians is a core obligation of the United Nations."[1]

With this obligation comes a responsibility to field a military component capable of protecting civilians where the government is unable. While it would seem intuitive to focus on a larger fighting force with better combat capabilities, a recent inspection looked into protection of civilian incidents and how they were responded to by four of the five

[1] UN Security Council, Letter Dated 16 June 2015 From the Chair of the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations addressed to the Secretary-General, 17 June 2015, S/2015/446, available at https://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/2015/446. Pg 11/104

largest Peace Keeping missions with Protection of Civilian Mandates.[2] It found that military capacity, (such as soldier strength and equipment), and distance from an incident to the nearest base demonstrated no relationship with the mission's response rate.[3] What did matter, according to the inspection, was prior knowledge of the location of potential threat. That is, if the mission had reliable information of where a potential threat was to occur, not only did the probability of a response increase, but the speed of response was also increased by the mission force.[4] This suggests that the most efficient and effective way to enable UN missions to respond to incidents is by enhancing their early warning systems and quality of information received. Therefore, information gathering and intelligence needs to be a focus for capacity building within UN peacekeeping missions with POC mandates.

Inadequacy of Human Intelligence (HUMINT)

HUMINT is a valuable source of intelligence and has historically been the UNs primary source of information gathering.[5] To be successful it necessitates interpersonal contact, requiring UN patrols to visit villages and engage with not only key leaders, but with local men, women, girls and boys as well. According to the Status of Force Agreement (SOFA) between the UN and the Government of The Republic of South Sudan, the UN has "full and unrestricted freedom of movement without delay throughout

[2] These missions were MINUSCA, MINUSMA, MONUSCO and UNAMID between March 2014 to July 2017. This inspection did not include UNMISS

[3] Rahul Sur, Pankaj Verma, & Johannes Hainzinger, (2018, July 30). *Inspection of the Performance of mission' Operational Responses to Protection of Civilians (POC) Related Incidents* (Rep. No. IED-18-010). Office of Internal Oversight Services. Pg 28

[4] Ibid Pg 29

[5] Walter Dorn, (2010). United Nations Peacekeeping Intelligence. *The Oxford Handbook of National Security Intelligence,* 274-295. New York: Oxford University Press. doi:10.1093/oxfordhb/9780195375886.003.0017. Pg 275

South Sudan by the most direct route possible."[6] Despite this, UN military forces and personnel are unable to visit many parts of the country to gather information or show presence. These accessibility challenges, as well as lack of infrastructure, government policy and soldier expertise, greatly reduce the effectiveness of HUMINT in South Sudan.

Several physical barriers exist which prevent UN members from engaging with South Sudan locals. "There are few paved roads, and telecommunications networks are very limited in [South Sudan]."[7] In the rainy season, which runs from mid-April/May to November, patrols on rural dirt roads are impossible for heavy armored vehicles. As such, UN military forces, and by extension all UN patrols requiring force protection, are confined to areas in close proximity to their base. State Support Bases are located in the vicinity of a major towns or cities, making local patrols into these population centers a standard daily activity. However, the quality of information collected during these local patrols in urban areas have two critical issues regarding rural areas: first, the information and details tend to be erroneous due to being passed on second/third hand. This often necessitates the planning of a patrol in order to verify and further investigate the incident. Secondly, if the incident is related to Protection of Civilians, it is too late for meaningful military intervention as the information is often collected well after an incident has occurred.

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[6] The Status of Force Agreement (SOFA), United Nations and the Government of The Republic of South Sudan, 8 August 2011, retrieved from https://unmiss.unmissions.org/status-forces-agreements-sofa, Pg 4

[7] Lauren Spink (2018, November). Data-Driven Protection: Linking Threat Analysis to Planning in UN Peacekeeping Operations [Center for Civilians in Conflict (CIVIC)]. Civiliansinconflict.org.

Interaction with locals in the rural communities is therefore essential and if face to face is not possible, then other means, such as voice and text, must be employed. In South Sudan, these means are also ineffective for gathering HUMINT in both quality and quantity. Cell phone providers have poor coverage throughout the country and is unreliable, particularly in rural areas. The South Sudan government recently shut down network provider Vivacell over a licensing dispute, leaving nearly one million subscribers without cell phone service.[8] Satellite phones are more reliable, but are only affordable to the wealthy or state officials. As such, satellite phones are used for coordination and passage of official information and are less useful for gathering meaningful HUMINT of sufficient quantity.

The most feasible option for UN personnel to show presence and acquire HUMINT in rural areas for almost eight months of the year is to utilize airlift. However, despite the SOFA, airlift is very controlled and subject to manipulation by both government and rebel Sudan People's Liberation Movement-in-Opposition (SPLA-iO) forces. Flight Safety Assurances (FSA) are required to be obtained from Government and/or SPLA-iO forces for every UN flight. If the FSA is not obtained, due to a failure to reach in individual by phone or one of the two organizations refusing to provide that safety assurance, the flight is not released by UN Air operations. This policy came into effect after UN helicopters were shot down in 2012 and 2014.[9] Although the policy was meant to ensure that UN air assets were not ‘mistaken as hostile’, it has two operational

[8] David M. Mayar (2018, March 30). South Sudan Dispute with Mobile Firm Disrupts Service. Retrieved May 25, 2019, from https://www.voanews.com/a/south-sudan-dispute-with-vivacell-telecom-firm-draws-static/4324125.html

[9] Lisa Sharland & Aditi Gorur (2015, December 15). Revising the UN Peacekeeping Mandate In South Sudan: Maintaining Focus on the Protection of Civilians [The Stimson Center and The Australian Strategic Policy Institute]. Pg 12

impacts. The first is that all planned movements are communicated to both warring parties well in advance of the patrol. In effect, this gives warring parties complete visibility on where UN forces will be and what they are doing on any given day. The second impact is that both sides can deny access to an area, simply by not providing safety assurances. The warring parties will argue that there was no SOFA violation as the UN was not forbidden to travel, just that the safety of the patrol cannot be guaranteed. The impact, however, is the same – the patrol is denied access to that planned area.

The final issue with HUMINT gathering in South Sudan is the preparedness and effectiveness of UN soldiers for mission. From a field study on South Sudan, "there was a quite clear sense that some troops had a reputation for effectiveness while others did not."[10] This statement is regarding overall soldier posture and performances from contingents of various contributing nations. In addition to this, the majority of "UNMISS' troops are infantry battalions with limited capacities to extend far beyond the POC sites."[11] The impact is a disparity within the military force of soldier effectiveness and a distinct lack of specific training for UN military members on HUMINT gathering. Canada offers specialized training for source handling. The entry process is challenging and competitive and requires "candidates to think "outside the box", as well as demonstrate maturity, superior cognitive skills, strong interpersonal qualities and leadership."[12] There is an entire skill set that needs to be learned, practiced and honed to

[10] Day, A. (n.d.). *Assessing the Effectiveness of the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS)* (Rep. No. Report 2/2019). Oslo, Norway: Norwegian Institute of International Affairs. ISBN: 978-82-7002-345-5. Pg 19

[11] Ibid Pg 62

[12] National Defence. (2018, July 06). Joint Task Force X conducts HUMINT operations. Retrieved May 25, 2019, from http://www.forces.gc.ca/en/news/article.page?doc=joint-task-force-x-conducts-humint-operations/inbg2b17

help members identify/recruit reliable sources and to draw out pertinent information. Therefore, even if the infrastructure and local government policy challenges were mitigated, the UN military would still struggle to acquire meaningful HUMINT in order to affect their POC mandate.

Technological Solution

The inconsistency of soldier preparedness, training and overall effectiveness is not new to PKO. In the United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR), Force Commander, (then BGen Roméo Dallaire), praised the contingents of some contributing nations, but also noted that others were there "simply to gain on-the-job training."[13] There is no indication that this trend will change in the foreseeable future. Therefore, since the quality of soldiers will depend on the contributing nations and enhancing early warning systems and quality of information better enables UN forces to respond to POC incidents, (vice troop strength and equipment), the UN should invest in information gathering technology, despite potential obstacles in doing so.

The benefits to implementing sense technology are succinctly listed out in a paper promoting a tech-enabled UN, by Walter A. Dorn, (who has written extensively on the topic):

> They increase the range and accuracy of observation; permit continuous monitoring (at night and in daylight); increase effectiveness of deployed units (including cost effectiveness, in some cases); decrease obtrusiveness, because UN staff need not be continuously present (thus enhancing staff safety as well); and

[13] Roméo Dallaire, "Command Experiences in Rwanda." Chap. 4 in *The Human in Command: Exploring the Modern Military Experience*, edited by Carol McCann and Ross Pigeau, 29-50. New York: Plenum Publishers, 2000. Pg 42

provide recordings that can be used for later analysis and as evidence in criminal tribunals.[14]

The technology listed in the cited paper are readily available and at varying degrees of cost effectiveness. High-resolution satellite imagery from one commercial provider is listed at approximately $50 USD for a new task request.[15] The use of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) is already standard equipment for most conventional militaries and civilian models are extremely common. Although the UN has not fully embraced this specific enabler, UN Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations Hervé Ladsous, says that the deployment of UAVs in the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) has been successful and that drones are enabling the UN to protect civilians.[16] During that mission, UAVs "spotted illegal checkpoints and illicit mining, surveyed destroyed villages, located rebel camps, and determined the presence of weaponry."[17] They also provided real time monitoring during combat operations including providing soldiers on the ground with imagery.[18]

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[14] A. Walter Dorn, "Smart Peacekeeping: Toward Tech-Enabled UN Operations," New York: International Peace Institute, July 2016. Pg 5

[15] Land Info-World Wide Mapping LLC. Buying Satellite Imagery: Pricing Information for High Resolution Satellite Imagery. (n.d.). Retrieved May 25, 2019, from http://www.landinfo.com/satellite-imagery-pricing.html

[16] Masimba Tafirenyika, (2016, April 15). Drones are effective in protecting civilians | Africa Renewal. Retrieved May 25, 2019, from https://www.un.org/africarenewal/magazine/april-2016/drones-are-effective-protecting-civilians

[17] A. Walter Dorn, "Smart Peacekeeping: Toward Tech-Enabled UN Operations," New York: International Peace Institute, July 2016. Pg 7

[18] Ibid Pg 7

Table 1 lists some of the mission tasks associated with UNMISS, whose primary mandate is POC, along with enabling technologies that are widely used in modern conventional militaries. These technologies are appropriate for peace-keeping operations because they are overt and un-intrusive. For good reason, the UN needs to remain a neutral and unbiased participant in any intervening conflict. It cannot be seen as favoring one side over the other, and it cannot be seen as an intelligence gatherer for any warring party or other contributing nation. These technologies do not blur those responsibilities but provide much more value than what is currently being obtained through HUMINT.

Monitoring	Protecting	Detection	Tracking
Real time or processed surveillance in locations where Peace-Keepers are unable to travel to or provide a sustained presence. Will also augment existing base security measures	Provide protection to civilians and UN members through early warning, especially at night where belligerent movement is more likely.	Location of weapons caches, belligerent movements and battle areas and mass graves.	Accurate population tracking, movement of UN members, civilians and belligerents.
Lighting, movement detectors in and around POCs, mounted cameras, air balloons with cameras over static points such as bases/Ops.	IR and thermal imaging optical devices, UAVs, other armed airframes with surveillance pods.	Ground surveillance and ground penetrating radar, audio detection devices.	GPS, aerial or satellite photo comparison for population density.

Table 1. The kinds of technology that could assist a mission like UNMISS with their peace-keeping tasks[19]

[19] Ibid Pg 8 -Figure 2. Relevant tasks and associated technology from the electromagnetic spectrum were extracted from this graphic for this paper with minor edits in terms of additions.

According to Walter Dorn, prohibited, or black, methods are covert in nature and are seen as infringing on reasonable expectations of privacy and matters of state sovereignty. Black methods include use of stolen documents and devices, paid or undercover/disguised agents, and intrusion into telecommunications without warrant.[20] Table 1 is generally considered 'white,' or permitted forms of information gathering, within UN PKO.[21] Most are enhanced or assisted visual observations, (from the air/space and sight beyond the visual spectrum), and sensors in terms of video, acoustic and radar recordings. These methods use passive and active observation throughout the mission area, which the UN already has the mandate to carry out, only without soldiers looking through binoculars or driving through an area. It simply allows UN members to see and detect well beyond what is currently observable from their bases.

There are operational challenges with new assets, (such as funding, availability training and interoperability), and then there are actual obstacles. This is not to minimize the impact of operational challenges, but they will be overcome so long as there is political will. The political will, then, is the real obstacle for implementing any new technology within UN missions. The UN Security Council recommended the deployment of UAVs and gunships in South Sudan in 2015, based on the success of UAVs in the Congo in 2013. The South Sudan government rejected the proposal and blocked their deployment, which they were able to do since "the mission requires the collaboration and cooperation from the host authorities for its operations, including air and aviation ones."[22]

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[20] Ibid Pg 8 -Figure 2

[21] Walter Dorn, (2010). United Nations Peacekeeping Intelligence. *The Oxford Handbook of National Security Intelligence,* 274-295. New York: Oxford University Press. doi:10.1093/oxfordhb/9780195375886.003.0017. Pg 280

[22] Cara Anna (2015, October 9). UN Security Council wants peacekeeping drones in South Sudan, which rejects them. Retrieved May 26, 2019, from

The government's official rationale for denying the use of UAVs and gunships was the potential for these assets to cause "disagreement and hostility"[23] within the country and between the warring parties. It is worth noting that government, as well as rebel forces, have been implicated in human rights violations throughout the conflict.[24] Given the government's SOFA violations, this is perhaps an effort to impede the UNs ability to effect their mandate and allow government forces the freedom of movement they have been enjoying to date.

South Sudan's refusal to allow UAVs appears to be an act of self-preservation by the government and government forces. However, the most significant obstacle, mentioned by Walter Dorn, is how the sharing of information is to be managed.[25] As it stands for UNMISS, information acquisition through HUMINT is poor. Arguably, any information that is reported to UN is controlled to some degree by the parties involved in the conflict. If these new capacities were to be deployed tomorrow, the UN would immediately have a well-defined assessment of troop location and disposition for both warring parties throughout the country. It may not be prudent to share that information with warring parties of an active conflict, as that information would likely be exploited. Therefore, the method of sharing that information, and what to share, needs to be

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https://www.usnews.com/news/world/articles/2015/10/09/un-wants-peacekeeping-drones-in-south-sudan-which-objects

[23] Ibid

[24] Day, A. (2019). *Assessing the Effectiveness of the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS)* (Rep. No. REPORT 2/2019). Oslo, Norway: Norwegian Institute of International Affairs. ISBN: 978-82-7002-345-5. Pg 41

[25] Walter Dorn. (2013). *Keeping Watch Monitoring Technology and Innovation in UN Peace Operations*. Erscheinungsort nicht ermittelbar: United Nations. Pg 182. Dorn lists several challenges in this book, but as this technology continues to become more readily available, economic and accepted by the public, those challenges will become increasingly less significant. The agreements with host nation, however, will be the deal breaker for employment of any technology.

established well ahead of time. This would be negotiated; however, it would be an ongoing point of contention between UN and the warring parties. Accusations of favoring one side of the conflict are already a common occurrence in UN missions. The ability to acquire much more sensitive information, with the added potential for mishandling that information, mistrust would surely intensify.

Conclusion

The deployment of intelligence and information gathering technology in UN missions is not without controversy. However, if you accept that POC is a core obligation of the UN, then you must also accept that this technology is essential in situations where the government has failed to protect their citizens from the atrocities of war. UNMISS is an excellent example where a government is failing its population and traditional UN information gathering is simply ineffective. With augmented technology, monitoring and early detecting will improve as the cited investigation demonstrated, the UN will respond more quickly and more effectively, thereby providing better protection to civilians with existing troop strength and equipment.

The real dilemma is how far the UN should push to have these technologies deployed. If it chose to, the UN could issue an ultimatum to the host nation that these tools are required to fulfill the mandate; accept their deployment or the UN does not accept the mission. There is incentive for the host nation to accept as not only would they lose out on diplomatic and political support, but a significant amount of financial support and aide that comes with a UN deployment. If the host nation refuses, however, civilians have no protection. Even in UNMISS, where human rights violations are rampant, the UN is providing protection and aide to hundreds of thousands of people who would

otherwise be at the mercy of the warring parties. Is it better to have an ill-equipped force that protects some, or risk being outed and leaving people to their fate?

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