

## PROTECTING CIVILIANS ON THE GROUND: MONUC AND THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

*I don't think [I feel] guilt. Maybe there could be feelings of impotence, because when you have a gun and know how to use it...it is natural, you want to use it. When you see a group committing such atrocities, you feel rage.*

- Lt. Col. Waldemar Fontes,  
former executive officer of Uruguayan peacekeepers in the DRC,  
discussing his troops' inability to halt atrocities in Bunia in April  
and May of 2003<sup>399</sup>

The Democratic Republic of the Congo provides a rich case study of efforts by third-party intervention forces for civilian protection. The deployment of MONUC, the United Nations Organization Mission in the DRC in 1999, the intervention of a French-led EU force in mid-2003, and the continuing MONUC mission demonstrate evolving interpretations of what the charge to “protect civilians” means for peacekeeping forces. MONUC has changed dramatically, developing from a small observer mission with a mandate to protect civilians—but without a capacity to do so—into the UN’s largest and most robust operation for which civilian protection is a central purpose.

MONUC also demonstrates multiple concepts of civilian protection: as support to humanitarian space; as a task for UN peacekeepers; and (nearly) as a central goal for military forces. MONUC highlights the challenges for operations that begin under-staffed and ill-equipped, and become widely dispersed across a remote, austere, and volatile region. MONUC further demonstrates issues of protection when peacekeepers operate with differing understandings of their mandate and ROE, with national caveats and varying preparation, with dissimilar views on the use of force, and with mandates that shift from Chapter VI to Chapter VII. Fundamentally, the DRC case illustrates the enormous difficulties of addressing a humanitarian crisis during ongoing civil conflict, where UN forces are drawn into a gray area between peacekeeping and warfighting.

---

<sup>399</sup> “Uruguayan Peacekeepers Faced Trouble in Bunia,” *The Wall Street Journal*, 1 October 2003.

The DRC is certainly an extreme environment for peacekeeping—indeed, for trying to protect anyone. The challenges are a violent storm of conflict, geography, poverty, and state failure. The International Rescue Committee has estimated that nearly four million civilians have died as a result of warfare since August 1998, the most devastating death toll in any armed conflict since World War II.<sup>400</sup> The war has engulfed not just the massive DRC, but has crossed its

---

*The DRC is an extreme environment for peacekeeping – indeed, for trying to protect anyone. The challenges are a violent storm of conflict, geography, poverty, and state failure.*

---

borders into neighboring countries.<sup>401</sup>

The DRC has few passable roads and little infrastructure, a plethora of exploitable and valuable commodities, multiple rebel groups, influential and difficult neighbors, and a dysfunctional government with limited authority outside the capital. In the east, for example, Rwanda and Uganda have sought control over the boundary areas, exploited the DRC's

natural resources, and backed or opposed different armed groups in the country, resulting in much chaos.<sup>402</sup>

In some sense, the DRC may be in the “too hard” category for civilian protection—peacekeepers face an environment where consent is partial, governance is limited, spoilers are rife, and the political commitment to peace is low. One UN official aptly called the DRC mission not peacekeeping but “conflict peacebuilding.”<sup>403</sup>

Yet MONUC's experiences illustrate some elements of civilian protection and its requirements. The mission also demonstrates the beginnings of an innovative strategy to integrate differing approaches within an operation, including coercive protection. The question of baseline capacity arises first. A lack of capacity has limited what the UN mission could do to protect people. With ongoing insecurity in the DRC, consent-based, non-interventionist methods of protecting civilians proved largely ineffective, and MONUC initially had insufficient troop

---

<sup>400</sup> Coghlan et al., “Mortality in the Democratic Republic of Congo: a nationwide survey,” *Lancet*, 44-51.

<sup>401</sup> The third-largest nation in Africa, the DRC nearly equals Western Europe in size with a 10,730-kilometer border with nine states. Its poor infrastructure requires cross-country travel by air and limits access to remote areas.

<sup>402</sup> UN Security Council, *Report of the Panel of Experts on the Illegal Exploitation of Natural Resources and Other Forms of Wealth of the Democratic Republic of the Congo*, S/2001/357, 12 April 2001.

<sup>403</sup> Fourth GCSP Workshop for Peace Operations, “Pursuing Security in the Post-Conflict Phase,” Geneva Center for Security Policy, Geneva, Switzerland, 12-13 June 2005. More civilians have died in the DRC concurrent with a UN peacekeeping operation than in any other country.

strength, equipment, and firepower to engage in coercive protection. Second, MONUC needed conceptual clarity as to the meaning and scope of its protection mandate. Mission leadership did not start with a coherent strategic framework for civilian protection and for how much force the mission should exercise. After years of struggling, MONUC has begun to develop and implement such a framework.

Third is the issue of military willingness and preparedness. Even as MONUC evolved into a Chapter VII operation with more troops and improved military materiel, its forces lacked a common understanding of the mandate and ROE, and consistent willingness to engage in offering physical protection to those at risk. In many cases, troops arrived unaware of the difficult in-country environment, uninformed of their mandate to protect civilians, and unprepared for the tasks ahead. It took years for able, well-trained forces to be deployed in respectable numbers to the DRC's volatile eastern provinces, and to operate with a concept of their protection responsibilities. The EU-authorized *Operation Artemis*, on the other hand, was prepared, willing and able to operate in a hostile environment, and quickly established security in its limited area of operations.

---

*MONUC demonstrates the issues that arise when peacekeepers engage in coercive protection, such as compelling armed groups to stop threatening the population.*

---

Finally, MONUC demonstrates the issues that arise when peacekeepers engage in coercive protection, such as compelling armed groups to stop threatening the population. Some recent MONUC activities fall in a gray area between traditional peacekeeping and “peacemaking,” which is more closely associated with warfighting. The mission’s robust posture has also complicated other aspects of its work. As MONUC has pushed militia to disarm or join the new Congolese integrated army (the FARDC), the FARDC itself has become a threat to civilians. MONUC’s cordon-and-search operations have limited the capacity and movement of armed groups, but have also led to reprisal killings of civilians, reduced NGO willingness to cooperate with the UN mission, and raised accusations of human rights abuses by UN personnel.<sup>404</sup> These are consequences of taking coercive action, and MONUC’s experience shows that

---

<sup>404</sup> UN General Assembly, *A Comprehensive Strategy to Eliminate Future Sexual Exploitation and Abuse in United Nations Peacekeeping Operations*, A/59/710, United Nations, 24 March 2005. Tragically, MONUC forces and civilian personnel have threatened civilians and sexually abused and exploited Congolese women and girls, a topic explored in-depth in other analyses.

these issues need to be addressed both in the DRC and for any peacekeeping mission or intervention force.

In such situations, the ability of outside parties with limited resources to protect large numbers of vulnerable civilians remains far from certain. Mission leaders and peacekeepers must be cognizant of the challenges and tradeoffs involved with various protection strategies. This chapter offers a basic history of peacekeeping in the DRC since 1999, analyzes how peacekeepers tried to protect civilians, and evaluates their relative success in doing so. It focuses on mission strategy and preparation—the concepts, mandates, rules of engagement, and training that the operations utilized, or failed to utilize, to protect civilians in the field.

### **1999-2005: THE UN FORCE AND PEACE IMPLEMENTATION EFFORTS IN THE DRC**

On July 10, 1999, the DRC, Angola, Namibia, Rwanda, and Uganda signed the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement, bringing the war in the DRC to a close, at least on paper. The African-led agreement, facilitated by the Southern African Development Community and President Frederick Chiluba of Zambia, requested a Chapter VII UN peacekeeping force “to ensure implementation of this Agreement; and taking into account the peculiar situation of the DRC, mandate the peacekeeping force to track down all armed groups in the DRC.”<sup>405</sup>

This call for a robust peacekeeping force caught the United Nations off guard. The international community was skeptical about the Congolese parties’ commitment to peace and aware of the massive difficulties of bringing stability to the DRC. There was a general view that the UN did not “own” the agreement and thus was not responsible for its implementation. “The Congo file started in Africa, not in the United Nations,” one diplomat complained. “The Lusaka Agreement called for UN forces. They didn’t know what they were writing. The UN wasn’t there. The UN came in with a framework that wasn’t theirs.”<sup>406</sup> Further, recruiting peacekeepers to disarm forces is a tough assignment. “It would be difficult, if not impossible, to identify troop contributing countries willing to contribute contingents to be deployed in eastern DRC for forcible disarmament of groups accused of genocide and other serious crimes against humanity, at least in sufficient numbers and with a sufficiently robust mandate,” explained a UN official.<sup>407</sup>

---

<sup>405</sup> *Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement*, 10 July 1999, text available at the US Institute of Peace website, [www.usip.org/library/pa/drc/drc\\_07101999.html](http://www.usip.org/library/pa/drc/drc_07101999.html).

<sup>406</sup> Clifford Bernath and Anne Edgerton, *MONUC: Flawed Mandate Limits Success* (Washington, DC: Refugees International, May 2003), 5.

<sup>407</sup> Peter Swarbrick, “DDRRR: Political dynamics and linkages,” in Malan and Porto, eds., *Challenges of Peace Implementation*, 166. Swarbrick has headed MONUC’s DDRRR Division.

Yet many believed the UN could encourage reconciliation and provide relief to the suffering Congolese population. Officials such as Ambassador Richard Holbrooke, the US Permanent Representative to the UN, urged a graduated approach to peacekeeping in the DRC, beginning with a small observation force to report, act as liaisons, and support the negotiations. As the parties demonstrated their commitment to peace, the UN force could expand, reflecting a parallel commitment by the international community.<sup>408</sup>

The Security Council authorized a small deployment of 90 military liaisons in August 1999, and up to 5,537 military personnel in February 2000—far short of the African request for 15,000 to 20,000 troops.<sup>409</sup> MONUC was to deploy in three phases, with the arrival of forces contingent on local actions. In Phase I, a small team liaised with the warring parties and planned for the arrival of military observers. In Phase II, 500 military observers deployed, supported by roughly 5,000 peacekeepers, to monitor and report on the disengagement of the warring parties. In Phase III, MONUC was to embark on a Disarmament, Demobilization, Repatriation, Resettlement and Reintegration program (DDRRR) and oversee the withdrawal of foreign forces. Each phase depended on the parties adhering to the peace process. Later MONUC developed further phases, including the deployment of combat-capable forces in the east.

This approach frustrated many by allowing parties with no interest in peace to set the pace of UN deployment. It also assumed incorrectly that armed groups would disarm voluntarily. The strategy reflected the Council's caution about creating an expensive and controversial peace enforcement mission, especially in such a difficult neighborhood where its permanent five members had few direct national interests. As a result, the UN reacted to events on the ground, rather than shaped them. The Council expanded MONUC's capacity in response to atrocities, rather than to reward progress towards peace.

Even with a Chapter VII clause in its mandate to “protect civilians under imminent threat of physical violence,” MONUC initially behaved more like a Chapter VI observer mission, using force only in self defense and doing little to physically protect civilians.<sup>410</sup> In May 2002, soldiers from RCD-Goma (one of the largest Congolese rebel groups, supported by Rwanda) responded to an

---

<sup>408</sup> Others took issue with this approach, arguing that either that UN forces should have come in stronger or that the peace plan should have more squarely addressed the presence of foreign forces.

<sup>409</sup> S/Res/1258, 6 August 1999 and S/Res/1291, 24 February 2000.

<sup>410</sup> The call to “protect civilians under imminent threat of physical violence” was first included in Security Council Resolution 1291 of 24 February 2000. Yet many referred to MONUC as a Chapter VI mission until Council Resolution 1493 in 2003, including MONUC sector leaders. Lawrence Smith, “MONUC's military involvement in the eastern Congo (Maniema and the Kivus),” in Malan and Porto, eds., *Challenges of Peace Implementation*, 233.

attempted mutiny by massacring civilians in Kisangani, the DRC's third-largest city. MONUC had roughly 1,000 troops and dozens of military observers in the city, but declined to oppose the massacres forcefully or send patrols to deter abuses.<sup>411</sup> The events in Kisangani reportedly led to some of the first discussions in the UN DPKO on the meaning of civilian protection as a military task for MONUC, its implications for ROE, and the suitability and willingness of MONUC contingents to carry out interventions.<sup>412</sup>

## Emergency in Ituri

A May 2003 crisis erupted in the Ituri province that significantly impacted MONUC, its mandate, and its willingness to use force. Fighting between the Hema and Lendu tribes began in Ituri in 1999 over a land dispute. The presence of Ugandan forces in the region exacerbated tensions and clashes grew as the conflict in the DRC wore on. In September 2000, the DRC and Uganda signed the Luanda Agreement, which called for the withdrawal of Ugandan forces (the UPDF) from northeastern DRC within three months. The UPDF began to withdraw in late April 2003 and pulled out its 7,000 troops from Ituri in less than two weeks, leaving a dangerous security vacuum.<sup>413</sup>

MONUC was unprepared for the speedy Ugandan exit. Only 712 Uruguayan troops, trained primarily for guard duty, had arrived in Ituri by the time the Ugandans withdrew.<sup>414</sup> Hema and Lendu militias acted quickly, creating chaos. Lendu militias invaded Bunia, murdering Hema and pillaging their houses. The Uruguayan troops tried to set up roadblocks and conduct patrols, but soon abandoned these efforts as futile.<sup>415</sup> The Union of Congolese Patriots (UPC), a Hema militia, retook Bunia a week later and began its own campaign of abuse against the Lendu. More than 400 people were massacred in two weeks.

---

<sup>411</sup> Suliman Baldo and Peter Bouckaert, *War Crimes in Kisangani: The Response of Rwandan-backed Rebels to the May 2002 Mutiny*, No. 6(A) (Human Rights Watch, August 2002), 2.

<sup>412</sup> Former DPKO military planning official, interview with author, 21 May 2006.

<sup>413</sup> Uganda had expressed willingness to keep its forces in Ituri until the UN deployed, but wanted official Security Council recognition of its presence. The Council, however, did not want to set a precedent of authorizing foreign troops on sovereign Congolese soil.

<sup>414</sup> Peacekeeping Best Practices, *Operation Artemis*, 6.

<sup>415</sup> The International Crisis Group (ICG) describes a week of horror: "During that dreadful week, individuals were killed or kidnapped beside the UN compound. MONUC was asked on several occasions to escort or protect Hema individuals out of dangerous locations to more secure areas, and it either failed to do so, or intervened too late. On 10 May, MONUC was informed of the likely assassination of Nyakasanza's parish priest and other Hema clerics. It refused to intervene or even accompany the vicar-general to the parish after the massacre. On 11 May, a man was kidnapped from the MONUC compound. Uruguayan officers were informed but refused to intervene. The person was then executed 100 metres away. On 11 May MONUC refused to escort to its compound nineteen Catholic seminarians who were under death threat and in hiding." International Crisis Group, *Congo Crisis: Military Intervention in Ituri*, Africa Report no. 64 (ICG, 13 June 2003), 12.

MONUC was barely able to protect its own personnel, let alone the population of Bunia.

Despite their small numbers, the Uruguayans in Bunia protected some civilians. When the violence began, around 10,000 people flooded the Bunia airport and about 6,000 went to MONUC sector headquarters.<sup>416</sup> MONUC troops refused to abandon these locations during the crisis, guarding the civilians in their care,

---

*More than 400 people were massacred in two weeks. MONUC was barely able to protect its own personnel, let alone the population of Bunia.*

---

facilitating the delivery of food aid and other supplies, and securing the airport to support future use by MONUC and relief organizations. In August 2003, 11,000 civilians remained at the Bunia airport camp. Many of these civilians would surely have perished without protection and support from MONUC.

## Operation Artemis and MONUC's Ituri Brigade

In response to a request by Secretary-General Annan, France volunteered to lead an Interim Emergency Multinational Force (IEMF) to establish security in Bunia, provided that other nations offer troops, that the EU lead it, and that the mission be organized under Chapter VII. The resulting *Operation Artemis* deployed under an EU flag with 1,400 troops and a Chapter VII mandate to “contribute to the stabilization of the security conditions and the improvement of the humanitarian situation in Bunia, to ensure the protection of the airport, the internally displaced persons in the camps in Bunia and, if the situation requires it, to contribute to the safety of the civilian population” in “close coordination with MONUC.”<sup>417</sup> The IEMF was to serve as a stop-gap, buying time to build up MONUC forces and establish security in Ituri. The first French soldiers arrived in the region on June 6, 2003. The EU force reached its full strength by mid-July, and handed its responsibilities back to MONUC in September 2003.<sup>418</sup>

---

<sup>416</sup> Peacekeeping Best Practices, *Operation Artemis*, 7.

<sup>417</sup> S/Res/1484, 30 May 2003.

<sup>418</sup> Future of Peace Operations program, *Review of European Union Field Operations*, Peace Operations Fact Sheet Series (Washington, DC: The Henry L. Stimson Center, March 2004), 4, [www.stimson.org/fopo/?SN=FP20020610372](http://www.stimson.org/fopo/?SN=FP20020610372).

The IEMF was authorized to protect IDPs and provide security for civilians only within the town of Bunia. “It is obvious that if we were to go out beyond Bunia to cover the risks in all of Ituri, we would need a much larger force,” explained a French Defense Ministry spokesman. “The main thing for us is to set objectives that are realistic and in keeping with the means we have.”<sup>419</sup> The force had light armored vehicles, observation helicopters, and French air support from Mirage

---

*During Operation Artemis, the UN rotated new troops into Ituri and the Kivu provinces who were prepared to use force to protect civilians.*

---

2000 fighter jets based in Uganda. It quickly established its authority in Bunia, enforced a “weapons-free zone,” and responded aggressively to UPC provocations.<sup>420</sup> One skirmish with the UPC reportedly killed 20 militiamen.<sup>421</sup> The IEMF cut off some weapons shipments into Bunia by monitoring secondary and field airstrips, and running vehicle patrols.

As a sign of the IEMF’s success at protecting civilians in its area of operation, thousands of IDPs returned to Bunia from June to August 2003. Improved security also allowed the political process in Ituri to restart. At the same time, at least sixteen massacres reportedly occurred outside Bunia in Ituri during the IEMF’s three month deployment.<sup>422</sup>

According to one MONUC official, the Ituri crisis caused a “sea change” in the mission’s approach to civilian protection.<sup>423</sup> During *Operation Artemis*, the UN rotated new troops into Ituri and the Kivu provinces who were prepared for the more robust MONUC mandate and to use force to protect civilians. As the IEMF withdrew, the UN organized a brigade-sized force with 4,800 troops, heavy armaments, and combat helicopters. The goal of this new “Ituri Brigade,” stated SRSG Ambassador William Lacy Swing, was “to stop the killing and end the violence, the *sine qua non* for all that follows.”<sup>424</sup> To prepare for the handover, the Security Council increased MONUC’s troop ceiling to 10,800 and authorized it to “take the necessary measures in the areas of deployment of its armed units,” and “within its capabilities”:

---

<sup>419</sup> “Questions about the ‘Artemis’ operations in Congo,” Joint press briefing by F. Rivasseau and J.F. Bureau, Government of France, 13 June 2003.

<sup>420</sup> Henri Boshoff, “Overview of MONUC’s military strategy and concept of operations,” in Malan and Porto, eds., *Challenges of Peace Implementation*, 141.

<sup>421</sup> Peacekeeping Best Practices, *Operation Artemis*, 12.

<sup>422</sup> Forum for Early Warning and Early Response (FEWER), *Ituri: Stakes, Actors, Dynamics* (London: FEWER Secretariat, October 2003).

<sup>423</sup> DPKO official, interview with author, 27 November 2005.

<sup>424</sup> William Lacy Swing, “The role of MONUC and the international community in support of the DRC transition,” in Malan and Porto, eds., *Challenges of Peace Implementation*, preface, x.

- to protect United Nations personnel, facilities, installations, and equipment;
- to ensure the security and freedom of movement of its personnel, including in particular those engaged in missions of observation, verification, or DDRRR;
- to protect civilians and humanitarian workers under imminent threat of physical violence; and
- to contribute to the improvement of the security conditions in which humanitarian assistance is provided.<sup>425</sup>

The mandate further authorized MONUC to “use all necessary means to fulfil its mandate in the Ituri district and, as it deemed within its capacity, in North and South Kivu.” The force was more capable, too. The Ituri Brigade included personnel from Morocco, Bangladesh, Nepal and Pakistan; an Indian aviation unit; and a Bangladeshi and Indonesian engineering unit. Brigadier General Jan Isberg, commander of the Ituri Brigade, confirmed the force’s new capacity and attitude towards its role:

...[T]he brigade’s capacity is enormous. We have all the necessary means—we have helicopters, APCs and the weapons each soldier has. We are capable of countering any attack.... we must act according to our new mandate of Chapter Seven immediately and without hesitation, to be ready to use force when the situation dictates.<sup>426</sup>

The Ituri Brigade established security in Bunia and gradually began to patrol more remote villages, although its impact on security outside Bunia is debatable. In one encounter, a truck full of militia fighters attempted to drive into Bunia, only to be fired upon by a UN surveillance helicopter; three militia members were killed.<sup>427</sup> In another, UN forces found a cache of weapons at UPC political headquarters, and arrested and detained a number of top officials.<sup>428</sup> But some observers criticized the brigade for failing to deal aggressively with armed groups during its first year of deployment. It was not until late 2004 that the brigade truly began to ramp up its use of force.<sup>429</sup>

The increased UN presence in the eastern DRC also improved security for civilians in the Kivus. The new Kivus Brigade conducted high visibility patrols,

---

<sup>425</sup> S/Res/1493, 28 July 2003.

<sup>426</sup> Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN), “DRC: EU calls Artemis operation ‘a big success,’” Brussels, 17 September 2003; quoted in Boshoff, in Malan and Porto, eds., *Challenges of Peace Implementation*, 142.

<sup>427</sup> Amnesty International, *Ituri: a need for protection, a thirst for justice* (Amnesty International, 21 October 2003), [www.amnestyusa.org/icc/document.do?id=71711FE4D330C1C880256DDA00478B0C](http://www.amnestyusa.org/icc/document.do?id=71711FE4D330C1C880256DDA00478B0C).

<sup>428</sup> IRIN, “DRC: Six killed as fighting erupts during protest in Bunia,” 16 September 2003, [www.irinnews.org/report.asp?ReportID=36618&SelectRegion=Great\\_Lakes&SelectCountry=DRC](http://www.irinnews.org/report.asp?ReportID=36618&SelectRegion=Great_Lakes&SelectCountry=DRC).

<sup>429</sup> NGO security analyst in the DRC, interview with author, 27 May 2006.

prompting thousands of IDPs to return home. The population in Kindu, for example, grew from about 20,000 in January 2003 to more than 220,000 in August 2003. When MONUC began foot patrols across the Congo River, it received a heroes' welcome and was "showered with leaves and rice as it passed through the crowds."<sup>430</sup> Col. Lawrence Smith, the Kivus brigade commander, concluded, "The mere presence of peacekeepers does have a stabilizing effect on an area that is suffering the aftermath and effects of war."<sup>431</sup> Nevertheless, civilians in such areas remained at risk. "A spin-off from the active patrolling in areas where human rights abuses and violations are rife," explained Smith, "is the decrease in incidents while patrols are operating in the area, and immediately thereafter. The unfortunate truth is, however, that very soon after a patrol has left an area...abuses and violations start again."<sup>432</sup>

### Crisis in Bukavu

Security in the Kivus started to deteriorate in late 2003 and early 2004. Tensions grew as the former rebel forces from RCD-Goma began to integrate into the FARDC. The UN announced plans to expand the brigade-sized force in the Kivus to 3,500 troops and to redeploy a battalion of Uruguayans to South Kivu.<sup>433</sup>

In the spring of 2004, a crisis rocked Bukavu, the capital of South Kivu, when mutinous FARDC forces occupied the city for a week. Hundreds of civilians were killed in Bukavu, and to the south in Kamanyola, before the renegade forces withdrew under international pressure. At least 2,000 civilians sought shelter at the MONUC compound and more than 30,000 fled to Burundi and Rwanda.<sup>434</sup> Despite a redeployment of UN troops to the Kivus that had begun months earlier, only 800 UN soldiers were in Bukavu at the time of the crisis.<sup>435</sup> Many Congolese were frustrated with the lack of a forceful UN response to the conflict. Large, violent anti-UN protests occurred in Kinshasa and elsewhere.

---

<sup>430</sup> Smith, "MONUC's military involvement in the eastern Congo," in Malan and Porto, eds., *Challenges of Peace Implementation*, 242.

<sup>431</sup> Ibid., 245.

<sup>432</sup> Ibid., 243-244.

<sup>433</sup> UN Security Council, *Fifteenth Secretary-General Report on MONUC*, S/2004/251, 25 March 2004, para. 33.

<sup>434</sup> UN Security Council, *Third Special Report of the Secretary-General on MONUC*, S/2004/650, 16 August 2004, para. 45.

<sup>435</sup> Philip Roessler and John Prendergast, "Democratic Republic of the Congo: The Case of the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC)," in Durch, ed., *21st Century Peace Operations*, 258. The number of UN troops in Bukavu was based on the tasks and general threat assessment. The area had been fairly calm before the Bukavu crisis. Although Bukavu was a UN Sector Headquarters, the majority of troops were some 15 kilometers outside of town in locations where DDR was planned. Former DPKO military planning official, interview with author, 21 May 2006.

## A More Robust MONUC

After the events in Bukavu, the Secretary-General proposed more than doubling MONUC's size, from 10,800 to 23,000 personnel. He requested brigade-sized forces in both North and South Kivu, a new brigade for Katanga and the Kasai provinces, an eastern division headquarters to direct military operations in the Kivus and Ituri, and a "joint mission analysis cell" to improve information analysis.<sup>436</sup> The Security Council approved half the request, raising the force ceiling to 16,700, but eliminated the brigade for Katanga and Kasais. The updated mandate also reiterated the call for MONUC to protect civilians.<sup>437</sup> In the months that followed, DPKO made a large-scale effort to shift forces to the eastern DRC, sending almost 5,500 combat-capable troops to the Kivus and Ituri. These troops came mostly from unified Indian and Pakistani brigades and were deployed to North and South Kivu.

---

*From early 2005, MONUC conducted some of the most aggressive actions by blue-helmeted forces in recent memory.*

---

From early 2005, MONUC conducted some of the most aggressive actions by blue-helmeted forces in recent memory. SRSG Swing set an April 1 deadline for Ituri militias to hand in their guns. MONUC compelled disarmament of militias through aggressive cordon-and-search operations, intended both to force armed groups to join the DDR program and to pre-empt attacks on local civilians. By June 2005, MONUC had disarmed roughly 15,000 fighters in the region.<sup>438</sup> An ambush by the Nationalist and Integrationist Front (FNI), however, killed nine Bangladeshi peacekeepers in February 2005. In response, UN troops from Nepal, Pakistan, and South Africa, supported by Indian attack helicopters, engaged the FNI in a fierce firefight that left 50 to 60 militia members dead.<sup>439</sup>

The Security Council again strengthened MONUC's mandate to protect civilians in March 2005, providing specific authorization to engage in coercive tactics. It called for MONUC "to ensure the protection of civilians under imminent threat of physical violence, from any armed group, foreign or Congolese," and stressed that "MONUC may use cordon-and-search tactics to prevent attacks on civilians

---

<sup>436</sup> S/2004/650, *Third Special Secretary-General Report on MONUC*.

<sup>437</sup> S/Res/1565, October 2004.

<sup>438</sup> MONUC News Release, "MONUC interventions," MONUC, [www.monuc.org/news.aspx?newsID=888](http://www.monuc.org/news.aspx?newsID=888), as of 15 April 2006.

<sup>439</sup> The FNI also reportedly used civilians as human shields. UN headquarters was concerned by the number of dead militia; DRC community leaders accused MONUC of reprisals for past attacks on UN personnel. IRIN, "DRC: UN Troops Killed 50 Militiamen in Self-Defence, Annan Says," 4 March 2005, [www.irinnews.org/report.asp?ReportID=45923&SelectRegion=Great\\_Lakes](http://www.irinnews.org/report.asp?ReportID=45923&SelectRegion=Great_Lakes); NGO security analyst of the DRC, interview with author, May 2006.

and disrupt the military capability of illegal armed groups that continue to use violence in those areas.”<sup>440</sup>

MONUC’s 3,700-strong Pakistani brigade in South Kivu, which included personnel with recent experience fighting insurgents along the Afghan-Pakistan border, engaged in active, coercive efforts to protect civilians. *Operation Safe Path*, for example, sought to ensure safe passage for civilians through the Kahuzi-Biega park. *Operation Lake Watch* attempted to provide security on Lake Kivu. *Operations Night Flash* and *Good Night* involved night patrols and radio communication to respond to militia attacks on villages in Walungu and urban centers.<sup>441</sup> *Operation Night Flash* was particularly novel. The mission organized village defense committees to alert peacekeepers of imminent attacks, reportedly through banging pots and blowing whistles.<sup>442</sup> A 50-troop strong Pakistani Rapid Reaction Force remained on high alert throughout the night in nearby Kanyola, ready to respond to disturbances with light personal weapons, mortars, night vision glasses, and available aerial cover.<sup>443</sup> The strategy allowed the Pakistanis to provide a security presence to the Walungu territory’s 524 separate villages.

The Pakistanis also aggressively pursued the FDLR (*Forces Démocratiques de Libération du Rwanda*), Hutu rebels with links to the 1994 Rwandan genocide who operate in eastern Congo. Alongside Guatemalan Special Forces, the Pakistani peacekeepers delivered an ultimatum and then helicoptered to FDLR camps deep in the bush, dispersed the militia, and burned their camps.<sup>444</sup> One MONUC official counted the destruction of thirteen to sixteen such camps as of October 2005.<sup>445</sup> The Pakistani brigade commander, General Shujaat Ali Khan, appeared eager for more robust operations and willing to forcibly disarm the FDLR if the UN mandated such activity.<sup>446</sup> General Patrick Cammaert, MONUC Eastern Division commander, expressed similar views about using force against remaining militia groups: “The sooner we can engage them the

<sup>440</sup> S/Res/1592, 30 March 2005. One analyst argued that earlier mandates implicitly allowed for “cordon-and-search” operations, and that the new mandate’s emphasis on this particular coercive tactic could actually inhibit use of other tactics. Former ICG analyst, interview with author, 28 May 2006.

<sup>441</sup> Yulu Kabamba and Tom Tshibangu, “Weekly Press Briefing of 18 January 2006,” MONUC, 19 January 2006, [www.monuc.org/news.aspx?newsID=9666](http://www.monuc.org/news.aspx?newsID=9666).

<sup>442</sup> Keith Harmon Snow, *Operation Iron Fist: UN Troops Chase Down Child Soldiers in Congo's Forgotten War; Hutu Militias as Pawn in Great Game for Central Africa's Mineral Wealth*, Special to World War 4 Report, 1 August 2005, [www.ww4report.com/node/848](http://www.ww4report.com/node/848).

<sup>443</sup> James Traub, “The Congo Case,” *The New York Times Magazine*, 3 July 2005; Joelle Sabella, “Operation Night Flash: Hope is Born Again in Kanyola,” *MONUC News*, 15 April 2005.

<sup>444</sup> The ultimatum to the FDLR gave them sufficient warning to move their forces and equipment before the UN operations began. NGO security analyst in the DRC, interview with author, 27 May 2006.

<sup>445</sup> Traub, “The Congo Case.”

<sup>446</sup> *Ibid.*

better.”<sup>447</sup> Although MONUC decreased the FDLR’s freedom of movement, the group remained in eastern Congo and was not successfully disarmed.

By early 2006, MONUC was focused on preparing for elections in the DRC, initially scheduled for June 2006 but postponed until the end of July. The EU agreed to deploy a 1,250-person force for four months to help maintain security during the elections, with troops primarily from France and Germany.<sup>448</sup>

## ANALYSIS OF CIVILIAN PROTECTION

Analyzing MONUC’s efforts to protect civilians requires understanding the nature of civilian vulnerability in the DRC. Of the nearly four million who have died there since 1998, most perished from preventable and treatable diseases hastened by the mass displacement of civilians fleeing militias. About two percent of these deaths resulted directly from violence.<sup>449</sup> Death rates from disease and malnutrition are significantly higher where militia groups are active, such as the Kivus. Where militias no longer operate and civilian displacement has abated, mortality rates have declined roughly to their pre-war level.<sup>450</sup> Thus, insecurity is central to the cause of the crisis, even as disease and malnutrition claim more lives than direct violence. “The number one humanitarian problem is security,” explained a senior MONUC official in 2005.<sup>451</sup>

Reducing this insecurity is no easy task, however. For peacekeepers, it is not simply a matter of demonstrating presence or patrolling a ceasefire line. Rebel groups in the DRC exhibit little of the predictable behavior associated with a concern for victory in a traditional sense. Instead, armed groups set up camp in civilian population centers and support themselves through pillage and extortion. Rather than fight a stronger group, they may flee, bringing violence, rape, looting, kidnappings, and death to another population center.

The multiple dimensions of civilian vulnerability in the DRC have led to a continuum of responses. Humanitarian groups have provided invaluable food, shelter, and health services to vulnerable civilian populations, alleviating

<sup>447</sup> Bryan Mealer, “U.N. Peacekeepers, Struggling to Pacify Congo, Turn to Warlike Methods,” *Associated Press*, 17 June 2005.

<sup>448</sup> “Germany Says EU Force to Stay in DR Congo Till New Government in Place,” *Agence France Presse*, 31 March 2006.

<sup>449</sup> International Rescue Committee, “The Lancet Publishes IRC Mortality Study from DR Congo.”

<sup>450</sup> The IRC found, for example: “If the effects of insecurity and violence in Congo’s eastern provinces were removed entirely, mortality would reduce to almost normal levels. Such was the case in Kisangani-Ville, where the arrival of peacekeepers helped quell fighting, allowing the IRC and its partners to rehabilitate basic health care, water and sanitation services. Crude mortality rates subsequently declined by 79 percent and excess mortality was eliminated.” International Rescue Committee, “IRC Study Reveals 31,000 Die Monthly in Congo Conflict and 3.8 Million Died in Past Six Years. When Will the World Pay Attention?” IRC, 9 December 2004.

<sup>451</sup> MONUC official, interview with author, 27 October 2005.

immediate suffering and saving lives. UN civilian and police leaders have mediated political negotiations, promoted the rule of law, and worked to reduce government corruption. Peacekeeping forces have in turn provided presence, conducted patrols, supported disarmament and reintegration of former fighters, and used force against armed groups to compel disarmament and prevent attacks on civilians.

In an environment like the DRC, however, the use of coercive action requires a baseline of military capacity, a clear concept of the mission objectives, effective preparation, and a willingness among both mission and contingent leadership to use force. For many years, these requirements were missing from MONUC. By 2005, as it overcame these shortcomings, MONUC faced new complications brought on by its increased use of force. Thus, sufficient capacity, effective preparation, and a sound strategy alone are not a guarantee of success at protecting civilians in such environments, but are, rather, the basis for making it possible.

### **Baseline Capacity**

From the start, the UN leadership had few illusions about MONUC's basic capabilities and its ability to protect civilians. Not only were there too few troops to offer comprehensive security in a large country like the DRC, the mission was hampered by slow deployments, inadequate funding, poor transportation, and insufficient supplies. Most mission forces came from developing states such as Uruguay, Tunisia, Senegal, Bolivia, Morocco, and Ghana. MONUC staff recognized that they lacked sufficient training, equipment, and preparation to challenge abusive and determined armed groups. SRSF Amos Namanga Ngongi, for example, cautioned that "full protection" was impossible. He urged a narrower view of what the operation could do:

[C]learly it is understood that MONUC does not have the capacity to be able to ensure full protection of the civilian population in the DRC—that's not possible. But clearly MONUC has the responsibility and the mandate to be able to protect those whose lives are in imminent danger, especially in the areas in which MONUC is fully deployed, like Kisangani.... We can take dissuasive action, rather than proactive protection. We don't have the troops or the equipment for that. But that's no excuse for not coming to the rescue of people whose lives are in danger.<sup>452</sup>

Here, although Ngongi never elaborates on the meaning of "dissuasive action," he clearly envisions a reactive stance for MONUC rather than one of going after militias. Nevertheless, he suggests the peacekeeping force should act when "lives are in danger."

---

<sup>452</sup> Bernath and Edgerton, *MONUC*, 9.

In his June 2002 report to the Security Council, the Secretary-General echoed caution, even for the idea that MONUC could respond adequately to civilians at risk. He directly linked the expectations for the peacekeeping force to its capacity to intervene:

MONUC troops currently deployed in the Democratic Republic of the Congo are not equipped, trained or configured to intervene rapidly to assist those in need of such protection. If MONUC is to take the steps necessary to enable it to protect more effectively civilians under imminent threat of physical violence, it will be necessary for the Security Council to consider adjusting the strength of MONUC with a view to reconfiguring and re-equipping contingents considerably to permit them to intervene more actively.<sup>453</sup>

A senior DPKO military officer took this analysis a step further, raising basic concern for the safety and protection of the UN force *itself*:

The troop strength in MONUC is a drop in the bucket. You say ‘Why not send troops with MILOBS (Military Observers) and security officers?’ What if those troops are attacked? We can’t get troops from Kinshasa or other places for hours or days. You can’t send in troops without plans for helping them if they run into problems. That’s basic military strategy. All they are trained or equipped or manned to do is protect their bases and equipment.<sup>454</sup>

Thus, without a baseline of sufficient and capable troops and firepower, MONUC was initially expected to be a mostly static mission, focused on defending and protecting itself and, at best, reacting when civilians came under threat, rather than preventing such threats in the first place. Not until 2003 and the Ituri brigade did this approach change, and even then, MONUC continued to struggle with what level of physical protection it could offer to civilians.

## Willingness and Preparedness

In addition to limited operational capacity, MONUC troop contingents were not initially prepared to implement their civilian protection mandate. When DPKO asked the Uruguayan battalion (URABATT) to redeploy to Bunia in April 2003, for example, it specified only limited duties for the forces, such as guarding UN assets and personnel—without mention of civilian protection.<sup>455</sup> Further, those Uruguayan troops were trained primarily for guard duty, and few had seen combat. Lt. Col. Waldemar Fontes, the Uruguayan executive officer in 2003, was in the difficult position of leading troops who expected a benign environment into a conflict zone:

---

<sup>453</sup> UN Security Council, *Eleventh Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo*, S/2002/621, 5 June 2002.

<sup>454</sup> Bernath and Edgerton, *MONUC*, 9-10.

<sup>455</sup> Peacekeeping Best Practices, *Operation Artemis*, 7.

The mission changed. We realized that this was not the task we had originally been sent for. If we knew this was going to happen, first, the personnel we would have sent would have been different. Second, the ammunition and the kind of weaponry would have been different. We would have brought more ammunition! We would have brought more offensive weapons, maybe grenades, rocket launchers, sniper guns—weapons more suited to launch offensive operations. The battalion that we had was dedicated to static operations, guarding fixed positions... [The troops] were not prepared psychologically for this because they came to Congo expecting to be on guard duty.<sup>456</sup>

Prior to the Ituri crisis, most UN troops were not equipped, trained, or organized effectively to intervene to protect civilians. MONUC contingents deployed with varying understandings of their role. Some believed they were only to protect the UN mission and the civilians in their immediate area. Others believed they would only conduct Chapter VI operations. These judgments reflected their interpretation of the UN mandate, their MOU and any national guidance provided. In some cases, as with Uruguay, national guidance contradicted UN expectations.<sup>457</sup>

The expectations of some MONUC contingents in Ituri contrasts with the preparedness of the IEMF to protect civilians. According to a UN study<sup>458</sup> and reports from former UN staff, the strengths of the IEMF included:

- The use of the airport in Entebbe, Uganda, only 40 minutes from Bunia, which allowed for the deployment of effective air assets and substantial operational support;
- The use of overflights to monitor the situation on the ground and intimidate would-be spoilers;
- The deployment of 150 French and 70 to 80 Swedish Special Forces to target and counter militia threats, even outside the force's area of operations;
- The use of mostly French speaking forces, which allowed for better communication in the mission, with the population and for collection of human intelligence;
- The use of satellites to monitor militia movements and intercept cellular phone communications;
- An emphasis on supplying information to the public, to promote positive local perceptions of the operation;
- Quality medical capacity, including a doctor in each IEMF company;<sup>459</sup> and
- Effective cooperation and information exchange with both UN forces and NGOs on the ground.<sup>460</sup>

<sup>456</sup> “Uruguayan Peacekeepers Faced Trouble in Bunia,” *The Wall Street Journal*, 1 October 2003. If Uruguay had anticipated what happened in Bunia, it might not have sent troops in the first place.

<sup>457</sup> Former DPKO military planning official, interview with author, 21 May 2006.

<sup>458</sup> Peacekeeping Best Practices, *Operation Artemis*.

<sup>459</sup> Although medical capacity was intended primarily to support the force, some capacity was used, when appropriate, to address local needs. Former DPKO military planning official, interview with author, 21 May 2006.

The IEMF personnel's common language with the DRC population was helpful. "They could yell 'Stop, or I'll shoot!' and people could understand them," pointed out one MONUC official.<sup>461</sup> The attitude of the force was another factor. "They were very aggressive, and would shoot to kill.... The people in Bunia *did* feel that these people [the IEMF] were there to protect them. And if someone did something wrong, they'd be shot."<sup>462</sup>

Following the crisis in Ituri, DPKO began a concerted effort to better prepare MONUC forces, particularly those deploying to the east. One UN official reported that reviewing the mission mandate with a troop contributor prior to deployment improved its forces' effectiveness significantly. For example, MONUC flew three staff to Nepal to conduct pre-deployment training for Nepalese military officers shortly after the Ituri crisis. The UN trainers discussed both the broad situation on the ground—such as the large number of child soldiers and the use of rape as a weapon of war—and useful capacities for troops stationed there, such as supplies to deal with civilian medical emergencies. "The Nepalese said [the training] was very helpful," recalled one trainer. "They said it changed what they brought. They took more doctors, more medical supplies, and some more women."<sup>463</sup> DPKO reportedly conducted similar briefings during the expansion of MONUC from 2003 to 2005.<sup>464</sup> MONUC also conducted "induction courses" for all troops and civilian personnel shortly after they arrived in the DRC, with briefings on child protection, human rights, and the humanitarian situation, among other issues.<sup>465</sup>

## Conceptual Clarity

Generating and preparing well-equipped troops is only part of the challenge, however. Decisions about strategy are also important. For example, the crisis in Ituri resulted from a clear strategic disconnect between the Security Council and MONUC: the Council pressured the Ugandan forces to withdraw from Ituri before sufficient peacekeepers had arrived to replace them. Moreover, the UN Secretariat had warned for years that foreign troop withdrawal would result in instability. As early as 2001, the Secretary-General had argued that "the UN should examine what it can do to help prepare for the situation, which may

---

<sup>460</sup> Peacekeeping Best Practices, *Operation Artemis*, 13-14.

<sup>461</sup> Former Chief, MONUC Humanitarian Affairs Section, interview with author, 1 February 2006.

<sup>462</sup> Ibid.

<sup>463</sup> Ibid.

<sup>464</sup> In October 2003, for example, two DPKO planners traveled to Morocco to brief its army leadership on the new MONUC operational concept so their forces could be reorganized and equipped for a Chapter VII operation in the eastern DRC. Former DPKO military planning official, interview with author, February 2005 and May 2006. The Nepalese experience fighting the insurgents at home is also cited as a basis for their relative effectiveness in the DRC. Former ICG analyst, interview with author, 27 May 2006.

<sup>465</sup> Former Chief, MONUC Humanitarian Affairs Section, interview with author, 1 February 2006.

develop in the DRC following the withdrawal of foreign forces, which are now responsible for the security of the civilian population under their control.”<sup>466</sup> Likewise, he anticipated that the rising number of peacekeepers in the DRC could create public expectations for civilian protection.<sup>467</sup> The Secretary-General expressed concern in September 2002 that more forces might result in calls for “all concerned urgently to address the security situation.”<sup>468</sup> Thus, even as the UN leadership anticipated the challenges in Ituri and recognized that MONUC would be expected to protect civilians, the Security Council failed to support a positive strategy to meet these challenges.

The crisis in Bukavu demonstrated a similar strategic disconnect. Unlike in Ituri, UN forces in Bukavu had firepower that might have allowed them to protect the city if ordered to do so. MONUC’s response, however, appeared plagued by internal confusion and disagreement on basic strategy. A DPKO report found that MONUC Force Commanders in the eastern DRC correctly identified the mutinous forces as hostile to the transitional government and recommended that MONUC oppose them forcefully, but senior civilian leadership in Kinshasa and New York overruled these commanders.<sup>469</sup> The UN force in Bukavu had no back-up if the conflict grew beyond its control, some feared.<sup>470</sup> Once the crisis erupted, the chain of command appeared to break down at least once *within* MONUC as well, when Deputy Force Commander serving as Sector Commander General Jan Isberg ordered the Uruguayan contingent to protect the airport but the Uruguayans handed it over without a fight.<sup>471</sup>

Beginning in 2005, MONUC began to address this strategic deficit. The mission attempted to integrate the diverse international actors in the DRC around a joint concept of civilian protection—an “umbrella framework” for civilian protection relevant to *all* actors’ activities. The impetus behind the effort probably began much earlier, albeit in an *ad hoc*, informal manner. After the Ituri crisis, MONUC’s humanitarian affairs officers realized that they had an important role to play beyond observing and reporting on the catastrophe. With the arrival of 16,000 IDPs at its doorstep in Bunia, “MONUC had to start protecting civilians;

---

<sup>466</sup> UN Security Council, *Seventh report of the Secretary-General on MONUC*, S/2001/373, 17 April 2001, para. 118.

<sup>467</sup> UN Security Council, *Eleventh report of the Secretary-General on MONUC*, S/2002/621, 5 June 2002, para. 71.

<sup>468</sup> UN Security Council, *Special Report of the Secretary-General*, S/2002/1005, para. 61, as cited in Peacekeeping Best Practices, *Operation Artemis*, 5, 8.

<sup>469</sup> Peacekeeping Best Practices Unit, *MONUC and the Bukavu Crisis 2004*, Best Practices Unit, DPKO, on file with authors, March 2005; NGO security analyst in the DRC, interview with author, 27 May 2006.

<sup>470</sup> Former DPKO military planning official, interview with author, May 2006.

<sup>471</sup> International Crisis Group, *The Congo’s Transition Is Failing: Crisis in the Kivus*, Africa Report No. 91 (ICG, 30 March 2005), 24.

they had no choice,” argued one MONUC humanitarian official.<sup>472</sup> Humanitarian officers began to act as conduits between military and humanitarian actors on the ground, and to promote cooperation towards the overarching goal of “protection.” MONUC began to serve as an important “force multiplier” for relief organizations with limited resources, linking the mission components. One former MONUC official gave an example: “Let’s say Oxfam has \$100,000 to feed and shelter civilians in Sector A. You [MONUC] have a plane. Now you can get Oxfam there and they can do more. To me, that’s protection. That’s protecting the humanitarian environment.”<sup>473</sup> According to this officer, MONUC embraced new tasks to protect civilians and expand humanitarian space, by “initiating” humanitarian access (rather than just accepting it), “challenging military contingents to take on their responsibilities, conducting joint assessments, providing military protection to humanitarian convoys, physically taking civilians out of danger, demining, and establishing field hospitals.”<sup>474</sup>

Building off of these efforts, MONUC worked with UN agencies, NGOs, and MONUC military, police, and civilian sections in “joint protection working groups” at key flashpoints in the DRC (such as North and South Kivu, Ituri, Katanga, Kindu and Kinshasa) during 2005.<sup>475</sup> The first joint protection working group was established in North Kivu to address civilian protection in the Masisi territory. It took a straightforward approach: first, assessing the major threats to civilian physical security; second, determining strategies for addressing these threats; and, third, implementing these strategies. The North Kivu working group identified twenty-six major types of threats to civilians—including rape, violence in IDP camps, killings, executions, and disappearances—and determined a variety of strategies to address them, such as eliminating impunity among FARDC forces through judicial reform and improving MONUC’s deterrent military presence.

According to MONUC Deputy SRSR Ross Mountain, the working groups were designed so all actors would realize the larger purpose of their activities, see how these activities fit within the mission goal to protect civilians, and divide

---

<sup>472</sup> Former Chief, MONUC Humanitarian Affairs Section, interview with author, 27 November 2005.

<sup>473</sup> Ibid.

<sup>474</sup> Ibid.

<sup>475</sup> Mark Cutts and Ann-Marie Linde, “Mission to the DRC,” InterAgency Internal Displacement Division (IDD), 12-20 May 2005, [www.reliefweb.int/idp/docs/reports/2005/DRC%20mission%20report%2012-20%20May%202005.pdf](http://www.reliefweb.int/idp/docs/reports/2005/DRC%20mission%20report%2012-20%20May%202005.pdf).

tasks effectively based on organizational *competencies*.<sup>476</sup> By early 2006, MONUC's protection framework was still developing and few details were sufficiently public to assess its effectiveness. The general principles included:

- A focus on *physical* violence against civilians;
- A comprehensive approach based on mutual cooperation and involving all the major international actors on the ground, including both legal/political and field-based actors;
- A recognition of the need for a division of labor in the field among military and humanitarian actors, to preserve humanitarian space;
- Effective coordination and exchange of information between military and humanitarian actors, where appropriate;
- More proactive efforts to *compel* the provision of humanitarian space where it cannot be secured by negotiation alone, through the threat and/or use of military force.<sup>477</sup>

Along with its joint protection framework, MONUC developed a more active military strategy to protect civilians, including “field protection activities” to be conducted by military, human rights, and humanitarian actors. Military protection activities include removal of threats against civilians by “a cordon-and-search operation and/or disarmament of individuals threatening civilian population;” the establishment of “buffer zones between combatants” and safe areas “with adequate military protection;” utilization of an “area domination” strategy through frequent patrols, overflights, and “mobile temporary operations bases;” escorting humanitarian and human rights actors to areas; and evacuating populations out of danger zones.<sup>478</sup>

Rather than defend a limited group of civilians at a particular site—an IDP camp or a UN base—some MONUC contingents began to attempt to protect civilians from violence within broad geographic areas under their control.<sup>479</sup> MONUC now is trying to provide wider security for dispersed civilian populations, in contrast to earlier efforts to protect only those civilians who fled directly into its care. Even after a Bangladeshi contingent was ambushed by armed groups in Ituri in February 2005, the Security Council applauded the more forward-leaning peacekeeping approach, commending “the dedication of MONUC’s personnel, who operate in particularly hazardous conditions. [The Council] welcomes the action of MONUC against the militia groups responsible for these

---

<sup>476</sup> Mountain, also the MONUC Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator, has played a leadership role in the integrated approach to protecting civilians across military and humanitarian sectors.

<sup>477</sup> MONUC official, interview with author, 30 January 2006.

<sup>478</sup> MONUC, internal documents, August 2005.

<sup>479</sup> MONUC official, interview with author, 27 October 2005.

killings and MONUC's continued robust action in pursuit of its mandate."<sup>480</sup> Yet for many MONUC contingents, coercive protection is not a primary focus.<sup>481</sup>

## Challenges of Coercive Protection

Not all observers approve of MONUC's increased use of force. The medical relief group, Médecins sans Frontières, argued that even with MONUC's cordon-and-search activities to disarm militia groups, there was "nothing new in Ituri" as of August 2005. MSF found no general decrease in the number of its consultations for sexual violence from June 2003 to June 2005.<sup>482</sup> Armed groups still preyed on civilians nearly everywhere in Ituri except Bunia; humanitarian access outside of Bunia was almost nonexistent; and MSF withdrew from Bunia following the kidnapping of two of its employees in June 2005.<sup>483</sup>

Similarly, one former MONUC humanitarian official argued that the mission's forceful disarming of combatants in the eastern DRC contradicts its mandate to protect civilians and facilitate humanitarian access. MONUC's tactics have led to reprisal killings against civilians—a Congolese militia claimed that it conducted three civilian massacres in retaliation for MONUC actions.<sup>484</sup> MONUC efforts to root out militia and push them farther into the bush can result in increased population displacement as militia destabilize new areas. Further, by using force against particular groups, MONUC may find that aid organizations reduce their cooperation if they fear they will lose access to vulnerable populations and endanger the safety of their unarmed workers. When MONUC uses the same vehicles to transport soldiers as it does IDPs, or torches FDLR camps deep in the Congolese forest, these actions may have a direct, negative impact on local perceptions and humanitarian access. In such cases, assistance groups may limit their cooperation with the mission, information-sharing, and use of MONUC transport.<sup>485</sup>

MONUC efforts to work with the FARDC are similarly fraught. By 2005, various MONUC officials emphasized, the most serious threats to civilians came from the integrated FARDC, which suffers from poor discipline and

---

<sup>480</sup> UN Security Council, *Statement by the President of the Security Council*, S/PRST/2005/10, 2 March 2005. Nine Bangladeshi peacekeepers were killed during the incident.

<sup>481</sup> The Pakistanis are reportedly the only contingent aggressively attempting to expand the geographic area under their control.

<sup>482</sup> Médecins sans Frontières, *Nothing New in Ituri*, 9.

<sup>483</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>484</sup> MONUC official, interview with author, 27 October 2005.

<sup>485</sup> Views offered by former MONUC humanitarian official, interview with author, 27 November 2005.

oversight.<sup>486</sup> The same fighters who preyed on civilians as militia now behave similarly as “official” soldiers in the new Congolese military. Thus, civilian protection issues in the DRC are directly linked to those of good governance, public finance, and security sector reform. One way to reduce atrocities against civilians may be to ensure that military salaries are paid, so that the FARDC soldiers refrain from brutal methods of extortion.<sup>487</sup> The UN has attempted to address FARDC abuses by providing training to select FARDC commanders on humanitarian principles and the protection of civilians. In May 2006, UN agencies led training for forty-five FARDC officers in Bunia on international legal norms, addressing issues including children in conflict and the role of armed forces in protecting women and children from sexual violence.<sup>488</sup>

## CONCLUSION AND LESSONS LEARNED

This case demonstrates the dilemmas for UN-led forces tasked to protect civilians without having all the tools to do it. The experience of MONUC and *Operation Artemis* also highlights the impact of concepts of operation, capacity, mandates and ROE, doctrine, and training on peace operations directed to protect civilians. MONUC’s experience further identifies standard questions for future military missions: the definitions of vicinity and capacity, the integration of actors, clarity on the use of force and the role of peacekeepers in providing broad security in lieu of a state’s responsibility—and the operational concept of protection. Given the continuing trend to direct military forces to protect civilians, these key areas deserve further consideration.

First, UN missions with a mandate “to protect civilians under imminent threat” require a *baseline capacity*, coupled with the authority and expectation that peacekeepers will act. Without these parameters, most UN forces will find that mandates to protect civilians lie outside their capacity—undermining the meaning of the mandate. Capacity is especially important where conflict continues and where parties to a peace agreement provide only partial consent to a UN or multinational peacekeeping force. In general, well-armed and experienced troops in sufficient numbers *may* be able to provide security for vulnerable populations in a challenging region; poorly trained troops in insufficient numbers with limited supplies are unlikely to provide more than presence—if that. Quality information and a clear chain of command are also essential, as the tragic events in Ituri and Bukavu demonstrate.

---

<sup>486</sup> “U.N., groups push for report on alleged massacre,” *Associated Press*, 2 February 2006.

<sup>487</sup> MONUC official, interview with author, 27 November 2005.

<sup>488</sup> UN Department of Public Information/OCHA, “FARDC Commanders Receive Training in Humanitarian Principles,” MONUC, 17 May 2006, [www.monuc.org/News.aspx?newsId=11075](http://www.monuc.org/News.aspx?newsId=11075).

Second, for multinational missions such as MONUC and *Operation Artemis*, political and military leaders need to provide *conceptual clarity* about how the operation should approach protecting civilians. Ideally, this strategy should be consistently understood throughout the leadership of the mission, by the troop contingents, and within the Security Council. After struggling for years, MONUC had a clearer concept by 2005. The mission operated more in accordance with its Chapter VII mandate. Peacekeepers conducted cordon-and-search operations and worked with local populations to identify spoilers to the peace. MONUC leadership began to use the goal of protection as an organizing tool to integrate civilian and military roles. A new mission strategy attempted to address civilian vulnerability across the board, from human rights monitoring and reporting, to the provision of humanitarian space, to coercive physical protection. No single concept defined the mission's civilian protection efforts; rather, the mission embraced multiple ideas and strategies.

Third, MONUC's experience demonstrates the need for *well prepared* and *willing peacekeepers*. Guidance to forces about their role in providing protection to civilians is best given at the start, through pre-deployment training and in-country or on-the-ground mission briefings. Contributing countries would benefit from having doctrine for such missions. At the least, TCCs should understand that their troops may be asked to use force, especially if deployed with a civilian protection mandate to volatile regions. Likewise, countries offering contingents for Chapter VII missions need to be clear about how national constraints on their personnel could contradict the mission's tasks and goals.

Fourth, missions authorized with robust civilian protection mandates need to understand the level of force to be used to achieve their goals, and whether they are *coercive protection* operations. As demonstrated in the DRC, mission leaders must navigate tough, inevitable choices about protecting civilians in hostile environments. The strategy of protection should be based on an understanding of the causes of civilian insecurity and the best remedy for the environment. Traditional strategies of supporting humanitarian space and conducting peacekeeping tasks can fall far short of protecting civilians, such as in the DRC where irregular armed groups have operated with impunity. Protecting civilians may require blocking the capacity of armed groups to wreak violence, and potentially using military force to defeat or disarm them. Such actions risk a counterinsurgency-like response if the armed groups refuse to stand down. A well-led UN force could undertake that approach, if UN Members States were willing to provide the capacity and personnel prepared for the environment.

Finally, as recognized in UN mandates, the role of peace operations in providing protection is always balanced by its relationship with the sovereign country in which they operate. In most UN operations, that government maintains primary responsibility for the welfare of its people. When a state is on the verge of failure or recovering from a conflict, like the DRC, the division between its responsibilities and those of a UN peace operation are blurred. The UN must continuously balance between taking responsibility for protecting the Congolese populace, offering support to the political process, and cooperating with the government.

Operating in that gray area between traditional peacekeeping and an intervention force suggested by *The Responsibility to Protect* is the central problem in protecting civilians, however. Protection is just one of many goals for the UN mission in the DRC, where the line between peacekeeping and peacemaking is not clear.

As long as forces are sent to protect civilians, they will require leadership to offer a strategy for protection. The innovative continuum approach to civilian protection in the DRC is a start at recognizing how differing concepts of protection can work together effectively. But that approach is not a substitute for a strategy for military forces and for preparing troops with their own concepts, doctrine, training and leadership for these kinds of operations. The Security Council and nations that support peacekeeping missions are on notice that such missions are in urgent need of conceptual clarity and better tools to prepare and support those sent to strengthen peace. MONUC's experience in the DRC shows that these issues need to be addressed both there and for any future peacekeeping mission or intervention force directed to offer protection.