

Peace Support Operations in Africa A Perspective from Nigeria

Major General Suraj ABDURRAHMAN, Nigerian
Armed Forces, Director of Policy, Defense HQ, Lagos

I should like at the outset of this presentation, to express appreciation to the organizers of this Seminar, the Austrian Blue Helmet Association, for putting together this seminar and particularly for inviting me to participate. This seminar could not have been better timed, coming as it were, at a time that Africa is being preoccupied with efforts to establish the African Standby Force. It is indeed my great pleasure to be here today to address such an admixture of important audience of universal peace seekers.

As the UN reviews and reassesses its role in peace operations, conflict management mechanisms in regional organizations and other arrangements offer new opportunities. Different regions are evolving in different ways and their respective capabilities to deal with their problems vary. Regional action can have both advantages and disadvantages. States in the region concerned have national interests in the stability of their local environment and are more likely to be willing to take part in peace operations that are closer to the homeland. Moreover, they will be more familiar with regional cultures and attitudes than outsiders. On the other hand, sometimes states in the region may be too close to the issues and may have their own agenda. Conflicting

interests and lack of mutual trust may undermine the peace process. There may also be inadequate military and other resources available for peace operations. We have had ample experiences of both situations in West Africa, and indeed Africa. I hope this forum will look at this and generate practical solutions that would be applicable in Africa and elsewhere around the world.

Nigeria's Commitment and Sacrifices

Over 1,500 peacekeepers have died in the service of the United Nations Peacekeeping Operations. Some of these brave souls have been Nigerian Armed Forces personnel. While the UN remains the pre-eminent international authority with the most resources at the multilateral level for dealing with global security and humanitarian concerns, it has always sought allies from within the ranks of its membership. Typically, countries are asked to support, or volunteer for service in the various peacekeeping missions. The level of commitment and participation of respective countries vary for a myriad of reasons.

However, over the last 44 years, one African country, NIGERIA, has committed more men and materiel toward keeping the peace in Africa and elsewhere than any other on the continent. For Nigeria, the expected return on these considerable investments as in a "peace dividend" is not the promise of fiscal reward, or international accolades, it is quite simply "peace". In March 1948, the Nigerian Regiment (which metamorphosed into the Nigerian Army) was called to what can be described as

the Nigerian Armed Forces first peacekeeping operation in the then Gold Coast (now Ghana). Both the police and military in Ghana could not contain the widespread disturbance that started as a rally by the Ex-service Union in Accra on February 20. Troops from the Nigerian Regiment were then flown in and shipped to various towns to restore law and order, a mission that was flawlessly executed with minimum civilian casualties. They were finally ordered back on June 19, 1948.

The formal contribution of Nigeria to the UN initiatives in world peace was flagged off by her first Prime Minister, Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, in his inaugural address to the plenary session of the 15th Regular Session on October 7, 1960, barely six days after the attainment of independence, when he stated in his speech: “... *it is the desire of Nigeria ... to participate actively in the work of the United Nations Organization... We are committed to upholding the principles upon which the United Nations is founded...*” Since that day, when Nigeria was also admitted as the 99th member of the United Nations, the Prime Minister’s clarion call for active participation in the work of the UN has been carried forth by succeeding Nigerian Governments to the present day.

Starting with ONUC over 100.000 Nigerian personnel participated in Peace Support Operations

Since her maiden participation in the UN mission in the Congo (ONUC) in 1960, Nigeria has continued to actively participate in regional and UN Peace Support

Operations. Our active involvement in Peace Support Operations (PSO) has been consistent with our foreign and defense policies since independence which among others aim at ensuring peace and security on the African continent and the world at large by participating in multilateral security arrangements through the UN, AU and other regional organizations. Consequently, over the past 44 years, Nigeria has cumulatively deployed over 100,000 men and women in PSO together with huge financial and materiel resources. So far, Nigeria has participated in over half of the total number of PSO mounted by the UN, contributing unit contingents, staff officer and military observers, civilian police and civilian experts. At the regional and sub-regional levels, Nigeria has been actively involved in missions mounted by OAU/AU and Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) as early as in the 60s. We started with participating with 2 bilateral missions in Tanganyika (now Tanzania) in 1964 and Chad in 1979 which later metamorphosed to an OAU Pan African Mission in the early 80s. However, our greatest challenges and sacrifices were recorded when we made the largest contribution to the first successful regional PSO, the ECOWAS Cease-fire Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) missions in Liberia and Sierra Leone in the 90s. While I do not want to bore you with the details of the missions, it should be mentioned that they had tremendous impact on the restoration of peace and security as well as return of democratic governance in those countries at that time. What is more significant in all this is the fact that Nigeria's ECOMOG initiative was the first test case of peace enforcement where we deployed, at the mission's height, over 12,000 men of our Armed Forces,

transported and sustained in Liberia by the Nigerian Government. Lessons learnt from these missions impacted on our preparation for subsequent sub regional PSO.

Impact of the fall of the ‘Iron Curtain’ and Globalization

The fall of the “iron curtain” coupled with the impact of globalization resulted to the increase of inter and intra state conflicts particular on the African Continent. These events had a tremendous impact on Nigeria’s role in UN and regional PSO. The period therefore witnessed an upsurge in Nigeria’s participation in PSO. In the new millennium, we have continued to contribute troops and military observers to the peace efforts in UNMIL (Liberia), UNAMSIL (Sierra Leone) , UNMEE (Ethiopia and Eritrea), ONUCI (Cote d’Ivoire) and MONUC (DR Congo). In response to AU request, we have deployed troops to the AU mission in Sudan (AMIS). Our total troop’s contribution to ongoing PSO is 3,514 all ranks.

Capacity Building

Whereas African troops have respectable experience in peacekeeping at home and abroad alongside international troops including European armies, they have hitherto lacked an organizational framework, philosophy, or collective logistical structure that could be employed to keep peace on the continent. The AU has recommended the development of a common security policy and, by

2010, an African Standby Force capable of rapid deployment to keep or enforce the peace, would be established. The ASF would comprise of standby brigades in each of the five regions, and incorporate a police and civilian expert capacity. Thus, the Joint AU/G8 plan to enhance African Capabilities to undertake PSO, that aims to mobilize technical and financial assistance so that, by 2010, African partners are able to engage more effectively to prevent and resolve violent conflict on the continent, and undertake PSO in accordance with the UN Charter. If African conflict prevention, resolution and management mechanisms are to be made functional by 2010, the vital operational needs among others might include:

- Strengthening the institutional capacity of the AU to effectively plan, support and manage PSO.
- The ongoing arrangements between AU, ECOWAS and SHIRBRIG in establishing Planning Elements at the HQs to provide command, control, and information systems for standby forces needs to be vigorously pursued.
- Encourage the AU Peace and Security Council (PSC) when required to formulate credible and achievable mandates to be supported by well trained and robustly equipped forces.
- Develop an effective African Chiefs of Defense Staff Committee that will meaningfully contribute into the military decisions of the PSC.
- Sharpen the conflict prevention of the AU as well as strengthen the institutional capacities of the Early Warning Systems of the AU and regional organizations.

International Coordination

There is also the need to encourage coordination of donor assistance and capacity building initiatives to avoid duplication and ensure cost effectiveness. There is the need for coordination and cooperation between the UN, EU and G8 to strengthen the planning and strategic management of the AU and sub-regional organizations. Complimentarity of programs and partnership to ensure they focus on clearly defined African priorities can lead to the attainment of more tangible goals. On going efforts by Western partners to develop doctrine, procedures and equipment standardization and inter-operability needs to be accomplished by 2007. Also, the on going efforts by partners to assist AU and regional organizations develop data bases to support training and standby arrangements may need to be accomplished by 2007.

Effective mine action is an essential element of confidence-building to promote peace and stability in a post-conflict situation. The Demining school in Ouidah, Benin Republic needs to be expanded to accommodate the Anglophones.

Logistics

In a continent such as Africa, where volatile situations arise overnight, distances are vast, infrastructure is often nonexistent or inoperable, it is glaringly apparent that any viable Standby Force must be able to deploy within hours over a distance of thousands of kilometers. This would

probably best bring out the issues of Logistics and Sustainability of the force to be so deployed.

Beyond the planning support, which is where the UN has an excellent track record, especially with the AU, there is the need to address the two critical aspects or requirements for PSO, as identified by African Chiefs of Defense Staff and the Ministers of Defense and Security of Africa in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia and Sirte, Libya respectively. These issues which continue to constrain peace support initiatives in Africa are the critical issues of LOGISTICS and FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY for PSO. The lack of Contingent Own Equipment (COE) has been one of the major problems of African peacekeeping forces. There is a need for deliberate efforts by partners to assist African forces to overcome this constraint by 2010. The establishment of AU and sub-regional logistics bases needs to be given priority to enhance rapid deployment and mission sustainability. The depots when established could serve both the AU and sub-regional organizations in order to achieve economy of scale. Furthermore, availability of strategic airlift capability to enhance rapid deployment to African theatres needs to be addressed urgently.

Nigeria's Continuing Efforts

As earlier mentioned, the changing nature of conflicts coupled with the multi dimensional challenges of PSO have made it incumbent on national governments to inject well trained and robustly equipped personnel in PSO. Arising from this, we have taken a giant step

towards the education and training of our peacekeepers in order to improve their operational capability and achieve their mission mandate. I will highlight the efforts made by Nigeria in this direction:

- **Unit Training:** In the face of major regional and global challenges, our training directives have been reviewed to cater adequately for training in PSO, drawing largely from the UN Standardized Generic Training Modules (SGTM 1) provided by the Military Division, Training and Evaluation Service (MD/TES) of the UN DPKO for unit and pre-deployment training. Formed units are now being taken through peacekeeping techniques and skills in the field and in the major training requirements. This has improved the operational skills of our troops and greatly assisted in their deployment to peace missions at short notice.
- **Operation ‘FOCUS RELIEF’:** As a follow up to its support to ECOWAS during the ECOMOG operations in Liberia and Sierra Leone, the US Government, in 2000/2001, under the exercise codenamed Operation FOCUS RELIEF trained some of our units in PSO. The package which was highly beneficial included training in tactical, operational and logistic aspects in Low Intensity Conflicts (LIC) and PSO. The training also included the provision of minimal clothing, personnel equipment and transport to benefiting units. A total of 6 Nigerian Army units benefited from this training package. Specialist train-

the-trainers course were also organized for officers of these units, and this has helped to enhance the continuous training of these and other units with the exit of the US Training Team.

- **Capacity Building Initiative:** Since the year 2000, the Nigerian Armed Forces have benefited from several capacity building initiatives provided bilaterally or through multilateral organizations, agencies and donors from Western countries. Recently, we participated actively in EX RECAP IV in the Republic of Benin. However, while we observed that much of these Western initiatives provide tangible benefits, including training and confidence building, they do not address the most crucial need of African peace support endeavors, namely the issue of logistics sustainment and funding for the deployment of African peace missions. In order to target external initiatives against real needs for the enhancement of operational capability especially the deployment of rapid deployment forces, the relevant initiatives should shift from training to logistic support and funding.
- **Pre-Induction Training:** Additional to unit training, there is an intensive 6-weeks pre-induction training package being organized for units that are earmarked for induction to peace support missions. The curriculum outline for the program includes the organization and composition of peacekeeping forces, peacekeeping concepts, geo-political briefs on the

host country, code of conduct and the mission mandate. Additionally, instructions on laws of war, humanitarian assistance and cooperation with NGOs, operational and non-operational safety measures are included. There is also a 2-days package on humanitarian international law conducted by the ICRC. The pre-induction training usually culminates into field exercises on tactical and logistics requirements for the mission.

- **Middle Cadre and Train-the-Trainer Courses:** The middle cadre training for our personnel is conducted at the Armed Forces Command and Staff College (AFCSC), Infantry Corps Center and School (ICCS) and the Nigerian Army College of Logistics (NACOL). The AFCSC peace support package is an intensive 2-weeks package dealing with the theory and practice of PSO in the field at the operational level, including an introduction to the UN system, conduct of humanitarian operations, principles for the conduct of PSO, lessons learnt from past and ongoing missions, dynamics and future of contemporary UN peacekeeping and the institutional, military and legal background to peacekeeping. The NACOL has a similar package dealing basically with UN operational logistics staff check, supply, transportation and movement control, maintenance and medical support. We also subscribe to peacekeeping courses and seminars in regional peacekeeping centers and institutes around the world for middle cadre and train-the-trainer courses.

- **Strategic Level Training:** In addition to the above training facilities, the National War College (NWC) – Abuja has been restructured and refocused to handle strategic level training in PSO for the sub-region. The college hosted the UN Challenges Seminar in June 2004, the UN Training Assistant Team (UNTAT) Course and UN Senior Managers’ Course in 2005.

The African Standby Force (ASF) and Nigeria’s Peacekeeping Wing (PKW)

In line with the Brahimi Report, plans have reached an advance stage for the establishment of an African Standby Force (ASF). Our contribution to the West African Standby Brigade, which is part of the ASF, shall be substantial in view of our present role in PSO. In order to meet the constant demand for Nigerian participation in PSO and our future commitment to ASF, a PKW was established in the Infantry Corps Center and School at Jaji. The aim of the PKW is to provide realistic tactical training to junior team leaders and commanders while at the same time complementing the knowledge gained by Nigerian personnel from other regional and international peace keeping centers. The PKW is fully supported by the British Government, and a Small Training Team (STT) from the British Army conducted a Method of Instruction Course to officially commission the wing.

The present Situation regarding the African Standby Force (ASF)

The prospects for the establishment of ASF are very high with the development of AU/regional defense and security mechanisms, force structures and concept of operations (CONOPs). There is a desire to see that the AU standby arrangement mechanism is realized as most African countries have already pledged forces to regional brigades under ASF. Nigeria has pledged 1 x Inf Bn, 1 x Recce Bn, 1 x Arty Regt, 1 x Engr Regt, 1 x Sig Sqn and level II medical hospital. However, the above dream will not go beyond rhetoric unless the following issues are urgently addressed:

1. On-going restructuring of the AU and regional HQ to develop institutional capacity to support ASF and PSO should be accomplished soonest.
2. Plan for establishing and equipping of logistics depots for ASF needs to be completed soonest.
3. On going effort to develop doctrine and related documents on procedures, SOPs, techniques and guidelines to ensure command, control and communication of ASF and regional brigades needs to be accomplished soonest.
4. Member states of AU need to accept assessed budget quotas to raise money for the ASF Trust Fund.
5. There should be increased consultation, cooperation and coordination between the UN, AU and sub-regional organizations to ensure the standby mechanism attain its objectives.

Conclusion

I should like to conclude this brief presentation on an optimistic note by acknowledging that there are many opportunities to expand the interface between African countries and our Western partners for peace operations. If we work together, we shall maximize the advantages. Judging from ECOWAS experience, the greatest drawback is the lack of capacity for sustaining PSO once launched. Therefore it is felt that effective Conflict Resolution and the maintenance of International Peace and Security would be enhanced if the Regional Standby Units are provided with appropriate logistics assets. They can intervene faster and cheaper. They can also set the stages for the UN to intervene later as ECOWAS has demonstrated in Cote d'Ivoire, Liberia and Sierra Leone.

The burden placed on Nigeria by the leading role she is playing in PSO particularly in Africa is quite enormous in view of the requirement of the Brahimi Report to deploy well trained and robustly equipped personnel in peace missions. It is in this connection that we implore all stake holders especially our good friends and partners to support us in the noble venture particularly in the area of training and institutional capacity building as well as in augmenting our deficiencies in logistic support. Over the last 3 years, discussion on strengthening African PSO capacity, establishment of an African Standby Force (ASF) and regional standby forces and requirements as well as priorities for achieving same are almost exhaustive. Concrete recommendations have been proffered in many fora but whether there is commitment, political will and resources on the part of the

beneficiaries, UN, regional organizations and Western militaries, remains the major concern.

Therefore, with on-going efforts at improving the capabilities of regional organizations and their arrangements for peace operations, there is now an opportunity for the UN to effectively partner these regional organizations. The UN will need to recognize what it should retain, what it should pass on to regional organizations and arrangements when practicable, and how to best develop effective cooperation to make the most effective use of available resources.

Nigeria will continue to play a major role in PSO for the maintenance of global and regional peace and security. Our training drive is based upon our experiences in past missions and the need to inject high quality peacekeepers in PSO. Thus, besides the concrete steps that we have taken locally to ensure adequate training for our personnel, we also subscribe to peacekeeping courses in the institutions around the World in order to meet our needs and modern trends.

It is my wish that my presentation will provide a contribution in our common efforts to make the world a safer place.