

PEACEKEEPING INTELLIGENCE
Emerging Concepts for the Future

**Intelligence and Peace Support
Operations:
Some Practical Concepts**

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The opinions expressed in this article are purely personal and do not represent the views of the Belgian Ministry of Defence or the United Nations.

Introduction

The past decade was marked by a remarkable increase in the number of peace support operations. The lessons learned from the UNAMIR, UNOSOM and UNPROFOR operations¹ have shown that peace support operations require a dedicated intelligence support and should, preferably, have an integral intelligence capability. Therefore it soon became popular to describe peace support operations as “intelligence driven operations”, notwithstanding that it has proven to be anything but easy to put this slogan into practice.

The inflation in the number of peace support operations, together with drastic changes on the geo-political level have provoked a radical transformation of the environment wherein intelligence and security services are expected to accomplish their mission. Whilst large parts of Western European militaries, when not involved in operations, function according to the somewhat routine “9 to 5” schedule, intelligence and

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security services see themselves facing a very different situation, where there is no distinction anymore between operations and “non operations”, or to it put more bluntly, between peacetime and wartime. In fact, intelligence and security services are, in essence, confronted with something tantamount to permanent war occurring all over the world. In order to be able to face this challenge with some degree of success, it is of paramount importance that the structures of intelligence and security services are modular and flexible, and last but not least, that these services can rely on the required amount of manpower with the right qualifications.

More than ever, intelligence services are expected to be permanently vigilant and fulfil the role of alarm bells. These expectations can only be met if the “Indication and Warning” process is performed in a professional way. This includes, among other things, the monitoring of not just conventional political and military indicators, but also less common parameters like cultural, sociological and other tailor-made indicators that have to be regularly reviewed, reassessed and updated.

Another interesting aspect is that almost simultaneously, the influence of the international media has expanded beyond all expectations. International and national media now have to be considered as key factors in the political decision-making process. They are not just opinion shapers anymore, but have developed into policy drivers.²

The changing face of the threat: the need for ‘other’ intelligence

In peace support operations, the threat is much more diffuse and harder to identify than in conventional military operations. The enemy is less readily defined and regular (military) forces often only play a secondary role. Paramilitaries, volunteers, self-declared police forces, freedom fighters, or even criminal networks and the gangs they control, dominate the situation on the ground. These groups are fully integrated in and

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assimilated with the local population and often maintain close relations with the local power centres. Due to the nature of the conflict, the local power centres amalgamate military, economical and political power. The objectives of the local parties are often determined by hard to quantify and qualify political and socio-cultural factors, which may appear irrational in our “Westernised” judgement. The peace support mission is confronted with a “Catch-22” situation: in order to implement its mandate, the mission will have to co-operate with these local power centres, which, at the same time, represent the biggest threat to the realisation of the mandate. This imposes particular constraints on the intelligence structure.

Instead of focussing on purely military information and intelligence, peace support operations require a much broader span of information: political, economical, geographic, ethnic, linguistic, social, sociological, cultural, religious, demographic, biographic, ecological intelligence, etc. In addition, the fact that the potential area of responsibility has become much larger has an immediate impact on the size of the area of intelligence interest.³

In concrete terms, this means that the intelligence organisation and its personnel during a peace support operation do not operate in a “military information environment”, but in a “global information environment”. It is obvious that this new situation imposes particular demands, not the least on the collectors and the analysts, and on their intellectual flexibility. They have to be able to handle a much larger amount of information, dealing with a much wider range of issues, in much less time. Most importantly, much more than was the case during conventional military operations, analysts will have to be able to get out of the paradigm; “get out of the box!” and think in a more unconventional way. This situation imposes a new and maybe unorthodox approach to recruitment and training of analysts. There may be a need for the temporary hiring of people (academics, NGO workers) with particular backgrounds or relevant experience, not available in the

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military. Some of the work may have to be outsourced to specialised research institutes or think tanks, etc. Analysis techniques have to be reviewed too. Link analysis, supported by specialised software has become a very important technique, although over-reliance on electronic tools (that should in fact only assist the analyst) could lead to erroneous conclusions.

Needless to say that this multi-layer intelligence picture should be available before the political decision to send troops, or participate otherwise in the peace support operation, is taken. Once this decision is taken, intelligence personnel should be among the first to be deployed to the mission area, before the other troops arrive.

The mission of the peace support operation is determined by its mandate. In reality, however, force protection tends to be the limiting (and therefore determining) factor for the implementation of the mandate and therefore the objectives of the peacekeeping operation. Force protection is not only a concern in the mission area, but also elsewhere; not the least on the territory of the troop contributing nations or other parts of the world where these nations have particular interest, as there can be a risk of retaliation. Force protection implies that there is at all times particular attention for counter intelligence (subversion, espionage and terrorism). Notwithstanding that most Security and Counterintelligence professionals will argue that the distinction between their discipline and intelligence needs to be maintained, based on the importance of force protection during peace support operations, the maximum integration of both disciplines should be pursued.

Force protection is also an appropriate area to illustrate the influence of the media. The “zero casualty”- doctrine that marked some Western powers during the 1990s and the concern of our political leaders to safeguard above all a good public image have put the media in a privileged position. Media play an ambiguous role during peace support operations. On one hand they can be a particularly valuable and essential

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source of information (as a component of Osint), but on the other hand, their influence and “subjectivity” can be counterproductive. Media can create myths or legends that can make the working conditions for the peace support mission and for an intelligence organisation quite difficult. The conflict in the Balkans and the way it was covered by most international media are a good example of this situation.⁴

Media can even become competitors to intelligence organisations. International media can produce ‘breaking news’ from anywhere on the globe, at an unbeatable speed. Still, the political and military decision makers will expect from their intelligence services that they will be able to investigate these media reports and answer all their questions provoked by the media reporting and all this under tight time constraints.

It was mentioned earlier that the intelligence organisation and its personnel during a peace support operation do not operate in a ‘military information environment, but in a ‘global information environment’. Related to this, it is argued by some, that the purpose of intelligence has changed too. The Defence Committee of the UK House of Commons concluded after the NATO Kosovo bombing campaign in Spring 1999 that it is an error to believe that intelligence is intended to predict the future and the reactions of the opponent with the highest probability. The real aim of intelligence is to identify and analyse all possible options and reactions of the opponent, even if they seem irrational, to avoid surprise and allow the planners and decision-makers to best prepare for all contingencies and avoid strategic surprise. At the same time, the decision-makers have to define their intelligence needs more precisely and also critically evaluate the intelligence that is produced.⁵

Impact of Peace support operations on the intelligence organisation

Particularly during UN-led peace support operations, neutrality and transparency will be two crucial aspects. The mandate can only be implemented if the peacekeeping mission has the lasting trust and

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confidence of all the parties involved. Therefore, the term intelligence is often replaced with 'military information'.⁶

If the gathering of information is perceived to be too aggressive, it will be considered 'espionage' and will most likely affect the trust of the parties in the neutrality of the force and as such weaken or even undermine the whole operation. This problem can also arise within the peacekeeping force itself⁷, particularly if troop contributing nations disagree about the solution to the conflict, because they have particular relations with one of the parties, have conflicting interests, or for other reasons. This was particularly obvious during the UNPROFOR peacekeeping operation in the former Yugoslavia (1992-1995).

Because the threat in peacekeeping operations is more diffuse and harder to identify, the traditional differentiation between tactical, operational and strategic intelligence - which usually reflects directly on the structure and procedures of intelligence organisations - proves to be counterproductive. Tactical developments can have or develop strategic implications and vice versa. The intelligence structure needs to be flexible enough to allow the permanent exchange, integration and synthesis of these three disciplines. The backlash of this situation is that there is a distinct risk of 'micro-management', when leaders at the strategic level (mis)use their direct access to real-time tactical information to attempt to influence tactical developments.

The knowledge of the parties' intentions will be crucial and actually be more important than their measurable military capabilities.⁸ WHAT do the parties want to achieve, and WHY? These intentions are much wider than just political or military objectives and as mentioned earlier, may seem sometimes irrational. Relying exclusively on sensors and detectors (Istar)⁹ will only provide a partial and therefore most likely incorrect picture of the parties' intentions. It is vital to UNDERSTAND, to grasp the parties. This cannot be done by computers, but only by fully engaging the human factor in all steps of the intelligence cycle, focused

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on studying and understanding the attitudes and aspirations of the parties.

It is commonly accepted that Humint and Osint are the dominating disciplines in Peacekeeping operations. Still, Sigint (Comint) and Imint will be important disciplines too (e.g. [Imint to](#) monitor buffer zones or demilitarised zones; observation satellites are crucial for Indication and Warning). The use of certain intelligence disciplines can be prohibited by the Rules of Engagement (e.g. field Comint). Osint consists not only of the systematic monitoring and exploitation of local and international media and other news sources, but also of the setting up of databases with the names of academics, journalists, NGO workers and others who have relevant knowledge of the area of intelligence interest and can be called upon when needed.

Humint is subject to a number of caveats. Because of the nature of the operation, all military personnel should be considered potential collectors. Logistical and humanitarian convoys cross the whole mission area and can provide very valuable information on the situation there. The same is valid for engineers, medical personnel, and Civil-Military Cooperation (CIMIC) and Information Operations teams. Liaison officers are in privileged position to collect information from the local authorities. All these people need to be made aware of their role as collectors and to receive basic training to carry out this task. But it has to be clear that the use of this wide range of mostly inexperienced collectors -who have to be systematically debriefed- includes a number of risks like “information overflow” and even misinformation. Additionally, many are wary of anything they think might undermine perceptions of their objectivity and intelligence collection is often accused of tainting the likes of CIMIC personnel.

When it comes to local contacts and sources, one should always consider why they want to help the peace support operation (often against their own people). It is quite obvious that their motives are often less noble

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than we expect them to be. This brings us to the importance of the screening of sources and keeping contact and source records, and, last but not least, source protection. The constant rotation of military personnel, every four or six months, represents an additional handicap in an area where confidence and confidentiality are key.

The military peace support force does not operate alone.¹⁰ Most often, civilian organisations (like for example UN Civil Affairs, the EU, OSCE, NGO's), with different corporate cultures, and their own approach to intelligence and security are present in the region too.¹¹ All these organisations collect information. Civilian organisations will need to have access to military intelligence and vice versa. This means that procedures need to be agreed upon to permit a smooth sharing of relevant intelligence, before the start of the operation. The most ideal solution, but most likely wishful thinking, is the creation of a fusion centre, where representatives of the various organisations come together and share and exchange intelligence in an organised way.

In case the military peacekeeping mission is based on ad hoc coalitions (Combined Joint Task Forces), procedures for the sharing of information and intelligence will also be required within the mission, not only to enhance the capabilities of the whole force and ensure force protection, but, also, and not least, to avoid distrust and friction within the force. The UNTAES and SFOR operations provide a good picture of the complexity of intelligence fusion and releasability.¹²

Some practical concepts

- The *Military Intelligence Liaison Officer* concept has existed for a long time in the United Kingdom. The aim is to have a group of trained intelligence officers available with a broad background who could be quickly deployed to any potential mission area, to assist in the planning and preparation of any potential peacekeeping operation (prior to the deployment). They can also be assigned as temporary

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reinforcement in case particular intelligence requirements have arisen.

- *National Intelligence Cells* are actually a very common concept in contemporary peace support operations. One could wonder though whether the NIC concept has always been applied like it should be. Should a NIC be limited to a liaison element or should it act like a mini-CJ2? Taking into account the lack of qualified personnel intelligence services are confronted with, it seems to be logical to limit the role of a NIC to that of a liaison element. It should be underlined that liaison implies the exchange of information and/or intelligence in two directions.

- *JASIC: Joint All Source Intelligence Cell*: During peacekeeping operations, nations can decide to deploy collection assets a battalion or a battle group (BG) normally does not have in its inventory. Examples of this are battlefield surveillance radars, specialised reconnaissance, Field Humint teams, Comint teams. In addition, the BG may have its own CIMIC and Information Operations teams, and a PIO cell under its control. This means that there is a whole range of new intelligence collection assets available to the BG commander. The regular S2 cell will most likely be overwhelmed and unable to adequately use all these assets. The idea of the JASIC would then be to create a kind of intelligence centre with a modular composition, where all the information collected by the aforementioned assets can be collated, analysed and further disseminated. The modular configuration of a JASIC consists of a command element, a CCIRM (Collection Co-ordination and Intelligence Requirement Manager) and an analysis element.

Endnotes

¹ *Activiteitenverslag, Vast Comité van Toezicht op de Inlichtingendiensten, Conclusies en aanbevelingen*, (Brussel:1996) pp 139-140, at

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<http://www.comiteri.be/rapports/rapport%2096nl.pdf> (accessed on 12 November 2002); *Report of the Secretary-General pursuant to General Assembly resolution 53/35 'The fall of Srebrenica', UN Doc A/54/549*, 15 December 1999, at <http://www.uni-frankfurt.de/fb01/INPE/srebrenica.pdf> (accessed on 12 November 2002); *Report of the Somalia Commission of Inquiry, Volume 3, The military Planning System, Military Intelligence*, July 1997, at <http://www.dnd.ca/somalia/vol3/v3c25ce.htm> (accessed on 12 November 2002).

² Bruce Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism* (London: Victor Gollancz 1998) p. 152.

³ Andrei Raevsky, *Managing Arms in Peace Processes: Aspects of Psychological Operations and Intelligence* (Geneva: UNIDIR 1996).

⁴ See CNN-effect and the IRMA (Instant Response to Media Attention)-effect. The latter acronym was introduced by a senior UNPROFOR officer in Sarajevo when a troop contributing nation decided to send a transport plane to evacuate a Bosnian girl called Irma.

⁵ *Lessons of Kosovo, Volume I, Reports and Proceedings of the Committee, Defence Committee, Fourteenth Report* (London: House of Commons 23 Oct 2000).

⁶ Daniel Villeneuve 'Intelligence and the United Nations, Lessons from Bosnia - A Canadian Experience', *Military Intelligence Professional Bulletin* (Oct-Dec 1996).

⁷ Andrei Raevsky, *Managing Arms in Peace Processes: Aspects of Psychological Operations and Intelligence* (Geneva: UNIDIR 1996).

⁸ David A. Charters, 'Virtual War? Virtual intelligence?': *Alternative Visions of Future War and Intelligence* (Lecture at CASIS Conference Ottawa: September 2000).

⁹ ISTAR: Intelligence, Surveillance, Target Acquisition and Reconnaissance

¹⁰ Compare the UNPROFOR and UNTAES operations and SFOR, KFOR. Whilst a UN civilian (SRSG or Transitional Administrator) was the overall chief in the UNPROFOR and UNTAES operations, there is no subordination relation between SFOR and the High Representative, nor between KFOR and the SRSG UNMIK.

¹¹ Pär Erikson 'Civil-Military Co-ordination in Peace Support Operations – An Impossible Necessity', in Woodstock and David (eds.) *Analysis of Civil Military Interaction* (Cornwallis Park: The Canadian Peacekeeping Press 1999) pp. 17-35.

¹² Particularly during the UNTAES operation, Russian officers serving in the force headquarters were convinced that colleagues from NATO countries were collecting information on them. This led on some occasions to tensions within the HQ.