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**MONUSCO: FROM PEACEKEEPERS
TO PEACEMAKERS. OBJECTIVE:
FDLR**

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MONUSCO: FROM PEACEKEEPERS TO PEACEMAKERS. OBJECTIVE: FDLR

Abstract:

MONUSCO¹ is “not in the DRC to react but to act”. Last January, Martin Kobler, Special Representative of the Secretary-General in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Head of the United Nations Stabilization Mission (MONUSCO), referred thus to the current situation of the mission on the country.

“Our position is clear: we are not in the DRC to react but to act, we are not there to deter but to prevent, and we do not only keep the peace, we must make peace a long term reality! With the Force Intervention Brigade and our Unmanned Aerial Vehicles all armed groups are aware now that we have the will and the means to take robust action at any time.”

(Statement of SRSR Martin Kobler to the Security Council. Turning promises into deeds. 13 January 2014)

This document, following the Special Representative’s words, analyses MONUSCO’s current situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), as well as the progress achieved by the Armed Forces of the DRC (FARDC), and the nature of the new MONUSCO objective: the neutralisation of the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR).

¹ The acronyms referring to the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) correspond to its French denominations:
MONUSCO: Mission de l’Organisation des Nations Unies pour la stabilisation en RD Congo
FDLR: *Forces Démocratiques de la Libération du Rwanda*
FARDC: *Forces Armées de la République Démocratique du Congo*

Keywords:

Martin Kobler, MONUSCO, FARDC, Intervention Brigade, drone, UAV, FDLR.

Palabras clave:

Martin Kobler, MONUSCO, FARDC, Brigada de Intervención, drone, UAV, FDLR.

1. BRIEF INTRODUCTION

The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), formerly known as Zaire (1971-1997), has endured a long history of unremitting conflict and is staggering under the strain of the various crises, periods of political turmoil, massacres and violations of human rights. The country gained its independence in 1960, but what with Mobutu Sese Seko's² long-drawn-out autocratic rule and the two wars which ensued, the State has effectively lost its monopoly on the legitimate use of force, largely due to foreign interference. These decades of unrest have put human security³ in the country in jeopardy.

These years of combat and regional instability eroded state capacities and have resulted in the emergence of numerous armed groups which exploit natural resources –notably mineral deposits in the region—in order to finance their activities. Both locals and foreigners vie for these coveted raw materials, thus perpetuating armed conflict⁴.



Figure 1: Geographic position of the DRC and of neighbouring countries. Source: CIA

The civil war in Rwanda came to an end in 1994; this prompted a mass exodus of Hutu

² Mobutu assumed control of the country in 1971, renaming it Zaire, and remained in power until 1997.

³ "This concept includes within the questions to be considered: economy, food, sanity, politics, environment and people individual protection, as well as the communities in which this people live." Laborie, Mario. *The Evolution of the Concept of Security*. IEEE Framework Document. 1 June 2011. Available at: http://www.ieeee.es/en/Galerias/fichero/docs_marco/2011/DIEEEM05-2011_EvolutionConceptSecurity_ENGLISH.pdf

⁴ PALACIÁN, Blanca. "Romper el círculo en el Este de la RDC: conflicto armado, violencia y minerales". IEEE Analysis Document 63/2013. Available at: http://www.ieeee.es/Galerias/fichero/docs_analisis/2013/DIEEEA63-2013_RDC_BPI.pdf

civilian refugees and soldiers who, along with the defeated militia—known as *Interahamwe*, “those who fight together”, responsible for the Tutsi genocide that very same year—, settled in the northeast of the DRC.

Founded by Hutu militiamen, the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR) constitute the subject-matter of the present document. The neutralisation of this armed group has recently become a priority for the Congolese authorities and is now a primary UN objective. The surrender of the M23⁵ rebel group was the result of a more robust action on the part of MONUSCO to support the Congolese armed forces.

In this respect, it is worth noting that the UN has adopted a more proactive approach and the nature of its operations has undergone several changes, namely: the creation of its first-ever offensive combat force, the announcement of new appointments for the mission and the deployment of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAV). It is within the framework of the Addis Ababa PSC agreement that regional cooperation is being strengthened, and the improvements in discipline and in the operational capacity of the FARDC are paving the way for the fulfilment of the next objective: the neutralisation of the FDLR.

2. CHANGES IN UN POLICY

The UN has been carrying out peacekeeping operations in the DRC since 1999. The United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) is the longest-running, most costly mission in the world to date, with some 21,000 uniformed personnel from 50 different countries⁶.

⁵ “Los rebeldes del M23 anuncian el fin de su lucha armada en el Congo”. El País. 02/11/2013

Available at: http://internacional.elpais.com/internacional/2013/11/05/actualidad/1383642968_110904.html

[Accessed November 2013]

Further suggested reading for the topic:

IRIN. “RDC: Comprendre le groupe armé M23”. 26/06/2012. Available at:

<http://www.irinnews.org/fr/report/95733/rdc-comprendre-le-groupe-arm%C3%A9-m23>

[Accessed December 2013]

PALACIAN DE INZA, B. “Is it the end of M23? The need to make a stand”. IEEE Analysis Document 52/2013.

Available at: http://www.ieee.es/en/Galerias/fichero/docs_analisis/2013/DIEEEA52-

[2013_FinDelM23_BPI_ENGLISH.pdf](http://www.ieee.es/en/Galerias/fichero/docs_analisis/2013/DIEEEA52-2013_FinDelM23_BPI_ENGLISH.pdf) [Accessed November 2014]

⁶ Country contributors. Military personnel: Algeria, Bangladesh, Belgium, Benin, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Canada, China, Côte d'Ivoire, Czech Republic, Egypt, France, Ghana, Guatemala, Guinea, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Jordan, Kenya, Malawi, Malaysia, Mali, Mongolia, Morocco, Nepal, Niger, Nigeria, Pakistan, Paraguay, Peru, Poland, Romania, Russian Federation, Senegal, Serbia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Sweden, Switzerland, Tunisia, Ukraine, United Kingdom, United Republic of Tanzania, United States, Uruguay, Yemen and Zambia.

Repeatedly criticized over the years for its apparent inability to meet the primary objectives of its mandate –such as the protection of vulnerable civilians—, current developments mark a milestone in the history of interventions of this kind.

“With the Force Intervention Brigade and our Unmanned Aerial Vehicles all armed groups are aware now that we have the will and the means to take robust action at any time.”⁷

A. THE INTERVENTION BRIGADE: from peacekeepers to peacemakers

In November 2012, scarcely a few months after its inception, the M23 rebel group seized control of Goma –capital of the North Kivu province—thus inflicting a severe blow upon the demoralised Congolese armed forces and damaging the image of the UN troops. Despite the retreat of the rebels a month later, the hostilities did not fade.

The UN’s ineffectiveness when it came to suppressing these acts and the scathing attacks on its management of the situation were the main motivating factors for the adoption of Resolution 2098⁸ by the Security Council in March 2013 by which the deployment of an “intervention brigade” was authorised, enabling offensive combat against armed groups in the region, both from the DRC and abroad⁹. It is the UN’s first-ever offensive combat force¹⁰.

This brigade’s more robust military operations, coupled with the deployment of surveillance drones, will allow for a more solid support to the Congolese Army to defeat these armed groups.

Country contributors. Police personnel: Bangladesh, Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Egypt, France, Guinea, India, Jordan, Madagascar, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Romania, Senegal, Sweden, Switzerland, Togo, Tunisia, Turkey, Ukraine and Yemen.

So far, 69 fatalities have been reported.

Source: United Nations. Available at: <http://www.un.org/es/peacekeeping/missions/monusco/facts.shtml> [Accessed January 2014]

⁷ KOBLE, Martin. *Op. cit.* P.3.

⁸ United Nations Security Council Resolution 2098 (2013). Available at:

[http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/2098\(2013\)](http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/2098(2013)) [Accessed September 2013]

⁹ “MONUSCO shall, for an initial period of one year and within the authorized troop ceiling of 19,815, on an exceptional basis and without creating a precedent or any prejudice to the agreed principles of peacekeeping, include an “Intervention Brigade” consisting inter alia of three infantry battalions, one artillery and one Special force and Reconnaissance company with headquarters in Goma, under direct command of the MONUSCO Force Commander, with the responsibility of neutralizing armed groups as set out in paragraph 12 (b) below and the objective of contributing to reducing the threat posed by armed groups [...]”

United Nations Security Council Resolution 2098 (2013). Available at:

[http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/2098\(2013\)](http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/2098(2013)) [Accessed January 2014]

¹⁰ The Brigade will be made up of contributions from South Africa, Tanzania, and Malawi, who will collectively supply 3,069 troops comprising three infantry battalions, one artillery and one Special force company. The Council envisions the extension of the one-year mandate.

B. THE NEW APPOINTMENTS AND THE CHANGING NATURE OF THE INTERVENTIONS

All the above-mentioned changes were introduced during the first semester of 2013, and some of them brought about further changes in both the military and civil affairs sections of MONUSCO. In April, Lieutenant General Carlos Alberto dos Santos Cruz of Brazil was appointed Force Commander of the mission. In June, Martin Kobler was appointed Special Representative for the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Head of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUSCO). Kobler emphasizes the importance of close working relationships within the team of Heads and Special Representatives in the country and the region and the “unwavering cohesion” exemplified by Mary Robinson, Special Envoy Great to the Lakes Region, in order to overcome the stagnation in the resolution process of the conflict¹¹.

A proactive –rather than reactive—stance is, as a consequence, the UN’s new guiding principle. “We are going to protect the civilians, eliminate and neutralise the threats,” General dos Santos declared. “We are not going to wait for the threat to come here against the civilians.”¹²

C. DEPLOYMENT OF SURVEILLANCE DRONES

The authorisation to use these systems preceded that of the Intervention Brigade, but their deployment is scheduled for December 2013.

In January 2013, the Security Council¹³ approved the use of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAV) –commonly referred to as “drones”—in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The Resolution clearly states that the use of these systems “would not prejudice the ongoing consideration by relevant UN bodies of legal, financial and technical implications of the use of UAVs”.

The UN has adopted these measures prior to these considerations because of the pressing need for swift action. The occupation of Goma represented a serious setback for the mission; nevertheless, the authorization of the Intervention Brigade revealed the full potential of the DRC Army and the pertinence and importance of the UN mission.

¹¹ KOBLER, Martin. *Op. cit.* P. 3

¹² <http://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/peopleandpower/2014/01/congo-general-2014131116336818.html>

¹³ Massod Khan, President of the Security Council, replied in a letter (S/2013/44), dated 22 January 2013, to a preceding communication of Ban Ki-moon (S/2013/43), dated December 2012, conveying the necessity to use these data-collecting systems for surveillance purposes.

Both letters are available at: <https://www.un.org/en/sc/documents/letters/2013.shtml>

The first drone the UN deployed in the DRC is also the first-ever UAV to support a UN mission. The Falco¹⁴ system was procured from the company Selex ES and went airborne on 3 December.

In an interview¹⁵ conducted towards the end of January, Special Representative Martin Kobler explained two UAVs were already operating in the DRC at the time and that three more units were expected to be fully operative between March and April. These systems are intended to perform reconnaissance and surveillance activities prior to the military intervention proper. Kobler also emphasizes their manifest deterrent effect on armed groups –which will find it harder than on previous occasions to cross the border undetected—and their potential utility as control systems to tackle the trafficking of firearms.

If their use proves successful, the UN will most probably deploy surveillance drones elsewhere to support other missions, such as the UNMISS in South Sudan. Nonetheless, the use of these control systems is still a matter of concern, especially after the events that took place after the 11S attacks¹⁶, as they could be misused as lethal weapons.

All of the above notwithstanding, the UN has presented both the brigade and the surveillance drones as purely temporary measures confined to the DRC.

3. THE ADDIS ABABA AGREEMENT. 24 February 2013

On 24 February 2013, the countries of the Great Lakes region signed the Peace Framework¹⁷ agreement with the support of the UN. The agreement was signed by eleven African states: the DRC, Angola, Republic of Congo, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, Central African Republic (CAR), Burundi, Rwanda, South Sudan, Zambia and the Republic of Mozambique. It seeks to prevent unwarranted foreign interference in internal conflicts in the region.

¹⁴ For further information on these systems and the difficulties the UN encountered during the acquisition process, see: LEE, Caitlin. “UN UAV procurement highlights political, acquisition problems”- IHS Jane’s Defence Weekly. 09/12/2013

Available at: <http://www.janes.com/article/28184/un-uav-procurement-highlights-political-acquisition-problems> [Accessed February 2014]

¹⁵ UNITED NATIONS NEWS CENTRE. “Interview with Martin Kobler, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Democratic Republic of the Congo”. 22/01/2014

¹⁶ Cesáreo Gutiérrez Espada & María José Cervell Hortal. “Sistemas de armas autónomas, drones y derecho internacional”. Journal of the IEEE No. 2 / 2013. P. 144 Available at: <http://revista.ieeee.es/index.php/ieeee>

¹⁷ Available in French at:

<https://www.un.org/wcm/webdav/site/undpa/shared/undpa/pdf/PSC%20Framework%20-%20Signed.pdf> [Accessed February 2014]

The military defeat of the various armed groups will remain an unfeasible and pointless objective so long as they find support, shelter and a new stock of military weapons in neighbouring countries. Hence the importance of the signing of this momentous agreement which, together with the international pressure on the M23 rebel group, will be crucial in the resolute battle against the FDLR.

4. EVALUATING A POSSIBLE RE-EMERGENCE OF THE FARDC¹⁸

The DRC armed forces are by far the largest in Central Africa, with approximately 134,250 uniformed personnel¹⁹. The land forces comprise a significant proportion of the military force. However, they cannot ensure national security without the aid of international troops.

A few months ago, all reports alluded to the problems of a poorly equipped FARDC, unpopular with civilians and whose soldiers received meagre salaries. In a country where abuses had become the norm, the lack of due recognition and respect triggered a violent response on the part of the armed forces, which resorted to punishment in order to reclaim their authority.

Moreover, the various reintegration schemes were of little avail and the undisciplined national armed forces now evince the influence of the rebel groups they sought to assimilate. In a 2012 report²⁰, *International Crisis Group* spoke of the spread of illicit activities and the predatory behaviour of the FARDC under the pretext of quelling the activity of armed groups.

The Congressional Research Service 2013 report on the DRC also drew attention to the fact that FARDC 150,000-person troops are not provided with consistent doctrine or training, are poorly and inconsistently paid, and are not given adequate food or supplies. These shortages may encourage looting and other abuses. In the report, it is also stated that the national police, judiciary, and other security institutions also suffer from limited capacity and a reported record of corruption and abuse²¹.

¹⁸ ¿Resurrección de las FARDC? Title taken from the following article, which provides a thorough account of the Army's history and the different stages of the projected reform. BERGHEZAN, Georges. "FORCES ARMÉES DE RDC : Le chaos institutionnalisé?". GRIP. 01/01/2014

Available at: <http://www.grip.org/fr/node/1174> [Accessed February 2014]

¹⁹ IISS. "The Military Balance 2014". Routledge, 2014. P. 432

²⁰ International Crisis Group Africa. "Eastern Congo: Why Stabilisation Failed". *Briefing N°91*, 4 October 2012

²¹ ARIEFF, A. y COEN, T. "Democratic Republic of Congo: Background and US Policy." CRS Report for Congress, R43166. July 2013. P. 12 Available at: <https://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/R43166.pdf> [Accessed February 2014]

A recently published report on child soldiers around the world, which included data collected by the UN up to 2012, revealed that armed groups are not the only ones recruiting minors; there are 20 reported cases of children being exploited and involved in the DRC armed forces²².

In the aforementioned CRS report, it was suggested that state actors often appear more focused on controlling resources and personal power than on establishing security, creating effective state institutions, and fostering socioeconomic development for the country's 75 million inhabitants²³.

Since the Security System Reform (SSR) is viewed as essential to achieve regional security, a number of programmes –including a European Union advisory mission, as well as bilateral and MONUSCO-led ones—have been supported by countries such as the United States, France or China, to name but a few. Most unfortunately, their efforts appear to have been challenged by a lack of strategic planning and hampered by systemic governance problems²⁴.

In spite of an apparent lack of progress, certain signs are indicative of substantial changes. Thanks to an improved training and intelligence programme, the performance of the FARDC between October and November, under the supervision of General dos Santos, attested to a greater degree of effectiveness and discipline, which allowed them to conduct combined operations involving artillery and air support, and encircle the M23. Moreover, no human rights violations have been reported concerning the FARDC on the course of these actions²⁵.

In his report, Secretary-General Kobler stated the following:

“Military successes thus far were brought about by not only the robust military engagement of our Force but through a reinvigorated performance of the Congolese army. Indeed, the FARDC have become more effective and more operational. They have partly improved discipline and streamlined their chain of command. They are better equipped and more regularly paid. This has had a decisive impact on the military success against the M23.”²⁶

Nevertheless, much remains to be done; almost everything, in fact. Mari Robinson, the

²² VV.AA. “Niños y niñas soldados en el mundo”. Alboan, Amnesty International, Entreculturas, Fundación El Compromiso & Save the Children. 2014. Available at:

http://www.entreculturas.org/publicaciones/estudios_informes/ninos-ninas-soldado-informe-2014

[Accessed February 2014]

²³ ARIEFF, A. & COEN, T. Op. cit. P. 1

²⁴ ARIEFF, A. & COEN, T. Op. cit. P. 12

²⁵ IISS. “DRC sets precedents for UN forces”. Volume 20. Comment 1. February 2014

²⁶ KOBLER, Martin. Op. cit.. P. 3

Secretary-General's Special Envoy for the Great Lakes region, noted²⁷ that efforts to reform the security sector should be significantly increased and accelerated in order to expand State authority and to disarm and reintegrate former M23 combatants, including those in Uganda and Rwanda.

5. NEW OBJECTIVE: THE DEMOCRATIC FORCES FOR THE LIBERATION OF RWANDA (FDLR)

20 years after the slaughter of the Tutsi in Rwanda by the Hutus, and now that the M23 has ceased its activities for the time being, Martin Kobler announced the new objective: the elimination of the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR). Along this path of international cooperation, the Congolese government has made a similar statement.

a. Precedents

The woeful events that took place during the spring of 1994 claimed the life of 800,000 Rwandan citizens in a 100-day period; 20% of the country's population died because of the genocide.

In the aftermath of the mass slaughter of the Tutsi minority by the Hutu government, the Tutsi-dominated Rwandan Patriotic Front underwent a reorganization process to wrest control of the country. A considerable number of Hutu refugees who didn't participate in the events fled the country fearing reprisal killings. 1.3 million of them crossed into the former Zaire, along with members of the armed forces, militia²⁸ and the government authorities responsible for the genocide. Those "*génocidaires*" recognised themselves as a government in exile and initiated preparations to return to power in Rwanda²⁹. The Democratic Front for the Liberation of Rwanda, an armed group which gravely hampers the peace process in the DRC, was thus created.

Objectives

The FDLR have officially declared that their sole purpose is that of toppling the Tutsi government. However, they also conduct actions against the Congolese population and cooperate with the Mai Mai militia³⁰. The FDLR is amongst the worst human rights violators in the provinces of North and

²⁷ ONU. "R.D.Congo: enviados de la ONU informan al Consejo de logros y retos". UN News Centre. 13 January 2014

²⁸ Interahamwe is Hutu for "those who fight together".

²⁹ ORTEGA RODRIGUEZ, Maria Paz. "The FDLR as an Obstacle to Peace in the DRC". Peace Review. Volume 23, 2011. P. 176

³⁰ The Mai Mai militia is a confederation of armed groups operating in the DRC with an estimated 8,500 combatants. Armed Conflict Database

South Kivu (Eastern Congo)³¹.

b. Members

The group is estimated to have a force structure of between 2,400 and 4,000 armed combatants³². The greatest difficulty when it comes to the neutralization of this group lies in the fact that its members remain widely dispersed amongst the civilian population.

Although the extremist militants of the group are genocide perpetrators, most of the young combatants recruited in refugee camps are still on a war footing. Based on their age –under 30 in most cases—it can be affirmed the majority of them were not involved in the Rwandan 1994 genocide³³. Their young age is also considered a positive factor for their reintegration into society. Nevertheless, given the ethnic nature of the conflict, the *disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration* process (DDR) will be long and gruelling.

c. Discourse

According to Maria Paz Ortega³⁴, two lines of thinking may be differentiated within the FDLR. The official narrative avoids mentioning the ethnic component and is focused on the “promotion of a real democracy and of an inter-Rwandan dialogue”. The second narrative reflects the fairly radical, anti-Tutsi nature of their true discourse; a discourse more consistent with their heinous actions against the Congolese population than their pro-democracy narrative; for this armed group is notorious for mastering the art of using rape as a weapon, as well as for other despicable crimes, such as the burning of schools, churches, health care centres and whole villages, the recruitment of children as soldiers, extortion, murder and a painfully long etcetera.

d. Geographic situation

Back in 1994, the armed group settled in eastern Congo.

³¹ ORTEGA RODRIGUEZ, Maria Paz. *Op. Cit.* P. 176

³² According to the Armed Conflict Database. [Accessed February 2014]

³³ “Rwandan Hutu fighters in Congo surrendering in large numbers – UN”. Reuters. 11/12/2013. Available at: <http://uk.reuters.com/article/2013/12/11/uk-congo-democratic-rebels-idUKBRE9BA18V20131211> [Accessed January 2014]

³⁴ ORTEGA RODRIGUEZ, Maria Paz. *Op. Cit.*

e. Support

Rwanda has accused the Congolese troops and the government of collaboration with the FDLR, while the UN experts have reminded Rwanda of their support to the M23 rebel group. Governments on both sides have denied all allegations.

f. Funding

The FDLR is reaping profits from its trading activities and the looting of mineral resources in the region.

6. CONCLUSIONS

In the DRC, they are now reaping the fruits of all the changes introduced both by the UN and the government, as well as those derived from the signing of regional agreements and the cooperation work of special envoys. Now that the neutralisation of the FDLR has become a MONUSCO priority, the group has hastily announced its disarmament; they have also expressed their wish to initiate peace talks with the Rwandan government. Nevertheless, the UN takes these declarations with a pinch of salt, as it is not the first time the group announces a surrender of weapons, only to renege on those assurances afterwards.

It is only natural that the UN should be wary of their recurrent, unfulfilled pledges. Furthermore, the hard core commanders of the group were directly implicated in the 1994 genocide in Rwanda and will be brought to justice. Therefore, it seems unlikely that these genocide perpetrators will surrender any time soon. The youngest members, however, may still have the opportunity to integrate into society and to better their lives. It would not be unreasonable to assume that this announcement might constitute a mere attempt to buy time and that the dissolution of the group will only be brought about by the defeat of its leading members, the surrender of weapons and the reintegration into society of the remaining members.

All of the above notwithstanding, much remains to be done and money is not a constraint. Military defeats do not normally constitute a solution to the problem, rather they pave the way for the protection of civilians, the control over the plentiful natural resources of the country and the translation of this wealth into benefits for its citizens, the security sector reform and the improvement of the ailing governance of the country.

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