The Military in Peacekeeping Operations

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United Nations

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The Military in Peacekeeping Operations

Introduction

In 2003, the United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE) Mine Action Coordination Center (MACC) implemented a revised work plan that focused on mandate-specific activities and the UNMEE Peacekeeping Force (PKF) demining assets. The novel and successful integration of the Force Mine Action Center (FMAC) with the MACC represents a first in UN peacekeeping history, as Force demining assets are now coordinated by a single body and they work to International Mine Action Standards (IMAS). Unanticipated national events in mine action in Eritrea in 2002 prompted an opportunity for the UNMEE MACC to demonstrate the key role that military demining components can play in humanitarian mine action when effectively integrated.

Background

Between 1998 and 2000, a devastating two-year border conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea left behind an abundance of mines and UXO in the countries, particularly along the border shared by the two countries. In Eritrea, this legacy compounded an already serious landmining problem—a result of the nation’s long struggle for independence.

After the countries’ signing of the “Agreement on Hostilities” in 2000, the UN Security Council promulgated Resolution 1320, which authorized a UN peacekeeping mission—the UNMEE—as well as established the Temporary Security Zone (TSZ) between Ethiopia and Eritrea. This resolution states that a key mandate of UNMEE is “to coordinate and provide technical assistance for humanitarian mine action activities in the TSZ and area adjacent to it.” In support of this mandate, the UN Mine Action Service (UNMAS) of the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) began implementing a mine action assistance program, establishing the MACC as part of UNMEE in mid-2000. By November 2000, the MACC was fully established. Since then, it has played a leading role in management and coordination of all mine action activities in the Mission area.

2000–2002

Between August 2000 and July 2002, the MACC responded to numerous requests for assistance to non-governmental organizations (NGOs) conducting mine action operations in the TSZ as well as observed the PKF demining and UXO clearance programs. In addition, with the official agreements of the government of Eritrea (GoE), the MACC, during this period, concentrated much of its efforts on the critical need to coordinate all NGO mine action activities and to assist the GoE to build national capacities for mine action. The MACC worked to balance the creation of an indigenous humanitarian mine action capacity and to coordinate the PKF mine action requirements. Indeed, it expended considerable resources in the creation and deployment of the national mine action capacity and ensured that these assets worked safely and efficiently alongside the UNMEE assets. Until mid-2002, this UN mine action structure and support functioned well and served the interests and needs of all affected parties in the country, in particular all those working and living in the TSZ and adjacent areas.

Events of July 2002

Unanticipated national events in mid-2002, however, disrupted the UN mine action operations in Eritrea. In July 2002, the GoE enacted a new national policy for mine action. It issued Proclamation No. 129/2002, which disbursed the entire national mine action configuration and put into place new structures: first, the Eritrean Demining Authority (EDA) and later the Eritrean Demining Operations (EDO). Representing a significant change of attitude within the national mine action programme, this also brought about the loss of humanitarian mine action capacity in the TSZ. The GoE directed a majority of international NGOs (INGOs) to leave the country. By early September 2002, the only non-UN mine action agencies that were permitted to remain in the country were the HALO Trust and RIONCO Consulting Corporation, which is contracted to the U.S. Department of State. The HALO Trust was subsequently asked to leave in June 2003.

Abruptly deprived of essential activities, the UNMEE MACC was forced to reconsider the nature of its mined area and to coordinate the PKF’s mine action efforts. By removing three major mine action international NGOs with less than a month’s notice, the original transition concept from emergency to development mine action for Eritrea had to be entirely reviewed. Thus, immediately following the adoption of the new national policy for mine action, the UNMEE MACC re-examined its mine action role, with a view to realigning its objectives and activities while at the same time confirming its resource requirements.

Establishing the Force Mine Action Center

In the fall of 2002, the MACC prepared a revised work plan focusing on the restructuring of existing mine action elements within the MACC and UNMEE, including resources under command and control of UNMEE PKF, the UN Military Observers (UNMO) and the MACC, to continue to carry out its primary responsibilities as mandated, first and foremost, by the UN Security Council. These are as follows:

• UN Security Council Resolution 1320 (2000): “To coordinate and provide technical assistance for humanitarian mine action activities within the TSZ and areas adjacent to it.”
• UN Security Council Resolution 1430 (2002): “Demonstrating in key areas to support demining.”

The rapid MACC restructuring process focused on establishing an integrated civilian and military mine action headquarters within UNMEE by combining the PKF’s Mine Action Cell (MACC), the Exposive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) Officer and the UNMEE Mine Risk Education (MRE) Cell with the structural components of the MACC, Operations Section. This unique integrated mine action establishment is referred to today as the Force Mine Action Center (FMAC).

At the same time, the United Nation’s responsibility for assistance in national-capacity-building shifted entirely to the UN Development Program (UNDP) and the UN International Children’s Emergency Fund (UNICEF). The MACC now only assists UNDP and UNICEF with their capacity building efforts. With the aim of implementing UNMEE’s mine action mandates, the MACC/P/MACC became fully responsible for prioritization and issuance of all UNMEE mine action tasks. It has both coordination and operational functions covering all aspects of mine action including MRE, EOD, medical coordination, mine clearance, and de-mining for demarcation as well as emergency response function, and as such is responsible for providing support to the PKF in the TSZ and adjacent areas. In this capacity, the MACC/ FMAC is now able to put into effect a consistent and well-coordinated UNMEE
In 2002, the MACC determined a need for a road verification/demining capability for locating presumably deep-buried mines and UXO and for increasing the safety of movement and mobility of the MACC and humanitarian operations in the TSZ. The five to be contracted to do this job was USBA (Pty.) Ltd.

During USB’s contract period until 2003, the UNMEE MACC planned the operations and took the route clearance capability. In mid-2003, with the realization that deep-buried mines did not pose the threat that was initially assumed, the MACC recommended that the contract of USB be not extended. USB concluded operations in Eritrea in mid-July 2003.

In mid-2003, the route clearance/verification contract was won; this time to address the need to clear roads in support of the border demarcation process of the Ethiopian Eritrean Boundary Commission (EEBC) more rapidly as well as to address the existing threat of newly laid land mines (30 newly laid land mines were reported in 18 months). This time, the contract was awarded to MECHM. MECHM has three clearance components: a technical team, a manual team and an MDS component.

**MACC Management and Coordination**

All mine action tasks carried out by the Force demining assets are closely planned, coordinated and supervised by the UNMEE MACC/MACF. An experienced set of both civilian and military staff members of the MACC/MACF is responsible for the receipt of tacking requests, issuance of tacking orders, monitoring of tasks, implementation of quality assurance as well as supervision of activities in completion of task orders.

The operations section of the MACC works alongside the FMAC. Three Liaison Officers (one from each demining contractor) work at the FMAC. They are in charge of directly liaisoning and coordinating tasks that are issued by the MACC operations section. These officers report to the civilian Operations Officer of the MACC, who is responsible for the coordination of the tasks and tacking priorities.

In addition, there are military officers working at the MACF/MACF. These officers are UN Military Observers (UNMOs) seconded to the MACC for specific assignments. For example, two UNMOs act as FMAC MRC Officers; one acts as the Project Officer Demining for Demarcation; one acts as the Field Mine Action Liaison Officer; and one acts as the Mine Action Liaison Officer in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. In total, there are currently five UNMOs seconded to the MACC in rank from Major to Lieutenant Colonel.

The civilian international staff of the MACC are predominantly ex-military staff from a variety of countries. The majority of them have considerable demining and operational management experience. At the MACC, they fill positions such as Programme Manager, Chief of Operations, Operations Officer, Civilian Liaison Officers, EOD Officer, Chief of Information, Logistics Manager, and Programme/Training Officer. As a team, they are responsible for the smooth functioning of the UNMEE MACC.

**Demining Statistics**

Since its inception, the MACC has coordinated, managed or supervised the following clearance operations:

- Clearance of 51,858,794 sq m of land
- Clearance of 9,277 km of roads
- Clearance of 9,739 AF mines
- Disposal of 2,514 AT mines and 46,256 items of UXO

These figures are the result of a combined military and civilian composite of demining operations since the beginning of the MACC through January 2004. They are a reflection of the consistent and cooperation to demining operations across the Mission area—an achievement that has been realised through joint efforts among contributing local authorities, NGOs and Force demining assets.

**Conclusion**

The integration of a MACC into a peacemaking operation has witnessed a successful management of assets coupled with a unique skill base. This is the first time in UN peacemaking history that a peacemaking mission has effectively incorporated into the establishment of the mission structure an integrated civilian and military mine action headquarters. This unprecedented achievement has been accomplished in addition to mine clearance of large areas of land in Eritrea and a significant reduction of the landmine and UXO threat for the local population. Being the first UN mine action establishment to effectively integrate all civilian and military mine action components of a UN peacemaking mission within a single headquarters structure, the UNMEE MACC has the potential to serve as a template for the creation of future mine action centers that are part of UN peacemaking operations where a mine action element is required.

*Photo: cite authors.*

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the needs and goals of the other. As John Wilkinson points out, "...it's the same thing, but different sides of the same coin," and getting those two sides to work in concert with one another is key to the progress of humanitarian de-mining and will undoubtedly benefit both as they work towards the mutual objective of a world safe from mines and UXO.

**Biographical Information**

Hugh Morris attended Sandhurst Military Academy and completed 10 years of military service in the British army where he retired as a Captain. He then joined MineTech International, where he was the Operations Manager, managing various contracts around the world (Bosnia, Kosovo, Nicaragua, Sri Lanka, Iraq, Kuwait, Somaliland, Ethiopia, Afghanistan), many of which involved working alongside different militaries. For the past four years, he has been the Operations Director of MineTech International.

Chuck Meadows is a retired U.S. Marine Corps Colonel with 26 years of active service. His organization, PacTech Vietnam, has been operating in cooperation with the Vietnamese army engineers for the past seven years.

John Wilkinson spent 34 years in the U.S. Air Force (11 active duty and 23 in the Reserves), and concurrently with his time in the Reserves, 23 years as the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). Mr. Wilkinson has been RONCO’s Vice President of Operations since October, 2001, following assignments from both the Air Force and USAID. RONCO has been de-mining with and for the U.S. Army in Afghanistan since early 2002. They also have extensive experience working with military organizations in places such as Iraq, Eritrea and the Central Asian Republics.

Paddy Blissard spent 34 years in the British army, and has worked in mine clearance since 1991. He has studied the demining activities of a number of armies, most recently when advising a Japanese NGO (JAHMS) in Thailand, where the organization worked alongside the Thai army’s humanitarian Mine Action Unit.

**Endnotes**

5. E-mail correspondence with Paddy Blissard, May 11, 2004.

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