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The Military in Peacekeeping Operations

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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 were now coordinated by a single body and they work in coordination with civilian 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 UXOs in the countries, particularly along the border shared by the two countries. In Eritrea, this legacy complicated 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) and 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 agreement 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. 123/2002, which disbanded 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 RONCO Consulting Corporation, which was 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 rationale for carrying out its mandates. By removing three major mine action international NGOs with less than a month’s notice, the original transitional concept from emergency to development mine action for Eritrea had to be entirely revisited. Thus, immediately following the adoption of the new national policy for mine action, the UNMEE MACC reconsidered its mine action role, with a view to realigning its objectives and activities while at the same time ensuring 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.”

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 (MACCE), the Explosive 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 offers UNDP and UNICEF with their capacity building efforts.

With the aim of implementing UNMEE’s mine action mandates, the MACC/FMAC became fully responsible for prioritization and issuance of all UNMEE’s mine action tasks. It has both coordination and operational functions covering all aspects of mine action including MRE, EOD, medical coordination, mine clearance, demining 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
mine action response in the mission area.

MACC/FA/MAC Aspects

The MACC/FA/MAC manages and coordinates a full set of PKF demining assets. These assets currently include a Kenyan Engineer Company, which consists of two humanitarian-trained manual demining teams; a Slovakian demining company, which is made up of both a manual and a mechanical demining capacity; and a Bangladeshi demining company, which consists of manual deminers as well as a mine detection dog (MDD) team. In addition, the MACC/FA/MAC trains foreign African civilian contractors, for road clearance operations, as well as an Emergency EOD field team and two MRE field teams.

The primary role and responsibility of the Force demining assets is to support the mobility and availability of the PKF as well as provide specialist operational capability. Once demining commences, the main focus of work for the Force demining assets will be the clearance of roads and access routes to pillar sites as well as clearance of the actual pillar sites along the delineated border between the two countries.

Current preparations for demining in support for demarcation attempt to deal with the above and to remove UXO from roads and other areas of operation, where all assets work alongside each other in a mutually supportive manner.

The Emergency EOD field team is tasked to support the Force demining assets in their effort to respond to immediate needs for disposing of UXO. Most commonly, UXO is discovered by members of the local population, who report these discoveries to the MACC/FA/MAC MRE field teams. The MRE teams are then responsible for submitting the discovery reports to the MACC/FA/MAC MRE headquar ters, including the MACC EOD team. In most cases, the MACC EOD team is subsequently tasked to dispose of these UXO in the field. The EOD team and the MRE teams have an excellent and effective working cooperation, which enables a quick response to UXO discoveries.

The MACC/FA/MAC MRE teams regularly deploy to the three sectors of the Mission area within the TSZ and adjacent areas, where they conduct community-level outreach training programs, providing much-needed mine risk training to an average of 2,000 men, women and children per week.

The MACC/FA/MAC personnel also conduct landmine safety training for mining personnel, both military and civilian, and other humanitarian assets operating in Eritrea.

In a similar manner, in 2002, the UNMEE MACC planned the operations and tasks the route clearance capacity. In mid-2003, with the realisation that deep-buried mines did not pose the threat that was initially assumed, the MACC recommended that the contract of UXO not be extended. UXO concluded operations in Eritrea in mid-July 2003.

In mid-2003, the route clearance/verification contract was ended; 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 address the existing threat of recently laid landmines (30 newly laid mines were reported in 18 months). This time, the contract was awarded to MECHEM. MECHEM has three clearance components: a technical team, a manual team and an MDD component.

MACC Management and Coordination

All mine action tasks carried out by the Force demining assets are closely planned and coordinated and supervised by the UNMEE MACC/FA/MAC. An experienced set of both civilian and military staff members of the MACC/FA/MAC is responsible for the receipt of tasking requests, issuance of tasking 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/contingent work at the FMAC). They are in charge of directly liaising 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 assets and tasking priorities.

In addition, there are military officers working at the MACC/FA/MAC. These officers are responsible for topic-specific assessments of the UXO (UNMOs) and UNMAS (EODs) for which they have specific assignments. For example, two UNMAS officers at the UNMEE MRE Officers; one acts as the Project Officer Demining for Demolition; 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 task 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, Regional Liaison Officer, EOD Officer, Chief of Information, Logistics Officer and Programme/Training Officer. As a team, they are responsible for the smooth functioning of the UNMEE MACC.

The Future

The largest task yet awaiting the MACCC/FA/MAC is the continuation of coordinating clearance tasks of roads, access routes to pillar sites as well as pillar sites in Sectors Center and West to support the demarcation project of the EEBC. Originally, it was intended that this project would commence in 2003. However, due to political setbacks between the two countries concerning the delineation of their border, the EEBC has been unable to proceed with demarcation. As a result, the task for pillar sites in Sector Center and West of the TSZ remain undecided, holding back the Force deminers to demine the necessary areas in preparation for marking the border.

Pillar sites in Sector East have already been identified and cleared in preparation for demarcation as this was underway prior to the disagreements between the two countries concerning the way ahead of the EEBC. In the interim, while the international community continues to adopt a solution, Ethiopia and Eritrea are continuing to clear the landmines that they have laid. In recent years, all clearance operations and surveys conducted by Eritrean and Ethiopian demining units have been concentrated in the areas where such actions have been affected by the threat of mines and UXO.

Conclusion

The integration of a MACC into a peacekeeping operation has witnessed a successful management of assets coupled with a unique skills base. This is the first time in UN peacekeeping history that a peacekeeping 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 peacekeeping 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 peacekeeping operations where a mine action element is required.

Demining Statistics

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

- Clearance of 51,058,794 sq m of land
- Clearance of 15,945 km of roads
- Disposal of 110,739 AP mines
- Disposal of 2,514 AT mines and 48,256 items of UXO

These figures are the results 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 commitment 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.

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 (Russia, Kosovo, Nicaragua, Sri Lanka, Iraq, Kuwait, Somaliland, Ethiopia, Armenia), many of which involved working alongside different militaries. For the past four years, he has been the Operations Director of MineTech International.

Hugh Morris joined UNMEE MACC in August 2002 as a professional EOD officer. As Chief of Operations, Officer, MACC/FMAC, Hugh Morris is responsible for mine clearance and humanitarian mine action across the Mission area—a role that has been realised through joint efforts among contributing local authorities, NGOs and Force demining assets.

NGOs, continued from page 41

...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 these two sides to work in concert with one another is key to the progress of humanitarian demining and will undoubtedly benefit both as they work towards the mutual objective of a world safe from mines and UXO.

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Notes

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