Regional Quick Reaction Force (RQRF)

Lessons Identified Study

Policy and Best Practice Service
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December 2016

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Executive Summary

1. In 2014, the Regional Quick Reaction Force (RQRF) was established in the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI) as part of the three-year drawdown plan for the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL). The objective of the unit was to perform the role of a Quick Reaction Force (QRF) in UNOCI and to provide *in extremis* support to UNMIL in the event of a serious deterioration of the security situation in Liberia.

2. The present study, conducted by the Division of Policy, Evaluation and Training (DPET) in DPKO-DFS, seeks to identify lessons from the establishment and deployment of the RQRF, including management of the political process, decision-making processes, support aspects, training exercises, and the deployment of the RQRF to the Central African Republic (CAR) in 2015.

3. The study involved a desk review of relevant materials and interviews with representatives from the Office of Operations (OO), Office of Military Affairs (OMA), Logistics Support Division (LSD), UNOCI, UNMIL and the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA), as well as from the Permanent Missions of the United States, France, Senegal and the United Kingdom.

4. Overall, the study found that the conceptualisation and establishment of the RQRF was successful. In particular, the creation of a *pre-authorised* inter-mission cooperation (IMC) arrangement, whereby the Security Council delegated authority to the Secretary-General to deploy the RQRF to Liberia for up to 90 days without seeking Security Council authorisation first, was a significant achievement and milestone in United Nations peacekeeping.

5. Several context-specific or regional factors were conducive to the establishment of an RQRF in UNOCI. These included the long-standing IMC arrangement and history of cooperation between UNOCI and UNMIL; Security Council trust in DPKO and the missions in the region; support of the Host States; geographic factors; the relatively stable security situations of both Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire; and the fact that both missions were in draw-down. In addition, Senegal, which was quickly identified as the preferred Troop Contributing Country (TCC), had an interest in taking on an expanded role in the region and was willing to take on a mobile role and to undertake a significant upgrade of its capabilities to do so. This was crucial in determining the success of the RQRF.

6. Nevertheless, outside of these context-specific factors, several best practices and lessons were identified that may be applicable for future QRF and rapid deployment arrangements in United Nations peacekeeping operations. In particular, the structure, composition and mechanism of the RQRF were well conceived and should be considered as a model for future RQRFs. The decision-making procedures, which were tested in a Command Post Exercise (CPX), were found to work well and are replicable. While there were some general challenges in organising the CPX and the later Field Training Exercise (FTX), they were found to be critical in identifying gaps in the process, which could then be addressed. It is recommended that future RQRF proposals factor regular exercises into the planning.

7. A key factor in the establishment of the RQRF was communication. For example, the creation of a pre-authorised IMC arrangement was the result of careful and considered negotiations undertaken by the IOT, whereby concerns of the Council were addressed without having to

depart significantly from the original concept. Similarly, Senegal was involved in the process from very early on, and was consulted on and approved every aspect, while regular VTCs were held with the missions to inform them of progress. Ongoing communication was key to managing expectations and ensuring all stakeholders were on the same page.

8. The study also identified several challenges. In particular, the RQRF represented a new way of operating in United Nations peacekeeping and therefore raised new logistical requirements and challenges, such as how to configure a unit to operate in different environments. The similarity between the environments of Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire, combined with the close proximity of the two countries, reduced the logistical challenges somewhat; however, further consideration will have to be given to the issues of RQRF configuration and strategic lift in the future. Furthermore, mission financial responsibilities were unclear and payments to the TCC from the RQRF's deployment to CAR remain outstanding. In the future, a clear financial agreement should be put in place that is understood by the missions as well as the TCC.

9. Further, there remain some ongoing areas of contention that would require resolution in the future. These include whether it would have been beneficial to attach a helicopter unit to the RQRF and what role the RQRF should play while stationed in the Host mission – with Senegal maintaining that overuse of the RQRF in Côte d'Ivoire caused excessive wear-and-tear on their equipment, which could have been an issue if/when it was required to deploy rapidly.

10. While the RQRF was never required to deploy to Liberia, in late 2015 the Secretary-General requested the Security Council authorise the temporary deployment of 300 personnel from the RQRF to CAR to support the visit of Pope Francis in the context of heightened tensions and a rapid increase in violence. The deployment required considerable interaction between all stakeholders and was successfully planned in one month. The mission reported that the operational capabilities of the RQRF in terms of mobility, training and firepower meant that they undoubtedly added value on the ground during a precarious period, although it was noted that caveats contained in the CONOPS meant that the mission could not take full advantage of their capabilities and mobility.

11. Looking to the future, many interview participants expressed a desire to see how and whether the RQRF concept could be replicated in other peacekeeping missions. While this is certainly a worthy goal, it must be noted that we are unlikely to see the same confluence of regional and historical factors that contributed to the RQRF's success in this case. Therefore, further work will have to be done in obtaining agreement from the Security Council to expand the pre-authorised IMC to cover other missions; convincing existing and new TCCs to be more flexible in their deployments; addressing reimbursement issues; obtaining the consent of (possibly hostile) Host States; and overcoming logistical challenges.

Introduction

12. The Regional Quick Reaction Force (RQRF), established in the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI) in 2014, was conceived as part of the three-year drawdown plan for the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) as set out in Security Council Resolution 2066 (2012). The objective of the unit was to perform the role of a Quick Reaction Force (QRF) in UNOCI and to provide *in extremis* support to UNMIL in the event of a serious deterioration of the security situation in Liberia.

13. In 2015, the last phase of the drawdown of UNOCI commenced and by mid-2017, the Mission should be closed. In this context, discussions have been occurring on how to provide UNMIL with an over-the-horizon arrangement in the event of a serious deterioration of the security in Liberia[1], with the potential relocation of the RQRF to Mali being explored.[2] However, irrespective of the future arrangements, valuable lessons can be drawn from the RQRF experience for future QRF and rapid deployment arrangements in United Nations peacekeeping operations.

Scope

14. To document these lessons and to inform future discussions on the RQRF concept, the Division of Policy, Evaluation and Training (DPET) in DPKO-DFS undertook a lessons identified[3] study of the RQRF. This study focuses on the RQRF concept as it was conceived in UNOCI and for UNMIL, as well as the RQRF deployment to the Central African Republic (CAR) in 2015.

15. In particular, the study explores a number of issues around the RQRF concept, including:

    - The background and establishment of the RQRF;

    - Management of the political process, including negotiations with the Security Council, the Host States and the Troop Contributing Country (TCC);

    - The overall framework of the RQRF, including the pre-authorised inter-mission cooperation (IMC) arrangements and the decision-making process for re-deployment;

    - Support aspects of the RQRF;

    - The Command Post Exercise (CPX) and Field Training Exercise (FTX); and

    - The deployment of the RQRF to CAR.

16. The aim of this study is to identify lessons on these issues and provide recommendations on the future of the RQRF concept within United Nations peacekeeping. This paper does not

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[1] Security Council Resolution 2295 of 29 June 2016 endorsed the proposal of the Secretary-General, as set out in his reports of 31 March 2016 (S/2016/298) and 31 May 2016 (S/2016/498), to transfer the quick reaction force from UNOCI to MINUSMA following its withdrawal from UNOCI. The RQRF would enhance the operations of MINUSMA and also operate in Liberia in the event of a serious deterioration of security.

[2] On 21, 22 and 26 April 2016 joint analysis was undertaken by OO, OMA, LSD and DPET regarding the options for the short-term future of the RQRF post the closure of UNOCI and pending the full withdrawal of UNMIL.

[3] According to the Knowledge Sharing and Organizational Learning Policy (2015.13) "Lessons Learned" are lessons that have been identified from past actions, projects and operations and which are being applied or taken into account. Until they have been put into practice they are referred to as "Lessons Identified".

address the short-term future of the UNOCI RQRF or the requirement to provide UNMIL with an emergency response capability post the closure of UNOCI as these issues have been addressed in the "Concept Note on the Future of the Regional Quick Reaction Force" of 27 April 2016.

Methodology

17. For the purposes of this study, 16 interviews[4] were undertaken with representatives from the Office of Operations (OO), Office of Military Affairs (OMA), Logistics Support Division (LSD), UNOCI, UNMIL and the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA), as well as from the Permanent Missions of the United States, France, Senegal and the United Kingdom.

18. In addition, on 25 July 2016, a "validation" meeting, attended by representatives of OO, OMA, LSD and DPET, was held to seek consensus on the broad lessons identified during the interviews.

19. *Note on language:* there is some disagreement regarding the terminology "Regional Quick Reaction Force", in particular over the word *regional* as the area of operational responsibility (AOR) for the unit was limited to the sovereign boundaries of Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia – not the West African region as a whole. As addressed below, this issue was raised in Security Council negotiations. Nevertheless, this paper uses the term RQRF as it is the terminology widely used within DPKO-DFS. In addition, it distinguishes the RQRF from other QRFs that are mandated to operate within one mission area only.

Background and Establishment of the RQRF

20. In 2012, General Babacar Gaye, the then Military Adviser, first proposed the idea of an RQRF to respond to potential crises in Liberia. The concept arose in the context of the three-year military drawdown plan for UNMIL, contained in Security Council resolution 2066 (2012) of 17 September 2012, and was based on a strategic assumption that over-the-horizon arrangements would provide temporary security support should the situation in Liberia deteriorate significantly.[5]

21. Consideration was given to establishing a standby capacity in the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), in line with ongoing United Nations' efforts to support regional partners and build capacity to respond to regional security needs. However, in the context of developments in Mali and Guinea-Bissau, ECOWAS did not have the funds or capability to commit to establishing a standby capacity.

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[4] This included a mixture of one-on-one and group interviews with multiple participants. In total approximately 30 colleagues participated in the process.

[5] The Special Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in Liberia (S/2012/230 of 16 April 2012) recommended, "options be explored for an over-the-horizon arrangement in light of the Mission's downsizing". It further stated that options for the rapid reinforcement of UNMIL by UNOCI through inter-mission cooperation arrangements in accordance with Security Council resolution 1609 (2005) and subsequent resolutions would be drawn upon as required.

22. In February 2013, a DPKO-led assessment mission to Côte d'Ivoire recommended that UNOCI should have the capability to rapidly reinforce UNMIL through inter-mission cooperation (IMC) arrangements and that a "UNOCI quick reaction capability should be able to provide support, as needed, to UNMIL and to respond to other crises in the sub-region[6] as required".[7] This recommendation was built upon in subsequent reports of the Secretary-General on UNOCI in June and December 2013.[8]

23. UNOCI was considered the only viable option for the RQRF. As UNOCI was also in drawdown, the RQRF would also contribute to a broader effort to make the peacekeeping presence in UNOCI more flexible and mobile while the troop numbers were being reduced. To further the aim of building the capacity and expertise of regional military units as part of the United Nation' legacy in West Africa, it was determined that the RQRF should be composed of troops from an ECOWAS member state, which could in turn contribute to the ECOWAS stand-by capacity in the framework of the African Standby Force (ASF). For several reasons that will be outlined below, Senegal, which had already deployed a reserve battalion of 455 personnel to UNOCI, was requested to form the RQRF.

24. Following the report of the Secretary-General on UNOCI of 15 May 2014 (S/2014/342), the Security Council, by resolution 2162 (2014), authorised the establishment of a quick reaction force within the authorised military strength of UNOCI for an initial period of one year. The Council also delegated its authority to the Secretary-General to deploy the unit to Liberia for a period of up to 90 days, subject to the consent of the concerned TCC and the Government of Liberia, and requested that the Secretary-General inform the Security Council of any such deployments. The RQRF was declared fully operational in May 2015 and was extended for an additional year by resolution 2226 (2015).

Structure and Role of the RQRF

25. The RQRF was intended to meet three major objectives, namely to:

   i) Serve as a flexible and rapid response capability in the context of the ongoing drawdown of both UNOCI and UNMIL and to allow the successful completion of their respective mandates;

   ii) Enable rapid and decisive action to respond to security incidents in Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia (*in extremis*), while improving the United Nations' capacity to deploy quickly; and

   iii) Build the expertise of a regional military unit, which would feed into the ECOWAS stand-by capacity to respond to regional security needs, as part of the United Nations' legacy in West Africa.

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[6] The original RQRF proposal suggested that in addition to providing an over-the-horizon arrangement for Liberia, the RQRF could respond to other crises in the sub-region, in particular Mali, if so authorized and required. It was quickly determined, however, that including Mali/MINUSMA in the concept was not feasible and thus it was restricted to Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia.

[7] Special Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire of 28 March 2013 (S/2013/197, paragraph 57).

[8] Special Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire of 26 June 2013 (S/2013/377, paragraph 63 and 24 December 2013 (S/2013/761, paragraph 59).

26. The RQRF comprised of 650 personnel, with the required capabilities, equipment and resources to rapidly deploy self-sustained as a unit to multiple and independent locations or, in certain situations, as sub-units. The main body of the RQRF stemmed from the commando, airborne, armoured and Special Forces units of the Senegal army and received extensive training, including from France and the United States. The RQRF included one reinforced mechanised company, two motorised infantry companies and a support company, including a Special Forces platoon.

27. The RQRF's mobility was enhanced by an agreement that all UNOCI and UNMIL military helicopters, including a Senegalese aviation unit consisting of two Mi-17 military utility helicopters that deployed to UNOCI at the same time, would be utilised in both Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia in order to facilitate rapid response and mobility. Senegal initially wanted the aviation unit attached to the RQRF; however, this did not occur.

28. The objective of the RQRF was to provide *in extremis* support to Liberia in situations where it was faced with the threat of a "strategic reversal" of its security situation. It was important that the RQRF would not create a dependency or substitute for incapacity of UNMIL to implement its mandate. In this regard, Security Council resolution 2162 (2014) stressed that the RQRF should prioritise implementation of UNOCI's mandate in Côte d'Ivoire.

29. Nevertheless, the unit had to be prepared to conduct the following tasks in support of UNMIL and the Liberian defence and security forces: i) protect civilians under imminent threat of physical violence; ii) support large-scale crowd control operations; iii) ensure United Nations freedom of movement; iv) protect United Nations personnel and installations; v) support evacuation operations; and vi) facilitate the delivery of humanitarian assistance and access.

Lessons and Recommendations

30. Overall, the structure and composition of the RQRF were well conceived and should be considered as a model for future RQRFs. In establishing a mobile and flexible unit such as the RQRF, it is important to assess its utility when deployed across borders. Two potential options included limiting the RQRF to a central location such as the capital (in this case, Monrovia) in order to backfill an existing unit that is then deployed to address the emerging crisis; or, should a wider area of deployment be required, the commanders of the RQRF could conduct regular reconnaissance visits to the relevant regions. The former option was pursued in this case as it was deemed easier. Should the RQRF concept be replicated it will be crucial to determine how ambitious the RQRF can be in a new AOR and how it would maintain situational awareness.

31. There are differing views on whether it would have been beneficial to attach a helicopter unit to the RQRF. Senegal clearly indicated that it was their preference to have dedicated aviation and they highlighted this as one of the primary obstacles they faced in forming the RQRF. This view was supported by some interviewees, who highlighted the potential benefits of having a helicopter unit attached to the RQRF, such as one line of command. However, other interviewees suggested that dedicated aviation is not integral to the functioning of the RQRF if it has access to aviation assets within the mission. In this case, the arrangements for the shared use of aviation assets between UNMIL and UNOCI enabled the RQRF to utilise the

assets of both missions, which included 10 Mi-8/17s (six in Liberia and four in Côte d'Ivoire). This issue will need to be considered further in any future RQRF deployment.

Internal Coordination

Responsibilities within DPKO and DFS Headquarters

32. Within DPKO and DFS Headquarters, OO and OMA, in particular the Assessment Team and the Military Planning Service (MPS)[9], took the lead in the establishment of the RQRF. A working group, chaired by the Chief of the Assessment Team, comprising representatives from OMA, OO and LSD was established, as well as a timeline for the process.

33. Initially, there were different views on what the RQRF should be. OMA was interested in a reaction force with the capacity for broader regional deployment, whereas OO saw it in more narrow terms as a tool to be used between two specific missions. The Security Council supported the latter option.

34. Turnover of senior managers in the departments caused some delay in the early stages of the development of the concept. In addition, the level of support from senior management evolved and changed over time. Nevertheless, a core group of OO and OMA colleagues at the senior working level continued to push for the establishment of the RQRF.

35. A key advantage in the negotiations at headquarters, and with the missions, was the fact that the same IOT covered both UNOCI and UNMIL. This assisted with coordination, communication and situational awareness. Further, the involvement and influence of senior ECOWAS officers, namely General Gaye, Brigadier General M'Bemba Keita (MPS Team Leader of Africa II) and Colonel Babacar Diouf (Senior Military Liaison Officer), significantly assisted pushing the concept forward, in particular in the negotiations with the TCC.

36. It was initially envisaged that the RQRF would include Formed Police Units (FPU). UNMIL in particular was interested in the inclusion of police as the primary security threats to Liberia were not of a military nature. The Police Division was invited to participate in the establishment of the RQRF; however, they declined to be involved.

Consultations with UNMIL and UNOCI

37. The decision to establish an RQRF was taken at Headquarters and communicated to the missions. Initially there was some reluctance within both UNMIL and UNOCI. UNMIL was uncertain of the purpose given the threats facing Liberia were not primarily of a military nature and had concerns regarding the time it would take for the RQRF to deploy and reach full operational capability (nine days). On the other hand, UNOCI was reluctant to share resources – it has been suggested that no Force Commander would be happy seeing a unit leave their command and this was a source of concern.

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[9] The Military Planning Service (MPS) initially had the lead for the establishment of the RQRF. OMA leadership later transferred the coordination of the process to the Assessment Team within OMA.

38. In order to overcome these issues, regular VTCs were held with the missions at the management level, the aim of which was to inform them of the process and motivate them by communicating the potential benefits of the RQRF (such as the upgrading of the TCC's capabilities). The long history of cooperation between the two missions, combined with shared interests, also helped pave the way for the establishment of the RQRF. Such a concept would be more difficult to implement between two missions with no shared history or interests.

39. Once the RQRF was deployed to Côte d'Ivoire, there was a slight tension regarding its expected role. The UNOCI Force Commander was keen to use the RQRF extensively; however, the RQRF leadership expressed concern that they were involved in too many activities / operations and their equipment was being overused and suffering from wear and tear – meaning they would not be at the required readiness to deploy to Liberia if requested.[10]

40. A further challenge was that the Special Representatives of the Secretary-General (SRSGs) of the missions saw the RQRF as a military concept – it took some time to convince them of the political benefits of the RQRF and the importance of their involvement.

Lessons and Recommendations

41. Ongoing communication between different areas at Headquarters and with the missions (at all levels) is key to managing expectations and ensuring all stakeholders are on the same page. As mentioned, the fact that the same IOT covered both UNMIL and UNOCI greatly assisted communication and coordination; however, this will not always be the case and therefore greater effort will be required to ensure effective leadership, coordination and communication.

42. In addition to the concerns regarding wear-and-tear on equipment, it is also important to note the responsibility of the parent mission to ensure the RQRF is able to commit an appropriate amount of time to familiarising itself with issues in the receiving mission and maintains its readiness to deploy. In order to address this, Senegal proposed than an RQRF liaison officer be deployed to UNMIL Force Headquarters; however, this was not implemented. It remains unclear to what extent the RQRF was able to commit to obtaining situational awareness of UNMIL while stationed in UNOCI. Within the missions, it is also important that there is more cooperation and situational awareness at the strategic level, so each mission is aware of what is happening in the other mission. An ongoing information exchange, including between the respective Force Commanders, and mutual understanding between missions will speed up processes should a crisis occur and the RQRF be required to deploy.

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[10] This will be an ongoing issue for the RQRF's deployment to MINUSMA where there is concern that it will become tied down in operations in Mali.

Mechanism of the RQRF

Pre-Authorised IMC Arrangement

43. An inter-mission cooperation (IMC) framework between UNMIL and UNOCI was originally established in 2005. Security Council resolution 1609 of 24 June 2005 authorised the Secretary-General to take all necessary steps to implement relevant measures outlined in his 2005 report on inter-mission cooperation and possible cross-border operations between the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL), UNMIL and UNOCI (S/2005/135 of 2 March 2005). These measures included joint air patrols; cross-border controls; border crossing points; extended areas of responsibility; pre-arranged, coordinated operations; fully integrated joint mission analysis cells; and the harmonisation of disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) programmes.[11]

44. The RQRF operated within the framework of the 2005 IMC arrangement, with one notable exception - Security Council resolution 2162 (2014) delegated authority to the Secretary-General to deploy the RQRF to Liberia for up to 90 days[12] without seeking Security Council authorisation first. This pre-authorised IMC arrangement was the first of its kind and was a significant milestone in United Nations peacekeeping.

45. As previously discussed, in an additional measure of inter-mission cooperation, the same resolution decided that all UNOCI and UNMIL military utility helicopters shall be utilised in both Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia in order to facilitate rapid response and mobility. This was a crucial factor for the potential deployment of the RQRF.

Lessons and Recommendations

46. The pre-authorised feature of the IMC ensured that no time would be lost by obtaining Security Council authorization should the RQRF be needed in Liberia. As detailed below, the Security Council did raise some concerns regarding delegating authority to the Secretary-General to deploy the RQRF to Liberia. However, the long history of the IMC arrangement between UNOCI and UNMIL and the high level of trust in the relevant DPKO and DFS colleagues, paved the way for the Security Council to approve a pre-authorised IMC. Further consideration should be given to how this type of pre-authorised arrangement can be used in other contexts given its potential utility in fluid conflict environments.

Decision-Making Procedures

47. Under the decision-making procedures developed, the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping (USG DPKO) was responsible for ordering the deployment of the RQRF to Liberia. The USG's decision would be based on the situation on the ground and the respective threat environments in Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia. In particular, the USG DPKO was required to consider the following:

    i)   A request with justification from UNMIL, including a security risk and threat assessment;

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[11] The report of the Secretary-General also recommended the establishment of an operational level subregional reserve force; however, the Security Council did not take up this recommendation at the time.

[12] Security Council authorization would be required for any deployment exceeding 90 days.

ii) Formal communication from UNOCI accompanied by an assessment of its operational requirements, security and risk assessment, and any risk mitigation measures that would be required in order to ensure the continued implementation of its mandate; and

iii) The advice of the Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, the Military Adviser, and the Assistant Secretary-General for Field Support, amongst others, including on the operational requirements, risk and mitigation measures, other options available, and cost estimates.

48. Based on the DPKO-DFS Policy on Authority, Command and Control in United Nations Peacekeeping Operations, when in Côte d'Ivoire the RQRF was under the operational control of the UNOCI Force Commander. If it were deployed to Liberia, it would be under the operational control of the UNMIL Force Commander.

Lessons and Recommendations

49. As detailed further below, the decision-making procedures were tested in a Command Post Exercise (CPX). The procedures were found to work well and are replicable. In particular, the procedures demonstrated that there was a need in this situation for Headquarters to "conduct the orchestra", meaning that it is important that the decision to deploy the RQRF be made by a third party (USG DPKO) based on assessed priority of need, rather than be the subject of negotiations between the two missions. The decision-making procedures represented a clear case where Headquarters has a role in operational decision making within missions.

50. To ensure decisions were made in an expedient manner, UNMIL was required to notify UNOCI when submitting a request to USG DPKO to deploy the RQRF. This simultaneous notification allowed UNOCI to commence its own threat assessment as soon as possible. In addition, the CPX identified that to maximise efficiency there should be concurrent planning activities, meaning that planning for the deployment should continue at all levels while awaiting a decision from USG DPKO.

51. The change in authority over the RQRF in the event of deployment to Liberia was well understood by the respective Force Commanders and was applied when the RQRF deployed to CAR.

Management of the Political Process

Security Council

52. Obtaining Security Council support and authorisation for the establishment of the RQRF was a painstaking process that required sustained engagement and careful negotiation to address the concerns of the Council members. While there was a history of cooperation between UNOCI and UNMIL dating back to the 2005 IMC arrangement, the RQRF model and the delegation of authority to the Secretary-General were new concepts. In order to introduce the RQRF to the Council, the Secretary-General's reports on UNMIL (S/2012/230) and UNOCI (S/2013/197) laid the groundwork by recommending that options be explored for an over-the-horizon arrangement for Liberia, including the rapid reinforcement of UNMIL by UNOCI through the 2005 IMC arrangement. Subsequent Secretary-General's reports then gradually built upon the concept.

53. Most Security Council members were supportive of the RQRF. Overall, the Council saw it as a means to save money and resources and to support the drawdown of UNMIL. There was recognition within the Council that while the missions were in drawdown, there was still a level of uncertainty over the security situation. The RQRF provided somewhat of an "insurance policy" – allowing the missions to draw down while still providing some reassurance to the Council that any change in the security situation could be addressed.

54. The United States in particular was an avid supporter of the RQRF. Like the United Nations, it viewed the RQRF as a contribution to building a West African standby brigade under ECOWAS, which was an important goal for the United States.

55. The Council did agree that the RQRF should not be a standby force in UNOCI, but rather that it should also act as a QRF with regular tasks. This was for two reasons. Firstly, the Council was reluctant to have a unit with a different mandate and chain of command than the others within UNOCI. Secondly, given the RQRF was seen as a way to support mission drawdown of UNOCI as well, there was some expectation that it would fill the gaps of contingents that had been withdrawn.

56. Certain Security Council members had three additional concerns that had to be addressed. Firstly, they did not want to give the Secretariat the prerogative to move troops around the region, thereby removing such authority from the Council itself. Secondly, there was concern that Liberia would dominate the RQRF resource, using it to fill gaps in mandate implementation or underperformance. Thirdly, the Council members did not support the idea of the RQRF being made available to respond to crises in other countries the sub-region.

57. In order to understand the views of the Council, the IOT met with all members individually and convened a meeting of the 15 Security Council experts to have concerns tabled and addressed. These discussions resulted in the following compromises:

   - To address the concern that the Secretariat would be given *carte blanche* to deploy the RQRF, a maximum of 90 days was placed on the deployment. The 90 day time frame was based on an assumption that this would be enough time for the RQRF to "hold the fort" in a crisis while another unit was prepared for deployment.

   - In order to avoid Liberia dominating the RQRF resource, it was emphasised that the UNOCI mandate would be given priority.

   - Finally, the Security Council resolution 2162 (2014) did not use the word "regional". The resolution instead authorises the establishment of a "quick reaction force to implement UNOCI's mandate … and to support UNMIL". No authorisation was provided to deploy the RQRF elsewhere in the region under the pre-authorised IMC arrangement.

58. In their negotiations, the Security Council members were adamant that the conditions of the RQRF be made very clear. As such, the resolution required considerable drafting and fine-tuning to ensure all Members agreed on the language.

Lessons and Recommendations

59. Several context-specific or regional factors were conducive to the establishment of an RQRF in UNOCI. Firstly, the long-standing IMC arrangement and history of cooperation between

the missions meant there was already a high level of Security Council trust in the United Nations activities in the region. Secondly, the fact that Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire are neighbouring countries, had relatively stable security situations, and were in drawdown assisted in easing Security Council concerns regarding taking the step of delegating authority to the Secretary-General.

60. The approach taken by the IOT was also crucial in gaining Security Council support. Steps such as introducing the concept to the Council slowly, meeting with Council members individually and gaining the agreement of the Host nations prior to going to the Council paved the way for successful negotiations, whereby concerns of Council members were addressed without having to depart significantly from the original concept.

61. The Council agreed that the RQRF should not be a standby force, but should have tasks within the host mission mandate. However, as detailed earlier in this paper, there was a period where the RQRF leadership felt that the RQRF was being overused within UNOCI, leading to wear and tear on their equipment. Expectations held by the Security Council, the TCC and DPKO-DFS regarding the expected tasks of an RQRF should be managed early in the process.

Troop Contributing Country (TCC)

62. As already mentioned it was decided early on that the TCC should come from the region. The professionalism of the Senegalese armed forces, their experience in United Nations peacekeeping, including in Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire, and the country's democratic track record made Senegal the preferred candidate for the role.

63. Senegal was subsequently approached with the idea of forming an RQRF and they were open to the idea. Senegal's overarching motivation for agreeing to the concept was their ongoing commitment to peacekeeping, a sense of responsibility to contribute to peace and security in the West Africa region[13], and a willingness to adapt to new methods of achieving these goals.

64. At the time, Senegal had troops deployed to UNOCI, where it formed a reserve battalion. However, as it stood, the Senegalese contingent in UNOCI was often tied down, under-equipped and had little flexibility. Therefore, the unit was totally restructured with adjustments to the equipment, training and mind-set of the unit.

65. Discussions on the process of transforming the reserve battalion into an RQRF occurred with Senegal at a leadership level through the Permanent Mission, a senior-level visit to Senegal and the hosting of a Senegalese delegation of experts at United Nations Headquarters. General Gaye and Colonel Diouf played a key role in negotiating requirements with Senegal.

66. Senegal specified under what conditions it would form an RQRF – namely what tasks it would be willing to perform and how it would be organised. They had some reservations over the initial proposal for the structure and role of the RQRF. Based on the draft Statement of

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[13] Senegal first participated in a peacekeeping operation in 1960 (UN Operation in the Congo – UNOC). Since then it has deployed personnel in 25 UN-led peacekeeping operations. Senegal has also contributed to all ECOWAS missions and is the lead of the francophone African Standby Force (ASF) brigade in ECOWAS.

Unit Requirements (SUR) that was provided to Senegal, they expressed the following concerns:

- Firstly, Senegal was opposed to the initial proposal that Mali be included in the RQRF concept. They argued that the different operational environment and terrain between Mali (desert) and Liberia/Côte d'Ivoire (forest) would make it too difficult for the RQRF to prepare and perform, as different equipment, training and familiarisation would be required for each theatre. The Security Council supported this view.

- Secondly, they recognised that an RQRF would have to be light, agile, self-sustaining and avoid heavy equipment; however, from the perspective of the TCC, the SUR had few details on how to achieve this.

- Thirdly, Senegal argued that the RQRF should not be required to perform sector missions as well as have RQRF responsibilities (as suggested in the SUR). In order to deploy rapidly as an RQRF it needed to be regularly exercised so that it could understand the terrain, know how to get to Liberia etc. This could not occur to an adequate degree if it were involved in sector missions.

67. In order to comply with the SUR, Senegal required a full upgrade of its equipment – from generators to armoured personnel carriers (APCs). The costs of upgrading the equipment were entirely borne by the Senegalese government.

68. The Senegalese forces benefited from existing bilateral training programs, including from the United States Africa Contingency Operations Training and Assistance (ACOTA) program.[14]

69. While in Côte d'Ivoire, the RQRF participated in multiple employments across the country for the purpose of operational readiness training. Senegal found this was causing rapid wear and tear on their equipment and expressed dissatisfaction to DPKO.

Lessons and Recommendations

70. Senegal was involved in the process from very early on, and was consulted on and approved every aspect, including the development of the operational concept (which was developed with the participation of technical experts) and the SUR. The way Headquarters interacted with the TCC should be considered as a model for the future. In addition to Senegal being consulted on every aspect, there was a strategic use of Senegalese officers within DPKO-DFS to help develop the relationship.

71. Senegal was a fairly obvious choice to take on this role – its army was professional and had experience in peacekeeping in both Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire; the country had a democratic track record; the government was ready and willing to take on an expanded role; several of the United Nations officers involved in the establishment of the RQRF were also Senegalese (thereby improving communications and understanding of their needs and motivations); and Senegal fit with the United Nations and United States' goal of improving capabilities in the

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[14] The ACOTA program provides extensive field training for African peacekeepers, plus staff training and exercises for battalion, brigade, and multinational force headquarters personnel. (http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2013/02/203841.htm)

region. It is quite unlikely that such a convergence of factors will arise again when seeking a TCC to form an RQRF. Therefore, consideration will have to be given to what characteristics of a TCC are necessary versus nice to have, and how to manage the relationship with the TCC when asking them to take on a new and expanded role.

72. An important factor in an RQRF is a TCC that is willing to be mobile from the start. Some TCCs indicate they are willing, but with the caveat that they would require approval from their government before deploying – this is not practical in a crisis situation. The willingness of Senegal to be mobile and to upgrade its capabilities was crucial in determining the success of the RQRF. As a result of Senegal's commitment, the unit could now be considered the highest quality QRF in United Nations peacekeeping.

Host States

73. The relationship between UNOCI and UNMIL with their respective host states had been good throughout the longstanding deployment of both missions. In December 2014, the governments of Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire were informed in writing of the intent to establish an RQRF in UNOCI based on the IMC arrangement. The host states raised no objections to the proposal. The acquiescence of both host states to the establishment of the RQRF was vital in ensuring the concept became a reality. While both host states enjoyed good relations with the missions and could see the benefits of the RQRF to their countries, this may not be the case in other regions and hence may be a significant hurdle in attempting to establish an RQRF in another mission.

Logistics

74. The RQRF represented a new way of operating in United Nations peacekeeping and therefore raised new logistical requirements and challenges, such as how to configure a unit to operate in different environments. Early on in the process, this raised some communication issues. On the one hand, OMA and Senegal required advice from LSD on what resources and equipment would be necessary to ensure the RQRF was mobile. On the other, LSD needed information on the precise requirements of the RQRF in order to provide such advice. This created somewhat of a vicious cycle as each side was waiting on the other to provide information.

75. The RQRF was required to be self-sustained, with integral support and maintenance elements, to sustain its operations at permanent and temporary deployment locations. According to the Concept of Operations (CONOPS), the RQRF was required to be capable of deploying to Liberia in three phases to achieve full operating capability no later than nine days after a formal request from UNMIL for support. A key challenge in adhering to this timeline was determining the procedures to allow a lift capability at short notice to transport the RQRF and its equipment.

76. The Field Training Exercise (FTX) demonstrated that the original support and movement plans developed were inadequate to move the RQRF personnel and equipment by air and sea within nine days. The RQRF could only deploy an advance party (150 personnel) by helicopters without Contingent Owned Equipment (COE) within 48 hours of USG DPKO's approval. The only way the RQRF could deploy 150 personnel *with* command and support elements to Liberia within 48 hours was by road movement; however, this could only be

made possible if mobility by road improved. Further, moving the RQRF by road may not be ideal, as it is difficult for the troops to travel for days in bad conditions by road and then be expected to engage in a crisis situation. In order to meet the nine-day timeline for the deployment of the main body of the RQRF, a combination of land, air and sealift would have to be explored.

77. The Command Post Exercise (CPX) demonstrated that the UNOCI and UNMIL support plans required synchronisation as it was evident that each mission was not completely aware of the conditions and requirements in the other mission. Following the exercise, it was recommended that the missions be requested to develop and maintain a joint RQRF support plan under the coordination of LSD; however, this was not taken forward.

78. In the future, the SUR will have to be examined closely to determine whether it can actually be delivered. The RQRF had many large heavy vehicles that are difficult to move to another theatre. While the equipment is impressive, questions have to be asked about the necessity of all of this equipment given the time and effort to move it to a new theatre. The requirement for self-sustainment will always compete with the capabilities of the unit.

79. There is a requirement to address reimbursements for mobile units such as the RQRF. According to Senegal, it was not reimbursed for certain equipment, such as tents and generators that were placed on standby for rapid deployment. Furthermore, the Contingent Owned Equipment (COE) Manual indicates that reimbursement rates are based on the generic fair market value (GFMV) of major equipment. Several factors are taken into consideration to calculate the GFMV[15]; however, the level of use of equipment over a certain period of time is not factored into costs. This is relevant to the RQRF because mobility causes wear and tear on equipment at a faster rate than if the unit (and therefore equipment) are static, yet the reimbursement rates are the same.

80. According to the COE manual, if equipment is damaged in battle, T/PCCs assume liability for each item of value when the GFMV is below the threshold value of $250,000. An issues paper for the COE working group will propose this be changed to 10% of the market value of equipment to give more incentive to TCCs, as under the current regime it is not in the interest of TCCs to use their equipment and it certainly not in their interest to use equipment intensively as required by a RQRF. These financial factors almost prevented the CAR deployment; however, a decision was made to pay a premium for the rapid deployment.

Lessons and Recommendations

81. Configuring the RQRF for different operating environments is a key logistical challenge. The similarity between the environments of Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire reduced this challenge somewhat; however, this is less likely to be the case in future scenarios (e.g. if the RQRF relocates to Mali).

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[15] The GFMV is defined as the equipment valuation for reimbursement purposes. It is computed as the initial purchase price plus any major capital improvements, adjusted for inflation and discounted for any prior usage, or replacement value, whichever is less. The GFMV includes all issue items associated with the equipment in the performance of its operational role.

82. The RQRF experience demonstrated that the United Nations faces serious challenges in moving units quickly and easily. In this instance, the issue of strategic lift was offset to a degree by the fact that Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire are neighbouring countries and therefore some deployment could occur by road; however, this could not happen in the timelines that were set down. The lack of strategic ability to move meant that if the RQRF had to deploy fully it would not be able to do so in a timely manner; or, as with the deployment to the Central African Republic (CAR), it could move quickly but without all of its equipment (discussed further below). Thus, in this regard, the reality of the RQRF was not necessarily what was originally envisaged. Further consideration will have to be given to timely strategic lift in any future RQRF deployment, including pre-identifying a process to move the RQRF by air, particularly if the distances to be travelled will be greater.

83. Mission financial responsibilities were unclear, and there remains some confusion over what each mission should be expected to pay for. For example, there was some expectation that UNOCI should pay for the RQRF's rations while it was deployed in Liberia. Further, it is noted that payments to the TCC from the RQRF's deployment to CAR are still outstanding. In the future, a clear financial agreement should be put in place that is as fair as possible to the host and receiving missions as well as the TCC.

84. Current support frameworks are not configured for new concepts such as the RQRF. In order to allow DPKO-DFS to introduce new and innovative ideas, thought should be given to ways in which policies and frameworks could be adapted or changed more quickly to speed up processes and create incentives for TCCs to commit to new concepts. Finally, in future RQRF scenarios the aim should be to develop an integrated support plan. This will require increased communication between the missions, with Headquarters potentially playing a coordination role.

RQRF Exercises

85. In order to test the assumptions behind the planning and organisation of the RQRF, two exercises were conducted, a Command Post Exercise (CPX) in February 2015 and a Field Training Exercise (FTX) in April 2015. A number of issues that arose in the exercises (e.g. logistical challenges) have already been addressed and will not be repeated here.

Command Post Exercise (CPX)

86. The CPX ran from 2-6 February 2015 and was designed to test the decision-making procedures in place to order the deployment of the RQRF from UNOCI to UNMIL. The exercise included daily VTCs and extensive staff involvement from a range of actors from Headquarters, UNOCI and UNMIL. Senior level staff, including USG DPKO and USG DFS as well as the Special Representatives of the Secretary-General (SRSGs), Force Commanders and Directors of Mission Support (DMS) from UNOCI and UNMIL, participated in the exercise. The scenario involved UNMIL requesting USG DPKO authorise the deployment of the RQRF to Liberia due to deterioration in security. Initially in the scenario, the security situation in Côte d'Ivoire was relatively calm; however, as the exercise went on security threats also arose in Côte d'Ivoire, forcing USG DPKO to make a decision on which country had the greatest need for the RQRF.

87. The exercise demonstrated that the timeline of the approval process was realistic, but required considerable coordination across the two missions and Headquarters. The processing of Code Cables, Notes and other official documents in a timely manner was a challenge.

88. The CPX was conducted at a time when a detailed movement plan (including load lists based on actual COE for deployment, cross-border formalities, and financial implications) was not yet in place. As such, the CPX was unable to determine whether the strategic lift capacity (air/sea) available through the IMC arrangement was sufficient or not for a complete deployment in three phases over 10 days.[16]

89. Support elements were not fully taken into account during the exercise. For example, initial briefings and communications from the missions did not cover logistics or support issues and the logistics assumptions of the two missions differed. On the support side, most of the information that was covered was on movement of the RQRF and neglected sustainability of troops in Liberia. The exercise did demonstrate the requirement for the missions to maintain standing contingency and support plans that could be quickly utilised.

90. The CPX also demonstrated that the challenges of putting into action a francophone infantry battalion from Côte d'Ivoire in an operational area in Liberia required further consideration, particularly with regards to i) which areas the RQRF could operate in straight away; and ii) where the RQRF could relieve existing UNMIL elements in order to free them up for operations in troubled areas.[17]

91. Further, it highlighted that both missions should have contingency plans to respond to a crisis should the RQRF deploy or not deploy to Liberia, for example, how UNMIL would respond to a crisis if the RQRF was not able to deploy and how UNOCI would deal with any threats in the absence of the RQRF.

Field Training Exercise (FTX)

92. The FTX took place in April 2015 and involved a deployment of the RQRF from UNOCI to UNMIL. The exercise was intended to validate the logistics arrangement and timelines to deploy the RQRF to Liberia as well as to demonstrate to the Security Council that the RQRF was operational.

93. To make the concept work, only a small portion of the unit (50 personnel) and no equipment was moved. In addition, the exercise did not include airlift. Given these limitations, it is unclear whether the exercise was fully indicative of the challenges that would arise in a real deployment. For example, how equipment would be cleared across borders was not tested and therefore any issues were not addressed. That said, the FTX was successful in highlighting some issues, such as how to integrate the RQRF into existing structures (such as compounds), once they arrived in Liberia.

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[16] Exercise "Swift Shield": RQRF Command Post Exercise Lessons Learnt
[17] Exercise "Swift Shield": RQRF Command Post Exercise Lessons Learnt

Lessons and Recommendations

94. There were some general challenges with organising the exercises. At Headquarters, few of the staff involved had experiences and/or familiarity with such exercises, which slowed down the process to some extent. Further, due to competing priorities some staff were not eager to devote the time required to participate in the exercises. The involvement of the USGs was crucial in conveying the importance of the exercise to all staff and gaining their full participation.

95. From the mission side, initially UNOCI was not clear on the importance of the exercise and both missions had other priorities and resource considerations. As such, the missions needed to be convinced of the importance of their involvement.

96. That said, overall the exercises were generally well controlled and were critical for identifying gaps in the process, which could then be addressed. In addition, the exercises built confidence amongst staff and gave them ownership over the process.

97. Given the utility of the command post and field exercises, it is recommended that, where possible, they be run on a more regular basis. This is particularly important with a function that is used in crises, such as the RQRF. Given high staff turnover and changing conditions on the ground, if such functions are not exercised regularly they may fail when a crisis actually occurs. In other words, if you do not exercise a function regularly, you are likely to lose that function.

98. Such exercises are generally not budgeted for and the initial outlay can be very expensive. However, given the potential benefits of conducting exercises, consideration should be given to how the costs of these exercises could be built into mission budgets and whether certain exercises should be made mandatory for the missions.

Central African Republic (CAR) Deployment

99. In late 2015, the Central African Republic was witnessing heightened tensions and a rapid increase in violence. At the same time, the country was in the process of preparing for the visit of Pope Francis and upcoming elections. In order to deal with this potentially volatile situation, and recognising that MINUSCA was still in the deployment phase of its authorised military and police units, the Secretary-General requested that the Security Council (S/2015/894) authorise the temporary deployment and immediate transfer to MINUSCA of a detachment of 300 personnel from the RQRF deployed in UNOCI. It was requested that the personnel be deployed for a period of eight weeks after its induction, under regular IMC arrangements.

100. The letter from the Secretary-General proposed that the detachment would provide additional security at a critical time, including by undertaking robust patrolling to deter spoilers and protect civilians, as well as rapid reaction tasks. The overall aim of the deployment was to enable MINUSCA, in conjunction with other arrangements in place, to significantly improve the security situation in its area of operations, thus ensuring a safer and more secure environment for the elections and enhancing security for the papal visit.

Support from Stakeholders

101.   In order to ensure the timely redeployment of the personnel and assets from UNOCI to MINUSCA, the Security Council was approached in parallel with the TCC, the host country and Côte d'Ivoire and was asked to grant advance approval while the consent of other parties was being obtained. The Security Council supported the deployment as it recognised that the need in CAR was great and the security situation in Côte d'Ivoire was such that UNOCI could manage without the full RQRF.

102.   The Government of CAR also did not object to the deployment as it recognised the requirement for extra support given the elections and papal visit. In particular, the Government was eager to host Pope Francis, and the presence of the RQRF in CAR played a vital role in demonstrating to the Vatican that the required security was available for the Pope's visit.

103.   Senegal too was willing to deploy and because of their operational readiness were able to deploy within a short timeframe. As with the establishment and deployment of the RQRF to UNOCI, Senegal was consulted on and involved in all aspects of the deployment to CAR. While the original request was simply to have an increased force presence in CAR, Senegal stated it would not deploy just to bolster numbers, but would expect to utilise its capabilities. To this end, they sent a delegation to CAR ahead of time to assess the situation and the capabilities that would be required.

104.   Within Headquarters, there was a difference of opinion as to whether the RQRF should have been deployed to CAR. On the one hand, it has been argued that the deployment to CAR did not meet the conditions of *in extremis* support and therefore potentially set a precedent that the RQRF could be used to fill gaps in another mission's ability to implement its mandate. On the other hand, it has been argued that the condition of *in extremis* support only applies to the pre-authorised IMC between UNMIL and UNOCI, whereas the RQRF deployed to CAR under regular IMC arrangements.

105.   From the perspective of MINUSCA, there were mixed views on the deployment of the RQRF. The operational side of the mission had requested additional capabilities, and so welcomed the deployment. However, the deployment of additional troops proved challenging for mission support, which was struggling to provide the required support (such as accommodation) for existing units in CAR, let alone additional units. To overcome this issue, it was requested that the RQRF deploy with all required equipment to be self-sustaining.

Deployment

106.   The deployment of the RQRF to CAR was planned in one month. This required considerable interaction between all stakeholders (DPKO-DFS, MINUSCA and UNOCI, the TCC and the Host State), which went smoothly. The initial proposal was to deploy 200 personnel; however, Senegal would not deploy less than a company. In the end, they sent a mechanised company (170 personnel) plus support (total 250).

107.   In addition, 16 armoured personnel carriers (APCs) were deployed to CAR. While this was the greatest challenge of the deployment, overall there was good coordination between DFS, UNOCI and MINUSCA meaning that the equipment was moved in a timely manner. Further, there was effective coordination with the authorities of Côte d'Ivoire

regarding the export of the equipment. One issue that did arise was that when loading the equipment some of the drivers struggled to back the trailers onto the aircraft. While this may seem like a minor issue, it caused a delay of several hours. It demonstrates the vast range of factors that must be taken into consideration when planning a deployment, right down to the training of the drivers who load equipment. This is particularly pertinent for rapid deployments, where a loss of several hours could potentially have a significant impact on the ground.

108.   In terms of particular actions on the ground, the RQRF was involved in tasks such as securing Pope Francis' visit to a mosque in the PK5 district, a Muslim enclave that had been the site of violent clashes with Christian militias; dispersing armed groups from polling stations; and the removal of barricades that had been erected by protestors. Given the professionalism and capability of the RQRF compared to other units on the ground, it was given tasks that were more challenging and was deployed to particular "hot spots" in Bangui. The deployment was seen as such a success that the mission, as well as the Host State, fought to keep the RQRF for a longer period; however, this request was denied.

109.   From the Senegalese perspective, the fact that MINUSCA FC was Senegalese made interactions easier. However, they indicated it also meant he possibly used the unit more than he would have otherwise. They also suggested that the deployment was good experience for MINUSCA as it is rare that a mission has to prepare to receive a new unit so quickly.

110.   Overall, the deployment of the RQRF to MINUSCA was a success. From the perspective of MINUSCA, the operational capabilities of the RQRF in terms of mobility, training and firepower meant that they undoubtedly added value on the ground in securing Bangui during the papal visit and in the lead up to the elections.

Lessons and Recommendations

111.   Despite the aforementioned successes, several issues that arose would require consideration in the future. Firstly, as previously mentioned, mission support in MINUSCA did not have the capability to receive the unit and therefore the RQRF deployed with all of the equipment it required to sustain itself. While this made sense given the capabilities of MINUSCA at the time, one downside was that given the RQRF was required to set up its own camp, it took three weeks before the RQRF was fully operational, which was time lost. Should the capabilities allow, it would be preferable for the mission to take on tasks such as setting up the camp as this would allow the unit to be operational within days rather than weeks. From the Senegalese perspective, they indicated that they recognise that if a unit is deploying under IMC arrangements it generally means that the mission does not have capacity and therefore the RQRF must sustain and accommodate itself. For this reason, they believe a deployment cannot last longer than 90 days.

112.   Secondly, the CONOPS stated that the RQRF was not to deploy outside of Bangui and restricted the RQRF from performing certain tasks. While these conditions were agreed upon before deployment, from the mission perspective, this was a lost opportunity as the RQRF was one of the strongest units on the ground at the time and yet the mission could not take full advantage of their capabilities and mobility. Ideally, it would be more beneficial if

CONOPS did not contain such caveats so highly capable units like the RQRF can engage in a greater spectrum of activities when deployed outside of the host mission to a crisis situation.

113.   Thirdly, regardless of the security situation on the ground, Senegal would only deploy as a company, rather than at platoon size strength as agreed in the CONOPS. In addition, as previously mentioned Senegal sent a delegation in advance of the visit to conduct a reconnaissance visit. While this certainly had its benefits, it did lead to Senegal seeking to influence the activities of the RQRF based on their perceived insights into what was occurring on the ground and potentially caused some delays. This is a common problem in peacekeeping and strategies to deal with this issue will require further consideration, particularly for forces that are dedicated to crisis response situations where time delays can be more critical.

114.   Finally, some logistical challenges arose. For example, after deploying it came to light that the communications equipment that Senegal possessed was not the same as other units on the ground and thus they could not communicate. In this instance, the mission provided them with the required communications equipment.

Conclusion

115.   Overall, the conceptualisation and establishment of the RQRF was successful. In particular, the delegation of authority from the Security Council to the Secretary-General to deploy the RQRF to Liberia was a significant achievement and milestone in the evolution of peacekeeping. Furthermore, the deployment of the RQRF to CAR, which was not part of the originally RQRF plan, was largely a success, including the planning of the deployment and the impact the RQRF had on the ground.

116.   One major caveat to the above is the fact that the RQRF was never actually required to deploy to Liberia and therefore this aspect of the concept was not tested. Some interview participants did suggest that the RQRF was never intended to deploy to Liberia (being more of an "insurance policy" to aid the drawdown of the missions) and if a real crisis did arise, the RQRF may not have been able to address the issue, but would at best have been an interim measure while other response options were explored. However, at this stage, these remain untested assumptions.

117.   What we do know is that there was overall success in the negotiations with the Security Council and TCC; the establishment of the RQRF and its deployment to UNOCI; and its deployment to CAR. Several specific factors contributed to these successes, including the long history of the IMC arrangement; Security Council trust in DPKO and the missions in the region; Host States that had a favourable view of the United Nations and the role of the missions in their countries; and a TCC that was willing and able to take on this new and expanded role. In addition, the careful negotiations undertaken by DPKO with relevant stakeholders demonstrated the importance of building and maintaining relationships when introducing new concepts into mission environments.

Future of the RQRF

118.   In the short-term, the plan is to deploy the RQRF to Mali, with the ongoing responsibility of providing over-the-horizon support to Liberia. Discussions and planning for this deployment are ongoing.

119.   In the longer-term questions remain regarding the future of the Senegalese RQRF in particular, and the RQRF concept as a whole. Regarding the Senegalese RQRF, the United Nations envisaged it would contribute to a future ECOWAS quick reaction capacity as part of the United Nations' legacy in the region. The establishment of the RQRF has contributed to this goal as Senegal is certified to deploy the west battalion of ECOWAS within the ASF framework. However, how Senegal's contribution will actually play out in the future remains to be seen as there is no agreement or common understanding with Senegal and/or ECOWAS on this issue.

120.   Looking at the future of the RQRF concept as a whole, numerous interview participants expressed a desire to see how and whether the RQRF concept could be replicated in certain missions (taking into account that it is unlikely we would see the same confluence of regional and historical factors that contributed to the RQRF's success in this case). Some interviewees further suggested that each mission could have an (R)QRF force that is tailored to respond to threats in their surrounding region. The idea would be that there is a pre-authorised mandate in each mission to deploy the RQRF to emerging crises in the region, including to countries without existing peacekeeping missions.

121.   While the expansion of the RQRF concept to other missions may be where some would like to see peacekeeping headed in the future, significant hurdles will need to be jumped first – including obtaining agreement from the Security Council to expand the pre-authorised IMC to cover other missions; identifying professional and experienced TCCs; convincing existing and new TCCs to be more flexible in their deployments; addressing reimbursement issues; and obtaining the consent of (possibly hostile) Host States. It also raises a number of questions, such as is it possible to have an RQRF that is not linked to a mission? Should/could an RQRF respond to crises in countries where no mission exists? Addressing these challenges and questions will require creative thinking and innovative solutions to make this vision a reality.