

Besenyó János: Hungary's contribution to African peacekeeping operations: lessons learned

The aim of this study is to present the contribution of the Hungarian Defence Forces in peacekeeping operations in Africa. Hungary has started its involvement in peacekeeping activities in 1989, from the time of “transition” period. According to the executives of the UN, the performance of the Hungarian soldiers has been outstanding in every regard. However these kinds of activities were mostly unknown and still less well-known for the home public. At that time these kinds of operations brought a so called “new wave” inside into military philosophy and mentality. Thereafter we have learned how to run peacekeeping operations, together with how to adapt it into multicultural environment which were totally unconventional for us in that time. As a result of these missions new modes of actions and technical terms were adopted within the Hungarian Defence Forces. Therefore to prepare for new missions we use lots of experiences from past operations although there are still useful observations from previous missions which could be well used for the preparation. Forasmuch in the past few years a new phase of peacekeeping operations has been started. In these missions beyond the UN other organizations are also playing keyholes like Africa Union, European Union, NATO, and regional organizations in Africa (SADC, ECOWAS etc).

How we entered in the African peacekeeping

In the late 1980-s the some of the communist regime leaders realised, that we can't depend on the Soviet Union only, for this reason they began to search other possibilities. They begun to make closer relationship with UN and sent a police unit to Namibia, where they turn out a success. Even so the regime failed but Hungary (mostly the Hungarian Defence Forces and the Police) was increasingly approached by UN organizations to take part in various peacekeeping operations. The first of these missions took place in Angola, soon followed by the one in Mozambique. On these occasions Hungary was entrusted with only „basic” peacekeeping

responsibilities to the all-round satisfaction of the international community. Not much later these missions were followed by various other activities in Liberia, and Rwanda. The Hungarian forces performed outstandingly well both in the specific field operations and as participants in international command and control bodies and represented Hungarian interests in a satisfactory manner. As a result, Hungarian officers were invited to join the New York based UN peacekeeping directorate and were able to gain an insight into the higher levels of peacekeeping activities. This period also saw the birth of the peacekeeping branch of the Hungarian Defence Forces (a Training Centre, with training courses first abroad and then in Hungary). The good reputation of Hungarian soldiers and police officers and their good performance ensured further peace keeping opportunities. Hungary was asked to participate in the Western-Sahara peacekeeping operation with a unit, and later the mission was commanded by a Hungarian Major General, György Száraz from 8 September 2002 to 10 August, 2005. His service was greatly valued not only by the UN representatives but also by the opposing parties.

After joining NATO and the European Union, Hungary realigned its peacekeeping structure according to the new demands, and almost completely withdrew from the African continent leaving only a small military contingent serving in Western-Sahara.

Soon the African continent gained importance once more in the eyes of the USA, NATO and EU as well as with the “new” arrivals such as China, India, Russia, Japan, Turkey and Brazil (Dowden, pp. 484-508. and Tarrósy, pp. 17-33). As a result Hungary found itself once again taking on a more important role in African matters. Northern Africa and the Maghreb region gained special importance not only due to migration, drugs and arms trafficking issues and the increased activities of militant Islamic groups but also due to the growth of its economic potential involving raw materials and resources, such as oil, natural gas, various minerals, fisheries, etc. From the point of view of security policy, the region had gained significance with NATO since the countries of the Maghreb region play an important role not only in the NATO/PfP program and are important participants of the Mediterranean Dialogue but also participate in the war waged against the Northern African al-Qaida groups.

As a sign of growing Hungarian interest, in 2005, I myself was sent as a military (logistics) advisor to the African Union mission in Darfur, Sudan. Not much later two high ranking officers were sent to the Democratic Republic of Congo and later a Sergeant Major to the EU NAVFOR

mission, as well as two officers and two NCO's to the EU training mission in Somalia. In this year Hungary sent 10 officers and NCO's to the EU mission in Mali.

In the followings I would like to introduce those operations which the Hungarian Defence Forces were participated or even up to now still involved in.

African Operations of the Hungarian Defence Forces

One of the first missions with Hungarian involvement was UNAVEM II in Angola (UNAVEM II, 2000). This lasted from June 1991 until February 1995, at first with Hungarian soldiers and later with members of the police, too.

The mission's mandate involved performing the following activities

- Enforcing the terms of the peace treaty
- Supervising terms of the ceasefire
- Overseeing the Angolan Police Force
- Observing elections and verifying their results
- Mediation between the opposing parties

42 officers of the Hungarian Defence Forces participated in the UNAVEM II mission. The Hungarian peace keeping unit was so successful in Angola that the UN Secretary General requested further peacekeeping troops for the peace mission in Mozambique from December 1992 till December 1994. (ONUMOZ, 1995).

The ONUMOZ mission's mandate involved the following activities:

- Enforcement and supervision of the ceasefire between the government and RENAMO
- Ensuring and overseeing the withdrawal of foreign military units
- Disarmament of various armed groups and the collection of arms
- Ensuring the smooth operation of the UN and other international organizations
- Assisting in the reconstruction of infrastructure
- Participation in the electoral process
- Coordination of humanitarian activities, overseeing the question of refugees

51 members of the Hungarian Defence Forces served in mission ONUMOZ many of whom were promoted to key positions in the mission's HQ or served as commanders of the military sections. In February 1995, following the successful completion of the mission in Mozambique, the UN Peacekeeping Council yet again requested Hungarian forces, this time for the UNAVEM III (UNAVEM III, 1997) peacekeeping operation.

The mission's mandate involved the following activities:

- Enforcing the Lusaka Agreement
- Supervising terms of the ceasefire
- Assisting in the creation of government administration
- Reorganizing the armed forces of UNITA into a political party
- The disarmament of armed units and civilians – DDR programs
- Humanitarian Assistance

The Hungarian Defence Forces participated with 20 members in the UNAVEM III mission. This operation was completed in June 1997, and was continued under a new name MONUA with the participation of 26 Hungarian soldiers (MONUA, 2001).

The new mission's mandate involved the following activities:

- Monitoring the re-development of government administration
- Assisting and overseeing the merging of UNITA organizational bodies into the new government and armed forces.
- Elimination of the UNITA armed forces and of military bases, disarmament and integration of armed individuals into civilian society.
- Enforcing the terms of the ceasefire
- Ensuring neutrality of the Angolan Police Force, merging of UNITA security forces, on national and local level, into the Police Force
- Collection and elimination of arms
- Ensuring human rights for the population, rebuilding of civilian society, offering support in the birth and operation of various NGOs
- Supporting the work of humanitarian organizations, co-ordinating the distribution of relief funds.

In September 1993, parallel to the peacekeeping operations in Mozambique, the UN launched an operation in Liberia that ended in September, 1997 (UNOMIL, 1997).

The mission's mandate involved the following activities:

- Ensuring that the Cotonou Agreement is observed
- Supervision of the ceasefire and support of ECOWAS
- Participation in the demilitarization and disarmament process
- Border security, halting smuggling traffic

- Support of ECOMOG, fire arm disposal activities
- Assisting the work of the UN and other humanitarian organizations
- Organizing and overseeing national elections

As a result of previous positive experiences, the Hungarian Defence Forces were able to delegate a military consultant who served as a personal advisor to the political leader of the mission. The consultant, Colonel László Forgács, was part of every military decision made. His recommendations and advice was acknowledged in every single instance by the UN New York HQ.

At the same time, in June 1993, the United Nations began its observer mission in Uganda and Rwanda that lasted till September 1994 (UNOMUR, 2003). The training unit for the operation was led for a while by a Hungarian officer, Captain Viktor Makay, who upon completing his mandate continued serving in Angola.

The UNOMUR mission's mandate involved the following activities:

- Border control mission
- Observation of Hutu and Tutsi military units
- Suppression of arms trade and smuggling
- Prevention of further hostilities
- Trust building activities
- Participation in the signing of the Arusha Agreement

Apart from the above mentioned Viktor Makay, 4 other Hungarian military observers took part in the mission. The next African operation that involved Hungarian units was the MINURSO mission, launched in 1991 (MINURSO, 2012). Since 1997 the Hungarian Police Force has also participated in the operation, but it wasn't until 2000 that the first peacekeeping soldiers arrived to the target area.

The mission's mandate involved the following activities:

- Monitor the ceasefire
- Verify the reduction of Moroccan troops in the Territory
- Monitor the restriction of Moroccan and Frente POLISARIO troops to designated locations
- Take steps with the parties to ensure the release of all Western Saharan political prisoners or detainees

- Oversee the exchange of prisoners of war, and implement the repatriation programme
- Identify and register qualified voters
- Organize and ensure a free and fair referendum and proclaim the results

At the moment a 7-man Hungarian military contingent is serving in the Western- Sahara operation. Although the international community would have been pleased to see participation of Hungarian units in other African operations, this was not supported by the political governance and stopped Hungarian involvement in all African operations except for the one in Western Sahara. Thus no Hungarian soldiers were sent to Africa in the following years. But joining the EU meant that the Hungarian leadership was forced to bring about certain changes, as part of Hungary's international responsibilities involved sending peacekeeping troops to Africa once more. The first mission delegated by the EU political and military leadership was the EU ARTEMIS operation in RD CONGO (DRC/ARTEMIS, 2003). The mission lasted from 12 June 2003 until 07 September 2003, where one Hungarian staff officer served.

The mission's mandate involved the following activities:

- Take part in the peace enforcement action in Ituri (Bunia) according to resolution No. 1484 of the UN Security Council and the decision No. 2003/432/CFSP
- Assist the security and cooperation of the African Great Lakes countries
- Stabilize Ituri province with a limited military operation, and secure Bunia airfield
- Support the Congolese government and MONUC
- Solve the Hema - Lendu conflict, security measures
- Humanitarian activities, defend the refugees of Bunia

After that we sent two staff officers in the EU Support Operation to AMIS that lasted from June 2004 until December 2007 (Besenyó, 2006).

The mission's mandate involved the following activities:

- Support and operation of AMIS-II (taking African propriety rights into consideration)
- Professional training of African soldiers
- Organizing tactical/strategic transports
- Support and consultation in logistics – advisory team
- Assisting the Police Force
- Participation in humanitarian programs

The first to be sent on the mission by the Hungarian Defence Forces was Major Ferenc Kajári who served in one of the African Union field camps in Darfur (Kabkabiya) as scout commander from June 2004 until June 2005. The leadership of the African Union was so satisfied with Major Kajári's performance that they asked for the delegation of further Hungarian military consultants by the EU. This was how in the June of 2005 I had the opportunity of serving as military (logistics) advisor at the mission HQ in El-Fasher (Besenyő, 2007). I was only able to spend six months on the mission as the increasing deterioration of the state of security meant that Hungary withdrew its earlier delegated contribution and I was leaving the mission.

In 2005 other two high ranking officers were sent to the EU Security Sector Reform Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo from June, 2005 (EUSEC RD CONGO, 2012).

The mission's mandate involved the following activities:

- Support of the Congolese government
- Aiding the security and co-operation of countries of the African Great-Lakes
- Supporting the administrative and fiscal reform of the army – transformation of the Defence Force
- Co-operation with EUPOL RD CONGO
- Humanitarian activities

Over the past years 8 Hungarian officers have served in this still active operation and, although replacement of these individuals was often met with difficulties, Hungary has been able to comply with EU request and continue participation.

The next operation, also in Congo, was the EUFOR RD CONGO where according to a previous contributory agreement Hungary sent 3 logistics and personnel officers. The operation lasted from July 2006 till the end of the same year (EUFOR RD CONGO, 2006).

The mission's mandate involved the following activities:

- Securing and overseeing the Congolese elections according to resolution no. 1671 of the UN Security Council
- Supporting the activities of MONUC
- Supporting the Congolese and Gabonese governments
- Maintaining security
- Humanitarian activities

With the increase of EU involvement in African affairs, Hungary sent three medical and logistics officers to operation EUFOR CHAD/RCA from March 2008 to March 2009 (EUFOR TCAD/RCA, 2009).

The mission's mandate involved the following activities:

- Maintaining regional security and collaboration with the UN bodies and the governmental organizations of Chad, Republic of Central Africa and the Sudan
- Patrolling
- Protection of the refugee camps and civilian population, ensuring the safe return of refugees
- Ensuring the safe arrival of humanitarian aid supplies
- Personal protection of international civilian citizens

The work of the Hungarian officers was viewed favourably by the operation leadership, which was partly due to Major Csaba Kis Antal, MD whose health risk assessment of the operation proved extremely helpful to the military forces serving in Chad.

In the same year EU NAVFOR Atalanta/EU Naval Operation in the Somali Republic was launched from December 2008 (EUNAVFOR SOMALIA, 2012), where Hungary sent IT Sergeants Major to the operational HQ offices in Northwood.

The mission's mandate involved the following activities:

- Support of EU defence and security policies
- Suppression of pirate activities, securing the trade routes, protecting “civilian” ships
- Escorting WFP and other humanitarian convoys
- Support of AMISOM activities
- Supervising fisheries active in Somali waters

The EU Training Mission Somalia was launched in April 2010 (EUTM SOMALIA, 2012), and the mission's mandate involved the following activities:

- Assist in the implementation of the Djibouti Agreement
- Support for the Temporary Government and governmental organizations
- Support for Uganda, stabilizing the region
- Assist the activities of AMISOM
- Train Somali government armed forces in accordance with resolution No. 1872 of the United Nations Security Council

So far ten Hungarian soldiers served in the base camp in Uganda, and also participated in training of the Somali government's military forces.

As part of mission EUFOR Libya, launched in April, 2011, two Hungarian medical officers served in the medical team. Lieutenant Colonel Tamás Bognár, MD was responsible for preventive medical activities and he was the officer who prepared the medical risk assessment analysis of the mission. The operation was completed in November of the same year (EUFOR LIBYA, 2011).

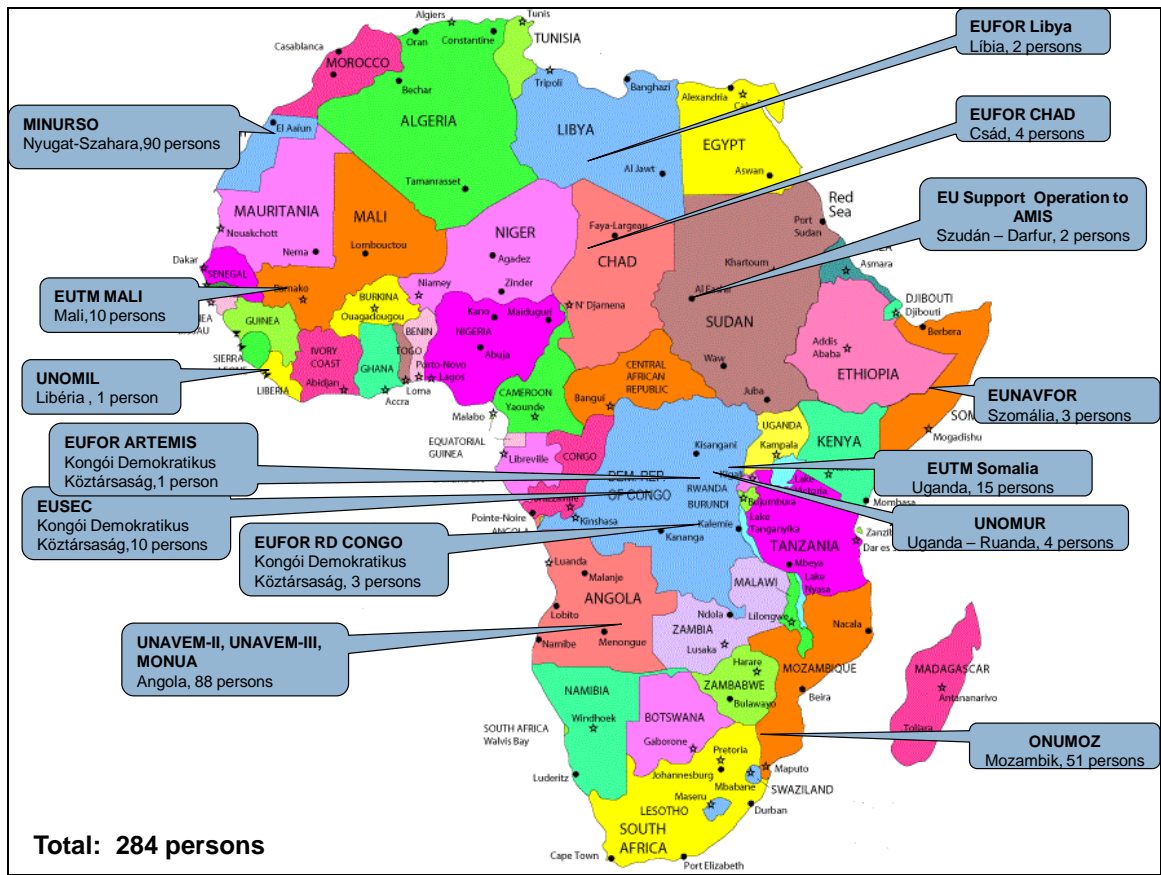
The mission's mandate involved the following activities:

- According to resolutions No. 1970 and 1973 of the UN Security Council, the EU will - if requested by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) - conduct a military operation in the framework of the Common security and defence policy (CSDP) in order to support humanitarian assistance in the region
- contribute to the safe movement and evacuation of displaced persons
- support, with specific capabilities, the humanitarian agencies in their activities

The **EU Training Mission Mali** was launched in April 2013 (Besenyő, 2013), and its mandate involved the following activities:

- Restore constitutional and democratic order in Mali through the implementation of a credible and consensual road map which foresees free, transparent and fair elections in 2013 and a framework for negotiations with armed groups rejecting terrorism
- Re-establish the state's authority throughout the country and redeploy it effectively in a context of peace and reconciliation between communities while respecting the rule of law and human rights
- Neutralize organised crime and terrorist threats

The map below shows the Hungarian missions in Africa between 1992 and 2013:



Source:

Lt. Col. János Besenyő

Lessons Learned

As I mentioned in the introduction from our early and further African operations not simply the campaigners even the whole system has benefited a lot. Firstly, Hungary as a former member of the socialist block and at the same time a country which has fallen into a kind of “no men’s land” situation lost its effective influence in international forums. Despite these facts Hungary has been able to join the international peacekeeping actions on time. Furthermore the successful implementations of these actions helped thorough to get into the “alliance of good boys”. The experiences and the new methods gained during the operations little by little helped to change the attitude of the Hungarian Defence Forces and on long-term flexibly transformed its training system. While in earlier times to get into a mission was a “privilege” especially of the few whom were speaking English. Nowadays become the minority whom has not been served in foreign operations. Understandably the Hungarian Defence Forces has put an important stress on English language training. Consequently today most of the professional and contractual officers and warrant officers are able to operate effectively in an international environment. Unfortunately the

knowledge of French and Arabic are less common. In addition also the knowledge of African “intermediary” languages (Hausa, Zulu and Swahili) are quite unusual even though the command of these languages are essential in African operations. Right managed activities in peacekeeping missions brought acknowledgment not only for those who serve there but for the home country as well. As a result the UN asked for Hungarian soldiers again and again to take part in forthcoming operations. Moreover they have offered command posts for them. So could György Száraz major-general become the commander of MINURSO, and other Hungarian military officers were posted into leading position within the African missions of the UN. Similar tendencies can be seen according to NATO’s and EU’s African operations. Most of the requests are for such functions (logistics, aviation management, information technology, engineering, water treatment and training) which give challenges for even bigger and wealthier nations as well.

It should be also mentioned that unfortunately the organized data processing of our African experiences are not at all or just very slowly implemented for some reason why. The Hungarian military science life also has not deal with this issue. Only a few books and study were published about Hungary’s African engagements. However, due to the appreciation of the African continent along with our position as partner (NATO, EU) we have obligate pledge. That is why it is necessary to process and to evaluated the former African experiences and to integrated them into the training. I believe it is necessary to take note of those whom served before in African operations and ask for their experiences even though if they have left the military forces by now. This knowledge can be assemble in a book which contains of collections of interviews, similar to I have made myself already. In addition mission-specific handbooks should be made by the Defence Forces with the use of documents of records, archives and documents of peacekeepers. To implement this project it could be enlist the services of different universities, colleges and the assistance of humanitarian organizations which are active in the African continent. Into the preparation stage of the missions specialist should be involve whom have more academic and more practical experiences. It would be important that the more soldiers whom we plan to deploy into Africa have the opportunity to acquire the earlier mentioned French, Arabic and “intermediate” languages.

Conclusion

The contribution of the Hungarian Defence Forces in Africa was groundbreaking in many ways. The effects of this input have had an impact not only in the fields of military but also on other areas as well. The experiences gained during the operations have launched a kind of innovation, and instituted the upcoming peacekeeping operations in Africa and in other continents. In the forthcoming years and decades due to different reasons (failed states, migration, climate change, desertification etc) current African peace operations will continue indeed new operation will start whereby Hungary cannot be away. Therefore it is important that the earlier achieved experiences should be fully processed by the time of preparation. And during the preparation it should be applied as well. Above and beyond the practical reasons with this we can express our mark of respect forward to the not really recognized part of the Hungarian peacekeeping.

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