



Argentinean Joint Peacekeeping Training Center

## Assessment on MINUSTAH

### 1. MINUSTAH as Stabilization and Maintenance of a Secure Environment

When the Security Council decided to implement a new UN peacekeeping mission in Haiti in order to replace the MIF, a huge feeling of discredit took over not only the international community as a whole, but also governments, international and regional organizations, non-governmental organizations, and so on.

At the same time a sense of failure also came from the past, with some disastrous UN peacekeeping missions as Somalia and Rwanda. Many arguments might be raised in an intent to explain such failures; however, a clear lack of strength and resources undermined both missions as well as a lack of political support.

That feeling could naturally come from the *previous missions* already deployed in **one of** the most fragile and poor country in the Western Hemisphere, which had suffered so many interventions of its internal politics as well as several attempts to provide humanitarian aid. From this perspective, the skepticism was well founded.

In Haiti there was no civil war, nor an agreement, but a situation of an almost failed state dominated by gangs of criminals; a situation which was apparently simple and easy to solve. Haiti was out of the international standard expected for UN peacekeeping

intervention. However, the situation was complex and far beyond to match armed gangs. There was a complicated political fight over a deprived society.

A Haitian interim government asked for the intervention of UN, and international politics did the rest. Some South-American countries, such as Argentina, Brazil, and Chile, took the initiative and arrangements were made to establish the *first UN complex peace operation under such unique South American leadership*.

An analysis indicated MINUSTAH should be given a Chapter VII mandate. The task of stabilization -the main one in such timelines- which gives the operation its name, was faced firmly. MINUSTAH was a peacekeeping operation supposed *to control chaos and restore security*. Obviously the *priority* was given to restore public order; an immediate necessity which had to be faced in order to allow the population to lead a normal life. Such restoration was the basis for any other rebuilding activity.

MINUSTAH has operated ever since in one of the worst scenarios, because the mission must not and will not negotiate with criminals who do not accept and respect international laws and Human Rights standards, plunging into An uncertain environment, characterized by a mixture of gangs and political violence.

From 2004 until 2007 *clear progress* has been made regarding security. It is not a matter of optimism. It is a fact that in the provinces the mission carried out vast positive changes, while in Port au Prince successful operations were undertaken, bringing relative peace and a state of stabilization in the country. The mission is now a good example, and a reference among other DPKO operations, put forth as a model of being capable of addressing the terrible Haitian challenges in shortage of time. Nowadays the figures about security and public order are much better than in the recent past. To say something different would be a way of denying reality.

As the *Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti*, dated 22<sup>th</sup> August:, 2007

a) "There have been significant improvements in the security situation, particularly in the urban areas that had previously been under gang control. The

restoration of those areas to State authority represents an important stride forward. In the regions, the security situation remains relatively calm. However, the situation is still fragile, and the gains achieved need to be consolidated in order to prevent backsliding and promote long-term stability”.

b) “On 1 and 2 August, I travelled to Haiti to assess the stabilization process and to reaffirm the United Nations commitment to Haiti. I held extensive discussions with members of the Haitian Government and parliament, as well as other influential members of Haitian society, and reviewed the work of the Mission. My visit gave me a first-hand awareness of the degree to which Haiti now stands at a moment of hope unlike anything that has been possible for decades. My optimism is based upon the considerable achievements thus far, and the determination of the Haitian leadership and people to address root causes of Haiti’s crisis, with the support of the international community. However, the length of the journey ahead and the fragility of recent gains were also starkly apparent, as was the real possibility that this moment of hope could dissipate unless it is supported through long-term commitment and vision. Haitian and international engagement is essential to consolidate these initial achievements and ensure that they become a firm basis for further progress towards stability and sustainable development”.

Naturally, the improvements are small if compared to the magnitude of the work to be done. What is relevant to clarify is that for many experts, *MINUSTAH has reached good results where other international interventions have failed* and has actually improved the security situation in the country, seeking to complete restoration of public order.

## 2. Actions taken for stabilization

By prioritizing security, MINUSTAH had to develop its own *urban operations doctrine*, adapted to the reality of Haitian cities. Such doctrine took into consideration the freedom of action allowed by the Haitian national government, as well as the tasks of the mandate.

In general terms, this doctrine consists of concepts, procedures, tactics and techniques already proved IN urban terrain, tailored to the Haitian context. The central

idea is to *seize criminal gang territory and maintain the presence there*, by inserting outposts, combining selective fire power with civil support measures, arresting gang leaders and conquering hearts and minds.

“Punching-and-leaving” strategies are not used. The troops march forward into the neighbourhoods like waves, cleaning streets from criminals and establishing safety corridors and strong points. They control and remain in place. The strong points are crucial for new supportive actions which give locals the chance to draw closer to an almost normal life.

A good example may be seen in Cité Soleil, the most infamous slum district in Haiti, where the troops took over the main gang operational center, and transformed it into a health clinic, which freely offers its services to the population. After occupying a territory controlled by gangs opposing the peace process, the troops settle there. The locals are grateful and start supporting further actions. The actions are firm but respect the Haitian population.

*The “Goliath Syndrome”* in which the intervention force believes itself to be the strong party, and that it can dictate the terms and the timelines to achieve what the mandate tasks, was noticed by MINUSTAH troops. Understanding the “Goliath Syndrome” greatly facilitated the way to develop the above mentioned doctrine, without losing firmness and objectivity, while avoiding errors already committed by previous interventions in Haiti.

The operational plans are eventually discussed among participant contingents respecting the different capabilities, in order to facilitate the operational objectives. After gang disbandment, new local leadership is contacted and supported permanently. The interaction with the population becomes a BASIS daily activity. The people have confidence in MINUSTAH and it is easy to realize that, in the streets of Port au Prince, Gonaives or any other major Haitian city. MINUSTAH does not understand itself as the strongest actor, to be realized as an occupation force.

Currently, one may walk in Cité Soleil with fewer risks than before; and this new situation allows UN Agencies and NGOs to approach, assess and help. Since last year, when MINUSTAH and the Haitian National Police (HNP) were given more freedom of

action by the Haitian Government, offensive activities have been carried out which has resulted in improvements as regards the security situation.

The majority of the troops belong to South-American nations which have a short but intense *history of joint deployment and training* (mixed Battalions in UNFICYP and in MINUSTAH, for example). A similar language also brings communication advantages among contingents. Similarly, several previous combined exercises help to achieve interoperability within the same doctrinal framework. An upcoming regional association of peace operations training centers, in the near future would certainly promote the development and improvement of the common doctrine put into practice in Haiti.

A general assessment could consider the applied doctrine as successful, although it will take time, resources and political support to accomplish the remaining objectives. As said by the UN Spokesperson on 13<sup>th</sup> July: *"Security is improving in Haiti but we have to continue to bolster Haitian police's capacities"*.

On the other hand, it is also very important to recognize that MINUSTAH was primarily tasked to restore security and, at this point, it is fulfilling its duty professionally. As *President Préval stated* "...in practical terms, the presence of MINUSTAH – as the country's new security forces take shape – is the only realistic formula available enabling Haitians to restore freedom and peace."

Lately the Security Council adopted *Resolution 1780*, extending Haiti mission until 15 October 2008. This Resolution *acknowledges the achievements of MINUSTAH* concerning security improvements, and endorses the Secretary General's recommendation for reconfiguring the Mission in terms of increasing police personnel and decreasing the military component (for example, force level may be reduced by one company, some 140 troops), among other relevant aspects.

Another important aspect to take into account is related to the type of *regional diplomatic support given to MINUSTAH*. The mission is comprised by a majority of South-American nations whose diplomatic bodies act with unity of purpose, and in pursuance of the same goals. The frequent presence of South-American leaders and

diplomats in the mission area reinforces the adopted political direction and stimulates the fulfillment of the mandated tasks.

Expressing MINUSTAH shared vision on the mission, the Brazilian Foreign Minister said in Oslo last September “ the presence in Haiti rests on three interdependent and equally important pillars: 1) securing a safe environment; 2) encouraging genuine national reconciliation through democratic dialogue; and 3) gathering effective international support for social and economic reconstruction”.

It is *remarkable and also almost unusual that MINUSTAH is a special case of peace mission which is able to act under Chapter VII and maintain the support of the population*, with full employment of means in the mission.

### 3. Looking to the Future

After reducing the levels of violence, MINUSTAH may proceed to a new stage. The scope is to improve the security status already reached, and plunge into Peacebuilding programs.

Several areas of governance in Haiti suffer terrible difficulties as known. Among the Peacebuilding objectives to be pursued we can mention: Respect for the Rule of Law and Human Rights, Legitimate Political Institutions and Participatory Process and Social and Economic Recovery and Transformation. They can be said to be under construction.

To fulfill the task of rebuilding Haiti properly *a mandate review and some structural modification are needed*. The current organization does not have enough flexibility, nor the resources to undertake its tasks or support other actors at the scene. The MINUSTAH mandate is focused on a secure and stable environment, the political process and human rights.

The issue of producing a secure and stable environment remains as a permanent challenge but, in fact, the performance of MINUSTAH has provided the minimum standards of security. The mission also has to restudy tasks as DDR, and to assist the Government as regards institution building (as for example, for the rule of law).

The main goal for the political process was achieved, namely: free elections; but a lot of political work remains to be done. The prestigious magazine “The Economist” stated: “***For a failing state, the election was a success***”. However, the human rights issue must be better addressed.

On the other hand, we may straightforwardly sustain that the mandate was made for a stabilization mission; it is time to change and review it in order to take into account aspects related to peacebuilding programs. ***Resolution 1780*** has also made clear the renewed importance of quick impact projects, welcome the steps taken towards the reform of rule of law institutions, and stressed the need of controlling maritime and land border areas.

Leaving the MINUSTAH context and going to a more general approach, but also calling attention to the fact that more and more complex peace operations seem to be undertaken in urban areas, ***looking to the future*** should imply:

- to insert in the ***UN system of education and training a module on military operations in urban terrain***, after studying MINUSTAH operations not as a model but as a real case of urban operations in a failed state;
- to ***increase the police training for military forces***;
- to ***develop standardized training modules tailored for the civilian component***;
- to ***better address the issue of intelligence in peace operations and its relationship with civil military coordination***.

To conclude, we would like to quote Ms. Nilda Garré, current Argentina Minister of Defense, who stated, “Our pride is that our Armed Forces supported and contributed for Haiti to have a president elected in a sovereign way. A representative man; someone who is knowledgeable in Politics. We are just supporters of the administration. Besides it is a Latin American commitment with the resolution of problems which are suffered by our Latin American brothers and sisters in Haiti. (...) In the last analysis brought to us by the UN Representative, 70% of the Haitian population is grateful with MINUSTAH contribution,”

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