



FESTUS AGOAGYE

PEACEKEEPING

## The African Mission in

# Burundi

## Lessons learned from the first African Union Peacekeeping Operation

In 1993, prospects for the peace and stability of Burundi were disturbed in the wake of the assassination of President Francois Ndadaye. At the end of peace processes led by the late Mwalimu Julius Nyerere, President of Tanzania,<sup>1</sup> as well as under the facilitation and mediation of Madiba, former President Nelson Mandela of South Africa (June 1998), the Arusha Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation for Burundi was signed on 28 August 2000, with the support of the Regional Peace Initiative (RPI) and the international community.

Subsequently, the peace processes were consolidated with the signing of two ceasefire agreements. The first of these agreements was signed on 7 October 2002 between the Transitional Government of Burundi (TGoB) and the Burundi Armed Political Parties and Movements (APPMs).<sup>2</sup> The second agreement on 2 December 2002 was

between the TGoB and the CNDD-FDD of Pierre Nkurunziza.<sup>3</sup> It is worthy of note that the Palipehutu-FNL of Agathon Rwasa did not participate in these processes. It continued to wage war and insisted on direct negotiations with the power-brokers in Burundi, which, in its view, was the Tutsi-controlled army.

Article 8 of Protocol V of the Arusha Agreement provided that 'immediately following the signature of the Agreement, the Burundian Government shall submit to the United Nations (UN) a request for an international peacekeeping force'. Under Article III of the October 2002 ceasefire agreement, the TGoB and the APPMs agreed that the "verification and control of the ceasefire may be conducted by a UN mandated mission, or an African Union (AU) [mission]." In contrast, Article III of the ceasefire agreement of December 2002 provided that the

“verification and control of the ceasefire agreement shall be conducted by an African Mission”.

Given these ambiguities, and the fact that the UN would not mandate the deployment of a peacekeeping mission in the absence of a comprehensive and all-inclusive ceasefire in Burundi, Mandela first used his good offices to obtain the consent of the government of South Africa to mandate the deployment of the South African Protection Support Detachment (SAPSD) in October 2000, to provide protection to designated returning leaders. Subsequently, the AU also accepted the challenge to mandate the deployment of the African Mission in Burundi (AMIB) in April 2003.

Following the signing of two protocols in Pretoria in October and November 2003, as well as a comprehensive ceasefire agreement between the TGoB and the CNDD-FDD of Nkurunziza on 16 November 2003, the mandate of AMIB came to an end on 31 May 2004. With effect from 1 June 2004, the responsibility for peace operations in Burundi was assumed by the UN Operations in Burundi (ONUB) which was mandated on 21 May 2004 by Security Council Resolution 1545 (2004).

The deployment of AMIB aimed to achieve synergy in peace efforts within the Great Lakes

This article will provide an overview of the establishment, mandate and concept of operations of AMIB. Against that background, it will also undertake a brief assessment of the rationale for the establishment of AMIB, as well as its strategic and operational challenges.

It will conclude with objective recommendations for the UN system in Burundi and for the capacity of the AU system for future peace operations.

### **Establishment of the African Mission in Burundi**

The AU has been engaged in Burundi since the events in 1993. But, in light of the significant and positive developments in the peace process in the Great Lakes Region, particularly in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Rwanda, the AU seized the opportunity to mandate the establishment and deployment of AMIB, the first fully fledged AU peace operation on the continent.<sup>4</sup> Thus, the deployment of AMIB aimed to achieve synergy in peace efforts within the Great Lakes region by adding momentum to efforts to implement the

agreements signed and resolve outstanding issues.

The 91st Ordinary Session of the Central Organ of the [Organisation of African Unity] Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution, meeting at ambassadorial level on 2 April 2003, mandated the deployment of AMIB for an initial period of one year, subject to renewal and “pending the deployment of the UN peacekeeping force to be mandated by the UN Security Council”.

### **The endgame, objectives and mandate**

In its preface to AMIB’s mandate, the Central Organ anticipated that the “African Mission would have fulfilled its mandate after it has facilitated the implementation of the Ceasefire Agreements and the defence and security situation in Burundi is stable and well-managed by newly created national defence and security structures”.

With this in view, AMIB’s deployment aimed to achieve the following objectives:

- ▲ oversee the implementation of the ceasefire agreements;
- ▲ support disarmament and demobilisation initiatives and advise on the reintegration of ex-combatants;
- ▲ strive towards ensuring that conditions were created for the establishment of a UN peacekeeping mission; and
- ▲ contribute to political and economic stability in Burundi.

To this end, AMIB was mandated to carry out the following tasks and missions:

- ▲ establish and maintain liaison between the parties;
- ▲ monitor and verify the implementation of the ceasefire agreements;
- ▲ facilitate activities of the Joint Ceasefire Commission (JCC) and Technical Committees for the establishment and restructuring of the national defence and police forces;
- ▲ secure identified assembly and disengagement areas;
- ▲ facilitate safe passage for the parties during planned movements to designated assembly areas;
- ▲ facilitate and provide technical assistance to the Demobilisation, Disarmament, and

- Reintegration (DDR) process;
- ▲ facilitate delivery of humanitarian assistance, including to refugees and internally displaced persons;
- ▲ coordinate mission activities with the UN presence in Burundi; and
- ▲ provide VIP protection for designated returning leaders.

### The concept of AMIB

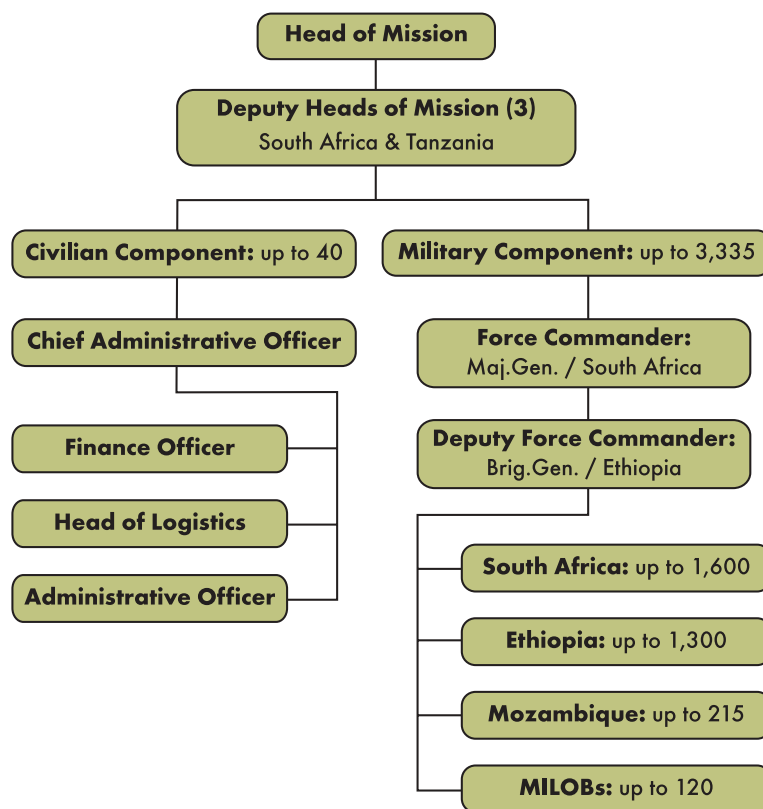
Like a UN peace operation, AMIB was an integrated mission, comprising a civilian component and military contingents. The Head of Mission (HoM) and Special Representative of the Chairperson of the AU Commission, Ambassador Mamadou Bah (Guinea), was assisted by two deputies from South Africa (Ambassador Welile Nhlapo) and Tanzania (Retired Lieutenant General Martin Mwakalindile); a third deputy from Uganda did not deploy.

The Force Commander of AMIB's military component was Major General Siphso Binda (South Africa), while his deputy, Brigadier-General G. Ayele, was from Ethiopia. Altogether, AMIB had a total strength of up to about 3 335 with military contingents from South Africa (1 600), Ethiopia (858) and Mozambique (228), as well as the AU observer element (43) drawn from Burkina Faso, Gabon, Mali, Togo and Tunisia.

AMIB's deployment started the establishment of its headquarters on 27 April 2003, followed by the transition of SAPSD, which was already deployed in Burundi. After the arrival of advance elements from Ethiopia and Mozambique on 18 and 26 May, the force headquarters and components were integrated on 1 June 2003. Consequently, South Africa beefed up its troop presence to nearly its authorised established strength of 1 600 troops. However, it was not until the arrival of the main bodies of Ethiopia and Mozambique from 27 September to 17 October 2003 that the force became fully operational.

Conceptually, the force was concentrated in Bujumbura. From this stronghold, the South African and Ethiopian contingents respectively were to establish two demobilisation centres at Muyange (Bubanza Province) and Buhinga (projected, Rutana Province). The establishment of a third demobilisation centre was contingent upon mission and operational exigencies. Overall, AMIB

### African Mission in Burundi (AMIB)



was expected to canton and disarm an estimated total of 20 000 ex-combatants, at a daily rate of about 300 from a number of assembly areas (between 6 and 11) to the demobilisation centres.

In addition, the Mozambican contingent was to provide escorts for sustainment convoys and all other movements, including those of humanitarian non-governmental organisations (NGOs), while the special Protection and Reaction Unit (South Africa) provided protection to the returned leaders.

In respect of the cantonment exercise, AMIB established Cantonment Site 1 (Bubanza) on 25 May 2003. With effect from 26 June 2003, it was able to canton up to 200 ex-combatants at this site; comprising elements from the CNDD-FDD of Jean-Bosco Ndayikengurukiye and the Palipehutu-FNL of Alain Mugabarabona. With the exception of this undertaking, AMIB was unable to proceed with the DDR. The maintenance of Cantonment Site 1 entailed the sustainment of the ex-combatants. To be able to do this, AMIB's Head of Mission used his good offices to mobilise resources mainly from the German Technical Cooperation (GTZ), European Union (EU), United Nations Children's



**A South African National Defence Force soldier in Bujumbura, as part of the Africa Union Mission in Burundi**

Fund (UNICEF) and the World Health Organisation (WHO).

By far the most visible mission task of AMIB was its protection of the returned leaders by the Special Protection Unit (SPU). The SPU undertook this task with about 260 special forces troops within the framework of a provisional service level agreement that provided for the scope, privileges and responsibilities of the parties and AMIB. Upon the termination of AMIB's mandate, this mission task fell into abeyance as the UN expunged it from ONUB's mandated missions.

AMIB's operations were also subject to clear rules of engagement and codes of conduct that accorded with international humanitarian law, the laws of armed conflict and the principles and standards of the UN.

### **Civil-military cooperation in AMIB**

Civil-military cooperation played no less a role in AMIB than in other UN peace operations. In practice, CIMIC play in AMIB focused on three main activity areas:

- 1** humanitarian support to the civilian population and ex-combatants,
- 2** DDR, and

- 3** civil-military relations with the host nation authorities.

In actual fact, it was to facilitate support to the UN and the international humanitarian agencies and NGOs operating in the mission area that AMIB established a Civil Military Coordination Center (CIMICC). The CIMICC liaised and consulted with humanitarian agencies and NGOs on planning the operational requirements of humanitarian delivery, in order to ensure proper and effective coordination of all AMIB military and other support to the recipient agencies and NGOs.

In technical terms, the DDR programme also constituted another dimension of CIMIC as far as coordination and consultations with the UN Office in Burundi (ONUB), AMIB, NCDDR, APPMs and the players, including the World Bank's Multi-Country Demobilisation and Reintegration Programme (MDRP) were concerned. In this respect, the DDR-CIMIC was conducted within the framework of the JCC, aiming at a negotiated Joint Operations Plan (JOP) to provide the framework for effective and sustainable DDR in Burundi.

The third dimension of CIMIC also related in technical terms to traditional civil-military relations.



In this area, ONUB and AMIB, as well as key players of the peace process, undertook consultations and negotiations with the TGoB and its ministries, departments and sectors over numerous aspects of the implementation of the peace process. In contrast with traditional CIMIC, these organisations and institutions pursued the resolution of issues not within the traditional CIMIC, but in such institutions as the Interim Monitoring Committee (IMC), the presidency and cabinet, and informal consultations. For example, AMIB had to consult with the sector ministry, as well as the Burundi Civil Aviation Authority, over the interpretation and execution of the taxation clause in the Status of Force Agreement. In order to resolve issues of conflict between members of AMIB and the Burundian authorities and public, AMIB established a special committee, which included the participation of the Burundian civilian police authority, for weekly meetings to amicably iron out social breaches by AMIB.

### **Administration logistics, budget and funding**

Though minuscule in relation to a UN peace operation, the AU Commission enhanced the civilian component of the mission headquarters, improving its managerial capacity. Again, being without capacity for in-mission sustainment, the administration and logistics of AMIB was streamlined through Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) with the troop-contributing countries (TCCs). Among provisions covering the terms for the contribution of resources to AMIB, the relevant MOUs required TCC self-sustainability for up to 60 days, pending reimbursement by the AU commission, and the possibility of in-mission supply of water and fuel.

The budget for the deployment, operations and sustainment of AMIB was estimated at about US \$110 million for the first year; at the end of its 14-month mandate, the total budget of AMIB amounted to US \$134 million, covering the real costs of troop and equipment deployments, reimbursement for specialised equipment at appropriate depreciation rates and common mission costs for items such as vehicle markings, insignia, and medical health facilities. It also included the budget for the integrated mission headquarters and the

military observer element. The applicable rates of reimbursement that were approved by the Central Organ were:

- 1 US \$1.28 as individual troop allowance;
- 2 US \$10 per troop for food; and
- 3 US \$500 per troop as operational costs.

Without adequate funds in its peace fund, the AU expected to fund AMIB's budget from redeemed pledges and donations from its traditional partners, who had given indications of sufficient goodwill towards the peace efforts of the AU. Incidentally, the pledges from the partners, amounting to some US \$50 million, fell far short of the budget. Even worse, actual donations into the trust fund amounted to just US \$10 million, even though this excluded in-kind assistance from the US (US \$6.1 million) and UK (US \$6 million), to support the deployment of the Ethiopian and Mozambican contingents respectively.<sup>5</sup>

### **Cooperation with the UN and the international community**

One aspect of strategic AU collaboration with the UN and the international community was the understanding that the deployment of AMIB was a holding operation pending the deployment of a UN Security Council-mandated peacekeeping mission. The AU also pursued strategic-level AU-UN engagement for the mobilisation of resources, as well as in-theatre administrative and logistical assistance from the UN system, including the United Nations Organisation Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUC) to enhance AMIB's technical capacity in the areas of public information, headquarters administration and DDR. However, these did not yield the desired results, even though operational collaboration between AMIB and ONUB, including participation in the activities of the IMC and the JCC, both of which are chaired by the UN, were according to the book.

Operational-level collaboration also involved consultation with international humanitarian agencies and NGOs, particularly in terms of the implementation of the DDR programme. In this respect, the mission collaborated with the EU, GTZ and the World Bank/MDRP, in sourcing for funding and material assistance for the DDR programme and the wider implementation of the agreements.

## Challenges, best practices and lessons learned

AMIB was able to oversee the implementation of the ceasefire agreements, contributing to the creation of conditions suitable for the deployment of ONUB on 1 June 2004

In terms of its own end-game, AMIB cannot be said to have fully facilitated the implementation of the ceasefire agreements, nor was it able to fully ensure that the defence and security situation in Burundi was stable and well managed by newly created national defence and security structures. Failing agreement with the TGoB on the designation and

security of identified pre-assembly and disarmament centres, as well as the lack of full cooperation from the APPMs, the mission was also unable to fully support the DDR initiatives and advise on the reintegration of ex-combatants. Even though it established and maintained liaison between the parties, monitored and verified the implementation of the ceasefire agreements and facilitated the activities of the JCC, it found it difficult to

facilitate the work of the technical committees, including the establishment of Joint Liaison Teams and the implementation of the Forces Technical Agreement, for the establishment and restructuring of the national defence and police forces.

These failures notwithstanding, the mission could be credited with efforts towards the stabilisation of about 95 percent of the country, with the exception of Bujumbura rural, which remained contested by the Palipehutu-FNL of Agathon Rwaswa. In this way, it was able to oversee the implementation of the ceasefire agreements, contributing to the creation of conditions suitable for the deployment of ONUB on 1 June 2004. AMIB was also able to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian assistance, coordinate mission activities with the UN presence in Burundi, and provide protection to the designated returning leaders. In spite of these achievements, the contribution of the mission to political and economic stability in Burundi was limited.

At both the strategic and operational levels, it is equally pertinent to note that the establishment and deployment of AMIB was affected by considerable challenges. The mission's logistical sustainment and funding was particularly problematic, owing to the lack of substantive support from within Africa, as well as from the UN and the international

community to provide requisite assistance.

So, what lessons can and should be learned from the instructive experiences of AMIB? Out of the many, the following is only a short list of nine key lessons:

- 1** The division of responsibilities between regional forces and UN presence should be formalised. This could be facilitated by UN involvement in the planning of regional missions, with a view to achieving a smooth transition to UN peace operations. In that transition, including planning for a UN peace operation, the UN should closely consult with the AU and regional peace initiatives, and not only troop-contributing countries.
- 2** The implementing institutions at the operational level, such as the IMC and JCC, should endeavour to ensure the implementation of key provisions of the instruments of peace; for example the release of political prisoners and detainees, the withdrawal of foreign forces, and the establishment of relevant security mechanisms (such as the Neutral and Negotiated Commission of Inquiry, the International Monitoring Mechanism and the Mixed Monitoring Commission) to monitor borders, the flow of small arms, activities of negative forces, and so on.
- 3** The integrity of the regional force and its mandate should not be compromised by unwarranted reliance on the transitional government whose efforts will be contested by members of its own coalition or by the opposing APPMs.
- 4** The civilian component of the leadership of regional forces should be endowed with the requisite capacity for the administrative and technical management of the regional peace operation.
- 5** Mandates for regional missions should aim at addressing fundamental issues in ceasefire and peace agreements.
- 6** Particularly in situations of incomplete ceasefires, the concept of operations of the regional force should ensure that:
  - ▲ All critical mission tasks contributing to security are included.
  - ▲ The deployment of the force, as much as possible, ensures that opposing forces are separated and the activities of armed elements in pre-assembly or cantonment

- areas are monitored.
- ▲ The cantonment of APPMs, the confinement of government forces, including the monitoring of their heavy weapons, and the DDR of the APPMs, are simultaneously undertaken.
  - ▲ Integrated security command and control bodies are established in a transparent manner through the appropriate institutions of the peace process.
  - ▲ The establishment of mixed units for essential security tasks, and the restructuring of the national defence, police and intelligence forces, are pursued in a transparent manner, and not left to ad hoc arrangements between the TGoB and the preferred APPMs.
- 7** The conduct of regional peace operations should be based on standardised doctrine and operating procedures and not those of the individual troop-contributing countries. Efforts are also needed in this direction to achieve a reasonable degree of inter-operability in the areas of equipment maintenance.
- 8** External assistance packages should be provided within multilateral regional arrangements and, in addition to strategic lifts, should also cover communication and office electronic equipment and consumables, as well as logistical sustainment, and funding for reimbursement.
- 9** Mission-level arrangements should be made for competent translation or interpretation to address the linguistic problem between the working languages of the AU system, namely Arabic, English, French and Portuguese.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, while AMIB has contributed its due in the face of serious limitations to peace and stability in Burundi, ONUB will still face formidable operational challenges arising from political difficulties in the implementation of the peace agreements. The accomplishment of ONUB's mandate will be determined by the extent to which the UN creates space for strategic and operational collaboration with the AU, the Facilitation Team and the RPI, to ensure that the underlying causes of the Burundian conflict, centring on the dynamics of power politics and the politics of political and

economic exclusion, are addressed.

As ONUB digs its teeth into the hard flesh of the Burundian conflict and peace process, the AU needs a sober reflection on its first fully fledged peace operation. It needs to undertake a best practices and lessons learned exercise, among other things, to inform its efforts towards the operationalisation and future operations of the ASF.

The UN and the international community may well learn the hard lesson that they need to assist the AU in its critical areas of need, beyond the limited 'soft' assistance towards training. The UN and the international community should see themselves as partners in arms with the AU. They ought to help Africa build real capacity for African regional bridging operations, in order to plug the gap in the global security architecture arising from the hesitance of UN intervention and the abdication of the West from UN-mandated peace operations in Africa. ▀

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## Endnotes

- 1 The takeover was necessitated by the death of Nyerere in October 1999.
- 2 In addition to the signatures of the Facilitation Team, the party signatories were: Pierre Buyoya (Major), President; Jean Bosco Ndayikengurukiye (Colonel) for the CNDD-FDD; and Alain Mugabarabona for Palipehutu-FNL.
- 3 Pursuant to Article 13 of Protocol II of the Arusha Agreement, the 36-month transition was planned in two phases of 18 months each. The first phase ran from 1 November 2001 to 30 April 2003, while the second phase commenced on 1 May 2003 and is expected to end on 31 October 2004.
- 4 The AU decision was in accordance with of the 19th Regional Summit in Arusha from 1-3 December 2002, which was ratified by the 7th Ordinary Session of the AU Central Organ in Addis Ababa at the level of Heads of State and Government on 3 February 2003.
- 5 The contributions and pledges were: (1) AU Peace Fund: US \$300 000; (2) Italy: €200 000; (3) EU: €25 million, earmarked for Burundi, with the understanding that unless peace was restored in Burundi, any investment would be wasted and would not achieve its desired ends; (4) USA: US \$6.1 million for airlift of Ethiopian contingent and 60 days' sustainment in the mission area; (5) UK: US \$6 million for the Mozambican contingent; (6) South Africa: funding for the Mozambican contingent; (7) Denmark: approximately US \$1 million for insignia and medals; (8) Germany: €400 000; and (9) other unspecified commitments when redeemed.