



In brief: International Military Forces in Mali

Standard Note: SN06615
Last updated: 19 August 2013
Author: Claire Mills
Section: International Affairs and Defence

As offensive military operations in the country began to wind down in March and April 2013 concerns remained that Malian and foreign forces would face a protracted insurgency from Islamic militants who continued to conduct small-scale counter-attacks from the north of the country.

On 26 March 2013 the UN Secretary General published a report on Mali¹ in which he presented a number of options, for consideration by the UN Security Council, regarding the possible transformation of the African-led International Support Mission to Mali (AFISMA)² into a UN stabilisation and peacekeeping mission.³ Justifying that course of action the report acknowledged the ongoing threat posed by Islamist insurgents, but also highlighted the potential resurgence of armed militias that operate throughout the north of the country, the potential security threat posed by the political tensions and divisions that exist within the military, and the presence of organised transnational criminal networks that operate throughout Mali and across the Sahel. In contrast the report notes that:

The Malian defence and security institutions are fractured, insufficiently equipped and lack training, coupled with a history of political interference. All the security agencies... face serious operational constraints.

The report went on to conclude therefore that “the objective of any United Nations operation would be to help the Malian State regain its legitimacy and re-establish its authority across the entire territory in order to provide physical security to all its people and ensure that its territory does not provide a platform for the emergence of threats to itself, its neighbours and beyond”.⁴ In April 2013 the UN Security Council subsequently authorised the deployment of a Chapter VII UN stabilisation and peacekeeping force⁵ to the country.⁶

The following is a brief summary of the international forces that are expected to remain in Mali in the near term, including UK forces.

UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilisation Mission in Mali (MINUSMA)

The mandate of MINUSMA is to support the transitional authorities of Mali in the stabilisation of the country and implementation of the transitional roadmap. The focus will be on major

¹ UN Secretary General, [S/2013/189](#)

² Mandated under UN Security Council Resolution 2085 (2012) and conducted under the auspices of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). The force comprised approximately 6,500 personnel from Nigeria (1,200), Niger, Burkina Faso, Togo, Senegal, Benin, Guinea, Ghana and Chad (2,000 personnel).

³ Consideration of a successor UN mission came at the request of the interim President of Mali, Dioncounda Traoré in a [letter to the UN Secretary General](#), 12 February 2013.

⁴ UN Secretary General, [S/2013/189](#)

⁵ <http://www.un.org/en/documents/charter/chapter7.shtml>

⁶ [UN Security Council Resolution 2100 \(2013\)](#)

population centres and lines of communication, protecting civilians, the promotion and protection of human rights, support for humanitarian assistance and the return of displaced persons, the extension of State authority and the preparation of free, inclusive and peaceful elections.

The stabilisation force will comprise 12,600 personnel in total: 11,200 military personnel, including reserve battalions capable of deploying rapidly within the country as and when required, and 1,400 police personnel. The initial mandate of the operation is for 12 months.

That force took over security responsibility on 1 July 2013. Forces deployed as part of AFISMA (6,300 personnel) have been subsumed into the new UN peacekeeping mission. It is expected to take several months for the UN force to come up to full strength however. As of 31 July 2013 MINUSMA consisted of the following country contributions:⁷

Country Contributions to MINUSMA

Country	Military	Police	Total
Bangladesh	5	177	182
Belgium		1	1
Benin	305	5	310
Burkina Faso	667	10	677
Burundi		2	2
Cameroon		2	2
Chad	1246	4	1250
Chile		1	1
Cote d'Ivoire	126	1	127
Egypt		1	1
France	13	3	16
Germany		1	1
Ghana	128		128
Guinea	149	2	151
Italy		1	1
Jordan		1	1
Liberia	46		46
Mauritania	5		5
Nepal		1	1
Niger	657	1	658
Nigeria	687	146	833
Rwanda	1	1	2
Senegal	510	285	795
Sierra Leone	4		4
Sweden	4		4
Togo	939	153	1092
United Kingdom	1		1
United States	1	1	2
Total			6294

⁷ <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/resources/statistics/contributors.shtml>

At the same time Nigeria is set to withdraw the majority of its contingent in the country. Nigerian officials suggested that troops were needed “back home” in order to deal with its own insurgency. Others have suggested that the move is in protest after a Rwandan General was appointed to lead the UN force, instead of a Nigerian General. Nigeria had previously commanded the African-led force in the country.⁸ The Nigerian contingent is expected to be limited in the future to approximately 140 police personnel, some staff officers and a field hospital.⁹

Question marks have also been raised over the Chadian contingent. UN Peacekeeping Chief, Herve Ladsous, is reported to have commented that “Chad would be closely monitored because it is on a blacklist for using child soldiers”, adding that “the UN is making every effort to screen the Chadian contingent...and ensure that no troops under 18 are among them”.¹⁰

Force generation has therefore been acknowledged as an issue for the new UN mission.

French Support to the UN Mission

For the present France still retains a sizeable military presence in the country (3,200 personnel) under Operation *Serval*.¹¹ However, those forces are expected to be steadily withdrawn from the end of August 2013 as MINUSMA forces increasingly take over.¹²

In the longer term France has confirmed that it will maintain a 1,000 strong force, permanently based in Mali, to conduct counter terrorism operations.¹³ These forces will not be under the command of the UN force, although France has offered military support to the UN operation. UNSCR 2100 authorises French forces to intervene in support of MINUSMA forces “when under imminent and serious threat” and upon request from the UN Secretary General.¹⁴

EU Training Mission (EUTM-Mali)

EUTM-Mali was launched on 18 February 2013 and training of the Malian army officially began on 2 April. Twenty two EU Member States¹⁵ are contributing approximately 500 staff, including 200 military trainers and a protection force (largely French and Czech personnel) for an initial period of 15 months. The objective of the mission is to provide basic military training as well as train and advise the Malian armed forces on command and control, logistics, human resources in addition to international humanitarian law, the protection of civilians and human rights. The mission has a training-only mandate and personnel do not have a combat role. The mission HQ is in Bamako and training is taking place in Koulikoro.

Rebuilding the Malian army is expected to be an “immense task”. EUTM Mission Commander General Lecointre is reported to have stated that “it is the army of a very poor

⁸ “Nigerian army abandons peacekeeping missions in Mali and Darfur to combat Boko Haram”, *Refworld*, UNHCR, 9 August 2013

⁹ “Nigeria to withdraw some troops from Mali”, *BBC News*, 19 July 2013

¹⁰ “UN gives go-ahead to deployment of Mali peacekeepers”, *BBC News*, 25 June 2013

¹¹ At its height there were 4,000 French personnel deployed in Mali as part of Operation *Serval*. French forces had begun withdrawing from Mali in April 2013, although that withdrawal was delayed in order to support national elections at the end of July.

¹² <http://www.defense.gouv.fr/operations/mali/actualite/operation-serval-inauguration-d-un-troisieme-puits-a-gao>

¹³ “French force to stay in Mali”, *Jane's Defence Weekly*, 17 April 2013

¹⁴ S/RES/2100 (2103), para 18

¹⁵ Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia. Spain, Sweden and the UK

country, and the army is very much underequipped and underendowed in budgetary terms". In particular he highlighted the lack of basic equipment such as arms, vehicles and radios, and a poor ability to plan and execute military campaigns, suggesting that "this army has to be completely restructured. Today it acts more as a somewhat disparate set of elements put together on request and on an emergency basis in order to cope with a tough combat situation. It's not an army as such".¹⁶

To date, EUTM has trained the first of four battalions, consisting of approximately 650 personnel. A further 700 soldiers of the second battalion are in the process of reporting to the training camp in Koulikoro. It has been acknowledged however, that while the EU training mission is delivering against its objectives, it remains too early to assess the effectiveness of the trained troops on actual operations.¹⁷

*UK Contribution to EUTM-Mali*¹⁸

The UK has 40 military and civilian personnel deployed as part of EUTM- Mali. Twenty one troops from the 1st Battalion The Royal Irish Regiment are carrying out infantry training; 12 personnel from 45 Commando Royal Marines and 29 Commando Regiment Royal Artillery are undertaking mortar and artillery training; while 4 headquarters staff and 3 civilian personnel are responsible for human rights and gender awareness training.

Ireland has also contributed 6 personnel to augment the UK infantry training team.¹⁹

Additional Training

UNSCR 2100 urged member states to continue to provide support to AFISMA until the transfer of authority from AFISMA to MINUSMA, including military training, provision of equipment, intelligence and logistical support.

Under the US State Department's Africa Contingency Operations Training and Assistance Program, the US had deployed 100 military trainers to assist those African countries which were contributing personnel to the previous AFISMA mission. Those personnel were not based in Mali and were intended to be complementary to the EU training mission in country.²⁰ Following the transfer of authority to MINUSMA it is unclear, at present, whether those US military trainers will continue to be deployed in the long term.

In January 2013 the UK Government also announced that up to 200 personnel could be deployed to Anglophone West African nations to assist in the training of AFISMA troops. A small number of advisers were deployed to several West African countries in order to assess their needs and to gain situational awareness, although no significant deployments were ever announced.

¹⁶ "EU training mission commander calls rebuilding the Malian army an 'immense task'", *The Washington Post*, 5 March 2013

¹⁷ HC Deb 17 July 2013, c738W

¹⁸ The UK's contribution to French operations in Mali is set out in Library briefing SN06531. That logistical support has now ended. In answer to a Parliamentary Question in July 2013 the MOD stated that the cost of UK support to the French-led intervention in Mali was £7m, allocated from the Deployed Military Activity Pool.

¹⁹ MOD press release, 27 March 2013

²⁰ <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2013/01/202942.htm> . Direct US military assistance to Mali, in addition to other types of US foreign aid, is currently prohibited following the military coup in Mali in March 2012. Section 7008 of the FY2012 *Consolidated Appropriations Act* bars State Department or USAID-administered aid to the government of any country in which a military coup or decree has overthrown a democratically elected government.

Suggested Reading

Library briefing SN06531, [The Crisis in Mali: Current Military Action and Upholding International Law](#), examines the conflict in Mali and the initial international military response to that crisis.