

Policing in Peace Operations in Africa: A Case Study of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA)

Dr. Lotte Vermeij

Summary

Over the past two years, the Police Component of MINUSMA has been confronted with an increasingly challenging task. With an unstable and deteriorating security situation posing threats to the safety and well-being of MINUSMA personnel and the civilian population in Mali, it has become difficult to fulfill the police mandate. The lack of a peace agreement and on-going conflict is preventing MINUSMA police to work on SSR initiatives with full capacity. In addition, the lack of trust and confidence by the Malian Police, Gendarmerie and National Guard towards MINUSMA limits the possibilities and results of capacity building, co-location and mentoring. Language barriers that prevent clear communication during daily duties and training further challenge this. Furthermore, the lack of trust by the local population, particularly in northern Mali, has complicated the tasks to be carried out by MINUSMA's IPOs and FPU's and threatened their safety. It is therefore recommended that MINUSMA continues to work towards a peace agreement with the involved parties in Mali, in order to create an environment in which MINUSMA police can fulfill the SSR aspect of their mandate. In addition, greater emphasis should be placed on language skills during the recruitment and training process of MINUSMA police officers, as well as on intercultural communication and cooperation skills. It is of importance that gender issues are mainstreamed and that more female police officers are recruited and deployed to MINUSMA. Within the mission, it is recommended that greater emphasis be placed on communication, trust building with the Malian population and police, as well as better coordination with partners and international organizations in order to improve the performance of MINUSMA police.

Introduction

As part of a larger study comparing policing in African Union (AU) and United Nations (UN) Peace Operations, this policy brief will focus on the Police Component of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA).¹ Whereas UN Peace Operations tend to be deployed in post-conflict situations where there is, in fact, some peace to keep, the AU more typically deploys into more unstable situations where one of the main objectives is to contribute to creating some form of stability. Hence, the security situation in which the UN and AU operate may be very different, something reflected in their mandates and which in turn may have implications on how they are able to operate and what they can do, let alone accomplish. However, with no peace agreement in place, the current security situation in Mali is posing severe challenges to the UN mission and its Police Component. Based on field research conducted in Mali and during 2013 and 2014, this policy brief aims to shed light upon the challenges faced by MINUSMA Police and to provide recommendations for future engagements.²

Mali: the Context and MINUSMA's Role

MINUSMA was established in April 2013 in response to the conflict that erupted in northern Mali in January 2012.³ The UN mission was partially initiated by re-hatting the African-led International Support Mission to Mali (AFISMA) into UN

1 During 2014-2015, the Training for Peace in Africa Programme (TFP) Research Network is conducting a study on the challenges of policing in AU and UN peace operations in Africa. The project seeks to compare the UN operation in Mali (MINUSMA), the AU operation in Somalia (AMISOM), and the AU-UN operation in Darfur (UNAMID). <http://trainingforpeace.org/about-tfp/research-and-policy-development/>.

2 During 2013-2014, interviews were conducted with MINUSMA leadership, police and other mission staff, UN DPKO representatives, Malian police and gendarmerie, and members of the population in Mali.

3 United Nations, S/RES/2100.

forces with the aim to support political processes in Mali, carry out a number of security-related tasks and a broad range of other responsibilities.⁴ These tasks included support to the transitional authorities, implementation of the Malian Transitional Roadmap, protection of civilians, monitoring of human rights, create conditions to facilitate humanitarian assistance and the return of displaced persons, extend State authority, and the preparation of national elections. After a rocky first year for MINUSMA and in the absence of peace, the Security Council (SC) amended the mandate in June 2014 in an attempt to better face the challenges on the ground. As such, in UN SC Resolution 2164, a broader emphasis was placed on security, stabilisation and protection of civilians, national political dialogue and reconciliation, the reestablishment of State authority, the rebuilding of the security sector, and human rights issues in Mali.⁵

However, MINUSMA continued to face severe challenges during 2014. Many of those challenges are linked to the security threats from insurgent groups and the lack of a political settlement to end the conflict.⁶ In addition to that, the Mission's involvement in military operations against insurgent and extremist groups alongside the French and Malian army have led to direct reprisal attacks against MINUSMA.⁷ As a result, the Mission has taken 44 fatalities and over 100 Blue Helmets have been wounded in reprisal attacks up to December 2014, while peace negotiations so far have failed to find a comprehensive solution.⁸

MINUSMA's Police Component

MINUSMA has an authorized strength of 12,640 uniformed personnel, including 11,200 military personnel and 1,440 police. According to the Mission, 9,494 uniformed personnel had been deployed as of 31 December 2014, of which 1,033 are police.⁹ MINUSMA's police officers report to UNPOL Police Commissioner Abdounasir Awale of Djibouti, who has been heading the Police Component since September 2013. UN Security Council Resolution 2164 defines the role of the Police Component as to

support national, and to coordinate international, efforts towards rebuilding the Malian security sector, especially the police and gendarmerie through technical assistance, capacity-building, co-location and mentoring programmes, as well as the rule of law and justice sectors, within its capacities and

close collaboration with other bilateral partners, donors and international organizations, including the EU, engaged in these fields, including through enhancing information sharing and joint strategic planning among all actors.¹⁰

In practice this implies that the two main tasks of MINUSMA's police component are the support of Malian police services capacity and the return of state authorities to northern Mali.¹¹

According to the report of the UN Secretary-General S/2014/943, as of 1 December 2014 1,019 police were deployed, of which 52 female officers.¹² Within MINUSMA, the Police Component is divided into Individual Police Officers (IPOs) and Formed Police Units (FPUs). The roles of IPOs range from reforming, restructuring, reinforcing and re-establishing Malian police services, to training, community policing, mentoring, assisting law enforcement agents to address transnational crime, and advisory functions.¹³ IPOs are generally unarmed. FPUs on the other hand, are deployed as teams of 140 armed police officers who are responsible for joint patrols with Malian police services, crowd control, protection of UN staff and material, and escorting UN personnel when visiting insecure areas.¹⁴ On 1 December 2014, 180 IPOs and 839 FPUs had been deployed to MINUSMA from 28 Police Contributing Countries (PCCs). This implied that in total 72 per cent of planned police personnel had been deployed, of which only 5 per cent female.¹⁵

	Authorized Police Personnel	Deployed Police Personnel . Dec 2014	Percentage of authorized police
IPOs	320	180 (13 female)	56%
FPUs	1,129	839 (39 female)	75%
Total	1,440	1,019 (52 female)	72%

MINUSMA Police Challenges and Recommendations

MINUSMA Police is currently facing several challenges that prevent the component from reaching its full potential and implementing its mandate. Many of these are related to the deteriorating security situation in Mali, the lack of a peace agreement, disapproval and mistrust from the Malian population, complex working relationships with the Malian authorities and police services, internal conflicts within MINUSMA, a lack of capacity due to insufficient numbers of personnel as well as technical and logistical support, and the unreliable infrastructure in Mali.¹⁶ Based on interviews with

2

4 United Nations, S/RES/2100 (New York: United Nations, 2013).

5 United Nations, S/RES/2164 (United Nations, June 25, 2014).

6 Dr. Lotte Vermeij, *MINUSMA: Challenges and Opportunities*, NUPI Policy Brief, February 2015.

7 Security Council Report, "Mali : October 2014 Monthly Forecast," September 30, 2014, http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/monthly-forecast/2014-10/mali_14.php.

8 United Nations News Centre, "With Mali Peace Talks Set to Resume, Security Council Urges 'Spirit of Compromise,'" October 17, 2014, <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=49110#VEUVpMm5T5M>; United Nations News Centre, "Mali: Ban Voices 'outrage' as UN Peacekeeper Killed in Second Deadly Attack This Month," October 8, 2014, <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=49028#VE46S8m5T5M>.

9 MINUSMA Facts and Figures. <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/minusma/facts.shtml>.

10 United Nations, S/RES/2164 (United Nations, June 25, 2014).

11 Gustavo de Carvalho and Liezelle Kumalo, *Building the capacity of the Malian police*, ISS policy brief 69, October 2014.

12 United Nations S/2014/943.

13 UNPOL: What the UN police do in the field. <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/sites/police/work.shtml>.

14 UNPOL: Formed Police Units. <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/sites/police/units.shtml>.

15 PCCs for MINUSMA are: Bangladesh, Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Djibouti, Egypt, France, Germany, Ghana, Guinea, Jordan, Madagascar, Netherlands, Niger, Nigeria, Romania, Rwanda, Senegal, Sweden, Switzerland, Togo, Tunisia, Turkey and Yemen. Source: United Nations S/2014/943 and <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/minusma/facts.shtml>.

16 Lotte Vermeij, *MINUSMA: Challenges and Opportunities*, NUPI Policy Brief, February 2015.

MINUSMA leadership, representatives of the Police Component, other Mission staff, and UN DPKO UNPOL representatives, it is therefore recommended that:

- MINUSMA continues to work towards a peace agreement with the involved parties of the conflict in Mali, in order to create an environment in which MINUSMA police can fulfill all aspects of their mandate. Specific attention should be paid to northern Mali in order to enable MINUSMA police to operate in these areas safely.
- MINUSMA needs to assure that facilities, technical and logistical support are available for the Police Component in order to actualize deployments and enable the implementation of the mandate.
- Trust building efforts need to be increased in order to improve the cooperation with key stakeholders such as the Malian National Police, Gendarmerie as well as the local population. As part of this, intercultural communication and cooperation skills need further emphasis during training of police officers that are (to be) deployed to MINUSMA. Trust building concerning the Malian police services is essential for co-location, capacity building and the mentoring relationship between MINUSMA and Malian police/gendarmerie. In addition, MINUSMA should prioritize the restoration of confidence in the Mission of the Malian government and population in order to increase MINUSMA's capacity and ability to fulfill its mandate. It is recommended that MINUSMA police increasingly interacts and communicates with the Malian population, particularly in the northern regions. Considering the deteriorating security situation, it is essential to build relationships based on trust and to retrieve and share information with the Malian population, police services and government.
- It is recommended that language skills are thoroughly tested by PCCs before police officers are recruited and deployed to MINUSMA. Those recruited, yet not proficient in French should be offered language training. In-mission it is important that language skills are taken into account during the assignment of tasks. Especially training tasks should be assigned according to proficiency in order to prevent a loss of capacity and impact.
- Coordination efforts need to be improved and needs assessments should be conducted in order to prevent overlap and duplication of activities between MINUSMA police, partners and international organizations. A lack of these is currently resulting in a loss of the already scarce capacity of MINUSMA police, particularly seen in training initiatives for Malian police.
- In addition to training of Malian Police and Gendarmerie, an increase in technical and logistical support is needed, particularly in the northern regions. The development of

a reliable infrastructure between Bamako and northern Mali, as well as throughout the northern regions, is necessary for MINUSMA and Malian police services to perform.

- Gender issues need to be mainstreamed and greater numbers of female police officers should be recruited and deployed to MINUSMA. Not only will this contribute to a better gender balance, female police officers are needed in order to be able to communicate and gain trust with the female population that is often actively engaged with demonstrations throughout Mali. It is therefore recommended that MINUSMA continues and strengthens its efforts to reach full deployment of authorized police personnel, with a particular focus to recruit female police officers.
- Improved and more regular communication between MINUSMA Headquarters in Bamako and the mission's regional offices in order to share information, develop realistic strategies and share lessons learned/best practices.
- It is recommended that PCCs use police officers that have served their term in MINUSMA to brief IPOs/FPUs that are to be deployed to MINUSMA. Sharing their expertise and experience is likely to contribute to a better preparation, better expectation management and improved risk analyses. This may lead to a higher morale among MINUSMA police officers.
- Generally, there is a lack of documented knowledge of the role of police in UN peace operations and a lack of common guidelines for police personnel. Like in other UN peace operations, this has caused a lack of operational cohesion, varying degrees of professionalism, confusion and inconsistent standards within MINUSMA's police component. While the development of the Strategic Guidance Framework for International Police Peacekeeping (SGF) addresses this,¹⁷ UN HQ needs to assure that the on-going process of operationalizing the SGF maintains momentum. In addition, research is needed to determine how to develop and utilize the SGF guidelines while avoiding the pit-falls of template use within UN peace operations.

¹⁷ Andrew Carpenter, *Policing the Frontlines of Peace*, The Police Chief 81, August 2014. http://www.policiechiefmagazine.org/magazine/index.cfm?fuseaction=display_arch&article_id=3448&issue_id=82014.



Norwegian Institute of International Affairs

Established in 1959, the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs [NUPI] is a leading independent research institute on international politics and areas of relevance to Norwegian foreign policy. Formally under the Ministry of Education and Research, NUPI nevertheless operates as an independent, non-political instance in all its professional activities. Research undertaken at NUPI ranges from short-term applied research to more long-term basic research.

About the Author

Dr. Lotte Vermeij is the Head of the Peace Capacities Programme and a Senior Research Fellow at the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI). She holds a PhD in Disaster Studies from Wageningen University, the Netherlands, focusing on child soldiers and African rebel groups. Besides this her areas of expertise include peacekeeping, peacebuilding, civilian capacities, disarmament-demobilization-reintegration (DDR), and socialization within armed groups.

NUPI

Norwegian Institute of International Affairs
C.J. Hambros plass 2D
PO Box 8159 Dep. NO-0033 Oslo, Norway
www.nupi.no | info@nupi.no