

Security of Humanitarian Organizations

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Introduction

In 2005 some humanitarian actors in eastern Chad called for an international operation to provide security for humanitarian activities, refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs). At the end of 2007, a European Union Force arrived with 3,322 troops at its full strength, in conjunction with a UN Mission composed of civilian sections and an UNPol contingent, the latter with the task to provide guidance to a Chadian gendarmerie and police component, the D  tachement Int  gr   de S  curit   (DIS).

EUFOR Chad/RCA deployed to Chad with the unique mandate to 1/ contribute to protecting civilians in danger, particularly refugees and displaced persons; 2/ facilitate the delivery of humanitarian aid and the free movement of humanitarian personnel by helping to improve security in the area of operations; 3/ contribute to protecting United Nations personnel, facilities, installations and equipment and to ensuring the security and freedom of movement of its staff and United Nations associated personnel.¹ The EUFOR Concept of Operations clearly designated EUFOR as a bridging operation, “under the condition that the UN are prepared to subsequently deploy a multinational force within the agreed timeframe”, to prepare the terrain for a United Nations Force².

For humanitarian organizations on the ground, the presence of EUFOR instilled a feeling of comfort and security, and soon became an example

¹ Cf. United Nations Security Council Resolution 1778, 25 September 2008.

² Op EUFOR Tchad/RCA – Concept of Operations and the Provisional Statement of Requirements, European Union Military Committee, 7 November 2007, 14749/07, Political-Military Objective Nr. 11, p. 7.

of best practices in terms of civil-military coordination. Yet, it was unclear in how far EUFOR's mandate, as it had been conceived by the Security Council, was appropriate to address the actual challenges and threats on the ground, and the extent to which the Force was able to implement its mandate was difficult to assess. It is debatable whether it is possible to measure the success of EUFOR in providing humanitarian organizations with security with tangible indicators, and if so, what would those be? We must also have a look at the effects of the operation and determine whether they were in line with the actual mandate.

In order to do so, it is imperative to look at the security situation for humanitarian workers, in particular in eastern Chad; to examine the threats in the light of Security Council Resolution 1778; to look at one of the indicators for success which had been considered tangible for a long time – the return of IDPs; to examine EUFOR's effects on humanitarian access; and to outline the structures of civil-military coordination supporting EUFOR's interaction with the humanitarian community. In conclusion, these factors should lead to an appreciation as to whether the mandate was implemented.

Humanitarian Workers and Security: a downward Spiral?

Over the years, the safety and security of humanitarian personnel seems to have continued to deteriorate. 60 years ago, the United Nations (UN) flag and logo had a more protective effect than today. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) suffer a similar trend, since more and more of their humanitarian workers are becoming targets of deliberate attacks that range from killings, abductions and hostage taking to rape, harassment, banditry and criminality. The comprehensive and updated report of the Secretary-General³, upon request of the General Assembly, on the safety and security of humanitarian personnel and protection of

³ Report of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly, 63rd Session, item 68, on the provisional agenda Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance, on the safety and security of humanitarian personnel and the protection of UN personnel, A/63/305, 18 August 2008.

UN personnel, dated 18 August 2008, highlights the recent threats and challenges in ensuring safety and security for humanitarian and UN personnel. It calls for an international collective responsibility according to international law and its principles, and for a closer collaboration between the United Nations and host governments pertaining to the security of its personnel. The report highlights: “(...) in 2008, 63 casualties among international and national staff of NGOs were reported. Other incidents included 236 attacks, 70 cases of detention by State authorities and 103 incidents of unlawful detention by non-state actors, 41 incidents of assault, 132 incidents of harassment, 138 cases of forced entry or occupation of premises, 113 armed robberies, 50 incidents of vehicle hijackings, 70 residential break-ins and 124 cases of theft. In the same period, the UN suffered 490 attacks, over 500 robberies, some 263 physical assaults and 119 hijackings”⁴.

The impact of these threats is not only disastrous at the individual and organizational level, but has an adverse effect when it comes to accessing populations in need: they tend to shrink the space for humanitarian action and hamper the delivery of assistance as well as the protection of thousands of vulnerable IDPs, refugees and poverty-stricken host communities that are left in highly stressful situations without coping mechanisms, in and outside of camps.

In eastern Chad, humanitarian organizations, refugees, IDPs, and the host population have not been exempted from the abovementioned deterioration of the security situation. A short chronology of the main security incidents from the end of 2007 to March 2009 provides us with a snapshot of the situation faced by humanitarian actors as well as the military throughout the mandate of EUFOR:

- October to November 2007: regular clashes between the Chadian Army (ANT) and the Chadian Armed Opposition Groups (CAOGs) in several villages in eastern Chad impose restrictions on the movements of humanitarian actors on IDP sites located along the border with Sudan;

⁴ Ibid.

- End of January to early February 2008: a rebel attack on N'Djamena causes the evacuation of non-critical humanitarian personnel and a temporary continuation of humanitarian operations with 'skeleton teams';
- April 2008: killing of a Save The Children driver on his way from Bredgine refugee camp to Farchana;
- April 2008: killing of two CNAR security officers during an armed attack in Iriba;
- 1 May 2008: killing of the head of mission of Save The Children: Pascal Marlinge is shot dead on his way from Farchana to Adre by bandits, who intercept the convoy. From now on, armed escorts are the norm in United Nations operations in eastern Chad;
- 14 June 2008: confrontation between the ANT and rebels in Goz Beida. This causes 235 humanitarian workers to leave their bases for the EUFOR camp in Goz Beida for two to three days;
- 8 July 2008: ethnic clashes between the Dadjo and the Muro communities in Kerfi interfere with NGO community work in the area and cause humanitarian organizations to leave the zone for several weeks, cutting off aid for some 11,000 people;
- July 2008: shooting of ICRC staff in Abéché;
- July/August 2008: several NGO staff based in Iriba and Bahai receive death threats, resulting in the suspension of humanitarian programs in the refugee camp (in particular a food distribution planned to take place in Oure Cassoni refugee camp), close to Bahai and the town of Iriba. NGO support to the local health center is suspended;
- September/October 2008: several violent acts of banditry and break-ins into NGO compounds based in Dogdore, close to the Sudanese border, cause the totality of them to leave and suspend their programs benefitting 28,000 IDPs and host populations in

the following areas of support: water, sanitation, hygiene as well as health. These acts of banditry are prompted by a security vacuum, due to the fact that the ANT and the GNNT (Garde Nationale Nomade du Tchad) have left the area and no security forces are present;

- 8 October 2008: during a registration exercise by UNHCR and partner organizations, humanitarian staff in Am Nabak camp are attacked by a group of refugees who want to be registered but are not considered legitimate. All humanitarian staff is evacuated safely from the refugee camp and the neighbouring town. All humanitarian programs, except the provision of water through one NGO, are suspended for several months;
- 7 to 9 November 2008: inter-ethnic clashes in the area of Birak between the Zaghawa and the Tama tribes cause around 40 casualties and several thousand displaced persons in the cantons of Birak and Bali as well as movements to Sudan. The attacks are aimed at the Tama community. Humanitarian access is impeded due to insecurity and proximity to the border. EUFOR is solicited to provide patrols and contribute to security in the area;
- February/March 2009: as in September 2008, acts of banditry and break-ins into compounds of NGOs based in Dogdore cause the majority of them to leave once again and suspend their programs for around 28,000 IDPs;
- March 2009: regular crime and acts of banditry cause NGOs to leave Adre and Ade.⁵

In sum, compounds were looted, vehicles carjacked, staff beaten, shot at, killed, or they received death threats. This kind of war economy, which saw much of the livestock in Dar Sila looted between 2005 and 2007, was then perpetuated through the looting of easily transferable humanitarian assets, such as four-wheel-drive vehicles, at the

⁵ Inputs to OCHA NY, Key Trends in Humanitarian Access over the past 18 Months, 23 March 2009.

considerable expense of IDPs in need of assistance. In the course of 2008, altogether more than 160 attacks on humanitarian workers were reported in eastern Chad, including four fatalities. Impunity continued to reign in eastern Chad.⁶

Humanitarian organizations became targets, irrespective of their adherence to humanitarian principles, irrespective to their logos displayed on cars, t-shirts, and compounds. Serious discussions took place inside the country about the shrinking of humanitarian space, at the individual and the organizational level, since perpetrators of violence showed little or no respect for the humanitarian principles of impartiality, neutrality, humanity and independence, or for international humanitarian law.⁷ EUFOR increased its patrols, and its presence provided comfort. However, security through the respect for the humanitarian principles that humanitarian organizations rely on was not guaranteed any more.

The expectations when EUFOR arrived in the country were mixed. They ranged from fears that EUFOR would try and conduct humanitarian projects to the uncertainty of how to deal and cooperate with or whether even to stay clear of the incoming military force to the hope that the security situation would become more stable and that humanitarian access would improve. These expectations had soon to be adjusted, and even the Force itself, within the limitations of its mandate, had to adapt and find ways of how to deal with the actual threats prevailing on the ground.

⁶ The murder of Pascal Marlinge, Head of SAVE the Children, was not followed up in due course.

⁷ Impartiality = the provision of aid according to need based on non-discrimination, neutrality = not taking sides in armed conflict; humanity = alleviating human suffering wherever it is found; independence = not being utilized as an instrument of any political, military or economic agenda.

Threats versus Mandate

The situation in Chad had led to a mandate for the multidimensional peacekeeping operation, enshrined in Security Council Resolution 1778 of September 2007, which reflected the concerns regarding limited access, the threats to humanitarian workers, and the protection of civilians by means of a three-pronged approach, as mentioned earlier.⁸ The threats which the mandate was supposed to tackle were generally divided into three categories by the humanitarian and international community: 1/ banditry, crime, impunity, a lacking rule of law; 2/ CAOG and cross-border movements; 3/ intercommunity and ethnic clashes.

OXFAM presented EUFOR's impact on the security of humanitarian workers as follows: "The mission's military component EUFOR, which is present on the ground, has made many civilians feel safer through its activities, such as patrolling, destroying unexploded ordnance, and even positioning themselves around camps and sites during rebel and government fighting. However, EUFOR is a military force, and not a police force, which means it is ill-suited to deal with banditry and criminality, and not mandated to act within the camps and sites. Nevertheless, OXFAM believes it is important that EUFOR continue with its patrols and other deterrent activities, focusing its efforts on protecting all the key refugee and IDP zones in order to ensure the 'wide-area security' necessary for both MINURCAT and DIS deployment as well as for a smooth handover to a future UN force".⁹

The mantra that EUFOR was a military force sent to deal with a police problem often came up in debates. EUFOR had been put in a delicate situation, since the problems that humanitarian personnel faced were car-jacking and break-ins into compounds, more than actual rebel attacks or conflict situations. EUFOR representatives often repeated that the Force would not go after a stolen Landcruiser. Yet EUFOR went out of its way

⁸ *United Nations Security Council Resolution 1778*, 25 September 2008.

⁹ OXFAM Briefing Paper, *Mission incomplete: why civilians remain at risk in eastern Chad*, September 2008, p.2.

to adapt to the situation within its mandate and, through creative ways of patrolling and the provision of area security, helped the humanitarian community to operate in eastern Chad and northeastern CAR.

The debate continued, though, as to whether the mandate could really tackle the threats on the ground. In June 2008, the Joint Technical Assessment Mission composed of UN and EU representatives from New York, Paris, and Brussels visited eastern Chad. One part of their task consisted in reviewing the mandate of SC Resolution 1778, in order to assess the needs for a resolution concerning the follow-on Force, mandated by the UN. The delegation left with more questions than answers – the threats on the ground simply did not match the mandate which had been outlined in the resolution. The military could do its part in providing area security and in serving as a deterrent to rebel groups when they moved through the area of operation (AoO). However, to address the problem of impunity, banditry and the lack of an appropriate justice system, a police contingent supported by a strong civilian component was necessary. The DIS, together with UNPol and MINURCAT's civilian sections, was to fulfill this role. Yet, during the EUFOR mandate, this was impeded by problems concerning a rapid deployment of the mission, as well as delayed training of the DIS elements.

Thus, EUFOR had no choice but to adapt as well as it could in order to fulfill the three main parts of its mandate. The Force went to great lengths to achieve this, *inter alia* by offering to patrol in Abéché. This type of 'policing' action was rejected, however, by the Governor of Abéché.

International and national attention was focused on how the Force would deal with the challenges it faced on the ground, and the desperate search for tangible indicators to measure the success or the failure of the Operation began. It seemed as though one of the options was to look at the number of IDPs and refugees that would return during the time of EUFOR's deployment.

EUFOR and the Return of IDPs and Refugees

The return of IDPs caused many debates and lively exchanges between the humanitarian community and EUFOR, from the tactical to the strategic and political level. For EUFOR and, in particular, the European Union at headquarters in Brussels, it was politically imperative to see people return to their home villages during EUFOR deployment in eastern Chad. For the European Union, the number of returned persons was an indicator of a successful operation. The return of IDPs was indeed named as one of the tasks in EUFOR's Concept of Operations.¹⁰ Frequent visits by European politicians and speeches during meetings with the humanitarian community in Chad underlined this 'responsibility' imposed on EUFOR.

For humanitarian organizations, this was a reason for serious concern. Humanitarian organizations consider the return of IDPs as voluntary and their assistance as an action to accompany those who wish to return, and thus feared that EUFOR, being under pressure to produce numbers of returned people, would push people to return.

Even if IDPs want to return, it is extremely difficult to track their movements and to deliver concrete figures. In its strategy for sustainable returns of 25 April 2008¹¹, OCHA categorizes IDPs into three groups: 1/ those who would return to their village of origin at some point, 2/ those who would stay at the IDP site, settle there, and not move again, and 3/ those who would do neither the first nor the second but move to a third location.

¹⁰ Op EUFOR Tchad/RCA – Concept of Operations and the Provisional Statement of Requirements, European Union Military Committee, 7 November 2007, 14749/07, Political-Military Objective Nr. 11 c), p. 7.

¹¹ Document des Groupes de Travail de N'Djamena et d'Abéché sur les solutions durables pour les personnes affectées par le déplacement à l'est du Tchad, 25 Avril 2008, Cadre stratégique pour la recherche de solutions durables en faveur des populations affectées par le déplacement à l'est du Tchad.

At the same time, several factors caused the movements of IDPs to fluctuate. Some would go back to their lands of origin during the harvest season and then return to the IDP site because that was where they would receive assistance in terms of food distribution, access to health facilities and education. The standard of living was simply higher at a site than outside.

The rainy season brought further movements. The rains made it virtually impossible for humanitarian organizations to deliver food at the sites themselves. Thus IDPs from Kerfi, for instance, would have to move to Goz Beida in order to receive their rations.

Lastly, even if some IDPs did decide to return, they often returned to a volatile situation, with no local authorities present in their area, thus a vacuum of rule of law and governance.

The abovementioned factors accounted for the fact that, even in case of an improvement of the security situation, IDPs would not necessarily return.

EUFOR on the ground realized this quickly and understood, due, amongst others, to the fervent criticism from humanitarian actors, that it was not possible to use returns as a tangible indicator for success. EUFOR Force Headquarters defended this view successfully, perhaps to the detriment of political and strategic authorities in Brussels and Paris, yet to the effect of positive relations and effective cooperation with the humanitarian community on the ground.

If it was difficult to appreciate EUFOR's impact based on the number of decreasing or increasing security incidents or on the number of returned IDPs, concrete and tangible examples exist where EUFOR's presence had a strong added value in creating or helping to maintain the access of humanitarian organizations to their beneficiaries.

EUFOR and Humanitarian Access

EUFOR provided area security, as opposed to point security or escorts. Upon the request of humanitarian organizations, the Force would open a passage across main axes two days in advance of humanitarian movements; equally upon request, EUFOR would conduct air patrols, and humanitarian workers could communicate their movements to the Force so that the military would be in the surroundings on the day the humanitarian actors moved. Some organizations, for reasons of impartiality, neutrality, and independence, communicated their movements to EUFOR so that the military would not be in the area at that same time.

A small selection of multiple examples illustrates the success EUFOR had in providing humanitarian access:

- Goz Beida, June 2008: rebels enter the town of Goz Beida, and fighting erupts. 235 humanitarian personnel find refuge at the EUFOR base of Sector South. Without this possibility, humanitarian operations would have to be suspended, since humanitarian actors would have to relocate to Abéché or even N'Djamena. Thanks to the presence of the battalion, they can stay in a safe haven and, once the situation has calmed down, move back to their base and resume their work.
- Am Nabak, October 2008: humanitarian organizations have been attacked inside the refugee camp of Am Nabak during a registration exercise. The Multinational Battalion North provides armed escort and evacuates humanitarian organizations from the camp back to their bases.
- Birak, November 2008: fighting is ongoing between two ethnic groups in the area of Birak. During the first two days, no humanitarian actors are present. EUFOR distribute water, food rations and provide some medical care. EUFOR's presence allows humanitarian organizations to move in and take over the delivery of humanitarian assistance, while EUFOR returns to its task to provide security.

- Doha, January 2009: 20,000 refugees from Central Africa come across the border in southern Salamat. EUFOR provides air escort and conducts reconnaissance missions to the airfields in Doha, so that humanitarian organizations can move in and deliver humanitarian assistance.
- Border areas, September 2008 and March 2009: both times, some 28,000 IDPs have been left without humanitarian assistance in the area of Adre, since NGOs had to leave due to insecurity and banditry. EUFOR provides patrols, which allows humanitarian organizations to resume their work.
- Rainy season: EUFOR pulls humanitarian personnel out of the mud.

For EUFOR to be able to provide the rapid assistance to humanitarian organizations outlined in the examples above, effective information exchange and coordination structures were essential. Successfully established coordination mechanisms in the domain of civil-military cooperation and coordination from both the military and the civilian sides provided the necessary basis.

Civil-military Coordination Mechanisms and Projects

Humanitarian civil-military coordination played a central role during the deployment of EUFOR as well as during and after the handover to the United Nations Force. A functioning structure for civil-military coordination was key to the success and the implementation of the unique mandate of EUFOR and the U.N. Force to support humanitarian organizations. Through the advocacy of humanitarian organizations in Chad on the ground and of headquarters, the necessary posts were established and filled from day one of the deployment of the European Union Operation: OCHA deployed its Humanitarian Civil-Military Coordination Officer (UN-CMCoord Officer) in November 2007, at the same time when the first EUFOR officers arrived; the NGO Coordination Committee (CCO) advertised the post of a Policy Advisor on Civil-Military relationships, who arrived in June 2008. This allowed

for the immediate setup of structures for coordination and information exchange, which showed several facets¹²:

1/ A CIMIC Day was initiated, on which the EUFOR Force Commander summoned his CIMIC teams from the sectors, together with his CIMIC branch, once a month per sector, on a rotation basis, in order for teams to exchange experiences, and in order to streamline the vision of CIMIC for the mission. Humanitarian representatives, such as the UN-CMCoord Officer or representatives of UNHCR or NGOs were often invited to give an update on the situation of IDPs or refugees.

2/ CIMIC bulletins and security bulletins were made available to humanitarian organizations regularly, on a monthly and weekly basis, respectively.

3/ The schedules of logistics convoys were communicated every week to humanitarian organizations, so that they could join the convoys by following or preceding them, in order to move within an environment of security, without having to take a proper armed escort.

4/ Escorts were provided by EUFOR, if necessary, and upon request of humanitarian actors. This was the case, for instance, during food distribution in one of the refugee camps, and in situations involving high security risks. Short and long distance patrols, were regularly conducted in all sectors, and movement schedules were communicated to the humanitarian community.

5/ EUFOR offered to transport large sums of money for humanitarian organizations, for instance, on salary pay day, in order to avoid carjacks on the road.

6/ EUFOR provided emergency numbers to the humanitarian community, and humanitarian organizations could call in 24 hours a day.

¹² Reference Document – Humanitarian Civil-Military Liaison Arrangements and Coordination Mechanisms during the Mandate of EUFOR Chad/RCA, 12 March 2009.

7/ Weekly coordination platforms in the shape of meetings on security were created and attended by EUFOR CIMIC teams and the Force Commander himself, where information was exchanged in the order of geographical location, from north to south.

8/ EUFOR contributed to the elaboration of security plans, in support of the humanitarian community, and conducted relocation exercises.

Projects were a contentious topic, but they can be taken as an example for best practices in the context of eastern Chad. EUFOR conducted eight micro-projects. Those included the reconstruction of schools, the building of sports fields, and infrastructure support to the local hospital. Meetings for information sharing between the humanitarian community and EUFOR were convened by OCHA, for EUFOR to explain the content and the objective of their projects. After some heavy debates on the ground, the humanitarian community and EUFOR came to the common understanding that projects should be complementary to and well coordinated with humanitarian operations. EUFOR's projects, within the Guidelines on the Use of Military and Civil Defence Assets in Complex Emergencies¹³, and within the Quick Impact Project Directives¹⁴, helped to reach those who did not receive humanitarian assistance, such as population groups who lived outside the refugee camps and IDP sites or too far for humanitarian organizations to provide them with any basic assistance.

Although under great pressure from troop contributing nations as well as headquarters in Brussels and Paris, EUFOR succeeded in limiting their projects to a minimum. This effort strongly contributed to the good relations between EUFOR and the humanitarian community.

¹³ Guidelines on the Use of Military and Civil Defence Assets to Support United Nations Humanitarian Activities in Complex Emergencies, March 2003, Revision I, January 2006.

¹⁴ DPKO Policy Directive on Quick Impact Projects (QIPs), 12 February 2007, DPKO/DFS Guidelines on Quick Impact Projects (QIPs), 1 March 2009.

Conclusion

It is not possible to measure the success of EUFOR with tangible indicators and figures. Security incidents continued on the same level, with their number even increasing at times. Certainly, this must be seen in correlation with the arrival of an increasing number of international staff, thus more goods and more money, which means more high-value targets in the area. The return of IDPs continued gradually, based on voluntariness.

The initial anxiety of humanitarian organizations regarding a military operation was calmed, and reassurance was provided that, in case of security problems, the military Force would be there and ready to intervene, if necessary. Cooperation between humanitarian actors and the military was a case of best practices in eastern Chad.

Based on the three main points of Resolution 1778, namely that EUFOR should 1/ contribute to protecting civilians in danger, particularly refugees and displaced persons, 2/ facilitate the delivery of humanitarian aid and free movement of humanitarian personnel by helping to improve security in the area of operations, and 3/ contribute to protecting United Nations personnel, facilities, installations, and equipment, and to ensuring the security and freedom of movement of its staff and United Nations associated personnel, EUFOR creatively adapted to the situation by flexibly finding solutions within the limits of its mandate, assets, and capabilities, and by addressing problems which, perhaps, it was neither trained nor equipped for. EUFOR did what it could; the question remains whether the mandate was appropriate for resolving the threats on the ground and realistic in view of the circumstances prevailing there.