

Burundi: The African Union's First Mission

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Introduction

Ten days before the power handover in the Burundian transitional government, mortar fire became even heavier on the outskirts of the capital, Bujumbura. In fact, the strongest Hutu rebel movement in Burundi, the CNDD-FDD² led by Pierre Nkurunziza, has threatened to step up the offensive in the capital as a way of forcing the government to make more concessions, particularly the inclusion of the FDD in the transitional government.

It is against this background that the African Union (AU) has decided to deploy troops to Burundi to safeguard the cantonment areas and to provide technical assistance to the disarmament and demobilization process. On 3 February 2003, at a Heads of State and Government meeting in Addis Ababa, the 'African Mission in Burundi', or AMIB was approved.³ The mission will see soldiers from South Africa, Mozambique and Ethiopia deployed in Burundi. This situation report will give an update on the political and military situation in which the mission is being deployed, as well as on the mission itself.

Political situation

On 7 October 2002, a ceasefire agreement was signed between Burundi's smaller rebel groups in Dar-es-Salaam. These were the CNDD-FDD of Jean Bosco Ndayikengurukiye and the Palipehutu-FNL of Alain Mugabarabona.⁴ This was followed by the signing of a ceasefire agreement on 2 December 2002 in Arusha, by the CNDD-FDD of Pierre Nkurunziza and the Transitional Government of Burundi. To date, only Palipehutu-FNL of Agathon Rwaswa has not engaged in ceasefire negotiations with the Transitional Government. In the past three years, they have been fighting the Tutsi-led army near Bujumbura rural province.

Although the ceasefire was hailed as a milestone in Burundi's peace process, it failed to persuade the army and the rebels to bury the hatchet. As a matter of fact, gunfire began before the ink on the ceasefire document had dried. President Pierre Buyoya, a Tutsi, stepped down on 31 April 2003 in accordance with the Arusha peace deal, which installed a three-year transitional government with Buyoya as President in the first 18 months. The remaining 18 months of the Transitional Government would see a Hutu vice-president, Domitien Ndayizeye, assuming the reigns of Burundi.

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² Conseil National pour la Defense de la Democratie- Forces pour la Defense de la Democratie.

³ See Communiqué of the Seventh Ordinary Session of the Central Organ of the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution.

There were speculations that the army and UPRONA⁵ wanted Buyoya to extend his term in office on the grounds that the Hutu rebels would refuse to lay down arms and that this would put Ndayizeye in an embarrassing position. After discussions with the facilitator, South African Deputy President Jacob Zuma, Buyoya confirmed that he would step down on 1 May. And, in fact, he did. Nevertheless, despite Buyoya standing down, both the FDD and the FNL are aware that the power handover will be of little significance for them with regard to their participation in the transitional government. The FDD's resentment is even stronger than that of the FNL, as they not only signed the ceasefire with the President in Arusha last December, but also agreed to a declaration of cessation of hostilities on 27 January 2003 in Pretoria. The FDD are now accusing the Burundian Transitional Government of not adhering to the 2 December 2002 ceasefire and of continuing to target and kill civilians and attack FDD forces. For their part, the FNL of Rwaswa has ceased all negotiations with the facilitator and is continuing the armed conflict against the Burundian Armed Forces (BAF).

Military situation

Since the signing of the ceasefire agreements with the smaller FDD and FNL groups as well as with Nkurunziza of the CNDD-FDD (respectively in October and December 2002), the ceasefires have been broken on a daily basis. One Burundian has suggested that it was a case of "he who signs can also un-sign" (*uwasinnye nimwe asinyura*), as the Burundian saying goes. Moreover, original encampment in December 2002 failed when FDD soldiers moved out of the area and were attacked by the BAF on the grounds that this was a violation of the truce. To a large extent, this happened because of the delay in the deployment of the AMIB before 31 December 2002, as stated in the 2 December 2002 ceasefire agreement.

As a result, the conflict started all over again and is still raging. Since 12 April 2003, fierce fighting between the army and CNDD-FDD rebels has been reported throughout the provinces of Kayanza, Gitega, Muramvya, Ruyigi and Bujumbura Rural. The FNL of Rwaswa is concentrating its attacks in and around Bujumbura with a modus operandi based on hit and run attacks on military posts and convoys in the Bujumbura rural province. Since 15 April 2003 the FDD of Nkurunziza, with Rwaswa's permission to operate in his area of responsibility, has started a campaign of mortar attacks on the capital of Bujumbura, killing innocent civilians and displacing thousands of people.

Accusing the government troops of attacking their positions, the FDD called on the international community, especially the African Union (AU), to send a peacekeeping force to monitor the Burundi ceasefire, saying the ceasefire might collapse without international backing. The deployment of 42 AU military observers to Burundi at this stage has had no major effect. It is planned that this figure will be increased to 120.

Likely scenarios

Several scenarios (or a combination of these) are possible as this new 18-month period begins for the transitional government:

- **Radical Hutu resistance.** Disgruntled FDD and FNL forces, excluded by choice from the peace process, intensify attacks that newly uproot thousands of Burundians.
- **Army coup.** The Burundi army refuses to accept the authority of the new presidency, responds with violence, and attempts a coup within weeks or months.
- **Suppression of rebels.** The new president, Ndayizeye, uses the Burundian army to destroy the rebels if they do not want to be part of the ceasefire, and to hold on to the presidency.
- **Forced repatriation.** Tanzanian authorities exploit the change of power to force hundreds of thousands of Hutu Burundian refugees home, a move that destabilizes Burundi.
- **Sudden voluntary return.** A peaceful transition occurs and hundreds of thousands of Burundian refugees repatriate voluntarily and spontaneously. This overwhelms Burundi's already fragile economy and inadequate social services'

- **Land disputes.** The issue of land ownership escalates into violence in a situation where returning refugees attempt to resettle on land which has been occupied by new owners.

The African Union Mission in Burundi (AMIB)

The Central Organ of the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution of the AU mandated the deployment of the AMIB on 2 April 2003 for an initial period of one year subject to renewal by the Central Organ and pending the deployment of a United Nations (UN) peacekeeping force to be mandated by the UN Security Council as envisaged in the agreement. South Africa, Ethiopia and Mozambique will contribute to the AMIB troop contingent.

The mandate provided by the AU outlined the force levels, the mission statement, mandate tasks, concept of operations, logistical support and, finally, command and control. The Military-Strategic Technical Planning Team (MSTPT) drafted a Preliminary Outline for the Mission during January 2003. The outputs were used to brief the Ministers of Defence of South Africa, Ethiopia and Mozambique. All signatories to the ceasefire agreement, except CNDD-FDD (Nkurunziza), were present. The AU then approved a mandate based on a concept prepared by the MSTPT.

AMIB force structure

The Peacekeeping Force comprises the following forces:

- Ethiopia (1 x Battalion, plus 2 additional companies: 980);
- Mozambique (1 x Strengthened Company: 280); and
- South Africa (1 x Battalion, plus 2 additional companies: 1 600).

South Africa, having been appointed the lead nation, was responsible for the appointment of the Force Commander (Maj Gen SZ Binda) whereas Ethiopia, being a troop contributing country, appointed the Deputy Force Commander (Brig Gen G Ayele).

Mission Statement

AMIB is to deploy within 60 days of the provision of a mandate to supervise, observe, monitor and verify the implementation of the Ceasefire Agreement, in order to further consolidate the peace process in Burundi.

Mandate tasks

The following tasks were approved:

- To establish and maintain liaison between the parties.
- To monitor and verify implementation of the Ceasefire Agreement.
- To facilitate the activities of the Joint Ceasefire Commission (JCC) and Technical Committees for the establishment of a new National Defence Force and Police Force.
- To facilitate safe passage for the parties during planned movement to the designed assembly areas.
- To secure identified assembly and disengagement areas.
- To facilitate and provide technical assistance to disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) processes; facilitate the delivery of humanitarian assistance.
- To coordinate mission activities with the UN presence in Burundi.
- To provide VIP protection for designated returning leaders.

Crux of the Mission

This is to safeguard the cantonment areas and to provide technical assistance to the

Mission structure

The Mission will include military and limited civilian components and a Head of Mission under the auspices of the AU. Its military component will include formal military units, Joint Liaison Teams (JLTs) and Military Observers (MILOBs). It is estimated that the total strength of the mission will not exceed 3 500 military personnel, including up to 120 MILOBs.

Military component

The military component will include infantry units for safeguarding the cantonments and for DDR. There will also be a protection and reaction element responsible for VIP and HQ protection, and a rapid reaction element. Provision is also made for a maritime element, aviation element and support unit.

Deployment concept

There are two approaches to deployment. The AMIB commander wants to use the standard deployment concept of:

- Stage 1:** Preparation;
- Stage 2:** Pre-deployment activities and movement to mission area;
- Stage 3:** Deployment in mission area and sustained from TCCs
- Stage 4:** Rotation and/or re-deployment
- Stage 5:** Post-operation activities

The Armed Forces of Burundi have the following perspective on the phasing and implementation of the ceasefire agreements:

- Phase 1:** Continuation of cantonment and DDR process for CNDD-FDD (Jean Bosco) and Palipehutu-FNL (Mugabarabona) as agreed;
- Phase 2:** Cantonment and DDR for CNDD-FDD (Nkurunziza) once they have committed themselves to the process (partial confinement of FAB elements not involved in operations is possible at this stage);
- Phase 3:** Cantonment and DDR for Palipehutu-FNL (Rwasa) once they have signed a ceasefire and committed themselves;
- Phase 4:** Once there is a comprehensive and holding ceasefire, FAB will fully comply with the agreement to be partially confined to their base areas;

It was recommended that a phased deployment be followed to make provision for those signatories who are ready for the envisaged DDR process, and to provide AMIB protection elements for the deployment of AU Military Observers (MILOBs).

Recommended cantonment areas

As a first step to disengagement, the agreements specified that the rebels and government forces would be cantoned in zones supervised by the AMIB. The zones were to be determined by a commission composed of representatives of the parties and of the AMIB. However, because the AMIB has not been established, the commission has not yet met. The MSTPT has suggested the following cantonment areas:

- Babanzu Province: Muyange
- Murumvyu Province: Buyarumu
- Rutanu Province: Buhingu
- Rugigi Province: Bweru
- Muyingu Province: Buhinyusa

Rules of engagement

The rules of engagement (ROE) are based on International law and the principle of self-defence. The ROE will focus on protection of mission personnel and equipment. The authority to adjust the ROE will be vested in the Head of Mission in conjunction with the Force Commander after consultation with the mandating authority.

Command, control and communications

The AMIB is authorized and deployed under the auspices of the AU, which mandates the following command and control:

- The AMIB shall function under the overall direction of a Head of Mission, Ambassador Bah, who shall be the Special Representative of the Chairperson of the AU Commission. AMIB Headquarters will be established in Bujumbura.
- Reporting: The Head of the Mission and the AMIB Force Commander are to provide the first report on progress towards the implementation of its mandate not later than three months after the establishment of the mission. Subsequently, they are to provide periodic reports. Reports shall be submitted to the Central Organ on a regular basis and at least every six months. It is still unsure how the AU will react on the reports and address the problem areas.

Concerns about the deployment of the AMIB

Security concerns are linked to entry and exit criteria. The biggest concern for the military planners relates to entry criteria. The ideal situation would be that of a ceasefire signed by all role-players combined with the political will to start the DDR process. Currently in Burundi the ceasefire is not inclusive and is not upheld by the signatories. The CNDD-FDD (Nkurunziza) has not yet made contact with the Technical Planning Team and is continuing with the war. Palipehutu-FNL (Rwasa) has not signed a ceasefire agreement and are also engaged in military activity. This has affected FAB's participation in the DDR process. Political guidance will be required whether or not to deploy the AMIB military forces, especially if the prevailing security situation at the time of imminent deployment degenerates.

Mandated tasks versus potential threats

The mandate makes provision for tasks related to the safeguard of the cantonment areas and to provide technical assistance to the disarmament and demobilization process. None of these mandated tasks allow for enforcement measures. The ROE are based on the use of force for self-defence including ensuring the security and freedom of movement of AMIB personnel, as well as to protect civilians under imminent threat of physical violence. The Force Commander retains direct control over the use of force in these circumstances. If the conflict between the rebels and the FAB continues, the AMIB will be sidelined and will have no mandate to intervene.

Finances

The AU ruled that troop contribution countries would pay for the first two months of deployment. The AU has set up a special fund to pay for the mission depending on donation money. Ethiopia has already indicated that it will not be able to deploy before receiving money for the deployment. The estimated cost of the mission for one year is \$165,000,000.

Conclusion

With AMIB military planning in the final stages of preparation to deploy, it is very important that the facilitator continues his engagement with the political process. The CNDD-FDD (Nkurunziza) must be persuaded to adhere to the ceasefire agreement and become part of the Military Technical Planning Team. Because of the close relations between Nkurunziza and Tanzania, it is foreseen that a possible mediation effort will involve Tanzania to a much greater extent. International pressure must also be put on the FNL (Rwasa) to be included in the ceasefire agreement. The ongoing deliberations in Switzerland can be used as a starting point to get the

If the conflict continues, it will be very difficult for the AMIB, with its limited mandate, to deploy. The CNDD-FDD (Nkurunziza) have threatened that they will attack the mission if it moves into their area of operations. This must be seen in a serious light and should be discussed with them as soon as possible. A meeting of the Burundi initiative, led by President Museveni, is urgently needed.

Until now the Mozambican and Ethiopian forces have only deployed partially because of a lack of funds. It is hoped that this issue will be resolved soon, otherwise the South Africans will have to go it alone. This is the first deployment of an AU mission in the short history of the organization, and it will certainly test the depth of its capacity to confront an on-going crisis. The AU mission in Burundi should be aware that its role will very likely degenerate into that of peace enforcer rather than peacekeeper. In practical terms this represents the difference between using force and projecting credible force.