



Thematic Series on Building More Effective UN Peace Operations

Reflecting on the Experiences of Major TCCs – the Case of Brazil in MINUSTAH

Summary of the 10 April, 2012 Thematic Series Panel Discussion

The Permanent Mission of Canada to the United Nations and the Center on International Cooperation held their first panel discussion of the 2012 edition of the thematic series, “Building More Effective UN Peace Operations,” on 10 April 2012. The event examined the role of troop contributing countries (TCCs) in peace operations, focusing on the experience of the Brazilian contingent of the UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH). Following introductory remarks from Canada’s Permanent Representative, Ambassador Guillermo Rishchynski, CIC’s Associate Director Richard Gowan moderated panelists Edmond Mulet, Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations and former Special Representative of the Secretary-General to MINUSTAH, and former MINUSTAH Force Commander General Luis Guilherme Paul Cruz in a discussion of the crisis response, recovery, and peacekeeping experiences of MINUSTAH, and what TCCs and the UN peacekeeping architecture can learn from the Brazilian deployment to Haiti. The proceedings were governed by the Chatham House rule.

The event began with a discussion of the unique nature of the MINUSTAH deployment and Brazil’s contributions to achieving mission goals and responding to crises on the ground. There was not a traditional conflict in Haiti or a peace agreement to monitor, but the UN deployed a peace operation to the country because the Security Council has no other tool with which to address a failed state. Brazil has been the bedrock of MINUSTAH’s armed component, which proved able to quickly respond and adapt to the unique challenges the mission faced, especially in the wake of the 2010 earthquake. The mission played a crucial role in the wake of the earthquake, as it was the only actor on the ground capable of providing a rapid response to the disaster. The Brazilian contingent took the lead in crisis response and broke new ground in its institution-building assistance.

Reinforcements came from around the world and from many organizations, demonstrating the challenge of integrating many diverse actors in the response. The Joint Operations and Tasking Centre (JOTC) facilitated this by basing the leadership of military, police, and other components in the same space, allowing for effective communication and knowledge sharing, along with the opportunity to develop personal relationships among leaders.

MINUSTAH’s work revolved around four axes: security and stability, support for the electoral process, support for humanitarian actions, and crisis response. The mission sought to foster public order by working and communicating with the Haitian people and both UN and local police, and by emphasizing to contingent personnel the daily needs of average Haitians. MINUSTAH worked to protect dislocated people living in camps, overcoming some initial resistance to establish community policing in these facilities. Brazilian engineering companies worked year-round to clear streets, collect debris, and work with civilian

actors through the JOTC to respond to the earthquake. The mission had a responsibility to assure the elections would happen “no matter what,” and provided logistics and security to all 1,500 voting centers. Throughout the experience, MINUSTAH worked under the mindset that the troops are not in charge, but part of a coordinated effort involving many actors.

MINUSTAH demonstrated that TCCs must be adaptable and flexible, and that they can provide unique knowledge and experience vital for mission success, even when the needs of the mission focus more on institution building than traditional peacekeeping responsibilities. Brazil's excellent training and preparation for its troops, which began six months prior to deployment, prepared them well for their work in Haiti. The Brazilian contingent was well suited for the challenges it faced, with experience operating in dense urban environments and a proven ability to work well with local communities. Its recent support for response to the cholera outbreak further demonstrates the contingent's adaptability. Brazil also serves as a bridgehead for Latin American countries to contribute to MINUSTAH and other peace operations.

A discussion with attendees followed the presentations. It was suggested that TCCs should be further brought in to the mission planning process to assure that mandated goals are feasible and realistic, and that MINUSTAH would benefit from lighter, more mobile forces and better command and control capabilities. Although the future evolution of peace operations is unclear, it was asserted that a mission must always develop an effective partnership with the host government.