The use of force in UN peacekeeping: The experience of MONUC

Jim Terrie

In order for the UN to keep the peace it has to enforce it sometimes.¹

General Patrick Cammaert, MONUC Divisional Commander

Introduction

In the post-Cold War period the opportunity existed for the international community to take a more direct role in attempting to solve conflicts. One of the consequences was an increase in the intervention of military forces for humanitarian purposes. This had a direct impact on the scale and scope of UN peacekeeping missions which soon found themselves, especially in Somalia and Bosnia, in situations that they were unprepared to respond to. Subsequent successes in Kosovo and East Timor by non-UN forces in part rehabilitated the notion of intervention, but these were offset by the UN’s failures in the Balkans, Sierra Leone and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).
The UN mission in the DRC, MONUC, was established in 1999 as an observer mission but by mid-2003 it faced collapse. The French led an EU force to stabilise the region of Ituri that had seen some of the worst atrocities. The respite allowed the UN to reconfigure and reinforce its mission but it was again challenged and failed in mid-2004 when Congolese Tutsi rebels led by dissident General Laurent Nkunda captured the town of Bukavu, which was being protected by UN forces. An article in *The Economist* in December 2004 asked provocatively and perhaps rhetorically, ‘Is this the world’s least effective UN peacekeeping force?’ The near collapse of the mission led to even further and more substantial reinforcement. From early 2005 the Eastern Division of MONUC, under the command of Major General Patrick Cammaert from the Netherlands, expanded its use of force, confronting militias and creating an improved security situation in the eastern DRC.

MONUC’s problems are both specific to the mission itself and symptomatic of the challenges and problems of UN peacekeeping operations. These include poor management, doctrinal confusion and an over-stretched force operating with too few troops. However, while the mission evolved to meet the changing situation on the ground, these changes have largely been made as a consequence of events rather than in anticipation of them – often after violence has occurred, with Congolese civilians paying the price. The greatest challenge has been to use the available force effectively in order to protect civilians, the mission, broader peace process and occasionally regional stability. This article will discuss the experience of MONUC, particularly in the period 2005–2007, to assess the evolving use of force and asses the impact and lessons for UN peacekeeping more broadly.

**From crisis to credibility**

The capture of Bukavu by rebels in 1994 caused serious reflection as to the viability of the mission. Bukavu exposed the weaknesses in MONUC’s operational capacities, especially its inadequate troop levels, lack of coherence and poor understanding of the utility of force. More fundamental was the misunderstanding within the mission and the UN as to what the role of the UN in the DRC was. High-ranking officials in the UN have suggested that MONUC did not have a coherent military strategy to speak of and this as well as a wider doctrinal void within the UN contributed to serious failures.

The UN Secretary-General’s Third Special Report on the DRC (16 August 2004) was an overdue attempt at grappling with the realities of the situation in the DRC and the challenges that MONUC faced. In response to the UNSG’s request UN Security Council Resolution 1565 (1 October 2004) authorised MONUC to raise its ceiling to 16 700 troops. The resulting restructuring of the force led to a number of significant...
enhancements: the establishment of a divisional headquarters in Kisangani to command tactical operations in the east; the deployment of full Indian and Pakistani brigades into North and South Kivu respectively (adding to the four battalion Ituri Brigade); and the establishment of a divisional reserve utilising the South African Battalion.

In late 2004 the armed groups in Ituri engaged in frequent inter-fighting as they battled for control of resources. Much of the fighting has resumed an inter-ethnic characteristic that had abated since late 2003. A number of brutal massacres were perpetrated and more than 10,000 civilians sought refuge over the Ugandan border. Faced with growing criticism for failing to act, MONUC began to shift from reactive to preventive operations and increased its presence in the vicinity of some vulnerable and displaced people. MONUC officials publically denied that such cordon and search operations were focused on any particular militia group despite clear knowledge as to who was responsible for atrocities against civilians. This inevitably brought it into conflict with those militia groups attacking civilians – perhaps deliberately.

On 25 February 2005, during one such operation, FNI (Forces Nationalistes et Intégrationistes) militia, left largely unchallenged in Ituri, ambushed a group of UN peacekeepers, killing nine Bangladeshi soldiers. In response the newly appointed Eastern Divisional Commander, General Patrick Cammaert of the Netherlands, sent reinforcements and commenced extended security operations, which resulted in MONUC forces killing 50–60 FNI militia. There were some accusations that MONUC acted punitively. Statements focusing on perpetrators being ‘brought to justice’ reinforced this perception. The UNSG described the killing of the FNI militia as ‘self-defence’, which strictly was true as it appears that UN Pakistani troops conducting cordon and search operations were fired upon first after being caught in a market place of Loga, and came under attack from 300–400 militia. This fire fight, the largest for UN troops since Somalia, resulting in a four-hour battle supported by helicopter gun ships and reinforcements in order to extract them, resulted in the serious wounding of two peacekeepers. While MONUC can be criticised for its failure to conduct such cordon and search operations since early 2004, after it had established sufficient force levels in Ituri, there now appeared to be an undeclared policy of placing peacekeepers in locations that were likely to not only deter militias but also increase the likelihood of coming into conflict with them. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General, William Swing, stated on 13 March 2005 that the militias would have a deadline of 1 April to enter the disarmament programme. MONUC’s military Chief of Staff was less equivocal: ‘If you do not surrender your arms by 1 April you will be treated like armed bandits and war criminals and we will chase you.’ The intensity of fighting increased in early 2005 and resulted in a number of casualties and incidents. However, despite the increased violence, what was indisputable was the significant increase in those entering the disarmament programme – in the order of 14,000 by mid-June 2005. This was mostly as a consequence of MONUC’s increasingly effective operations against the militias.
It was unclear whether these actions heralded a deliberate change in MONUC’s concept of operations to act more aggressively and that ‘the armed groups do not have any other choice but to disarm’\textsuperscript{15} or whether the actions were merely a continuation of the existing concept of operations and ‘in keeping with the mission’s robust mandate’ [own emphasis].\textsuperscript{16} In respect of the use of force, the mandate itself – while increasing the range of tasks – did not explicitly move beyond the paradigm of protecting those ‘under imminent threat of physical violence’\textsuperscript{17} with ‘all necessary means, within its capacity and in the areas where its armed units are deployed’.\textsuperscript{18} While the mission was more capable and better organised, the mandate did not explicitly require any pre-emptive action on the part of MONUC, instead calling on MONUC ‘to deploy and maintain a presence in the key areas of potential volatility’. This left the mandate open to interpretation by the commanders on the ground, and in Kinshasa and New York. Regardless of the official or unofficial policies and decisions, the message that MONUC was willing to use deadly force against militias had an effect.

However, the range of statements from UN staff after the events of early 2005 reflected confusion, division and uneasiness over a more active role for MONUC forces. Within MONUC and the UN headquarters in New York there was immediate objection, especially from some in political and humanitarian affairs who wanted all offensive operations by MONUC to cease.\textsuperscript{19} This was especially after reports were received that civilians had been killed in fighting between MONUC and militias – despite information that the militias had deliberately used civilians as ‘human shields’.\textsuperscript{20} In a briefing at the UN on 4 March 2005, the Deputy Director of the Africa Division in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) stated that MONUC was ‘sticking to its mandate of protecting people’\textsuperscript{21} but that it was ‘not the peacekeepers’ role to go on the offensive and take out the militias preying on civilians. We are not engaged in a war. We need basic security on the ground so that the parties themselves can create peace and establish some kind of legitimate government.’\textsuperscript{22} The obvious response would be to question how MONUC was going to protect civilians while precluding the use of effective military force to do so. The preferred alternatives from those objecting to direct action against the militias included an emphasis on more ‘passive measures’ such as the arms embargo, despite the demonstrated lack of required capacities. These objections distorted the notion that a new more ‘robust doctrine’ of UN peacekeeping operations was being applied as was being rhetorically proclaimed by DPKO.\textsuperscript{23}

This view was also in contradiction to view of the divisional commander, Major General Patrick Cammaert, who was determined that he was going to make a difference – to the relief of those within the mission who believed that past failures had seriously undermined the mission’s credibility, morale and effectiveness.\textsuperscript{24} General Cammaert was resolute after receiving criticism about the actions undertaken by MONUC troops saying that:
Those guys who are so critical, let them come down here and get their boots muddy … Everyone can talk but I will get on and do my own thing … If we have an opponent that engages you or misbehaves, he will feel the consequences. It’s very simple.²⁵

General Cammaert’s views on the use of force were clearly spelt out after he ended his time as divisional commander. He acknowledged that in protecting those in ‘imminent threat of physical violence’ on occasion ‘the only way to disarm local and foreign armed groups who have conducted barbaric attacks with guns, spears and/or machetes is through the [proactive] use of lethal force’.²⁶ Therefore the rules of engagement (ROE) issued stated that where there is a ‘threat of imminent and direct use of force, which is demonstrated through action, which appears to be preparatory to a hostile action, only a reasonable belief [own emphasis] in the hostile intent is required’.²⁷ These ROE and the proactive leadership of General Cammaert added reality to the notion that MONUC had moved on from its failures of 2003/04 and was actively conducting robust peacekeeping.

While MONUC had numerous successes, especially against the militias in Ituri, it was clear that there were limitations to its operational influence, especially in the Kivus where the challenges remain significantly greater. This included the rebellion by General Nkunda that threatened to destabilise North Kivu. In response MONUC took a more proactive role where needed. In its defence of the town of Sake, North Kivu, in November 2006, when Congolese Army troops crumbled in the face of Nkunda’s advance. MONUC’s operations, including the use of attack helicopters, killed many of Nkunda’s fighters. Notably there were far fewer objections or protests from within the UN compared to the killing of militia in Ituri early 2005 and it appeared that there was an acceptance of the consequences of MONUC troops using force where necessary.²⁸

The biggest challenge for MONUC has been dealing with foreign armed groups, especially the Rwandan Hutu FDLR (Forces Démocratiques de Libération du Rwanda, Democratic Liberation Forces of Rwanda). Their continued presence of the FDLR has in part contributed to the continued resistance of General Nkunda, who claims to be acting to protect the Congolese Tutsis. MONUC has adjusted its operations to maintain pressure on the FDLR. The most significant change has been the use of mobile operating bases which has seen MONUC contingents leaving their barracks and establishes a presence in the areas previously controlled by the FDLR. This patrolling in mass approach destabilised the FDLR but was mainly focused on providing protection to civilians while the Congolese Army carried out operations against the FDLR. However this has had limited affect due to the weakness of the Congolese forces.²⁹ While MONUC has preferred to allow the DRC government and its army to lead the way in dealing with issues such as Nkunda and the FDLR, the Congolese lack the capacity and often the political will to resolve these issues. This has often left MONUC in a situation where while it is the only viable and cohesive security force in the eastern DRC it has
deferred to the notion of Congolese sovereignty. This has often resulted in MONUC (again) being accused of failing to act to protect those threatened by armed groups or the Congolese army itself (whose own human rights record is poor).

However, the momentum and impetus for MONUC to take a more direct role in dealing with ‘spoilers’ such as Nkunda or foreign armed groups on Congolese soil such as the FDLR or the Ugandan Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) have been created. Certainly, undertaking a concerted military campaign against the FDLR, a far more battle hardened and ideological opponent would require more troops than MONUC has at present but more significantly, these operations would require a far more comprehensive acceptance and application of the use of force. The DRC’s problems are the product of dysfunctional national and regional politics, and the long-term solutions will lie with the corresponding parties. However, to date they have not shown sufficient resolve to do so. Therefore the current problem is how to best respond to the immediate consequences of the conflict and how the UN and MONUC can use its available resources effectively in the short term – this include its military peacekeepers.

Many of the improvements in operational effectiveness were a result of the purposefulness that General Cammaert had gone about using the forces he had to make a difference. After his departure in February 2007, it took six months to fill the important position of Commander Eastern Division and it appears that the present mission leadership has not continued his momentum. Given that the changes General Cammaert instituted did not go unchallenged and there have been numerous other leadership changes within the mission, notably the mission chief, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG), it is likely that military operations will return to a reactive mode, in part reinforced by the preference for the Congolese Army to do the bulk of the fighting. It also raises the question as to whether the ‘robust’ peacekeeping undertaken was largely a product of specific conditions and personalities rather than a deliberate expansion of UN strategy and therefore reflecting a lack of coherence and consistency in UN peacekeeping’s understanding and application of force.

Understanding and applying force

The use of force has always been recognised by the UN, at least implicitly, as a necessary aspect of managing conflict affected environments. However, as Trevor Findlay notes: ‘All the other weaknesses of UN peace operations are amplified when the use of force is badly handled.’ The use of force has largely been framed by the ‘bedrock’ principles of impartiality, consent and minimum force but has also been repeatedly used as an excuse for military inaction in the face of war crimes and genocide. The Brahimi Report challenged some of these principles and stated that: ‘In some cases, local parties consist not of moral equals but of obvious aggressors and victims, and peacekeepers may not
only be operationally justified in using force but morally compelled to do so.’\textsuperscript{33} Similarly, the report states: ‘[W]hen the United Nations does send its forces to uphold the peace, they must be prepared to confront the lingering forces of war and violence, with the ability and determination to defeat them,’ and notes the need ‘to project credible force if complex peacekeeping, in particular, is to succeed.’\textsuperscript{34} However, as Mark Malan notes, neither the Brahimi Report nor Kofi Annan’s subsequent appraisal got to grips ‘with the principal doctrinal issue of intervention – the appropriate and effective use of military force in pursuit of the mandate’ and they offered ‘no new and credible concept of operations, but rather reiterates the validity of the ‘classic’ peacekeeping principles of impartiality, consent and the non-use of force’.\textsuperscript{35} Therefore despite the acknowledgement in the Brahimi Report of clear failures in understanding and applying force and the consequences thereof, the UN Secretary-General subsequently stated that he did not interpret any portions of the panel’s report as a recommendation to turn the United Nations into a war-fighting machine or to fundamentally change the principles according to which peacekeepers use force’.\textsuperscript{36} Putting aside the case of exaggeration by association, this was clearly a rebuttal of many of the insights of the Brahimi Report, as well as earlier ones concerning Rwanda and Srebrenica.

This lack of strategic and doctrinal clarity is largely to be expected. John Hillen states that: ‘UN military operations have their own grammar (no matter how unintelligible), but their logic is the logic of the UN’s political character.’\textsuperscript{37} Hillen’s Clausewitzean argument is that effective military operations require a necessary political commitment and military legitimacy, which the UN lacks as it is in not ‘a form of embryonic world government but an international corporation’.\textsuperscript{38} UN peacekeeping in complex environments is highly reliant upon military operations and cannot escape the logic that Hillen and others draw. In fact, the linkage goes a long way to explain the weaknesses of UN military operations. The diffuse mandate derived from broad multilateralism (central to the UN’s claim of legitimacy) and diplomatic compromise directly frames the nature of military responses that the UN generates. In normal military operations the deployment of the military is aimed at projecting force, usually applying it coercively. In peacekeeping the logic is often reversed where the deployment of military forces is often an end in itself and the actual use of force is a secondary consequence. While peacekeeping is not the same as war the Clausewitzian logic still applies. While military forces are only an element of the overall peacekeeping structure they need to be used wilfully in order to effectively contribute to the mission objectives. Any assumption to the contrary that UN peacekeeping, due to its international ‘legitimacy’ and non-warlike intent, is somehow different when it comes to the role of military forces and the logic of force, is flawed. Such beliefs lie at the root of the UN’s inability and reluctance to utilise force effectively and is largely derived from the UN’s political structure and ‘culture’ where force, while recognised as sometimes necessary, is seen as anathema to the institution’s broader pacific purpose. This is best illustrated in relation to the capture of Bukavu in mid-2004. Prior to Bukavu the head of DPKO postured that:
It is highly important that the armed groups operating in Congo, who poison the atmosphere in the region, understand that the time has come to give up their weapons. We are prepared to increase pressure and squeeze on those armed groups. Understand that their time is up.

During the crisis, faced with a deteriorating situation the focus changed to maintaining the UN’s ‘neutrality’. Much of the post-event justification changed to describing the UN’s role in the DRC as being to ‘broadly ensure law and order and is better served as a confidence building actor than as a security provider’.

Tactically, the main flaw in the UN’s military approach is the value placed on ‘deterrence through presence’ – the expectation that the mere presence of UN forces is sufficient to deter aggressors has more often than not proven to be false. Deterrence is only valid if credible, and while credibility is partly contingent on force strength, it also relies on an adversary’s belief that force will be used, often beyond the level of ‘minimum necessary force’ and pre-emptively if necessary. An adversary’s belief that it can ‘snipe’ at UN forces and that there will not be a strong response, greatly undermines the inherent threat that accompanies the deployment of armed peacekeepers. However, once peacekeeping forces are located in an area, they do alter the dynamics and calculations of those in proximity, regardless of the stated mandate or mission. For civilians there is an expectation that the UN presence will mitigate the insecurity and when needed, protection will be provided. For belligerents, armed UN peacekeepers will represent a threat to their viability. This will usually prompt them to test the peacekeepers’ resolve in order to determine the degree that they will need to modify their behaviour. This test was often failed by MONUC in 2003/04.

Despite tactical successes since early 2005, one of the fundamental problems for MONUC was that it lacked a doctrinally based coherent campaign plan that clearly identified the roles and task of its military forces in achieving the wider objectives of the mission and made clear the context and applicability of military force. Promoting political progress and humanitarian objectives necessitates a secure environment. While political progress and reconciliation can increase security it is also the case that ongoing insecurity and atrocities can undermine and negate political progress. The oft used statements (mainly used rhetorically) that ‘there can only be a political solution’ or ‘there is no military solution’ are as obvious as they are nugatory. It is clear that often security has to be created and the military component of any peacekeeping mission needs to be prepared to do this where it is needed. Moreover, the threat of violence inherent in military force must be calibrated with other mission tools to achieve the strategic objectives. The challenge for a mission is to understand its environment and to apply force skilfully and purposefully.

The UN has – somewhat belatedly, it could be argued – recognised the need for a better understanding of the dynamic of force. The UN has developed a conflict continuum that
defines the use of force as inversely proportional to consent and impartiality. The current UN ‘Capstone Doctrine’ attempts to define the boundaries of force and consent as follows:

Although on the ground they may sometimes appear similar, robust peacekeeping should not be confused with peace enforcement, as envisaged under Chapter VII of the Charter. Robust peacekeeping involves the use of force at the tactical level with the authorization of the Security Council and consent of the host nation and/or the main parties to the conflict. By contrast, peace enforcement does not require the consent of the main parties and may involve the use of military force at the strategic or international level, which is normally prohibited for Member States under Article 2(4) of the Charter, unless authorized by the Security Council.43

*Figure 1 The limits of peacekeeping*

While this continuum creates a general framework for thinking about operations between traditional peacekeeping and war fighting, the distinction and application of ‘robust peacekeeping’ and ‘peace enforcement’ is a lot greyer than the doctrine implies. Correspondingly so is the distinction between ‘minimum force’ and ‘enforcement’ as different ‘consent prompting techniques’. This is especially so for commanders and troops on the ground in complex conflict environment where the link between ‘tactical’ and ‘strategic’ can either be indistinguishable (such as General Nkunda’s rebellion) or inconsequential (such as the militias in Ituri).

The UN doctrine assumes a high degree of linearity and consistency in the relationship between impartiality and the application of force. MONUC’s experience shows that there
is a great deal of fluidity in the belligerent parties and the overall security environment that makes such a ‘doctrinal approach’ problematic in the reality of operations and perhaps requiring a degree of operational flexibility that is likely to be beyond UN forces. One of the initial problems in the UN was in understanding consent and impartiality as they applied to local ‘spoilers’ and ‘main parties’. The capture of Bukavu is illustrative of a lack of clarity. General Nkunda had been a member of the Rassemblement Congolais pour la Démocratie (RCD), a party to the peace agreement and member of the transitional government. His attack on Bukavu was in part due to internal conflict with the RCD and an attempt to assert his influence. The confusion led many, including the UN spokesman, to justify MONUC’s lack of action as consistent with its mandate which prohibits action against parties to the peace agreement. However, the UN clearly failed to make the necessary distinctions as to Nkunda’s position as a ‘spoiler’, his objectives, previous actions and the consequent threat to overall stability of the country. This failure underwrote failure to apply force when it may have made a difference.

In Ituri, MONUC peacekeepers were able to overcome institutional resistance in part because the task was relatively simpler as none of the militias had significant or durable links to the main Congolese parties. Although these links existed, as they did to Uganda and Rwanda, they diminished as the peace process progressed. The current Capstone Doctrine states that: ‘The ultimate aim of the use of force is to influence and deter spoilers working against the peace process or seeking to harm civilians; and not to seek their military defeat [own emphasis].’ However, it seems clear that MONUC’s operations were aimed at bringing about the demise of the militias by arresting their leaders, forcing their disarmament, generally diminishing their influence, and using deadly force if needed to achieve these ends. While some may see this as a question of semantics it is axiomatic that the ‘defeat’ of militia groups who show ongoing hostile intent, through various means including military force, was necessary to achieve the wider objectives of protecting civilians and pacifying Ituri. It is certain that regardless of the stated intent, military officers were aware of the effect of these operations on the militia’s survivability. The operations in Ituri also moved beyond the notion that force should ‘always be calibrated in a precise, proportional and appropriate manner, within the principle of the minimum force’. General Cammaert was clear that: ‘In the reality of the DRC, however, opponents often give MONUC forces little warning. Therefore the urgency of the situation dictates that UN soldiers immediately use deadly force to stop aggression.’ Practically, prescriptive boundaries between reactive and pre-emptive uses of force are overly restrictive for forces on the ground, as well as being insufficient criteria in defining a transition from ‘robust’ peacekeeping to peace enforcement.

Alex de Waal warns that ‘once an intervening force begins to fight, it can do nothing else’. This is certainly true in some respects but the degree that it is problematic is arguable. Most of the militia leaders in the DRC that have surrendered and agreed to enter the disarmament programme have only done so after being confronted by resolute UN forces; before that they had a free hand to loot, kill and rape. This progress has not
solely been a result of military force as there have also been political and social incentives, but contra de Waal’s assertion, force is but one element of promoting progress and when sanctions are enhanced by incentives the overall effect is seldom negative. The use of force doesn’t necessarily negate other options and may reinforce them.

The early experience of MONUC and many other missions also shows that the opposite of de Waal’s assertion is also true – sometimes if it doesn’t fight it can do nothing. Certainly an initial application of force can lead to escalation; however, this should be expected and planned for. This is where the principle of minimum force is problematic, as incrementally and reactively increasing force from a low base is far more difficult than initially using the ‘maximum necessary’ level of force and then decreasing as compliance is achieved. This was one of the key lessons of the non-UN interventions in East Timor, Sierra Leone and Operation Artemis in Ituri. While UN forces may not be as technically capable as first world armies, they often have considerable capability and experience that can be brought to bear against most belligerents in complex conflicts. It is however, important to acknowledge that the decision to escalate should be a deliberate one and UN forces should be prepared, equipped and supported to do so. A mission that deploys with no capability or expectation that it will have to create some dominance initially is likely to face serious problems if not failure and this has been the case on numerous UN missions.

Similarly, the UN and the troop-contributing countries (TCCs) must accept *prima facie* that that they may have to fight (and kill) and that the use of force is often consistent with achieving the mission’s objectives. Force is most effective when applied with true impartially – those that offend the most will have the most force applied. The demonstration of intent to use deadly force will create clarity on the part of all belligerents as to the consequences of transgression – it will also create clarity for the mission and UN Headquarters. This is particularly the case with ‘spoilers’ who largely remain outside of the normal requirements of consent as the justification and execution of the mission is not contingent on the consent of the spoilers.

**Conclusion**

Alex de Waal points out that once peacekeepers use force then it is difficult to undo the consequences. But instead of seeing this as a constraint it should be accounted for in the preparation and use of UN peacekeeping forces. As occurred in MONUC, UN forces are often able to apply military force robustly and, especially in Ituri, were able to greatly influence the security environment and progress the mission objectives as a whole. The influence in the Kivus was more limited; whether MONUC could more fully apply force to the problems of General Nkunda or the FDLR and extend their use of ‘robust’ peacekeeping is dependent on a range of factors. With more troops the areas of influence can be extended and greater force ratios would be available. However, taking on these
opponents would mean the UN taking a deliberate decision to take on the primary responsibility for security from the nascent but problematic Congolese Army. From a military standpoint and given the forces this seems logical; however, it departs from the overall political objective of MONUC to assist in the re-establishment of state capacity. The consequence is that MONUC is caught in-between supporting a government that lacks capacity and a reluctance to do too much itself. In the security sphere this means that MONUC forces have had to go beyond the normal peacekeeping principles in applying force tactically.

Defining how far UN forces can or should go in applying force is problematic. There is no neat division between ‘robust peacekeeping’ and peace enforcement. At various times the difference tactically is likely to be indistinguishable in a complex conflict with a high degree of fluidity in belligerent forces. UN commanders on the ground need to be guided by their mandate and ROE but be prepared to use the forces at their disposal prudently but with deliberate purpose. MONUC’s Eastern Division, under General Cammaert, was able to demonstrate these principles effectively on numerous occasions. However, these actions were largely a confluence of numerous factors of leadership, necessity and opportunity. While they provide some precedence it is unlikely that the experience has or will have sufficient impact on the development of UN peacekeeping overall. Each UN mission will have its own parameters and constraints from which the mission commanders will have to determine if and how to apply force robustly. While there is definitely scope for UN forces to apply robust peacekeeping in other situations, the degree to which such an approach can expand and become doctrinally embedded in the UN is greatly restricted by UN’s political and institutional constraints upon the effective use of force.

Notes


2 The Economist, 2 December 2004.

3 See the UN’s report MONUC and the Bukavu Crisis 2004 (March 2005). While the report deals in some detail with the failures within the mission, it fails to address in detail any institutional or operational failures by the UN itself.


5 According to sources this was largely due to the insistence of the mission to ‘tell it like it is’, although there were reportedly 6–7 redrafts before it was finally accepted by the UN in New York.

6 United Nations, Security Resolution 1565, 1 October 2004. Although this was a welcome and necessary reinforcement it fell well short of the 23 900 troops that the Secretary-General requested and meant that a presence could not be established in Katanga or Kasai.

7 Fighting between the FNI and FAPC was partly driven by a struggle for the control of mining zones and taxes and customs collection in Aru and Malagi.

8 The ambush was partly in response to an earlier arrest of FNI militia and the seizure of weapons.

9 Humanitarian organisations such as Médecins Sans Frontières and German Agro Action were unhappy with MONUC’s search operations because they had not been informed beforehand. AAA’s vehicles were looted by UPC militias the same day in Katato. MONUC replied that such operations are secret and
cannot be known in advance, which was a reasonable expectation given the usual lack of operational and information security that typifies UN operations.

10 Agence France-Presse, *DRC: MONUC is determined to proceed with actions against Ituri armed groups*, 16 March 2005.


12 Interviews, Kinshasa, February 2005.

13 IRIN, *DRC: Uncooperative fighters will be hunted down*, *MONUC says*, 1 April 2005.

14 According to an ISS report: ‘[P]rior to the launch of MONUC’s robust actions and the setting of the ultimatum, only 2000 militia had been demobilised. By late April, this figure had risen to 11,394, S Wolters, *Is Ituri on the road to stability? An update on the current security situation in the district*, ISS Situation Report, 12 May 2005.


16 Margaret Carey, Deputy Director of the Africa Division DPKO; IRIN, *DRC: UN troops killed 50 militiamen in self-defence, Annan says*, 4 March 2005.


18 Ibid. Fighting between FARDC factions in North Kivu in late 2004 in an environment aggravated by threats from Rwanda to enter the DRC revealed, unlike Bukavu, the actual limits of MONUC’s mandate and presence. MONUC’s mandate does not authorise it to intervene, other than to protect affected civilians, in the case of either inter-state conflict or between recognised parties of the transitional government. However, the actual limits of MONUC’s mandate and presence: MONUC’s mandate does not authorise it to intervene, other than to protect affected civilians, in the case of either inter-state conflict or between recognised parties of the transitional government. But in response to the Bukavu crisis, the UN Secretary-General’s spokesman, Fred Eckhard, said that ‘[i]t’s for the [Congolese] parties to sort out – when war breaks out, the role of peacekeepers ends’ (J K Stearns, *The other African crisis*, *Washington Post*, 13 August 2004). The implication would have been correct if the ‘war’ in Bukavu had been between factions of the transitional government. However, the statement was a misrepresentation of the situation on the ground as the transitional government that MONUC was tasked to support was being attacked by a ‘spoiler’ group.


20 Interviews, UN staff, Kinshasa, February 2005.

21 *Peacekeepers seek a stronger hand in DRC*, IOL, 4 March 2005.

22 Ibid.

23 *UN forces to operate more aggressively*, ISN Security Watch, 24 May 2005.

24 Interviews, UN staff, Kinshasa, February 2005.

25 UN forces at last take the fight to Congo militiamen, *Telegraph*, 7 March 2005.


27 Ibid.

28 Interview, Cammaert, 5 June 2008.

29 Despite a considerable effort in the area of security sector reform, ‘FARDC lacks the capacity to undertake significant offensive operations in the near future. Addressing that deficit will require the institution of a system of leadership vetting and review, increased joint operational planning and better training. MONUC is conducting an assessment to determine the capabilities and limitations of FARDC in terms of offensive operations and to identify priority areas where the Mission and international partners could help enhance FARDC capabilities.’ 25th report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, S/2008/218, 2 April 2008, 9.

30 An attempt to arrest the second in command of the LRA, located in Garumba National Park, in January 2006 led to the deaths of eight Guatemalan Special Forces troops.

31 Interview DPKO, June 2008.


34 Brahimi Report, viii.


37 John Hillen, Peace(keeping) in our time: the UN as a professional military manager, Parameters, Autumn 1996, 17–34.


39 UN vows tough action against militia fighters, Reuters, 26 May 2004.

40 Interviews Kivus and Kinshasa, July and August 2004; also see Stearns, The other African crisis. Many UN staff, including those involved in decision-making positions during the Bukavu crisis, seemed unable to distinguish between the principles of ‘neutrality’ and ‘impartiality’.

41 Meeting notes, OCHA/InterAction meeting in New York, 30 July 2004.

42 Interviews in 2004 with militia leaders in Ituri indicated their lack of respect for MONUC troops, largely stemming from the reluctance of MONUC to use force effectively when confronted.


45 See International Crisis Group, Pulling back from the brink in the Congo, ICG Africa Briefing, 7 July 2004.


47 United Nations peacekeeping operations, 35.

48 Ibid.

49 Cammaert, Learning to use force on the hoof in peacekeeping, 7.