

Participation of Force Enablers in UN Peacekeeping Operations: The Chinese Perspective

Since 1990, the People's Liberation Army (PLA) has participated in a total of 23 UN peacekeeping operations, involving more than 24,000 military personnel. The PLA engagement in peacekeeping has experienced the stages of pre-participation preparation, moderate involvement and enlarged participation. The PLA has also developed a scientific mechanism for peacekeeping participation, which is comprehensive in system, complete in function and scientific in operation. The majority of Chinese peacekeepers are engineering, transport and medical units, or force enablers in UN terms. Only a small number of them are military observers. Over the past 20 or more years, they have played a due role in UN peacekeeping operations and won, on many occasions, extensive praises from such high-ranking officials as Secretary Generals and Under Secretary Generals. On June 19, 2013, Secretary General Ban Ki-moon once again acclaimed Chinese peacekeepers as having "first class professionalism and dedication", when he had a live video conversation in Beijing with the Chinese contingent in South Sudan.

I. Generating a strong force according to strict standards.

To discharge their duties successfully, peacekeepers must possess

full scale capabilities and qualities, since they have to operate in a remote and foreign environment. Whenever a new contingent has to be generated, we take into full consideration the needs required for peacekeeping duties. **The first and foremost is to form a strong team of leaders and cadres.** Under the strict guidance of UN Force Requirements, we designate one formed company as the basis for force generation. Posts of the contingent will then be open to application. An individual applying for peacekeeping service must be recommended by his unit and pass professional, political, physical as well as psychological examinations, before his application is further processed by the appropriate HQ functions and approved by the Party Committee. Contingent commanders are selected according to their ability to fulfill missions, managerial skills, sense of responsibilities and professional competence, with the emphasis on mixing the old with the new, complementation of qualifications, equal number of military and political leaders and preference in peacekeeping experience. In each contingent, over 50 percent of the commanding officers have previous peacekeeping experience. With regard to the specialties of air conditioning and power supply, we enlarge our scope of selection to make sure that only the best of the bests is selected and those selected are 100% qualified for the posts. Officers in charge of external affairs are carefully

selected from the best candidates according to the standards of familiarization with peacekeeping policies and guidelines, a good command of English and a full knowledge of mission operating procedures and practices. **The second is to set a scientific proportion between different categories of personnel.** Over the years of peacekeeping practice, we have worked out a scientific proportion between different categories of peacekeeping personnel, while we fully meet the Force Requirements issued by the UN. The normal proportion between the old, middle-aged and young is 1:2:3, the average proportion between officers and soldiers is 1:7 and the proportion between corporals, sergeants, staff sergeants and master sergeants is usually 2:4:3:1. And depending on the actual needs, there is a flexible proportion between specialists for such specialties as refrigeration, water treatment and equipment maintenance, on the premise that they will not take up more than 10 percent of the total strength. Given the fact that the engineering, transport and medical units have a big variety of specialties and yet a relatively small authorized strength, 20 percent of the personnel selected for those units are multi-talented. **The third is to establish a whole-course elimination mechanism.** When a contingent is first set up, the number of candidates will usually exceed the authorized strength by 20

percent to ensure full strength and high qualities of the contingent. These 20 percent of the candidates will be sifted out at different stages according to the ratings of their ideological performance, training achievements and results of physical examinations. In the first month of pre-deployment training, the strength will be reduced to 110 percent of the authorized strength, in the second month to 105 percent, in the third and last month to 102 percent, and the final strength of 100 percent will not be reached until the last moment of departure. The introduction of the whole-course elimination mechanism has stimulated the training enthusiasm of all ranks and guaranteed the high qualities of the peacekeeping contingents.

II. Sharpening the edges through robust training. Whenever a new mission is established, we will conduct a reconnaissance tour to the mission area. And on the basis of thorough investigation and surveying, we organize training activities according to the nature, magnitude and requirements of the tasks. **The first is to formulate training guidelines and develop training materials.** To ensure the standardization of peacekeeping-specific training, the Headquarters of General Staff promulgated Training Guidelines for Engineering Units Participating in Peacekeeping Operations and peacekeeping training materials in the early years of our

participation. In order to improve the relevance and effectiveness of peacekeeping training, concerned regional military commands have developed more than 30 types of peacekeeping guidelines, manuals and emergency response handbooks. They have also produced more than 10 video training materials such as the Planning and Conduct of Peacekeeping Operations and Red China, Blue Peace. **The second is to differentiate levels of training.** In line with the requirements of peacekeeping duties, training activities are organized at three different levels: elementary, intermediate and advanced. The elementary training, which is intended to popularize knowledge about peacekeeping and improve individual physical fitness and military skills, is delivered by the contingent to the average officers and soldiers. The intermediate training, which aims to improve the contingent's ability to react in crisis situations and the ability to defend itself, is organized by various military commands. The advanced training, which consists of senior mission leaders' training, contingent officers' and cadres' training, and military observers' and staff officers' training, is conducted here in the Peacekeeping Centre by the Ministry of National Defense. The senior mission leaders' training aims to train officers from colonels to major generals who have previous peacekeeping experience to compete for senior DPKO or mission

leaders' positions. The contingent officers' and cadres' training is intended to improve the trainees' ability to apply policies and guidelines to peacekeeping practice. Participants of the military observers' and staff officers' training must possess robust military and political qualifications with at least 6 years of active service, working knowledge of English and the ability to drive a motor vehicle. Upon completion of this training, officers will be fully capable of performing peacekeeping duties independently. **The third is to intensify training in weak areas.** Although the selected personnel have mastered professional skills in engineering, transportation and medicine, we also attach great importance to intensified training in our weak areas. Since most of our officers do not speak fluent English, we incorporate English language training into pre-deployment training. Professors of English from universities and colleges are invited to teach English lessons in the barracks. We also run English courses for officers in charge of external affairs and medical staff. To make up for the PLA's inexperience in military operations and tactical weaknesses of the support units, veteran soldiers were invited to share their war experience and expert tactical instructors are attached to assist them in improving their defensive combat skills. **The fourth is to identify training priorities.** The most challenging,

complicated and difficult job of peacekeeping troops in the field is to cope with various kinds of emergencies. With this in mind, we formulated Guidelines for the Management of Emergencies in UN Peacekeeping Operations. Furthermore, in 2011, we organized Blue Helmet 2011 in Shandong Province, an emergency management exercise observed by a wide array of audience. Doctrinal research products such as Emergency Management Handbook for Peacekeeping Troops and Guidelines for the Construction of Defense Facilities for Peacekeeping Troops were produced. Peacekeeping best practices such as Five Steps in Emergency Management, Five Teams and Six Groups in Force Composition, Four Steps in the Use of Force and Three Rules in Media Relations were developed.

III. Bringing our specialties into play in the service of peace.

The purpose of United Nations peacekeeping is to help the host nation build lasting peace and improve the livelihood of local population. Force enablers are capable of supporting the reconstruction of the host nation with their special expertise. With the authorization of the peacekeeping mission, Chinese contingents take an active part in various kinds of support operations within our capabilities in order to achieve the mission's overall objectives. We place great emphasis on bringing into play the three advantages of the PLA. **The first is the advantage of our**

political work. The People's Liberation Army is widely known for its right political position, exceptional professionalism, fine work style, strict discipline and strong service support. As such, the PLA has always been able to accomplish military tasks with high political attainments. While serving with the UN, the Chinese units always adhere to the three guiding principles of consent, impartiality and non-use of force. They think, plan and act in a way that best serves the interest of the mission objectives. For feasible and priority tasks, they will take immediate and prompt actions and carry them out to the core; for ordinary and unfeasible tasks, they will communicate their understanding to all the parties concerned and at the same time make positive efforts to create conditions conducive to their fulfillment. Over the years, the Chinese units have won the trust of all the stakeholders and created a mission-friendly environment. **The second is to bring into play the force enablers' special expertise.** Chinese peacekeeping units endeavor to bring about extraordinary performance with the special expertise in their grasp. As of the end of August, 2013, the engineering units have constructed or repaired over 10,600 kilometers of roads, built over 300 bridges, and cleared over 9200 landmines; the transport units have covered a distance of over 11 million kilometers and transported over 1 million tons of materiel;

the medical units have treated over 13,000 patients. In 2012, to lift the medical service of Chinese Level II hospitals to a higher level, the PLA invested over 10 million yuan (an equivalent of 1.62 million US dollars) in establishing a high definition tele-consultation system. Linking the Peacekeeping Centre of MND and military hospitals back in China to the Chinese Level II hospitals in UNMISS, UNIFIL and MONUSCO, the system enables the Chinese Level II hospitals in peacekeeping missions to consult medical experts at home and provides strong life-saving support in emergent situations. **The third is to bring into play the fine traditions of the PLA.** Without prejudice to the fulfillment of mandatory tasks and with the authorization of the Force or Sector HQ, the Chinese units also take an active part in the local reconstruction and humanitarian assistance activities in order to alleviate the sufferings of the local people. They used their redundant manpower and spare time to help construct or repair local bridges and primary schools. They donated school materials to local schools, provided transport support for DDR programmes, trained medical staff for local charity hospitals, and provided medical care and even agricultural technology to the local people. These deeds helped improve the operating environment of UN peacekeeping operations and won the understanding and support of the local

population.

IV. Developing best practices for the betterment of efficiency and effectiveness of our operations. Over 20 years of participation has taught us one important lesson: for the betterment of efficiency and effectiveness of our operations, we must keep on developing best practices. **The first is to carry out doctrinal research.** For the better performance of UN peacekeeping duties, we organized task teams to carry out doctrinal research in the areas of ideological education, force generation, defensive operations, military training, administration, mass work and logistical and equipment support. A large number of doctrinal research products have been produced. We made a study of 8 different types of emergencies (armed attacks, hijackings, social unrests, armed conflicts, natural disasters, outbreak of epidemic diseases, accidents and criminal cases) and developed 10 contingency plans for these emergencies. These products have provided strong doctrinal guidance for the fulfillment of peacekeeping tasks. **The second is to make active efforts to identify best practices.** To explore the characteristics of pre-deployment training and find practical solutions to pre-deployment training problems, in June 2013, an experimental pre-deployment training observation exercise codenamed Blue Helmet 2013 was organized in Beijing for engineering, transport and

medical units respectively, which resulted in a set of practical pre-deployment training and evaluation guidelines, administrative regulations, operating procedures and techniques. To improve the security work of our peacekeeping contingents, we launched a campaign called “the Month of Security” on the occasion of the Sudanese election in 2010. During the campaign, the Chinese contingents in UNMIS and UNAMID conducted a general security check which included 9 major items. A working team was dispatched to Sudan to evaluate the effectiveness of the campaign. **The third is to conduct after-action reviews.** During their tours of duty, all the contingents conduct regular after-action reviews, while they perform their peacekeeping duties. They have identified 7 areas to be reviewed following an action, which includes personnel selection, conduct of training, preparation of materiel, mobility and movement, fulfillment of tasks, rotation of troops and performance evaluation. To boost the morale and adhesiveness of the troops, the contingents work out ideological education programmes intended to strengthen unity of minds, unity of strength, unity of efforts and unity of steps. To further standardize the rotation operation, the contingents have identified 8 steps in the handover-takeover process, which include introduction and briefing, handover of equipment and materiel, familiarization with roles and

responsibilities, on the job training and independent operation. In addition, the contingents have set up 8 standards for the handover-takeover operation.