



CF Photo by: WO Blouin, ISC94-2015

Scene in a refugee camp near Goma, Zaïre.

OPERATION "ASSURANCE": PLANNING A MULTI-NATIONAL FORCE FOR RWANDA/ZAÏRE ¹

By Dr. Michael A. Hennessy

In November 1996, as a by-product of the genocide in Rwanda two years earlier, a major humanitarian crisis erupted in Central Africa on the border between Zaïre and Rwanda. Hundreds of thousands of refugees — this time Hutus — fled into the jungles of the region and appeared on the verge of starvation. Canada took a leading role in forming a UN multi-national force to provide aid and protection to the refugees. This proved to be a major challenge. Canada last took the lead in the formation of a multi-national UN force in 1956 (UNEF I), and had never led a UN Chapter VII operation. The Canadian government offered to deploy 1,500 personnel, including headquarters, transport, aviation and security elements, in addition to the Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART). It was estimated that the mission would last up to four months, and that the cost would approach \$60 to \$100 million.

However, the humanitarian disaster that appeared unavoidable in mid-November was largely resolved by 13 December 1996. Consequently, the Canadian Forces actually deployed only 354 personnel to the theatre. Despite this turn of events, the Canadian Forces learned valuable lessons in attempting to generate and lead a large multi-national force (MNF) in an *other-than-war* humanitarian relief operation. Traditionally structured

and prepared doctrinally to be a coalition member — but not a coalition leader — the Canadian Forces found the UN mission to be an unanticipated military and diplomatic test. Compounding these challenges were fast-paced changes to the developing situation in Africa, especially the rapid redirection of refugee movement.

Operation "Assurance" resulted in perhaps the most exhaustive effort at discerning lessons learned that the Army has ever made in peacetime.² This narrative draws heavily upon those continuing efforts, as well as on documentation made during the crisis, to offer a brief synopsis and analysis of Canada's only recent effort to mount and lead a multi-national humanitarian mission.

BACKGROUND TO THE CRISIS

One million Hutu refugees fled Rwanda in 1994 to escape retribution at the hands of a victorious Tutsi army for the genocide many of their leaders had perpetrated. Most of these Hutus sought refuge in the jungle in eastern Zaïre (now Congo) near the border with Rwanda. This mass exodus from Rwanda resulted in

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over forty refugee camps being established. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) provided humanitarian assistance to all these camps at a cost of some one million dollars per day. Most camps were populated by unarmed civilians, but a number of

Liberation of Congo-Zaire (ADFL), and then secured the unquestioned leadership of the movement that would eventually topple the Zairian government. Kabila launched an offensive against both the Hutu refugee camps and the Zairian forces. The escalating civil war in Zaire saw both Zairian factions now act against the Rwandan Hutu refugees. Kabila's forces attacked the armed camps, and Zairian troops looted UNHCR supply centres. UNHCR representatives evacuated Uvira, Bukavu and Goma, and eventually all humanitarian aid to eastern Zaire was cut off. The fighting compelled large numbers of refugees to flee their camps and move west, deeper into Zaire, thus sparking what was seen to be a humanitarian crisis in the Great Lakes region of Africa.



Watching this looming disaster, a number of countries — particularly France and Germany — called for military humanitarian intervention. Despite active discussion, little real

support was forthcoming for these measures. Non-intervention by western military forces (at least by conventional or large-scale troop deployments) had typified the response to previous crises in the region since the Congo's 1960s civil war. The complexity of the region's history and tribal-national politics were major reasons for this inaction. Moreover, the relatively recent experience of the UN-mandated multi-national coalition in Somalia considerably limited the willingness of the United States to contribute troops to intervention forces. Similar checks on large-scale western military intervention had affected previous Canadian involvement in the region.

Canada had, of course, been involved during the 1994 civil war in Rwanda as part of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Rwanda (UNAMIR), commanded by Major-General Romeo Dallaire. UNAMIR, an under-strength Chapter VI observer force, stood impotent during the period of the 1994 genocide.³ Events in Zaire the following year caused the UN Secretary General to ask Canada to consider sending a force to secure the Hutu refugee camps. In the former case, the world community demonstrated almost no interest in intervening militarily to save unarmed civilians from slaughter. In the latter case, the deployment of a UN force would likely have forestalled the 1996 crisis, but lack of local African support for the plan led to Canada's decision to decline the request for troops — indeed, no UN force was deployed.

them did contain armed elements of the former Rwandan army (the FAR) and the *Interhamwe* militia that had been involved in the 1994 genocide against Rwanda's Tutsi population. Following the Hutus ouster from power — because of the success of a Tutsi-led rebel army — both of these groups found themselves among the mass of refugees. Both also attempted to maintain loyalty and power in the refugee camps through strong-arm tactics; ultimately, they hoped to overthrow the new Rwandan government.

The Rwandan Hutus initially established their refugee camps in a region that for hundreds of years had been occupied by Zairian Tutsis, known as the *Banyamulengi*. This area of eastern Zaire sported at least three armed rebel elements before the arrival of the Hutus, and was notoriously unstable. The Hutus proceeded to clear the local Tutsis from the Goma-Masisi region north of Lake Kivu. Through 1995-96, some 250,000 *Banyamulengi* fled the region into Rwanda. South of Lake Kivu, the *Banyamulengi* began armed operations against the Hutu settlement camps there. These attacks were supported by Rwanda and other outside powers. Faced with escalating violence, in October 1996 the Zairian government declared the region south of Lake Kivu a war zone, and gave the 300,000 *Banyamulengi* concentrated there one week to leave the country or face being hunted down as rebels. At this point, the UN Human Rights *Rapporteur* in Kinshasa called for the imposition of a UN military observer force.

Within two weeks of the Zairian government calling for the expulsion of the *Banyamulengi*, the armed Tutsi elements had made common cause with a separate rebel group led by Laurent Kabila, who had been at war with the Zairian government since the mid-1960s. Kabila exploited the opportunities this ethnic strife now created to form the Alliance of Democratic Forces for the

In the 1996 crisis, however, the growing scope of the problem threatened to (and did) de-stabilize the entire Great Lakes region. Moreover, the international media and relief agencies gave widespread publicity to the developing crisis. Following some behind the scenes activity by Canadian diplomats, the UN Secretary General appointed Raymond Chrétien, Canadian Ambassador to the United States (and former

ambassador to countries in this part of Africa from 1978 to 1981), as the UN Special Envoy to the Great Lakes Region.

On 5 November 1996, the UN and several European countries held a regional summit in Nairobi. With the President of Tanzania as chairman, all countries of the region participated, with Zaïre being represented by the government of Kenya. The summit called for the establishment of safe corridors and temporary sanctuaries inside Zaïre, renewed access for humanitarian aid, and steps to facilitate the return of refugees to Rwanda.

Further, the conference called for the UN Security Council to deploy a neutral force to facilitate these measures. Rwanda stated it would allow legitimate refugees to return home, but wanted them separated from Hutu armed elements, and insisted that humanitarian aid not go into the armed camps. Zaïre, in contrast, wanted the UN force to stabilize eastern Zaïre and control the local rebels. Neither country would deviate from these positions during the initial stages of Canadian deployment. As this crisis developed, the UNHCR advocated action to facilitate and hasten the return of displaced Hutus to Rwanda. Most of the major powers supported that stance, even though it was very much at variance with previous UNHCR policies and international practice — which, it should be noted, had resulted in near-permanent Palestinian refugee camps in the Middle East, massive Cambodian refugee camps in Thailand, and Afghan refugee camps in Pakistan.

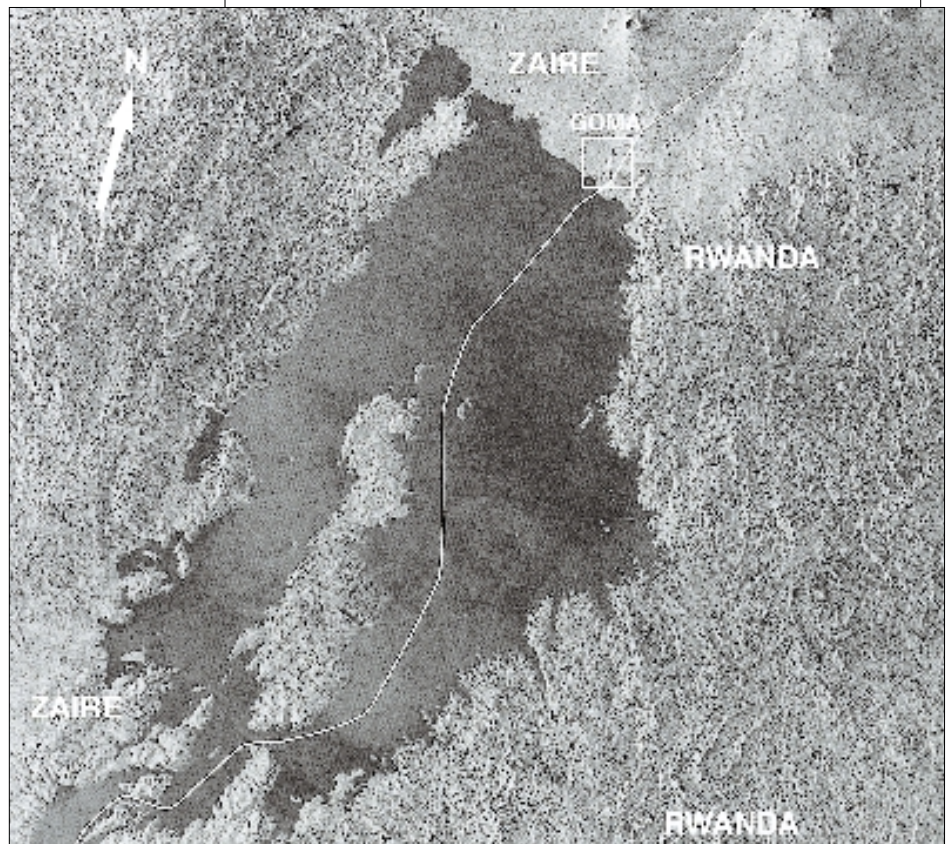
Ambassador Chrétien flew to Africa on 6 November and began local diplomatic efforts to diffuse the crisis. Meanwhile, the Joint Operations Staff at NDHQ began to make contingency plans for possible deployments to central Africa, with the initial assumption that Canada would simply be a contributing country to a multi-national UN force. The NDHQ Joint Staff were at the time already fully engaged in planning or monitoring Canadian activities in Bosnia and Haiti, so planning for the MNF was added to an already demanding list of concurrent operational activities.

On 9 November 1996, the Security Council voted on a French resolution calling for the establishment of an MNF. Prior to this vote, as a result of diplomatic discussions amongst the nations seeking intervention, a number of decisions had already been made. Among them, that UN aid would go to all refugees and no effort would be made to separate out armed elements; that command, control and financial matters were to be agreed to by contributing nations; that most nations wanted the United States to commit troops to the mis-

sion; and that France and the United States had both made clear they would not lead the mission.⁴

FROM CONTRIBUTOR TO LEADER

Early in the diplomatic discussions it became clear that neither the United States nor France would agree to lead a putative MNF. Both were driven by domestic and geopolitical motives to avoid such an entanglement. Canadian representatives floated the idea of Canada volunteering to become the lead nation. This option was attractive for African leaders in the area, in part because Canada had no colonial past in Africa, and could also provide a bridge between Commonwealth and *La Francophonie* nations in the region. Moreover, the US and other countries stated that they would contribute to a Canadian-led mission. At this juncture, Canada's Alliance ties and bilingual armed forces proved to be important considerations. Those attributes, and the reluctance of traditional lead nations to take on the mission, informed the discussions that took place on 9 November between the Canadian Prime Minister, the Minister of National Defence and the Acting Chief of the Defence Staff (A/CDS). The A/CDS was directed to



Canadian Radarsat imagery could have been used to track the movement of large groups of refugees during Operation "Assurance". This photo depicts the Lake Kivu area on 22 November 1996, with the white line marking the boundary between Zaïre and Rwanda.

refocus planning for a Canadian force contribution from a purely supporting role to providing the multi-national lead headquarters. Plans for that option were completed the next day, and on 12 November 1996 the government announced that Canada was prepared to lead a UN multi-national force to Central Africa. Shortly thereafter, the appointment of Lieutenant-General Maurice Baril as force commander was announced. Force deployments

began immediately, even though a full implementation plan had yet to be produced.⁵

Before agreeing to lead the mission, Canadian representatives discussed the draft Security Council resolution with several permanent members of the Security Council, and developed a “mission concept of operations with potential contributing nations”. This concept laid out the following conditions:

- the UN Security Council would make the mission a Chapter VII operation, but for humanitarian assistance;
- countries of the region would have to state that they accepted Canada’s lead;

- facilitate the voluntary, orderly repatriation of refugees, as well as the voluntary return of displaced persons to Rwanda.⁶

CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS

Prior to accepting leadership of the mission, Canadian representatives at the United Nations developed and got agreement to a concept of operations from the nations that indicated they would contribute troops. Unfortunately, the initial intelligence briefings given to General Baril have remained classified, so it has not been possible to reconstruct, for this study

the initial estimate planning process within the higher echelons of the Canadian government prior to General Baril becoming directly involved in deployment planning.⁷ Nevertheless, the Canadian Forces received a fairly clear initial tasking order to commence detailed planning for the mission during the first week of November 1996. Beyond the points mentioned above, the operation was based on the following assumptions:

- Good airports would be a major limiting factor. There were few or no suitable airports in eastern Zaïre. Forces deploying to the region would therefore have to use Entebbe, Kigali and Nairobi airfields. Uganda had already authorized the United



US Navy Photo

Air photo of a refugee camp taken 2 December 1996.

- an adequate force of about 10,000 would be the ultimate size of the MNF;
- all troops would be under Canadian control;
- the force was to end on 31 March 1997, with a follow-on force to be considered, if necessary;
- the force was to be representative of the region and not dominated by white/European contingents; and
- Canada would provide the command element, with the United States, France, Italy and Britain providing large contingents (Canadian representatives received word by 14 November that all would contribute).

Acceptance of these conditions informed the UN Security Council Resolution 1080 (15 November 1996) that established following the mandate and missions of the Canadian-led MNF:

- facilitate the immediate return of humanitarian organizations and the effective delivery of humani-

- States to use Entebbe.
- Forward operating bases for the deployment of forces were to be established at Goma and Bukavu, which lay astride the bulk of the refugee camps. Troops were expected to operate within 60 km of these forward bases. The rebel forces at Goma had offered the United States access to the Goma airfield.
- The location of the MNF Headquarters would remain a touchy issue as the governments of both Rwanda and Zaïre expressed concern about its location. As a compromise, based on operational logic, the MNF headquarters was slated to go into Goma, where it could more directly be in contact with formation-level headquarters at Goma and Bukavu.
- The MNF headquarters was to establish direct contact with all parties in the region, i.e., with the rebels at Bukavu and Goma, and the governments at Kinshasa and Kigali. Liaison at both capitals was to

be through “Theatre Headquarters East and West” under an acceptable senior commander.

- The United States offered General Baril the use of Kelly Barracks in Stuttgart, Germany for a rear headquarters, as a location for the various governmental and non-governmental agencies to meet, and as a forward control point for troop deployments.

THE EXECUTION PHASE

Canadian strategic recce teams travelled to Kigali, Rwanda and Entebbe, Uganda by CC-130 aircraft on 17-18 November to commence establishing the MNF Headquarters. A forward planning cell was established at Kelly Barracks (the US European Command Headquarters [EUCOM]) in Stuttgart. By 21 November 1996 an ad-hoc Steering Group, chaired by Canada, was established at UN Headquarters in New York.⁸

MNF planners at Stuttgart considered four possible military options in consultation with a number of political and diplomatic representatives during the weekend of 22-23 November. These plans offered levels of involvement and operations that ranged from freezing the *status quo* to the deployment of a 10,000-strong security force into the region.

On 26 November, the UN Steering Group directed the MNF to establish itself in Rwanda and Uganda in order to conduct a more complete recce of eastern Zaïre. Intelligence assets included support from US Orion recce flights, satellite imagery (mostly US, but some from the Canadian Radarsat) and, later, an AC-130 gunship/recce and a British Canberra recce aircraft, as well as information provided by various humanitarian agencies.

The UN Steering Group, now comprising 14 countries, met in Ottawa on 29 November to determine the level of operations the MNF would undertake. The plan now called for the MNF to establish its headquarters, conduct an enhanced recce in order to determine the true scale of the humanitarian crisis, and prepare humanitarian airdrops.

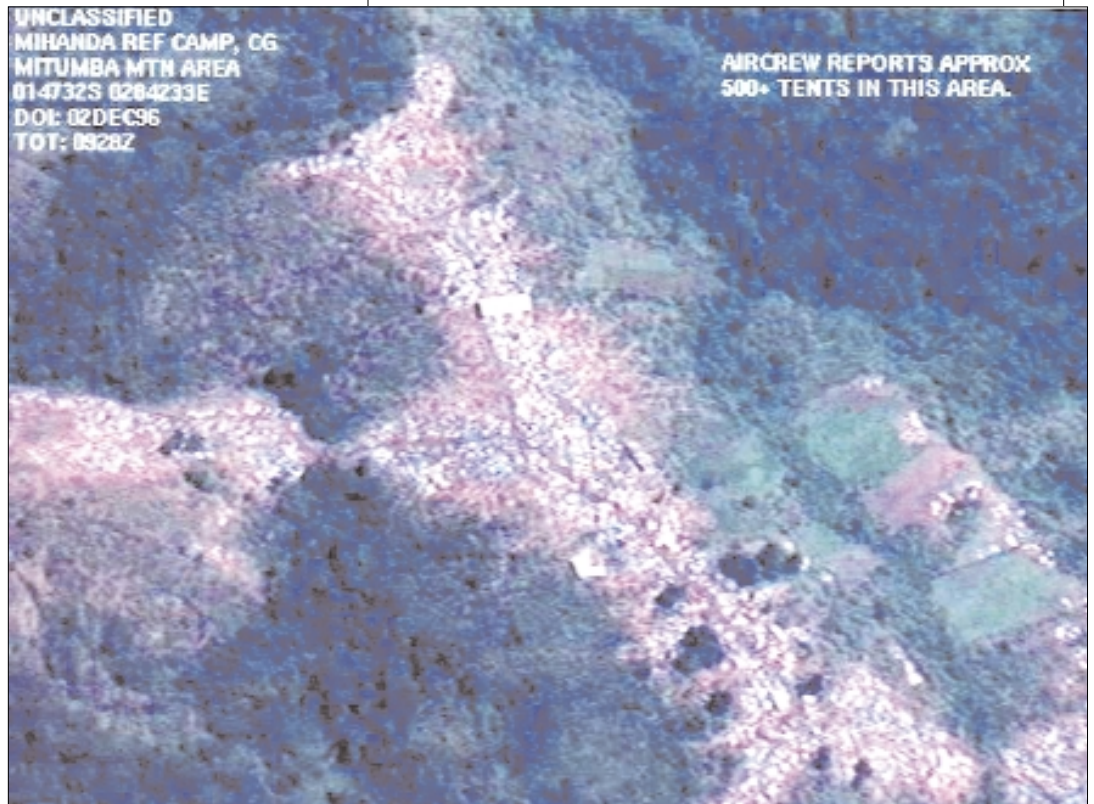
This restrained but evolving ‘End State’ was confirmed through the Implementation Plan issued by NDHQ to the MNF commander on 30 November 1996.

Concurrently, the command organization was adjusted. The planning force at Stuttgart became the

MNF Headquarters (Rear), designed now for coordinating the force contributions from the various Troop Contributing Nations and managing strategic movement into the theatre. The MNF Headquarters was activated in Entebbe on 30 November, and MNF liaison detachments were formed at Kigali, Nairobi, Kinshasa and, later, Gisenyi.

Subsequently, MNF Headquarters moved to Kampala, Uganda on 4 December, where it was then integrated with the Air Component Headquarters (ACHQ). This integration also marked the adoption of the Air Force-favoured ‘component command’ philosophy, rather than the ‘direct command’ philosophy favoured by the initial JFHQ planners. The re-located and modified MNF Headquarters coordinated the movement of personnel, equipment and supplies into and throughout the theatre.

Although 14 nations comprised the UN Steering Group, and although many nations including the US and France originally maintained they would contribute troops to the operation, no country other than Canada actually placed forces under the MNF commander. Despite taking the lead, Canada could not convince others to follow, and could do little itself to fill the void. Supporting multiple rotations to Bosnia, Croatia and Haiti taxed the number of Canadian combat forces available, and those con-

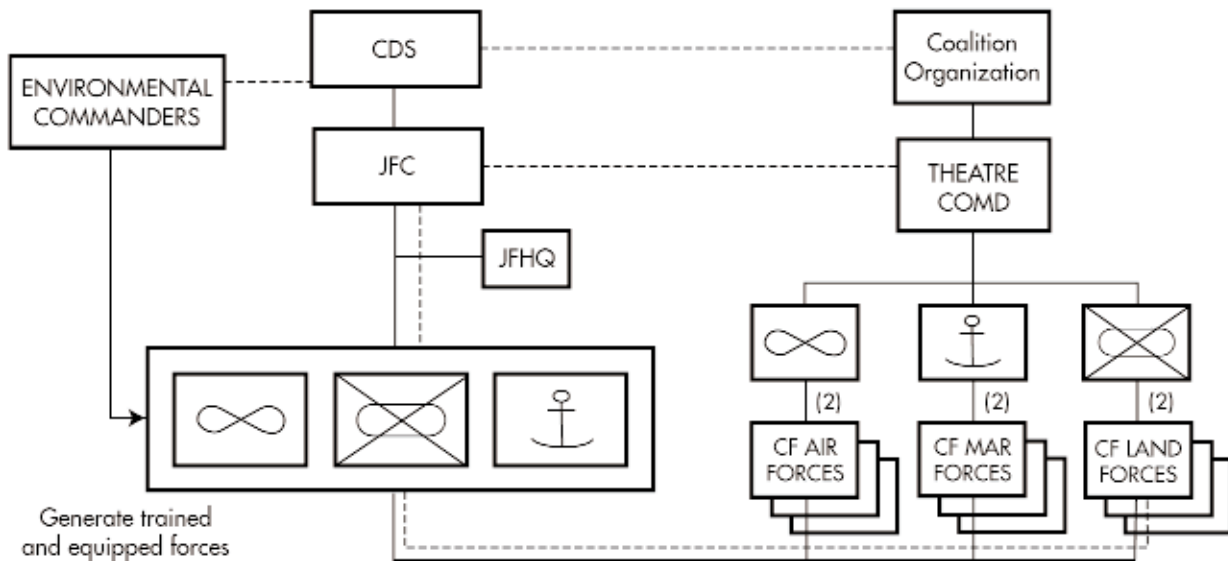


Another US air photo of a large refugee camp.

straints diminished Canada’s bargaining position with other contributing nations. Equally, the fast pace of developments on the ground — unrelated to whatever the Canadian capabilities may have been — could explain why the formal commitment of foreign personnel did not occur. In reality, the full scale develop-



JOINT FORCE HEADQUARTERS "NORMAL" C2 ARRANGEMENTS



ment and deployment of the MNF was simply overtaken by events.

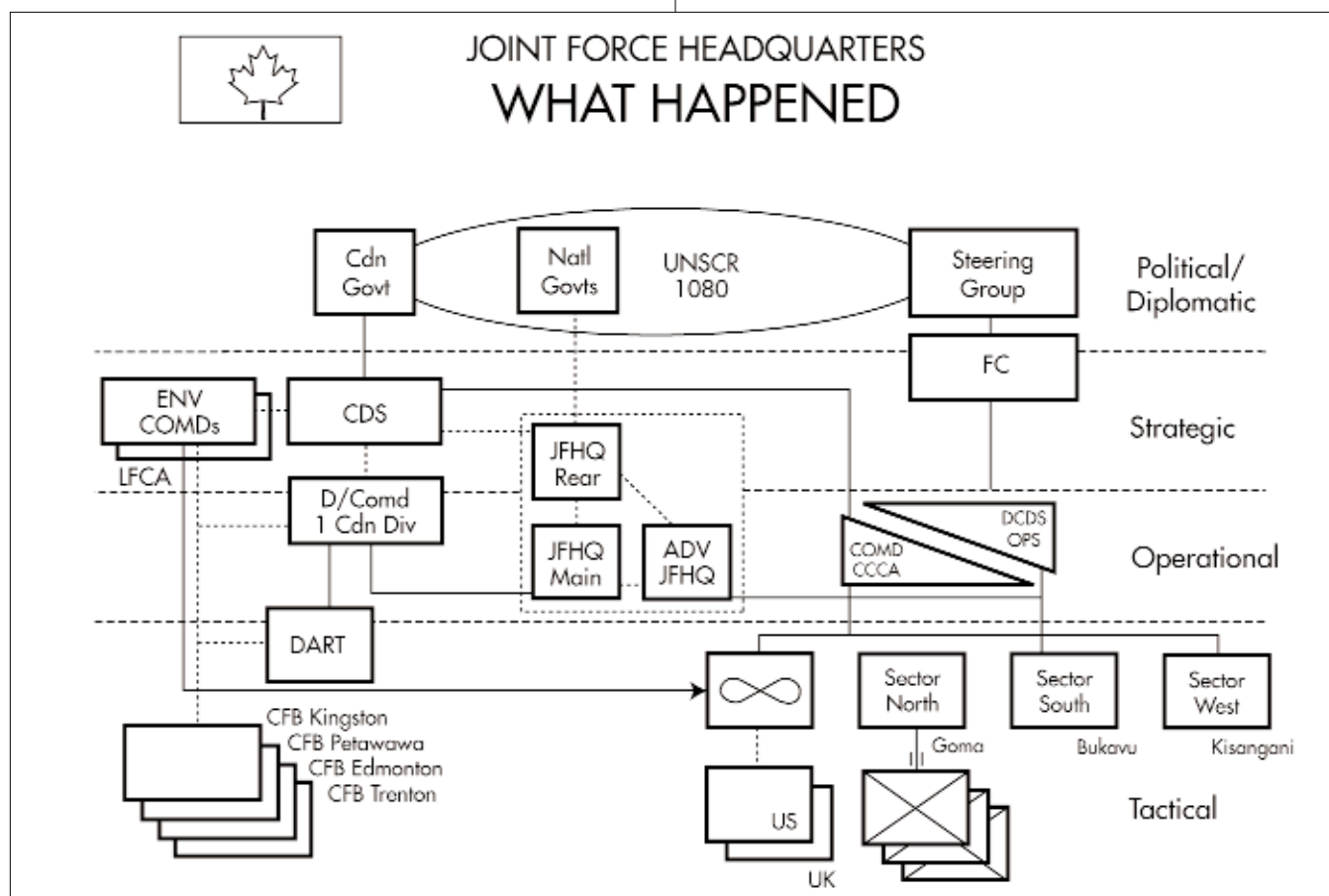
Events unfolded faster than mandates or the MNF could develop. On the day the Security Council passed Resolution 1080 (15 November), a sharp escalation in fighting in eastern Zaïre compelled a mass exodus of refugees toward the Rwandan border, particularly from the largest refugee camp at Goma. This deliberate escalation of violence by the Rwandan government and Kabila's forces was an attempt to resolve the refugee crisis unilaterally, so as to forestall international armed intervention in eastern Zaïre that might have held Kabila's forces in check. The intention was to attack the largest of the camps occupied by armed ex-Rwandan army Hutus at Mugunga, near Goma, and thus force the expatriates back into Rwanda. In large measure this was successful: by 22 November some 400,000 refugees crossed into Rwanda at Goma. (A number of groups of these refugees were attacked by the now Tutsi-dominated Rwandan army to weed out Hutus who had been members of the Rwandan army or *Interhamwe* militia.) By the first week of December, media reports and intelligence indicators called into question the need for further development or deployment of the MNF. Most refugees appeared to have gained unimpeded repatriation to Rwanda, and humanitarian relief agencies were allowed access to them (although the Rwandan government continued to deny access by armed UN forces).

The preparations to mount the MNF clearly played a considerable role in convincing local wielders-of-power to force this repatriation. To the forces support-

ing the burgeoning civil war in Zaïre, the refugees of the region were both useful pawns and troublesome nuisances. Allowing international intervention to stabilize the region — and halt the fighting — ran contrary to their wider designs for toppling the government of Zaïre. The repatriation of the vast majority of the Hutu refugees obviated any need for further deployment of the MNF, as was publicly acknowledged by the Canadian Minister of National Defence, Doug Young, in the first week of December.

The mass repatriation, however, did not clearly end the viability of the mission. Some 200,000 refugees were still camped astride the Rwanda-Zaïre border, and humanitarian relief agencies called for the continuation of the mission to facilitate their access to these refugees. The UN Steering Group proved to be divided over the issue; the fact that the mission was officially termed a "Humanitarian Mission" clearly influenced some countries among the Steering Group to support a continuation of the UN presence.

Intelligence became a major issue in the final stages of the crisis. Meetings at Stuttgart between the potential troop-contributing nations and Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) concluded on 24 November that only refugees that could clearly be counted by US or RAF reconnaissance flights would be tallied by the MNF for the 'official' refugee count. This step proved crucial in resolving debates fuelled by conflicting perspectives on the magnitude of the refugee problem. Prior to the arrival of the Canadian advance party on 17 November, USAF reconnaissance aircraft began



overflights out of Entebbe. On 21 November, Kabila's rebel forces started to fire at low flying aircraft, and information was passed on that Zaïrian air force aircraft were mounting air-to-air missiles. These developments gravely complicated the conduct of air reconnaissance over the dense jungles of eastern Zaïre by ruling out a number of low-level flights. Rwandan Hutu refugees that moved deeper into the jungle became difficult to track, and would have been even more difficult to supply. A number of relief agencies recommended air drops, but many also argued against such a means of supply. General Baril acknowledged that such missions were "complex, dangerous and very difficult — something to use only as a last resort". Moreover, Zaïre opposed them, and Rwanda opposed the use of Entebbe by the MNF.⁹ Meeting with Kabila on 28 November, General Baril secured a promise not to fire on relief aircraft in return for informing his forces in advance of these air movements. That solved the tactical problem, but complicated relations with the Zaïrian government.

With the refugee problem in eastern Zaïre largely disappearing or, at least, becoming increasingly difficult to gauge, General Baril defined the ultimate missions of the MNF on 29 November. Because only an estimated ten percent of the initial mass of refugees remained in eastern Zaïre, the MNF would be confined to supplying and assisting humanitarian relief operations and, if necessary, developing relief supply points by air drops using Hercules aircraft operating out of Entebbe. These limited missions were communicated to NDHQ, which subsequently issued its mission tasking orders on 30 November — well after the major crisis had passed. By

1 December, the MNF deployment was limited to a logistical headquarters at Kampala, the Canadian air element at Entebbe, and liaison teams at Kigali, Goma and Kinshasha.

END GAME

By mid-December, most of the refugee camps had been emptied and their occupants repatriated to Rwanda. At that point, the Rwandan government informed the UN that the MNF was no longer welcome to operate on its territory. The repatriation of a majority of the refugees did not, however, bring a clear end to the mission. Somewhere in the vicinity of 200,000 refugees were still on the move in eastern Zaïre, and still in need of assistance. Unfortunately, manipulation of the media by humanitarian agencies and by local government officials created a dense fog over events. Some agencies were clearly vying for increased foreign aid money, while local leaders were trying to maintain their grip on certain terrain or groups of people and either variously exaggerating or underreporting the presence or movement of peoples.

In General Baril's official estimate of the situation, the major humanitarian crisis that had prompted his mission had passed. However, his force, by accident or design, risked being drawn into an internal "conflict in Zaïre...which could engulf the entire region". On 3 December, General Baril wrote the Chief of the Defence Staff, "We are dealing with big players in a very complex situation without the tools or knowledge necessary to control either specific events or the general situa-

tion". He judged the risk of being trapped by events beyond Canadian control 'increasing daily' and, therefore, recommended cessation of the operation.¹⁰

The Canadian government quickly endorsed Baril's recommendation, but it took tens days of debate within the UN Steering Group to bring the mission to a close. Despite the debate over what the mission 'end state' was to be, Canada insisted on 13 December 1996 that the Steering Group recommend the termination of the MNF.¹¹ The UN Security Council accepted the recommendation. The final elements of the abortive force departed Entebbe on 31 December, 1996.

LESSONS LEARNED?

Operation "Assurance" proved to be a major test of new CF Joint Doctrine and related operational planning processes then being implemented. This was Canada's first attempt at leading a joint and combined multi-national force in an armed humanitarian operation. The operation was only the second operational deployment of the Joint Force Headquarters (resident within 1 Canadian Division in Kingston), and the first operational deployment of the Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART). Elements of the JTF-2 were also employed. As a test case, however, Operation "Assurance" provides only partial lessons for several reasons: first, the deployment was never fully implemented and, second, the planning sequence was incredibly telescoped and foreshortened with the warning order, mounting, deployment and redeployment occurring concurrently rather than sequentially. Nevertheless, beyond the critical insights offered above, several key areas warrant examination for lessons learned.

Doctrine for Planning and Command

Joint doctrine assumed that a rational planning process would follow a sequential development of plans — strategic, then operational. But the existence of the doctrine could not ensure its adherence. Indeed, while the relevant joint doctrine booklets — B-GG-005-004/AF-000 *Joint Doctrine for CF Joint and Combined Operations*; and CFP (J)5(4)4 *The Joint Operations Planning Process* — outlined a checklist for strategic guidance formulation, they did not, possibly could not, forecast who would provide this guidance, how it was to be formulated, and how and what parts of it would be passed to the Operational Commander. Ultimately, the Privy Council Office and the Cabinet were not bound by the logic of Canadian Forces doctrine manuals. Lassitude in that quarter, combined with the apparent and developing crisis, militated against the rational planning models found in CF keystone manuals. Unique problems associated with leading a multi-national force concerned the higher direction given to DND. As mission leader, Canada was expected to clarify issues and roles for others, but the Joint Force Headquarters (JFHQ) itself lacked sufficient national strategic planning and guidance.

Related to that problem, it is clear that liaison with the Department of Foreign Affairs and International

Trade (DFAIT) left considerable room for improvement, particularly in the early stages of defining a military commitment and in sharing information about local conditions and geo-political interests in central Africa. Strategic direction and management through an agency such as the UN Steering Group was seen to require closer DND-DFAIT cooperation and coordination than that provided by ad hoc structures, and prior practice would have proved fruitful.

As General Baril later reported, "Ultimately, during Op ASSURANCE the only apparent elements of a national strategy were the objectives inferred from UNSC Resolution 1080."¹²

Baril further identified a significant weakness in Canadian doctrine (CFP (J)5(4)4 *The Joint Ops Planning Process*), which tended to assume the CF would remain a dependent receiver of wider campaign planning conducted by some other nation. Put another way, the doctrine assumed Canada would not be lead country, and therefore we had no permanent mechanism for responding to the challenges of being one. CF strategic staff direction consequently was geared toward developing 'force options', but not the strategy into which these options could be placed. Having assumed it would be a 'dependent', the CF could only act as one. This is no simple challenge to the CF, for "if Canada assumes the leadership of a multi-national force, then it is also responsible for the provision of a clear strategy".¹³ By way of contrast, Canadian deployments to Somalia in 1993 followed receipt of an operational campaign plan developed by US Central Command in conjunction with a Joint Task Force headquarters. The NDHQ 'J' staff were thereby able to limit their activity to developing force options. In turn, 1 Canadian Division Headquarters was able to deploy rapidly to Somalia as a JFHQ with purely national command responsibilities. In contrast, during Operation "Assurance", 1 Canadian Division provided the JFHQ recee party that deployed to the theatre 24 hours before the UN Security Council resolution (1080) was approved. Canadian follow-on forces also deployed prior to receiving detailed strategic guidance or an operational-level plan.

The Joint Operations Planning Process (JOPP) then in place for the Canadian Forces assumed that the warning order issued by the Chief of the Defence Staff would present the key components of the strategic-level decisions and guidance that could be translated into operational-level orders and guidance. Indeed, the CDS' warning order was the ignition of the operational level JOPP, but it did not contain sufficient detail to permit the planning requirements anticipated by the JOPP doctrine.

If the orderly sequence outlined in the JOPP were followed, strategy was to be formulated and agreed to at the political/policy level by the government and the Steering Group, as well as by NDHQ. The operational-level headquarters should then have been left to develop the operational-level JOPP outputs, including the campaign plan. This did not happen. The sequential staff planning process — from strategic- to operational-

level — was not sequential, but concurrent. This proved to be especially problematic for staffs in the field. When the mission was finally stood down, the operational-level staff of the JFHQ were operating at the strategic level in Stuttgart, at the operational level in Kingston and Kampala, and at the tactical level at Entebbe. In large measure, the play of events in Zaïre confounded the efforts of strategic planners in Ottawa to write the operational orders and rules of engagement that were eventually promulgated for General Baril on 30 November, i.e., after he had been in the field for two weeks and when the major humanitarian problem was coming to a close.

A significant weakness in informing the strategic-level guidance was the absence of a national assessment team. Both the US and UK rapidly deployed such teams to the theatre (under general officers) to provide real-time in-theatre information and assessments on mission viability, and they had done so before the arrival of the Canadian *rece party*, which itself was only initially responsible for establishing the infrastructure and support requirements for the Multi-National Force Headquarters.

The doctrinal component of the problem was the JOPP itself, which was really designed for national contingent planning. It did not address overall force planning procedures and, as lead nation, these were far more demanding. While the UN is mandated and has the capability to manage Chapter VI peacekeeping operations, it is not structured to run Chapter VII intervention operations. Canada therefore found itself having to create such a structure while already actively operating on the ground. The UN Steering Group thus created took on the overall guidance role, but it was not a command organization, and it experienced all the problems associated with being a committee of supposed peers. The Canadian government's response fell to the 'Zaïre Interdepartmental Task Force' (ZITF), which operated out of the Privy Council.¹⁴ The ZITF as ad hoc, took time to develop a method of operating and was not a command organization. The CF Joint Staff Steering Committee later concluded that "both the government and the CF underestimated the requirements for organization of a MNF in the areas such as force level logistics, medical, engineering, CIS [combat information systems], military police, financial and other functions". Moreover, it was determined that in the areas where there was 'some' knowledge of what was required for the coalition leadership role, "the planning was too chaotic to permit rational development of an international force under our leadership".¹⁵ The MNF commander and a large part of our forces on the ground waited for clarity on questions being debated in the consensual UN Steering Group or ZITF.

Operationally, the command organization confronted several challenges to basic doctrine and practice. Initial plans assumed Canada would provide a Canadian contingent with its headquarters, rather than provide the locus of a multi-national force headquarters *and* a Canadian contingent headquarters. Given the pace at which the mission developed, the separation of these

functions created difficulties at the strategic level. The staff of the Canadian contingent had to develop terms of reference, draft status of forces agreements and rules of engagement, and generate or clarify financial arrangements while also in large measure making up the staff of the Multi-National Force Headquarters. In the event, the staff for both had to be drawn essentially from the same small pool of personnel. The division of personnel and the development of roles and responsibilities occurred during the fast-evolving mission, further complicating planning.

The evolving roles and missions particularly disturbed elements of Air Command as it was structured for and favoured 'component' command, while Army elements favoured direct command. In East Africa, the air component headquarters did not have enough staff to conduct operations 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and the JFHQ included no integral air staff. The force commander therefore had to liaise directly with a line commander at the air component whenever an operational or administrative order or plan was produced by his headquarters. While the mission was accomplished, it was only in the very last stages that Air Command's preferred command relationship for joint operations was achieved.

Strategic Communications

The Canadian Forces deployed strategic communications assets into the theatre only after the mission was well underway, thus impeding the timely passage of information at the most crucial stage of this operation. General Baril later concluded, "The effectiveness of the JFHQ in the execution of Op ASSURANCE was undoubtedly hampered by the lack of secure and non-secure CIS [Communications and Intelligence Systems]."

The tasking of non-Canadian assets had not been fully anticipated in the mission warning order from the CDS. The deconfliction of air space, for example, was particularly problematic, and the handling of all foreign forces taxed an already over-stretched strategic assessment process. The MNF staff found itself increasingly responding to raw intelligence data provided by the media or other sources in Canada and other contributing nations, which bypassed the Fusion Centre to confuse policy or decision makers. This fueled the decision to accept only air photos for the official refugee count. This problem became acute in the final days of the crisis, and affected the manner in which the mission was finally terminated.

Significantly, no Regional Air Management Control Centre (RAMCC) was formed to plan and deconflict strategic and tactical air use. In most of Canada's previous international deployments, the RAMCC had been provided by NATO or the US Air Force. As the lead nation, others now looked to Canada to create a RAMCC, but as this responsibility had not been assigned in the warning order to Air Command, the Canadian air planners assumed that some other country would provide it. Fortunately, the mission ended before this became a major problem.

Force Generation and Readiness

The Joint Force Headquarters in Kingston initially found itself understaffed and under-equipped for this operation. The staff, busy with Divisional level work, found itself planning its own deployment. To facilitate intelligence preparation, for instance, it had to call on the hasty mobilization of intelligence officers from the Toronto Militia 2 Intelligence Company to conduct pre-deployment briefings for the JFHQ intelligence staff.

Moving from conceptual plans to actual deployment was more difficult than anticipated. As General Baril's post-operations report concluded, "Due to such factors as the active posting season, leave, equipment availability and other taskings, there exists a real life gap between our real readiness levels and those derived from Defence Planning Guidance tasks."¹⁶ Moving from notional capacity to actual capability was problematic.

Information on unit operational readiness needed for detailed planning was not available. That is to say, real readiness was impossible to gauge, as the existing tasking and reporting system accepted responses without really testing them. Nevertheless, having a JFHQ already in existence, despite its undermanning and unpreparedness, was better than not having even the kernel of a trained staff in a rapidly deployable form.

All of these weaknesses have been identified in the lessons learned activity undertaken by the Canadian Forces. That is a positive note on a near run thing. Corrective steps have been taken in most areas, and they are ongoing. The larger geopolitical and national command and control issues that arose, or were confronted during this mission, are generally beyond the ken of the Canadian Forces to redress.



NOTES

1. This is not an official report and it reflects the conclusions of the author alone. All research materials employed for this study have been in the public domain since 1998. The author would like to thank external readers for their comments, some of which have been incorporated into the paper.

2. On the lessons learned process, see the collection of documents declassified under the Access to Information Act (AIA) request numbers (A)97-0732; and (A)97-0671.

3. Scot R. Feil, "Preventing Genocide. How the Early Use of Force Might Have Succeeded in Rwanda". A Report to the Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict. Carnegie Corporation of New York, April 1998.

4. UN Security Council Resolution 1078 (1996), S/Res/1078 (1996), 9 Nov 1996.

5. Briefing Note to MND, 26 Nov 1996 AIA (A) 96/1168.

6. United Nations Security Council Resolution 1080 (1996) UN Records Security Council Meeting 3713, 15 Nov 1996.

7. It appears the Canadian government did not purposely embark on a course of action that would result in the destruction of the rump of the FAR, and ultimately aid in the collapse of the Zairian government.

8. Members of the Steering Group were Belgium, Cameroon, France, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Senegal, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom, USA, Uganda and Canada.

9. Journal of Humanitarian Assistance-Weekly Roundup, 1 Dec 1996, p. 1.

10. 3350-1 (Op Assurance-Comd) 3 Dec.96 to CDS, AIA (A) 96-1168.

11. France, the Netherlands and Senegal voiced opposition to the mission close out throughout these discussions. At this final meeting, the representative of Zaïre, who interposed himself on the group, also called for the continuation of the large MNF force to restore stability to eastern Zaïre. Record of MNF Steering Group Mtg 13 December 96, 3451-DCDS-12, 16 Dec.96 AIA (A) 96-1168.

12. Baril, 3350-95 (Comd) 30 April 1997, "Op ASSURANCE" Commander Multi-National Force Headquarters - Post Operation Report, ATI (A97)-0671].

13. Baril, *op. cit.*

14. Di-Pol 4-2 Speaking Points, n.d., AIA (A) 97-0732; and Zaïre Interdepartmental Task Force records, AIA (A) 96-1168

15. Brief to JSSC, 9 April 1997, AIA (A)97-0732.

16. Baril, *op. cit.*, p. 7.