

CRISIS IN THE CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC



April, 2014

NAVIGATING THE U.S. RESPONSE

As the death toll continues to climb in the Central African Republic, the United Nations Security Council—with U.S. leadership—has authorized a new peacekeeping mission. Imperative as action may be, questions remain: What will UN intervention look like? How much will it cost? And what is the cost of not acting?

Crisis in the Central African Republic

NAVIGATING THE U.S. RESPONSE

Dear Friends,

The international community's next steps in Central African Republic (CAR) will, almost without question, determine how many more civilians will be murdered, mutilated, or forced to flee.

An explosion of violence between Christian and Muslim militias have brought the already unstable nation to its knees in recent months. The United Nations estimates that thousands have been killed. More than one million have been driven from their homes, and some 2.5 million people—over half CAR's entire population—face humanitarian disaster.

While there are African Union, French, and European Union troops deployed in CAR helping to stabilize the situation, the death toll continues to climb, and the U.S. and international community are taking additional steps, including authorizing a larger UN peacekeeping force. Yet, imperative as action may be, basic questions remain: **What exactly will UN intervention look like? How much will it cost? And what is the cost of not acting?**

This document aims to address those questions so that policymakers have a keener understanding of what UN intervention in CAR entails. This is particularly timely as the Security Council recently voted for a UN peacekeeping mission in country. This paper provides key elements of the mandate and outlines the details of the force, which is called the Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Central African Republic (MINUSCA).

Given the urgency of these forthcoming steps, the Better World Campaign has provided a snapshot on the features of such a mission, its costs, and the risks of inaction. Drawing on this analysis, we also recommend the following to U.S. policymakers: the U.S. should fully fund the UN mission in fiscal year 2015.

With FY 15 budget discussions already underway and a new peacekeeping mission set to deploy later this year, understanding the contours of a CAR mission and ways to ensure it can protect civilians is ever more critical.

Sincerely,



Peter Yeo
Executive Director, Better World Campaign

Background on the Crisis in CAR

The Central African Republic (CAR), a landlocked nation of 4.6 million, is one of the world's poorest, least-developed, and most politically unstable countries. While security conditions in CAR have never been optimal, they deteriorated significantly in March 2013 after a loosely-organized coalition of armed groups called Seleka (literally meaning "alliance") overthrew President Françoise Bozizé. Seleka was founded by members of the Muslim community from the northeastern regions of CAR.

While Seleka's leader, Michel Djotodia, initially declared himself interim President after Bozizé's ouster, pressure from neighboring Central African states, the French, and the larger international community prompted his resignation and subsequent exile earlier this year. Following his departure, CAR's transitional governing authority appointed Catherine Samba-Panza to serve as interim President until national elections can be held in February 2015.

While Muslims and Christians have lived together in CAR for generations in relative peace, this most recent round of political instability has led to the emergence of serious sectarian fissures:

- Following the overthrow of the Bozizé government last year, Seleka carried out systematic killings and abuses against Christians.
- In retaliation, Christian-led militias known as Anti-Balaka ("anti-machete") rose up throughout the country, attacking Muslim communities and causing a mass exodus of Muslims into neighboring countries.

According to the United Nations, thousands of civilians have already been killed, and more than one million people have been driven from their homes. As violence has continued to spiral in recent months, senior UN officials have warned that the situation could devolve into outright genocide.

On December 5, 2013, in response to mounting pressure from the international community, the UN Security Council authorized the deployment of a 6,000-strong African Union-led peacekeeping force (known as MISCA) to help stabilize CAR, and a French military contingent of 1,600 troops to support them. In January 2014, the European Union agreed to deploy a force of 1000 soldiers to assist MISCA and the French force.

Comprehensive UN Action in CAR

The UN Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Central African Republic (BINUCA) has been supporting CAR for the last decade. BINUCA is charged with strengthening support for the political process including national elections in February 2015. BINUCA also provides technical assistance in security sector reform, rule of law, disarmament, and reporting on human rights violations.

UN Humanitarian Agencies have also worked together to meet the humanitarian needs in CAR:

- In January, the World Food Programme (WFP) provided food aid to 1.25 million people in CAR.
- The Food & Agricultural Organization (FAO) is assisting 110,000 agricultural families in conflict areas.
- UNICEF and WHO have immunized 150,000 children against measles and 32,096 against polio.
- In Chad, Cameroon, Congo, DRC, and South Sudan the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) is assisting 217,916 refugees from CAR.

The UN **Human Rights Council** has established a Commission of Inquiry to document abuses and human rights violations and compile information to identify the potential criminal liability of perpetrators.

A Potential UN Peacekeeping Mission

As required by the Security Council's December 5 resolution, the Secretary General issued a report recommending the transformation of MISCA into a UN peacekeeping mission. Recently, the Security Council voted to authorize a UN force in CAR with a robust mandate to protect civilians under Chapter VII of the UN Charter. The mission will focus on containing the violence, facilitating a political process, and providing humanitarian assistance.

This UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) will not be operational until September 15, 2014. In the meantime, the UN will deploy a transition team to prepare for a transition of authority from MISCA to MINUSCA. This transition team will seek to improve MISCA's capacity with increased air assets and vehicles, communications systems, and medical and logistical support.

While not a panacea, the deployment of a UN force will ensure the provision of more military, police, and civilian personnel, all of which are desperately needed on the ground in CAR. While MISCA has saved lives, there are currently not enough personnel to meet all of the serious security and governance related needs facing CAR. At the present moment, MISCA has 6,000 troops, 600 police, and 35 civilians who have only been able to deploy to a limited number of areas. This is in contrast to the UN peacekeeping mission, which will have 10,000 troops, 1,800 police, and significantly more civilian personnel. While a force of this magnitude is still not large considering the size of CAR, it could cover a larger swath of the country. This UN force will also be able to pull from a broader range of troop contributing countries (TCCs), with different specialties, than the AU force and be better able to supply, train, and equip them. In addition, the UN has more stringent policies for vetting potential TCCs and ensuring they are compliant with certain human rights standards. A UN peacekeeping mission could also provide more enabling assets such as helicopters, vehicles, fuel, and communications systems, which are essential to the mandate of protecting civilians.

Other features of the new UN-led force will include:

The estimated cost for a UN Peacekeeping mission in CAR could be anywhere from \$800 million to \$1 billion, depending on the size of the force.

- **The deployment of 10,000 troops, including most of the 6,000 AU troops already in country.** MISCA forces will go through a "re-hatting" process to ensure that they meet UN standards on training and equipment, which at minimum would take five months. A significant portion of the additional forces would be engineers, logisticians, and enablers. To expedite the re-hatting process, the UN has deployed a contingent to begin preparing camps and assisting with logistics for a full UN deployment to help with a transition from MISCA to MINUSCA.
- **A mandate to protect civilians from the threat of physical violence.** MINUSCA's protection mandate is especially focused on ensuring the safety of women and children, and will include the deployment of Child Protection Advisors and Women Protection Advisors.

A UN peacekeeping mission aims for at least 10,000 troops, 2,000 police, and significantly more civilian personnel to cover a larger swath of the country.

- **A UN police contingent of 1,800** including 1,400 formed police units, 400 individual police officers and 20 corrections officers. **UN police will address ongoing rule of law concerns in CAR and civilian-on-civilian violence between Muslims and Christians.** This would represent a 150 percent increase over the number of police personnel currently deployed in CAR as part of MISCA. The UN police force will also help bolster, rebuild, and train the national police force.
- **A large contingent of civilian personnel to facilitate the political process, support the extension of state authority, promote mediation and national reconciliation, facilitate the rapid and unimpeded delivery of humanitarian assistance, and support the holding of national elections by February 2015.** This large deployment is in contrast to the 35 civilians deployed with MISCA. Their mandate will support community level mediations with religious and community leaders to broker discussions between Christians and Muslims. Civilian personnel will also help the government provide basic services. The AU mission has not had the capacity or mobility to deploy throughout the country to help facilitate humanitarian access.
- **The deployment of civilian personnel with a greater ability to protect human rights and monitor, help investigate, and report on abuses of human rights or violations of international humanitarian law throughout the country.** The mission is called upon to identify in particular ex-Seleka and anti-Balaka and help facilitate their prosecution. At present, MISCA only has four human rights observers — a UN mission would have significantly more. In addition, a UN mission would work in conjunction with the International Commission of Inquiry (COI) established by the UN Human Rights Council. The COI has a mandate to document abuses and human rights violations committed in country, help investigate reports of human rights violations, and compile information to identify the potential criminal liability of perpetrators. The establishment of the International Commission of Inquiry is vitally important as it sends a strong message to perpetrators of violations and abuses that the international community is committed to holding them accountable.
- **Support for government efforts to develop and implement a strategy for disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) with specific attention to child soldiers and repatriation of foreign fighters.** MINUSCA will also confiscate and destroy weapons, ammunition, and related material from armed groups or former groups.

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For the U.S., MINUSCA is likely to cost around \$250 million in its first year

Due to the country's large size—roughly comparable to Texas—low population density, and lack of modern infrastructure, troops will likely be initially deployed to major population centers, including the capital of Bangui. But by the time the mission has its full contingent of troops, the goal would be for countrywide deployment. A transition from MISCA to a UN-led force would take five months from the authorization date.

The total estimated cost for a UN Peacekeeping mission in CAR in will likely be similar to the UN peacekeeping mission in Mali. As a result, MINUSCA is likely to cost the U.S. around \$250 million in its first year.

The Cost of Inaction

If past is precursor, an escalation of violence in CAR would be likely — provided that it is not properly addressed. Inaction and partial responses could exact far higher costs than full-fledged intervention.

Economists Paul Collier and Anke Hoeffler of Oxford University have found that historically, “civil war reduces the growth of real gross domestic product (GDP) per capita by an average of 2.2 percentage points for every year of conflict” and neighboring countries “each experience an average reduction in their annual growth rates of .089 percentage points over a five-year period.”

Taking Sudan as an example, Collier and Hoeffler estimated that a return to war in the country could cost more than \$100 billion over a decade with the international community itself paying out \$30 billion more in extra peacekeeping costs and humanitarian assistance.

In the case of CAR, any economic impacts from prolonged violence could reverberate throughout the region, affecting neighboring countries, which already face political and ethnic violence and economic instability of their own. Cameroon’s northern territory has become a vortex for arms traffickers smuggling in weapons to CAR and South Sudan. Also, UN officials report that Boko Haram—the militant Islamist group originating in Nigeria—already has a presence in CAR, as well as in neighboring countries of Cameroon and Chad. As the

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U.S., UN, and international community monitor the movement of this and other extremist groups in the region, an ungoverned CAR could become a future safe haven for terrorism and other illicit activities.

Beyond the immediate and possible future economic impacts of the situation in CAR, the daily reports of violence, which have come to include incidents of lynching and mutilation, have brutally illustrated the sheer extent of human suffering caused by the current political crisis and concomitant sectarian tensions. Currently, there are 838,000 internally displaced people within CAR, and an additional 245,000 civilians have fled to neighboring countries. Nearly 2.5 million people,

representing more than half of the population, are in need of humanitarian assistance. Doctors Without Borders reports that in the capital of Bangui, over 1,650 wounded civilians were treated in January alone.

The few NGOs still operating on the ground in CAR tell a similar story. International Crisis Group, for instance, reports that the AU peacekeeping force is spread thin and barely able to secure even the country’s capital. As a result, CAR’s less accessible regions are even more vulnerable. This has been confirmed by Amnesty International, which warned that, in the country’s northwest in particular, “there is a huge risk of a major human tragedy because of the complete absence of any peacekeeping forces.” Human Rights Watch—reporting from the ground since 2007—is calling for a full-fledged UN peacekeeping mission, stating that, “we are in a moment where immediate action is necessary to stop the killings...otherwise the future of the Muslim community of this country will be gone.”

This begs the question, will UN peacekeeping forces actually make a difference in country? A 2013 report says yes: Published in the *American Journal of Political Science*, “UN Peacekeeping and Civilian Protection in

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Civil War” **concludes that deploying large numbers of UN peacekeepers “dramatically reduces civilian killings.”** To support their hypothesis, the authors examined monthly civilian death tolls from intrastate armed conflicts in sub-Saharan African between 1991 and 2008. Their findings were striking: in instances where no peacekeeping troops were deployed, the monthly average of civilian deaths was approximately 106. However, in instances where at least 8,000 UN troops were present, the average monthly death toll fell to less than two. The study concluded that ensuring UN peacekeeping forces “are appropriately tasked and deployed in large numbers” is critical to their ability to protect civilians.

Recommendations

As the U.S. continues to debate proposals for countering violence in CAR, it is critical that any UN peacekeeping mission authorized by the Security Council be given the political and economic support necessary to protect civilians and help rebuild some semblance of stable governance. Achieving this will require sustained engagement by the Administration and Congress both at the UN in New York and on Capitol Hill. Now that the Security Council has authorized a UN peacekeeping operation in CAR, the Better World Campaign recommends the following:

FULLY FUND A UN CAR MISSION IN FY 2015.

To achieve the mission’s objective in CAR, UN peacekeepers must be provided with the resources necessary to operate in a large and underdeveloped country with few paved roads or modern infrastructure.

Congress should fully fund the U.S. share of all UN peacekeeping missions, including MINUSCA, during the FY 15 appropriations process.

A significant shortage of funds could cripple the mission’s ability to promote stability during the initial deployment or fulfill its civilian protection mandate. Given that the U.S. pays slightly more than one-quarter of each UN peacekeeping mission’s budget, a CAR force would be greatly weakened without adequate U.S. financial support.

As a first step to ensure funding, the Administration needed to include funding for a UN mission in CAR its formal budget request to Congress. While a mission had not materialized when the FY 15 budget was submitted in March, a requests

was necessary to alert Congress to the fact that a new peacekeeping mission could be on the horizon, and to demonstrate the Administration’s firm support for providing the funding necessary to get the operations off the ground. As a next step, Congress should fully fund the U.S. share of all UN peacekeeping missions, including MINUSCA, during the FY 15 appropriations process. The President’s FY 15 budget request provides a vehicle to do just that by proposing the creation of a Peacekeeping Response Mechanism (PKRM) in OCO to fund “initial urgent and unexpected requirements of new UN and non-UN missions without compromising support for existing U.S. peacekeeping commitments.” Among other things, funding under this new peacekeeping account could be used to support MINUSCA, which, of course, was authorized by the Security Council after the release of the President’s FY 15 request.

Crises requiring the authorization of new or expanded peacekeeping operations can arise at any time, without regard to our normal budgetary processes. As a result, the PKRM could be an effective tool to deal with the budgetary challenges

created by urgent new peacekeeping needs, such as the mission in CAR. While the Administration has requested \$150 million for the PKRM, the cost of a CAR mission, by all accounts, is likely to reach \$250 million in its first year. As a result, **we recommend that Congress provide \$250 million for the account in FY 15.**

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While we are aware of the strict discretionary budget caps facing the Appropriations Committees, once the U.S. votes for a mission in the Security Council, we are treaty obligated to honor our commitments and pay for the force. In addition, by sharing the burden of safeguarding global security, peacekeeping not only advances American interests and keep our troops out of harm's way, but also reduces the likelihood of the U.S. military's involvement and the large expenditures that would undoubtedly accrue. This was affirmed by Admiral Mike Mullen, former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, who observed that UN peacekeepers "help reduce the risks that major U.S. military interventions may be required to restore stability in a country or region. Therefore, the success of these operations is very much in our national interest."

UN missions are eight times cheaper than U.S. forces acting alone.

Given the serious economic challenges currently facing our country, it is important to recognize that UN peacekeeping is a cost-effective investment — UN member states bear nearly three-quarters of their costs, and as the GAO has noted, UN missions are eight times cheaper than U.S. forces acting alone. By helping to address outbreaks of conflict and instability that may affect U.S. interests so our own forces do not have to, UN peacekeepers ultimately save American taxpayers money.

In 2013, we witnessed the consequences of failing to include mission requests in the budget and a lack of Congressional support. Last spring, when the President's FY 14 budget request was released, it was clear that the Security Council, with U.S. backing, was about to authorize a new peacekeeping mission in Mali. However, the Administration's request included no funding for the Mali mission (MINUSMA), and Congress later declined to fund MINUSMA in the FY 14 Omnibus Appropriations bill — shorting it by \$250 million. The consequences of this are stark — peacekeepers in Mali now have fewer resources to contain instability in a nation that, until very recently, was a haven for extremists. There are serious concerns that a similar scenario could play out this year if Congress chooses not to provide sufficient funding for the new UN mission in CAR. As a result, full Congressional engagement and support will be crucial over the coming year, not just to CAR, but to other critical UN peacekeeping missions as well.