



World Chronicle

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“UN Peacekeeping in Evolution”

A classic image of UN peacekeeping shows troops in blue helmets monitoring a border area through binoculars. But how accurate is this picture today? What are the new challenges facing peacekeepers in places like Congo and Liberia and how is the process of planning and deploying peacekeepers in the world's trouble spots adapting to these new realities? In this edition of **World Chronicle**, these questions are discussed with Major General Patrick Cammaert of The Netherlands, the UN Military Adviser in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations.

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ANNOUNCER: From the United Nations in New York, an unedited interview programme on global issues. This is **World Chronicle**. And here is the host of today's **World Chronicle**.

LITTLEJOHNS: I'm Michael Littlejohns and this is **World Chronicle**. Troops in blue helmets monitor a border area through binoculars – a classic image of UN peacekeeping. But how accurate is this picture today? What are the new challenges facing peacekeepers in places like Congo and Liberia? With us to talk about the challenges facing peacekeepers today is Major General Patrick Cammaert, the UN Military Adviser. Joining us in the studio are Bill Reilly of *United Press International /UPI* and Céline Curiol of *BBC Afrique*. General Cammaert, welcome to **World Chronicle**.

LITTLEJOHNS: General, there've been a lot of critics of UN peacekeeping operations. The *Wall Street Journal* is a notable example; in their editorial pages often jumping on the alleged failures of the UN. You've been around the UN for quite some time and are quite familiar with a number of peacekeeping operations, what would you say to the critics? I mean, evidently there have been many successes as well. There've been what, 50-odd peacekeeping missions in the life of the UN? So what do you say?

CAMMAERT: My immediate reaction would be look at the successes instead of looking from the failures, and the second point is learn from what had been wrong in the past. There are a lot of successes and one of the latest ones is Sierra Leone where we are in the draw-down of the mission which is going successfully. We see East Timor where we are in a draw-down of the forces in East Timor, which is successful. And you don't have to go too much in the past where you look at Cambodia or East Slovenia; those were successful missions. But since that time you had the Brahimi Report, as you know.

LITTLEJOHNS: This was the series of recommendations on lessons learned which the Security Council adopted?

CAMMAERT: Yes. And in fact, that Brahimi Report was the signal of change and that change is now very evident in the way we approach, with the member states, peacekeeping operations.

LITTLEJOHNS: Lahkdar Brahimi, the author, one of the principal authors of the report, is now in Afghanistan. Now, Afghanistan is an example of peacekeeping, or military operations, which do not involve the UN at all and there are other examples of multinational

forces rather than UN forces. Is there a trend now toward multinational forces rather than Blue Berets?

CAMMAERT: I don't think so because we have a lot of work in the Department for Peacekeeping Operations, DPKO, and the focus is very much on the conflicts in Africa and, as you know, we have a handful of operations there. We have an operation in MINURSO, in the Western Sahara, we have an operation in Ethiopia/ Eritrea, we have an operation in the Congo, we have an operation in Sierra Leone, in Ivory Coast, and now recently we started an operation in Liberia.

LITTLEJOHNS: Which is going to be very large?

CAMMAERT: I think the operation in Liberia is the largest one after Korea. It is a – and some people should realize that; that it is a multinational divisional deployment from the standing start without organic logistic assets. And that's a major operation. And we have a very energetic SRSG, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, and a very competent and professional Force Commander, Lt. Gen. Opande from Kenya. And they are the driving factors with DPKO, the department, to make sure that we got the 15,000 troops in very short notice, in a very short period of time. The point.

REILLY: You've been here a year at UN Headquarters, what changes have you instituted during this period?

CAMMAERT: Changes that I instituted or were instituted after the Brahimi Report?

REILLY: That were instituted.

CAMMAERT: The changes are focusing in general on the rapid deployment of forces after a Security Council resolution is adopted for a new mission. And in the old days, if I may say so, member states started only when the Security Council resolution was adopted, but then it takes a long time before you have your troops trained and equipped and then you get the parliamentary green light for deployment, et cetera, and that takes a long time. So, nowadays, we start the preparations for a mission as soon as we see smoke over the horizon, that there is a fire somewhere in the world, and we start involving the member states and telling them we see smoke. It is more or less there and then and we start preparing and planning for a possible operation and we involve in that planning the member states and the possible troop contributors. And, for instance with Liberia, long before we had a Security Council resolution adopted there was already a feeling of commitment of member states to deploy and to commit the troops when there was a Security Council resolution and when the member states were

happy with the mandate, the rules of engagement, et cetera. And that speeds up the process of deployment.

CURIOL: Recently in Africa – in Liberia, in Ivory Coast, in Sierra Leone -- we've seen one country, like France or the U.K. or the U.S., taking the lead in a multinational force and then the UN coming in. Is it a better way to handle peacekeeping according to you?

CAMMAERT: It depends a bit on the type of conflict. In the case of Sierra Leone, there was already a peacekeeping operation ongoing but when that operation went down the drain, so to speak, the U.K. stepped in and gave it the boost and help and then disappeared and stayed over the horizon just in case. In the case of the Congo, we had also an ongoing operation. When things went wrong in the northeast of the Congo, we asked the French, and later the European Union, to step in and help out. In the case of Liberia, the conflict came to an end because President Taylor disappeared from Liberia and then a coalition of the willing, a multinational force, stepped in, stabilized the situation and has handed over on the 1st of October to the United Nations. So you have a kind of combination of various types of conflicts, depending on the conflict.

REILLY: Do you see some problems inherent with this new model of having a single nation – or in the case of Liberia, ECOWAS, the Economic Community of West African States – coming in and replacing them? Do you see some reluctance maybe on their part to give up control?

CAMMAERT: No. In the case of Liberia, where ECOWAS did a tremendous job in stepping in and stabilizing the situation, there was certainly not a reluctance; on the contrary, I think. The ECOWAS countries were very happy to hand over to the United Nations and be blue helmet, blue-hatted, so to speak, and because their sustainment – logistics is a problem for the African countries at the moment and that is one of the issues that we are in dialogue with the African countries to enhance their peacekeeping capacity in strengthening the logistic effort. So there was not the slightest reluctance. And I would say, on the contrary, ECOWAS was very happy to handle it. But for the United Nations, it gave us some breathing time, breathing space to generate the force and they did the job of stabilizing it and then we took over.

CURIOL: In terms of how many troops you deploy in a country, like mostly Africa, in Sierra Leone which is – I'm sorry Liberia, which is a relatively small country, you have these 1,800/1,700 peacekeepers that are going to be deployed. In DRC, which is a much bigger

country, you have a smaller number of peacekeepers. What defines how many blue helmets you send? How do you decide this?

CAMMAERT: Well, one of the further lessons learned from the past is don't go on the track of the incremental approach. We've learned from UNAMSIL, in Sierra Leone, where the Security Council accepted 5,000 troops and then things didn't work out as we had planned, and then another Security Council Resolution and we ended up with 17,000. But you lose a lot of time, you lose a lot of credibility, so we said from the beginning in Liberia we have to go in with overwhelming power, with a robust mandate, with robust rules of engagement, and that means that you can shorten the mission because you can immediately swing over with the whole country and get a grip of the situation. Because what one should also not forget is that in the whole evolution what you – your first question – the whole evolution of peacekeeping, we are now dealing with situations that are extremely volatile. You don't have two parties who are in consent and you have a buffer group. No, now you have situations where you have rebel groups, child soldiers; you have people who are drugged, drunk, completely without any command and control structure, and those people sign an accord on Monday and break the accord on Tuesday. That is different business. And those people are very good in killing females and elderly people and children. They're not so brave as to take on an overwhelming power with a blue helmet on it. And that's also the difference from the days when we were looking through our binoculars, as you said, in a buffer zone and deploying a force in Liberia or in the Congo.

LITTLEJOHNS: The slides that we're seeing here, do you want to make any comment as the slides change?

CAMMAERT: Well, you see the rebel groups and armed groups and child soldiers--

LITTLEJOHNS: The top left shows the rebel groups?

CAMMAERT: Top left. And top right is a young kid, you know, who is quite hysterical there.

LITTLEJOHNS: Where is that? Can you recognize it?

CAMMAERT: That one is in Liberia. Maybe the next one, we can have a look? You see also that there is not a standing army or what; this is a bunch of people armed to the teeth and difficult to handle.

LITTLEJOHNS: But they look sort of relaxed. I mean the guy in the middle there doesn't seem to be particularly aggressive.

CAMMAERT: No. That's true. And I don't know in what situation this picture was taken but they can be quite different—

LITTLEJOHNS: He's a bit wild though.

CAMMAERT: --and this is in a middle of a firefight in Monrovia. And here, this picture is taken in Bunia, in Ituri, in the Congo where two groups were fighting it out with each other and fighting it out also with machetes and massacres were taking place there. And that was exactly the situation when we had to ask France and the European Union to step in to take action immediately to take a grip of the situation. You see here the internally displaced persons, IDP camps.

LITTLEJOHNS: And where is that?

CAMMAERT: This is in Bunia, again in the northeast Congo.

LITTLEJOHNS: But the situation in the Congo is still very unstable, isn't it?

CAMMAERT: It's getting better by the day. We are now deploying more and more forces in the northeast. We will soon have a brigade-size unit, which is three, four thousand people, in the northeast and you see that we are getting a grip of the situation. That people are now more relaxed, more stable and you see that also on the political side in Kinshasa where there is a more stable situation and things are moving forward.

LITTLEJOHNS: This is **World Chronicle**. Our guest is Major General Patrick Cammaert, the UN Military Adviser in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations.

We've been talking about peacekeeping yesterday and today, here's a clip from an educational video, narrated by a UN Peacekeeper from Ireland, that was produced more than a decade ago. Let's take a look:

NARRATOR: Peacekeeping forces were a natural progression from observer missions. Their deployment began in 1956 when a United Nations force was first sent to the Middle East. In these missions, armed military units from different countries are brought together as a unified force. The intention is to position ourselves between warring factions, enhance security in the area, and, if possible, supply humanitarian aid.

PEACEKEEPER: "You see, we are here, namely, for our own soldiers. But in the afternoons we have three-hour reception for the local people. We treat about 200 local patients per month and this is a typical patient. We have many children who have respiratory infections in this wintertime."

NARRATOR: While humanitarian aid can be an important part of our job we are soldiers and, as such, we carry what are called "light weapons" and can only use them

in self- defence. If we are shot at, we are instructed to fire warning shots first, to try to end the shooting and protect the lives of United Nations peacekeepers. Only in such a situation have we ever resorted to the use of arms. The United Nations forces are hardly equipped in either manpower or firepower to take on an entire army.

LT. COL. DERMOT EARLEY: “Our strength is international opinion; the moral authority of the United Nations. We report all ceasefire violations to United Nations Headquarters in New York.”

NARRATOR: You would think that the introduction of another army would aggravate a conflict. It doesn't because a plan is worked out between both sides before the Secretary-General sends in United Nations troops.

LITTLEJOHNS: General, there's recent evidence – well evidence over quite a long period actually – that the moral authority of the UN is not always very successful, and earlier on this programme you spoke about the stronger rules of engagement that were called for in Security Council mandates. But the situation is still the same, is it not, that UN troops can only use their firepower in self-defence?

CAMMAERT: It depends under which mandate you operate. Is it under Chapter 6, which is a mandate where you only can use of force--

LITTLEJOHNS: Of the UN Charter?

CAMMAERT: --of the UN Charter, where you only can use force for self-defence or under Chapter 7, where you can use all means necessary to take action? And the traditional peacekeeping operations are, most of the time, under Chapter 6 and nowadays in Africa – Congo, Sierra Leone, Liberia -- they're all under Chapter 7, which gives the mission much more body and much more possibilities to act and also to protect civilians under imminent threat. And that is something that is very important because we learned from the past.

REILLY: General, there's a question that is nagging me only because of the singularity of it and that's -- you mentioned about discipline and discipline of peacekeepers. Recently, there was a report of peacekeepers in the Congo getting their hand in the cookie jar, or caught with – it looked that way anyway – the Uruguayan troops confiscating a chalice or some other objects from a church. I say singularity because of the excellent record peacekeepers have had in general over such a long period of time. What's happened with that, since that situation was first reported, stealing religious items?

CAMMAERT: May I make one remark before I give an answer to your question, and that is that if you want to have a thousand peacekeepers who are working day and night to do their job and to bring peace in an area, you need only one to spoil all the effort of the 999 others and the spoiler will be seen in the headlines of *The New York Times*. But we investigate. First of all, we investigate if there is an incident and if the investigation indicates that people have been misbehaving themselves then the perpetrators will be repatriated because we have not the means to punish someone. That is the member state who is doing that. Now, we follow up on that, you see. We are not only repatriating him and then we say this is it. No. We ask the member state to report to us what has been done about this case and if a member state is not willing to do so we will pursue him to do so. And then if they still refuse to give us information on the follow up, on the aftermath, then there's maybe not a place at this moment for that country to take part in peacekeeping operations. So we want to know what is happening with people who misbehave and spoil the good name and reputation of the United Nations and their country.

REILLY: What's happened, in this instance, to the Uruguayans?

CAMMAERT: In this case Uruguay took it very, very seriously and have repatriated a number of soldiers to take disciplinary action at home.

CURIOL: Still talking about peacekeepers, recently the Under-Secretary-General, Jean-Marie Guehenno, said that the burden of peacekeeping was mostly on developing countries since they are the ones who give most of the troops in peacekeeping operations. Do you think this should change? Do you think developed countries should be more involved in giving troops to the UN?

CAMMAERT: Well, the interesting thing is that some years ago, before the 90's, it was just the other way around, you see. You had the members, the countries from the north – the developed countries were the major ones taking part in peacekeeping operations and now it is more the other way around that the developing countries are the ones that are providing the troops. And that is also because developed countries are also engaged in operations which are UN-mandated but not UN-led, like in Afghanistan, like in Iraq, like in Bosnia at the moment and Macedonia, et cetera. So, those countries are quite over-stretched. Now, having said that, we don't ask those developed countries for a large amount of troops. There is no reason to do so because developing countries have a lot of troops but miss the technical aspects of peacekeeping like, enabling forces, movement control, airfield services, intelligence, engineers, medical. Many times those are small units that need only to be there

for a short period of time – the first three months or so – and then the UN has taken over with the civilian contract and then those youth can go to a next mission, you see. Because those technical units are in short supply everywhere but most of them are in the developed countries. So there should be more a kind of capacity that developed countries bring on the table than battalions because the battalions can also be taken from countries that have huge armies like India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nigeria, et cetera.

CURIOL: But you have to make sure they're trained enough, as you were saying. Since the situation on the ground is changing are these peacekeepers trained to deal with a different kind of--

CAMMAERT: Absolutely, but my experience with developing countries, with their troops, there's nothing wrong with their troops. They are very well trained, very proud to have for instance an Indian battalion group under command in Ethiopia/Eritrea because they were outstanding troops. And the same thing for Bangladesh. I mean I've also experienced Bangladeshi troops. Outstanding troops.

REILLY: Do you accept the argument that some smaller nations are able to keep a larger standing army than they normally would have only because they're able to get some funds from UN peacekeeping by submitting their troops for peacekeeping operations?

CAMMAERT: Well, I'll leave that to critics who want to discuss those kinds of things. I'm only interested in getting the troops when we are starting a mission and if there's a small country which has a huge army, so be it, and I'm not so much interested in why they have such a big army. The reality of the day is that every country, small or big, will get a reimbursement from the United Nations for every soldier that is deployed in the field and that is the same for everybody.

LITTLEJOHNS: Is there a future for a sort of standing rapid reaction force because it seems to take forever for the troops to be assembled for many operations.

CAMMAERT: In my view there is no future for a standing army. There's no country who wants to give up their sovereignty over their forces so I think it is dragging a dead horse.

LITTLEJOHNS: Not even small?

CAMMAERT: Not even small. I think that we should look more – and we are doing that and I think we are successful in doing that with the member states in shortening the response time by preparing well before there is a Security Council resolution, as I described. And the good example is that we have deployed very quickly in Ivory Coast and we

are now deploying very quickly or rapidly in Liberia. So I am recently optimistic that with the help of the member states – because we should not forget that the United Nations is only the Secretariat who is carrying out the orders and instructions of the member states. It is the member states who tell us you go left, we go left ; you go right, we go right. If the member states are not giving us the troops I can, as Military Adviser, jump up and down, but nothing will happen.

LITTLEJOHNS: We only have a few seconds left. The Western Europeans and the United States have not been providing much in the way of actual manpower or womanpower, as the case may be. You think that could change?

CAMMAERT: Well, I think that the major countries, the P-5 countries as we say, who are represented in the Security Council – the permanent members – they are helping us out in particular in what I described, the multinational forces, when there is a need for a quick response....

LITTLEJOHNS: General Cammaert, that's all the time we have. Thank you for being with us on this edition of **World Chronicle**.

Our guest has been Major-General Patrick Cammaert, the UN Military Adviser in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations. He was interviewed by Bill Reilly of *United Press International/UPI* and Celine Curriel of *BBC Afrique*.

I am Michael Littlejohns, thank you for joining us. We invite you to be with us for the next edition of **World Chronicle**.

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