

The GLOCEPS

Weekly Influential Brief

Research Focus: Security and Defence

Strategic options for a Successful Kenyan-led Multinational Security Support Mission in Haiti

Executive Summary

The brief posits that;

The success of Kenya's leadership of the Multinational Security Support Mission (MSS) in Haiti rests on a number of strategic options focused on ensuring careful navigation of the complexities surrounding the mission. These include operational preparedness in relation to capacity building of

personnel, quality of logistics and equipment, communication approaches adopted, command and leadership, perception of the Haiti and Kenyan population approval, analysis of the strategic environment and post-deployment plan.

It concludes that;

Achieving victory in the mission will largely depend on the ability of the mission command to integrate effective leadership and strategic communication with superior logistics, human capital and application of humanitarian law so as to

win the support of the Haiti population. Such accomplishments will further rely on the ability to navigate the complex political dynamics in Haiti's strategic environment with a clear exit strategy and contingency plan.

It recommends that the mission leadership should, among others

- i) Lobby the UNSC to translate the MSS into a UN Peace keeping mission to secure adequate funding.
- ii) Establish enhanced engagement with Antigua, Barbuda, the Bahamas, Bangladesh, Benin, Barbados, Chad, and Jamaica to mobilize adequate troops for the mission and develop a unified operational command strategy.
- iii) Validate the MSS training curriculum using UN standards with the support of the International Peace Support Training Centre (IPSTC) to embrace theatre induction training with emphasis on Humanitarian Law, French language and the culture of the Haiti people.
- iv) Deploy civilian personnel alongside the law enforcement officers for humanitarian and psychosocial support of the Haiti people and mission personnel.
- v) Develop a thorough and comprehensive strategic communication policy in collaboration with the troop contributing countries and other mission stakeholders.



Context

The Caribbean nation of Haiti currently faces overwhelming security challenges that have occasioned the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) to approve the deployment of Multinational Security Support (MSS) Mission led by Kenya to stabilize the country. Kenya is expected to coordinate with the Haitian National Police (PNH) and other states that have pledged to support the mission. The states include Antigua, Barbuda, the Bahamas, Bangladesh, Barbados, Benin, Chad, and Jamaica to bring law and order.

Haiti's key security threat is the presence of a coalition of gangs whose superior weapons and strength have outnumbered the declining PNH. There are about 200 gangs operating in Haiti but the notorious ones are the G9 Family led by Jimmy Cherizier alias Barbecue and the GPep, led by Gabriel Jean-Pierre alias Ti Gabriel. They have been accused of sexual violence and mass murders, airport shut-down, indiscriminate looting of seaports and supply chains and police station attacks. The gangs' accord drove the PM Ariel Henry to resign in March 2024 and their attacks on prisons have freed over 4,600 inmates. Gang violence notwithstanding, over the last 220 years of its existence as an independent country, Haiti's history has been characterized by chaos, natural calamities, dictatorial leadership, coups, lawlessness and external interferences. Since 1886 after General Salomon, none of the Haitian 12 Presidents or PM has completed the full 7-year term in office. Four have been killed and six driven out.

The Transitional Council which was tasked with choosing Haiti's next PM and Cabinet after the resignation of PM Ariel Henry, named former Sports Minister, Fritz Bélizaire as Prime Minister. Even though the appointment is

beset by controversies and divisions in the Council, it is a milestone that has paved the way for foreign intervention to support Haitians rebuild their country.

The country is mineral-rich country with gold, silver, copper, oil and natural gas which are under intense geopolitical competition from US, Canada and Australia. Haiti's oil reserves are estimated to be the largest in the world after Venezuela.

Kenya has pledged to deploy 1,000 police officers as United States contributes \$ 200 million financial support for the mission. While Kenyan troops have previously served in peace missions in Somalia, Namibia, Kosovo, Sierra Leone, South Sudan, Liberia, and East Timor, among others; this is the first time Kenya is deploying its officers in the Caribbean state. However, other African countries including Chad, Algeria, Burkina Faso, Central African Republic, Cameroon, Democratic Republic of Congo, Egypt, Madagascar, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, South Africa and Togo have previously contributed troops to the 2004 – 2017 United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH), led by the Brazilian Army. Whereas some analysts have warned against the deployment, citing risks, others have seen the positioning as an economic and geopolitical strategy for Kenya to amplify its role as a key actor in global affairs.

The criminal gangs of Haiti have voiced their disregard for the Kenyan-led Mission and are ready to confront Kenyan troops as an occupation force. However, a 2023 Survey by a local Haiti NGO indicates that 70% of the population favor the deployment of an international armed force under the UN to fight the gangs. A reality for Kenya is





acknowledging the role of the gangs in addressing Haiti's governance problems. Other expected challenges include inadequate logistical support that may hinder the capacity to deliver duties professionally and the fact that prior external interventions have been plagued by human rights violations. There is therefore a need to explore policy and strategic options that will guarantee Kenya successful leadership of the mission in the quest to magnify global posture through stabilization of the impoverished nation.

Key Strategic Options

The brief advances the following key strategic options for mission predeployment, deployment and post-deployment phases.

Capacity building

Adequate training of the police for the security mission strictly under the UN standards remains a major cornerstone of mission preparedness as it contributes to increased morale. The goal should be to capacitate the officers with the requisite knowledge and skills that would enable them to execute their duties proudly as contributors to global peace and prosperity for the sake of mankind and not as those being sacrificed for the overall success of the mission. While much of the training has been going on in respective Troop Contributing Countries (TCCs), there is little evidence that additional training is being carried out on the ground where the troops are going to operate. Continuous on-ground training remains critical to endear the troops to the Haiti terrain and the population they are going to serve and to enable them surmount the unforeseen challenges as they begin to execute their duties. Nevertheless, training off-ground needs to incorporate real-life simulation exercises using training aids designed to mirror Haiti terrain, particularly the urban and rural

environments. Equally, the mastery of French language remains critical for the troops' survival and interaction with the local population and this can be achieved in the short-term using well developed digital applications for that purpose and paring French speakers with beginners. There is also a need for the troops to be married well in advance with the equipment they are going use during the mission, particularly the fire-arms and the body armour. This will minimize casualties, injuries and other operational drawbacks related to strange or faulty equipment. Preparing for extreme hostility at the initial stages of the mission would require training in special weapons and tactics (SWAT). Such teams would be crucial in projecting show force in case of resistance. The training must also impart skills on humanitarian law and gender sensitivity during operations. Finally, it is important that all the troops involved in the operations are trained using the same curriculum approved by the UN and all TCCs for harmonization of skills and command responsibilities.

Logistics and Equipment

The need to secure adequate logistics and equipment for the mission remains critical. Kenya has estimated that the mission will require at least 5,000 troops and \$240 million per year. While the troops need to be well remunerated to sustain their morale, the equipment procured must be of superior quality, guaranteed serviceability and tested well in advance before the operations begin. The personnel must be able to seamlessly operate the equipment in the Haiti terrain regardless of the weather conditions or existing infrastructure. For instance, the maneuverability of the patrol vehicles in the urban areas must be ensured as this boosts morale during operations. The need for technical support staff to be on standby to ensure





service ability of the equipment must equally be considered.

Winning the Support of Haiti Population

Winning the hearts and minds of the Haiti population remains critical to ensuring that the MSS troops achieve success with minimal challenges. The real task for the Mission leadership will be achieving peaceful disarmament of the criminal gangs without street battles. Given that the people of Haiti have seen similar peace support missions come and go without much success, the overall goal in this quest should be to put in place effective humanitarian interventions as well as interpersonal and conflict resolution skills that would make the population accept the mission as a peaceful intervention rather than the perceived occupation enforcement. Key options include the quality of leadership, discipline of the troops, soft policing approaches, understanding the Haiti culture, observance of human rights, effective communication, dialogue, engaging women, youth and children, negotiation, mediation, psychosocial support, provision of basic services and reaching out to the criminal gangs.

Strategic Communication

Guided and consistent information focused on the long term goals of the MSS is key to the overall success of the mission. Given that the mission would most likely proceed for long, the flow of information and careful methodology for dealing with the expected and unexpected outcomes are crucial. As questions remain in Kenya with regard to the constitutionality of the country's participation in the mission, continuous targeted communication to the Kenyan population on the importance of the mission will be a morale booster to the troops. Equally, structured communication with the

international media, the families of troops, the civil society, TCCs, as well as the troops themselves must be part of the mission commander's kit.

Command and Leadership

The success of any mission depends on the quality of leadership exhibited by the commander. While Kenya's leadership in other peace keeping missions abroad has been exemplary, leading a police deployment under Chapter Seven of the UN Charter is a rarity. Moreover, no Kenyan peace keeping contingent has experienced Haiti. The ability of the MSS Commander to manage the competing geopolitics, develop a clear contingency plan and create a unified command of all the TCCs, some of whom have better experiences of Haiti, remains key. Dissent among TCCs has jeopardized previous multinational peace keeping missions elsewhere. As already noted, the ability of the commander to win over the Haiti population and peacefully disarm the criminal gangs should be the ultimate goal of the mission leadership. The achievements of General Daniel Opande of Kenya in the United Nations Mission in Liberia, (UNMISL) particularly his successful disarming of 100,000 combatants which culminated in peaceful democratic elections in 2005 can offer vital command and leadership lessons.

Managing Political Dynamics

The fact that Haiti's political landscape has been characterized by turmoil over the last 138 years makes managing political dynamics a significant success factor. The dynamics include the geopolitics, local competing interests and the influence of Transitional Organized Crime (TOCs). It is important to note that the support of the Haiti Transitional Council to the mission is yet to be assured. But even so, their opinion needs to resonate well with the local population and the democratic





ideals of the Haiti population whose perception of the criminal gangs will play a major role in public approval of the mission thereby enabling or disabling efforts to enforce peace. As Kenya nears 2027 general elections Haiti deployment could emerge as a critical campaign agenda.

The geopolitics of Haiti revolve around its resources, which are mined by US, Canada and Australian companies. The US remains the main benefactor for the Mission with a pledge of \$300 million and their interests will determine the overall direction and success. With the US elections fast approaching in November 2024, the outcome may have a major influence on the future of the mission should the current US Administration, the main proponent of the MSS lose elections. The possibility of America's global interests in the Middle East, Europe and Asia outplaying its interests in the Caribbean remain real, post-elections. Moreover, it is equally important to be sensitive to the interests of other countries that have pledged to support MSS. These include Canada (\$59 Million), Britain (\$6 million) and France, a former Haiti colonial master (\$3.9 Million). So far only \$18 million of the pledges has been deposited with the UN. A clash of competing geopolitical interests if not well managed would most likely plunge the mission into financial distress and jeopardize its success.

The other political factor is the influence of Transnational Organized Crime (TOCs) syndicates involved in the trans-shipment of drugs from Colombia and Puerto Rico to the US through Haiti and which supply the criminal gangs with arms and ammunitions. With the motivation to ensure continued chaos in Haiti, they will continue to exert

pressure on Haiti Transitional Council to call off the Mission through negative publicity, continued violence and possible assassinations of Haiti leaders. Given that the major criminal gangs G9 and GPep have united against the MSS, managing criminal gang politics will be a critical success factor.

Exit Strategy

Peace keeping missions should not last forever. It is important for Kenya's leadership of the mission to put in place a clear strategy for disengagement or withdrawal in case the mission comes to an abrupt closer or is translates to another mission or ending having fully attained its principal objectives. This includes developing a clear plan of transferring the peace enforcement duties to the PNH as the mission exists. Recognizing that the strategic environment in which the MSS operates is volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous (VUCA) equally necessitates a clear exit plan in wake of adversity. The US elections as well as the local politics of Haiti and the divided opinion of the Kenyan people on the deployment, are a clear manifestation of VUCA. Should the mission come to an endless stalemate, the best exit strategy is mission withdrawal. The key aspects could include how and where to get reinforcement, neighboring countries to engage in case of retreat, logistics and contingency funds as well as a clear plan to communicate the exit.

Conclusion

In conclusion the success of the Kenyan-led MSS Mission in Haiti rests on the ability of the command to integrate effective leadership and strategic communication with superior logistics, human capital and humanitarian law so as to win the support of the Haiti population. Such accomplishments will further





rely on the ability of the leadership to navigate the complex political dynamics with a clear exit

strategy and contingency plan.

Recommendations

The Mission leadership needs to;

- i) Lobby the UNSC to translate MSS into a UN Peace keeping mission to secure adequate funding.
- ii) Deploy adequate troops during the initial stages of the mission once adequate logistics and equipment have been secured and troops well married to the equipment.
- iii) Establish enhanced engagement with Antigua, Barbuda, the Bahamas, Bangladesh, Benin, Barbados, Chad, and Jamaica to mobilize adequate troops for the mission and develop a unified operational command strategy.
- iv) Validate the MSS training curriculum using UN standards with the support of the International Peace Support Training Centre (IPSTC) to embrace theatre induction training with emphasis on Humanitarian Law, French language and the culture of the Haiti people.
- v) Deploy civilian personnel alongside the law enforcement officers for humanitarian and psychosocial support of the Haiti people and mission personnel.
- vi) Develop a thorough and comprehensive strategic communication policy in collaboration with all troop contributing countries and other mission stakeholders.
- vii) Strengthen relations with Caribbean Community (CARRICOM) countries through bilateral and multilateral engagements.
- viii) Develop a comprehensive exit strategy in collaboration with all mission stakeholders.

