CHALLENGES AND REQUIREMENTS FOR UNITED NATIONS MISSION IN SOUTH SUDAN (UNMISS)

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
	The United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) faces significant challenges in maintaining peace and security due to the complex security situation in the region. This study aims to support contingents in enhancing performance in these challenging settings by addressing key operational requirements. This research focuses on analysing the effectiveness of contingents and identifying the requirements necessary to fulfil the mission mandate. A qualitative approach was employed to examine the various factors that impact the performance of contingents. Data collection involved the researcher's own experiences, published articles, books and insights from UN staff currently serving at UNMISS Headquarters. The findings highlight the challenges faced by contingents, including access denials, a lack of essential resources, and communication barriers. Some of the recommendations for this mission include emphasising the need for force headquarters and troops contributing countries' support, compliance with doctrine, mission-specific training and improved logistical capabilities at the contingent level. This research underscores the importance of tackling these issues to enhance contingent effectiveness and mission success. By improving leadership effectiveness, providing specialised training and modern equipment and fostering local engagement, contingents can adapt better to the multidimensional security environment in South Sudan.

1.0   INTRODUCTION

The United Nations (UN) does not have a standing military or police force. Peacekeeping operations (PKOs) support member states in complex crises, based on mandates created by the UN Security Council. These mandates guide planning and execution. Recent global crises, including those in South Sudan, have raised concerns about the UN's ability to respond quickly and effectively to peace operations. The foundation for planning, execution, and control of the PKOs is these mandates, which are created at the highest political and diplomatic levels (Tuvdendarjaa, 2022). Even the most developed and well-prepared member nations find the process of deploying a UN mission to be complicated and complex. A deployment may become frustrated and delayed if one component is missing. Large-scale troop deployments for peace operations in conflict areas around the globe are challenging to execute. A plethora of activities, such as obtaining member state support for the deployment of troops and their resources, sometimes complicate and prolong the process inside the United Nations system (Langille, 2014). However, UN peacekeeping operations continue to be a crucial norm, with set response times and objectives that support numerous related reforms. The United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) comprises military, police, and civilian personnel. The military units consist of infantry units and supporting units such as signal, aviation, engineers and medical. The Troops Contributing Countries (TCC) are from Mongolia, Nepal, Ghana, Ethiopia, India, Rwanda, Bangladesh, China, Pakistan, Thailand and South Korea. The trends in South Sudan

are growing increasingly complicated in terms of threats to civilians, human rights issues, attacks on peacekeepers and protection of civilians (Kim et al., 2001). The effectiveness of the contingents in UN missions is critical, which demands maintaining peace and security. The article highlights the current security situation and the recent changes in security at UN missions. Challenges and types of emerging threats are identified that impact the operational environment. Based on the operational environment and performance status, the requirements of the UN peacekeeping contingents have been derived. Thus, the article focuses on the requirements that contingents need to address to achieve better performance in UNMISS.

2.0   BACKGROUND

South Sudan became the youngest country to break away from Sudan on July 9, 2011. Following the 2005 deal, the longest-running civil war in Africa came to an end. One of the most diverse nations in Africa is South Sudan, which comprises the ten southernmost states of Sudan. It is home to more than sixty different significant ethnic groups. The unrest in South Sudan persisted after its independence. The civil war that began in 2013 has resulted in the displacement of four million people in South Sudan (UNHCR, 2023). The UNMISS was established on July 8, 2011, when the Security Council passed Resolution 1996, to assist this young nation in establishing conditions for development, fostering good neighbourliness and consolidating peace and security (Stamnes, 2015). In 2013, civil war started in South Sudan after the president, Salva Kiir, an ethnic Dinka, sacked Mr Riek Machar, his deputy, an ethnic Nuer (Premium Times, 2017). The incident occurred despite the presence of a UN mission on the ground.

Security Situation in South Sudan

The heat map is the map-plotting practice in the UNMISS operations room. The UNMISS mission headquarters uses a heat map to visualise incidents that pose a threat to the local community, UNMISS peacekeepers, and security conditions. The ultimate goal is to provide more information on security incidents that occur within the area of responsibility and to identify particularly vulnerable areas, so that operations can be concentrated there to maintain security and peace. The heat map shows that the primary security concern in South Sudan is anti-UN activities, armed conflict, ambush and tribal fighting (UNMISS, 2019).
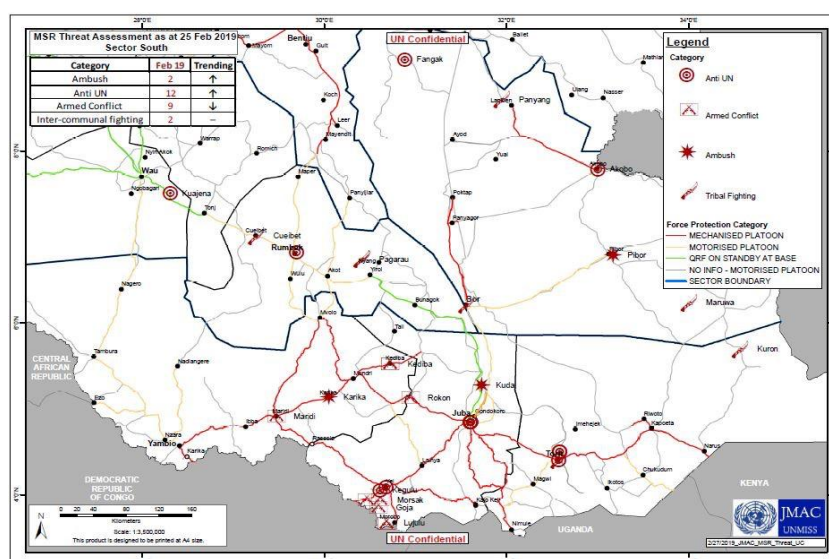
HEAT MAP

Fig. 1. *Heat Map of South Sudan prepared by UNMISS*
(Source: UNMISS FHQ U3 Power Point/ sectors of FHQ,2023)

More than 2.2 million people have been internally displaced for more than ten years due to the fighting in South Sudan, and the situation is made worse by food shortages and climate change. (UNHCR, 2024). There were thousands of civilian casualties, wounded, and displaced due to fighting between government forces, rival groups, and their affiliated militias. Authorities did not guarantee responsibility for crimes. Because of the ongoing impunity, violence continued, affecting civilians most severely through regular attacks, institutionalised sexual abuse of women and girls, the continued enlistment of minors in the military, and state-sponsored extrajudicial killings. The series of events threatening the security of South Sudan are attacks on civilians and aid operations, child marriage, refugees and returnees and legislative developments, i.e., progress towards the creation of a new constitution, which is still in dilemma.

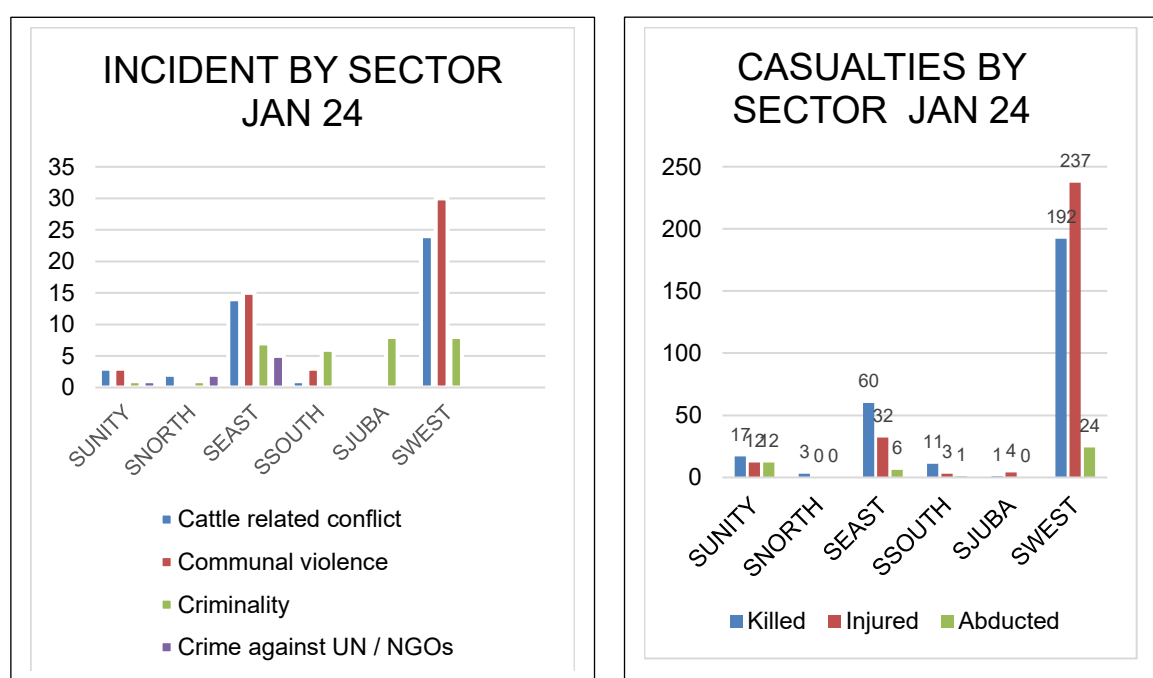The sector data, which includes incidents and casualties, is presented in the bar diagram.

Fig. 2. *Sectors casualties and incidents data* **(Source: UNMISS Force Monthly Report – Jan 2024)**

The above details mentioned in the heat map and sector casualties and incidents data can be summarised as follows: South Sudan has a humanitarian crisis, SPLA-IO forces exert opposition influence through protests or rallies and a heavy influx of returnees and refugees leading to a humanitarian crisis. The biggest challenges in humanitarian supply are food insecurity and barren lands. Major incidents included human rights violations, child abductions, cattle raids, rape, child/human trafficking, and the detention and ambushing of returnees from Ethiopia.

3.0 CHALLENGES IN UN PEACEKEEPING MISSIONS

Restricted freedom of movement has long been a problem. Fourteen Secretary-General reports from 2017 to 2021 documented visa delays or denials; during that period, the mission encountered various operational movement restrictions, many of which hindered required activities, primarily those related to the PoC and human rights issues. A new regulation concerning the mobility of UNMISS's ground forces and its air capability was established early in 2020 by the Joint Verification and Monitoring Mechanism (JVMM) of the South Sudan People's Defence Forces. The regulation required the patrols to submit Sharing of Information (SOI) related to the land and air missions to JVMM. Even though the government advertised SOIs as a means of raising public awareness of UNMISS's work, they have subsequently evolved into a de facto means of official government approval.

The air assets are centrally controlled from Juba. The assets available are mainly fixed-wing aircraft mobilised to provide logistic support from Uganda, Kampala, and for personal and duty travel of UN personnel. The airfields available in various states do not support fixed-wing landings. It is only favourable for fixed wings during the dry season. The mission and air patrols are confined to rotary-wing aircraft only, which reduces operational capabilities. The rotary wings are limited, and demand in various sectors is high. The Rwandan unit deployed for fixed-wing operations is limited in assets and pilots, which further hinders the rotation of those pilots. Although UNMISS attempts to enhance its footprint in all corners through Dynamic Air Patrols (DAPs), most planned DAPs are not executed due to a lack of air assets/cancellation due to technical reasons (UNMISS, 2024).

Deploying large-scale UN peace operations is challenging, with delays potentially causing significant human suffering. This is particularly true in South Sudan, where political, security, and logistical issues complicate deployment. Despite these challenges, UN peacekeeping remains crucial for maintaining peace, with Troop Contributing Countries (TCCs) such as Mongolia, Nepal, Ghana, and others playing a pivotal role in this effort.

In South Sudan, peacekeepers face complex threats, including attacks on civilians, human rights abuses, and increasing ethnic violence. Operational limitations due to the vastness of the country and the limited number of peacekeepers often slow response times and decrease the effectiveness of UNMISS in fulfilling its mandate. There have been criticisms about its slow response to crises and the lack of trust between rival groups.

3.1 Present State of Contingents' Performance in UNMISS and Deficiencies in Carrying out Assigned Duty

Chapter VII of the UN Charter thus permits UNMISS to employ all essential methods to carry out its mandate. The mandates of UNMISS are: protection of civilians; creating conditions conducive to the delivery of humanitarian assistance; monitoring, investigating, and reporting on violations of humanitarian and human rights law; and supporting the implementation of the revitalised agreement and the peace process (Mandate, 2023, March 24). After the adoption of Security Council Resolution 2677 on March 15, 2023, the Security Council authorised UNMISS with a ceiling of 17,000 military troops of all ranks. The ins and outs of UNMISS strength continue, so the manning strength of UNMISS military personnel remains changing. The total percentage is now at 81.5%, which remains normal strength during deployment for missions (UNMISS, 2024).

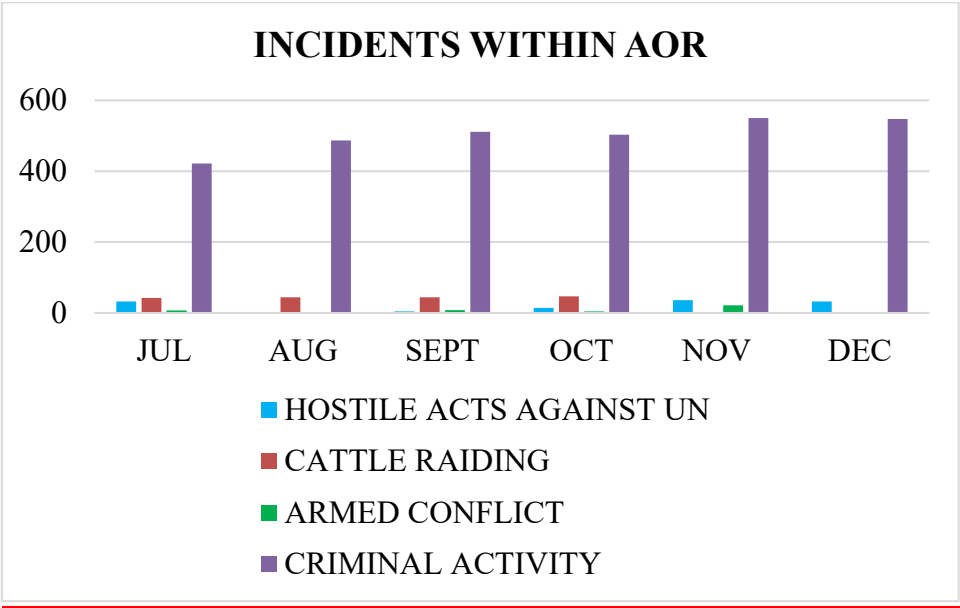**COMPARISON BETWEEN INCIDENTS AND UNMISS PATROLS ON GROUND**

Fig. 3. Incidents data study (Source: UNMISS Force Monthly Report – Jan 2024)
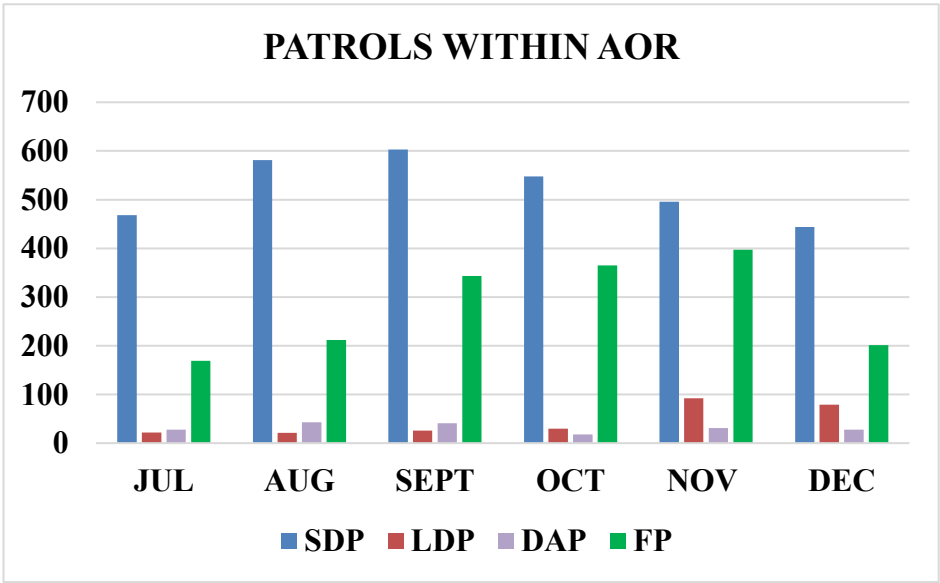

Fig. 4. Patrols data study (Source: UNMISS Force Monthly Report – Jan 2024)

Patrols data study.

The above data shows that the security situation in South Sudan is affected by various incidents, such as hostile acts against the UN, cattle raiding, armed conflicts and criminal activities. UNMISS has taken the initiative and mobilised all its resources, both human and material, to minimise and control the situation on the ground by deploying Short Duration Patrols, Long Duration Patrols, Dynamic Air Patrols, and Force Protection. The details include the performance of UNMISS personnel, especially military personnel, primarily in the field where incidents occurred. Though the data shows that there are no Killed in Action (KIA) or Wounded in Action (WIA), there is always a potential threat to UNMISS personnel within the AOR (UNMISS, 2024). The patrols are conducted on a routine basis, based on the threat level in the sectors.

However, the incidents remain the same or are increasing every month, which raises significant questions about their effectiveness in maintaining security in the sectors. The study reveals that incidents have occurred away from UN bases, where there is a reduced presence of UN troops. The motive behind the incidents and the actors remains unknown most of the time, which suggests that there is an intelligence gap in UNMISS at both Sector Headquarters and Force Headquarters. This comparison study reveals that the UN presence is most noticeable in remote areas, where its presence is less pronounced throughout the year.

3.2   Deficiencies in Carrying out Assigned Duty

The UN Sectors (UNS) attempts to enhance its footprint in all corners of the UNS through the use of DAPs. The planned DAPs get cancelled due to weather conditions, a lack of air assets and other technical reasons. During the KLE by UNMO and UNMISS, civilian staff most often request humanitarian aid, including food, water, medicines, and other necessities. While the patrols manage their expectations tactfully and communicate them to humanitarian partners, it is challenging to continue engaging with them on subsequent patrols, especially if no aid is rendered as requested in the intervening days. UNS has been facing Status of Force Agreement (SOFA) violations. There was access denial for FP for MOVCON in various places. The contingents' patrols are stopped at local checkpoints when they are planned for the incident site. SOI has been negotiating documents, but local forces are not implementing them, despite sharing them at checkpoints. The training of each TCC varies due to non-compliance with the "capstone doctrine" within the UN and UNMISS mission headquarters. The patrols conducted by one battalion differ from those of another. It has been observed that most of the staff at U1 rotate at the same time. This affects the smooth running of roles in the section. It is proposed, where possible, to scatter their rotation by allowing a month extension to some (UNMISS, 2024). This creates a gap in SO and UNMO handover and takeover, which ultimately creates a dilemma for 2-3 months until they take the pace in their respective roles and responsibilities. The contingents lack modern equipment for intelligence collection. Intelligence collection operations are less prevalent in practice; therefore, contingents often rely on local populations or local media for intelligence gathering.

3.3   Requirements for Improved Performance

The FHQ's timely guidance to the sector HQs has improved their performance. The planning desk is sometimes in a loop about what the U3 branch has planned for military patrols without involving other humanitarian agencies. This has shown the UN presence on the ground, but the outcome and effectiveness are lower. The patrols should be planned in such a way that they consist of humanitarian agencies, which will help fulfil their roles and responsibilities. Meanwhile, dismounted military foot patrols should be conducted to give security to the local community. Most of the patrols in South Sudan are mounted on vehicles. Therefore, dismounted patrols will enhance performance more than vehicle-mounted patrols.

Contingents deployed in UN peacekeeping missions are facing dilemmas on the doctrinal level. Contingents on UN missions confront a variety of doctrinal challenges. The necessity of aligning national military doctrine with the capstone doctrine of UN peacekeeping missions gives rise to these challenges. Since U.N. peace operations grew dramatically both in number and complexity in the early 1990s, there have been several instances where peacekeepers have suffered fatalities. The lack of reaction capabilities and the absence of proper instructions and compliance doctrine have been significant challenges in the UN peacekeeping mission, hindering effective responses during confrontations. The doctrine issues have been challenged when there are multiple contingent LDPs or joint patrols, where every unit has its own operational deployment, movement techniques, and Forward Operating Base (FOB) drills, which constantly threaten the security of peacekeepers. The reaction capabilities to support the local community are ultimately affected by the doctrinal variation between different contingents in various countries. This has given a sense of necessity and importance to complying with UN doctrine to synchronise the operational deployment and performance of every contingent.

According to Cruz (2017), it has focused on intelligence to enhance mission capability. The Security Council and the Department of Peace Operations (DPO) have taken the gravity of the reports seriously and cooperated to implement the recommendations. Based on the report, future UN peacekeeping missions were modified to reflect the contemporary situation and threats to peacekeepers. Different missions have their own mission planning and intelligence collection processes. UNMISS has its own Joint Military Analysis Centre (JMAC) and U2, where information is collected, analysed, and later disseminated to meet

intelligence requirements for operational planning. The observed gap is a lack of modern intelligence collection assets, such as small drones owned by contingents for tactical purposes, as well as sensors and funding for intelligence collection at the field level. The availability of drones with contingents, sensors around contingents' premises, and certain funds allocated to contingents are requirements that FHQ can address by making decisions at a higher level.

This is one of the challenges that FHQ should address to support the local commander, ensuring that local ownership is recognised and valued rather than punished in a quick reaction. Gregory & Sharland, (2023)The mission's presence and operations cannot be legally justified without the host country's approval. Both the host nation and UNMISS should cooperate to develop a culture of local ownership for its conduct and results, which is more closely related to constructivist theory, so that local ground commanders will have the efficiency to perform smoothly.

The contingents are staying in the prefabricated mobile houses. It presents challenges in maintaining hygiene and sanitation during hot weather. Infrastructure improvements enhance operational capabilities in all weather conditions. The contingents recognised the importance of having limited permanent houses in case hostilities broke out, as they could be used for safety and security reasons. FHQ should develop a plan to establish observation posts and relay stations to connect other sectors, FHQ, and patrols. The mission becomes more of a threat to peacekeepers due to diseases such as malaria, which are directly or indirectly related to a lack of clean infrastructure.

The contingents are entitled to have the operationally required ammunition. During the Operational Readiness Inspection (ORI), the contingents had ammunition whose expiration dates had passed, requiring timely turnover. This is directly or indirectly affecting the operational readiness of the contingents and the morale of the troops. The confidence of troops carrying expired ammunition is unlikely to be high. FHQ and its responsible authority should manage to conduct timely inspections and be aware of contingencies to replace them. According to (Kim et al., 2001) One of UNMISS's primary concerns is proving the value of patrolling and presence in preventing violence. UNMISS's large geographical area has brought challenges to communication during patrolling. Sustaining peacebuilding operations requires keeping a clear connection between mission aims and local engagement. It is affected by a lack of communication at relay stations. Hence, to enhance mission capability and effectiveness, a strong and solid communication network is essential.

A competent commander displays the highest standard in terms of operational experience, training and ethics. He must have the confidence to make tough/right decisions and must hold on to the integrity of his intent during complex situations at UNMISS. Such a commander must be able to comprehend operational and multidimensional peacekeeping operations successfully. A good communicator with oral and written skills who is well-versed in the MOU or specific mandates of the unit so that the mission authorities can deploy the contingent to take on roles and responsibilities. It is believed that language is a soft power to convince the local population to be in their favour. The local language has been a hurdle in convincing the local population about UNMISS activities and presence, which supports the local community. The patrol is sent without a local language expert. This has significantly impacted the mission's efficiency and effectiveness. The local language expert can enhance the effectiveness of the mission. Contingents, if provided with local language experts, will be more effective on the ground.

Close coordination and cooperation between military personnel, civilian units, and other mission participants are frequently necessary for peacekeeping operations. It might be necessary for peacekeepers to become knowledgeable about civil-military coordination principles and incorporate them into their operational planning and execution. It will create a harmonious environment, and the local community will develop a positive perception of UNMISS's presence, recognising that it is for their benefit. UNMISS is for their safety, security and well-being. If this branch functions well, then military operations will be automatically reduced to safety and security within the AOR. Traditional CIMIC plans and activities need to be modified or changed in new ways and means based on the actual requirements of the local community. For this, contingents should propose a CIMIC plan tailored to the specific needs and requirements of the local community.

4.0   WAY FORWARD

4.1   Complying with the doctrine

The introduction of the UNMISS mission capstone doctrine is of prime importance to synchronise contingents. It would be better if the mission headquarters ensured the contingents were complying with the doctrine. This will minimise doctrinal differences between contingents and bring effectiveness to ground performance. It will further synchronise the joint planning and execution with UNMISS. In a multidimensional peacekeeping environment, mission-specific training and exercises involving various contingents are necessary to enhance their interoperability and collaboration. Organisation of joint drills, training and regular engagement with other contingents is also necessary. Regular coordinating meetings help synchronise the troops from various contingents.

4.2   Equipped with new and modern equipment

The contingents should be equipped with the latest modern equipment and technology that can provide real-time information. Most of the outdated and non-functional major equipment and ammunition should be phased out and replaced with new, more modern versions. Contingents should have two-thirds of the contingent-owned equipment spare parts available. Intelligence-driven operations utilising modern equipment should be implemented. Ground-level information collection should be given priority by allocating the necessary funds. The contingents should be encouraged to bring modern equipment that supports intelligence collection and analysis. The provision of reimbursement for such equipment should be planned to enhance mission capabilities.

4.3   Administration and logistics

The contingents' patrols are stopped at local checkpoints when they are planned for the incident site. Joint meetings with the Joint Verification and Monitoring Mechanism (JVMM) and frequent high-level coordination are necessary to prevent access denial. It will not hinder the UNMISS mission, and its aim will be achieved by giving confidence to the local community. The road maintenance is to be continued based on local demand. More air assets needed to be added to UNMISS to increase its footprint at the local level. The relay station concept should be implemented to prevent communication gaps during patrols, and local ownership should be increased among contingent commanders to ensure a prompt response during emergencies. Three levels of bases—permanent, operational-level headquarters at the UN base and tactical operating bases in the vicinity need to be established to support the safety and security of the local community. Good infrastructure facilities will enhance performance, so they need to be given priority.

4.4   Selection of a Competent Commander

A capable commander must be selected for UN missions to optimise the performance and well-being of peacekeepers in dynamic conflict contexts. A combined strategy of personnel and commander selection should be implemented, especially for sensitive and high-risk missions. The requirements highlighted, such as force headquarters, include timely guidance to ensure contingents comply with the doctrine, intelligence-driven operations, and local ownership. Troops contributing countries, by providing modern equipment, training and a competent commander. Contingents' requirements, such as mission-specific training, area of operations orientation, situational awareness, language expertise for local level engagement, the Civil-Military Cooperation (CIMIC) program and operational aspects by aligning their operational practices with the specific requirements of the mission, need to be well considered and addressed by respective departments and countries. If the above-mentioned recommendations are implemented, improved performance by contingents is expected in the upcoming days in South Sudan.

4.0   CONCLUSION

UNMISS has a unique mission of providing security to IDPs by having its own PoC sites. UNMISS contingents are deployed on the ground to support the mission mandate. The need to respond to complex events and implement organisational reforms is what makes it necessary to strengthen the UN's ability to conduct peace operations. UN mission deployment is a very complex and demanding process. UN peacekeeping operations continue to be a crucial norm, with set response times and objectives that support numerous

related reforms. UNMISS comprises military, police, and civilian personnel. The military contingents are considered quick-response forces, responsible for protecting civilians and providing a sense of security to the local population. Prior preparation and extensive planning are essential, particularly in light of contemporary situations and experience. The demand for immediate UN help was unprecedented, exposing the shortcomings of the current structures and posing challenges to both the organisation and its member nations. The types of emerging threats and challenges that impact the operational environment are identified. The prompt availability of highly skilled and equipped workers, as well as reliable transportation with secure supply chains, is typically required. The contingents complying with the capstone doctrine can bring effectiveness to the ground. In conclusion, addressing the identified gaps and implementing the recommended requirements, such as a competitive commander, the availability of highly trained UN troops and well-equipped personnel supported by good infrastructure facilities, will enhance the contingent's performance. The UNMISS mission will have a greater impact on the local population if the threats and challenges mentioned above are addressed promptly by fulfilling the contingent's requirements by the respective departments and authorities.

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