



Under-Secretary-General Hervé Ladsous

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Near Verbatim Transcript

Martin Nesirky: Good afternoon, welcome to the briefing, I am joined by Under-Secretary-General Hervé Ladsous who is of course the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations. He is here for his, if you like, end of year press conference. I know he will have some introductory remarks and we will have time for questions, probably for about half an hour. So without further ado, please Mr Ladsous.

Hervé Ladsous: Thank you Martin and good morning to all of you. Yes indeed, I thought it was good, it was timely to give you a few impressions about the way the year has gone. I'll go straight into one of our perennial subjects, which has been marked by very significant progress. That is the situation of the DRC, where I was last week for several days.

I think there have been major developments with the military victory of the Congolese army supported by MONUSCO against M23. And you would have seen that the political agreement has now materialized; the process known as the Kampala talks is all done now. I think one has to express gratitude to all those facilitators who helped make it happen.

So we have made very significant military gains and now we have several priorities.

First, is to deal with those other armed groups. M23 was a very important one, very structured, very powerful, but now we are going after other spoilers. For instance as a matter of priority the FDLR, or ADF Nalu a little later. We take this as we go. But certainly, the means are there, the Intervention Brigade is now fully operational within MONUSCO. And you may have seen that I launched, last week in Goma, the first flight of the



first UAV, unarmed UAVs for surveillance purposes only. I think they are going to be also a very important tool.

The second priority is to deal with the new situations that are emerging as fighters withdraw or draw down their arms. We've had in the recent period, just in North Kivu, 2.300 ex-combatants who have ceased to fight and we have to go through the DDR [disarmament, demobilisation, reintegration] process in support of the Congolese government.

The third very important priority is not to let a vacuum establish itself. That is to say that the State of the DRC has to show itself, to be present, active with the police, with the administration, with the army if need be, in all these places that are now liberated where the civilians are now under our protection. This is what we call the concept of "the islands of stability" that we hope to expand gradually in order to achieve our goal of pacification of the eastern provinces.

A word about Mali, where there has been, if you compare the situation to exactly one year ago, significant progress. As you know we will be seeing the second round of the legislative elections the day after tomorrow. After presidential elections, which I think everybody agrees, were very free and transparent. But of course, now with the completion of the return of fully legitimate authorities in the country, we need now to go unreservedly, and I say we, it is the Government of Mali that needs to accelerate efforts to organise an inclusive dialogue with all the armed groups in the north, and all the communities in order to address what have been the root causes of the conflict over many years.

We are, of course, very vigilant on security. There have been several attacks over the last months against the Malian army, against us, against the French of *Serval*. It is true that the threat from the jihadists remains. And we have therefore to be watchful of this while, of course, not allowing civilians to be threatened or injured or killed by these groups. Anyway, this is all I think, partnership, a strong partnership, between the Government of Mali, the African Union, ECOWAS and the United Nations. And we are pushing with all speed possible to deploy, to complete deployment of the troops and police of MINUSMA.



A word about the Sudans, where in fact we've had in the Republic of Sudan a difficult year with a new increase in attacks by armed groups with a result there have been about 400,000 more IDPs [Internally displaced people] in Darfur. We have been attacked, we have had 14 peacekeepers killed during the year, which is totally unacceptable and we consistently call for accountability. At the same time, of course, we continue working on the Doha process, in order to get more signatories involved because, as you know, there is in that country no other game in town except the Doha process so we have to continue.

We faced problems during the year with the need to protect civilians in South Sudan, especially in the eastern province of Jonglei. It is a challenge because the lack of infrastructure, insufficient mobility are of course real constraints for us but we are working actively on it and, I can tell you that, we are currently starting a redeployment of the military part of UNMISS so as to have better coverage of these provinces where most problems occur.

And finally, of course, we are keeping on working in Abyei. But we have to say that Abyei, the issue of Abyei has made no progress, whether with the establishment of the administration and all that follows. But we keep expecting that Sudan and South Sudan will agree so we can be in a better position to do our work there.

I should mention two final issues geographically speaking. Syria. We have UNDOF, twelve hundred people, twelve hundred and fifty people, deployed on the Golan Heights under very difficult circumstances. There is hardly a day without an attack or something being made on our people as they continue doing their work. Of course, this is unacceptable. We know that the international community cannot afford to have the Golan Heights becoming again an issue in a part of the world which has, God knows, much more worries than it should. So we are continuing to do the job but it is not easy.

On Central Africa. I would, of course, have to mention that. You know the context. We have political, special political mission, BINUCA. We have now, as decided by the Security Council in Resolution 2127, the re-hatting



of Central African States' troops to the African Union that will happen on 19 December. We are working actively on supporting this MISCA, and at the same time the Resolution has requested the Secretary-General to report within 90 days on possible other solutions including the transformation of MISCA into a UN peacekeeping operation. That will be for the Security Council to consider in due time. But we are working on this option.

So all in all a very active year. We continue, I continue to place high value on the need to continue improving on the quality of UN peacekeeping, in many respects: more work about training; more work about monitoring the quality. You may know that the General Assembly has created the Director General for, the director for strategic peacekeeping partnership, which was originally the concept of the Inspector General. Now it is a little bit different but it is aimed at addressing those issues that may affect the quality of our operations.

We continue to introduce new technology. I mentioned the UAVs the Kivus.

And of course at the time when the fiscal crisis throughout the world does impact on the resources that we have we are trying to continue doing more with less. That is not easy but I would give you one figure which I think shows that these efforts are really pay. The cost per head of peacekeeping uniformed personnel, both soldiers and policemen, has actually decreased by 16 per cent, one sixth, in five years, simply because we are more effective in our management. We are looking at all the details that need to be looked at. So I think this all pays and I think the Member States are aware of this.

At the same time we are right-sizing, that is in effect diminishing, the size of some of our operations that have gone already through a large part of their life cycle. We are downsizing in fact in Haiti and Cote d'Ivoire, in Liberia, in Darfur also to some extent. This is an effort that will continue because that is what Member States expect from us.

So this in a nutshell is where we are.



Let me just express our sorrow, of course, at the fact that we have had over this past year 90 of our colleagues who died, 29 of them through deliberate attacks against them. This is really a shame and we are terribly sorry for the loved ones. This is also the reality. So more than ever safety and security of our personnel remain a major concern and something on which we keep working at all times and actively upon.

Thank you for your attention.

Martin Nesirky: Thank you very much indeed Under-Secretary-General Ladsous, please questions.

Question: Thank you, it's Pamela Falk from CBS news. Under-Secretary-General Ladsous, welcome on behalf of the UN Correspondence Association. Thank you for the briefing. My question is about the drones or the UAVs, surveillance drones, in DRC. When you were there the reports were that there were one or maybe two launched, and maybe maximum of five. How effective have they been and what are you looking for in terms of battlefield successes or not? What are you looking for and have they been successful?

Hervé Ladsous: In fact we have started initially with two UAVs and the number will be brought to five by the first of April. But it is not only about the machines. It is also a whole chain, where we get live pictures from the field. This is what I was the witness to last week. We get very accurate and very precise pictures of what is happening. What we are expecting is twofold. First, much better information from military units as to what is happening on the ground. Whether an armed group is about to attack, you know, you get much better sense and you get those pictures. Also infrared signals, radar signals. So I think this will be improve very much on the information available. It will also thereby contribute somewhat to a better safety for our troops. And, last but not least, it will also give us much more information, real-time, on possible movements of people of civilians. If one of those armed groups, is about to commit an attack, immediately in that part of the world it translates in thousands or tens of thousands of people, civilians going somewhere else, trying to escape. Since the heart of our mandate in the DRC remains the protection



of civilians, I think, all together it will allow us to do an even better job. And, of course, we are looking at the possibility of drawing lessons eventually, so that we can see whether in due course we might use this sort of equipment in other theatres.

Question: Great, thanks a lot, Matthew Lee Inner City Press on behalf of the Free UN Coalition for Access. Thanks for doing the briefing. I want to ask you two questions about Mali and I hope you will answer them.

One had to do with the Kidal, the incident. It was reported at least, and you can say if it's wrong, that the peacekeepers ordered the crowd to disperse at the airport and somehow the crowd ended up getting fired on and I believe one woman was killed, but at least two were critically injured at the time. And I wanted to know whether MINUSTAH, excuse me, MINUSMA, is doing some kind of investigation, and what the kind of rules of engagement are in terms of protestors? The other one has to do with the Letter of Assist field services I can believe also in Kidal, just sort of what the process was? It was given to France I've tried to ask how much money is involved in this procurement and why it's not more public than it is.

Hervé Ladsous: I make it a policy not to respond to you, Mister. But I will respond on the Kidal because indeed it was a very infelicitous occurrence where our UN Police and SERVAL the French troops, ordered the crowd to disperse. We are further investigating to the matter. It appears that the Malian police did shoot and that, yes, three civilians were injured one of whom died over the weekend. We have repatriated the body from Bamako, where we had transported the wounded, back to Kidal for burial. So, as I said, we are looking further into the matter. But of course we have to say that if indeed it is established beyond any doubt that the Malian police did shoot, that is not the way to behave, this absolutely unacceptable.

Question: Thank you Mr Under-Secretary-General. My question is on Syria. In January, the sides will come together and hopefully talk about the transitional period in Syria. While that happens, do you foresee that your Department will be involved to keep at least some kind of peace in



Syria? Generally speaking, how is your Department going to be involved after the January process? How do you prepare for it?

Hervé Ladsous: Well, I explained several times that of course, the first thing is to have Geneva II or Monteuix now on the road. You have seen the invitations sent by the Secretary-General for the 22nd of January. And of course, it is the hope of all of us that this does materialize in a political result or a political process or something that can contribute to be putting an end to an immense drama that has unfolded in front of us for more than two years in Syria. And yes, if certain conditions could be met, we might if that is the request of the Security Council, we might contribute towards stabilization of the situation in Syria. We have been working on various scenarios and planning ahead. But clearly this is still paperwork, because nobody really knows what is going to unfold politically over the next weeks or months. The hope is there, so we have been getting ready to do our bit. But that will depend very much on the political process and its outcome.

Martin Nesirky: Please, and then Lou.

Question: Thank you very much. My name is Ahmed [inaudible]. I am a correspondent for various Arabic language news media. Under-Secretary-General, with regard to the DRC and the Sudans. On the DRC, you mentioned that a lot of the armed groups have ceased their operations; including there are 1,500 soldiers who ceased to fight. May I ask, what is the procedure followed with these soldiers who ceased to fight? Is there any sort of rehabilitation for them or incentivizing for them not to go back into mercenary activities or engage in armed conflict?

And the other part of my question is on the Sudans. You mentioned that there were 14 peacekeepers killed during the year. That is something very sad and our condolences for the families and the loved ones. But what is beyond the Doha process? Obviously the Doha process is not fulfilling what it was established for? How long do the UN peacekeepers have to wait to see the colleagues fall while the politicians have reached those stage of impotence in dealing with such matters? Thank you very much.



Hervé Ladsous: On the DRC. Sir, I would perhaps, not use the word soldiers, combatants yes, but definitely not soldiers. I think if we are seeing those relatively large numbers of people stopping to fight it is because of the deterrent effect of the Brigade, the Intervention Brigade and now the drones. People think that maybe it is not worth their while to continue combating. Yet, of course, it is true that we cannot leave them in a vacuum because if they see nothing coming their way, they may very well return to their terrible habits. This is why it is terribly important to have a real DDR process, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration. Not reintegration into the army of the Congo. That is very clear from the point of view of the Government but reintegration into society, giving them back, or a sense of belonging to a national community. So civic education and eventually giving them some sort of training which will allow them to take a job and possibly return to their place of origin. We are waiting, that was my message during my meetings last week with the President, with the Prime Minister. We are all waiting for their plan because it has to be their plan. And we are ready to move in with our teams and our experts into implementing the actual measures but first we need a political decision. That is very urgent.

Regarding the Sudans, the Doha process is what it is. There is no other game in town. We know that one of the limitations is the fact that several groups are not signatories to this agreement. So it is, in effect, a large part of the work of our Joint Special Representative Mohamed Chambas to try and get more movements to become signatories. He has had consultations, in particular last summer in Kampala. He is having regular meetings to try to bring them in so that circle can enlarge and the implementation can then proceed to better conditions. But it is, I do agree, a difficult and time-consuming exercise.

Question: Thanks. On the subject of the DRC again, you mentioned 2.300 ex-combatants, who had given up their weapons. Where, when did this happen? Exactly over what time frame? And what groups were they from? Were they mainly M23? And then, a second issue, could you maybe tell us more about the weapons that were left behind by the M23, where



they came from? Any details on the fight against the FDLR or the ADF would be interesting?

Hervé Ladsous: Those 2,300 have come forward over the last two or two-and-a-half months and they are from many groups. They come from M23. They come from Mai-Mai. I went to a place last Wednesday called Pinga, which was evacuated. And this is again an indication of the way the deterrents seem to work because they were the Mai-Mai Cheka, very bad people. Cheka himself has disappeared somewhere but his people have in effect surrendered. It is a good spread.

Now regarding the weapons, I flew over the hills of Chanzu which was the last battle effectively between the FARDC, helped by MONUSCO, and the M23. It is amazing the quantity of weapons that were seized there including heavy calibre, hundreds of tons of all sorts of stuff including a year's worth of ammunitions supplies. As you know, there is a Committee of Experts. They are working. I talked to them, and they are not ready yet to give out their findings, their conclusions. But that will come. I am sure it will make interesting reading.

Question: Thank you Mr Ladsous. On these figures you provided on the 90 UN personnel dead. Can you please give us a break down of how many of them were peacekeepers and how many of them were civilian personnel? And also in which countries the most were killed?

Hervé Ladsous: I will not tell you about the countries because that is between the country concerned and us, but most of them were indeed military personnel. You know we just had one died yesterday of accident in that particular case, but it was a soldier. So no I cannot give you more details.

Question: Thank you Mr Ladsous. My question is, if we can go back to the drones. Who operates them? I understand they require special know-how. Do the same peacekeepers operate them? Or do you get them with specialised personnel? And if yes, can you tell us where these personnel come from? Thank you.



Hervé Ladsous: This was a subject of a contract passed with an Italian company. There was a competitive process and they were found to offer the best service. Because you see it is not just, as I said, flying machines. It is also a chain of communicating pictures and making the best use of them. So it does involve a small team of personnel who are supplied by the contractor and that's how it works.

Question: Joseph Klein Canada Free Press. My question involves the Central African Republic and to get a better idea of who the fighters are. I know Séléka are involved. We understand it has become more sectarian in nature. From the information you received have you detected any presence of jihadists from other countries that are now participating in this fight? And secondly, it has been alleged that that more actions are being taken, to the extent that any enforcement actions are taken at all, against some of the Christians combatants, who see themselves as trying to defend themselves against the initial attacks by the Séléka groups. Could you comment on that?

Hervé Ladsous: Well in very general terms, you know, because we do know that to have a rough idea, you have the Séléka who are predominately Muslim fighters, and you have in front of them the Anti-Balaka who appear to be Christians. And it is true that the conflict is getting more and more confessional. Everything has to be done to avoid that because that would only compound a crisis which is already major. It means, by the way, that when it comes to national reconciliation that will have to include a religious chapter because otherwise it will not be sustainable. But certainly it is a crisis of massive and tragic proportions.

Question: Just following up though has there been any detection of jihadists starting to come in? Starting to come in from other countries.?

Hervé Ladsous: I am not in a position to confirm beyond saying, as you have, I have seen, I have read I have heard rumours about that. And let's face it, Central African Republic is in a part of the world where there are known to be a number of jihadist groups. It is not far away from Nigeria for instance. It is not far away from the Sahel. But I cannot tell you more.



Question: Thank you. Stefan for Radio Radicale in Rome and La Voce New York, here in New York. Mr Ladsous, the charter says the whole, every country has to contribute for the missions, the peace missions around the world. And not only financially also with the blue helmets. Now in these here 2013 there was some, did you expect, did the countries for you, especially the major countries, did they contribute fairly like you expected? Or are there some some countries not doing what you should you are expecting?

Hervé Ladsous: I would agree with you sir, that it is I think not a satisfactory nor indeed a sustainable situation, such as the one we face. Where 95 per cent of our uniforms come from countries of the Global South. And when it gets to African missions, missions on the African continent, then the percentage is 99 versus one per cent. So, no, that cannot go on indefinitely.

So it has been part of my work over the last year-and-a-half to talk systematically to in particular all those countries of the Global North that have been very much engaged in Afghanistan. Telling them that now that 2014 and the exit from Afghanistan is just round the corner they would be very welcome to come back to UN peacekeeping. Indeed just to give you an example, the decision by the Dutch government, confirmed yesterday by parliament, to send 300 troops and four military helicopters to Mali is, I think, an indication that this message is getting through and that these countries are indeed taking measures to help us rebalance somewhat the exercise. I give you the example of the Dutch but there are quite a few others, significant others. As we see maybe especially next year and towards 2015 I think we will see much more of that.

Martin Nesirky: Okay. Carla this is the last question. Please use the microphone. Also just to add should there be further questions for the Under-Secretary-General after this I would request that you wait for Mr Ladsous to exit the briefing room and you can follow him out and ask the questions there.

Hervé Ladsous: [Laughs] I would not advocate that, I have another appointment.



Question: Mr Ladsous, there have been reports of a vast increase of jihadist groups in Syria, many of whom have come from other countries. To what extent, this may be hypothetical and it is a more explicit question than Joe asked, but it is in same category, to what extent do you think this is maybe contributing to the destabilisation of many formerly stable countries in Africa with jihadist movements?

Hervé Ladsous: About the situation in Syria, I have read I expect the same articles and papers as you. I have no further information, but it is true that the crisis in Mali does illustrate the fact there are more jihadist movements, in that particular case it is Al Qaeda, they call them Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb. That is a fact. But I cannot give you anything further on this.

Martin Nesirky: Thank you very much again Mr Ladsous. Until the next time, thanks very much, thanks, all the best.

Hervé Ladsous: Thanks very much, thanks.