



## Security Council

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### Letter dated 13 December 2021 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council

In accordance with the statement by the President of the Security Council ([S/PRST/2021/11](#)), I have the honour to transmit to you the report of the independent strategic review, led by Major General (retired) Hugh Van Roosen, on the responses of United Nations peacekeeping operations to improvised explosive devices (see annex). The report describes the nature, scope, and impact of the growing threat of explosive ordnance, including improvised explosive devices, on the delivery of peacekeeping mandates and on the safety and security of peacekeeping forces and affected communities. It also recommends a certain number of measures to enable stakeholders to reduce and mitigate this threat.

I should be grateful if you would bring the present letter and the report to the attention of the members of the Security Council.

*(Signed)* António Guterres



## Annex\*



Center photo - MINUSMA maintenance facility, Kidal, Mali, 6 October 2021, ISR Team; bottom left and bottom centre photos from Bundeswehr Joint Forces Operations Command, C-IED Center (slide deck on Current IED Threat and TTPs in Mali, 2019); right photo of a device found in Beni, Democratic Republic of the Congo on 30 October 2021; MONUSCO FIB.

## The United Nations Response to Explosive Ordnance Threats: *A more coherent approach is needed*

### ABSTRACT

Since 2014, a steady increase in the number and complexity of explosive ordnance threats has been reported against United Nations personnel, national defense and security forces, civilian populations, and other actors within United Nations mission areas. On 24 May 2021, the United Nations Security Council requested an independent strategic review to address the nature of this increasing threat and suggest actions that can be taken by the Security Council, Secretariat, Missions, and Troop/Police Contributing Countries, amongst others, to reduce and mitigate this threat. The following independent report presents observations and evidence-based recommendations which emphasize that effective responses need to be integrated, coherent and proactive, as well as responsive.

**November 23, 2021**

\* The present document is being issued without formal editing.

## Table of Contents

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<b>Acknowledgements</b>	Page iii
<b>Executive Summary</b>	Page iv
<b>Chapter 1: Introduction and Context</b>	Page 1
<b>Chapter 2: The Impact of the Explosive Ordnance Threat on Mandate Delivery</b>	Page 11
<b>Chapter 3: UN Peacekeeping Operations Responses to the Explosive Ordnance Threat</b>	Page 18
<b>Chapter 4: National and Regional Responses to the Explosive Ordnance Threat</b>	Page 32
<b>Annex A: Table of Recommendations</b>	Page A1
<b>Annex B: Post-visit Reports Provided by the ISR Team to Mission Leadership</b>	Page B1
<b>Annex C: Methodology (Terms of Reference and Lines of Inquiry)</b>	Page C1

## Acknowledgements

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Sincere thanks to the governments and numerous United Nations and external stakeholders who contributed and supported the drafting of this report. We recognize and appreciate the significant risks that so many face each day in the pursuit of peace and pay tribute to those whose lives and service will not be forgotten.

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### **About the author:**

*Major General (Retired) Hugh C. Van Roosen served as the Deputy Military Advisor for the United Nations Headquarters in New York from 2017-2021, and as Force Chief of Staff for UNMIL in Liberia. He has more than 41 years of international and national public security and military experience.*

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## Executive Summary

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In response to reports of increasing incidents of the use of Explosive Ordnance (EO) in United Nations (UN) Mission areas, on 24 May 2021 the UN Security Council in Presidential Statement [S/PRST/2021/11](#) requested that the Secretary-General provide to the Security Council no later than 15 December 2021 “an independent strategic review of United Nations peacekeeping operations’ responses to improvised explosive devices, **assessing capabilities and measures necessary to better mitigate this threat.**”

The scope of this report was expanded from Peacekeeping Operations (PKOs) to include Special Political Missions (SPMs), the Protection of Civilians (PoC) from EO, the ability and willingness of national authorities to strengthen their Counter-EO (C-EO) capacity (including within the justice system), and regional response recommendations. The independent strategic review (ISR) Team conducted extensive consultations with numerous stakeholders. See Annex C for a full description of methodology undertaken.

The ISR Team was tasked to make “feasible” recommendations to address the EO threat in UN Missions. In the words of Mr. Alexandre Zouev, Assistant Secretary-General for Rule of Law and Security Institutions, Department of Peace Operations (DPO): “New and additional risks require new resources.” It will be up to Member States to ensure that feasible recommendations are sufficiently resourced to mitigate the increasing threat of EO in UN Missions mandated by the Security Council.

Observations and recommendations were made both broadly across all UN Missions and specifically for the three Missions visited: the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA); United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA); and the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO). It is noted that significant work to mitigate the effects of EO, both proactively and reactively, has been accomplished by the UN, by Troop and Police Contributing Countries (T/PCCs), and by the national authorities within UN Mission areas. Continued mitigation needs to be guided by a **UN-wide EO mitigation strategy and coordination framework** to address the increasing EO threat.

Additionally, the following **overarching principal recommendations** are made to support UN missions facing EO threats. For a complete list of recommendations, see Annex A.

- Establish a **regional UN effort to address the drivers of instability leading to the use of EO**. Develop a regional response to mitigate the EO threat that could incorporate approaches to disrupt supply chains and networks, including the trafficking of precursor materiel, and support capacity development through training programs. Gender and PoC considerations are key to a comprehensive approach to this regional effort.
- Expand, reinforce, and improve **integrated UN EO planning and operations** (uniformed and civilian) in the UN Headquarters (UNHQ) and in all missions (PKOs and SPMs) to include preemptive Peacekeeping-Intelligence (PKI) and Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR) capability (such as the capability used by MONUSCO), analysis, coordination, information-sharing, mitigation measures to best pre-empt, respond and prevent EO threats and counter disinformation. This will require generation of new posts, or reallocation of expertise.

- Continue to engage politically to **strengthen the national criminal justice system regarding EO** and to advocate for political willingness to hold EO perpetrators accountable in accordance with Security Council Resolution 2589 (2021) on accountability.
- Consider generating a **regional UN Level 2 forensics lab** to support all UN missions.
- **Review the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) role and resources** in missions with an emerging EO threat, to better integrate and resource UNMAS in a comprehensive response and strengthen its capacity, as needed. Review the UNMAS role for missions in transition, particularly where continued support to national institutions is envisioned.
- Continue to **strengthen medical support** to Missions to ensure the best-possible response to EO injuries, including verified casualty evacuation (CASEVAC) capability, leadership-ensured individual first aid capacity, and consideration of enhanced mobile or virtual capacity.
- Continue establishment and strengthening of **uniformed performance evaluation** to include C-EO<sup>1</sup> planning and operations in headquarters and units.
- Include robust EO/C-EO evaluation in the **Pre-Deployment Training (PDT)** of uniformed personnel (including Military Staff Officers and Individual Police Officer, as needed), and during **Pre-Deployment Visits (PDV)** for units deploying to Missions with an EO threat. The UNHQ should consider increasing the use of alternative models for delivering EO training and equipment during PDT such as **mobile training teams, bilateral agreements between TCCs and other member states**. Continue review of the UN Manuals (such as the UN Infantry Battalion Manual – “UNIBAM” and the UN Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) Manual) to reflect changes in the tactics of EO/C-EO.

#### UN Mission-specific principal observations and recommendations

- **MINUSMA**
  - **Principal Observations:** The Mission has a mature and very high EO threat, with the potential for further EO threat increase. Threat mitigation has improved for peacekeepers, but local populations remain extremely vulnerable to serious injury or death because of EO attacks. According to UNMAS, EO-based attacks have seen a steady rise from 77 in 2014 to 170 in 2020 (and 137 in the first 8 months alone of 2021). MINUSMA personnel, *Force Armées Maliennes (FAMA)* or *Police Nationale du Mali (PNM)*, International Forces, and local populations are targeted. The number of EO-related fatalities amongst peacekeepers has declined from a peak of 23 in 2016, principally because of improved mitigation measures.<sup>2</sup> While more remains to be accomplished, the Mission has worked together with the Government of Mali to increase the capability of the justice system to hold perpetrators accountable. As of 1 October 2021, 176 persons were tried for terrorism-related offences resulting in the conviction of 143 individuals and the acquittal of 33 since 2017, some of whom were convicted for the use of EO.<sup>3</sup> For greater EO security, the UNHQ and T/PCCs have worked together to enhance mission capability, including:

<sup>1</sup>United Nations peacekeeping doctrine describes the strategy for uniformed personnel to C-EO as a holistic application of three pillars: prepare the force, degrade the network, and defeat the device - UN Peacekeeping Mission Military Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) unit manual, second edition 2021

<sup>2</sup> S/2020/1281.

<sup>3</sup> Office of Rule of Law and Security Institutions, DPO, on request from the ISR Team, dated 23 November 2021.

- A 71% increase from 2015 to 2020 in the deployment of Armoured Personnel Carriers (APCs) built to Mine Protective Vehicle (MPV) standard.<sup>4</sup> Many of these are equipped with Electronic Countermeasure (ECM) devices, sometimes referred to as 'Jammers'.
- Training, equipping, and deploying of Search and Detect (S&D) Teams within infantry and Formed Police Units (FPUs) and Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) Teams, separate or within engineer units.
- Deployment of four Combat Convoy Companies with integrated S&D and EOD capacity.
- Increased PDT specific to the EO threat.
- Mentoring, training, and equipping of some units by UNMAS.
- Improvement of camp security and inclusion of camera and radar systems.
- Inclusion of Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) and CASEVAC/MEDEVAC/surgical capabilities.

#### ○ **Principal Recommendations**

MINUSMA should maintain current levels of mitigation efforts and focus on integrating the full range of Mission civilian and uniformed capabilities to address the EO threat in the widest possible manner, thereby broadening the response beyond military force protection. The Mission should further strengthen early warning and quick responses to be more proactive, including regarding threats to the local population. Specific actions include:

- Create a **National/Mission EO Working Group**.
- Encourage the Government of Mali to initiate **dialogue with non-signatory armed groups (AG's)** to address grievances and recognize motivations for using EO.
- Enhance or create methods to **communicate with the local population** who are victims of the EO threat. Strengthen Community Liaison Assistants (CLA) and PoC.
- Work with UNHQ to increase **selected T/PCC MPV operational readiness**.
- Use **EO experts** assigned to the Mission who can analyze trends to **support Boards of Inquiry (BOI)** and consider additional BOI staffing.
- Continue to **strengthen the Mission's EO forensics exploitation capacity**.
- Continue to **reduce logistics supply demands** for remote bases, including by identifying alternative logistics supply routes.
- Further research **why** some military units suffer **fewer EO casualties** or incidents.
- Carefully **monitor increased activity of Selected Bilateral Partners (SBP)** for destabilizing actions.

#### ● **MINUSCA**

- **Principal Observations:** The MINUSCA EO threat is in transition and the impact on mandate delivery in the West is considerable. The lack of MINUSCA presence in the West is a vicious circle where the perceived inability of peacekeepers to deploy leads to less security, which in turn means challenges in delivery/implementation of UN mandated activity. The Mission has the capacity to address this now. The *Force Armées Centrafricaine (FACA)*, operating with support of an SBP, are reported by the MINUSCA leadership to be regularly conducting serious breaches of the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA), although incidents were down to 1 per week at the time of the ISR team's field visit. These violations exacerbate the impact on the local population by impeding access and freedom of movement and reducing supply deliveries to communities. World Food Program (WFP) colleagues reported to the ISR Team that the degree of food instability in the area and related gender impact with food insecurity predominantly effecting

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<sup>4</sup> Increased from 265 MPVs in 2015 to 453 in 2021. Total of 718 APCs are deployed as of October 2021 out of which 63% of all APCs are MPVs - Reference to Chief Contingent Owned Equipment, MINUSMA, 22 November 2021.

women, has increased. Some additional required EO equipment, and personnel capabilities are already being generated. A limited number of MPVs already deployed in Sector West will provide a more protection to peacekeepers, although terrain conditions will limit their operational range. One MINUSCA military unit successfully uses methodology that involves a combination of patrols and effective community liaison in the area that provides a good example of what can be achieved, even without MPVs. Tactics of using disinformation and EO threats have also been used to mobilize sentiment from amongst the local population against MINUSCA which has resulted in increased vulnerability and obstructed responses by the Mission to EO threats, therefore impacting mandate delivery. For increased EO security, the UNHQ and T/PCCs are working together to enhance Mission capability, including to:

- Enhance EO response capability with a TCC EOD Company.
- Continue to strengthen UN medical capacity in the West, even as efforts are ongoing to clarify a perceived government policy not to allow night flights since December 2020, which has severely limited the medical response capability of the Mission.

○ **Principal Recommendations**

- **Ensure EO threat mitigation governance and management is owned by Mission leadership** and reinforces a national process through a comprehensive strategy, outlining roles and responsibilities of all relevant Mission components, in addition to those of the Force and of UNMAS.
- **Strengthen analysis and security assessment capability** including to assess who is employing EO, what are sources of EO precursor materiel, and where are source locations.
- Engage politically at level of SRSG and through the Force with government authorities to **allow night flights**, especially for CASEVAC and practice/crew qualification. **Exercise CASEVAC drills** based on EO incident scenarios with numerous casualties. Consider additional trauma capability in the West and review the CASEVAC plan in accordance with the drill exercise findings.
- Engage politically at level of SRSG or higher to address **SOFA violations** and **SBP threats** (connected to the Mission EO threat response and delivery of PoC mandate).
- **Use existing S&D/EOD Team capability** to regain access in Sector West for Mission and Agencies/Funds/Programs (AFPs) mandate delivery.
- Consider **limited deployment of MPVs** to Sectors West and Centre, if and where mobility allows.
- **Increase UNMAS mentoring of S&D Teams and EOD Teams**, including in evidence collection.
- Deploy TCC EOD Teams to EO threat areas to **support countering EO, and not solely for Force Protection**.
- Consider **best means to procure and equip S&D Teams in the short-term** to meet emerging needs until T/PCCs can provide its own equipment and training. UNMAS or bilateral sources are options.
- **Increase PKI and exploitation capabilities** such as post-blast investigation (PBI) and establishment of a Level One exploitation laboratory would add value to both proactive and reactive Mission responses. Possibly an equivalent to the MONUSCO advanced ISR capability should be considered for gaining advance notice of threats.

- **MONUSCO**

- **Principal Observations:** The Mission is at the beginning of a potentially serious increase in EO threat with at least 37 EO incidents reported between 1 January 2021 and 30 September 2021<sup>5</sup>. The *Forces Armées de la République Démocratique du Congo* (FARDC) appear to be the main target of EO incidents, which are mostly attributed to the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF). However, reports of use by armed groups of radio controlled EO and dummy devices raise concerns over the potentially evolving nature of the threat. The Mission has developed a Support Plan against IEDs in Beni town where the threat persists and established in 2019 an IED Threat Mitigation Working Group which remains to be fully activated. Despite these developments, the impact on MONUSCO's ability to deliver on its PoC mandate remains minimal. EO incident data is predominantly unverified and from the FARDC. Most EO-related incidents were reported by the Mission in the Beni area, allegedly perpetrated by the ADF as a defensive means against the FARDC and to prevent the local population from accessing their fields, thereby enabling the AGs to appropriate crops.<sup>6</sup> One individual, reportedly of Middle Eastern origin, was arrested and accused of training the ADF in IED and UAV techniques. A possible concerning trend of turning towards maximizing civilian casualties was evident by three incidents over 26 and 27 June 2021 in Beni town, where EO were planted in a church, a bar, and a fuel station. Preparedness by the Mission is therefore recommended to effectively mitigate this threat in the future, should the situation deteriorate. This would involve ensuring having relevant planning and operational capacities to mitigate EO risks, and to gain greater understanding of the evolving situation. The UNHQ and T/PCCs have worked together to enhance Mission response capabilities including by:
  - Using ISR capability of the Mission to detect and defeat some EO threats.
  - Deploying Quick Reaction Force Units, which fully meet the Statement of Unit Requirements (SUR) for EOD self-sustainment, bring valuable capabilities for use in operations, including when partnering with FARDC.
- **Principal Recommendations**
  - Ensure **C-EO governance and management** is owned by Mission leadership with clear roles and responsibilities and expand it to ensure positive two-way information flow, including the Force Intervention Brigade (FIB) and Beni Hub.
  - Strengthen **UNMAS EO risk education** for FARDC, the *Police Nationale Congolaise* (PNC), and the local population.
  - **Reinforce the sensitization of the local population** to the EO threat also through regular community policing projects and programs.
  - Increase **UNMAS training/mentoring of S&D Teams**.
  - **Review the current Force Protection measures** and the security posture with Mission leadership, the Force, UNDSS, UNPOL and UNMAS (in support), amongst others, to ensure EO threat mitigation measures are in place. While there may be no current confirmed incidents of EO attacks against UN personnel or bases, planning a response that considers the possibility of the threat evolving in sophistication and tactics is recommended. Operationalize the Mission's Support plan against IED threat in Beni.

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<sup>5</sup> Compared to 7 incidents in 2020, 14 in 2019, 1 in 2018, 2 in 2017 and 19 in 2016 according to UNMAS report on the IED threat in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, 30 October 2020 (p.10) and UNMAS briefing to the ISR team on UN responses to IEDs (Goma, 26 October 2021)

<sup>6</sup> MONUSCO FHQ brief to ISR Team (Goma, 26 October 2021), confirmed by MONUSCO FIB HQ brief to ISR Team (Beni, 28 October 2021).

- **Exercise CASEVAC drills** designed around EO incident scenarios with mass casualties. Consider additional trauma capability and review the CASEVAC plan in accordance with the exercise findings.
- **Review the requested EOD Company** Statement of Unit Requirement (SUR) to ensure it provides enough capability (equipment, training, deployment).
- **Enhance UNMAS capability** to ensure better support to the Congolese Mine Action Center (CCLAM) in detecting and disposing of EO threats. Establish a special EOD training program to strengthen military justice investigation entities.
- Initiate a **dialogue with the government** to prioritize EO threat investigation, prosecution, and adjudication.
- **Strengthen PKI** and continue to develop use of the ISR assets.

The increasing EO threat is largely recognized by the Missions and UN HQ however, a more coherent approach is needed. This summary briefly touches on the only principal aspects of the report. The following chapters provide context, evidence, and data on how this can be accomplished.



**Major General (Retired) Hugh Van Roosen**  
23 November 2021

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# The United Nations Response to Explosive Ordnance Threats: *A more coherent approach is needed*

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

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#### Introduction

1.1 The 19 December 2017 Report by Lt. Gen (Ret) Cruz entitled “*Improving Security of United Nations Peacekeepers: We need to change the way we are doing business*” stated: “Operational behaviour on the ground should ... be based on a risk assessment, according to specific situation and the threat environment.” The Cruz report served as the basis for the United Nations Secretary General’s Action for Peacekeeping (A4P), of which most envisioned actions have been completed. While A4P did not specifically address EO threats, this is one of the most significant challenges to mandate delivery, notably for UN missions deployed to Mali, the Central African Republic, Somalia, Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Colombia. Other UN Missions are only mere incidents away from EO causing a significant impact on mandate delivery. The UN leadership at Headquarters and in the field must ensure that any EO threat is considered, assessed, prepared for, and **coherently managed**.

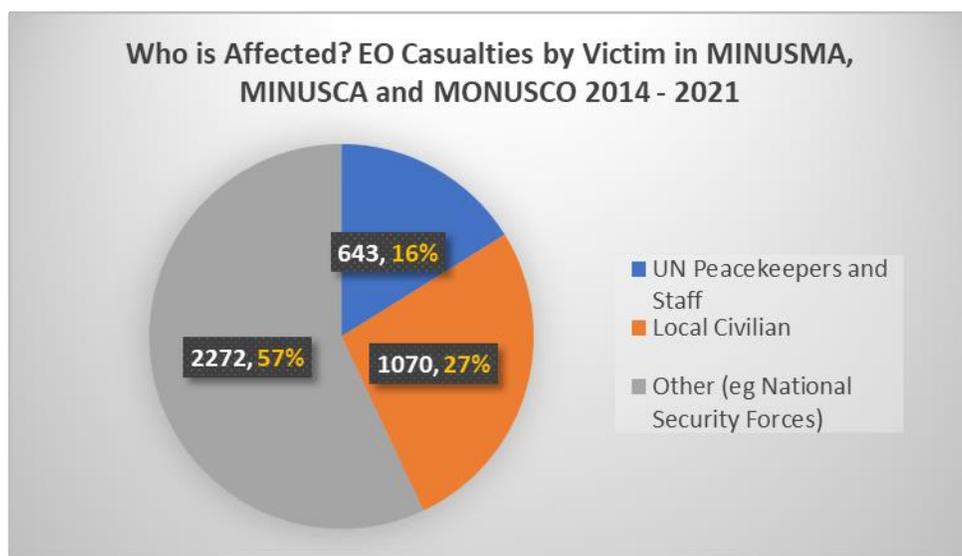
1.2 The aim of this Independent Strategic Review (ISR) is to: *recommend realistic, feasible measures to mitigate the EO threat on UN personnel and civilians and support to mandate delivery; identify roles stakeholders can play to improve the safety and security of UN personnel in EO threat environments; and propose measures that would be forward looking, promote proactive responses, and potentially be applicable to other mission contexts, even if only facing an undetermined or emerging threat*. This review is the first thematic United Nations ISR related to the safety and security of peacekeepers facing an EO threat. The ISR included a field study in Mali, the Central African Republic, and Democratic Republic of the Congo from late September to end October 2021 to directly observe three Missions with significant EO threats. Evidence-based and data-driven, the review has applied rigorous standards of accuracy, consultation, and assessment, including a ‘Red Team’ process facilitated by the Executive Office of the Secretary-General. Full details of the methodology, concept, scope, and lines of inquiry of this report can be found in Annex C.

1.3 The safety and security of peacekeepers is a central element of this study and is addressed by several observations and recommendations throughout the report. The review also notes the high importance placed on the safety and security of peacekeepers by the Security Council, most recently in Resolution 2589 (2021) calling on host nations to prosecute crimes against peacekeepers wherever possible, and the wide-ranging calls to action in Resolution 2518 (2020). The EO threat has a significant impact on the safety of peacekeepers, with **643 peacekeepers and UN staff injured or killed by EO devices since 2014**<sup>7</sup>. These casualties have occurred both through the deliberate targeting of peacekeepers, and as ‘collateral damage’ when armed actors have targeted the local population or National Defence and Security Forces (NDSF).<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Composite Sources, ISR Field Research, 2021

<sup>8</sup> Composite Sources, ISR Research, 2021

**Figure 1: Casualties by victim; MINUSMA, MINUSCA, MONUSCO 2014-21<sup>9</sup>**

1.4 The ISR Team notes the unique nature of the EO threat to peacekeepers, especially when they are the targets. When a Mission's military unit adopts an active posture, conducting patrols, outreach, and self-sustainment activities, it supports mandate delivery and is better able to mitigate EO threats. Greater activity, at least in the short-term, involves greater exposure to EO threats since more peacekeepers will be walking and driving past more potential EO emplacements. Even short-term exposure to EO threats, however, must be accepted, and can be mitigated with the right capabilities. Once units become more active, establish relationships with the local population, improve their understanding of the environment and begin to manage the terrain in which they operate, the risk from EO decreases. Patrolling, outreach, and other activities such as Civil-Military Cooperation (CIMIC), when carefully considering the motives and vulnerabilities of those providing information, can reduce the EO threat to peacekeepers.

1.5 It is also important to note that the EO threat against peacekeepers could be much more significant. Missions and others involved in anticipating or planning an effective EO response must consider how this EO threat can escalate. Understanding and preparing for a changing EO threat needs to consider not only the evolving sophistication of the device but also the evolving tactics by which EO are used or combined with other threats.

1.6 Peacekeeper safety and security relies on many key capabilities across Missions. Elaborated in more detail later in this report, these can comprise of: an effective information and PKI capability down to individual threat awareness; integrated planning capabilities across uniformed components, the Mission, and the wider UN community; military unit-level S&D Teams; installation, vehicle, and personal Force Protection; EOD capabilities; medical capabilities (including buddy first aid and CASEVAC); post-blast investigation (PBI) capabilities; and, forensics capabilities to address accountability.

1.7 Even with appropriate capabilities, evidence shows there can be significant differences in the outcomes of T/PCC interactions with EO threats. While further study is required, current available data from MINUSMA is strong enough to conclude that measures must be taken to improve the ratio

<sup>9</sup> Composite Sources, ISR Field Research, 2021

of EO detected and cleared to EO exploded in incidents (see Figure 2). Further research should also be conducted to assess the ratio of fatalities to injuries involving different military and police units across different Missions. For example, Figures 2 and 3 below highlight different aspects related to TCC survivability, A TCC has a particularly high rate of deaths per injury, the reason for which may be that the type of vehicle in use at the time was not suitable. Further study on this issue would allow informed decisions about risk and prioritisation of resourcing. UN standards regarding military and police vehicle use in an EO environment are not fully developed and some T/PCC tactics put uniformed personnel at significant risk where technology might be used to reduce that risk (see Figure 4).

Figure 2: Search and Detect Effectiveness for TCC Units

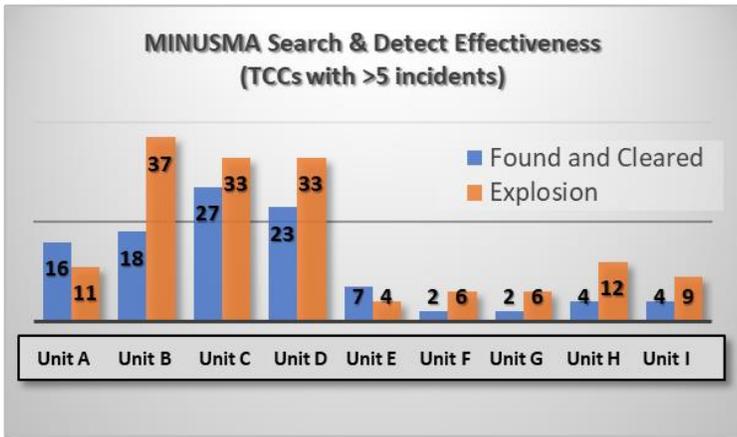


Figure 3: Ratio of Fatalities to Injuries by TCC Units

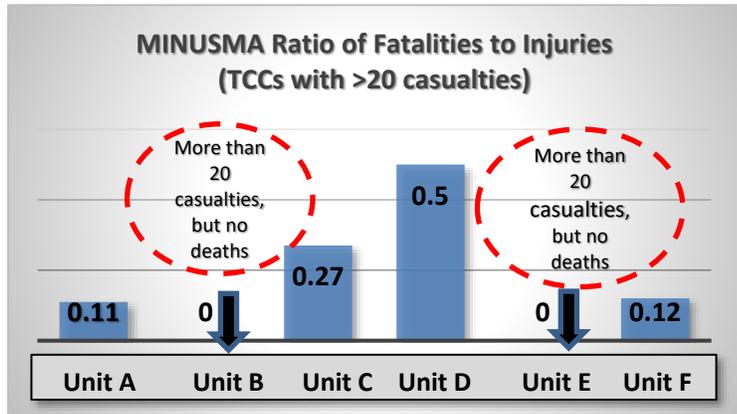


Figure 4: Survivability<sup>10</sup>



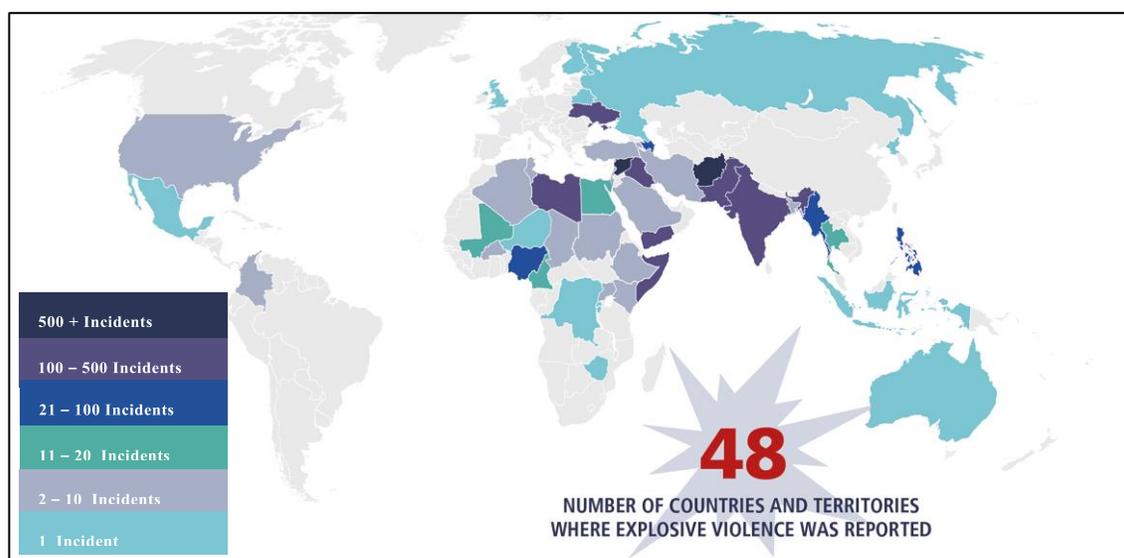
<sup>10</sup> Photograph by the ISR Team, Gao, Mali, 8 October 2021

## Context

### The Global EO Threat

1.8 The threat posed by EO is a world-wide issue, affecting at least 48 different countries and territories and all continents except Antarctica, resulting in over 18,000 casualties in 2020<sup>11</sup>. These weapons, which can be either conventional explosive munitions or IEDs. Previous research indicates that globally, local populations endure the heaviest toll, accounting for 59% of all EO-related casualties<sup>12</sup>. Research by this review, however, shows that over the last five years in the three mission areas reviewed by the ISR Team, the largest group of casualties is NDSF and other armed combatants, followed by local population and then peacekeepers<sup>13</sup>. Furthermore, EO-related attacks and incidents involving UN peacekeepers increased each year between 2016 and 2020<sup>14</sup>. So far over this year, 69 incidents have occurred resulting in over 75 casualties<sup>15</sup>.

**Figure 5: Global Impact of Explosive Violence<sup>16</sup>.**



1.9 Some EO casualties are a result of active conflicts in these countries, but whatever the reason, given the indiscriminate nature of this threat, **any balanced study must take a broad view, incorporating PoC, the capabilities of national authorities and the safety and security of UN personnel, national defense and security forces, civilian populations, and other actors within UN mission areas.** This is the approach adopted by this ISR.

<sup>11</sup> Action on Armed Violence (AOAV), 2021

<sup>12</sup> AOAV 2021

<sup>13</sup> Composite Sources, ISR Field Research, 2021

<sup>14</sup> Composite sources, ISR Field research 2021

<sup>15</sup> UN Operations and Crisis Centre/OMA/CMOS Dashboard of Hostile Acts against TCCS as 22 November 2021

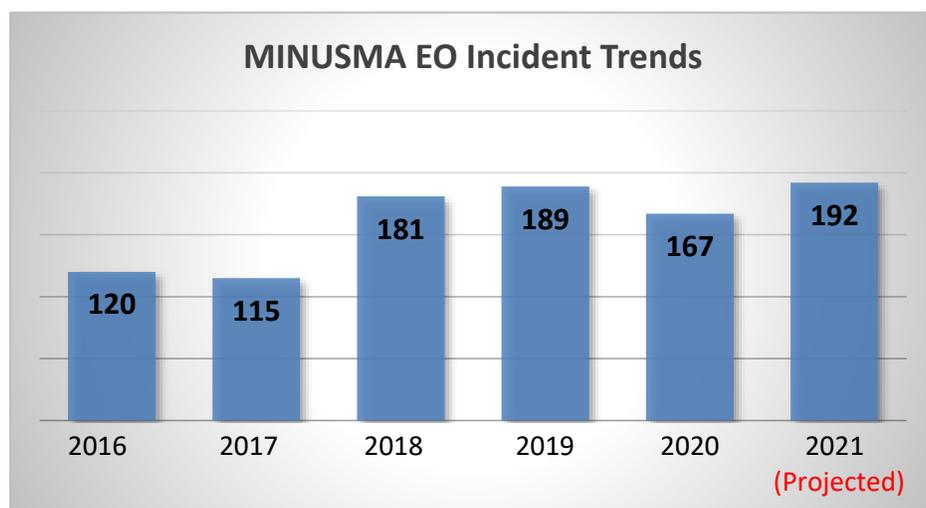
<sup>16</sup> AOAV, 2021

## Mission Context

### The MINUSMA EO Threat

1.10 **Trends and Scale.** MINUSMA has a high EO threat that is steadily increasing. The Mission has the highest peacekeeper casualty rate within Peacekeeping Operations, mainly due to the high number of EO incidents. Numbers of EO incidents have steadily increased in MINUSMA, and since 2017 expanded towards the centre of Mali. Between July 2013 and September 2021, 1,841 incidents were recorded involving EOs leaving over 756 casualties including 81 peacekeepers, and injuring over 2,095 more, including 568 peacekeepers.<sup>17</sup>

Figure 7: MINUSMA EO Incident Trends<sup>18</sup>



1.11 **EO Incident Characteristics.** Most EO attacks in Mali are single victim-operated devices, targeting vehicles and convoys, either of the FAMA/PNM, International Forces, or UN peacekeepers. Since 2018, the technical characteristics of the average EO incident in Mali have not changed, but the potential for increasing lethality (for example through larger charges) remains. Terrorist Armed Groups (TAGs) have recently used multiple devices to cover a range of route selection options, possibly in response to MINUSMA countermeasures. Some EO incidents in Mali have seen large devices and complex, co-ordinated attacks against bases, logistics convoys, or security operations. These complex attacks account for 7 of the 131 explosive devices used so far this year in Mali<sup>19</sup> and represent the worst-case EO threat scenario against peacekeeping worldwide at present. They show the capabilities and capacity of TAGs, to combine indirect fire (IDF), direct fire, novel capabilities such as UAVs and Suicide Vehicle-Borne IEDs (SVBIEDs) to inflict high casualties (for example, four casualties and 19 injured in Aguelhok on 2 April 2021<sup>20</sup>).

1.12 **Geography and Targeting.** Most incidents occur either in Sector Centre, Sector North, or Sector East (see heat map below). Attacks serve a variety of purposes. UN convoys and patrols and

<sup>17</sup> MINUSMA Force HQ (FHQ) and MINUSMA UNMAS “The Explosive Threat in Mali, Evolution and Trends”, September 2021

<sup>18</sup> MINUSMA FHQ brief to ISR Team, (Bamako, 27 September 2021)

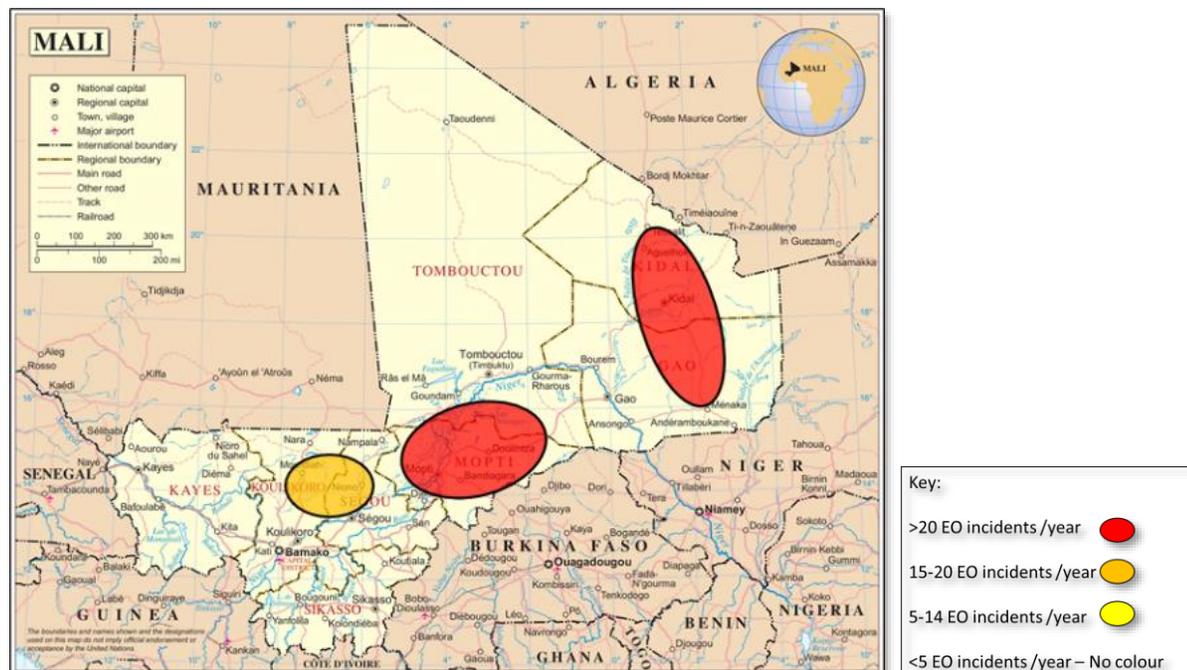
<sup>19</sup> SAGE and OMA, CMOS data on Mali incidents, 2021

<sup>20</sup> SAGE data on Mali incidents, 2021, MINUSMA JOC report 03 April 2021

FAMa/PNM activity are commonly attacked. The ISR Team heard from military and police units about EO being used to channel or prevent civilian movement in areas under control of TAGs.

**1.13 Perpetrators, Motivations and Assessments.** The perceived tactical success from the use of EO in Mali has resulted in IEDs and landmines becoming a commonly chosen weapon for TAGs. It is assessed that these types of weapons will remain in use for restricting access, inflicting attrition, and on occasion, through complex attacks, supporting decisive tactical engagements.<sup>21</sup>

**Figure 8: Geographic Range of EO incidents in Mali, 2021<sup>22</sup>**



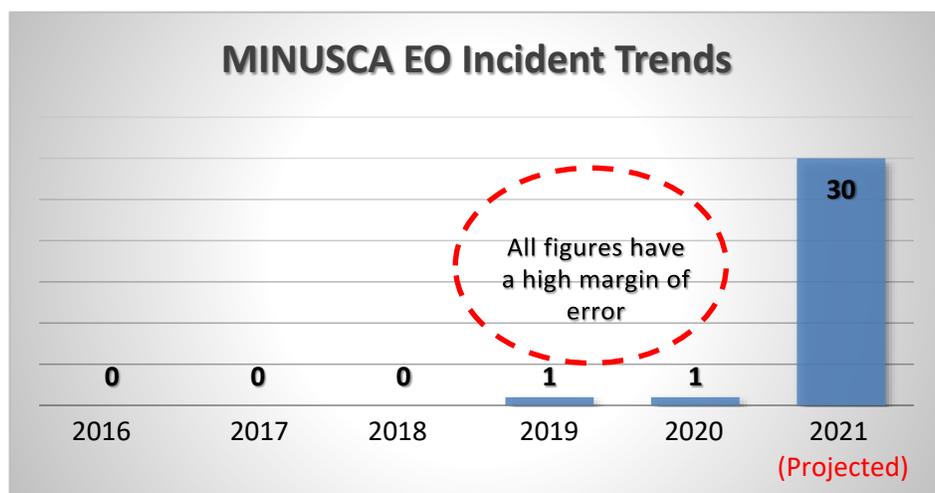
## The MINUSCA EO Threat

**1.14 Trends and Scale. MINUSCA is in a transitional EO threat phase.** EO incidents rose from 2 per year to an average of 3.5 per month in the last 12 months<sup>23</sup>. Two EO incidents were reported in 2019 and 2020, followed by a sharp rise in Feb-Mar 2021 and steady rate since then.

<sup>21</sup> MINUSMA FHQ and MINUSMA UNMAS “The Explosive Threat in Mali, Evolution and Trends”, September 2021

<sup>22</sup> Composite Sources, ISR Field Research, 2021

<sup>23</sup> MINUSCA FHQ brief to ISR Team, (Bangui, 14 October 2021)

Figure 9: MINUSCA EO Incident Trends<sup>24</sup>

1.15 **EO Incident Characteristics.** Post-blast investigations are hampered by continued obstruction of freedom of movement in Sector West and lack of a Level one or Level two forensics capability. UN EO reports are based primarily upon FACA and civilian reports that may have a high margin of error and no chance of verification. From the available evidence, EO found are mainly anti-vehicle mines, most often the PRB M3 mine pictured in the figure below, targeting vehicle movements with pressure activation. Sector Centre reports the use of rocket propelled and hand grenades as booby-traps, assessed to be for extortion against the civilian population, or in defense against FACA. To date, only victim-operated devices are confirmed by the available evidence.

Figure 10: PRB M3 Anti-Vehicle Mine in CAR<sup>25</sup>

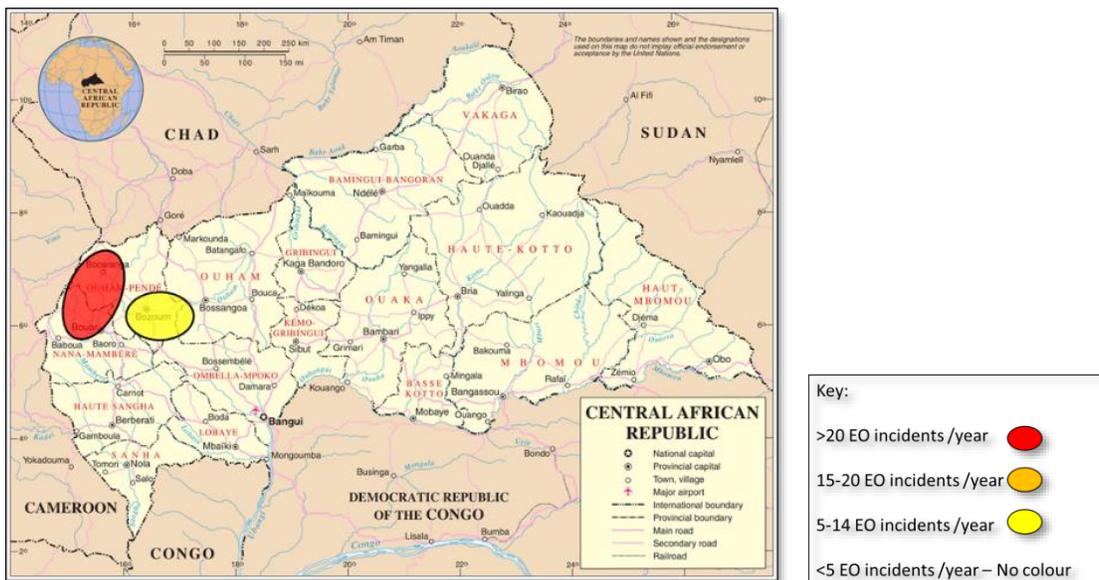
1.16 **Geography and Targeting.** EO incidents are concentrated almost exclusively in Sector West as shown on the map below. In 2021, there have been 54 civilian casualties, in comparison to 15 others combined (FACA, UN personnel, and NGOs)<sup>26</sup>. This distribution of casualties suggests that either civilians are the principal target of EO, or that the indiscriminate nature of victim operated devices results in civilians commonly becoming victims of EO intended for NDSF or an SBP.

<sup>24</sup> MINUSCA UNMAS brief to ISR Team, (Bangui, 15 October 2021)

<sup>25</sup> MINUSCA FHQ brief to ISR Team, (Bangui, 14 October 2021)

<sup>26</sup> MINUSCA UNMAS brief to ISR Team, (Bangui, 15 October 2021)

Figure 11: MINUSCA Geographical Concentration of EO, 2020-21<sup>27</sup>



1.17 **Perpetrators, Motivations and Assessments.** According to the MINUSCA Joint Mission Analysis Centre (JMAC), the 2021 increase in EO incidents coincides with a February 2021 surge by FACA and supported by one SBP in Sector West. According to UN military commanders in Sector West and the Mission headquarters, these events are linked and are assessed to be a response principally by the Armed Group called *Return, Reclamation and Rehabilitation* (3R) against operations into areas that 3R uses.

Figure 12: Selected Bilateral Partner in the Central African Republic<sup>28</sup>.



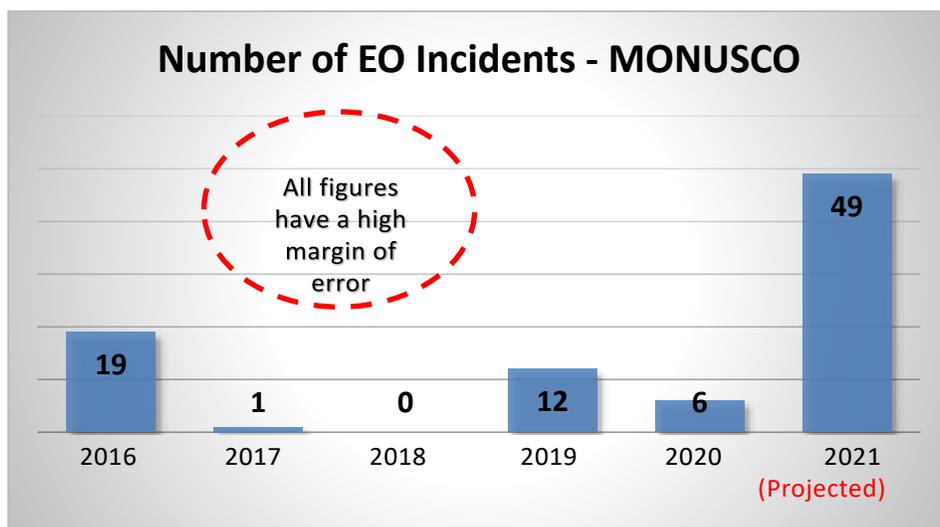
<sup>27</sup> Composite Sources, ISR Field Research, 2021.

<sup>28</sup> Photograph by the ISR Team, Bangui, Central African Republic, 18 October 2021.

## The MONUSCO EO Threat

1.18 **Trends and Scale.** The EO threat in MONUSCO appears to be rising sharply with at least 37 EO incidents reported in 2021 compared to six in 2020, 12 in 2019, and a previous annual high of 19 in 2016<sup>29</sup>. These figures, however, have a high margin of error since they come from the FARDC who often do not report attacks or otherwise provide details to the UN. Further work is required to understand the EO threat and its underlying causes. Two key actors within the mission reporting on incidents are UNMAS and JMAC. Both continue to work to provide greater fidelity, in initial analysis of EO trends, and in the assessment of the consequences on the threat environment.

Figure 13: EO Incident Trends – MONUSCO<sup>30</sup>



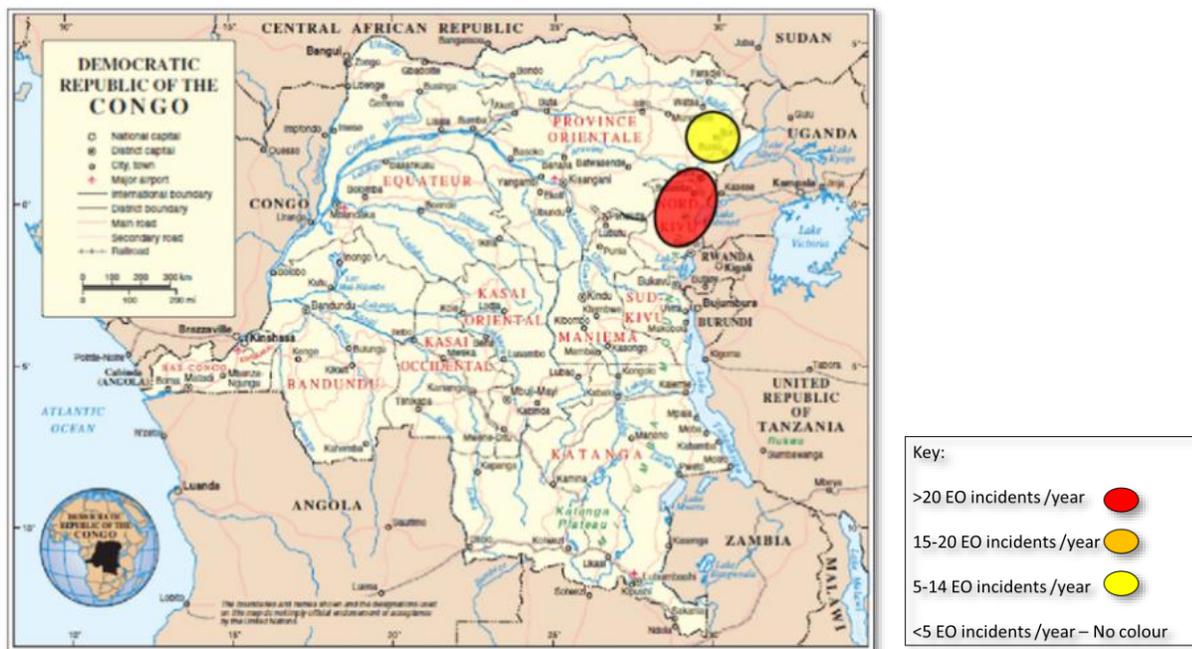
1.19 **EO Incident Characteristics.** To date, EO have been relatively unsophisticated, with simple victim-operated mechanisms used against patrolling FARDC units. Tactics such as alleged radio-controlled EO utilized at a church, bar, and fuel station in Beni over two days in June 2021 and hoax devices apparently used to test responses have raised concerns over the evolving sophistication and increasing danger of the threat.

1.20 **Geography and Targeting.** EO incidents are concentrated almost exclusively in the Grand Nord, in and around the area of operations of the FIB as shown on the map below. While the FARDC are currently the main target of EO, the civilian population is increasingly being targeted by the ADF in towns and villages. This will be expanded upon in Chapter 2.

<sup>29</sup> MONUSCO UNMAS brief to ISR Team, (Goma, 25 October 2021)

<sup>30</sup> MONUSCO JOC, 2021.

Figure 14: Geographical Concentration of EO Devices in DRC 2021<sup>31</sup>



1.21 **Perpetrators, Motivations and Assessments.** ADF has been almost the sole user of EO devices in DRC according to JMAC who assesses that there is little potential for other groups to employ EO in the short or medium term. One individual, reportedly originating from the Middle East, was arrested, for allegedly training ADF in IED and UAV techniques.

<sup>31</sup> Composite Sources, ISR Field Research, October 2021.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE IMPACT OF THE EXPLOSIVE ORDNANCE THREAT ON MANDATE DELIVERY

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2.1 This chapter explains why, how, and where the EO threat challenges, obstructs, and undermines the United Nation's ability to deliver its mandated tasks. It emphasizes the point that effective EO mitigation is not only a military, police, and security issue but extends to Protection of Civilian (PoC) and reaches into underpinning themes such as access, communication, mission support and credibility.

#### **The Impact of the EO Threat on Delivering PoC Mandates**

2.2 Protection of Civilian tasks are a priority for United Nations Missions with a Security Council mandated role to protect the most vulnerable.<sup>32</sup> This role becomes even more critical when an EO threat impacts the physical safety and security of civilians, Mission personnel, and humanitarian actors. This is in addition to the impact of EO on mandate delivery, freedom of movement, and access. PoC should be allocated appropriate prioritization, resources, and capacity. Notably, in Security Council resolution 1894 (2009), the Security Council "stresses that mandated protection activities must be given priority in decisions about the use of available capacity and resources" for a Mission to be able to respond based on an understanding of the nature of the EO threat.

2.3 The ISR Team observed that effectively addressing the EO aspects of PoC in a high-threat environment cuts across all three Tiers of PoC Action<sup>33</sup>. It is not only safeguarding civilians from immediate threat of violence resulting from EO but also extends to advocacy and political engagement. The sections below present observations from the ISR Team in the Mission contexts of MINUSMA, MINUSCA, and MONUSCO which reinforce that, even with limited physical safety and security, Mission components can and should engage in effective EO information campaigns, community EO sensitization outreach strategies, as well as political engagements to maintain a prioritized emphasis on the EO aspects of PoC. However, it should be stressed that Mission components, particularly the engagement of uniformed personnel with local communities in the desire to gain information about the employment of EO, must take care to follow the principle of 'do no harm' so not to expose civilians to reprisals or targeting because of the conduct of mission activities.

2.4 As stated in the DPO Policy on PoC, approaches should be comprehensive and involve a wide range of Mission components, both uniformed and civilian, to effectively analyze and plan EO threat mitigation in an integrated manner. Integrated EO threat mitigation approaches are even more important when missions face emerging or evolving EO threats that also impact on the safety and security of Mission personnel, which in turn may impact on the capacity to conduct PoC activities. During EO related discussions with civilian Mission components involved in PoC as well as members of

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<sup>32</sup> Protection of Civilians in UN peacekeeping is defined as: "Without prejudice to the primary responsibility of the host state, integrated and coordinated activities by all civilian and uniformed mission components to prevent, deter or respond to threats of physical violence against civilians, within the mission's capabilities and areas of deployment, through the use of all necessary means, up to and including deadly force.", UN DPO Policy: The Protection of Civilians in United Nations Peacekeeping, Ref. 2019.17.

<sup>33</sup> Tier I: Protection through dialogue and engagement; Tier II: Provision of physical protection; and Tier III: Establishment of a protective environment, UN DPO Policy: The Protection of Civilians in United Nations Peacekeeping, Ref. 2019.17

the broader humanitarian community and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), interlocutors stressed with the ISR Team the need for better EO information exchange and discussions on prioritization of EO threat mitigation activities. These discussions also yielded important insights on the role of women as important stakeholders, and even, as was seen in Mali, triggering ‘early warnings’ ahead of changes in the threat environment.

2.5 Lastly, the responsibility of national governments to protect civilians from EO threats must not be forgotten. Therefore, the ISR Team includes observations on how supporting national institutions and capacities, as well as promoting accountability through the national criminal justice for those using EO to target civilians and peacekeepers system is another important means of addressing EO-related PoC concerns.

## **MINUSMA**

### **Protection of Civilians**

2.6 The use of EO has steadily increased in Mali, including against civilian populations and infrastructure. According to an UNMAS report in MINUSMA from September 2021, 1079 PoC incidents took place from January to September. EO attacks are also being used to isolate communities<sup>34</sup> and have led to increased internal displacements, which as of May 2021 stood at more than 350,000 people, according to OCHA. This appears largely due to a lack of will among the parties to fully implement the Malian Peace Agreement, which creates a void filled by groups such as violent extremists or, more recently, self-defense militias. These groups seek to prove their relevance to local communities, including by addressing socio-economic grievances of local populations, as an alternative to an absent state authority. In Mali, EO attacks are also often used for ideological reasons by terrorist armed groups (TAGs) trying to ascertain control and drive away foreign troops and for political purposes by armed groups battling for leadership and control of territory. An additional strategy and motivation, particularly in the centre with Dan Na Ambassagou (DNA) and others, is to show force and relevance as an influential stakeholder to force negotiations with the Government.

2.7 The use of EO is causing civilian casualties, restricting access, and damaging key infrastructure, such as bridges, the loss of which cuts off communities from humanitarian assistance, important trade routes, and security forces, as recently witnessed in Bandiagara region from January to September 2021<sup>35</sup> EO planted in the roadways followed by complex attacks prevents MINUSMA convoys and patrols in critical areas and, therefore, prevents the Mission from being able to act as a deterrent. The EO threat also impedes interventions by the NDSF thus enabling presumed radical armed elements to consolidate and expand their control of local communities and the local populations that reside there. This tactic of using EO as part of a strategy to create ‘besieged communities’ further complicates outreach and engagement to local populations and should be a factor in developing any strategic communication plans by the mission. The EO threat has also caused deterioration of economic social conditions, and, ultimately, livelihood prospects of local populations by cutting off access, weakening

<sup>34</sup> “In early July, the locality of Songho was also encircled by violent extremist groups, who set up a blockade around the village, preventing local farmers from accessing their fields.”, S/2021/844 United Nations Secretary-General Report on the Situation in Mali, 1 October 2021

<sup>35</sup> Since January 2021, MINUSMA (JOC report, 9 September 2021) reported IED attacks on civilian buses and bridges in Bandiagara cercle. On 26 January 2021 a minibus struck an IED in Bandiagara, Sara Commune, killing 4 civilians. On 24 and 31 August, respectively, two IEDs exploded at two bridges of the Route Nationale 15, in Bandiagara, Doucoumbo commune, partially demolishing these two bridges, while on 9 September an IED attack struck a private minibus in the vicinity of the Parou and Songobia bridges in Bandiagara Commune, resulting in the death of four civilians

their economic and business activities and weakening the ability of civilians to resist violence extremist group control by destroying their protective environment. In line with the Security Council second strategic priority to MINUSMA's mandate, the Mission Adaptation Plan has significantly strengthened the proactivity, robustness, flexibility, and agility of the Mission's posture for PoC in central Mali. MINUSMA continues its efforts to accompany a Malian-led, clearly articulated stabilization vision and strategy to protect civilians in the North and the Centre.

## **MINUSCA**

### **Protection of Civilians**

2.8 The use of EO was confirmed for the first time in the Central African Republic in June 2020<sup>36</sup>. The increasing EO threat coincided with military operations by the NDSF and SBP deployed against the *Coalition des Patriotes pour le Changement (CPC)*, who in turn attacked NDSF and civilians. Those actions continue despite the Government's unilateral declaration of ceasefire on 15 October 2021. The sharply increased EO threat has disproportionately impacted civilians, as well as humanitarian activities and personnel amid the deteriorating humanitarian situation in the country. For example, two Danish Refugee Council vehicles hit EO in Sector West, killing one driver and injuring three passengers, in September 2021<sup>37</sup>.

2.9 MINUSCA continues its efforts to implement its PoC mandate. However, challenges remain. EO threats compound mobility challenges for the Mission by impeding proactive deployment, timely response in high-risk areas to threats against civilians, and patrolling, in addition the full operationalization of early warning mechanisms. The situation also carries reputational risks for MINUSCA for being criticized for the perceived lack of will and/or for being wrongly associated with spreading EO threats. This is further compounded by ongoing disinformation campaigns that deter local populations from cooperating with the Mission, which is necessary for effective mandate delivery. Disinformation campaigns are not unique to MINUSCA. All three missions visited by the ISR team (MINUSCA, MONUSCO and MINUSMA) face ongoing disinformation campaigns of varying sophistication with the intent of isolating the Missions from local populations. This occurrence brings about a particular vulnerability to a greater EO threat since it both deprives the Mission of access to information and leaves Mission personnel easier to target. Missions should therefore particularly focus on strategies to counter disinformation and understand the effectiveness of such campaigns and their evolving vulnerability to the EO threat.

## **MONUSCO**

### **Protection of Civilians**

2.10 While the FARDC have been the primary target of EO incidents with eight casualties and 31 other NDSF injured between 2014 and 2021<sup>38</sup>, civilians also sustained increasing casualties during the same period. According to MONUSCO, since 2014, a total of 18 civilian casualties and ten others injured, including two women and four men in three IED incidents in Beni town on 26 and 27 June 2021<sup>39</sup>. Attacks are mostly attributed to the ADF who lay EO along footpaths as a defense tactic against the FARDC, as well as against civilians to prevent them from accessing their farms so that the

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<sup>36</sup> From UNMAS.org website: [Central African Republic | UNMAS](#)

<sup>37</sup> <https://drc.ngo/about-us/for-the-media/press-releases/2021/9/statement-car>

<sup>38</sup> MONUSCO FIB HQ, briefing with the ISR Team, (Beni, 28 October 2021)

<sup>39</sup> S/2021/807 United Nations Secretary-General Report on MONUSCO of 17 September 2021

crops could be sold by the ADF. The ISR Team did not find any evidence of ideological motives behind the use of EO by the ADF. However, according to the Mission, the ADF are progressively enhancing construction techniques of EO which are likely to cause more harm to civilians if adequate mitigation measures are not in place. Despite a slight increase in EO incidents since the beginning of 2021, EO impact on MONUCO's ability to deliver on its POC mandate remained minimal.

### **The Impact of the EO Threat on the Conduct of Operations**

2.11 To accomplish their mandates, each United Nations Mission must conduct supporting and enabling operational activities such as the protection of UN bases and installations; the delivery and security of logistic supplies; the implementation of vertical and horizontal engineering and infrastructure work; military and police patrolling to facilitate access to areas with differing degrees of security; direct military action against armed groups and medical support including CASEVAC, when required. A range of UN stakeholders contribute to these activities, notably uniformed contingents, the Director of Mission Support (DMS) and the UN Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS), working in accordance with specific priorities set by the mission. Effectively addressing the EO threat requires action from all these stakeholders.

2.12 In addition to EO threat mitigation, some Missions also help develop national capacity through advice, training and equipping of NDSF, although coordination of EO best practices between the National to Mission level is often weak.

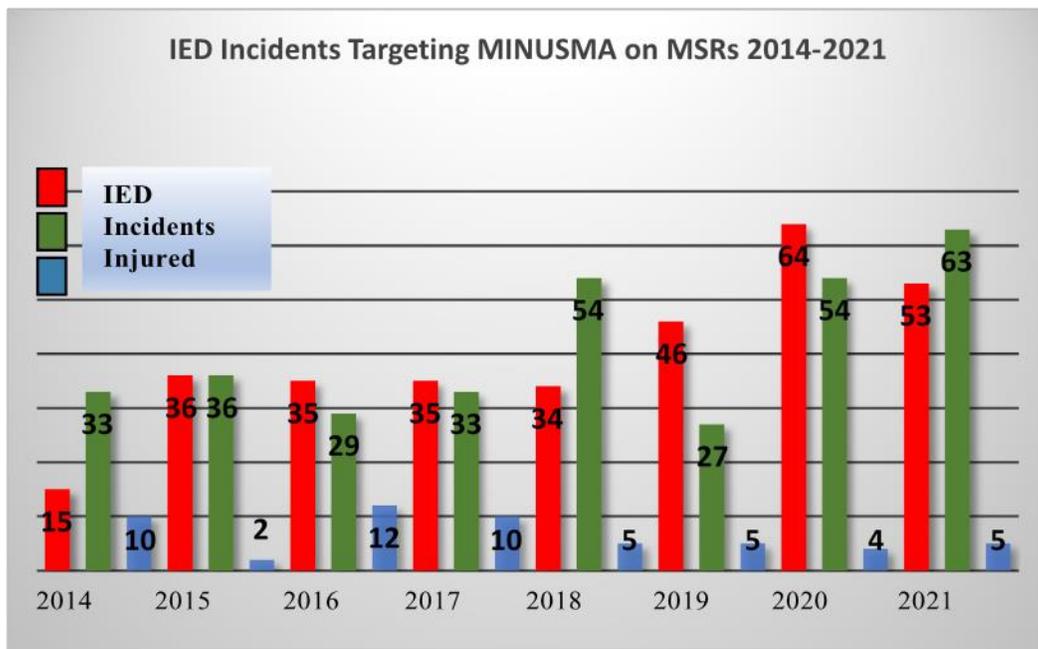
### **MINUSMA**

#### **EO Impact on Mission Operations**

2.13 EO incidents have increased in Mali, reaching an average of 176 per year since 2018 compared to 96 per year between 2013 to 2017<sup>40</sup> These incidents have resulted in peacekeeper and civilian casualties plus loss or damage to Mission assets, like vehicles and equipment. The majority of EO incidents targeted logistics convoys on main supply roads (see Figure below) which are often forced to move slowly and carry out S&D tasks at numerous vulnerable points. It is difficult and time consuming to search and detect EO along entire convoy routes, which are hundreds of kilometers in length and are almost all unpaved. The emergence of this vulnerability in MINUSMA and the extent of the response required leads this ISR review to conclude that all missions with an EO threat should seek to reduce land-based logistics resupply demand. Continuing to reduce reliance on petroleum fuels, maximizing the use of local borehole water, using aviation or air resupply wherever possible, selecting the shortest and least vulnerable routes, and reducing the movement of construction materials will reduce the overall EO threat. Bases have been targets of SVBIED and complex attacks. Consequently, additional peacekeepers and specialized units are required to carry out escort duties and EOD tasks.

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<sup>40</sup> MINUSMA HQ data as of 31 August 2021

Figure 15: IED Incidents targeting MINUSMA on Main Supply Roads 2014-2021<sup>41</sup>

2.14 As observations, the impact of MINUSMA's large-scale logistics convoy operations reduces peacekeeper and equipment availability to conduct other mandate tasks. While the Mission has taken care to limit convoy frequency and exposure to EO threats, however, the repair and shipment of replacement vehicles and equipment contributes to diminished operational readiness and overreliance on other capabilities. Bases must be reinforced against Vehicle Borne IEDs (VBIEDs) which has meant that additional peacekeeper tasks and resources are diverted from other operational and administrative priorities. Scarce air assets are often over-tasked for CASEVAC, re-supply and reconnaissance, therefore, impacting humanitarian and other Mission tasks. The ISR Team heard from many units that more infantry and Formed Police Unit (FPU) personnel require S&D training since availability of these teams is a condition for many operational tasks to be carried out. This situation is further exacerbated by the rotation of contingents and the loss of S&D training and experience.

## MINUSCA

### EO Impact on Mission Operations

2.15 FACA, Internal Security Forces (ISF), and one SBP have conducted operations directly impacting peacekeeper freedom of movement, mainly in the West. At least one of the armed groups is reported to have begun using EO defensively. These EO incidents have caused civilian populations and non-governmental organization casualties. At the same time, FACA, ISF, and one SBP are reported to have obstructed MINUSCA personnel from accessing large areas in the West in violation of the SOFA, and contributing to the EO impact on the civilian population.<sup>42</sup> Strengthening security assessments, including through the regular review and update by UNDSS, Force U2, supported by the Joint Operations Centre (JOC) and JMAC information, with input from prefectures and sectors may

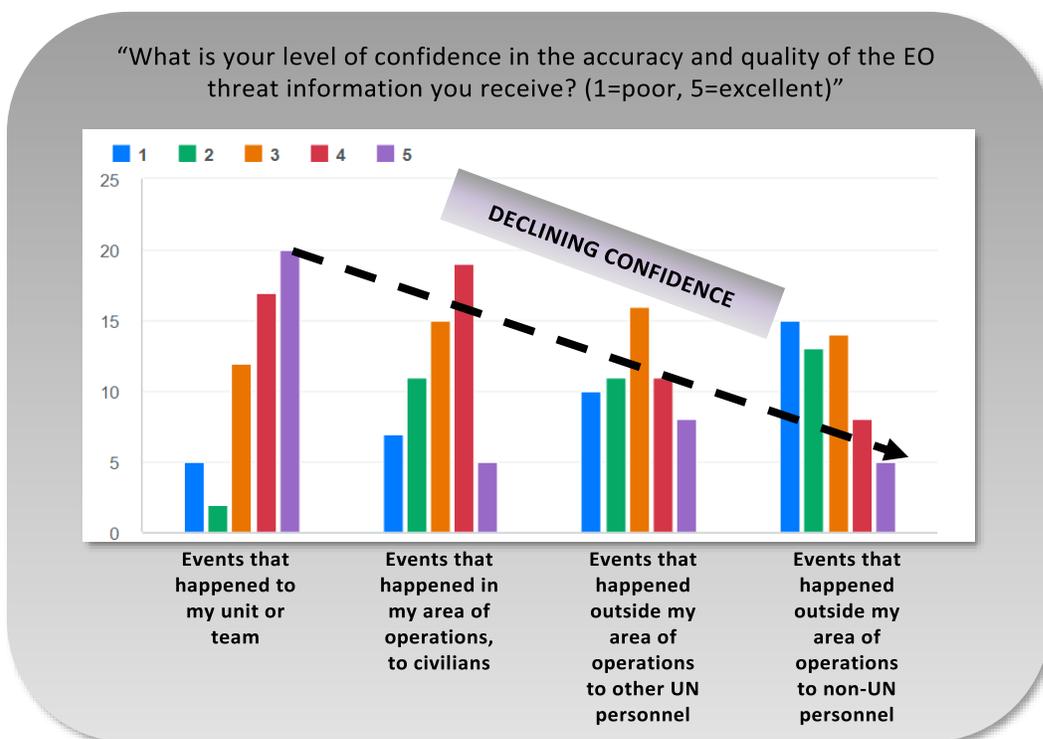
<sup>41</sup> UNMAS Mali, 2021

<sup>42</sup> MINUSCA Sector West HQ brief to ISR Team (Boar, 18 October 21), Interview with Head of Office Sector West, (Boar, 18 October 2021) and Commander BAN BAT Sector West, (Boar, 18 Oct 2021)

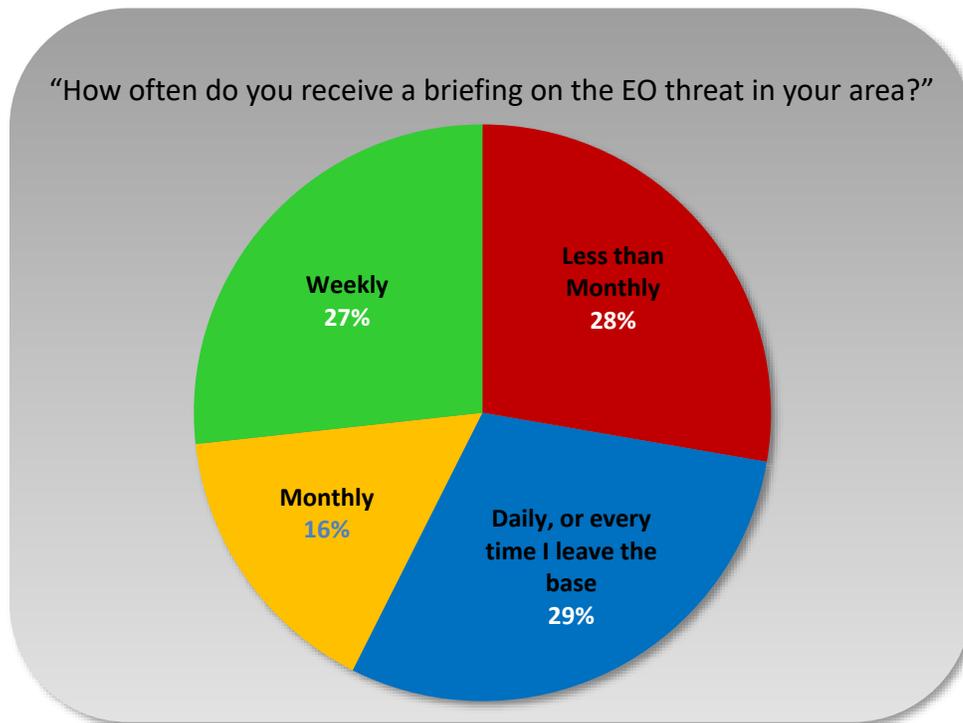
help to alleviate this, including to facilitate coordination of information on secure routes for humanitarian personnel and mandate delivery. Finally, disinformation campaigns against the Mission, and MINUSCA's inability to counter these, is further reducing operational activity and effectiveness.

2.16 Interviews during the ISR field study phase suggested that MINUSCA EO threat briefings are not regular or routine<sup>43</sup>. The ISR survey demonstrates that this issue is widespread across other Missions (see Figures 16 and 17 below). All Missions with an EO threat should ensure all Mission personnel are updated regularly on the threat. There are concerns that EO information flow and confidence levels in the flow of EO threat information to uniformed components is moderate to low, further impacting operational output and the level of presence. Conversely, excellent examples stand out of peacekeeping units using community engagement, observation, and manoeuvre to reduce risk and enable movement of Mission components to meet mandate delivery.

**Figure 16: ISR Survey Results on Confidence in Threat Information**



<sup>43</sup> Interview with Sector Centre HQ staff, 19 Oct 2021 & Interviews with FHQ and Sector West Contingent, 18 Oct 2021.

**Figure 17: ISR Survey Results on EO Threat Briefings**

## **MONUSCO**

### **EO Impact on Mission Operations**

2.17 In the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), the ISR Team found that except for a 2016 attack against MONUSCO which reportedly resulted in 32 peacekeepers injured<sup>44</sup>, no other EO attacks against United Nations personnel were recorded. Since then, the impact of EO on the Mission’s ability to deliver on its mandate remains minimal. According to MONUSCO leadership, joint operations with the FARDC against ADF continue, including operation Mayangose II launched in August 2021. However, as the ADF retreat into remote areas such as Tchabi and Boga, the Mission expects an increase in the use of EO against the FARDC. Given the joint operations, MONUSCO uniformed personnel may be exposed to increased EO threat. There are also increasing concerns from humanitarian actors over EO impact on the delivery of humanitarian assistance. In discussions with OCHA and UNHCR while in DRC, the ISR team was informed of delays faced by humanitarian actors since May 2021 to deliver humanitarian assistance to approximately 100,000 IDPs in Rwenzori and Mutwenga due to security concerns and the fear of EO reports along the main roads.

<sup>44</sup> MONUSCO UNMAS Assessment report on the IED Threat in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, 30 October 2020

## CHAPTER 3

### UNITED NATIONS PEACEKEEPING OPERATIONS RESPONSES TO THE EXPLOSIVE ORDNANCE THREAT

3.1. This Chapter focuses on how, and with what, UN Missions and the wider UN have reacted to the rising EO threat, thematically and in its different guises across the world. As well as a wide range of observations and recommendations on uniformed equipment, training, organization and approaches, this chapter makes important points on the integration of full-spectrum mission capabilities as well as optimizing UN-wide strategy and governance to address this threat.

3.2 UN peacekeeping doctrine describes the strategy to counter EO as a holistic application of the three pillars: prepare the force, degrade the network, and defeat the device<sup>45</sup>. PDT and in-mission training with required COE; PKI and S&D and EOD Teams deployed; on scene PBI with access to a forensic laboratory are some of the capabilities required to contribute to an effective and integrated approach to these three lines of effort towards the common goal of mitigating the EO threat.

#### Early warning, understanding, analysis and information management systems

3.3 Understanding is critical. It allows smart action planning, enables threat avoidance and mitigation, and facilitates effective decision-making at all levels. The principles and process by which understanding can be achieved are well-defined in the Military PKI Handbook, but this review notes that in the case of the EO threat, these principles must extend far beyond the uniformed components of a Mission because the threat impacts everyone, and everybody has a role to play in countering the threat.

3.4 The review team made observations that could improve EO aspects of each of the PKI cycle: Direction, Acquisition, Analysis, and Dissemination.<sup>46</sup>

- **Direction.** Although most missions have some form of a formal Intelligence Acquisition Plan, it was clear that in many cases, obtaining information about the EO threat was not articulated as a Specific Information Requirement (SIR). In other cases, the task of obtaining information on the EO threat was not allocated to all the components of the mission that would be able to obtain the information; commonly, the task was given only to the Force or the uniformed components. In Missions with an EO threat, SIRs should be set on gaining EO threat information, and allocated to bodies across the mission with potential access to that information. At the strategic headquarters level, the ISR Team also found that expertise in this area tended to come because of the previous experience of individuals rather than being embedded in the organizational structure. The UN should accordingly increase staffing in OMA/PD to include EO and increased ISR expertise.
- **Acquisition.** The importance of maintaining uniformed activity in areas with an EO threat was reinforced by the results of the ISR survey, in which 77% of respondents stated that Police and Military patrol reports were seen as 'useful' or 'very useful' as an information source. More convincingly, 88% stated that engagement with the civilian population was 'useful' or 'very useful'; greater human PKI capabilities could be the way to develop this potential information

<sup>45</sup> UN Peacekeeping Mission Military Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) Unit Manual, second edition, 2021

<sup>46</sup> Peacekeeping-Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance Staff Handbook, 2020

source, but the ISR Team notes that there are already components of Missions that collect data from this source, which could be used more effectively (see Dissemination, below). Technical methods of acquisition also offer opportunities to provide a better understanding of the EO threat. In MONUSCO, a specialized ISR capability gained actionable intelligence of 13 EO incidents between May and October 2021, including two that resulted in attacks being prevented. **Expansion of that capability to other missions is recommended.** UAVs or manned aircraft provide other capabilities that can reduce the EO threat, through optical systems examining suspicious activity, infra-red cameras identifying ground disturbance and Synthetic Aperture Radar providing pattern of life studies. ISR survey data indicates that Missions are less interested in investing time and/or money in overhead sensors such as UAVs when compared to intelligence analysis/fusion mechanisms and forensic analysis capabilities<sup>47</sup>. Open-source acquisition is also viewed as an excellent tool for understanding more about the EO threat, and camera systems installed as part of base security suites should be considered as part of the Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance acquisition matrix. Just as the threat is evolving, countermeasure techniques and technologies are, as well. **UNHQ requires personnel with the right understanding of these capabilities to inform policy, doctrine, and planning.**

- **Analysis.** Missions have a wide range of analysis capabilities available to them that can provide context, identify key issues, and support effective decision-making in the EO threat environment. Uniformed PKI branches, each Mission JMAC and UNMAS, all play key roles. Any expansion of Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance capabilities must be integrated into a visible Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance annex within a C-EO plan, supported by Priority Information Requirements (PIRs), data management and analysis, as well as trained practitioners to operate and understand capabilities. **Such capabilities must also be available to the Mission, not just the Force, with a consolidated effort to pull from all information sources to provide quality data for decision-makers.** The ISR survey noted however, that 62% of people deployed in EO threat areas said they did not have enough trained or qualified personnel to analyze or assess EO threat data; uniformed and civilian analysis staff should be fully qualified and experienced.
- **Dissemination.** The ISR Team observed that in many cases, Mission components that engage routinely with the civilian population, like Civil Affairs and Human Rights units, obtain information about the EO threat but that there is no system by which information is then channeled effectively towards other Mission components that can respond appropriately, such as EOD teams and investigators. Missions should review their internal information sharing procedures to **ensure that all field-based elements of the mission components likely to come across potentially lifesaving information are fully engaged in the EO information flow.**<sup>48</sup> Care should be taken to carefully weigh the motivations of, and risks to those providing information. Missions should also put in place formal information sharing measures to ensure that sensitive but non-critical data (such as source details) are not shared unnecessarily.

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<sup>47</sup> Only 15 out of 102 respondents ranked overhead ISR capabilities such as UAV as the 'most likely' target for further investment to enhance their Mission C-EO capabilities; compared to, for example, 47 out of 102 who would invest in forensic and technical exploitation.

<sup>48</sup> The Guidelines on IED Threat Mitigation in Mission Settings (31 August 2021) lay out who should be part of a co-ordinated information sharing and planning approach.

## Information Management and Information Management Systems

3.5 In an environment with a rapidly evolving threat, accurate, complete, relevant, and accessible data is essential. The UN is now at a point where there is a system to deliver this capability. This opportunity can be exploited to maximize understanding and support decision making to counter the EO threat. Within the Unite Aware suite of applications, the UN Situational Awareness and Geospatial Enterprise (SAGE) Programme has the potential to provide an accurate common understanding of the EO environment.

3.6 At present, this common understanding has not been achieved by most Missions; progress is being made but many stakeholders lack access to the common operating picture and the use of locally maintained ad-hoc databases is widespread. MINUSMA represents good practice using the available tools, with SAGE and the Information Management System for Mine Action (IMSMA) Core database being used in parallel. Interoperability, including automated data transfer, between IMSMA Core and SAGE would be a major step forward and should be delivered at the next possible update of the SAGE application. Use of the UN EO and IED lexicon alongside a Standard Operating Procedure for SAGE would further enhance this measure.

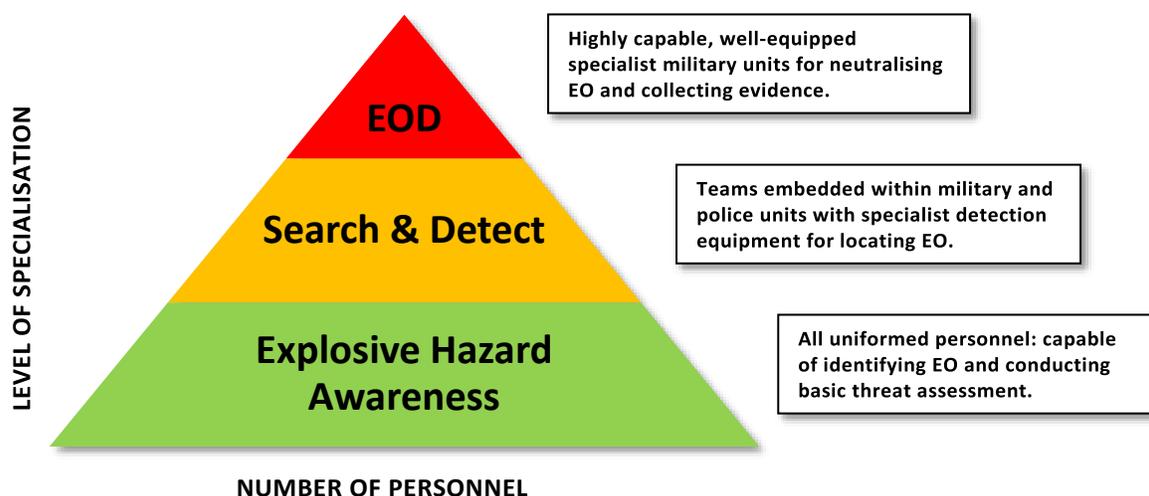
3.7 Maximizing the potential of technology and contributing to the digital transformation of peacekeeping will require several changes. The following should be considered:

- Intensifying and expanding the drive to **make SAGE the situational awareness tool of choice across the UN**, whereby ensuring that as many relevant offices and departments as possible have read and write access to the system and making the temporary local spreadsheet a relic of the past. SAGE training could be incorporated as part of uniformed component SURs to facilitate this.
- Reporting and databasing of EO activity should adhere to a standardized categorization or lexicon of terminology to ensure accuracy of the common operating picture and follow-on analyses. Efforts to **adopt the UNMAS IED Lexicon within the UN doctrinal system should continue and be established as the common standard** for all UN activities to include peacekeeping operations.
- Maximizing the relevance to the EO environment of associated performance assessment and analysis tools, including military, police, and the Comprehensive Planning and Performance Assessment System (CPAS). It is important to continue to deploy the DPO systems currently being developed and implemented. **Performance evaluation and leadership are key to successfully mitigating the EO threat.** Periodic update of EO performance standards ensures maximum preparedness.
- Developing regional functionality of Instant Messenger (IM) applications, to allow visibility of trends in nearby Missions and cross-border developments for mission planners and decision-makers.
- Developing the capacity of SAGE to accept, identify and protect confidential data, whilst retaining the default principle of transparency, especially for life-saving information.
- Enhancing the ability of SAGE to host, store and analyze data sets from the full range of peacekeeping capabilities pertaining to countering the EO threat, including post-blast investigations, forensic analysis, UAS and GTAU-type capabilities.

## Training

3.8 Pre-deployment training (PDT) is a critical requirement for all T/PCCs and varies dependent on the conditions of the specific mission environment and the role of the unit being trained. To successfully operate within an EO threat environment, C-EO operations depend upon a continuum of capabilities. These levels of skills include Explosive Hazard Awareness for all uniformed personnel to successfully recognize and react to the threat; S&D Teams for selected maneuver units that are trained and equipped to search suspected vulnerable areas or points with possible hazards; and military EOD Teams that are specifically trained, staffed, and equipped to respond to found EO and safely dispose of them (see below).

Figure 18: Levels of EO Specialization



3.9 The UN performance standards for operating within an EO environment are widely accepted to be adequate for the task, but the level of competency of T/PCCs is mixed, usually due to the amount, or quality of PDT conducted prior to arrival in Mission. Because of this capability gap, UNMAS field programs, in all the Missions visited, had been requested to respond and develop extensive in-mission training programs to bring contingents to the required UN standard. Deploying **contingents should conduct training in explosive hazard awareness and S&D to UN standards prior to arrival in Mission to shorten the in-mission training requirement.** The UNMAS Mali program also operates an extensive training program for EOD units that over several years has built a highly trained and technically skilled capability. **UNMAS programs in CAR and DRC should be enhanced to enable them to provide additional in-mission S&D and EOD training to improve Force capability.**

3.10 In the longer term, EOD capability across TCCs requires a training development process to maintain an enduring and relevant capacity that meets UN EOD standards. There are a range of options that should be considered ranging from developing UNMAS capability to train and mentor TCCs for EOD units (when required), to promoting bi-lateral training agreements between Member States as part of the Light Coordination Mechanism. To improve these competencies within the Force during their deployment, **units should conduct periodic training with supporting EOD teams to improve their skills, gain experience, and improve integration with all force enablers.**

3.11 FPU do not yet benefit from standardized PDT. In MINUSMA, these units are trained by UNMAS during a two- to three- week in-mission S&D training period. Although considered of high value, the in-mission setting of the training prevents the units from becoming operational upon deployment. Preparations are currently ongoing for standardized S&D modules for PDT purposes, which should be complemented with in-mission modules and refresher exercises. **The Police and UNMAS should increase the number of S&D trained members in FPUs to allow for more rest and refit rotations and expand the FPU's capability.**

## Equipment

3.12 T/PCC contingents arrive in Missions with differing amounts and capabilities of EOD equipment. This is dictated by the Statement of Unit Requirements (SUR), but often vaguely; if the SUR states an S&D or EOD capability is for 'self-sustainment' only, a much lower level of capability is required. In MINUSMA, some contingents require additional equipment to be provided by UNMAS so that they can operate safely. The differences in equipment mean that some teams are unable to conduct S&D tasks safely. These teams are often not employed beyond the base perimeter. FPUs are often not deployed with S&D equipment; in MINUSMA they are provided with hand-held metal detectors by UNMAS. **The ISR Team recommends review of the SURs to include S&D tasks, training, and equipment including more UAS and ECM/jammers.** A review should also be conducted on the requirement to issue ECM capacity to S&D and EOD teams in MINUSCA and MONUSCO. Consideration should be given to using the Light Coordination Mechanism for this purpose.

3.13 Some TCCs are equipped with mine-rollers fitted to armored vehicles to deliberately initiate buried EO. The success of these is not accurately known, but rough or wet terrain seriously reduces the effectiveness of these assets. The same constraints apply to the so-called 'Route Clearance Packages' in use by the French counter-terrorism mission in Mali. There was no evidence of mast-mounted vehicle cameras in use by S&D or EOD Teams. **Mast-mounted cameras** potentially offer the ability to look at the ground well ahead of the team and have the capability to add to the team's ground awareness before placing themselves in the danger zone. These would be preferable to the technique of placing military personnel on the outside of MPVs as survivability after an EO strike will be low for the 4 personnel riding outside. Other technology could achieve the same observation level without the risk to lives.

3.14 Some T/PCCs do not have sufficient equipment in their home country to train incoming contingents so newly arrived unit members often see the equipment for the first time when they take over from the out rotating contingent.

3.15 Common to both MINUSCA and MONUSCO was a shortage of hand-held metal detectors for the S&D Teams and, in one instance, low confidence in the equipment provided. Additionally, both missions need to be provided with the well-functioning hand-held Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR) detectors for the S&D and EOD Teams.

## Specialized Vehicles

3.16 **MPVs.** ISR survey data suggests that the provision of MPVs is a contentious issue; 45% of respondents stated that the vehicles available to peacekeepers were 'definitely not' or 'mainly not' fit for purpose<sup>49</sup>. Of the missions visited, all have some form of vehicular capability either deployed or in the process of being deployed to counter the EO threat, however there are some issues to consider.

<sup>49</sup> ISR Survey, 2021.

3.17 In MINUSMA vehicle capability appears to be sufficient, however, operational readiness and availability is a concern. The high EO incident rate and unserviceable or destroyed vehicles, along with the lack of T/PCCs repair or replacement capability contribute to this.

3.18 In MINUSCA, as part of the increase in Engineering company capability, MPVs are currently in transit, however, terrain will determine successful mobility against the EO threat, especially in the West, where they would be used. Bridge construction may need to be considered to support operation of these vehicles across Sector West.

3.19 Finally, in MONUSCO, there are at least six MPVs already deployed, therefore, an increased requirement is unlikely. However, this will be dictated by any increase or expansion of the threat, as well as the condition of the terrain and the roads in the envisaged operating locations.

## Specialist Personnel

3.20 **S&D Teams.** S&D Teams are integral elements of uniformed contingents (normally infantry units or FPUs but in principle can be any unit). They enable the freedom of movement of their unit by confirming routes or areas are free of EO or identifying the location of EO. They do not conduct EO disposal. A S&D Team consists of about six personnel; two S&D Teams are in each infantry company, and one in each FPU per the units SURs

3.21 **EOD Teams.** EOD Teams render safe identified EO and can collect EO components for evidentiary use. Dependent upon TCC methodologies, an EOD Team will consist of 2-10 personnel. A standard EOD Company comprises of five EOD Teams. At present there are 11 (10 military and one civilian) EOD Teams in MINUSMA which will be increased by 2 military EOD teams. MINUSCA has 5 EOD Teams of varying capability and will be increased by 4 EOD Teams early next year. MONUSCO has 5 EOD Teams (4 military and 1 civilian).

3.22 **Combat Convoy Companies (CCC).** These units, normally based on infantry unit structure, are intended to protect, and escort logistics and supply convoys between bases. Specific to MINUSMA, they have been developed as a response to the EO threat against the very large logistics convoys that move between mission locations. They operate as single CCC. Each CCC includes two S&D Teams, one EOD Team as well as a trained and qualified Convoy Commander (this is bespoke training delivered by UNMAS Mali).

3.23 **Post-Blast Investigation (PBI) Teams and Weapons Investigation Teams (WIT).** Terminology varies, but WITs are normally military and PBI teams are normally police. These teams collect evidence, conduct analysis, and reach conclusions about EO incidents. Tactical, electronic, forensic, chemical and explosives safety personnel normally form these teams.

## Medical Capabilities

3.24 The ISR Team conducted research into the suitability of Mission medical capabilities to cope with the EO threat. This was not a systematic audit of medical capability, but consulting with clinicians, practitioners and managers about the readiness and capacity of their medical system to deal with the potential demands of EO casualties. **Survivability in EO events and related medical capabilities should be part of the next peacekeeping mission medical review.** This review had observations in four principal areas of medical capability:

3.25 **Buddy first aid.** The ISR Team conducted enquiries on the standards of medical equipment and training of each contingent unit visited; results were mixed. Some contingents were well-equipped and prepared to meet the 10-minute goal for lifesaving buddy first aid in the kind of trauma event typical of an EO incident. Many uniformed units, however, were not. In particular, the equipment provided often did not meet the standards laid out in COE Manual 2020 on Buddy First Aid Kit (BFAK) nor were medical kits routinely carried on the person as required. T/PCCs are obliged to have their units equipped with BFAK as of 1 July 2022. In the ISR survey, in the question about personal preparation aimed at people who operate directly in an EO threat environment, only 32 out of 66 respondents stated that they had had specific medical training during their PDT. **PDVs and in-theatre validation activity should ensure buddy first aid training and equipping meet UN standards.**

3.26 **Aerial Casualty Evacuation.** The ability to move casualties safely and rapidly to a place they can receive lifesaving damage control surgery is critical to the medical chain, and the degree of trauma often experienced in EO incidents inevitably places demands on this system. In the typical austere and remote mission environment, evacuation by helicopter is often the only feasible option for an EO casualty. Missions varied in their approaches to providing this capability. MINUSMA has dedicated aircraft at several locations available 24/7 on standby. MONUSCO and MINUSCA do not, but place CASEVAC at the top of their aviation priority lists. A 24/7 dedicated aircraft, fitted for CASEVAC is highly recommended<sup>50</sup>. In missions where this is not possible, a guaranteed aircraft is essential (i.e., a system in which at no time are all available helicopters tasked on routine operations). Training and organization are key. The review noted the good practice of MINUSMA and MONUSCO in conducting regular and demanding CASEVAC exercises. Constraints of weather, improvised airstrips/landing zones and night flying are also a concern (see the MINUSCA Case Study below), and Missions must be fully aware of any restrictions on their CASEVAC capability. Contingents should have the necessary skills to minimize these constraints, such as the ability to prepare improvised Helicopter Landing Sites at night.

3.27 **Level 2 Hospital Care.** The review was reassured about the extent of Level 1 care available in visited missions; for example, 55 Level 1 clinics are operating in MONUSCO. Level 2 care performs a key role within the casualty chain for serious trauma injuries, as the first point at which a casualty receives damage control surgery. Level 2 hospitals are rare, and the ISR Team heard on more than one occasion that some Level 2 hospitals were reluctant to accept even urgent cases. **The capacity, capability and admission rate of mission Level 2 facilities should be an aspect of any future review of peacekeeping medical care.** The development of the 'Light Mobile Surgical Unit' (such as the unit deploying to Beni, MONUSCO), and the Department of Operational Support (DOS) concept of a virtual surgical consultation capability, are options that should be explored further for enhancing C-EO capability.

3.28 **Availability and use of medical data.** Throughout the study, it was clear that some elements of medical data that might be useful in improving EO event outcomes were not readily available. Boards of Inquiry (BoI) and Head of Mission Reports often did not include the level of information required to inform trends and improve survivability in similar incidents, and no mission surveyed had a comprehensive trauma register to enable analysis of injuries and propose enhancements to vehicles, personal protective equipment, tactics, and procedures. Future updates to SAGE should consider its suitability to host medical information.

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<sup>50</sup> Due to the aircraft characteristics, this is almost always a helicopter

### Text Box 1: Casualty Evacuation

#### Case Study: MINUSCA Casualty Evacuation

Currently, UN Casualty Evacuation (CASEVAC) in MINUSCA does not occur at night. A *Note Verbale* seen by the review indicates that this is due to government-imposed airspace constraints, but this was not widely understood by interviewees; some stakeholders believed that the CAR government had banned night air movement, others thought it was because the aviation bases did not have facilities for night flights. The ISR team concluded that the second point is moot - MINUSCA aviation units arrive with the required capability to operate from, and to, helicopter landing site (HLS) locations with minimal preparation. The consequences of any limitations to the Mission's CASEVAC ability are clear – the likely death, sooner or later, of a civilian or UN peacekeeper because of inability to evacuate them from the point of wounding.



A Pakistan Mi-17 and Portuguese QRF (Al J Venter Collection)

Dealing with the declining night-flight currency of helicopter crews is also a problem, but secondary. Likewise, Force units and UNPOL FPU's must practice establishing improvised night helicopter landing sites. Fixing this issue must be a high priority for the Mission with support from UNHQ, as required. It should also be noted that the CAR government is currently allowing night flights by FACA and SBF aircraft.

## Capability Policy

**3.29 Military or police contingent SURs.** The review team notes the successful adoption in MINUSMA of infantry unit SURs that specify that APCs should be protected against 10kg explosive mass as a mine protective standard within MINUSMA. Recently adopted SURs also increased the number of deployed MPVs<sup>51</sup>.

**3.30** Most SURs request EOD capability but only for self-sustainment (see 3.12) which is clearing the unit's own camp/base<sup>52</sup>. The COE which is required to conduct this kind of S&D task by the COE manual is very basic, and the required level of training is commensurately low. For S&D tasks beyond the unit's own camp/base each unit needs embedded dedicated trained and experienced personnel for S&D tasks with increased COE like Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR). The techniques, tactics, and procedures (TTPs) to conduct S&D tasks outside a base on operations are more complex and troops require a higher level of training. The ISR team recommend reviewing **SURs of uniformed units operating in an EO threat environment to ensure the unit is prepared for the likely increased S&D**

<sup>51</sup> Increased from 265 MPVs (2015) to 453 (2021). Total 718 APCs are deployed in 2021 which shows 63% of all APCs are MPVs. (Reference to Chief COE MINUSMA, 22 Nov 2021)

<sup>52</sup> SUR Annex C requirement for EOD self-sustainment and COE Manual

**tasks in its area of operations.** This review should include Special Forces companies, as well as Infantry units which may have a requirement for with embedded EOD capacity.

3.31 EOD unit SURs should be updated regarding the EO threat within the different AORs as well as the United Nations Peacekeeping Missions Military EOD Unit Manual, Second Edition August 2021 to ensure appropriate amount of required capability will be deployed by the TCCs.

3.32 **Contingent Owned Equipment (COE) Manual.** The COE manual allows T/PCCs to deploy a 10 % operational reserve COE on UN expenses without reimbursement on the additional 10% COE. **The operational reserve should allow the T/PCC to provide 100% operational COE even when some COE are in maintenance or needs repair.**

3.33 The number of broken or destroyed COE because of EO attacks in MINUSMA is high. The T/PCCs are responsible to provide new replacement COE and the transport is under UN expenses. As most of the T/PCCs do not have such EO threat in their home country, some COE, such as the MPVs, were only procured by T/PCCs to be used in MINUSMA with a limited reserve capacity. Even T/PCCs which are using such equipment in other operations, the time required to provide replacement is mostly too long and is having negative impact on the operational output. The ISR Team therefore recommends a review of the COE policy on operational reserve to **increase the operational reserve from 10% to 25%** for certain COE and units which are operating outside the base within an EO threat

3.34 The COE manual defines the hostile factor for adjustment of the standard COE reimbursement regarding the hostile activity within the area of operations. The hostile factor per mission is evaluated by a technical survey team at UNHQ level with support by the missions. The ISR Team therefore recommends an **increase of the hostile factor** for peacekeeping missions with EO threat, at least for MINUSMA where the mission is directly targeted by Terrorist Armed Groups (TAG).

### **Pre-Deployment Visits and Post-Deployment Validation**

3.35 Peacekeeper readiness and preparation featured heavily in the facts collected by the ISR review, supported by survey data. Evidence greatly suggests that the process of PDVs as well as post-deployment evaluation with specific focus on EO and C-EO has some shortcomings. Specifically, the importance of EO-experienced personnel with the requisite experience deploying as part of the OMA-led PDV team to identify TCC shortfalls earlier and enable the TCC to improve before deployment. Such experience serves several purposes to validate EO and C-EO related equipment, sustainability EO and training. Data from the ISR survey suggests that almost half of respondents thought uniformed contingents had not conducted sufficient training before arrival in the mission, with PDT a key criterion for PDV assessment. This perception was reinforced by many in mission leadership positions, indicating that **greater robustness in PDVs may be required** to mitigate this shortfall. Too often it seems, TCCs are not meeting the standards outlined in SURs and Manuals as well as the COE Manual. This has resulted in the need for augmentation through borrowed equipment or sustainability and additional training once in mission – normally falling to requesting UNMAS to deliver. This has included periodic training with supporting EOD teams to improve their skills, gain experience, and improve integration with this important force enabler will assist with this.

### **Mission integration and intra-mission cooperation**

3.36 **Mission Integration.** It is vital to cohere the efforts of all components within a mission to address the EO threat. This includes adapting a focus on EO enabling systems and underlying drivers

that will allow a mission's full capabilities to come to bear on this problem, and a concerted effort to achieve common understanding and acceptance of what this entails in a UN context. The benefits of doing so are clear (see box below) and this review recommends the implementation of local or sector-level information exchange and integration arrangements to build confidence and understanding across mission components. The review's overall conclusion, which will be detailed in the paragraphs below, is clear- **the UN should reinforce and improve integrated UN EO planning and operations (uniformed and civilian).**

3.37 The recent Review on UN Integration,<sup>53</sup> while focusing on overall United Nations effectiveness and performance system-wide, offers, and in some cases, reinforces general principles observed by the ISR Team that can be applied specifically to improving integrated UN responses to EO threats. Most relevant to this ISR are, namely: successful integration focuses on structures, individuals, and shared objectives, with the latter two having the greatest impact on overall effectiveness of effort; integration requires strong leadership and guidance and efforts to be well resourced; and the importance of a data-driven approach, especially if it can be a common or even standardized one. The Review on Integration also offered insights on how, by focusing on pragmatic solutions and practical requirements of local populations – often at a more local level, away from headquarters – Missions can facilitate integrated approaches with humanitarian actors, especially if there is a concern over preserving humanitarian space and principles. Concerns over security also was conducive to more integrated approaches between (and within) mission components and a wider set of stakeholders. Lastly, consistent with observations made by this ISR, more work needs to be done to adequately reflect gender issues as part of integrated approaches.

#### **Text box 2: The potential benefits of integration – MINUSMA**

##### **Case Study: MINUSMA Lessons Learnt**

The February 2021 attack against a Temporary Operating Base (TOB) in Sector Center, Douentza region, Mali, which resulted in 28 injured peacekeepers and the activation of mass casualty evacuation plan, highlighted the critical need for integration of information to improve anticipation by the Mission. Whereas reports from uniformed components provide good information for the technical execution of military or police operations, information from civilian liaison assistants (CLAs) is essential to understand local context and dynamics that could impact on the operation. In the case of the attack on the TOB, the base was established in the same area where there was a turf war ongoing between two AGs, causing MINUSMA to become an opportunity target for the armed groups to show their strength and capabilities.

Lessons learned from this incident have led to the establishment of weekly situational awareness meetings, where all components discuss directly with the CLAs about local dynamics within and between communities, including sentiments towards the Mission, allowing patrols and other operations to better anticipate engagement with different local actors.

<sup>53</sup> As noted in the executive summary of the final report, commissioned by the Executive Committee the objectives of the review were to assess “the extent to which entities are working jointly to maximize impact in complex settings” with a view to generate recommendations to the Deputies Committee for revising the integrated assessment and planning policy and handbook.

<https://unitednations.sharepoint.com/sites/PPDB/PolicyGuidanceDatabase/Integration%20Review%20Report.pdf>

3.38 Across the three Mission areas visited by the ISR, the role of UNMAS as a cohering agency was raised consistently. More details are in text box 3, and in summary the review concluded that the **UNMAS role and resources in missions with an emerging EO threat should be reviewed, to continue to integrate UNMAS in a comprehensive response and strengthen its capacity, as needed**. In addition, an UNMAS role for Missions in transition should be considered, given its activities in support of wider partners such as national authorities.

3.39 **Mission Integration – MINUSMA.** MINUSMA experiences the highest amount of EO activity. The UNMAS program in Mali is therefore well established at the heart of the mission's EO threat mitigation effort. UNMAS in Mali should be looked at as a possible example for other missions to adapt to better mitigate an existing or emerging EO threat. Some aspects of integration by other components remain in need of improvement. An example of an area in which deeper integration would have a positive impact is that of layering Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance and establishing clear information flows. Logistics convoy protection is perhaps the clearest example of the current weaknesses and future opportunities in this area. The ISR Team noted more than one instance of an avoidable convoy EO strike, either because available Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance assets were not on-task or EO emplacement sightings from Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance assets were not communicated to convoys. This review strongly supports integrating Mission-level civilian information capabilities with Force level overhead Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance and Sector and unit level ground-based and air assets to enhance understanding of IED emplacement networks and provide timely force protection information to convoy assets would also significantly enhance survivability.

### Text Box 3: The role of UNMAS

#### The Role of UNMAS in peacekeeping missions with an explosive ordnance threat

Alongside mandates from the General Assembly and the Security Council, and directly contributing to a broad range of mission priorities, like protection, safety and security, performance and accountability, peacebuilding and sustaining peace, and partnerships, **UNMAS expertise is also critical to effective mission responses to an active or emerging EO threat.** The review team observed that UNMAS provides a unique combination of **agility** in identifying and responding to threats before other efforts can be brought to bear; **expertise** to understand, assess, articulate, and react to the situation; **reach and credibility** within and across the UN and mission to bring civilian and uniformed stakeholders together and cohere efforts; and the **commitment and tenacity** as a specialist service provider for explosive ordnance threat mitigation.

**In MINUSMA, for example, UNMAS is the *de facto* training, equipment, mentoring, sustainment and information enabler across the Mission's counter-EO capability;** UNMAS trains and mentors uniformed contingent S&D Teams; it provides widely-available explosive hazard awareness training; as the custodian of the principal EO information management system, it is a widely trusted information source; and it facilitates procurement as well as providing maintenance or training for key equipment such as jammers and mine-protected vehicles. As an enduring civilian component of the Mission, staffed and resourced through mission budgets, UNMAS continuity of presence ensures these crucial functions continuously improve, even between rotating contingents. In MONUSCO and MINUSCA, although the mission has assessed the EO threat to be lower and the response not as comprehensive, the ISR observed a clear desire amongst Mission leadership in each to make initial movements in the same direction vis a vis UNMAS role.

UNMAS has a track record in meeting short-term mission needs, to respond to an emerging EO threat. Relying solely on UNMAS for the long term, however, has its disadvantages. As a civilian component of an integrated mission, UNMAS has a wider remit. It extends support to essential humanitarian activities, protection of civilians, weapons and ammunition management, and even national capacity development, amongst other areas. More importantly there is a risk of blurred lines of responsibilities and accountability between Mission components, and the possible creation of a long-term reliance on UNMAS, that reduces the incentive for P/TCCs to provide their agreed upon (and funded) capability. **UN HQ and Mission leadership must address broader questions of: what roles, what responsibilities and – crucially – what conditions, need to be met to transition from UNMAS (short-term support) to a more enduring, sustainable uniformed personnel solution?** Options that might allow a graduated transition of responsibilities could include **improved SURs** for contingents; a more focused **Contingent Operated Equipment (COE) regime**, with incentives for effective use; and possibly invitations for **bilateral or contracted pre-deployment training, including through the Light Coordination Mechanism.**

**3.40 Mission Integration – MINUSCA.** Within MINUSCA, the underlying lack of clarity over the number and nature of EO events hampers efforts to develop effective counter measures, understand the type and level of Force capability required, or develop a clearer picture of the perpetrators and their intentions. However, greater integration of the Mission's C-EO enterprise would significantly boost these efforts. Additional resources for UNMAS CAR to temporarily expand its program to improve Force capabilities would be a significant step in the right direction. Additionally, the program is encouraged to look at its role to sustain these capabilities, comprehensively with other components including with the Force as the TCCs improve and develop longer term capacities. Further to this, the existing IED Working Group structure could be re-emphasized with a focus on routinely incorporating all stakeholders across the mission and the wider UN team.

3.41 **Mission Integration – MONUSCO.** The current and planned structure for C-EO integration within MONUSCO is a useful illustration of the ISR's wider observations on strategizing, governing, and managing these efforts. At present, efforts have been *de facto* delegated to the Force, sitting in the remit of the Deputy Chief of Staff Operational Support while support to the government is provided by UNMAS. The Mission also established in 2019 the IED Threat Mitigation Working Group chaired by the DSRSG-Ops which remains to be fully activated. The ISR Team fully supports the existing efforts but believes that the Mission C-EO enterprise must be owned by senior leadership, who should endorse and resource a strategy that provides a framework for action across military, police and civilian components of a mission, as well as bringing in actors from the wider UN team, regional partners, and national authorities; this is not a challenge to be left only to the Force and UNMAS. The full activation of the existing IED Threat Mitigation Working Group chaired by the ODSRSG-Ops would be a suitable vehicle. The role of UNMAS should also be planned for, with responsibilities and boundaries clearly set.

### **Cooperation with national authorities and external actors**

3.42 A key element of the response of PKO to the EO threat is the extent and manner of their cooperation with national authorities and other actors such as regional bodies and the European Union. In its resolution A/RES/70/46 (2015) on countering the threat posed by improvised explosive devices, the United Nations General Assembly "encourages States to enhance, as appropriate, international and regional cooperation, including the sharing of information on good practices as appropriate and where relevant, in cooperation with the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL), in order to address the theft, diversion, loss and illicit use of materials for making improvised explosive devices, while ensuring the security of sensitive information shared."

3.43 In the Central African Republic, Mali, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Peacekeeping Missions maintained cooperation with national authorities and provided technical assistance and training on S&D. However, the ISR team found that some national authorities remained reluctant to fully cooperate with the UN or other international partners, especially in information-sharing. That point had been underscored by the Security Council on 26 March 2021 during an Arria Formula meeting co-hosted by Kenya, when it urged Member States to "expand and deepen collaboration in sharing information and joint investigation among States"

3.44 **National Authority and External Actor Cooperation – MINUSMA.** Almost all interlocutors who spoke with the ISR Team, including the humanitarian actors, agreed that addressing the EO threat cannot be done in isolation and must be embedded in a comprehensive political response. They also agreed that solutions lie with the national authorities who need to be more regularly present in the communities and enhance the capacity and resources of local authorities. MINUSMA and partners understand that addressing the issue of EO will require a focus on the capacity of the Malian Government, to effectively bring together several policy strands and design a political strategy, with a view to address the root causes of violent extremism.

3.45 **National Authority and External Actor Cooperation – MINUSCA.** In July 2020, explosives that were intended for training and operationalization of EOD Teams in the NDSF were seized by the Ministry of Defence. National authorities continue to retain them, despite multiple engagements with the Government on the matter. As of now, the project, along with the capacity building EOD (level 2) training UNMAS had provided for FACA and ISF remain suspended.

3.46 In addition to the various technical and other support to the national authorities, stakeholders highlighted the importance of political process and dialogue, to effectively and sustainably address conflict triggers to enable effective mitigation of the EO threats in the country. Such a comprehensive approach is required, given the likely escalation of the situation, with the coming dry season and transhumance, as well as the gap until the expected arrival the reinforced EOD capabilities.

3.47 **National Authority and External Actor Co-operation – MONUSCO.** During interactions with various stakeholders in the DRC, the ISR Team found that the Congolese authorities are willing to cooperate with MONUSCO in addressing the EO threat. Mindful of their limited EO threat mitigation capability, national authorities have been relying mostly on the Mission through UNMAS interventions to sensitize, and to receive training on how to better render safe and dispose of EO. UNMAS engaged with the national authorities to develop better protocols in response to the changing EO environment and supported the Congolese Mine Action Center (CCLAM) in developing IED National Standards. UNMAS also responded to several FARDC's requests to destroy or dispose of EO. For example, on 27 July, a joint MONUSCO IEDD and EOD Team destroyed one IED and over 10 Unexploded Ordnance in Makoko, in Beni Territory<sup>25</sup>. However, the team found a lack of full transparency from the Congolese authorities when sharing data with the Mission. Most of the data on EO is provided by the FARDC who do not involve the UN at the early stage, especially when an explosive is found. As a result, information on the location of IEDs or the type of explosives is sometimes misrepresented or inflated, further complicating the Mission's ability to make accurate analysis and mitigate the threat and impact of explosive ordnance on civilians.

3.48 **The European Union Training Missions (EUTM).** International partners such as the European Union Training Mission have a presence in several countries where the United Nations has a PKO Mission, making EU-UN cooperation stronger especially on ways to address the EO threat. The EUTMs have encountered varying experiences and some similar frustrations as the UN when engaging with the differing national authorities. In Mali, the EUTM has developed relationships with the FAMA, providing mentorship and training of the Malian leadership, assisting the FAMA in developing a C-IED "roadmap" or plan to build capability. On the other hand, in CAR, the EUTM is experiencing the similar apathy from the national authority that the UN mission experiences when trying to provide national capacity building activities. A small and limited training course regarding basic EO awareness was conducted for the FACA special operations unit but follow on offers of additional training or engagement of any type has been completely ignored by the government. In DRC, the government is in preliminary discussions with the EU for the deployment of EUTM. There is the potential in other UN missions, that the EUTM could be engaged as a bilateral partner to provide training for T/PCCS.

## CHAPTER 4

### NATIONAL AND REGIONAL RESPONSES TO THE EXPLOSIVE ORDNANCE THREAT

4.1 This chapter focuses on the national and regional capacities to counter the EO threat, by explaining the need for a whole-of-society strategy, and a synopsis on the response by national authorities to the call from the Security Council to hold perpetrators accountable, followed by a summary of capacity building efforts to strengthen the national response to the EO threat. A specific paragraph for each mission area describes the respective national capabilities in more detail. Lastly, the regional response to the EO threat is addressed.

#### National response

4.2 With the adoption of United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, the General Assembly encourages Member States to adopt a comprehensive, whole-of society, human rights compliant and gender-sensitive approach in the fight against Terrorism<sup>54</sup>.

4.3 Commonly, such Government strategies typically use a framework<sup>55</sup> which provides work strands such as:

- Prevent: to stop people becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism.
- Pursue: to stop terrorist attacks.
- Protect: to strengthen protection against a terrorist attack.
- Prosecute: hold perpetrators responsible.
- Prepare: to mitigate the impact of a terrorist attack.

4.4 The provision of an effective strategic capability therefore requires the Government to create a C-EO overarching strategy based on inter-departmental cooperation, which provides direction and resources to numerous stakeholders. Although critical, it is not sufficient to properly staff, equip, train, and deploy C-EO organizations. An **integrated strategy** calls for including provisions on preventing violent extremism to complement the countering of terrorism and violent extremism. Citing the UN Secretary-General's Report on the plan of action to prevent violent extremism<sup>56</sup>, making prevention an integral part of a comprehensive approach could help tackle many of the underlying conditions that drive individuals to join violent extremist groups. This requires the involvement of many governmental bodies, as well as civil society.

4.5 Impunity, including in cases where NDSF commit violent acts against civilians, causes local communities to distrust national authorities, leaving the population in the most volatile areas little choice than to rely on militias or extremist groups for protection. However, national authorities in countries hosting a UN Mission often seem not to prioritize accountability and countering impunity, illustrated by poorly resourced military justice systems.

#### National capacity to fight impunity

4.6 Impunity and injustice create an environment of insecurity and helplessness, undermining conflict mediation and resolution efforts, including political transitions. Violent extremism tends to

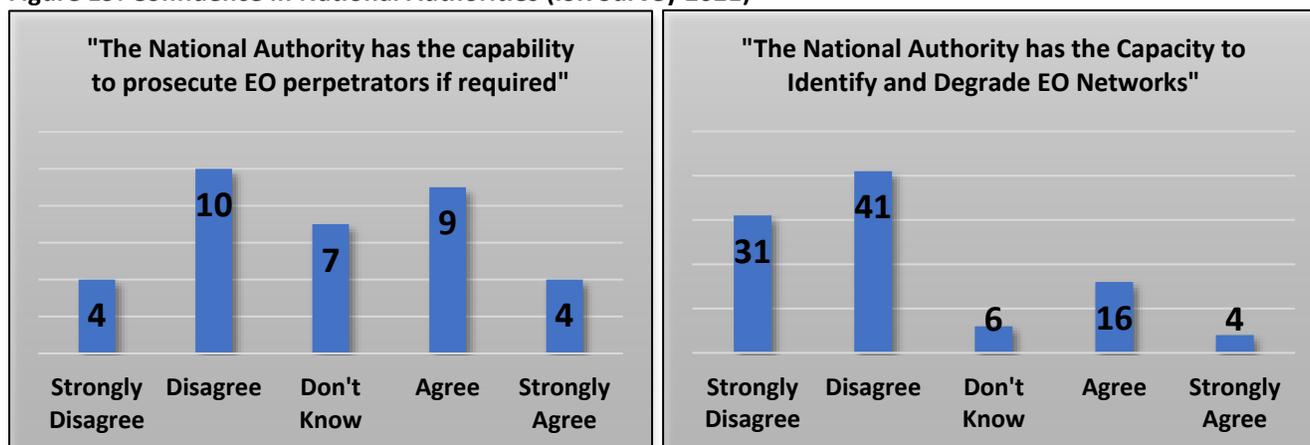
<sup>54</sup> (A/Res/60/288 (2006)

<sup>55</sup> UK Counter-Terrorism Strategy (CONTEST) 2018

<sup>56</sup> A/70/674 (2015)

thrive in an environment characterized by poor governance, democracy deficits, corruption, and a culture of impunity for any unlawful behavior, including from the State or its agents. Accountability is essential to break the cycle of terrorist violence and impunity. With national authorities having the lead role in bringing perpetrators of EO attacks to justice, to date **insufficient progress has been made in many of the countries with an EO threat** that host a UN Mission to investigate, prosecute, and adjudicate criminals involved in these attacks. Despite advocacy from mission leadership at strategic level, national authorities in all countries with an EO threat that host a UN Mission are challenged to prioritize investigations and prosecution of perpetrators of EO attacks, except for large-scale attacks against peacekeepers and attacks receiving international media coverage. The situation in specific Missions will be covered below.

**Figure 19: Confidence in National Authorities (ISR Survey 2021)\***



\* The left-hand chart surveys individuals currently in Missions without a current EO threat, asking for their assessment of their national authority's potential capacity. The right-hand chart surveys individuals in Missions with a current EO threat, asking about actual capacity.

4.7 As reflected in the results from the ISR survey as answered by UN personnel who state that they are involved with interaction with national authorities on impunity, it is not only lack of national political leadership and political will that contribute to an environment of impunity regarding EO cases. The significant gap in technical capacity and means equally limits the ability of national authorities to address the EO threat. Lastly, and inherent to the security landscape in areas most prone to EO threats is the limited presence of NDSF, which complicates the investigation of such crimes. Additionally, the vast size of operational areas for most countries with UN Missions complicates deployment of the necessary law enforcement and judicial authorities for exploitation of crime scenes.

### Building national capacity

4.8 While the lead for reforming rule of law and security institutions lies with the national authorities, many Missions have a capacity-building mandate to support the criminal justice system and the national fight against impunity. In reference to Security Council Resolution 2589/2021, UN Missions need to enhance support to national authorities to implement an effective criminal justice chain. Significant capacity building efforts have been and need to continue to be undertaken by the respective UN Missions and other stakeholders to build the national criminal justice chain to hold those involved in EO attacks accountable. The graph below from the ISR survey shows strong confidence in the capacity of Missions with an EO threat to support the national authorities in bringing

perpetrators to justice. A positive outcome, however, depends entirely on the willingness of national authorities to accept this support, which in turn requires trust and transparency.

**Figure 20: Confidence in Mission Support to National Authority in Prosecuting EO Threat Perpetrators<sup>57</sup>**



4.9 Past capacity building activities show only slow progress in building sustainable capabilities throughout the criminal justice systems of UN Missions with an EO threat. With criminal cases often relying on testimonial evidence, the lack of victim and witness protection is a critical gap. Many recorded cases have not been referred for prosecutions, due to the lack of information and evidence. Equally relevant for EO cases, the building of capacity to collect and exploit evidence, including forensics, should be accompanied with the required technical means and human resources. There is a need for a shift from training to mentoring, to support the national authorities in putting the theoretical knowledge in EO cases into practice. Although UN Missions with an EO threat mandate tasks in the fight against impunity, **stronger political advocacy is required** to push for more transparency from national authorities, to allow UN Missions to collocate, provide technical support and follow up on EO cases daily.

4.10 In line with Security Council Resolution 2518 (2020), UNHQ developed a Standard Operating Procedure<sup>58</sup>, to assist field missions in supporting national authorities to ensure accountability of crimes against peacekeepers and to end impunity for serious violations and abuses of international human rights law and violations of international humanitarian law. This SOP describes both preventive and reactive measures a field mission can should put in place, starting with political advocacy and good offices. The document also requires each UN Mission to develop mission-specific procedures. Those procedures should encompass EO threats and responses.

4.11 MINUSMA developed and implemented an SOP which includes EO evidence collection and exploitation: The first level of exploitation is site exploitation. MINUSMA set up in-mission training,

<sup>57</sup> ISR Survey, 2021

<sup>58</sup> UN DPO SOP-2020.18

jointly conducted by EO experts from UNMAS, the Force and UNPOL, to train military and UNPOL staff on PBI. If EO investigative capacity is not immediately available, uniformed units are instructed to preserve EO evidence. The collected EO evidence is further exploited at a dedicated laboratory, run jointly by three TCCs in Sector East, for chemical, digital, and other intrusive exploitation, and further analysis, to shed light on criminal networks involved, their capabilities and tactics, which contributes significantly to crucial for the further development of effective protective and preventive measures. To allow for the collected EO evidence to be used in judicial proceedings, forensic exploitation of the evidence takes place by an UNPOL laboratory, as the interface with the ISF. MINUSMA Force issued a task order detailing the processes on evidence handling by its units.<sup>59</sup>

4.12 For UN Missions without the required capabilities to provide requested technical, logistical, or otherwise assistance to host nations to fight impunity, such demand should be channeled to UNHQ. This requires the necessary transparency from national authorities, which is requested by the Security Council in multiple resolutions<sup>60</sup> that field Missions are to follow up on cases related to attacks against peacekeepers to allow for monitoring and reporting on progress in these cases.

## **Mission context**

### **C-EO Capabilities – Mali**

4.13 Coordination between the different constituent parts in the Malian Government is a challenge and there is no Malian Government minister responsible for C-EO strategy. There is no overarching C-EO or counter-terrorism strategy, hence, there are no EO strategic Government departments.

4.14 Due to a lack of a national strategy, Mali does not have a complete, recognized national and coherent C-EO capability across all levels of Government. First responders to an EO incident tend to be the FAMa who are not trained in evidence handling procedures (PBI is limited or non-existent). There are insufficient NDSF to cover the vast territory of Mali and there are no EO forensic exploitation laboratories, so EO evidence for prosecution cases is normally unavailable, resulting in weak EO investigation and prosecution response.

4.15 There is no prosecutorial strategy to address and prioritize complex cases, which include EO incidents and attacks against civilians. There is currently no effective C-EO capability within the MDSF for EOD operations. Although the *Pôle Judiciaire Spécialisé* (PJS) has in some instances tried cases related to EO attacks, there is a lack of specialized capacity to deal with the complicated crime scenes related to EO attacks. Despite these challenges, the Mission has worked together with the Government of Mali to increase the capability of the justice system to hold perpetrators accountable. As of 1 October 2021, 176 persons were tried for terrorism-related offences. This resulted in the conviction of 143 individuals and the acquittal of 33 between 2017 to 2021, some of which were convicted for the use of EO.<sup>61</sup>

4.16 MINUSMA UNPOL has been building crime scene management capacity of the ISF, which has resulted in certified Malian trainers. However, PBI requires more technical expertise. The Mission can provide this technical support when requested. Not each attack is followed up with this expertise,

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<sup>59</sup> Task Order – Collecting and handling evidence for processing by exploitation labs – UN CONFIDENTIAL. September 2021

<sup>60</sup> Security Council Resolution (SCR) 2378 (2017), SCR 2518 (2020), SCR 2589 (2021)

<sup>61</sup> Office of Rule of Law and Security Institutions, DPO, dated 23 Nov 2021.

however, the national authorities do not always ask for support, while the Mission is often hampered by limited capacities to provide transport and security, in addition to the technical expertise.

4.17 Although not in every case, Malian authorities show willingness to address EO incidents against peacekeepers. Significant capacity building efforts by the Mission and other stakeholders are still needed to build the national criminal justice chain to hold those involved in EO attacks accountable. With the recent establishment of a National Directorate for Forensics, the Malian authorities show their engagement in building locally owned capacity to exploit forensic evidence. Until this Directorate is fully staffed, trained, and equipped, the judicial chain still depends on Mission's capacity for exploitation and judicialization of evidence.

4.18 Outside Bamako, there is a critical need for judicial capacity to use the evidence reports for prosecution of perpetrators of EO violence against civilians and UN personnel. The gold boom in northern Mali with its mining equipment, has found its way into the hands of AG's that have influence over the mines. Commercial goods, such as fertilizer and detonators are readily available and are being used for EO attacks. Coupled with criminal networks, porous borders, and the absence of state authority in the centre and northern part of the country, there are no EO framework or procedures. There is a need for EO awareness-raising with local retailers and intelligence-gathering by the national authorities to establishing tracing programmes at the national and regional level.

4.19 The UNMAS Mali Programme provides national capacity development within the Malian Defense and Security Forces (MDSF) and civilian humanitarian organizations. The programme mentors the Malian Operations Coordination Centre (CCO) management and coordination of the MDSF EO threat response, S&D training, FAMa staff officer and Gendarmerie training, and training and equipping an EOD/IEDD capacity within the Gendarmerie Special Intervention Brigade to respond to EO threats within Bamako and surrounding areas. Within the humanitarian realm, UNMAS provides mentorship and training of trainers courses to the National Mine Action authority and other national NGOs to develop EO risk education and victim assistance programs for affected populations. In cooperation with EUTM, UNMAS-Mali supports and assists in developing strategies within the MDSF C-IED Roadmap to include a shared understanding of the threat, a coordinating training strategy, and coherent operational and organic structures to support those efforts. Until the MDSF are capable and operationally ready to effectively respond to EO threats, UNMAS capacity building program remains critical.

#### **C-EO capabilities – Central African Republic (CAR)**

4.20 The Government of CAR has limited C-EO capabilities. NDSF are not reliably under national command or direction of their higher headquarters. Distance from Bangui confers significant operational NDSF autonomy. Any EO capability mentoring will need to also address the issue of national authority co-operation.

4.21 Previous bi-lateral training programs have trained individual FACA soldiers, but no standing EOD Team or unit is known to exist. The ISR Team heard unsubstantiated reports of a possible national police team that has conducted limited response to EO in and around Bangui. MINUSCA UNPOL has supported law enforcement investigations and provided capacity building forensics activities, including training and the development of standard operating procedures. However, national EO investigation capability remains limited due to a lack of resources and absence of ability to use EO evidence in criminal cases.

4.22 UNMAS efforts to support the FACA were suspended indefinitely by the government, and several funded national capacity programs to build national security forces EOD and weapons and ammunition management (WAM) capabilities remain unrealized. Compounding the situation are persistent anti-MINUSCA disinformation campaigns. Such campaigns, including those targeting certain contingents of the Mission, subsequently obstruct cooperation by local populations and some local authorities with MINUSCA. UNMAS is prepared to re-engage with the FACA whenever the government allows, but this review notes that cooperation must start at the national policy level.

### **C-EO Capabilities – Democratic Republic of the Congo**

4.23 The Government is willing to do more in EO policy and practice but lacks capability to identify and degrade EO networks. Strategically, the government could benefit from transparent bilateral partnerships to improve and increase capability to mitigate the EO threat. The Government currently lacks and the capability to conduct EO threat investigations or prosecute EO crimes within the military justice system.

4.24 NSDF have limited operational and strategic capability to mitigate and dispose of EO and rely on UNMAS sensitize the NDSF and civilian population, as well as render safe and dispose of EO. There is a significant gap in knowledge and capability of the FARDC engineering units to conduct regular demining and EOD operations, although one FARDC commander expressed the desire for EO equipment and training to the ISR Team. According to UNMAS, only 30 personnel of the FARDC are trained on EOD but with no practical experience or equipment, and no EO trained personnel assigned to the CCLAM. All EOD trained officers are currently based in Kinshasa while all reported EO incidents are in the East. The limited capability of the NSDF to mitigate the EO threat is likely to impact the ability of the government to deliver on its PoC responsibilities and ensure safety and security of its troops. UNMAS is working with the CCLAM to develop IED National standards.

4.25 In MONUSCO, UNPOL has assisted the PNC in criminal investigations. However, there is no specific focus or expertise on investigations related to EO, including forensic exploitation of evidence. As part of support to PNC to address the threat posed by the illicit transfer, destabilizing accumulation and misuse of arms, MONUSCO UNPOL and the UN Arms and Embargo Cell (AEC) have developed a joint work plan in September 2020, to perform firearms and ammunitions inspections, to share the information between the AEC and UNPOL via daily and technical assistance reports focusing mainly on weapons seized by national military and police authorities at the various crime scenes structures, to raise the awareness of the PNC, to provide training on the theme of weapons and ammunition inspection within the framework of the arms embargo in the country. This framework should work for EO.

4.26 Within MONUSCO, UNMAS DRC enjoys a collaborative environment with government. The program conducts explosive hazard awareness and WAM skills training with the FARDC as well as conducted joint demolition operations of recovered EO and unserviceable ammunition.

### **Regional disruption of supply chains and networks**

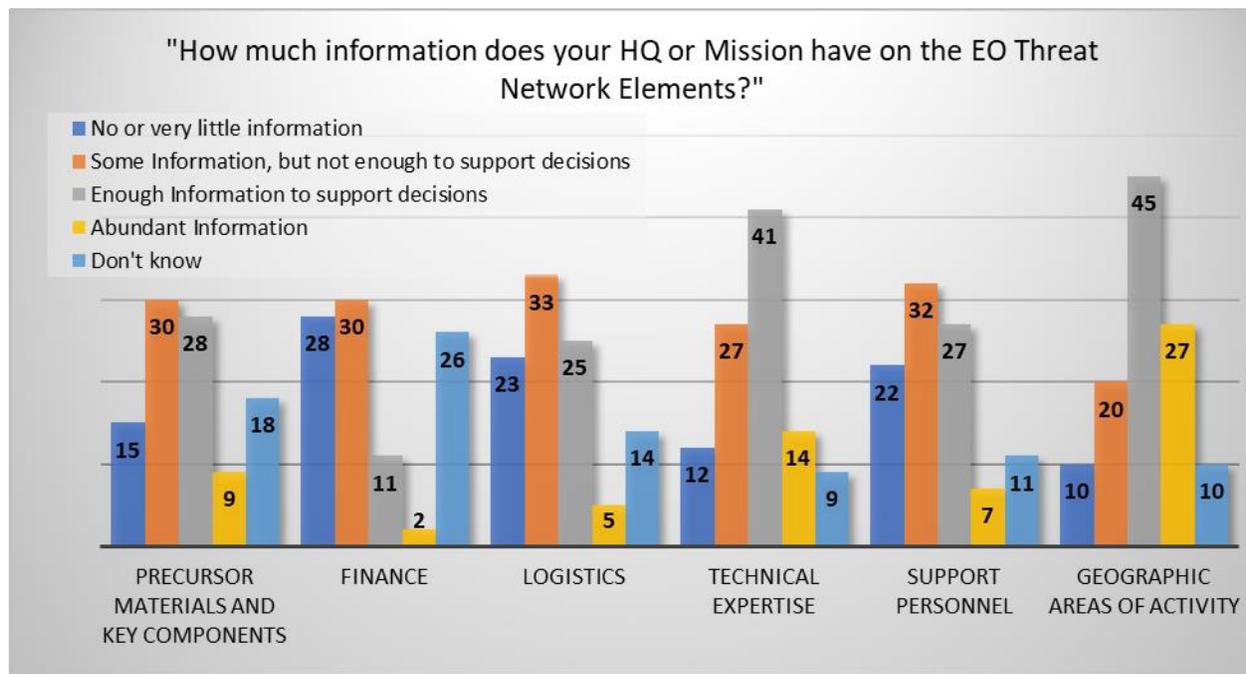
4.27 The ISR Team concluded that **proactively addressing the increasing EO threat requires that the UN focus regionally on both the drivers of instability** that lead to the use of EO in UN Mission areas, **and the disruption of the networks** that extend well beyond most UN Mission borders. The Team encourages the UN to consider widening of the mandates of UN organizations such as the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS) which has the responsibility for preventive

diplomacy, good offices and political mediation and facilitation efforts in West Africa and the Sahel. UNOWAS also works to consolidate peace and democratic governance in countries emerging from conflict or political crises so could be key in this regional effort. The UN may also consider encouraging and supporting organizations like the African Union to more concretely address the rising EO threat, and what is driving it. Porous borders and the regional nature of AG's and their support networks mean that although the EO threat may be localised, its roots and influences are widespread. Concepts of disrupting EO networks, therefore, are frequently rooted in a regional approach. Although the potential benefits of degrading EO networks are often emphasised, it can be easy to overlook the challenges of obtaining the required levels of understanding and effectively executing a plan to deliver the needed effects.

4.28 Networks are – almost by definition – resilient. A focus on individuals within EO networks can be counterproductive. As one interviewee commented: “*The prosecution of individuals responsible for procuring, building or planting IEDs is akin to ploughing the sea.*” There was a widespread view that effectively degrading an EO network must be conducted in parallel to wider political efforts. The Mission needs a clearer understanding of what activities and methods are most likely to provide a mitigating effect on the EO threat.

4.29 Although hard data on the effectiveness of regional counter-network activity will only come once the activity starts, some of the biggest gaps are already identifiable. Whilst 73% of ISR survey respondents thought they had good information on the locations of EO events, this dropped to 42% who thought they had valuable information on precursor materials and components, and only 20% who thought they knew enough about EO financing.

4.30 ISR Survey respondents were clear that they do not receive much in the way of information from regional partners: only 17% thought they received sufficient information or better from this source, whereas 92% of respondents agreed that greater bilateral and regional partnerships would help to mitigate the EO threat. UNHQ and UN Country Team members should facilitate and support access by Missions to EO information from regional partners.

Figure 21: Information on EO Threat Network Themes<sup>62</sup>

4.31 Understanding EO networks is challenging. One good example is found in the attempt to trace explosives and IED components found in Mali. In 2019 and 2020, Malian authorities seized 825 illegal explosive charges and 425 electric detonators in Bamako, which could easily have been used to manufacture IEDs. MINUSMA identified that these explosives all come from one source, an identified West African mining company. This offers a rare insight into sub-regional supply routes of EO components, and further exploitation could result in greater insight of the network, significant breakthroughs in identifying logistic and enabling systems, and open the possibility of criminal investigations of individuals involved in diversion. Some missions have mandate language that enables direct technical support. All missions can, and should, use the existing Co-operation Agreement with INTERPOL to support efforts at weapons and materiel tracing. In cases these do not apply, **the Security Council should consider mandating enhanced efforts at regional and cross-border co-operation in cases of EO networks.** In line with the Action for Peacekeeping (A4P), Member States should champion and advocate for a framework to control the import of materials used in EO against UN personnel and civilian population. In this light, Missions should encourage **national authorities in UN Mission areas to strengthen their regional cooperation mechanisms** to enhance cross-border information exchange and judicial cooperation in addressing transnational criminal networks.

<sup>62</sup> ISR Survey Data, 2021

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## Conclusion

*Coherent* is defined as “working closely and well together.”<sup>63</sup> In that spirit, the ISR Team concludes that **the increasing EO threat across many United Nations Missions requires a more coherent approach**, both in terms of protecting people as effectively as possible while continuing to deliver on Mission mandates, as well as in terms of proactively addressing the conditions that lead to the use of EO as a weapon.

While our report makes several recommendations that we believe to be practical and feasible, some, notably the recommendation to address the drivers of instability that lead to the use of EO, will require further investigation to determine feasible actions to achieve those goals. This report is intended as a call to action based on recommendations we have brought forward, hopefully as able voices for those incredibly brave peacekeepers, civilian components and partners facing this threat each day in the field missions. We recognize the work already accomplished following the Cruz Report, through A4P and hope that this report will help inform A4P Plus.

Success in the endeavor to reduce both the impact and use of EO will require leadership, resources, capacities, and partnerships. To stay ahead of this evolving threat, **status quo is not enough**. It is our sincere hope that the United Nations, supported by Member States, adapts to act coherently against this threat, and continues to save lives.

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<sup>63</sup> Merriam-Webster online dictionary.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. This Annex contains two tables of recommendations. Table 1 includes the cross-cutting recommendations listed in the Executive Summary, along with where to find supporting and enabling recommendations in the main body of the report plus a suggested 'owner' of any follow-up action. Recommendations specific to MINUSMA, MINUSCA, and MONUSCO are in Table 2, with the same references to chapter and owner.
2. Implementation of these recommendations requires integration of gender into planning to ensure a comprehensive approach.

**Table 1: Cross-Cutting Recommendations**

Serial	Recommendation	Chapter	Owner
<b>CROSS-CUTTING RECOMMENDATION 1: ESTABLISH A REGIONAL UN EFFORT TO ADDRESS THE DRIVERS OF INSTABILITY LEADING TO THE USE OF EO</b>			
1.1	Develop a regional plan to counter disinformation.	Chapters 2 & 3	UNHQ, Missions
1.2	UN HQ and UN Country Teams should facilitate and support access by Missions to EO information from regional partners in support of General Assembly resolution A/RES/70/46 (2015) on countering the threat posed by improvised explosive devices.	Chapter 4	UNHQ, Missions
1.3	Missions should use the existing Co-operation Agreement with INTERPOL to support efforts at weapons and materiel tracing.	Chapter 4	UNHQ, Missions
1.4	The Security Council should consider mandating enhanced efforts at regional and cross-border co-operation to address drivers of instability related to EO networks.	Chapter 4	Security Council
1.5	Provide forensic and C-EO technical exploitation capability to all missions: consider establishing a regional Level Two forensic and technical exploitation laboratory to support regional UN missions.	Chapters 2, 3 & 4	UNHQ, DOS
1.6	Capacity building efforts should include strengthening regional cooperation mechanisms to enhance cross-border information exchange and judicial cooperation in addressing transnational criminal networks.	Chapter 4	DPO

<b>CROSS-CUTTING RECOMMENDATION 2: EXPAND, REINFORCE, AND IMPROVE INTEGRATED UN EO PLANNING AND OPERATIONS</b>			
1.7	In Missions with an EO threat, Specific Information Requirements (SIRs) should prioritize gaining EO threat information.	Chapter 3	Missions
1.8	Missions with an EO threat should seek to reduce land-based logistics resupply demand.	Chapter 2	Missions
1.9	Missions with an EO threat should ensure all Mission personnel are updated regularly on the threat and, where relevant, take measures to ensure EO considerations are included in implementation of Protection of Civilians mandates.	Chapter 2	Missions
1.10	Where possible, missions should integrate Mission-level civilian information capabilities with Force-level overhead Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR) and Sector and unit-level ground-based and overhead assets to enhance understanding of IED emplacement networks and provide timely protection information for civilians and peacekeepers.	Chapter 3	Missions, DPO, DOS
1.11	Missions should encourage the implementation of local or sector-level information exchange and integration arrangements to build confidence and a shared understanding across Mission components.	Chapter 3	Missions
1.12	Expansion of the specialized ISR capability currently in MONUSCO is recommended to other Missions.	Chapter 3	DPO
1.13	Missions, where relevant, should focus as a priority on countering disinformation, including development of specific strategies based on understanding the nature and effectiveness of such campaigns and a Mission's changing vulnerability to the EO threat.	Chapter 2	Missions
1.14	To meet an identified gap in the overall percentage of competent EO experienced staff, military and civilian information and analysis staff should be assessed to be adequately qualified and experienced prior to deployment.	Chapter 3	DPO, T/PCCs
1.15	Interoperability, including automated EO data transfer, between IMSMA Core and SAGE should be delivered at the next possible update of the SAGE application.	Chapter 3	DOS
1.16	Intensify and expand the drive to make SAGE the situational awareness tool of choice for EO across the UN.	Chapter 3	UNHQ, Missions

1.17	Develop the capacity of SAGE to accept, identify and protect confidential EO data, whilst retaining the default principle of transparency, especially for life-saving information.	Chapter 3	DOS
1.18	The UN to consider widening of the mandates of UN organizations such as the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS) which has the responsibility for preventive diplomacy, good offices and political mediation and facilitation efforts in West Africa and the Sahel.	Chapter 4	DPO/DPPA

**CROSS-CUTTING RECOMMENDATION 3:  
ENGAGE POLITICALLY TO STRENGTHEN THE NATIONAL CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM REGARDING EO**

1.18	Missions should use their good offices to encourage national authorities for functional transparency in investigations and prosecutions in criminal cases related to EO, for the respective Mission components to provide technical support.	Chapter 4	Missions
1.19	Mission leadership should advocate for prioritizing criminal cases related to EO attacks.	Chapter 4	Missions
1.20	Missions should report on cases, follow up, monitor, and alert when national institutions are not transparent in their case management, not only related to attacks against peacekeepers but also in relation to civilians, due to the indiscriminate nature of EO.	Chapter 4	Missions
1.21	Develop mission specific EO procedures on supporting host nations to ensure accountability of crimes against peacekeepers.	Chapter 4	Missions
1.22	Ensure that EO forensics collection/exploitation and Post Blast Investigation capabilities are embedded within the relevant law enforcement, Judicial and Military departments.	Chapter 4	Missions
1.23	Consider increasing Mission's EO capacity, including budgetary resources, to strengthen support for transport and security provisions to national judicial authorities to restore state presence in the EO threat areas.	Chapter 4	Missions
1.24	Continue strengthening and mentoring technical EO capacities of the criminal justice chain to investigate and prosecute perpetrators.	Chapter 4	Missions

<b>CROSS-CUTTING RECOMMENDATION 4: REVIEW THE ROLE AND RESOURCES OF UNMAS IN MISSIONS WITH AN EMERGING EO THREAT</b>			
1.25	To sharpen EO lines of accountability, UN HQ and Mission leadership should address broader questions of what roles, responsibilities, and crucially, what conditions need to be met to transition from UNMAS (short-term support to bridge a gap) to a more enduring and sustainable response to an emerging or established EO threat, with a particular view to clarifying what approaches are needed to reach the requisite capacities by troop contributing countries.	Chapter 3	UNHQ, Missions
1.26	UNMAS in MINUSCA should receive additional EO resources to temporarily expand its program to improve force capabilities.	Chapter 3	Mission, UNHQ
1.27	UNMAS role in Missions in transition should be reviewed, particularly where continued support to EO within national institutions is envisioned.	Chapter 3	UNHQ
1.28	UNPOL and UNMAS should determine the policy position on UNMAS support to deploying FPU and police personnel, and deliver it, prioritising MINUSMA.	Chapter 3	UNHQ
<b>CROSS-CUTTING RECOMMENDATION 5: STRENGTHEN MEDICAL SUPPORT TO MISSIONS</b>			
1.29	Survivability in EO-related events and related medical capabilities should be part of the next peacekeeping mission medical review.	Chapter 3	UNHQ
1.30	PDVs and in-theatre validation should validate that the unit meets UN medical standards for Buddy First Aid training and the new UN COE Manual standards the Buddy First Aid kit.	Chapter 3	DPO
1.31	Each mission should have a helicopter dedicated to Casualty Evacuation and fitted appropriately with the correct equipment. A helicopter guaranteed in the event of a CASEVAC requirement is essential.	Chapter 3	Missions, DOS
1.32	Uniformed contingents should have the ability to prepare helicopter landing sites in the field, at night.	Chapter 3	T/PCCs, OMA
1.33	The capacity, capability and admission rate of mission Level 2 facilities should be assessed in any future review of peacekeeping medical care.	Chapter 3	UNHQ

1.34	Future updates to SAGE should consider its suitability to host medical information.	Chapter 3	DOS
1.35	Consider generation of forward/mobile surgical capacity.	Chapter 3	DPO, DOS
<b>CROSS-CUTTING RECOMMENDATION 6: GENERATE AN IMPROVED MILITARY AND POLICE CAPABILITY OF QUALIFIED MEN AND WOMEN</b>			
1.36	Increase staffing in the Office of Military Affairs and Police Division at UN HQ to include EO and increased Intelligence Surveillance Reconnaissance (ISR) expertise.	Chapter 3	DPO
1.37	Review SURs of uniformed units operating in an EO threat environment to ensure preparedness to respond to any increase in S&D tasks. Review Military and Police SURs to ensure Post Blast Investigation (PBI) and scene exploitation capacity as well as Electronic Counter Measures (ECM) equipment.	Chapter 3	DPO, DOS, T/PCCs
1.38	Generate Military Staff Officers and Individual Police Officers with C-IED expertise to strengthen Mission HQ capability.	Chapter 3	DPO, T/PCCs
1.39	Ensure that Pre-Deployment Training (PDT) for P/TCCs is optimised to the Mission-specific EO threat.	Chapter 3	DPO, Missions, T/PCCs
1.40	Strengthen the existing uniformed performance evaluation processes regarding EO.	Chapter 3	DPO, Missions, T/PCCs
1.41	Ensure deploying contingents conduct training in EO hazard awareness and S&D to UN standards prior to arrival in mission to shorten the post-deployment / in-mission training requirements.	Chapter 3	T/PCCs, DPO
1.42	Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR) detectors rather than metal detectors should be the default hand-held detector equipment requirement for S&D and EOD teams.	Chapter 3	T/PCCs, UNHQ
1.43	Develop specialized EO capacity related to UN Policing within field missions facing EO threat and required support from UN HQ.	Chapter 2	PCCs, UNHQ
1.44	Increase cultural awareness training during PDT (or during in-mission training) to improve EO-related community engagement.	Chapter 1	DPO, TCCs

1.45	Increase “local” language training for uniformed personnel during PDT before deployment to facilitate EO-related community engagement and PoC tasks, where relevant.	Chapters 1 & 2	T/PCCs
1.46	Increase number of translators for contingents deployed to facilitate EO-related community engagement and PoC tasks, where relevant.	Chapters 1 & 2	Missions, T/PCCs
1.47	Increase the MPV operational readiness of selected T/PCC.	Chapter 3	DPO, DOS, T/PCCs

**CROSS-CUTTING RECOMMENDATION 7:  
POLICY AND DOCTRINE**

1.48	Develop a United Nations system-wide EO Threat Mitigation Strategy and coordination framework to address the increasing EO threat and promote a coherent response. Elements could include: coordinated policy, doctrine, supporting documents, information sharing, reporting, “degrade” the network, amongst other issues and approaches.	Chapter 1	UNHQ
1.49	Review the COE Manual to increase the Operational Reserve and Hostile Factor for the Missions with an EO threat and S&D and EOD equipment requirements.	Chapter 1	DOS

**Table 2: Mission Recommendations**

Serial	Recommendation	Chapter	Owner
<b>MISSION RECOMMENDATIONS – MINUSMA</b>			
<b>The Mission should:</b>			
2.1	Maintain its current levels of EO mitigation efforts to address this threat and focus on integrating its response across the full range of its civilian and military capabilities to address the threat in the widest possible manner; broadening the response beyond military force protection.	Chapter 3	Mission
2.2	Create a National/Mission EO Working Group.	Chapter 3 & Annex B	Mission
2.3	Encourage the Government of Mali to initiate dialogue with non-signatory armed groups to address grievances and recognize motivations for using EO.	Chapter 4 & Annex B	Mission

2.4	Enhance or create methods to communicate with the local population who are victims of the EO threat. Strengthen Community Liaison Assistants (CLA) and PoC.	Chapters 2 & 4	Mission
2.5	Work with UN HQ to increase MPV operational readiness of selected T/PCCs.	Chapter 3	Mission
2.6	Use EO experts assigned to the Mission able to analyze trends to support the Boards of Inquiry (BOI) and consider additional BOI staffing.	Chapters 3 & 4	Mission
2.7	Continue to strengthen the Mission's EO forensics exploitation capacity.	Chapters 3 & 4	Mission
2.8	Continue to reduce logistic demands for remote bases, including by examining alternative routes to reduce the EO threat.	Chapter 3	Mission
2.9	Further research why some military units suffer fewer EO casualties or incidents.	Chapter 3	Mission
2.10	Carefully monitor and assess increased activity of Selected Bilateral Partners (SBP) for actions that could increase the use of EO.	Chapters 3 & 4	Mission

#### MISSION RECOMMENDATIONS – MINUSCA

<b>MISSION RECOMMENDATIONS – MINUSCA</b>			
2.11	UNMAS support to MINUSCA should be enhanced and appropriately resourced to provide additional in-mission S&D and EOD training to improve force capability.	Chapter 3	Mission
2.12	A review should be conducted on the requirement to issue Electronic Counter Measures (ECM) equipment to S&D and EOD teams in MINUSCA.	Chapter 3	Mission
2.13	Ensure EO threat mitigation governance and management is owned by Mission leadership and reinforces a national process through a comprehensive strategy, outlining roles and responsibilities of all relevant Mission components, in addition to those of the Force and of UNMAS.	Chapter 4	Mission
2.14	Strengthen analysis and security assessment capability including to assess who is employing EO, what are sources of EO precursor materiel, and where are source locations.	Chapter 3	Mission
2.15	Engage politically at the level of the SRSG and through the Force with national authorities to allow night flights, especially for CASEVAC and practice/crew qualification.	Chapter 3	Mission

2.16	Exercise CASEVAC drills designed around EO incidents with numerous casualties and review the CASEVAC plan in accordance with the drill exercise findings.	Chapter 3	Mission
2.17	Consider additional trauma capability in the West.	Chapter 3	Mission
2.18	Engage politically at the level of the SRSG or higher to address SOFA violations and SBP threats (connected to the EO threat response and delivery of PoC mandates).	Chapters 2, 4 & Annex B	Mission
2.19	Use existing S&D/EOD Team capability to regain access in Sector West for the Mission and Agencies/Funds/Programs (AFPs) mandate delivery.	Chapters 2 & 3	Mission
2.20	Consider limited deployment of MPVs, if and where mobility allows.	Chapter 3	Mission
2.21	Increase UNMAS mentoring of S&D Teams and EOD Teams, including in evidence collection.	Chapter 3	Mission
2.22	Deploy TCC EOD Teams to EO threat areas to support countering EO, and not solely for Force Protection.	Chapter 3	Mission
2.23	Consider best means to procure and equip S&D Teams in the short-term to meet emerging needs until T/PCCs can provide its own equipment and training. UNMAS or bilateral sources are options.	Chapter 3	Mission
2.24	Increase PKI and exploitation capabilities such as post-blast investigation (PBI) and a Level One exploitation laboratory to add value in both proactive and reactive areas. Consider an equivalent to the MONUSCO advanced ISR capability for gaining advance notice of threats.	Chapter 3	Mission
2.25	Mission-level or UN HQ engagements with the CAR national authorities should use C-EO capacity building and Weapons and Ammunition (WAM) support as an uncontentious point of dialogue and should consider proposing cooperation on those issues as entry points for further discussions.	Chapter 4	Mission
2.26	Establish a methodology for teaching EO threat assessment for the conduct of ground movement.	Annex B	Mission
2.27	Continue political engagement to gain access to Sector West and address the EO threat.	Annex B	Mission

MISSION RECOMMENDATIONS – MONUSCO			
2.28	UNMAS support to MONUSCO should be enhanced and appropriately resourced to provide additional in-mission S&D and EOD training to improve force capability.	Chapter 3	Mission
2.29	Conduct a review on the requirement to issue Electronic Counter Measures (ECM) equipment to S&D and EOD teams.	Chapter 3	Mission
2.30	Ensure C-EO governance and management is owned by mission leadership with clear roles and responsibilities and expand it to ensure positive two-way information flow, including the Force Intervention Brigade (FIB) and Beni Hub.	Annex B	Mission
2.31	Strengthen UNMAS EO risk education for FARDC, the <i>Police Nationale Congolaise</i> (PNC), and local populations.	Chapter 4	Mission
2.32	Reinforce the sensitization of the local population to the EO threat also through regular community policing projects and programs.	Chapter 4	Mission
2.33	Review, as a proactive measure, current Force Protection measures and security posture with UNDSS, UNPOL and UNMAS (in support) to ensure EO threat mitigation measures are in place. Operationalize the Mission's Support plan against EO threat in Beni.	Chapter 4 & Annex B	Mission
2.34	Exercise CASEVAC drills designed around EO incidents with numerous casualties. Consider additional trauma capability and review the CASEVAC plan in accordance with the exercise findings.	Chapter 3	Mission
2.35	Review the requested EOD Company SUR to ensure it provides enough capability (equipment, training, deployment).	Chapter 3	Mission
2.36	Enhance UNMAS capability and resources to increase capacity of the Congolese Mine Action Centre (CCLAM) to detect and dispose of EO. Establish a special EOD training program to strengthen military justice investigation entities.	Chapter 3 & Annex B	Mission
2.37	Initiate a dialogue with the government to prioritize EO threat investigation, prosecution, and adjudication.	Chapters 3, 4, & Annex B	Mission
2.38	Strengthen EO aspects of PKI and continue to develop use of the ISR assets to counter the EO threat.	Chapter 3 & Annex B	Mission

**Annex B, Post-visit Reports  
Provided by the ISR Team to  
Mission Leadership, to  
The UN Response to the EO  
Threat  
Independent Strategic Review  
Dated 23 November 2021**

**Post-visit Report provided by the ISR Team to MINUSMA Leadership**

**Information gathering, review activity, and data collection**

1. During the field study phase in Mali over the period 26 Sep – 13 October 2021 the ISR Team conducted 42 separate engagements, focused on MINUSMA senior management and mission components plus included wider stakeholders such as the UN CT, the humanitarian community, the EU Training Mission, and other external actors. The ISR Team was also able to deploy to Mopti and Doentza in Sector Centre and Gao (in Sector East) and Kidal (in Sector North) to observe and engage with field offices, sector HQs and uniformed units. At the Mission HQ, the ISR Team conducted interviews and round-table meetings both on a divisional basis and based on thematic areas. Principal inputs came from the Mission leadership, UNMAS, the Force, DMS, PoC, UNPOL, JMAC, JOC and BOI amongst others. This activity was underpinned by a review of MINUSMA documents and UN HQ policies, and the input from MINUSMA into the ISR survey.

2. In general, the ISR concludes that **the MINUSMA Mission has a mature and very high explosive ordnance (EO) threat, with the potential for further development; threat mitigation has improved for peacekeepers, but civilians remain extremely vulnerable**. EO-based attacks have seen a steady rise from 77 in 2014 to 170 in 2020 (and 137 in the first 8 months alone of 2021). Both MINUSMA personnel, MDSF, International Forces, and civilians are targeted; the number of EO-related fatalities amongst peacekeepers has declined from a peak of 23 in 2016, principally because of improved mitigation measures, but civilians remain extremely vulnerable to serious injury or death because of EO attacks. The Mission should further strengthen its efforts on early warning and quick response to increase a more proactive approach to address the threats, including against the population.

3. The review team made several specific observations that may support the MINUSMA and UNHQ next steps in addressing the EO threat in Mali:

- **Information Collection and Management.** Despite the existence of analysis capacities within MINUSMA, the lack of reliable and timely collection of intelligence in the field dramatically hinders the ability of the Mission to identify threats to the security of UN personnel and failed at establishing an early warning capacity. This is easily explained by the size of Mali, difficult access to most of the areas affected by terrorist activities, and low population density. This results in the inability to collect human intelligence using classic Mission's capacities, which would immediately compromise any of their contacts, exposing them to deadly retaliation by TAGs. The collection, sharing and management of information should be part of an integrated approach by the mission; the use of the SAGE and IMSMA tools to provide 'single versions of the truth' is noted and fully supported, and there is an effective/cohesive flow of relevant information across the Divisions, the Force and UNPOL on EO threat and EOs impact on UN personnel as well as on the local communities, particularly within the sectors, enabled by Regional JOCs. However, the ISR Team noted several instances of critical EO information failing to reach those who required it for protection purposes. Improving the flow and speed of existing information will require an organisational approach and rigorous adherence to emergency communications procedures that consider stakeholder sensitivities alongside robust transparency measures to improve protection. Alongside this, additional information collection measures should be integrated into a coherent system that provides a full EO threat picture for the Mission. These should include existing methods

such as Community Liaison Assistants (CLA) and the information gained by Human Rights and DDR components as well as by UNMAS risk education outreach initiatives, but also potentially more active measures; an equivalent to MONUSCO's advanced ISR capabilities could be considered.

- **The active intelligence capability is non-existent** in mission and requires suitable personnel and equipment to pre-empt/avoid EO incidents which would also help avert direct fire/IDF etc. attacks. This structure may be suitably equipped with Signal Intelligence (SIGINT) capability and human peacekeeping-intelligence, which is a realistic prospect in MINUSMA to enhance protection and understanding of the EO threat, but to achieve this, clear protocols for the use of information must be established and all information collection elements of the mission must contribute to the enterprise, including CLAs. This could include through the intensification of outreach campaigns via "Police de proximite's activities (INFOUNIT). Effectively gaining and using EO threat information also requires a regional approach; UNHQ should provide the framework, authority, and support for the Mission to identify activities for effective EO threat mitigation for which formal MOUs would be beneficial, negotiate with partners and put these in place. In addition, it is suggested to subscribe to Outsourced Intelligence Collection Capacities (OICC) from a specific private Company with experience and long presence and operations in Mali. This maintains an autonomous information collection network directly from the population, operating isolated with an indirect payment system for security purposes. It would provide a real-time information capacity that does not exist so far and leaves the Mission blind to most of the unfolding threats in the field. Finally, forensic, and technical information exploitation requires additional resources within the L2 laboratory in Bamako, and a more robust process to ensure consistency of 'credible' evidence delivery into this facility.
- **Having an impact on EO Networks.** Finding an effective way to address EO networks requires establishing a common understanding between all stakeholders along the peacekeeping-security-humanitarian-development nexus. The term 'Attack the Network' used widely by NATO P/TCCs can create an adverse reaction among key stakeholders, from the Security Council downwards who see this activity as exclusively kinetic and outside the scope of the UN. Using the UN terminology 'Degrade the Network', alongside a clear and widespread understanding that lethal force is only one of a wide range of options including dialogue, financial pressure, materiel interdiction and many more that can all be applied to reduce the effectiveness and likelihood of EO attacks. It is not entirely clear if MINUSMA has sufficient information to enable **EO network degradation**, but it is certainly true that the Mission cannot understand or affect the network with the information it holds in its current configuration. To undertake the full gambit of 'Degrade the Network' activities, UN mandates would require revision. Such revision would allow for a more effective isolation of the component parts of networks and target the vulnerabilities within AG's.
- **T/PCC Readiness.** To ensure effective performance, T/PCCs must incorporate UN performance standards (EO, medical, PKI) early within their PDT and preparation cycle. Although SURs and COE manuals have been updated with the most effective capability requirements, there are instances where T/PCCs have not fully met those requirements; this has resulted in the need for additional training once in mission – normally falling to UNMAS to deliver. As a part of addressing this problem, UNHQ must look at the PDV process to ensure the requisite expertise of Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) to evaluate the following capabilities EO, Medical, PKI, S&D capacity and CASEVAC is available to identify those earlier and enable the T/PCC to improve before deployment. S&D Teams are a key element of C-EO capability; for some units the UNMAS in mission training is the first time the troops are presented with the training and are considered "operationally ineffective" till trained, and to improve these competencies the Force should conduct periodic training with supporting EOD teams to improve their skills, gain experience, and improve integration with this important force enabler. FHQ U7 should coordinate and ensure these programs designed through identified gaps in training are followed and continuously updated as is currently being done. The UNMAS training support to T/PCCs should be extended to ensure S&D Teams receive a refresher course after 6 months. Weekly and Monthly CASEVAC training must continue to be maintained and evaluated. Additionally, the MINUSMA Police and UNMAS should work to increase the number of S&D trained

teams in the FPU to allow for more rest and refit rotations and expand the FPU's capability. To allow FPUs to be better prepared and equipped to mitigate the EO threat, a swift implementation of the revised SUR is critical, which addresses the gap in APCs and lack of S&D capability and equipment. A PDT program for FPUs regarding the EO threat should be established. The Force and Police must remain alert and prepare for, a potential evolution of the EO threat or a change in direction such as use of RPGs or indirect fire systems, if and when the Force reduces the effectiveness of current TAGs attack modus operandi. Good intelligence gathering by U2 and the UNPOL Police Analysis Cell will be a key component of keeping pace with TAG modus operandi intentions.

- **The role of UNMAS.** UNMAS in Mali is an integral linchpin to the entire mission's EO/IED threat mitigation effort. UNMAS activities of training and mentoring the entire continuum of required skills from explosive hazard awareness, S&D, to specialist EOD teams; managing the primary source of explosive threat data and analysis; conducting national capacity development; and integrating into key mission and force operational processes provides MINUSMA a critical force enabler capability. The ISR Team suggests that, with its comparative advantage and technical expertise, UNMAS should be included in the relevant peace agreement monitoring committees and subcommittees, especially security subcommittees to advocate for responsibilities of different parties on the awareness and mitigation of the risks posed by EO. UNMAS also provides the required continuity of presence to ensure these crucial functions endure and continuously improve. The ISR Team was impressed by the focus and responsiveness of the Mali UNMAS team in this regard, and asks the question – until what point should the Mission rely on UNMAS to “fill this gap”? This level of effort detracts from other activities falling within UNMAS mandate and expertise; possibly blurs lines of responsibilities and accountability between Mission components; and creates a reliance on UNMAS amongst the rest of the mission for the long-term that was meant to meet a short-term gap. Mission leadership and UNHQ must address the broader question: what roles, responsibilities and limitations should be placed on an UNMAS response to an emerging or established EO threat? In case additional role/tasks of UNMAS are envisaged then they must be suitably reinforced with personnel and resources.
- **Operational Planning and convoy vulnerability.** Logistic supply convoys are one of MINUSMA's principal vulnerabilities to the EO threat. For improved convoy protection, improved capabilities for convoy escorts, better PKI, including air intelligence prior to convoy movements, a more thorough planning process and discipline of civilian drivers is essential. Consideration should be given to the use of bespoke 'Route Clearance Package' capabilities or additional forces/deployment for route clearance, but this would be resource-intensive and would also come with operational disadvantages. Alternative mitigations offer attractive solutions; for example, strengthen the Mission efforts to reduce the number of convoys needed by reducing logistical demands using alternative methods, such as Solar Power, maximizing the use of local resources, alternative logistics routes (where feasible), continuing to find the most efficient camp and infrastructure development, and maximizing the use of air logistics. These would all contribute to reducing the large logistic requirement which is the most frequent target of EO.
- **Political Measures and Protection of Civilians.** The single most effective measure to mitigate the EO threat encountered by the ISR Team during the study was the delivery of community peace and reconciliation agreements mediated by MINUSMA and partners, such as the peace agreements negotiated in Koro Cercle, Sector Centre, since Summer 2020. It is important, however, to implement these in a manner coherent with wider Mission activity and UN policy. Effective delivery of PoC also hinges on engagement with 'besieged communities' and reconciling their need for security (and entering into tacit agreements with AGs for 'protection') with need for accurate information through confidential means to ensure safety and security of personnel, as well as safe conduct of mission activities; scale up efforts, in collaboration with the national authorities, on the return, restoration of sustainable state authority. As part of this, MINUSMA should **advocate with national authorities** for their engagement with all spoilers of peace; consideration of sanctions

(most obviously an **arms embargo**) should be considered. The mission may also engage with national authorities for road paving projects (*if feasible*) such as one reportedly being funded by EU, which could decrease the EO incidents while providing wider socio-economic benefits as well.

- **Disinformation and Countering Disinformation.** The use of **disinformation to drive a wedge between UN personnel and the population** includes reports that MINUSMA and French counter-terrorism operations have planted EO to harm the non-signatory armed groups and have harmed the population. Beside the Mission broadcast of anti-mines public service announcements, prepared by Strategic Communications and Public Information and broadcast the work of UNMAS in radio and multimedia productions, a MINUSMA counter-disinformation capability to degrade the disinformation campaign was not observed. Hence, the Mission may consider adding counter-disinformation capability to the intelligence structure in close coordination with respective Mission civilian offices.
  - **Accountability.** Impunity is one of the root causes of local population distrust of Malian authorities, including its NDSF, sometimes leaving the local population no other choice than to rely on extremist groups for protection. Although the Malian authorities seem to show willingness to address cases related to EO attacks against peacekeepers, significant capacity building efforts by the Mission and other stakeholders are still needed to build the national criminal justice chain to hold those involved in EO attacks accountable in accordance with Security Council Resolution 2589. Since 2017, 176 cases have been tried, 143 convicted and 33 acquitted. At least some of these are related to EO. Although the mandate seems to give enough room to address the fight against impunity, **stronger political advocacy is required to push for more transparency and greater political will from the Malian authorities** – this could occur from the Mission but is more likely to be effective if equally delivered from UNHQ. At the local judicial level, there is a critical need for the mission to push the Malian authorities to use the evidence reports for prosecution. This will need to include training and mentoring for Malian law enforcement and judicial authorities in exploiting and using this technically complex evidence in legal proceedings. Eventually, there will be a need to build an effective Malian (FAMa and NPM) C-EO capacity to take over responsibility for EOD operations. Thoughts must be given now to shape the requirements of this line of development to avoid an ineffectual capability. Consideration could also be given to the renewed DDR efforts to bring those that use EO back into communities, cutting ties with terrorists, ending violence, and abiding by Malian laws.
  - **Other**
    - The Mission budget needs to reflect an increased and increasing EO threat.
    - Carefully monitor increased activity of selected bilateral partners for destabilizing actions.
    - Increase MPV operational readiness by engaging with T/PCCs and continue/increase UNMAS support until T/PCCs can meet UN standards for training/equipping.
    - Further research why some military units suffer fewer EO casualties or incidents.
    - Ensure that Mission HQ U3 CIED staff are carefully selected to ensure they are Subject Matter Experts able to contribute to operational planning.
    - Create an EO Working Group at National/Mission HQ level.
    - Engage with non-signatory armed groups to address grievances and recognize motivations for using EO threat as tactic.
    - With UNHQ assistance, continue the level of medical care and work to strengthen capacity for Buddy First Aid in the first 10 minutes (enforcing UN training and equipping standards).
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## **Post-visit Report provided by the ISR Team to MINUSCA Leadership**

### **Evidence gathering, review activity and data collection**

1. During the field study phase in the Central African Republic (CAR) over the period 13 – 23 October 2021, the ISR team conducted 36 separate engagements, focused on MINUSCA but including meetings with wider stakeholders such as the UNCT, the humanitarian community, the EU Training Mission, and other external actors. The ISR Team was also able to deploy to Bouar in Sector West and Kaga Bandoro in Sector Centre to observe and engage with field offices, Sector HQs, and uniformed units. In the Mission HQ, the ISR Team conducted interviews and round-table meetings both on a divisional basis and based on thematic areas. Principal inputs came from the Mission leadership, UNMAS, the Force, DMS, PoC, UNPOL, JMAC and JOC. This activity was underpinned by a review of MINUSCA documents and UN HQ policies, and the input from MINUSCA into the ISR survey.
2. In general, the ISR concludes that **the MINUSCA Mission is in a transitional phase for the EO threat**, but it is difficult to tell which direction that threat might take. EO-based attacks rose from 0.1 per month as at last October, to about 2.5 per month in the last 12 months. This took the form of the first EO seen in November 2020, a sharp rise in Feb-Mar 2021 and steady since then. Concentrated almost exclusively in Sector West (North and West of the Carnot – Bozoum – Bouca axis), there is a clear link between EO events and the November deployment, and February surge, of partnered *Forces Armées Centrafricains* (FACA) and Selected Bilateral Forces (SBF) in that sector. Exactly what that relationship is, is uncertain. Based on the evidence available, the ISR Team agrees with the MINUSCA conclusion that the majority of EO devices are probably from AG's attempting to protect their territory against FACA/SBF advances, but it is possible that FACA and SBF are also employing mines during their operations. Irrespective of the precise threat evolution, **it is prudent for MINUSCA to lay some groundwork to mitigate EO risks, and essential for the mission to gain greater understanding** of the developing situation.
3. The ISR Team made several specific observations that may support the MINUSCA and UN HQ response to, and anticipation of, the EO threat in CAR:
  - **Mobility Challenges for MINUSCA.** As with other threats, the inability for peacekeepers to deploy leads to less security, which in turn means reduced presence. The ISR Team observed, however, that the EO threat presents a particularly insidious challenge in this regard, with an abundance of caution leading to conservative route classification (particularly in Sector West) and a lack of military and police patrolling, in turn leading to reduced agencies/funds/programmes (AFP) mandate delivery. A rigorous, evidence-based, routinely reviewed, consistent and transparent threat assessment which will strengthen the analysis and security assessment capability including who is employing EO, EO sources and locations should be adopted. Ground movement should form part of the 'confidence package' that will provide momentum to troops to deploy on patrol into contested areas. This should be combined with the use of current and planned S&D Teams, and EOD Teams. Leadership at Sector and Force level should focus on instilling this confidence in deployed units. The ISR Team noted that there were local examples of best practice in this regard, with excellent use of community engagement, observation and manoeuvre reducing risk and enabling their movement in these areas.
  - **SOFA violations and associated threats.** The role of some bilateral actors and the challenge of operating 'alongside' a national authority which does not regard UN activity positively raises many issues and contributes to a range of outcomes directly related to the EO threat. The ISR Team heard numerous unverified views that bilateral forces operating in the West of CAR use EO to conduct their operations. There is also evidence that the military operations of FACA and SBF in these areas have driven AGs to use EO as a means of defence. At the same time, FACA and SBF efforts to prevent MINUSCA personnel from accessing large areas in Sector West (SOFA violations) contribute to the EO threat being unaddressed and greater impact on the civilian population. Continued political engagement will be required for MINUSCA to gain access Sector West.

- **MINUSCA C-EO governance, and the role of UNMAS.** The current and planned structure for C-EO governance within MINUSCA is a useful illustration of the ISR's wider observations on strategizing, governing, and managing C-EO efforts. At present, C-EO efforts have been *de facto* delegated to the Force DCOS Operational Support. The ISR Team fully supports the efforts of the existing Working Group but believes that the Mission C-EO enterprise must be owned by senior leadership, who should endorse and resource an integrated strategy that provides a framework for action across military, police and civilian elements of a mission, in support of national authorities, as well as bringing in elements of the wider UN team, and regional partners. One option is to use an Operational Coordination Team (OCT), chaired by the Mission COS. The [temporary] role of UNMAS should also be planned, with responsibilities and boundaries clearly set, including in relation to the Force; the shape and resourcing of this model should be developed and directed by UNHQ.
- **Disinformation and countering disinformation.** From the perspective of the EO threat, widespread disinformation, and mobilisation of the population against UN activity results in significantly increased vulnerability and obstructed responses to mines and IEDs. The ISR Team strongly recommends that MINUSCA commit resources to allow it to operate in partnership with the UNCT and humanitarians to counter disinformation and ensure that peacekeeping and humanitarian efforts remain entwined with public consent, and therefore less vulnerable to EO threats. One option is to include strategic communications capability in the Mission HQ, the Force, and/or UNPOL.
- **Casualty Evacuation (CASEVAC).** Currently, UN CASEVAC does not occur at night. *Notes Verbale* seen by the review indicate that this is due to government-imposed airspace constraints, but this was not widely understood by interviewees; some stakeholders believed that the CAR government had banned night air movement, others thought it was because the aviation bases did not have night flying facilities. The ISR Team concluded that the second point is moot – MINUSCA aviation units arrive with the required capability to operate from, and to, helicopter landing site (HLS) locations with minimal preparation. The consequences are clear – the likely death, sooner or later, of UN personnel because of inability to evacuate them from the point of wounding. Dealing with the declining currency of helicopter crews is also a problem, but very much secondary. Likewise, Force units and FPU must practice establishing night HLSs. Fixing this issue must be a high priority for the Mission with support from UNHQ, as required. It should also be noted that the CAR government is currently allowing night flights by FACA and SBF aircraft.
- **Additional Capabilities.** Some additional required capabilities are already being generated. A limited number of Mine Protected Vehicles (MPVs) in Sector West will provide a higher degree of assurance, although terrain conditions will mean they may be limited in operational range. One unit, interviewed by the ISR Team, methodology provides a good example of what can be achieved without MPVs. Additional EOD teams will also add assurance and open a process for evidence collection. They should be deployed to the areas of threat and used to support the C-EO enterprise and not solely for local force protection. Consideration should also be given to training and equipping S&D Teams within infantry units and FPUs (possibly using UNMAS as the delivery agent for training in the short term) and establishing this capability in units deploying in the future. Capabilities such as post-blast investigation (PBI) and a Level One exploitation laboratory would add value in both proactive and reactive areas. Possibly an equivalent to the MONUSCO advanced ISR capability should be considered for gaining advance notice of threats.
- **Information management.** The coherent use of interoperable information systems will support a common understanding of the problem and enable unified efforts against the threat. The UniteAware and SAGE system, and the UNMAS IMSMA application should be promoted as the 'single version of the truth' for incident management and EO events respectively, with both feeding each other.
- **Pre-Deployment Training.** Senior Mission leadership questioned the effectiveness of PDT and preparation of uniformed contingents, a theme in common with other Missions. Additional

robustness in EO/C-EO training and capacity is needed, and a more specific focus on the AAV and PDV process could be the route to deliver this. UNHQ should also be engaged to identify if alternative models for pre-deployment training could be used; mobile training teams, bilateral agreements between T/PCCs and other member states for training, pre-rotation visits from UNHQ or other measures. T/PCCs with existing pledges could be reminded of the importance of C-EO training, and continued review of the UN Manuals (such as UNIBAM and the EOD Manual) would support the conceptual understanding of the requirement.

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### **Post-visit Report provided by the ISR Team to MONUSCO Leadership**

#### **Evidence gathering, review activity and data collection**

1. During the field study phase in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) over the period 23 – 29 Oct the review team conducted 33 separate engagements, focused on MONUSCO but including meetings with wider stakeholders such as the UN country team, the humanitarian community, the FARDC and other external actors. The review team was also able to deploy to BENI to observe and engage with field offices, OIC HoO and uniformed units. In the Field HQ, the review team conducted interviews and round-table meetings both on a divisional basis and based on thematic areas. Principal inputs came from the Mission leadership, UNMAS, the Force, DMS, PoC, UNPOL, JMAC and JOC. This activity was underpinned by a review of MONUSCO documents and UN HQ policies, and the input from MONUSCO into the ISR survey.

2. The ISR observed that the Mission is at the beginning of a potentially serious increase in EO threat with at least 37 EO incidents reported between 1 Jan 2021 and 30 Sep 2021 compared to 7 in 2020, 14 in 2019 and 1 in 2018, 2 in 2017 and 19 in 2016 according to UNMAS<sup>64</sup>. Tactics such as potentially radio controlled EO and dummy devices to test response raise concerns over the evolving nature of the threat. However, it is still difficult to assess in which direction that EO threat might involve evolve or whether this represents a trend. While the FARDC are the main target of EO-based incidents, the civilian population is the most affected with 22 civilians killed in the last 12 months. Most EO-related incidents were reported in the Beni area, allegedly perpetrated by the ADF as a defensive means against the FARDC and to prevent the local population from accessing their fields to steal their crops. It is prudent for MONUSCO to continue to mitigate EO risks, and essential for the mission to gain greater understanding of the evolving situation.

3. The ISR Team made several specific observations that may support MONUSCO and UNHQ response to, and anticipation of, the EO threat in DRC.

#### Main observations and recommendations:

- **Mandate delivery is not “yet” significantly impeded by the increasing number of EO incidents** (23 since 31 May 2021), but as many as 22 civilian casualties by EOs in the last 12 months.
- **EO incident data is predominantly unverified and from FARDC, but** simple EO are the norm, targeted against FARDC and for extortion. Others were planted in a church, bar, and fuel station. ADF is believed to be the primary instigator. One individual reportedly Middle Eastern, was arrested for training ADF in IED and UAS techniques.
- **C-EO governance, and the role of UNMAS.** The current and planned structure for C-EO governance within MONUSCO is a useful illustration of the ISR’s wider observations on strategizing, governing, and managing C-EO efforts. At present, C-EO efforts have been *de facto* delegated to the Force, sitting in the remit of the DCOS Operational Support while support to the government is provided by UNMAS. The ISR Team fully supports the existing efforts but believes that the Mission C-EO

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<sup>64</sup> UNMAS Assessment report on the IED threat in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, 30 October 2020 (p.10) and UNMAS briefing to the ISR team on UN responses to IEDs (Goma, 26 October 2021)

enterprise must be owned by senior leadership, who should endorse and resource a strategy that provides a framework for action across military, police and civilian components of the mission, as well as bringing in elements of the wider UN team, regional partners, and national authorities; this is not a problem to be left only to the Force and UNMAS. As one option, the use of an Operational Co-ordination Team (OCT), chaired by the Mission COS, would be a suitable vehicle. The role of UNMAS in this enterprise should also be planned, with responsibilities and boundaries clearly set.

- **Additional Capabilities.** Additional capabilities are required, including S&D capability (beyond that required in self sustainment by the SURs and MOUs), and EOD capacity (with post-blast investigation capacity). Limited Mine Protective Vehicle (MPV) are required but must be validated against the terrain and road conditions where they are planned to operate. Consideration should also be given to training and equipping infantry units S&D Teams (possibly using UNMAS as the delivery agent for training in the short term) and establishing this capability in units deploying / rotating in the future. Proactive capabilities such as post-blast investigation, weapons investigation team (WIT) capability, and a Level One exploitation laboratory (and access to a possible regional Level Two Laboratory) would add value.

4. Further recommendations based on different levels:

**Mission level**

- Review the current force protection measures and security posture, with UNDSS, UNPOL and UNMAS in support to ensure EO threat mitigation measures are immediately put into place. While there may be no current confirmed incidents of suicide attacks, planning a response and considering evolving threats is recommended.
- MONUSCO should operationalize the Mission's Support plan against IED threat in Beni.
- Reinforce the sensitization of the awareness of the local population to the EO threat through regular community policing projects and programs.
- Strengthen PKI and continue to develop use of the GTAU.
- Be prepared to increase BOI staff at mission HQ to handle increased numbers of BOI if the EO threat further increases. There should also be the capacity to capture wider BOI data to look for trends and recommend actions.
- Consider adding a seconded officer with previous experience as a MSO in one of the 3 missions with a current EO threat and UNHQ expertise to strengthen Force knowledge of UN organization and to provide EO experienced liaison with the UNCT, agencies, funds and programs.
- Exercise CASEVAC drills based on EO incidents with high numbers of severely wounded peacekeepers, national security forces, or civilians. Consider additional trauma capability in the North and review the CASEVAC plan in accordance with the exercise findings.

**UN HQ Support to TCC/PCC**

- Generate MONUSCO MSO and IPO C-IED expertise to strengthen HQ knowledge and crime scene management expertise.
- Review MONUSCO SURs for INF BAT, QRF, SF, and FPU to strengthen S&D capacity beyond self-sustainment category and integrate appropriate COE into Annex B.
- Generate MONUSCO EOD capacity with post-blast investigation (PBI) capacity for existing ENG units.
- MONUSCO's advanced ISR capacity should continue to be studied and generated. Consult with other Missions that may wish to study similar capability in their Mission.

**Capacity building**

- Training or specialist mentoring/capacity building to FADRC on forensics, PBI and exploitation to ensure chain custody of evidence and appropriate response to identify the perpetrators, the motives, and the origin of EO.
- UNPOL/FPU should conduct training sessions entitled 'EO threat mitigation competence' for national counterparts on permanent basis.
- The Mission should study national legal framework with particular focus on EO criminalization and come up with concrete suggestions on how to adopt the current DRC law to the violent EOD threat.
- Initiate a dialogue with the government to prioritize EO threat investigation, prosecution, and adjudication.
- Establish a special EOD training program to strengthen military justice investigation entities.
- Enhance UNMAS capability to support the Congolese Mine Action Center (CCLAM) in detecting and disposing of IED-EOD threat.
- Assist Gov DRC initiating bilateral partnerships with external actors with a view to increase its strategic and operational capability to mitigate and dispose of increasing IEDs threat, as the Mission prepares its progressive and phased drawdown.

**UNMAS**

- UNHQ should enhance UNMAS capability to support the Congolese Mine Action Center (CCLAM) in detecting and disposing of IED-EOD threat.
- EO risk education for FARDC and the civilian population undertaken by UNMAS should be strengthened and extended.
- The Mission should continue to encourage the Government to increase resources to reinforce the capacity of the CCLAM.
- The Government of the DRC should seek external partnerships to increase its strategic and operational capability to mitigate and dispose of increasing IEDs threat, as the Mission prepares its progressive and phased drawdown.
- Conduct more training/mentoring of S&D Teams and review the SUR for the requested EOD Company to ensure it provides enough capability (equipment, training, deployment).

**UN Regional approach**

- Create/enhance a cross-mission best practice and knowledge sharing process.
- Generate a regional level 2 forensics lab in support of all UN Peacekeeping missions.
- Support the development of a regional response to mitigate the EO threat, disrupt supply chains and networks.

## METHODOLOGY

### *Terms of Reference*

#### **Concept**

1. The United Nations Security Council in Presidential Statement S/PRST/2021/11 of 24 May 2021 requested the Secretary-General conduct an “independent strategic review (ISR) of United Nations peacekeeping operations responses to improvised explosive devices, assessing capabilities and measures necessary to better mitigate this threat.” A report was requested by the Security Council by 15 December 2021.

2. The call for an ISR reflected concern over the steadily increasing number of peacekeeping casualties due to explosive ordnance, including improvised explosive devices (IEDs). Consultations began in July 2021 involving the Department of Peace Operations (DPO), Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA), and the Department of Operational Support (DOS) to outline initial elements for the scope of the review, including the geographic focus to this thematic review, along with recommendations on the methodology and approach to be taken. Once the ISR Team Leader was designated by the United Nations Secretary-General in August, these elements for the scope were the foundation for the ensuing work, including the development of Lines of Inquiry used by the ISR Team and planning for the consultations/desk review, field visits, preliminary findings review and validation, and report writing phases. The ISR also benefited from the rigor of a Red Team exercise managed by the Executive Office of the Secretary-General that stress tested the Lines of Inquiry and, later, preliminary findings.

3. The composition of the ISR Team was discussed with the ISR Team Leader to confirm the size and expertise required for the ISR. Outside experts in IED threat mitigation were subsequently identified to join the ISR team. The network of ISR focal points from amongst the UN Secretariat offices provided initial briefings to the Team Leader and subsequently also leant expertise from the Integrated Operational Teams (IOTs), the Office of Military Affairs (OMA), the Police Division (PD), and the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) to the field visit phase of the review. A network of data focal points was also established to support the ISR who strengthened the evidence-based approach of the review when finalizing the Lines of Inquiry and in advising on the development of a perception survey that was shared with all UN missions through a circular code cable co-signed by USG DPO and USG DPPA.

#### **Scope**

4. The ISR proceeded with the understanding that the aim of the review was to **recommend realistic, feasible measures** to mitigate **the threat on UN personnel and civilians and support mandate delivery; identify roles** stakeholders can play to improve the safety and security of UN personnel; and propose measures that would be forward looking, **promote proactive responses**, and potentially be **applicable to other mission contexts**, even if only facing an undetermined or emerging threat.

5. This review was the first-ever thematic United Nations independent strategic review. During the review early scoping and planning stages, several issues became clear that warranted for the scope to be enlarged to include the following considerations:

- IEDs are one type of explosive ordnance and do not apply to most types of devices or munitions that pose a threat in United Nations mission settings. Therefore, the ISR team applied **the wider definition of “explosive ordnance” (EO)** for the purpose of this review which are defined as, *“Munitions containing explosives, including bombs and warheads; all mines, cartridge and propellant actuated devices; electro-explosive devices; clandestine and improvised explosive devices; and all similar or related items or components explosive in nature”* according to the United Nations Peacekeeping Missions Military EOD Unit Manual.
- An effective analysis of the threat to United Nations missions **required assessments beyond the planning and operating systems of UN uniformed personnel** and their T/PCCs. Following consultation, the review team therefore expanded the scope of the review to **also encompass UN civilian personnel**, UNCT and Agencies, Funds and Programmes, Host Nation capabilities and intent, including on holding perpetrators accountable for attacks.
- Explosive threats impact **not only uniformed and all mission personnel and but also civilian populations** as well as the ability of the Mission to **deliver priority tasks related to Protection of Civilians** mandates.

6. Given the above, the ISR undertook the following:

- Review response of United Nations missions facing an established or potential emerging IED threat - MINUSMA, MONUSCO, MINUSCA - determining its nature, expected evolution and appropriate response.
- Analyze existing mission capabilities, including but not limited to the standards, guidance, training, equipment, operational procedures, forces (including enablers) and support available to the missions to respond to the threat and implement mission mandates.
- Analyze flexibility and adaptability of missions to adjust their response to a changing nature or level of IED threat.
- Formulate recommendations for measures the UN, Host Nations and T/PCCs and other relevant stakeholders should take to better mitigate the threat and ensure mission composition and capabilities are fit-for-purpose.
- Assess the respective added value of civilian and uniformed capabilities to address the IED threat either through preventive or responsive measures and identify opportunities for enhanced synergies.
- Assess how peacekeeping operations response to IEDs affects implementation of mission mandates.
- Recommend approach to be taken at United Nations system-wide level, as appropriate.

7. To achieve these objectives, the ISR bore in mind the following factors, amongst others:

- The primacy of politics and the impact this can have on the security situation.
- The primary responsibility of host states for the protection of their civilian population as well as their primary responsibility for the safety and security of United Nations personnel and assets.
- Links between national, regional, and local political and security dynamics.
- Need for strong partnerships between the relevant national and regional stakeholders, including between host nation, UN and T/PCCs.

- The need to consider gender, age, and diversity sensitive approaches as cross-cutting issues in EO threat mitigation measures.

## Conduct

8. The ISR was **data-driven, evidence-based and guided by best practices** with the aim to recommend realistic and feasible measures to improve United Nations responses to threats of explosive ordnance and promote safety and security of United Nations personnel. It followed an **extensive and broad consultative and integrated process** through a wide range of actions, including:

- Reviewing strategic documents, including mission specific plans and guidance documents, threat assessments, response, and contingency plans, in addition to relevant DPO/DPPA/DOS guidance, training materials, etc.
- Conducting field visits to MINUSMA, MINUSCA, and MONUSCO, the agendas for which were closely coordinated with mission leadership and mission components and included visits to high-threat areas.
- Interviewing local, regional, and international stakeholders.
- Producing a gender-sensitive and forward-looking assessment, drawing i.a. on available qualitative datasets and analytics.
- Evaluating responses of interlocutors based on ISR's Lines of Inquiry.
- Assessing mission capabilities over time, based on quantitative and qualitative data sources and relevant threat assessments.
- Assessing UN partner capabilities, including comparative advantages and limitations.
- Analyzing trends, including perception trends and risks.
- Stress-testing and red teaming options and recommendations.
- Debriefing interlocutors from mission level to UN headquarters to validate preliminary findings.

9. Overall, the ISR conducted over 111 **interviews and provided briefings** to senior United Nations management, Member States and key partners (e.g. European Union Training Mission (EUTM), amongst others). The **Survey** had 245 respondents; these provided input from every UN PKO Mission as well as agencies, UNHQ and SPMs. There were survey responses from every DPO office, with the majority from leadership or senior management offices, military staff, mine action and operational support. Survey respondents were mostly from the United Nations P4-P5 cohort.

## Timeline

10. Timeline of major milestones met by the ISR were as follows:

- Team Leader and Review Team consulted with relevant stakeholders, including Red Team and network of data focal points, **late August through late September** to define Lines of Inquiry for the review and, based on these, developed the online survey disseminated to all Missions.
- Team Leader and Review Team travelled to mission areas under review (MINUSMA, MINUSCA, MONUSCO), having coordinated and planned agendas with mission senior leadership and substantive components - **25 September through 31 October**.
- Preliminary findings shared with Red Team to 'stress test' at start of November and workshop held on **8 November**.

- From **1 November to 19 November** consultations and debriefings held at UN HQ with various representatives of senior management on preliminary findings; drafts of mission-specific findings shared with respective mission leadership of MINUSMA, MINUSCA, and MONUSCO for review, comments, and clarifications.
- Team Leader submitted his final report on **23 November**.
- The Secretary-General transmits the ISR report to the Security Council by **15 December**.

### *Lines of Inquiry*

The Security Council in Presidential Statement S/PRST/2021/11 requested the Secretary-General conduct an “independent strategic review (ISR) of United Nations peacekeeping operations responses to improvised explosive devices, assessing capabilities and measures necessary to better mitigate this threat” and to submit a report by 15 December 2021. The below are Lines of Inquiry (LOI) with which the ISR was conducted. Data sets for each LOI were developed to be measured across all Missions and serve as the basis of analysis and visualizations in the report. The review focused on United Nations operational responses in MINUSMA, MINUSCA, and MONUSCO, based on travel to those mission areas, while simultaneously using these Lines of Inquiry to develop a Survey through which to request relevant data, analysis, and trends from other Missions facing explosive ordnance threats.

Lines of Inquiry were also informed by additional guidance from the Under-Secretary-General Lacroix from the United Nations Department of Peace Operations in September 2021 as below:

- As the ISR examines the planning and operating systems of United Nations uniformed personnel and Troop and Police Contributing Contingents, it is also relevant to engage United Nations civilian personnel/offices, national authority capabilities and intent, and regional influences to ensure a comprehensive analysis of the safety and security threat to Peacekeeping Operations.
- The impact of explosive ordnance (intentionally or unintentionally) by armed groups upon the civilian population is also relevant (especially in Missions with Protection of Civilians mandates).
- Since Improvised Explosive Devices are not the only explosive ordnance threat<sup>65</sup>, it is relevant to include examination of all explosive ordnance (mines, rockets, mortars, bombs, etc.) while maintaining a particular focus on IEDs.
- It is relevant for the ISR to include United Nations uniformed and civilian planning and operations in both peacekeeping and special political missions in how they mitigate and prevent explosive ordnance threats.
- Taking the above into account and given the short timeframe to report to the Security Council, the ISR Team must keep to the timeline and may need to simplify the number and depth of the questions in the Lines of Inquiry to remain focused but may recommend open-ended questions for additional areas requiring examination in the future.

<sup>65</sup> For purpose of this ISR, responses to threats posed by improvised explosive devices (IEDs) will be assessed as responses to threats posed by explosive ordnance, as defined by “all munitions containing explosives, nuclear fission or fusion materials and biological and chemical agents. This includes bombs and warheads; guided and ballistic missiles; artillery, mortar, rocket and small arms ammunition; all mines, torpedoes, and depth charges; pyrotechnics; clusters and dispensers; cartridge and propellant actuated devices; electro-explosive devices; clandestine and improvised explosive devices; and all similar or related items or components explosive in nature.” [source page 12 & 145 of United Nations Peacekeeping Missions Military EOD Unit Manual (dated August 2021)]

- LOI 1: To what extent does the information and analysis available to a UN Mission enable it to prevent or reduce explosive ordnance incidents and mitigate their impact on mandate delivery?**
- LOI 2: How well (and how) do Missions, UN HQ, and T/PCCs mitigate risk to operations (deliver on the mandate) where there is an explosive ordnance threat?**
- LOI 3: How well does the UNHQ support T/PCCs deploying to explosive ordnance threat environments?**
- LOI 4: How effective is the mission at mitigating the threat and impact of explosive ordnance on the civilian population?**
- LOI 5: How well are Missions/national authorities contributing to the effort to identify the perpetrators and hold them accountable?**
- LOI 6: Do the Missions assess the national authorities as able to mitigate the EO threat (and to what extent)?**
- LOI 7: What is the Missions' and national authorities' collaboration with internal and external entities?**
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*One of two EO Found and defused by UN military in Aguelhok, Mali, MINUSMA JOC Flash report 28 November 2021*