

Box 3.3.1 From ONUC to MONUC

When the UN Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUC) reached its highest strength, 18,536 troops, in August 2006, it was still below the peak of 19,898 soldiers achieved by the UN Operation in the Congo (ONUC), in July 1961. The expansion of MONUC has invited comparisons with the earlier operation, deployed from 1960 to 1964, which was the UN's first in sub-Saharan Africa and by far its biggest during the Cold War. In both cases, the UN has made robust use of force: while MONUC is mandated to use "all necessary means" against militias in the country's east, and has lost 98 soldiers to date, ONUC launched three campaigns in the secessionist province of Katanga, suffering 249 fatalities over four years. Both missions have also had ambitious state-building tasks: ONUC staff were in part intended to replace the departing Belgian colonial administration, and even included agronomists; MONUC supported a complex transitional process leading to elections in 2006.

A comparison of ONUC and MONUC is made possible by a 1966 study of the former published by the Brookings Institution. It reveals distinct differences

between the two forces. The first is in their deployment: whereas MONUC's mandated and actual size has grown gradually since 1999, ONUC deployed extremely quickly in its first month. The mission was mandated on 14 July 1960 and by 20 August had fielded 14,295 troops, a number that rose to 19,443 by the end of the year. This rapid deployment was facilitated by US airlift, on which the mission relied heavily; during the entire four years the United States transported 118,091 troops and 18,569 tons of cargo within the Congo.

ONUC relied not only on US planes, but also on US funding. The United States paid 41.5 percent of the mission's total cost, \$411 million, in contrast to its current contribution of 26 percent of the peacekeeping budget. But ONUC was a much cheaper mission than MONUC: its annual cost of roughly \$100 million is the equivalent of \$650 million today, whereas MONUC's projected requirements for the 2005–2006 financial year were \$1,094 million.

The missions also differ markedly in terms of force origin: in 1960, UN Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld prioritized involving African troops, and in December 1960, 75 percent of ONUC

forces (14,700 soldiers) were from African states. This percentage would decline due to disputes over the mission, but the African contribution never fell below a third of the total deployment. By contrast, African troops currently represent just 20 percent of MONUC soldiers. ONUC was important as the first mission in which South Asian personnel proved crucial to the UN. From 1961 to 1963, India was the largest troop contributor to ONUC—as it would be forty-five years later to MONUC.

One problem common to both missions has been sustaining command and control across a vast territory. ONUC maintained a multinational headquarters in Leopoldville (now Kinshasa), while single-nation commands were responsible for specific provinces. But as the UN launched antimercenary operations in Katanga in 1961, it created a stand-alone multinational command in the region. MONUC likewise formed a divisional headquarters in the east when it began antimilitia operations there in February 2005. If ONUC left this precedent for MONUC, it remains to be seen whether MONUC will follow a similar exit pattern: ONUC drew down from 19,782 to 0 in sixteen months, in 1963–1964.