

Central African Republic

Hopes that the 2005 elections in the Central African Republic (CAR) would provide conditions for peacebuilding continued to dwindle in 2007 as renewed violence in the northern provinces of the country overwhelmed the republic's military and the Force Multinational de la Communauté Économique et Monétaire de l'Afrique Centrale (FOMUC). EU and UN preparations for a multidimensional mission in Chad and the Central African Republic made some progress in 2007 with the authorization of UN police and EU military missions. But tenuous peace agreements with rebel groups reached earlier in the year were disrupted by flows of refugees from Darfur and a dramatic increase in internally displaced persons.

Background

Decades of political instability in CAR reached a peak in 1996, when protests over unpaid salaries erupted into insurrections by the armed forces against the elected government of President Ange-Félix Patassé. Fighting was fueled by regional and ethnic tensions, as well as a struggle to control the timber and diamond industries.

Regional mediators brokered the Bangui Peace Agreement in January 1997, which was monitored first by the 800-strong Inter-African Mission to Monitor the Implementation of the Bangui Agreements (MISAB) and subsequently by the UN Mission in the Central African Republic (MINURCA). The peacekeepers provided security in and around Bangui, enabling the elections that saw Patassé returned as president in September 1999. The UN Peacebuilding Support Office in the Central African Republic (BONUCA)

Force Multinational de la Communauté Économique et Monétaire de l'Afrique Centrale (FOMUC)	
• Authorization Date	2 October 2002 (Libreville Summit), 21 March 2003 (Libreville Summit, Amended)
• Start Date	December 2002
• Head of Mission and Force Commander	Brigadier-General Auguste Roger Bibaye Itandas (Gabon)
• Budget	\$12.5 million (October 2006–September 2007)
• Strength as of 30 September 2007	Troops: 378

UN Peacebuilding Support Office in the Central African Republic (BONUCA)	
• Authorization Date	10 February 2000 (S/PRST/2000/5)
• Start Date	15 February 2000
• SRSG and Head of Mission	Lamine Cissé (Senegal)
• Strength as of 31 October 2007	International Civilian Staff: 26 Local Civilian Staff: 50 UN Volunteers: 3

was created in February 2000, following the withdrawal of MINURCA.

Established in 2002, FOMUC was originally conceived as a small observer mission mandated to monitor the security in Bangui and along the Chadian border. The force is composed of troops from Gabon, the Congo, and Chad. Despite being unable to prevent a 2003 coup in which General François Bozizé ousted Patassé, the mission has continued operating. During 2006, FOMUC refocused

its efforts toward the unstable northern provinces of the country, where violence continued throughout the year in review.

Major Developments

Ongoing aggression in the northern parts of the country in 2007 was attributed to several rebel groups, all dedicated to the overthrow of the Bozizé government. Renewed attacks by the Armée pour la Restauration de la République et la Démocratie (APRD) in the northwestern town of Paoua in January 2007, alongside continuing violence in the northeast, meant that the more than 200,000 internally displaced persons in the region continued to be exposed to indiscriminate violence. Particularly troubling were several incidents in which UN and humanitarian workers were targeted, including a hostage incident on 19 May, an attack on a BONUCA convoy on 26 May, and the killing of a French member of Médecins sans Frontières by the APRD on 11 June.

At the outset of 2007, the UN Security Council reiterated its call for the establishment of a multidimensional presence in Chad and the Central African Republic. In February, the Secretary-General proposed a UN mission in Chad and the Central African Republic, an 11,000-strong force mandated to protect civilians, facilitate relationships among the countries in the region, and monitor human rights violations in eastern Chad and the northern area of the Central African Republic. But this proposal ran into trouble when the Chadian government failed to consent to the deployment of UN troops on its territory. Subsequently, a compromise was reached, paving the way for authorization for the deployment of UN police personnel and EU troops, which had still not happened at the end of the year in

review. The Security Council adopted 1778 (2007) authorizing the deployment of the UN Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad (MINURCAT). For its part, the European Union authorized the deployment of the EU Force in the Republic of Chad and the Central African Republic (EUFOR TCHAD/RCA) on 15 October 2007. Among other things, MINURCAT was mandated to liaise with the security services such as the army, the gendarmerie, and judicial officials in order to contribute to building sustainable peace in the Central African Republic. MINURCAT's mandate also includes cooperating with BONUCA and FOMUC to deal with existing and potential developments that would have negative consequences on the humanitarian situation in the area. In addition to providing security to the thousands of refugees and internally displaced persons, the EU Force will also provide security to UN personnel and facilities.

Meanwhile, diplomatic channels between the government of the Central African Republic and some rebel groups were opened at the end of 2006 and early 2007, with the assistance of a Central African civil society organization, Group of the Wise. In February, the government signed cease-fire agreements with two rebel groups, the Front Démocratique pour le Peuple Centrafricain (FDPC) and the Union des Forces Démocratiques pour le Rassemblement (UFDR). However, the relative calm that followed these agreements was soon disrupted by the arrival of approximately 3,000 Sudanese nationals fleeing heavy fighting in Darfur in May 2007. Over 26,000 Central African Republic refugees also spilled over into neighboring Cameroon during the year, highlighting the wider threat to the region posed by the continuing conflict, and the urgency of the coordinated UN-EU deployments.