

Box 2.3 Mission for the Consolidation of Peace in the Central African Republic (MICOPAX)

Since July 2008, the Mission for the Consolidation of Peace in the Central African Republic (MICOPAX) has provided support to peace and stability efforts in the Central African Republic (CAR). Under the authority of the Economic Community of Central African States (CEEAC), MICOPAX is mandated to support peace, security, and respect for human rights, including through assistance in the promotion of democratic governance, national reconciliation, security sector reform, and disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) of former combatants. It also collaborates with the UN Integrated Peacebuilding Office in the Central African Republic (BINUCA).

MICOPAX was established to support the consolidation of peace following decades of instability, rebellions, and mutinies in the Central African Republic. The CAR's current leader, General François Bozizé, came to power in a coup in February 2003. Conflict continued until the government and nearly all main rebel groups signed a comprehensive peace agreement (CPA) in June 2008. However, the government quickly demonstrated a lack of political will for following through on the CPA and the subsequent inclusive dialogue, resulting in political and security challenges that continue to undermine the consolidation of peace in the CAR.

The 2011 presidential and parliamentary elections were held in January, with a second round of parliamentary voting in March. MICOPAX provided support to the elections, including transport of voting materials to regional polling stations. Despite the largely calm

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• Authorization Date	2 October 2002
• Start Date	December 2002
• Head of Mission	Ambassador Albert Akendengue (Gabon)
• Force Commander	Brigade-General Prosper Nabilwa (Democratic Republic of Congo)
• Budget	\$27.2 million (1 October 2010–30 September 2011)
• Strength as of 30 September 2011	Troops: 497 Civilian Police: 139

atmosphere that characterized both rounds of voting, the elections demonstrated the continued fragility of the CAR's political process. There was strong turnout for the January poll, and Bozizé garnered a majority and was inaugurated on 15 March. However, opposition candidates quickly denounced the election as fraudulent and several opposition candidates petitioned the Constitutional Court for a cancellation of the vote, a request that the Court denied as unfounded. After the second round of parliamentary elections, Bozizé's political party, the Kwa Na Kwa, also won a legislative majority, amid lower voter turnout and a boycott by the opposition.

In 2011 MICOPAX continued to support the reform and restructuring of the CAR's security forces and assist the government in DDR activities for former combatants. However, DDR processes in northern CAR have been repeatedly delayed due to political, security, and logistical challenges. MICOPAX plays a key role in the northwest as a guarantor of security while rebel groups disarm,

and has recently begun to expand its presence to the northeast. In April, MICOPAX, with financial support from the European Union, opened a military barracks in Ndélé in the northeastern prefecture to house several hundred soldiers through 2013.¹ The rebel group Convention of Patriots for Justice and Peace (CPJP), the last holdout, signed a cease-fire agreement with the government in June and agreed to begin the DDR process, a positive step forward.

Despite gains in 2011, the CAR remains an environment of heightened political and security concerns. Renewed hostilities between the CPJP and a rival rebel group in the central town of Bira in September over control of diamond mines demonstrates how tenuous the situation remains. The withdrawal in December 2010 of the UN's peacekeeping operation places additional pressure on MICOPAX and BINUCA to support the peace process. Continued fragility and an increasingly entrenched political elite are major obstacles to the consolidation of peace.

Note: 1. Humanitarian and Development Partnership Team, Central African Republic, *Info Bulletin* no. 167, 12–26 April 2011, <http://hdptcar.net/blog/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/hdpt-car-info-bulletin-eng-167.pdf>.