The Soldier and the Street: 
East African CIMIC in Somalia and Beyond

BY MARIE BESANÇON AND STEPHEN DALZELL

The African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) is a watershed in African security – a truly multinational, all African, peace support operation. While there will be many strategic, operational, and tactical lessons to be drawn from this experience, one that is already yielding changes within African military forces is the awareness of the need for effective civil-military operations (CMO) to complement other components of the campaign. Not only are the AMISOM leaders and units adapting on the ground, the troop-contributing countries (TCC) are implementing changes in their organizations and training programs at home. For the “tactician” in global security, this poses interesting questions regarding the operational role of CMO and its impact on regional security; strategically, it is important to evaluate how this increased awareness of CMO is driving changes in East African armed forces and the implications for civil-military relations in all the countries involved.

The AMISOM Experience with CMO

A 2012 Africa Union Commission Report estimates that it will be 2020 before Somalia is stable enough for AMISOM troops to entirely withdraw. Between now and then, the daunting task for the Somalis is to solidify professional military and police institutions to secure the internal and external safety of the population. In the meantime, how long will it be before the local population begins to view the AMISOM forces as an occupying army, if they don’t already? What can the TCCs and the soldiers on the ground do to promote positive relations with the Somali people, government, and civil society? What should the role of the American military be in this endeavor?

As the AMISOM troops slowly encroach upon the Islamic insurgents’ (al-Shabaab) territory militarily, what can appease the local population while the Somali government stabilizes and embeds its brand of African/Muslim consensual democracy politically? Western military doctrine

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suggests effective CMO planned and conducted by the AMISOM forces could help this process; this is occurring to a certain degree already. As the population grows restless and al-Shabaab is not yet defeated, there is little doubt that the presence of the AMISOM forces in Somalia may be needed for quite some time.6

Somali Backdrop to AMISOM

In a country divided by complex clan ties, in the past 40 years Somalia’s attempts at governance have included nine years of democracy, a dictator (General Siad Barre), warlords, UN/U.S. troops, three transitional governments, an Islamic ruling structure (Islamic Courts Union), Ethiopian troop occupiers, al-Shabaab insurgents, and AMISOM. The formation of the temporary governments with the help of the international community began in 1999; then re-formed in 2004, and expanded to include the opposition in 2008 with the Djibouti Peace Agreement.7

The advent of the Islamic Courts Union in the mid-2000s, fairly strict Islamic law, and militias hired by wealthy businessmen together rendered some stability to the otherwise volatile country. However, Ethiopia and the U.S. had concerns about Somali collaboration with terrorists, and Ethiopia invaded in late 2006, staying through 2009. Somalis tended to back the Islamic militias (al-Shabaab being the major faction evolving after the invasion) in the face of foreign invaders.9 The Islamic insurgents have varying goals, ranging from uniting Somalia under an Islamic regime to worldwide jihad.10 These insurgents are still in control of large parts of southern Somalia and are present throughout the country in a diffused form, which makes them difficult to defeat, causing

Ugandan forces interacting with Somali civilians, 2013
concern to Somalia’s neighbors and the U.S.\textsuperscript{15} The current government (Federal Government of Somalia– FGS) was formed through a representative parliament in 2012, which then voted for the president.\textsuperscript{12} The FGS, with all of its flaws, has managed to reach fragile agreements with the “clan-states” of Jubbaland and Puntland, and to make some progress with plans for services badly needed by Somalis. Additionally the Rahanweyn have formed a separate state backed by the FGS.\textsuperscript{13} AMISOM forces can both limit further violence and help fill some of the roles in providing services normally provided by a government until the current government matures.

The Conflict Continues with Pockets of Ceasefire

News reports and military situation reports indicate that the only real peace in southern Somalia is in areas controlled by African Union (AU) peacekeepers – peace enforcers. Areas in and around the airport in Mogadishu, where foreign aid and military groups have bases and compounds, are fairly secure, but the growing force of Somali police and soldiers have training and corruption issues as well as supply issues. Monthly attacks by al-Shabaab have not diminished over the past few years, and in fact spiked somewhat during the latest Ramadan season and have been on the increase since the end of 2013 and most of 2014. There are weekly news reports of attacks against government officials, IEDs (improvised explosive devices), assassinations, rocket-propelled grenades, and even suicide bombers, and attacks by al-Shabaab and others by groups wanting to affect politics. With Somalia’s large geographical area, a relatively small population, and the small number of AMISOM and Somali National Army (SMA) soldiers, securing the territory is challenging.\textsuperscript{14}

In a recent interview leading Somalia expert Roland Marchal discussed al-Shabaab’s short- and medium-term strategies: “Shabaab will get weaker, will be less numerous, but will survive and will try to capitalize on any political crisis that may take place in Somalia and elsewhere.”\textsuperscript{16} Other experts like Andre Le Sage have similar opinions on the ability of al-Shabaab to regroup, remain strong and continue operations in other regions, again indicating the need for a strong support force while Somalia builds.\textsuperscript{17} Al-Shabaab might not control people and territory, but it can terrorize, so it remains a force to contend with. The coordinated and planned attack on the Westgate Mall in Nairobi, Kenya, in September 2013 demonstrated an international capability.\textsuperscript{18} As AMISOM has increased and reclaimed territory from al-Shabaab, so have al-Shabaab’s ties to al-Qaeda increased.

Le Sage contends al-Shabaab is doing the same thing it did in 2007 following Ethiopia’s invasion, it is re-forming the mudawama/muqawama (resistance), using assassinations, attacks and intimidation.\textsuperscript{19} While some al-Shabaab fighters are retreating to Puntland and others are disappearing into their clan families, they are leaving weapons stashes and secret safe houses in their wake.\textsuperscript{20} In the format of cell groups, they depart from the district, but leave appointed al-Shabaab emirs. In Galgala, the al-Shabaab strategy was to recruit some of the smaller, discontented clans, then take over their districts. They promote destabilization in an area, and follow up by offering themselves as the security provider.\textsuperscript{21} In summary, Somalia remains insecure, poor and without a strong central government providing services, justice, and voice to the people.
CIMIC and the AMISOM Forces

The African Union Commission’s strategic review of AMISOM in 2013 says;

"Since the deployment of a civil affairs capacity, the mission has contributed in the reinvigoration of local governance institutions, especially in Mogadishu. AMISOM’s mandate includes the facilitation of humanitarian assistance, and the mission has contributed to enhanced coordination with humanitarian agencies, NGOs and the FGs. In addition, AMISOM has, through its Humanitarian Affairs section and the Civil-Military Coordination (CIMIC) branch of the Force (as a last resort) provided access to free medical care, free potable water supply and, in some instances, basic food items to civilians."

AMISOM hosted its first CIMIC conference in Mogadishu September 19, 2013, where CIMIC officers in Somalia came together to share their experiences on implementing the mission’s mandate and enhanced cooperation with civilians. The AU Special Representative for Somalia, Ambassador Mahamat Saleh Annadif, said “this initiative comes at a time when increasing interactions with civilians is crucial to consolidate peace dividends recently gained in Somalia. Although security improvements have been observed, civilian populations continue to be vulnerable.”

CMO is particularly challenging because the individual AU countries – particularly Kenya and Ethiopia – historically have had ulterior motives for intervening in Somalia, increasing Somali suspicion of all foreigners. Meservey summarizes the challenges for the foreign forces intervening in Somalia by saying that a foreign force composed primarily of black, Christian troops from countries that are Somalia’s traditional enemies has invaded a xenophobic Muslim country infamous for its violent tribal politics.

Problems regularly follow military troops deployed in populated areas for extended lengths of time: discipline, insubordination, human rights abuses and corruption among others. The locals tolerate this as little from foreign troops as from domestic soldiers. AMISOM troops were alleged to have committed gang rape in the fall of 2013 and even earlier. Furthermore, certain TCC forces (and the Somalis) claim that other TCC forces only remain because of the huge income from the UN/AU, and that they do not attack or pursue al-Shabaab, but simply occupy space already secured. Lynch says that as of late 2012, Kenyan soldiers were not running patrols into Kismayo, but staying inside their bases rather than interacting with civilians, understanding their environment and running a counterinsurgency campaign. Some reports claim that AMISOM runs “evasion tactics” rather than integration, and that AMISOM forces want the conflict to continue. Nevertheless, if AMISOM troops can provide certain services and security that no one else can, their acceptance can be secured while Somalia rebuilds.

CMO, CIMIC, CAO: Distinction with a Difference?

Within the doctrine of the U.S., NATO, and other Western militaries, the preferred way to improve relations with the local populace is through conducting Civil Affairs Operations (CAO) or similar activities. Reflecting its roots in the occupation of the former Axis countries following World War II, U.S. joint doctrine includes both “coordination” tasks and the “hard CMO” of assuming roles of civil
government as needed. This doctrine defines civil affairs as the “forces and units organized, trained, and equipped specifically to conduct civil affairs operations and to support military operations,” and then (circularly) defines CAO as the “military operations conducted by civil affairs forces that (1) enhance the relationship between military forces and civil authorities in localities where military forces are present; (2) require coordination with other interagency organizations, intergovernmental organizations, nongovernmental organizations, indigenous populations and institutions, and the private sector; and (3) involve application of functional specialty skills that normally are the responsibility of civil government to enhance the conduct of civil-military operations.”

CMO, a broader field, comprises all “activities of a commander that establish, maintain, influence, or exploit relations between military forces, governmental and nongovernmental civilian organizations and authorities, and the civilian populace in a friendly, neutral, or hostile operational area in order to facilitate military operations, to consolidate and achieve operational U.S. objectives.” Most significantly, these “may be performed by designated civil affairs, by other military forces, or by a combination of civil affairs and other forces.”

These terms are closely related to CIMIC (Civil Military Cooperation/Coordination), the preferred construct of most Western European armies, which NATO doctrine defines as, “The co-ordination and co-operation, in support of the mission, between the NATO Commander and civil actors, including national population and local authorities, as well as international, national and non-governmental organizations and agencies.”

In practice, all of these terms are used in connection with AMISOM training and operations, partly because of the wide range of military traditions in Africa and the variety of international actors who support training and operations, each using their own doctrine as the standard. Regardless of the label applied on the ground, there is clearly a demand for this kind of activity, and an expectation that AMISOM will provide it. One UN report stated, “No apology or amount of compensation can give back what Somali war victims and their families have lost. But our findings clearly show that an attempt to respond to their suffering in this conflict can mitigate some of the consequences and return a sense of dignity to the victims and their communities.” The Ugandans, Kenyans, Burundians and Djiboutians now see the need for certain skills to deal with the civilian populations. American forces contribute to CMO/CIMIC training, probably more so in the last three years than in prior years, when they focused on conducting CMO in Africa (though not in Somalia) – a strategy that brought its own challenges. As AMISOM began more aggressively moving outside Mogadishu and expanded the number of troops and troop contributing countries (TCCs) in 2012 and 2013, CA forces from the Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa (CJTF-HOA) conducted multiple training events (some with field applications) with the Kenyans and Ugandans. The American forces conducted high-level leadership training on CIMIC/CMO with most of the AMISOM TCCs (Burundi, Kenya, Ethiopia, Djibouti, and Uganda) in 2012 and 2013.
The Way Ahead in Somalia

In one of his first media interviews, Somali President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud said that the top three priorities in Somalia are “security, security and security.” However, if citizens do not receive jobs and services, as well as security, conflict will remain. Insurgent groups provide some of the key needs for the local populace in marginalized societies, including three areas identified by Africans in a 2010 conference on preventing terrorism: 1) justice, 2) voice, and 3) inclusion. Injustices such as land taken from minority and Rahaweyn clans in southern Somalia have yet to be addressed, from Siad Barre’s time until today. If basic grievances (such as human rights abuses) and other urgent needs are not addressed, the central government will not have legitimacy. Former Prime Minister Abdi Farah Shirdon noted that the government has learned that winning hearts and minds will be more important than bullets.

Voice, Services, Justice, and Inclusion

The most promising U.S. military contribution in the short run would be to enable the Ugandans, Burundians, Djiboutians, Kenyans, and Ethiopians to provide services to the locals after they secure territories, and ensure that the local justice systems are empowered to render justice on the local level while the central government builds its own national justice system. This is in addition to the other defense training projects for the Somali National Army/Somali National Security Forces (SNA/SNSF). The presence of “foreign occupiers” can actually give the local populace the “voice” they desire if they feel their needs are being made known to the international community, and delay discontent with the occupiers over time.

Unfortunately bad behavior by the “occupying” and Somali forces has already aided recruitment into al-Shabaab. “A former al-Shabaab fighter described how he yearned for revenge after Transitional Federal Government (TFG) soldiers behaved like animals by harassing Somalis and inappropriately touching women at checkpoints. Other former fighters cited AMISOM’s bombing of towns, a practice that built intense hatred toward the international force, while the corruption and misbehavior of the transitional government was one of the jihadi group’s biggest recruiting tools.” Regardless of the veracity of the reports, the insurgents can use them as a propaganda tool against any foreign actors in the arena. It is the daunting task of AMISOM and the SNA to reverse these impressions.

Long-term Development of Civil Affairs Forces in East Africa

If there were a region ripe for the development of CA forces and CMO capabilities, it is Africa. The continent remains the most “conflicted” in the world, in terms of ongoing conflicts, UN and regional peacekeeping operations, or most other metrics. Most importantly, many African militaries face a combination of internal challengers, external threats, and regional responsibilities, all likely to have civilians on the ground alongside military operations.

When the U.S. military began operations in East Africa after September 11, 2001, it faced a strategic challenge. In Somalia there was a Salafist movement that seemed sympathetic to, if not formally linked with, al-Qaeda. But the U.S. had neither the available forces nor the political will to put “boots on the ground” in a country that already symbolized many ways military intervention can go wrong. The neighboring countries generally had stable
leaders, competent militaries and cordial relations with the U.S. — but some also had their own Muslim extremists to worry about, as well as challenges in sustaining the rule of law, human rights, and democratic norms. A containment strategy might check the southward spread of Islamic extremism while the U.S.-led coalition cleaned up Afghanistan and Iraq, but only if the African partners remained a positive force in the Horn of Africa and did not pour fuel on the fire with poorly executed operations. The U.S. solution included a range of activities, including direct action, information operations, intelligence support, and train-and-equip programs, but one of the pillars remained the use of American CA personnel to both conduct CAO and support the development of African CA capabilities. The latter in turn leads to questions about how these partners are developing CMO doctrine and forces and how these developments might impact broader civil-military relations in these countries and in international combat zones (like Somalia).

**Kenya: CMO without CA**

Although the Kenyans have a longstanding Combat Engineer Brigade and a Combat Engineering School, they (like most African militaries) have historically considered Civil Affairs activities to be “un-military” and their initial interest was accordingly minimal. After Kenya began operations in Somalia in October 2011 and encountered challenges in conducting this new type of operation, their focus broadened. The Kenyans began to more fully understand the need for services on the ground in combat arenas and the beneficial effects that the combat engineers have for the populace. Kenyan clerics were specific in
their warning that there is a risk extremist ideology will return if AMISOM forces don’t take care of Somalia’s needs.39

The Kenyan Defense Forces (KDF) use Civil-Military Operations (abbreviated to “CMOPS”) as their term-of-choice in referring to CMO/CA capacity. According to Brigadier George Owino, Commander of the Kenyan Army Engineer Brigade, these are defined as “those operations that use non-combat functions of the military to deal with civilian functions, or that involve the military taking on tasks typically performed by civilian authorities, NGOs, or international humanitarian organizations.”40 It is important to note that this explicitly goes beyond simple coordination to encompass civilian functions.

Starting around 2009, Kenya began developing a civil affairs capability focused on engineers supporting domestic requirements. At the inauguration of the Kenya Army Engineers Civil Affairs Course on November 1, 2010, U.S. Deputy Chief of Mission Lee Brudvig recognized the purpose of the training was to “prepare the Kenyan Army Engineers in Civil Affairs which will assist them in on-going reconstruction and development efforts across the country as well as prepare them to respond quickly to inevitable disasters.”41 This would seem to fit into the country’s overall disaster management model, which includes local military commanders in the “District Disaster Management Committee,” in a subordinate position to the civilian leadership.42

By 2012, this approach had expanded to such a point that the KDF concept for CMOPS training included three pillars: 1) Building CMOPS capacity within the Engineer Corps, 2) Enhancing knowledge of how to respond to disasters, and 3) Linking the KDF’s normal
humanitarian civil activities to the CA approach through needs assessment and analysis, project identification, budgeting, interaction with affected communities, media handling and project execution. For the first pillar, by 2011 the KDF had created specific engineer-based CA forces, as is evident from news accounts of their activities within Kenya. The intent is for all KDF personnel to receive CMOPS training, ranging from a five-day basic course for enlisted soldiers and a six-week course for all officers to a ten-day planning course for commanders and staff officers at the operational and strategic levels.

Key to these developments is the close relationship developed with the U.S. CA forces based at Camp Lemonnier, Djibouti, under CJTF-HOA, and deployed to the Kenya Coast, Rift Valley, and Garissa regions. Among the first operational activities by the new Kenyan CA forces were projects in coastal areas, with Maritime CA forces from CJTF-HOA providing support and mentoring. Initially Kenyan soldiers accompanied some of the U.S. CA missions, but found them slow and irrelevant, and eventually dropped out of the missions. Kenyan soldiers, working out of their base in Manda Bay, independently conducted several projects helping repair churches and schools. The Kenyan Engineers also worked closely with the American teams in the Rift Valley. Following the 2007 Kenyan national elections, the U.S. embassy requested that the U.S. military help rebuild the Eldoret, Rift Valley, an area that had been seriously affected by the election violence. The U.S. worked closely with the Kenyan engineers on these projects. This was not a priority in the U.S. campaign to counter violent extremism, nor one for the Kenyans, but it was an opportunity for close cooperation. By the end of 2012, the U.S. forces, with the aid of the Kenyan forces had completed more than three community projects, 56 missions, 14 project assessments, and 85 key leader engagements in various areas of Kenya.

Domestically, the KDF’s periodic misbehavior and inability to win the support of civilians have impaired their missions. During the 2007 election violence and in areas such as Garissa and the refugee camps (e.g. Dadaab), the media and the population criticized the performance of the KDF. Human Rights Watch reported in 2012 that in Kenya:

Both the military and the police are implicated in the abuses. Not only do the violent and indiscriminate responses of the Kenyan security forces constitute serious human rights violations, the abuses are also serving to alienate Kenyans of Somali origin at the very moment when the security forces most need the trust and confidence of the local population in order to help identify the militants behind the grenade and IED attacks and ensure public safety.

Kenyan troops were accused of looting in Nairobi after the terrorist attack on Westgate Mall in 2013, a blight that the KDF will need to work hard to eradicate. The Kenyan forces are concerned about their public image and behavior, and are working to improve training and adapting to different norms.

Ethics is only one area requiring both training and field experience. One Kenyan brigadier emphasized the need for metrics in the centers of excellence and training such as the International Peace Support Training Center (IPSTC) in Kenya to make sure the students “achieved something rather than just attended the courses.” Training should also cover good governance and leadership in
addition to peacekeeping. Programs such as the U.S. International Military Education and Training (IMET) could also be used to send Kenyan military leaders to U.S. senior corporate internships to learn core civilian values, as suggested by a former U.S. ambassador to Kenya.

Several 2013 interviews with Kenyan military officials and clerics yielded suggestions for overcoming various civil-military challenges in Somalia and developing closer ties with local and regional organizations such as the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), East African Standby Force (EASF), the Horn of Africa Peace Advocates, and the Supreme Council of Kenyan Muslims. They also suggested each of the AMISOM units could have an imbedded ethnic Somali, either from Somalia, or from Kenya, Djibouti or Ethiopia, to overcome ethnic, language, and cultural differences within AMISOM and between AMISOM and the Somalis. Most of all, the TCCs should take precautions to avoid the impression of a takeover, or displacement of Somalis.

Lastly, in order to lessen the discontent over outsiders’ presence in Somalia, CMO could introduce quick impact projects (as have already been planned) such as wells, dispensaries, and schools. The local population needs to see tangible and useful projects. While neither the Somalis nor the AMISOM TCCs would likely agree to an enduring American military presence in Somalia, short deployments of U.S. Functional Specialty Units for medical treatment would help fill the shortage of medical treatment and evacuation facilities.

One effect of this evolution in Kenyan policy and doctrine toward CMOPs training is the demonstration effect it has on the region. For a variety of reasons, Kenya has often been the first choice for regional and international headquarters and training centers, which in turn provide venues for regional sharing of best practices and new concepts. In January 2012 and September 2013, CJTF-HOA conducted CMO Symposia in Karen, Kenya, at the IPSTC. Senior military leaders from Kenya, Ethiopia, Burundi, Uganda, and Rwanda and mid-level military leaders from Djibouti attended. One of the Kenyan generals who attended the seminar in 2012 subsequently served as Chief of Operations in Kismayo, Somalia (and head of CA). Kenyan Military Engineers and the U.S. military planned multiple training/sharing best practices courses for 2013 and 2014, and beyond.

Uganda: Building CA

Where the Kenyan Defense Forces have focused on the engineering side of CMO, the Uganda People’s Defence Force (UPDF) has taken a broader view of CA capabilities. This may be due to a longer and more varied history of CMO, including UPDF support to relocating large numbers of civilians from areas taken over by Joseph Kony’s Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) into Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camps and their subsequent repatriation after Kony’s departure from Uganda. Additionally, the Ugandan military has participated in the United Nations-African Union Mission in Darfur (UNAMID), a mission focused on cooperation and coordination due to the existence of a functioning government in Khartoum and the large number of international organizations and NGOs. Lastly, the UPDF is one of the earliest and largest troop contributors to AMISOM.

U.S. CA teams from CJTF-HOA have been working with the UPDF in the Karamoja Region of eastern Uganda since June 2009,
aiming to help the UPDF gain the acceptance and trust of the civilian population and enhance security. Prior to Karamoja, U.S. teams conducted projects in Kitgum and Gulu. These domestic CMOs, were complemented by the increasing demand for CIMIC skills the Ugandans found in Somalia.

News reports in the Karamoja region intermittently reported bad behavior by UPDF soldiers towards civilians, but some NGOs claimed that the U.S. military teams working with the UPDF helped add credibility and legitimacy to the UPDF teams in the homeland.56 The Ugandans, much as the Kenyans, are showing considerable proactive concern for training and improving their track record and image, and learning from the international community.

Ugandan CA institutions have gradually developed as well. In 2009-10 there were few signs of UPDF buy-in on local CIMIC work, and CIMIC offices in Karamoja typically had a single army private manning the station and no funds with which to conduct operations.57 They usually sent one private for the regional, on-site CMO training conducted by the U.S. CA teams, though CIMIC cells officially had one officer and one NCO.58 CIMIC itself continued to lack credibility and prestige in the UPDF, and if the U.S. military were not there, the UPDF would likely have marginalized the Civil Military Operation Commands (CMOCs). By 2011, most of the CIMIC personnel in the Karamoja region were field-grade officers and the UPDF participated in most of the projects done by the U.S. CA teams.59 The U.S. teams advocated CMO training for the UPDF CIMIC, and indicated that the greater utility was in having a U.S. presence, being around the UPDF, and working with them on
a daily basis, an approach that worked in Djibouti as well. Because of the Somalia operations, CIMIC’s prestige grew to the point that the UPDF created a separate department dedicated to CIMIC and a fully operating Public Affairs Office reporting on CMO in Somalia.

At the institutional level, the UPDF had begun incorporating CMO training into larger efforts by 2010, and the U.S. had developed a multi-year training plan. The training base at Kasenyi, which had focused on training “commando” tasks and other high-end combat activities, added a multiple-week CA course, taught by CA personnel from CJTF-HOA. Later, the multi-year plan to conduct training at Kasenyi was cut short by the UPDF – some postulated financial reasons, others personnel issues, and yet others cited lack of U.S. coordination with the new UPDF Chief of Operations and Training.

Efforts to renew the training partnership led to a meeting between the U.S. CMO team and the UPDF in the winter of 2013 to plan multiple CMO/CIMIC training seminars for the Uganda Battle Groups (UGABAGs) going to Somalia. With the introduction of the UPDF CIMIC “Chieftaincy” in 2013, all planned UPDF courses will have a CIMIC focus and include staff officers and enlisted soldiers. The 2013 meeting outlined a plan of action for the courses covering leadership and administrative skills, as well as practical training in and around Singo and Kampala, Uganda. Topics such as CIMIC doctrine, coordination with non-governmental and international organizations, introductory counter-insurgency, rules of engagement (ROE), scenario-based practical exercises, key leader and female engagements, human rights training, CMOC structures, and civil reconnaissance training were among the courses agreed upon by the U.S./Ugandan group. The U.S. CA team conducted an extensive joint course with the UPDF at Jinja (the Engineering School training center) in mid-2013 and U.S. teams have planned training for the UPDF for the next two years.

The UPDF named Colonel Moses Ddiba Ssentongo the first head of the new Chieftaincy of Civil Military Cooperation, which reports directly to the Joint Chief of Staff. The UPDF are in the process of streamlining and crafting the structure, but are hampered by budget restraints and implications. They are carrying out training at operational and tactical levels which has reportedly already improved their forces and operations in the Somalia mission as well as in the Central African Republic, where the UPDF is pursuing the LRA, all in addition to the CIMIC operations in Karamoja where the UPDF are continuing their “disarmament operations.” The CIMIC Chieftaincy collaborates currently with the Engineering Brigade and the Medical Departments in the UPDF. The proposed “CIMIC Support Unit” would be composed of the following elements: a command post team, a CIMIC reconnaissance team, a CIMIC liaison team, a project management team, a CIMIC center team, functional specialists (either military or civilian medical or similar personnel), a staff of experts in civil administration and infrastructure, and teams for disasters, emergencies, and military information support operations.

The UPDF Act of 2005 designates the CIMIC teams and functions as: (a) to preserve and defend the sovereignty and interior integrity of Uganda; b) to cooperate with the civilian authority in emergency situations in cases of natural disaster; c) to foster harmony and understanding between the defense forces and civilians; and d) to engage in productive
activities for the development of Uganda. At the time of the 2012 East Africa CMO Symposium, Ugandan CIMIC forces had been developed up to the brigade level. Participants noted, however, that “there is a lack of female officers,” a significant capability for many kinds of CA tasks. This has been reversed somewhat with the inclusion of females in the medical corps and even in the tank corps. Bancroft (a civilian contractor) provides CIMIC training in Mogadishu, Baidoa, and Afgoya and Out Patient Departments in Baidoa and Burhakaba, which include female AMISOM medical personnel.

In the past decade, the UPDF and the KDF’s emphases were primarily on domestic missions, though this is changing rapidly due to the Somalia mission. Prior to the creation of the CIMIC Chieftaincy, Uganda’s 2005 defense reform law gave the UPDF four missions, two of which were explicitly domestic. Importantly, the law provided none of the posse comitatus restrictions so cherished in the United States. In fact, the 2005 law allowed that officers and soldiers (enlisted personnel) needed no further authority to execute “all the powers and duties of a police officer,” and that they would be only liable to obey their superior officers, who would act “in collaboration” with the civilian authorities, not under them. Somalia operations now include CIMIC mostly in the medical realm with training from the UN, Bancroft, the United States, and the UK, among others. Additionally the UPDF and the KDF have engineering capability to move from the domestic realm to international operations.

Other TCCs

Though the United States has worked most extensively with Kenya and Uganda with CMO, it has conducted training and seminars in Burundi, Djibouti, and Ethiopia. The Burundians participated at high levels (general officer) in the IPSTC symposiums; the U.S. has also done course work with Ethiopian well-drillers and has courses planned for Burundi.

The Djiboutians resisted joining the AMISOM coalition for more than a year, in spite of urging from the international community. Hesitation came from two directions: 1) there was apprehension at joining a peace-enforcement campaign (which inherently involves taking sides in a conflict) when Djibouti prides itself as the peace-broker of the region; and 2) concerns over threats coming from al-Shabaab to the Djiboutian population through the Internet and Twitter. UN and French trainers deemed the Djiboutian troops unprepared to join combat/peace-enforcement operations, but so far they have achieved considerable success. Among all of the AMISOM forces, Djiboutian troops received the highest approval ratings from the Somalis in the early 2012/13 UN/IST poll for their work in Beledweyne.

Prior to Djibouti’s entrance into AMISOM, the U.S. military worked with some of the Djiboutian Special Forces at their outpost near the Ethiopian border (Karabti San). This was learning by observing and participating rather than by formal training, and took place over more than two years. The Djiboutian military hosted and worked with several U.S. CA teams who guided the local civilians through a building project for their village. It was a long-term operation, which probably could not be duplicated in short-term classroom training. Two of those Special Forces platoons subsequently deployed to Somalia.

The years of interaction with U.S. forces at home, as well as their own Somali customs
and relative similarity to the Somalis, prepared the Djiboutians for CMO in Somalia. Lt. General Andrew Gutti, the AMISOM Force Commander, visited the Djiboutian troops who took over from the Ethiopians in Beledweyne, Somalia – some of whom worked with the U.S. military in Karabti San – and commended the troops for their efforts to help the local population by providing humanitarian assistance in response to a recent flooding, ensuring their security. The same report said that the Djiboutian soldiers also engaged in local reconciliation efforts as well as regrouping and training various militias and integrating them into the Somali National Army.68 The Djiboutians were instrumental in bringing assistance to the civilians during a cholera outbreak in addition to flood relief efforts. Thus, in spite of little formal training, the Djiboutians have excelled in CIMIC. They are also reported to move outside their safe bases and to actually chase down al-Shabaab combatants.

A New Model for CA?

The Kenyan and Uganda experience in creating CA/CMO-capable forces illustrates numerous challenges and decision-points confronted in other militaries attempting such a transformation. One of the challenges all countries have in creating CA forces is the inevitable obstacle of “reprogramming” military minds. After a career focused on following a chain of command to achieve direct results, many officers and NCOs find it difficult to work within the ambiguity, indirectness, and collaborative environment of a multidimensional development or humanitarian relief mission.

At a more fundamental level, even defining what CA/CIMIC missions actually entail is a constantly evolving challenge. Since September 11, 2001, and the coalition missions in Iraq and Afghanistan, CAO by coalition and U.S. militaries were frequently about sponsoring projects and distributing goods and services. U.S. CA teams deployed to Africa with the CJTF-HOA mission generally followed that agenda – however East Africa (apart from Somalia) is not a combat arena, and is subject to different rules and circumstances than the
combat and post-conflict zones. These operations have generated questions from East Africans on the definition of CA/CIMIC missions, and highlighted the tension between CA as the coordination of resources and information, on one hand, and the provision of goods on the other hand.69

Significantly, in a 2012 symposium at IPSTC, the East African CA delegates recommended removing two sections from the draft East African manual on CA: 1) Populace and resource control (PRC) and 2) Dislocated Civilians (DC) operations. Their logic was that “this is not a core function of the military.”70 Yet both are critical areas for CMO conducted in a foreign country during wartime, and in fact are implied tasks for the military commander under international law. Removing them from the menu of doctrinal tasks reinforces the understanding that the African concept focuses on the more generic CIMIC and less CA-intense role of coordination.

The AU CIMIC concept for military support to the civilian element in conflict situations focused on two things: security and resources.71 Implied in these are related areas like public affairs. Again, note that these are core military operations and “soft support,” respectively, not the “hard CA” of conducting operations for the civilians. This also highlights the continuing difference in concepts from the U.S. approach, in which the military is explicitly taking on mission outside its “core functions.”

From CMO to Civil-Military Relations

The most significant tendency from a civil-military relations standpoint is an East African tendency toward planning and preparing CA forces for domestic operations. While it is rarely stated explicitly, underlying the development and employment of CA in the U.S. has been an assumption that it was intended for use in foreign operations, not for domestic operations. This is grounded both in posse comitatus and other constructs that limit the military’s domestic role, and in the conscious development of civilian agencies (e.g., the Federal Emergency Management Agency) to do the planning and coordination done by CA forces in certain overseas operations. In general “U.S. military power is projected across the globe but is barely noticeable at home,” according to Hill, Wong and Gerras, who argue that is one of three primary reasons for the high levels of trust American citizens have in the military.72

Other countries have asked their militaries to conduct extensive domestic missions, with mixed effects on civil-military relations. The Colombian Army conducted a series of successful rural “civic-military action” programs in the context of counter-insurgency campaigns between the mid-1960s and mid-1980s. As a result, military leaders developed beliefs on the country’s situation at odds with those of the political leadership, leading the former to speak out on the need for deeper social and political reforms; this phenomenon became serious enough that three different presidents removed senior military leaders for their dissent.73 That this could be done without provoking a coup d’état is a credit to the generally successful professionalization of the Colombian military – and something that would be unlikely in many African countries.

Looking from the perspective of countries with a history of military rule, Koonings and Kruijt have argued that many cases of military politicization include the “competence principle,” according to which military officers perceive themselves as better trained and
organized than their civilian peers. De Kadt argues, “such problems around governance have probably now become the central issues that impel military men to interfere with government.”74 While considering the possibility military forces could be given new missions to occupy soldiers and keep them out of explicit political roles, they conclude that, “A strong emphasis on civic-military action and other local development activities does not justify the existence of the armed forces and weakens the functioning of the public sector and civilian authorities in the process.”75

The Kenyan and Ugandan militaries are clearly trying to succeed where others have “failed” at sustaining both domestic CMO and civilian control of the military, so it is surprising how little public debate has been generated by this effort. One exception is a recent article by Senegalese Colonel Birame Diop, who recognized three risks in “mobilizing the military” for domestic missions: 1) Detracting from their primary mission of national defense, 2) The militarization of society, and 3) The politicization of the military, as increased power over domestic outcomes brings the allure of corruption and manipulation of domestic politics.76 Diop’s response to these concerns is to first restate the need for improved development by any means, and then to suggest safeguards to minimize the risk of the three negative outcomes. He stops at the generalities of building trust between the military and the populace, clearly defining the limits and timetable for military missions, and creating a legal framework for this to occur. His examples are limited to Kenya’s development of the “environmental soldier” and various other engineering and civic education programs, including those in Senegal. None of these cases go deep enough to explain how these countries actually did mitigate the risks of domestic military missions, or how others can hope to mitigate such risks.

A potential positive effect of CA development is to promote better behavior within the military. To the degree CA personnel adopt the desired values of respect for civilian authority, human rights, and social development, they can become advocates within military circles for plans and strategies that reflect such values. The U.S. military did exert some influence on the UPDF with their work in Karamoja over time. Unfortunately, recent history would suggest that this “change agent” affect is limited in most countries. Even in the U.S. Army, CA leaders are regularly relegated to secondary staff roles. It is hard to foresee African CA leaders faring better.

In the end, history may not repeat itself. The fact that the East African armies are choosing to build military forces specifically trained, and often designed, to work with civilians comes at a particular juncture in their historical development. They not only have the benefit of their own experience in Somalia and other foreign operations, they have already been engaged for decades in their own countries’ political and social development. Additionally, they can draw on the experience and analysis derived from U.S. and coalition operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, all of which relied heavily on the CA/CMO/CIMIC component. Whether this prologue allows them to play the appropriate role in the future remains to be seen. PRISM
Notes

1 Brianna Musselman of the School of International Service provided invaluable assistance to this project. Dr. Ladan Afifi, a post doctoral fellow at Qatar University, provided input and editorial comments on Somalia.

2 AMISOM was created by the African Union’s Peace and Security Council on 19 January 2007 with an initial six-month mandate, which has been extended. The current troop-contributing countries (TCCs) are Uganda, Djibouti, Burundi, Sierra Leone, Kenya and Ethiopia (Amisom-au.org). Uganda, Nigeria, Kenya, Sierra Leone, and Ghana are police contributing countries (PCCs).


4 In a 2013 interview with Dr. Besançon, a prominent Kenyan imam said: “Kenya should be out of Somalia yesterday.”

5 Harakat al-Shabaab al-Mujaheddin - HSM or simply Al Shabaab or AS—is the radical Islamic military movement in Somalia with domestic and foreign ‘terrorist’ support. Somalis is majority Muslim, but mainly Sufi.

6 A senior U.N. official disclosed that 3,000 AMISOM personnel have been killed during its seven-year mission (Source (Mombasa RMS): Taifa Leo (Independent newspaper and generally unbiased), in Kiswahili, 11 May 13)


8 Somali Scholar’s comment 2014: the Islamic Courts have been around since the early 1990s but they were not cohesive until 2004/2005 when the CIA began to fund the warlords to go against the Islamic Courts.

9 Somali Scholar’s comment 2014: by the time Ethiopia invaded Somalia, the Islamic Courts had scattered, later on coalescing in Eritrea.

10 Jihad was the minority view from al Shabaab until the Ethiopian invasion

11 Somalia’s history is complex and has been documented by multiple historians and current academics including I.M. Lewis, Gerard Prunier, Kenneth Menkhaus, Alex De Waal, Roland Marshall, and Andre Le Sage, among many.

12 Also known as the Somali Federal Government of Somalia (SFG) and the Somali National Government SNG

13 Central Somalia and the FGS still consider Somaliland, a self-declared separate nation, unrecognized by the rest of the world, as part of greater Somalia.


15 ‘Approximately two of every five local or regional reports on or related to al-Shabaab argue that “al Shabaab’s quasi-state in southern and central Somalia has been progressively reduced over the past thirteen months” (AMISOM Daily Media Monitoring website) as the result of “multi-pronged military operations” by Somalia government forces, AMISOM peacekeepers, ENDF, and allied militias.’ CUBIC Media Analysis Report 26 November 2012.


17 Presentation in November 2013 by Dr. Le Sage to US troops deploying to Africa.


19 Andre Le Sage, November 2012. Norfolk, VA.

20 Scholar at Tufts University. November 2012. Also, on 08 November 2012, a cache of firearms and ammunition thought to belong to al-Shabaab militants was recovered by Somali and African Union forces in the port city of Kismayo after they carried out a major joint operation to the west of the town. Source: Ethiopian Radio (Pro-government), in Amharic, 09 Nov 12; Ethiopian Television (Pro-government), in Amharic, 09 Nov 12; Addis Zemen (Pro-government), in Amharic, 10 Nov 12. The Economist. October 2012. ‘The Shabab, who have dispersed their communications equipment men and
weapons, can again be expected to play a waiting game.” http://www.economist.com/node/21564258


The Somalis believe the Kenyans want the coastal territory of Kismayo and the natural resources, but the Kenyans particularly felt the need for a buffer zone to secure their coastline from attacks and protect their tourism industry. The Ethiopians and Somalis have long had border and territory ownership issues – marked by the Somali invasion in 1977.


April 15 Burundi (Prime Minister Sharidon was replaced in December 2013 by Abdiweli Sheikh Ahmed)


Note, for example, that the phrase “Black Hawk Down” has evolved from a succinct title for a U.S. newspaper story to a book, a film, and finally shorthand for the entire ”Battle of Mogadishu” or any similar urban combat operation.


Kenya officially joined AMISOM in June 2012 – months after invading Somalia.

Kenyan Muslim cleric, interview with Dr. Besançon, 2013

Proceedings of the East Africa Civil-Military Operations Symposium (henceforth, "EACMOSP"), held January 30 – 10 February 2012, p. 115

“The Kenya Army Engineers Civil Affairs Training,” http://www.mod.go.ke/?page_link=engineers, last accessed 25 Sep 2013. Quotation is from Kenyan website, and may not reflect his actual wording. The course was a joint effort of the Kenyans supported by the US military.

EACMOSP, p. 73.

Brig Owino, comments summarized in EACMOSP, p. 118.


Brig Owino, comments summarized in EACMOSP, pp. 119-22

Interview with Kenyan Officer at Manda Bay by Dr. Besançon. January 2013.

Lee and Farrell. 2011.

50  Partner nations need to solve the certification/validation issue with schools/centers/training – the training is free and the students get per diem, so there is no incentive to participate or perform. They get a certificate without any testing mechanism.
51  Muslim clerics, Kenyan Army and Navy officers, US officials, city leaders, and contractors, interviews with Dr. Besançon, 2013.
52  Suggestions by Bancroft – a leading training and mentoring contracting organization.
53  Kenyan Brigadier General interviewed by Dr. Besançon in 2013
54  AGCAP-Agricultural Civil Action Project – Kenyan Engineers/military will join US CA team experts in constructing food and grain storage units. The Kenyans will see how the US coordinates projects through local formal and informal leaders, provincial and state/country leaders.
55  Tum, EACMOSP, p. 166
56  STREP NGO-AFLI, 17 November 2010 (this is an “unconfirmed statistic”).
57  Don Osborn July 2010, CA team member from late 2010, Besançon 2011.
58  Besançon 2011. Uganda Karamoja VETCAPS: Partnering with UPDF and NGOs
59  Ibid
60  The UPDF had not been receptive to the British CMCC training in Soroti in 2009 – they rejected any kind of power point presentations (Dr. Donald Osborn, ’Summary and prospectus: Harari and Moroto VETCAPS’ September 2010).
62  LTC Rukogota email communication
63  EACMOSP, p. 47.
64  UPDF Act of 2005, paragraph 7, gives these functions as (a) to preserve and defend the sovereignty and interior integrity of Uganda; b) to cooperate with civilian authority in emergency situations in cases of natural disaster; c) to foster harmony and understanding between the defense forces and civilians; and d) to engage in productive activities for the development of Uganda.
65  UPDF Act of 2005, paragraph 43.
66  The first post Somalia deployment suicide bombing occurred in Djibouti City May 2014. http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/05/27/uk-djibouti-attacks-idUSKBN0E72AA20140527
68  “AMISOM Commander visits Hiiraan, says Somali Army will be trained,” Sudan Tribune. 28 November 2012. 20 May 2013. Soldiers from Djibouti serving under the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), provide security, water, and other services to the residents of Beletweyne. Residents fondly refer to the Djiboutian soldiers as brothers and helpmates for their role in repelling attacks, resolving clan disputes, and supporting commercial activity. (AMISOM - via You Tube) <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2InQYD1fJ0o&feature=youtube_gdata>
69  EACMOSP, p. 50.
70  EACMOSP, p.173. Ironically, this was followed by a briefing from MG Okello, who listed PRC as one of six generic CMO activites for AMISOM.
71  EACMOSP, p 197