ASIFU
Enhancing Intelligence Support to UN Peacekeeping Operations in Mali

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Introduction

In 2014, the Netherlands and Norway together with five other countries[2] took the initiative to improve the intelligence support for the United Nations (UN) mission in Mali. This initiative resulted in the so-called *All Sources Information Fusion Unit* (ASIFU). The ASIFU proved successful as its high quality intelligence products were praised both inside and outside MINUSMA. The unit was also mentioned in several dispatches and speeches of high ranking UN-officials to the members of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). This article provides insight into the concept of ASIFU and its achievements. It also outlines the realities of intelligence operations within a UN setting.

The article is structured as follows: Firstly, it will give insight into the underlying motives for the need to improve the intelligence support for UN peacekeeping operations, leading to the Dutch and Norwegian initiative. Secondly the ASIFU concept itself will be discussed. Subsequently, the article will outline ASIFUs deployment phase and the complex way of operating within the UN framework. Fourthly some achievements and challenges will be mentioned. The article concludes with lessons learned and some reflections.

ASIFU: the beginning

After the experiences of the UN peacekeeping operation in Congo, the United Nations published the so-called Brahimi Report. This report signaled poor political-strategic direction and failing leadership within UN peacekeeping operations. Furthermore, it also underlined that UN missions lacked proper support and logistics. In military terminology these are called *enabling functions*.

One of the problems mentioned is intelligence support. The Brahimi report referred specifically to the following: lack of information, inability to respond to information, lack of specialized intelligence sensors and the inability to deal with sensitive information in a classified environment.[3] The report argued that UN peacekeepers were operating in increasingly dangerous, complex, chaotic and fluid operational conditions and were facing opponents who operated increasingly in a hybrid manner and were often involved in transnational organized crime. The intelligence support for such environments so far had been inadequate.[4] The usual UN agencies tasked with gathering information had been poorly organized trained and equipped to produce adequate intelligence for all levels of command

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[2] Next to the Netherlands and Norway, also Sweden, Denmark, Germany, Finland and Estonia participated in the ASIFU.

[3] Panel on UN Peace Keeping Operations (Brahimi report), New York, 21 Aug 2000, P 65-75.

[4] For more information about the importance of information and intelligence see Expert Panel on Technology and Innovation in UN Peacekeeping: Final Report, Performance Peacekeeping, 22 Dec 2014.

within UN missions.[5] So improvements were urgently needed. In other words: UN Peace Keeping Operations needed a modern high quality intelligence system.

Figure 1: one of ASIFU's sensors: the Scan Eagle

The traditional agencies responsible for intelligence production within UN missions are the U2, JMAC and UNDSS. The U2 is the military intelligence staff of a UN mission and is responsible for tactical and operational level intelligence (including the Force Commander). The Joint Military Analysis Centre (JMAC) is responsible for operational and strategic level analysis (Senior Mission Leadership)). Due to high demand for tactical intelligence, JMAC is often unintentionally misused to support these lower requirements. Its operational and strategic intelligence tasks therefore becoming subordinate.[6] The UN Department for Security and Safety (UNDSS) in turn is responsible for specific threat assessments against UN infrastructure.

Besides the unintended misuse of JMAC for tactical intelligence, there are four other reasons why the intelligence capacity of the UN was inadequate: Firstly, many Western countries withheld their technologically advanced intelligence units from the UN, because of a lack of confidence in the organization. Secondly, the UN was overburdened due to the large number of missions and therefore had trouble receiving enough first rate troops for specific UN missions. Thirdly, the intelligence capacity of the UN was harmed by the 'institutional tendency' to share intelligence reports only in its own chain of command ('stove piping') and not share it horizontally enough between the various organization of the mission.[7] In other words, the UN intelligence was inadequately organized and did not have modern comprehensive intelligence processes and structures. Finally, qualitative and quantitative staffing as well as equipment had not kept pace with increasingly complex threats.

[5] For an overview of the UNs new challenges, see: UN DPKO, A New Partnership Agenda / Charting a New Horizon for UN Peacekeeping, New York, July 2009. On p 21 the importance of situational awareness and threat assessments are mentioned. The importance of predictive Intelligence and integrated risk analysis is described on p24 and on p27 information-gathering as critical shortfall is mentioned.

[6] Peter Shetler-Jones: Intelligence in Integrated UN Peace Keeping Mission: the JMAC. Article in the *International Peacekeeping.* Published online on 04 Aug 2008, p 526 and further.

[7] Ibid. p 520

Opponents had often more advanced means at their disposal than the UN and could therefore easily hide their intentions. The ASIFU concept, as designed by Norway and the Netherlands supported by Sweden, Denmark, Germany, Finland and Estonia, took those shortcomings in to consideration and offered the UN high quality intelligence in support of their MINUSMA mission in Mali. Before going into details how this came about and what the result of this concept was, it is worth mentioning the underlying conceptual ideas.

ASIFU: the concept

The ASIFU concept derives from (intelligence) lessons from previous military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. During these missions it was realized that focusing on *current intelligence* was no longer sufficient. *Predictive capacity* was needed to provide force protection (*Protect the Force*) and to serve the Mission goals (*Protect the Mission)*. For plausible hypotheses, a robust intelligence system has to be developed that can provide predictive and actionable intelligence. In other words, intelligence that can lead to renewed and better military activities. In this way threats can not only be mitigated but also prevented and opportunities for action can be exploited. This is called *intelligence led activities*.

Afghanistan has also taught us that this is not easy. Sometimes the intelligence system must be supported by combat and support units in order to be effective.[8] Occasionally combat units must subordinate to a specific intelligence effort, which is then the main effort. Hitherto this was unusual and it required a substantial change of culture within the military to make it happen. There should also be flexibility in planning as well as in implementing combat activities, in order to respond to incoming intelligence. Furthermore, the deployment of sensors must be predominantly focused on intelligence gathering for planning purposes and less for direct support of ongoing operations.

To produce predictive and actionable intelligence, some conditions have to be met. Firstly, the intelligence gathering subunits (sensors) have to be deployed in a concentrated or focused way. This is called the ISTAR[9] concept: the limitations of one sensor are being mitigated by the specific capabilities of another sensor. The deployment of the different sensors therefore should not to be spread out in time and space, but should be concentrated in order to achieve this. This is also called multi sensor deployment.

Secondly, in modern irregular conflicts, like the US-led coalition wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the multi-dimensional approach should be used when producing intelligence. This means that certain conflict aspects should not only be viewed from a military point, but also (or even primarily) from the political, economical, social-cultural, infrastructural or information point of view. This is also known as the X-PMESII[10], in which X stands for the cross approach. The X-PMESII approach ensures that all relevant aspects (or combination of aspects) are taken in consideration when analyzing operational environments. Furthermore it makes sure that these aspects are used in conjunction with each other. In this way commanders are able to vary in their options for action and are not automatically forced

[8] In the ideal situation, intelligence leads to operations and operations lead to new intelligence
[9] Intelligence, Surveillance, Target Acquisition and Reconnaissance
[10] PMESII stands for Politics, Military, Economical, Social, Infrastructure and Information. This are the so-called descriptive variables, used for analysis of changes in an operational environment.

to opt for violent action (hard power). In theory this makes the use of soft power easier. The X-PMESII approach is therefore crucial in a multi-dimensional approach that MINUSMA (and UN missions in general) represent.

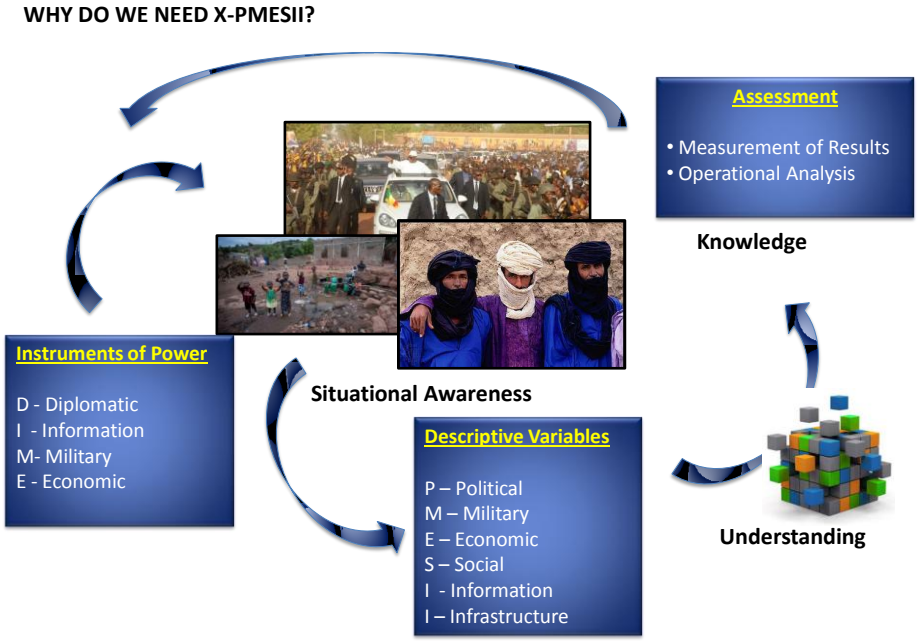

Figure 2: the importance of the multi-dimensional approach

The ASIFU concept includes all the lessons identified that are stated above. Besides concentrated deployment of sensors in order to produce intelligence for planning purposes and the X-PMESII approach, the ASIFU concept consists of a third fundamental idea, which is long time basic military practice within Western armed forces. This is centralized direction combined with decentralized execution. Centralized direction must ensure connection with the strategic and operational level of UN missions. In addition, it should also guarantee that intelligence activities are not only initiated in order to respond to incidents, as often occurs in UN missions, but also to detect trends to prevent them. Furthermore, intelligence activities should be initiated for mid and long-term planning. Decentralized execution on the other hand should increase freedom of action for the tactical level (mission command). This tactical level (sector headquarters and subordinate UN units) must be able to respond to predictive and actionable intelligence. Furthermore, because the same mission space[11] is used, the tactical level should synchronize activities to prevent fratricide and unnecessary duplications.

Summarized: the ASIFU concept contains three things: focused intelligence operations, the X-PMESII approach and centralized direction with decentralized execution.

[11] Mission space is the physical and mental space that a commander can use to deploy his means.

ASIFU: the structuring and the deployment

After developing the basic idea for ASIFU, some more countries were asked to participate in the ASIFU concept. In total seven countries expressed their willingness and thus formed a coalition-of-the-willing.[12]

Figure 3: The flag ASIFU consists of the colors of the flags of the original participating countries and Mali.

Under the coordination of the Netherlands, planners from the participating countries developed the layout of ASIFU. Not only the organization, but also the allocation of functions, the necessary infrastructure, Command & Control systems,[13] equipment and armaments. Through cooperation the (financial) burden was reduced as much as possible. In Bamako, the Headquarters (HQ) ASIFU was created, together with an Analysis Fusion Cell (AFC). The analysts of the AFC were responsible for processing the incoming information into readymade intelligence products for MINUSMA's higher leadership. In addition, two company sized ISR (Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance) units were stationed in sectors West and East, respectively Tombouctou and Gao regions.

For use of specialized multisensory intelligence units two models are available: the '*attached*' model and the '*integrated*' model. In the *'attached*' model ISR units are kept under direction of the intelligence functional chain, where as in the *'integrated'* model ISR units are put at this disposal of local tactical commanders. The *'attached'* model' was chosen. This means that the local ISR subunits were not placed under the command of the Sector HQs but under HQ ASIFU. The reason for not putting the ISR subunits under command of the Sector HQs was that this would result in a degradation of the ASIFU concept, because at that moment in time, knowledge on sector level how to use high quality intelligence units was not there. It would (under the then existing circumstances) most likely lead to a wide distribution of sensors, reacting to incidents and only being tasked to look to military aspects. In short: they would be used for '*history writing'* and not production of high quality predictive and actionable intelligence. By using them in the attached mode (directed and controlled from HQ ASIFU) the production of high quality intelligence was better ensured. However

[12] For more lessons learned about the added value of coalitions of the willing in UN peace missions, I refer to the article of the *International peace institute* (IPI) of John Karlsrud and Adam C. Smith: European Military Participation in MINUSMA, published in February 2015. The authors call ASIFU a successful example of cooperation between troop contributing countries.

[13] The UN are using the term Authority, Command and Control (AC2)

instructions were given to the subunits to seek collaboration with sector HQ-level and other local UN units, to synchronise local (intelligence) activities as much as possible.
However, if certain conditions were fulfilled a switch from the '*attached'* model to the *'integrated'* model was foreseen. Those conditions are: (1) enough knowledge and experience on tactical level (sector HQ) on use of intelligence units, (2) the ISR units should be used as multi-sensor units (keeping the sensors together) executing focused intelligence activities, (3) as basic for analysis the X-PMESII approach should be used and (4) proper use of intelligence products should be guaranteed (using them in an independent way and not to sanction *'most 'whish-able'* courses of action. If those conditions are not in place, the 'attached' model is the preferred one, best ensuring high quality intelligence support. At the moment of writing MINUSMA is moving toward fulfillment of the abovementioned conditions, but is not there yet.

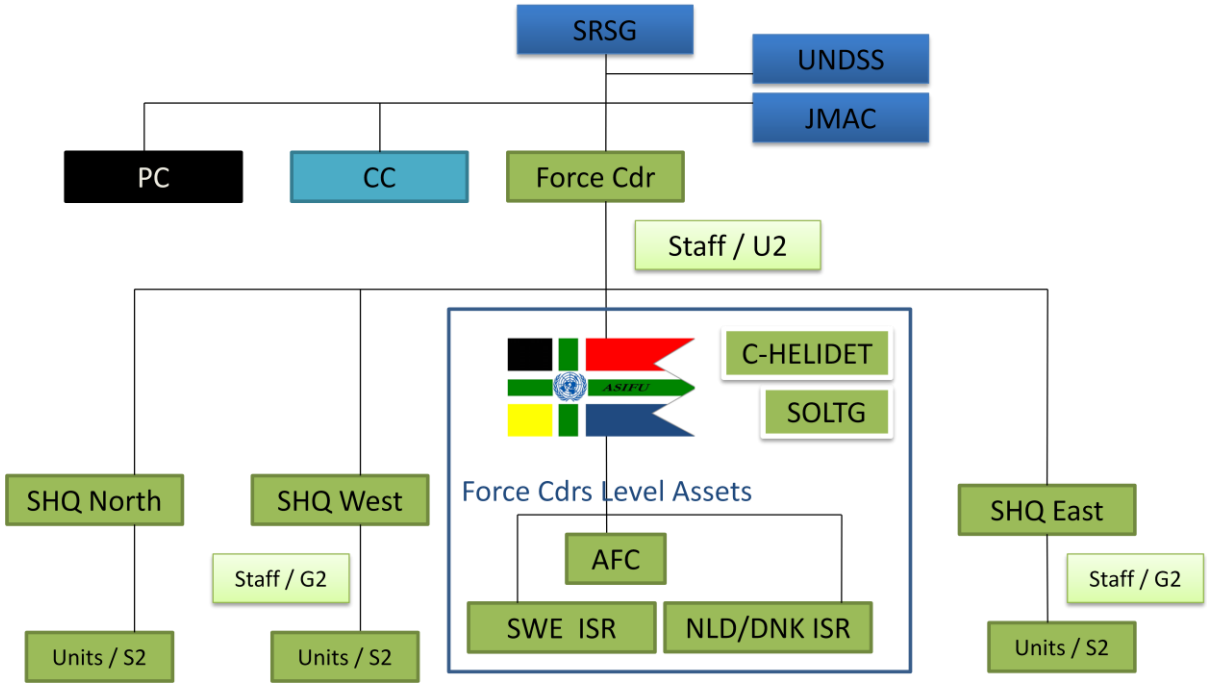

Figure 4: simplified representation of the organization of MINUSMA and ASIFU.

The Netherlands offered an small ISR unit for Gao and intelligence personnel for the ASIFU HQ and Sweden offered the second ISR unit for Timbuktu region. The latter prepared thoroughly and learned much from the Dutch lessons in Gao, who deployed earlier. The lack of enabling capacity within the NLD ISR Coy limited their operational reach. In order to conduct long range intelligence activities they had to rely on support from other Dutch units, especially the NLD Helicopter Detachment[14]. However, due to other priorities, helicopter support could not always be secured, leading to cancellation of several planned long range intelligence activities. But on some occasions helicopter support could be secured which greatly increased the output of the NLD ISR Coy.

The Swedes chose to deploy a more robust intelligence unit (and called it Task Force) with its own enabling capacities. This ensured that the SWE ISR TF could operate more independently. However

[14] Next to the NLD ISR Coy the Dutch Government also deployed a Special Forces unit and a Helicopter Detachment. All were supported by a national Joint Support Detachment (JSD).

for long range intelligence activities additional medevac (or casevac) helicopter support was needed. While the Dutch were able to organized this themselves in Gao (using the Dutch helicopters), the Swedes could not. No dedicated medevac helicopter support was available at Tombouctou and the casevac helicopter support (using the traditional UN-system) had severe operational limitations. This lack of helicopter support hampered the operational effectiveness of the SWE ISR TF. Intensive planning however ensured that at least during some long range intelligence activities of SWE ISR TF medevac helicopter support (using Dutch helicopters) was available. This greatly contributed to the effectiveness of SWE ISR TF.

The deployment of HQ ASIFU (2014) in Bamako, NLD ISR Coy in Gao region (2014) and SWE ISR TF (2015) in Timbuktu region went generally according to plan, although there were some delays caused by logistical problems and unfamiliarity with the UN-system.

Figure 5: one of ASIFUs Swedish sensors: vehicles from the Long Range Recce Squadron along the River Niger.

ASIFU: complex reality

Both the NLD ISR Coy and the SWE ISR TF were multi-sensor units and contained, next to C2 element, information management capacity, analytic capacity, and various types of sensors. Added was extra liaison and Civil-Military Interaction (CMI) capacity to engage a multitude of local actors holding PMESII information) and CMI.

Most of ASIFU intelligence activities are focused on producing intelligence for planning purposes and sector and Force HQ level. This intelligence then can be used for making sure that the limited UN civilian and military capacity is used in the right way, in the right place, at the right time, in the right

way and against the proper target audience. In short: ASIFU produced intelligence allows the efficient deployment of MINUSMA resources and permits the most efficient action. But ASIFU can do more. If needed (or ordered) ASIFU can also use its various sensors to collect information to support ongoing or tomorrow's operations. ASIFU can even adapt very quickly and on-the-fly retask some of its sensors to cover significant incidents which are occurring right now. We call this emergency intelligence support. But this will, of course, limit its ability to execute intelligence activities aimed for planning purposes. So the more ASIFU reacts (or is ordered to react) to ongoing incidents, the more MINUSMA will be drawn into 'the dynamics of the here and now.' This results in MINUSMA being less prepared for the future . The Force Commander can of course, decide to do so, but it should be the exception rather than the rule. Next to above mentioned tasks ASIFU can also support other UN activities, like information activities, protection of civilians and recovery and stabilization projects.

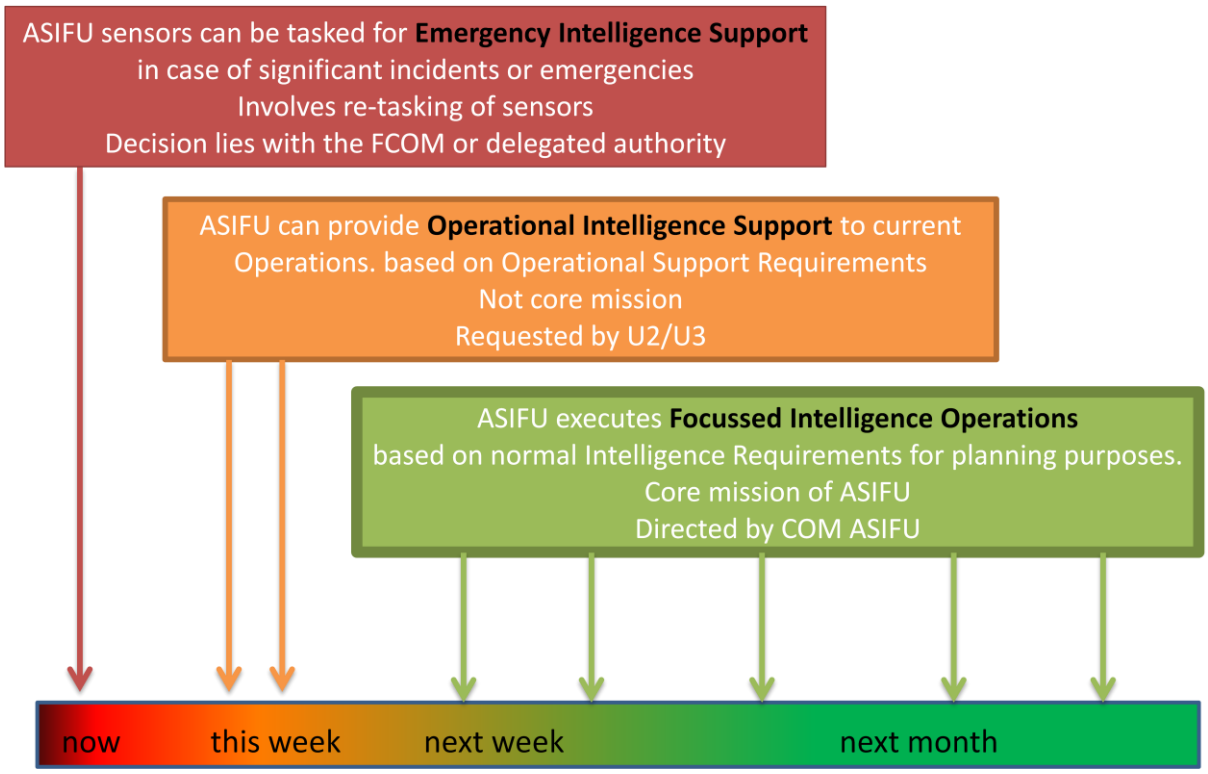

Figure 6: Three types of intelligence activities.

Although ASIFU produced good intelligence products, it did face some challenges. Firstly, many UN staff officers and commanders had no experience with handling intelligence. Secondly, MINUSMA had hardly any free available forces at hand to respond to or act upon these intelligence products. Most of its forces were concerned with providing security to its bases, convoys and local (civilian) security. The capacity for conducting operations at night was almost non-existent. [15] Moreover there was almost no MINUSMA units left south of the Niger river bend, that could provide or react upon intelligence.

[15] ASIFUs advised in October 2014 to limit the number of MINUSMAs physical locations, in order to have more forces available for other tasks. This advice was not followed up.

The positioning of the new ASIFU concept within the traditional UN command and control structure also caused some problems for HQ ASIFU in Bamako. In the last months of 2014 there was some discussion about who was responsible for which piece of information. With the deployment of ASIFU, the U2 became responsible for current, tactical intelligence. ASIFU on the other hand was made responsible for the long term tactical and operational intelligence. Due to misunderstandings at the start, both U2 as well as ASIFU claimed parts of each other's turf. In addition, there was strong ongoing pressure from leading personalities within Force HQ to deploy sensors only for tactical, often incident driven objectives. In this period MINUSMA was under great pressure and there were a lot of violent incidents that killed many peacekeepers. Therefore, the pressure from the Force HQ was understandable, but it made sure that the mission was about to be overtaken by events. Ultimately, due to a better explanation of the ASIFU concept the situation improved significantly.

When the decision is taken to evolve from the 'attached' to the 'integrated' model, the relationship between ASIFU and U2 will change. As the ISR subunits are put under control of the tactical Sector HQ level, the responsibility for organizing both situational awareness and situational understanding shifts completely to the U2. In this model U2 and HQ ASIFU can merge, using the All Sources Fusion Cell (AFC) as a special analytic cell under command of the Force Commander, directed by the U2. The AFC can then be used for all specialized (intelligence) assessments on the operational level, like specialized thematical studies, operational analysis, target audience analysis, etc.

Another challenge was the relationship with JMAC, the strategic analysis cell of MINUSMA. ASIFU's intelligence products handle the tactical and operational level. JMAC was tended to engage in the same levels, while its task should be the production of intelligence for the strategic level (focusing on achieving the mission objectives).[16,17] By explaining concepts however, relations improved significantly.

A significant improvement was the creation of the Mission Intelligence System, based not on hierarchical Authority, Command and Control (AC2) lines, but on network relations and added value of each individual intelligence organization to the wider intelligence network. Instead of competing for space and authority the different intelligence organizations in MINUSMA started to look for possibilities for support and contribution to each other's intelligence activities. This however was not easy. It took (and still takes) al a lot of discussing, arguing, talking and convincing before other organizations were able to 'leave their stovepipes' and started to act as part of a bigger intelligence network. But we really went from competition to synchronization. The Mission Intelligence System did made sure that all MINUSMA levels (strategic, operational and tactical) and components were supported by intelligence. In short: network centric intelligence.

[16] The civilian leadership is tended to ask JMAC tactically incident driven questions

[17] JMACs original term of reference is: 'to integrate all information.' This is obsolete and not attuned to contemporary developments.

Figure 7: Swedish camp Nobel in Timbuktu.

Another big step forward was the creation of the so-called Joint Coordination Board (JCB) involving all intelligence branches (JMAC, ASIFU, U2, UNPOL and UNDSS) and designed to steer the above mentioned Mission Intelligence System.[18] Chief JMAC is the president of the JCB. Within the JCB the intelligence activities are synchronized, working groups are formed and visions are compared. The JCB is starting to work and becomes more effective each month. For instance the interaction between the JCB and the senior mission leadership can be improved.[19]

Perhaps the biggest problem for the effectiveness of ASIFU so far has been the lack of long term integrated planning within MINUSMA. For various reasons, MINUSMA was unable to set up a good civil/military campaign plan in 2013 or in 2014.[20] But this changed in 2015, especially when a new Danish Force Commander arrived, bringing renewed energy and firm leadership. MINUSMA's military staff has as of mid 2015 written a new Force Concept of Operations (CONOPS), and the UN HQ produced an overarching Mission CONOPS, integrating and synchronizing the military, police and civilian activities. New to this also a beginning was made with the design of a MINUSMA Integrated Operation Planning and Coordination (IOPC) process. The intelligence products of the Mission Intelligence System (among which the ASIFU product are central) are used as input for weekly, monthly and quarterly integrated planning. So big steps has been made forward, ensuring that intelligence products are well used.

[18] The creation of the JCB was a first step for the management of information within MINUSMA. Both for the civil component as well as the military component.

[19] However, tactical intelligence remains important in order to produce good strategic intelligence. The UN are unable to produce good tactical intelligence. This is a problem for MINUSMA. Therefore, the pressure on ASIFU remains to produce tactical intelligence.

[20] One of the main reasons for this was the rapidly deteriorating security situation in Mali after the Kidal incident in May 2014. The pressure on MINUSMA was high, so that the required long-term planning capacity for long-term planning could not be released. Moreover, the fluid situation made it very difficult to do long-term planning. The slowness of the UN system could not cope with the dynamics of the operational environment.

ASIFU: results and challenges

A few words about the results of ASIFU are important. In both Gao and Bamako the intelligence products are much appreciated by a variety of customers, both in and outside of MINUSMA. The ISR Coy in Gao for example gave early warnings of the escalating local security situation. The SWE ISR TF supported Sector HQ West with multiple intelligence activities and managed to improve the situational understanding of the wider Tombouctou area significantly. They also physically protected the civilian population of Tombouctou by deploying some Swedish reconnaissance subunits in a 'stopping line' north of the city when rebel Arab and Touareg forces tried to overrun the city. They even stopped a possible escalation by preventing Malian Armed Forces deploying artillery and firing indiscriminately to area's to the North of the city.

The ISR Coy in Gao is also exchanging information and intelligence with 47 local civilian, military and local partners (including GOs, NGOs, IOs and representatives of civil society). Thereby its information position has improved significantly. Daily and Weekly Assessments, IED threat charts, Air Threat Assessments and IDF threat analyzes are disseminated.

ASIFU HQ Bamako also started producing high quality intelligence. Weekly and Monthly Assessments are produced as well as numerous Intelligence Reports, spanning a wide range of subjects like assessments on ethnic groups, organized crime, armed groups etcetera. Furthermore, HQ ASIFU produces the Quarterly Assessment, which is disseminated every three months. Scenarios are developed based on structured analysis. The Quarterly Outlooks are of high quality and most of them actually came through. ASIFU Quarterly Outlooks and monthly assessment now are being used in a structured way for planning purposes.

Figure 8: Camp Bifrost where HQ ASIFU is located

Its flexibility is part of the reason for ASIFUs results. ASIFU has shown that it can adapt its organisation and processes very quickly whenever the situation demands it. For example, the collating process[21] was centralized, ASIFU HQ positions were exchanged between countries and analysts rotated between the HQ and ISR subunits. In Gao additional capacity was introduced in the form of a Cover & Support Team (CST) to better facilitate HUMINT and CMI teams for independent missions. Next to this new international sensors were received and attached to the subordinate ISR Units. Also analysts from new countries (like Switzerland, Latvia and the Czech Republic) were incorporated in our analytic cells in Gao and Bamako. Furthermore, in dialogue with FHQ-leadership the intelligence support was synchronized with improved Force planning processes and intelligence support to Information Operations was organized.

The achievements of ASIFU were partly based on two important power tools: our well structured information management system and our central collated database. Based on NATO proven doctrinal ASIFU has put much thought in organizing its incoming and outgoing information flows, including tasking and reporting procedures with regard to subordinate ISR units and non ISR partners. We have developed disclosure and dissemination procedures, serving various information needs from a variety of customers. ASIFU also possesses a well-maintained database. This data-base is accessible by analysts on multiple locations, allowing them to use verified detailed data. Knowing the value of a good database and realizing the dangers if of not organizing data control, we choose for the concept of centralised collation. So all data, information and intelligence (reports) is send from the ISR subunits and other information-partners to the central collation-cell in Bamako. This cell then makes sure the data is put correctly into the data-base. The collation cell has software for bulk translation available, next to database management tools and quality check mechanism. The experience of ASIFU on use and management of its data-base is also used to help and train other organizations in MINUSMA, like JMAC, Joint Operation Centre (JOC) and UNMASS and UNPOL. At this moment, based on orders from DPKO New York, steps are being made towards synchronization of all MINUSMA databases enabling smooth data transfer as a possible stepping stone towards an MINUSMA Integrated Database.

We however, also have internal weaknesses and areas we should improve. Our linguistic capacities are vulnerable as most participating countries have difficulties to find enough suitable French speaking and writing, military intelligence personnel. Especially when dealing with Malian local leadership or civic-society it is important to be able to speak the French language fluently[22]. So next ASIFU-joining countries will be requested to increase their efforts in securing French-speaking and writing intelligence specialists. Next to this the coverage of our sensors is too limited. Some important area's (or themes) cannot be covered enough. Another weakness is the frequent rotation of military intelligence personnel. Six or sometimes even four months is too short a period to know the dynamics of the complex Malian conflict. Such a short period of time puts our intelligence personnel also in a disadvantageous position with regards to the far longer serving civilian personnel of MINUSMA. They frequently have a better understanding than most military do.

[21] Collation means the filling of the database

[22] Of course, when using the ASIFU in other UN missions, the linguistic challenges may be different as indigenous languages differ around the world.

There are also other challenges, more outside ASIFU. Firstly, too many MINUSMA organizations tend to focus on the tactical level. Secondly, some countries complain about the exclusive nature of ASIFU,[23] which now only consists of Northwestern European countries. Some people consider that not in line with UN values based on the 'nondiscriminatory' community of nations. In their eyes other (less developed) countries should also be able to participate in a concept like ASIFU.[24] Thirdly, the financial costs for such high quality intelligence products are high. The last challenge, I would like to mention is the outdated command and control documentation within the UN. Some visitors from New York often use old documents (from the pre-ASIFU era) that have to be updated.

Yet it can be said that ASIFU is making progress. Especially with the deployment of the SWE ISR TF Tombouctou and incoming new personnel and sensors, ASIFU is even better able to make a difference. After all, because of good intelligence support, both the Force HQ as well as the sector HQs are better able to deploy MINUSMAs limited available peace keeping units in the right place, the right time and in the correct composition. This actually applies to the civilian component of MINUSMA as well. ASIFU thus provides the conditions for a more proactive MINUSMA.

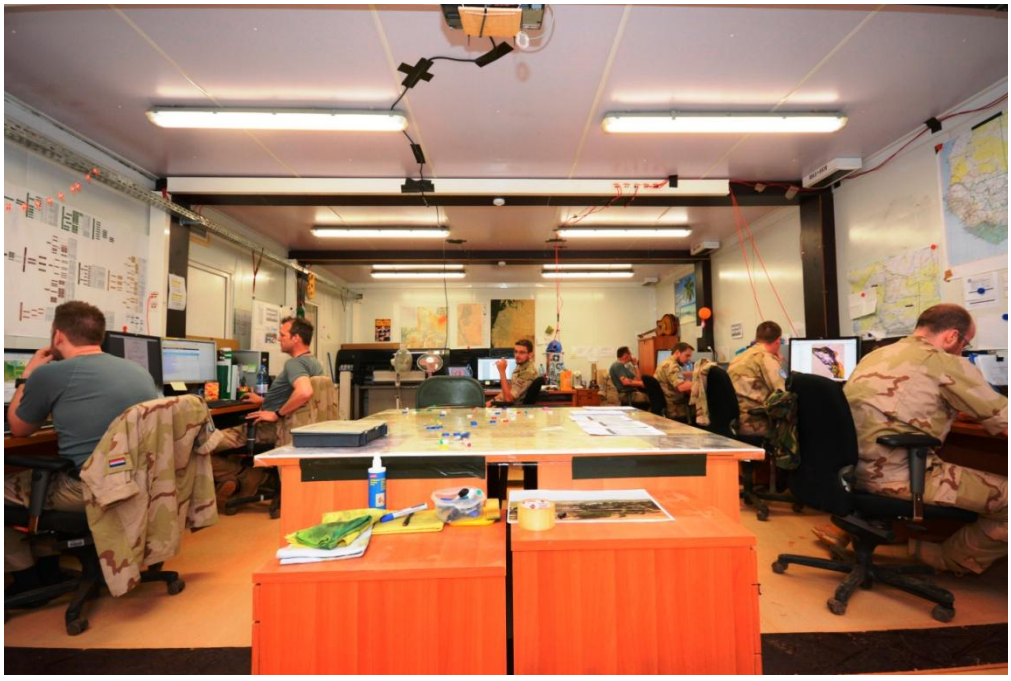

Figure 9: Analysts of the All Sources Intelligence Cell (ASIC) of the NLD ISR Coy in Gao at work

ASIFU: lessons learned

What lessons can be drawn from the ASIFU experiment at this moment? Firstly, the strength of the coalition-of-the-willing. This unique partnership between cultural and conceptually related countries makes it possible to bring together high-quality capacity that is quickly operational along NATO and EU standards. In addition, partnerships like these increase the possibilities of smaller countries to

[23] The exclusive nature of the coalition-of-the-willing has a crucial advantage. There is confidence between these seven countries based on previous deployment experiences, earlier collaboration within peace keeping missions or conceptual similarities. This confidence is essential for intelligence work.

[24] Obviously exclusivity is untenable in the long term within the UN and other countries will get access to ASIFU

participate in such high quality UN peacekeeping operations. These kind of international partnerships make ASIFU sustainable. For smaller, individual countries it is difficult to sustain this kind of efforts on their own, but by exchanging functions and sensor capacity, they can.[25]

A second lesson is the importance of a secure network which is needed for the production of intelligence. A Mission Secret level allows intelligence organisations to share, fuse and produce high quality and even sensitive intelligence, while protecting its sources. The UN does not have such a secure network yet, but plans are being made to develop such a UN capacity.

Also specific intelligence software is important. This is the third lesson. Specific intelligence software is needed to produce Geographic Intelligence (GeoInt) processing high volume data. Such software is needed to do Network Analysis, to analyze IMINT footage, to conduct Target Audience Analysis, to run databases. Specialized intelligence software like, IBase, ArcGis, ArcView and Analyst Notebook are vital analysts tools and should be made available to all parts of the Mission Intelligence System.

Training capacity is a fourth lesson. In order to improve other areas of the Mission Intelligence System, local training is necessary. For this, ASIFU has developed so called Forward Liaison & Analyst Training Teams (Flatt). The Flatts try to train both the personnel in the Sector HQ s as well as the UN battalions to improve their way of reporting and therefore the intelligence process. Although there are still some practical problems like language barriers and cultural differences, improvements have been made.[26] If needed ASIFU is also able to augment the G2 section of certain sector HQ with a so-called Forward ISR Team (FIST) for al limited time period. For instance, on the special request of Commander Sector North, ASIFU did deploy such a FIST to HQ Sector North during the months June and July 2015.

A fifth lesson is the importance of the civilian component. MINUMSA consists not only of UN troops. The civilian component in UN missions is often well developed and has a lot of experience, information and knowledge. This information and knowledge must be disclosed in accordance with the X-PMESII approach. The contribution of liaison and Civil-Military Interaction (CMI) capacity at both the HQ-level and subunit-level of ASIFU is therefore of great importance and should be extended.

[25] The Brahimi report in 2000 mentioned the value of informal coalitions for the acquisition process of UN forces. See Panel on UN Peacekeeping Operations (Brahimi report), New York, Aug 21 2000, page 19 and 20. The subsequent UN report *A New Partnership Agenda / Charting a New Horizon for UN Peacekeeping* recognizes the added value of informal coalitions of troop contributing countries, UN DPKO, New York, July 2009, page 12.

[26] The UN Department for Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) is considering to require an S2 cell for each UN battalion.

Figure 10: Dutch sensor: the Civil Military Interaction (CMI) team at work

The sixth lesson is that we need more sensors in the Human Domain.[27] This means besides Human Intelligence capabilities, more CMI and Liaison capabilities. Furthermore, Electronic Warfare and Signal Intelligence capacity is needed to intercept communications.

The seventh lesson is that we should not underestimate the value of Open Source Intelligence (OSINT). ASIFU has a small, but powerful OSINT section, where linguistic and analytical capacities are combined. The products of this section are used throughout MINUSMA and also support the Information Activities of MINUSMA.

The eighth and final lesson is that we must remain adaptive. Not only ASIFU, but also the troop contributing countries. We must therefore continue to learn from our efforts and jointly identify lessons learned, analyze and use them in our forming of military structures. In other words, they must be mutually shared. The main message is that experimenting and making adjustments are also important during Peace Keeping missions. No conflict after all is static and conditions at the beginning of Peace Keeping missions are always different than in due course of those mission. This requires adaptability. Otherwise, 'indeed, you exclude yourself.'

Conclusion

Reflecting on what the ASIFU-concept aimed to achieve, I think it is safe to say that a big step has been put in the right direction. ASIFU was designed to help make improvements in the intelligence support for UN peacekeeping operations. The idea was to create concentrated intelligence support to pursue not only force protection, but also to make predictive capacity that could serve as input for planning and executing UN peacekeeping operations. This of course, in cooperation with other UN

[27] Battles and conflicts are not only settled in the physical domain, but also in the informational and human domain.

intelligence-related organizations. By enhancing the Mission Intelligence System UN units would be better able to plan, perform and protect. In other words, increasing the total effectiveness of UN operations. We think ASIFU, together with others, succeeded in doing so. We do think the ASIFU-experiment has provided some useful lessons and is worth repeating in other existing and future UN peacekeeping missions. This was clearly underlined by the recent speech of Force Commander MINUSMA, Major General Michael Lollesgaard, to UN Security Council on 17 June 2015. In his speech on 'Operating in an Asymmetric Environment in a Peace Keeping Operation,' he mentioned ASIFU several times as a positive example of using modern intelligence concepts and techniques , employing high quality ISR assets.

However, it takes more than high quality intelligence products to increase the effectiveness of UN operations. Intelligence does not stand on its own, but always supports other processes. In reality, it is these processes that are complex. Especially those staff processes which handle preparation for future activities seem prone to passivity, fear for unknown effects and sometimes even inability. The reasons for this are inconsistencies in mandates and the complexity that characterize UN peacekeeping operations, with a variety of military and civilian capabilities from 193 different countries. The diversity of those nations is both the power and the weakness of UN Peace Keeping Operations.

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