General Assembly Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations

Background guide
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The Creation and Usage of Unmanned Aerial Vehicle Force in Peace-building Missions

The United Nations Security Council is primarily tasked with the responsibility to maintain international peace and security. It has 15 Members, and each Member has one vote. Under the Charter of the United Nations, all Member States within the organization are obligated to comply with the Council’s decisions.

There are five permanent Member States with veto power: China, France, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom, and the United States. The ten non-permanent Members are elected for two-year terms by the General Assembly. The current Members include: Argentina, Australia, Chad, Chile, Jordan, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Nigeria, the Republic of Korea, and Rwanda. A Member States of the United Nations may participate, without a vote, in the Council’s discussions.

The Council determines and deliberates the existence of threats to peace and acts of violence, attempting always to settle disputes through peaceful means. In some cases, the Security Council can resort to imposing sanctions or even authorize the use of force to maintain or restore international peace and security.

The Security Council will be tasked to discuss the creation and usage of unmanned aerial vehicle forces in peace-building missions. Unmanned aerial vehicles are devices used for flight that have no on-board pilot. Sometimes referred as drones, these vehicles are programmed for autonomous flight or are remotely operated.
**Background Information**

The Security Council has been successful in integrating unmanned aerial vehicles in their peace-building mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo. In January 2013, unarmed drones where approved for use by the UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUSCO). Resolution 2098 (DRC) S/RES/2098 was adopted in March 28th, 2013 regarding the situation in the country. It established a stabilization force which included an intervention brigade tasked with carrying out targeted offensive operations. Due to limited government authority, lack of infrastructure, and renewed violence by rebel groups in the country, MONUSCO provided a comprehensive strategy that includes the use of drones to provide surveillance to help peacekeepers better fulfill their mandates and protect civilians in eastern Congo.

These drones have four basic functions:

- To increase awareness, and to protect civilians and peacekeeping troops;
- To monitor armed groups and arms trafficking;
- To examine refugee group mobility;
- To analyze the impact of natural disasters and scour geographic locations.

The MONUSCO strategy reflects the UN Peacekeeping Operations Principles and Guidelines to work within the constraints of the Security Council mandate. The mission’s objective is to settle disputes among parties, use peaceful tactics, and be able to carry out self-defense strategies.

Unmanned aerial vehicles can fly up to 12 hours at a time with a range of 150 miles. The drones deployed by MONUSCO carry cameras with electro-optical and infrared thermal technology, operate from a height of 18,000 feet, and can capture and relay still and video images. The technology allows the United Nations to track armed groups, assist members of the mission that patrol hostile territory, and to document situations and events. The UN only seeks, collects and uses the information acquired by the drones to efficiently carry out the Security Council’s mandate.

Another instance is Resolution 1706, which mandated the use of aerial surveillance to monitor trans-border activities of armed groups along the Sudanese borders with Chad and the Central African Republic.

Furthermore, the United Nations has raised concerns about unmanned aerial vehicles affecting basic human rights. On December 2013, the General Assembly adopted by consensus resolution A/RES/68/178 on the Protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism. The resolution urges States to ensure that any measures taken or means employed to counter terrorism, including the use of remotely piloted aircraft, comply with their obligations under international law, including the Charter of the United Nations, human rights law and international humanitarian law.

Similarly, on March 2014, Human Rights Council Resolution (A/HRC/25/L.32) ensured that the use of drones in counter-terrorism and military operations are in accordance with interna-
tional law, including international human rights and humanitarian law. The resolution examined the impact of drones in civil society, ensured the transparency in their records, and dealt with the accountability of Member States who execute drone operations.

These implementations were established as a response to the UN SRCT Drone Inquiry created in January 2013. The Special Rapporteur began evaluating and investigating allegations where the use of drones, in extraterritorial lethal counter-terrorism operations has resulted in disproportionate levels of civilian casualties. The Special Rapporteur exposed that civilian casualties at the hands of drone strikes have occurred in the Gaza Strip, Yemen, Somalia, Afghanistan, and Pakistan.

Another resolution in regards to the topic of drone usage was passed on February 2014 by the European Parliament, calling for the adoption of an EU common position on the use of armed drones. The European Parliament concluded that drone strikes outside a declared war by a State on the territory of another State without the consent of the latter or of the UN Security Council constitute a violation of international law and of the territorial integrity and sovereignty of that country. The resolution called upon the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the Member States and the Council to oppose and ban the practice of extrajudicial targeted killings, and to include armed drones in relevant European and international disarmament and arms control regimes.

**Potential Benefits of Usage of Unmanned Aerial Vehicle Forces**

- Unmanned aerial vehicle technology can conduct nighttime surveillance to help improve an early warning system and to document movement of refugees and hostile groups.
- An unmanned aerial vehicle force can improve the ability to protect civilians under threat of violence.
- Such technology can serve as a transportation medium for extracting civilians and mobilizing peace-keeping troop members, as well as providing supplies.

**Concern over drone usage in the UN**

- Who will have the control over the targets of surveillance drones?
- The use of unmanned aerial vehicles in peacekeeping missions raises questions of ownership of the large amounts of data collected and stored.
- Concern that the latest information technologies and means of telecommunication can be used for inconsistent objectives of international stability and security. Therefore, would having a drone force be a threat to sovereignty and the security of the Member States?
- Is it legal for non-military personnel to operate a drone in a combat zone or a peacekeeping mission?
- Previous drone usage has had a history of dehumanizing bodies into targets for remote monitoring and destruction.
• Should the drone force have military and destructive capabilities?

**Recommendations for the Committee**

• The Security Council should assess a cost-benefit analysis of drone usage, providing a projection and analysis of the full-scale implementation of the drone force.

• The Council should consider innovative methods and new technologies for the aid of peacekeepers.

• Decide on the creation of an unmanned aerial vehicle force for specific usage in the Security Council missions.