



THE EUROPEAN UNION TRAINING MISSION IN THE CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC: AN ASSESSMENT

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I. Introduction

The European Union Training Mission in the Central African Republic (EUTM RCA) is the military component of the EU Common Security and Defence Policy (EU CSDP) in the country. Established in 2016, EUTM RCA succeeded the EU Military Advisory Mission RCA (2015–16) and the EU Force RCA (2014–15). A non-executive military training mission, EUTM RCA supports the authorities of the Central African Republic (CAR) in an advisory role.¹ The mission is mandated to assist the defence sector reform (DSR) process in CAR and to support the development of a ‘modernised, effective and democratically accountable Central African Armed Forces (FACA)’.² It engages in three domains: (a) strategic advice to the CAR Ministry of Defence and the president’s cabinet; (b) education for the FACA’s commissioned and non-commissioned officers and specialists; and (c) operational training to the FACA. EUTM RCA’s force commander works directly with the CAR president as a security advisor.³ In December 2019, the European Council established EUTM RCA’s civilian counterpart, the EU advisory mission (EUAM RCA), to support the reform of the Internal Security Forces (ISF)—the police and gendarmerie.⁴ EUAM RCA became operational on 9 August 2020.⁵

EUTM RCA’s second mandate renewal in July 2020 did not change the mission’s objectives of strategic advice, education and operational training.⁶

¹ European External Action Service (EEAS), European Union concept for EU-led military operations and missions, EEAS 00990/6/14 REV 6, 17107/14, 19 Dec. 2014, para. 14.

² Council Decision (CFSP) 2016/610 of 19 Apr. 2016 on a European Union CSDP Military Training Mission in the Central African Republic (EUTM RCA), *Official Journal of the European Union*, L104/21, 19 Apr. 2016.

³ EUTM RCA official 1, Interview with author, 25 Aug. 2020; and UN headquarters official 2, Interview with author, 23 Sep. 2020.

⁴ Council Decision (CFSP) 2019/2110 of 9 Dec. 2019 on the European Union CSDP Advisory Mission in the Central African Republic (EUAM RCA), *Official Journal of the European Union*, L318/141, 9 Dec. 2019.

⁵ Council of the European Union, ‘Central African Republic and Common Security and Defence Policy: EU launches civilian advisory mission and extends the mandate of military training mission’, Press release, 30 July 2020.

⁶ Council Decision (CFSP) 2020/1133 of 30 July 2020 amending Decision (CFSP) 2016/610 on a European Union CSDP Military Training mission in the Central African Republic (EUTM RCA), *Official Journal of the European Union*, L247/22, 30 July 2020.

SUMMARY

● This SIPRI Background Paper provides an overview of the European Union Training Mission in the Central African Republic (EUTM RCA) and assesses its impact on the country’s conflict dynamics since it was established in 2016. The second of three country-specific papers, it is part of a larger SIPRI project analysing the effectiveness of the EU’s training missions in Somalia, the Central African Republic and Mali. All three papers will feed into a synthesis paper that will offer a comparative analysis of the missions and recommendations for the way forward.

This paper analyses EUTM RCA’s main training and advisory activities, before assessing its political and operational impacts. It summarizes the main factors that account for the mission’s successes and limitations, and makes five recommendations to augment the future impact of the mission.

It concludes that EUTM RCA has made an impact in terms of military capacity building and assistance to the national Ministry of Defence, but so far there has been little tangible progress in terms of structural reform of the defence sector or the transformation of the armed forces. In addition, EUTM RCA faces many obstacles that lie largely beyond its control. The main challenges of lack of national ownership and limited political engagement cannot be addressed with technical solutions alone.



However, the 2020–22 mission plan foresees an expansion of the mission area beyond the capital Bangui and the town of Bouar in western CAR to N'délé in the north and Bangassou in the south, and the establishment of mobile units in order to support deployment of the FACA throughout the country.⁷ Moreover, EUTM RCA's new authorized strength is up to 365 military personnel, with the mission's current number of personnel at 225.⁸ These 225 personnel are provided by 12 states, including 9 EU countries (France, Italy, Lithuania, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Spain and Sweden) and 4 partner countries (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, North Macedonia and Serbia). In addition, Brazil contributes members of staff based on a bilateral agreement with Portugal.⁹ Correspondingly, the budget for the mission's common costs has doubled from just over €18 million (2016–18) to almost €37 million (2020–22).¹⁰

This paper provides an overview of EUTM RCA's activities and an assessment of its impacts since it was established in 2016. It is based on a review of relevant primary and secondary sources, 36 semi-structured interviews with stakeholders (27 men and 9 women) and 3 focus group discussions with FACA officials between 20 July 2020 and 7 January 2021. All focus groups and interviews with local actors—civil society organization (CSO) representatives, researchers, and officials from public authorities and the Ministry of Defence—took place in Bangui and were led by CAR researchers. The interviews with international stakeholders—EUTM RCA, the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA), the Delegation of the European Union to Central African Republic (EUD), the European External Action Service (EEAS), the UN and researchers—were conducted by the lead author. These interviews were carried out remotely due to the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020. All interviews and focus groups were conducted on a confidential basis.

This study uses a framework developed by the Effectiveness of Peace Operations Network (EPON), a network of over 40 research partners from across the globe, to assess EUTM RCA's impact. The framework allows for an assessment of the impact of a peace operation by its ability to: prevent armed conflict and sexual violence; build confidence among local parties; stabilize the area; protect civilians; strengthen public safety; promote human rights; contribute to peace dividends; extend state authority; support institution building and development; reform the security sector; promote the rule of law; and support community policing and transitional justice. The framework helps to explain an operation's impact with reference to the following factors: the primacy of politics; realistic mandates and matching resources; a people-centred approach; legitimacy and credibility; coordination and coherence; and promoting the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda.

This paper is organized as follows. Sections II and III summarize the background and context in which EUTM RCA works and the activities it

⁷ EEAS, 'European Union Training Mission in Central African Republic (EUTM-RCA)', Fact sheet, 1 Oct. 2020; EUTM RCA official 2, Written communication with author, 31 Aug. 2020; and EEAS official 1, Interview with author, 7 Jan. 2021.

⁸ EUTM RCA official 2, Written communication with author, 29 Dec. 2020.

⁹ EEAS official 3, Written communication with author, 6 Jan. 2021.

¹⁰ Council Decision (CFSP) 2020/1133 (note 6).



undertakes. Section IV analyses the impact of EUTM RCA, focusing on the mission's effects on stabilization, security sector reform (SSR) and human rights, as described by the interviewees. Section V then examines the factors accounting for EUTM RCA's successes and limitations using the framework developed by EPON. Finally, section VI provides the main conclusions and recommendations.

II. Background

Context

Military coups, recurrent violence and dysfunctional security institutions have troubled CAR since colonial times.¹¹ Successive presidents have used the FACA to increase the wealth of the ruling elites and enhance and consolidate presidential authority. This has been done by instrumentalizing and ethnicizing the FACA. Over the years, they have created a 'lasagna army' by building their own layer of loyalists on top of previous ones.¹² This came to a head in 2013 when the Séléka ('alliance') armed groups ousted President François Bozizé (2003–13), leading to the collapse of the FACA, which had been structurally underfunded and weakened under his rule. To protect the population from subsequent killings, rape and looting, a constellation of militias formed the equally violent Anti-balaka ('anti-machete') self-defence armed groups.¹³

The ousting of President François Bozizé in 2013 led to the collapse of the FACA

In the absence of functioning national security forces, the spiralling violence and widespread human rights abuses triggered the UN-authorized French Operation Sangaris (2013–16) and the African-led International Support Mission in the Central African Republic (Mission Internationale de Soutien à la Centrafrique sous Conduite Africaine, MISCA) (2013–14), which functioned as a bridging operation until it was replaced by MINUSCA.¹⁴ The EU also deployed the military mission EU Force RCA (2014–15) to contribute to the stabilization of the situation in Bangui. As of August 2020, MINUSCA had 11 650 military troops in CAR.¹⁵ Since its deployment, MINUSCA has been plagued by multiple allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse, of which a number substantiated.¹⁶ A major scandal included the UN's failure to act on the alleged involvement of French Operation Sangaris troops

¹¹ Lombard, L., *State of Rebellion: Violence and Intervention in the Central African Republic* (Zed Books: London, 2016).

¹² Ebo, A., Pradier, C. and Sedgwick, C., 'UN support to SSR in peacekeeping contexts: A case study of CAR', eds. A. Ebo and H. Hänggi, *The United Nations and Security Sector Reform: Policy and Practice* (Lit Publishing House: Zurich, 2020), p. 115.

¹³ International Crisis Group, 'Making the Central African Republic's latest peace agreement stick', Africa Report no. 277, 18 June 2019.

¹⁴ UN Security Council Resolution 2127, 5 Dec. 2013; and UN Security Council Resolution 2149, 10 Apr. 2014.

¹⁵ UN Peacekeeping, 'MINUSCA factsheet', 23 Nov. 2020.

¹⁶ For the period 2015–20, see United Nations, Conduct and Discipline Unit, 'Sexual exploitation and abuse: Allegations', [n.d.]; and United Nations, Conduct and Discipline Unit, 'Sexual exploitation and abuse: Table of allegations (2015 onwards)', [n.d.]. For 2014, see United Nations, General Assembly, 'Special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse', Report of the Secretary General, A/70/729, para. 27.



until the story was leaked to international media outlets.¹⁷ It is against this background that EUTM RCA was deployed to CAR.

In 2013 the UN Security Council imposed an arms embargo on CAR, banning all supplies of arms and related materiel, except to the CAR security forces if approved in advance by the relevant UN sanctions committee.¹⁸ The embargo—currently in force until 31 July 2021—was partially eased in September 2019 by simplifying the procedures for approval of lethal equipment to the security forces.¹⁹

The security situation remained highly volatile in 2020.²⁰ Brokered by the African Union and Russia, the CAR Government and 14 armed rebel groups signed the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic in February 2019 (commonly referred to as the Khartoum Agreement, after the location where peace talks began, and the eighth peace agreement since 2013). In spite of this, seven years after the start of the crisis, violence is still ongoing and some 80 per cent of CAR territory remains under the control of armed groups.²¹ The number of internally displaced persons in the country was more than 697 000 and over 616 000 CAR refugees had fled to neighbouring countries as of 1 June 2020.²² In addition, the Covid-19 pandemic (officially declared in CAR on 14 March 2020) and the presidential elections on 27 December 2020 have contributed to a political environment ‘increasingly characterized by tension and mistrust’ and a new outbreak of violence between different armed groups.²³

Security and defence sector reform

The UN Security Council has designated SSR a priority in the CAR peace-building process due to the limited capacity of CAR’s security sector (defence, internal security and justice).²⁴ MINUSCA is in charge of both coordinating international support to the broader SSR process, which includes justice reform and ending impunity, and the demobilization, disarmament and reintegration (DDR) of ex-combatants. EUTM RCA focuses on DSR, an integral subset of the broader security sector.²⁵ DSR is a long-term, technical endeavour and involves the sustainable transformation of

¹⁷ United Nations, General Assembly, ‘Report of an independent review on sexual exploitation and abuse by international peacekeeping forces in the Central African Republic’, A/71/99, 23 June 2016.

¹⁸ UN Security Council Resolution 2127 (note 14).

¹⁹ UN Security Council Resolution 2488, 12 Sep. 2019.

²⁰ United Nations, Security Council, ‘Central African Republic’, Report of the Secretary-General, S/2020/545, 16 June 2020.

²¹ United Nations, Security Council, Letter dated 14 February 2019 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council, S/2019/145, 15 Feb. 2019; and Amnesty International, ‘République centrafricaine: Cinq ans après sa création, il faut redoubler d’efforts pour rendre pleinement opérationnelle la Cour pénale spéciale’ [Central African Republic: Five years after its creation, we need to double the efforts to operationalize the Special Criminal Court], 3 June 2020.

²² United Nations, Security Council (note 20).

²³ United Nations, Security Council, Report of the Secretary General, para. 2, S/2020/944, 12 Oct. 2020, and Handy, P., ‘CAR elections expose the depth of the country’s crisis’, Institute for Security Studies, 13 Jan. 2021.

²⁴ United Nations, Department of Peacekeeping Operations, *Security Sector Reform in the Central African Republic: Challenges and Priorities* (UN Security Sector Reform Unit: 2016).

²⁵ Council Decision (CFSP) 2016/610 (note 2).



military governance, including the separation of powers between political and military leaders and the application of military justice. In addition, it aims for the establishment of clear command-and-control structures for the armed forces.²⁶ The presidential guard is not included in CAR's DSR process.²⁷

In CAR, DSR is based on the 2017 national defence plan (NDP), which falls under the overarching national SSR strategy.²⁸ The NDP prescribes a radical transformation of the FACA into a functioning garrison army spread across four defence zones. This includes retirement measures to create space for the reintegration of armed group members and new recruits.²⁹ The target is to have 9800 FACA personnel by 2021, with around 4500 troops deployed outside Bangui. A second objective is the realization of a clear division between the responsibilities of the army and those of the ISF, which are legally divided but in practice completely merged.³⁰

Several foreign partners are active in CAR's SSR process alongside MINUSCA and EUTM RCA. In addition to traditional bilateral security collaboration between CAR and France and CAR and the United States, Russia has played an increasingly important role since the signing of a CAR–Russia military agreement in August 2018. The status (and objectives) of different Russian actors in the country is unclear. Russia has supplied weapons, ammunition, and military and civilian instructors to provide combat training to the FACA, as well as personal security advisors to President Faustin-Archange Touadéra. The instructors are reportedly employees of the Wagner Group, a private military contractor, but Russian authorities have consistently denied this.³¹

In February 2020, there were officially 235 Russian instructors in CAR—but in practice the number was probably higher.³² On request from the CAR Government, Russia dispatched an additional 300 Russian instructors in the run-up to the elections in December 2020.³³ Russia's expanding military presence and France's attempts to retain influence have ignited serious international geopolitical competition in the country.³⁴

Russia's expanding military presence and France's attempts to retain influence have ignited international geopolitical competition

²⁶ Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance (DCAF), 'Defence reform: Applying the principles of good security sector governance to defence', SSR Backgrounder, 2019.

²⁷ Vircoulon, T., 'La reconstitution de l'armée Centrafricaine: Un enjeu à hauts risques' [The reconstitution of the Central African army: A high-risk challenge], *IRSEM: Note de recherche*, vol. 36 (Apr. 2017).

²⁸ Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance (DCAF), International Security Sector Advisory Team, 'Central African Republic background note', 1 Oct. 2019.

²⁹ Ebo, Pradier and Sedgwick (note 12), p. 115.

³⁰ Ebo, Pradier and Sedgwick (note 12).

³¹ Ross, A., 'How Russia moved into Central Africa', Reuters, 17 Oct. 2018; and Stronski, P., 'Late to the party: Russia's return to Africa', Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Paper, 16 Oct. 2019.

³² Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, [Central African Republic], 14 Feb. 2020 (in Russian); and Researcher 1, Interview with author, 20 Aug. 2020.

³³ BBC News, 'Russia sends 300 military instructors to Central African Republic', 22 Dec. 2020.

³⁴ Maślanka, L., 'France and the Russian presence in Africa', Polish Institute of International Affairs (PISM), Bulletin no. 47 (1477), 17 Mar. 2020.



III. EUTM RCA's activities

As noted above, EUTM RCA's main activities are strategic advice, education and operational training.

Strategic advice

EUTM RCA's primary task has been advising national political and military authorities on the conception, proposal and validation of essential DSR documents, including the DSR strategy, the NDP and the military programming law (2019–23), as well policies related to military justice, such as the Military Justice Code (Code de Justice Militaire, 2017) and the Law on the General Statute of the Military (Loi sur le Statut General des Militaires, promulgated in July 2020). According to interviewees, the force commander has been serving as an advisor to the president on a broad range of security issues, such as the securitization of the 2020 presidential elections.³⁵

The mission has also played a key role in advising on and implementing the FACA's human resources (HR) system. The system was destroyed during the 2013 crisis, making it impossible to determine the size of the army—the payroll of the Ministry of Finance counted almost 13 per cent more soldiers than the official database of the Ministry of Defence.³⁶ In collaboration with other international partners, EUTM RCA supported the military authorities at the Ministry of Defence in updating the database by identifying and counting soldiers.³⁷ It also supported the FACA's retirement procedure. A presidential decree streamlined this procedure in March 2018, by authorizing the retirement of 800 soldiers to make room for new recruits and former combatants.³⁸ The FACA employed over 8244 verified members of personnel including 619 women as of 1 June 2020.³⁹

Finally, EUTM RCA provided technical advice for projects supporting the deployment of the FACA, including infrastructure projects financed by the EU such as the assembly of military bridges in Sapeke and Zinga.⁴⁰

Education and training

EUTM RCA has engaged in the training of units and their leaders, new recruits, individual specialists, and reintegrated members of the 14 armed groups. The latter had completed the DDR programme and the vetting process, and were enlisted in the FACA. Most courses follow the 'train the trainer' concept, which aims to strengthen the FACA's capacity to develop its own education and training systems.⁴¹

³⁵ EUTM RCA official 1 (note 3); and FACA officials 2, Focus group, Bangui, 4 Sep. 2020.

³⁶ Ebo, Pradier and Sedgwick (note 12).

³⁷ United Nations, Security Council, Final report of the Panel of Experts on the Central African Republic extended pursuant to Security Council Resolution 2399, S/2018/1119, 14 Dec. 2018.

³⁸ Ebo, Pradier and Sedgwick (note 12).

³⁹ United Nations, Security Council (note 20).

⁴⁰ EEAS (note 7).

⁴¹ EUTMRCA, 'European Union Training Mission République centrafricaine' [European Union Training Mission Central African Republic], Newsletter no. 3, 2018, p. 18.



Between June 2016 and December 2020, EUTM RCA trained and educated almost 7000 FACA personnel.⁴² That included 2435 members of battalions, 52 members of an engineering platoon, 2458 specialists, 1020 recruits, 238 reintegrated members of armed groups and 53 trainers. It also validated and certified 343 FACA personnel trained by a third party abroad.⁴³ However, the actual number of trained individuals may be lower as it is unclear how many soldiers underwent multiple courses.⁴⁴

The 1st to the 4th territorial infantry battalions and the amphibious battalion (approximately 2435 trainees) attended EUTM RCA training courses from 2017 to 2019. For a duration of three to seven months, the battalions learned to improve performance as a unit within the command-and-control system, while platoon leaders and commanders underwent additional leadership courses.⁴⁵ The curriculum included tactical skills, combat shooting, combat rescue and international humanitarian law (IHL).⁴⁶

Between August 2017 and May 2018, EUTM RCA trained 238 reintegrated members of armed groups for 14 weeks, as part of a pilot project within the DDR programme. The first cohort was composed of 105 soldiers from Bangui and the second comprised 133 soldiers from the whole country.⁴⁷

From June to October 2019, 1020 new recruits—of whom 99 per cent passed a final test—attended a 12-week, basic military training course at the training centre in Bangui (508 recruits) or the centre in Bouar (512 recruits).⁴⁸

By the end of 2019, 2485 FACA members had participated in specialist courses (635 officers, 1088 non-commissioned officers and 735 privates).⁴⁹ Lasting from one week to several months, these courses focused on radio operations, leadership, tactics, IHL, human rights, sexual abuse and HIV/AIDS.

Finally, EUTM RCA and MINUSCA prepared 34 FACA officers and 19 ISF officers to become instructors of the three Special Mixed Security Units (Unités Spéciales Mixtes de Sécurité, USMS) in the first ‘train the trainers’ programme in 2019.⁵⁰ The establishment of the USMS is stipulated by the Khartoum Agreement to promote trust and secure migration corridors, but there have been multiple setbacks and the one established joint unit has yet to start its operations. In total, the three USMS will be just under 2000 troops, of which 60 per cent will be reintegrated members of armed groups and 40 per cent regular government forces.⁵¹ Supervised by the FACA’s chief of

⁴² EUTM RCA official 2 (note 8).

⁴³ EUTM RCA official 2 (note 8); and EEAS official 3 (note 9).

⁴⁴ EUTM RCA official 1 (note 3); and FACA officials 2 (note 35).

⁴⁵ EUTM RCA (note 41), p. 18.

⁴⁶ EEAS, *Impetus*, no. 27 (spring/summer 2019), p. 7; and United Nations, Security Council, Final report of the Panel of Experts on the Central African Republic extended pursuant to Security Council resolution 2399, S/2019/930, 14 Dec. 2019, annex 7.2.

⁴⁷ United Nations, Security Council, Midterm report of the Panel of Experts on the Central African Republic extended pursuant to Security Council resolution 2399, S/2018/729, 23 July 2018, para. 11; and EEAS, ‘L’EUTM-RCA et FACA forment les ex-combattants’ [EUTM-RCA and FACA train ex-combatants], News stories, 31 May 2018.

⁴⁸ United Nations, Security Council (note 46).

⁴⁹ United Nations, Security Council (note 46).

⁵⁰ All data from United Nations, Security Council (note 37).

⁵¹ United Nations Office to the African Union, ‘MOU signed between the African Union Observer Mission in the Central African Republic (MOUACA) and the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission (MINUSCA) concerning the provision of support to MOUACA in CAR’, 22 May 2020.



staff, the USMS will be monitored by the African Union Military Observers Mission to the Central African Republic (MOUACA).⁵²

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic and at the request of the Ministry of Defence, EUTM RCA temporarily halted all physical education and training activities from March till July 2020.⁵³ During that period, the mission focused on advising the CAR Government on the development of a countrywide Covid-19 response plan.⁵⁴

IV. The impact of EUTM RCA

Using the EPON framework, this section assesses and reflects on the impact of EUTM RCA. It focuses on the mission's intended and unexpected direct and indirect effects on (a) stabilization, the prevention of conflict and the protection of civilians; (b) security sector reform, extending state authority and institution building; and (c) the promotion of human rights and the prevention of conflict-related sexual violence.

Stabilization, prevention of conflict and protection of civilians

EUTM RCA is not mandated to directly intervene in stabilization, the prevention of conflict or the protection of civilians, yet the ultimate goal of supporting the set-up and deployment of a well-trained FACA is to contribute to peace and security for the population. However, the FACA does not yet have the essential features of a functional garrison army, such as accountability and a functioning command-and-control system. It also remains focused on Bangui—of the 8244 soldiers on the payroll in June 2020, only 1500 were deployed in another of CAR's 16 districts (CAR is roughly the same size as France)—and is not capable of addressing security challenges without MINUSCA's support.⁵⁵ Further, it is deployed without the necessary logistics and equipment to effectively plan and support military operations, such as communication networks and tools, accessible road infrastructure, transport capacity and weapons.⁵⁶

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The FACA's tardy progress was of concern to its personnel and other local actors interviewed for this study. In fact, they often blamed the long duration of EUTM RCA training for the slow progress. However, FACA focus group members were equally critical of the CAR Government, because of its unwillingness or inability to support its army.⁵⁷

This limited progress has appeared particularly worrying in light of the elections on 27 December 2020. Time was not on the side of the mission. Moreover, international stakeholders interviewed for this study feared the instrumentalization of soldiers, defections to armed groups or even a

⁵² United Nations, Security Council, 'The situation in the Central African Republic', provisional, S/PV.8646, 25 Oct. 2019.

⁵³ United Nations, Security Council (note 20).

⁵⁴ EUTM RCA official 1 (note 3); and EUTM RCA official 3, Interview with author, 26 Aug. 2020.

⁵⁵ United Nations, Security Council (note 46).

⁵⁶ United Nations, Security Council (note 46).

⁵⁷ Ministry of Defence official 2, Interview with local researchers, 29 July 2020; and FACA officials 2 (note 35).



military coup, and emphasized that the armed forces were a possible threat to stability.⁵⁸

Following a major spike in political tensions in the weeks before the elections—deteriorated by the blocking of former president Bozizé’s candidacy by the Constitutional Court—violent fighting broke out and attacks from armed groups increased after the contentious re-election of President Touadéra. Not only has the FACA been unable to secure the country, great desertion by FACA soldiers has been reported.⁵⁹ Fearing a continuation of the post-election violence, the CAR Government announced a state of emergency throughout the country from 21 January until 4 February 2021.⁶⁰

Security sector reform, extending state authority and institution building

DSR is a key component of SSR and an important dimension of extending state authority and institution building. DSR is inherently a political process that depends on local ownership and the commitment of the government.⁶¹ EUTM RCA’s strategic pillar has therefore been advising CAR’s political and military authorities on the development of structural defence reform policies. The mission has, for example, successfully supported the establishment of an HR system and the verification of soldiers on the payroll, as well as the streamlining of the FACA’s retirement process (see section III).

However, many of the SSR documents and policies related to military justice that have been developed, proposed and validated with EUTM RCA’s assistance are still waiting to be implemented (see ‘Political primacy’ below). In the words of an official from the Ministry of Defence: ‘In certain domains, it is as if we present these texts and we put them directly in a drawer. And we keep working like before . . . In certain cases, this is because we are just slow but in other cases the texts are downright put aside.’⁶² The Ministry of Defence also seems only willing or able to work at a notoriously slow speed.⁶³

In addition to governmental reluctance to reform, local stakeholders saw foreign-led SRR as a threat to state sovereignty. In the words of one CSO representative: ‘Our Ministry of Defence is almost completely under the supervision of certain foreign institutions. This is not normal. The presence of EUTM RCA hinders the expression of the sovereignty of CAR and impedes the restoration of state authority.’⁶⁴ FACA focus groups complained that the European reform model was imposed in a top-down fashion. There was a perception, particularly among trainees, that the mission had a paternalistic or even condescending attitude and lacked sufficient understanding of

⁵⁸ UN headquarters official 1, Interview with author, 20 Sep. 2020; Researcher 1 (note 32); Interview with EUTM RCA official 2, Interview with author, 25 Aug. 2020; and France24, ‘Central African Republic’s ousted leader Bozizé to run for president again’, 25 July 2020.

⁵⁹ France24, ‘UN envoy urges “substantial increase” in Central African Republic peacekeepers’, 21 Jan. 2021.

⁶⁰ Africanews, ‘CAR declares state of emergency for the next 15 days’, 21 Jan. 2021.

⁶¹ Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance (DCAF) (note 26).

⁶² Ministry of Defence official 2 (note 57) (translation by author).

⁶³ Researcher 2, Interview with author, 7 Sep. 2020; and United Nations, Security Council (note 46).

⁶⁴ CSO representative 1, Interview with local researchers, 20 July 2020 (translation by author).



the historical and cultural contexts of CAR.⁶⁵ In the words of another CSO representative: ‘Have the people [of EUTM RCA] taken the time to make a serious analysis of the situation to see what the real problem is with the CAR army, in order to address the root causes and restore the army to its former glory?’⁶⁶

Local stakeholders generally believe that the FACA’s main problem is insufficient provision of weapons instead of insufficient training of soldiers—and that adequately equipping the soldiers would solve the security situation within a couple of weeks.⁶⁷ Most civil society actors and FACA soldiers alike perceived the FACA as the only capable institution to protect CAR citizens from insecurity and there was a strong demand for the immediate deployment of troops across the country.⁶⁸ Such expectations, which go far beyond the FACA’s current capabilities, have been actively raised by national politics.⁶⁹

EUTM RCA officials, however, emphasized that the FACA’s reconstitution into an accountable security actor is a complex, long-term process: the FACA is far removed from functioning independently without the risk of serious IHL and human rights violations (see below).⁷⁰ One mission official explained: ‘It is going to take time, maybe one generation. We cannot change the mentality in two or three years.’⁷¹

Promotion of human rights and prevention of conflict-related sexual violence

Lacking a functioning command-and-control system as well as democratic oversight, the FACA remains characterized by widespread impunity and is, in practice, often more a source of insecurity than a source of protection. The conduct of its soldiers continues to be a serious issue, and reports refer to the use of sexual violence, aggression and illegal taxation.⁷² Unfortunately, there are still no incentives for soldiers to do no harm or protect vulnerable groups.⁷³

Given a lack of reporting systems and therefore of reliable data, however, it is difficult to objectively measure possible changing attitudes with regard to respect for human rights. Nevertheless, interviewed CSO representatives and Ministry of Defence officials were of the opinion that EUTM RCA training had positively affected troops’ behaviour.⁷⁴ FACA soldiers themselves

⁶⁵ FACA officials 1, Focus group, Bangui, 20 Aug. 2020; FACA officials 2 (note 35); and FACA officials 3, Focus group, Bangui, 4 Sep. 2020.

⁶⁶ CSO representative 1 (note 64); and CSO representative 2, Interviews with local researchers, Bangui, 22–23 July 2020 (translation by author).

⁶⁷ UN headquarters official 2 (note 3); Researcher 1 (note 32); FACA officials 1 (note 65); and CSO representative 6, Interview with local researchers, Bangui, 30 July 2020.

⁶⁸ CSO representative 1 (note 64); and CSO representative 2 (note 66).

⁶⁹ Glawion, T., van der Lijn, J. and de Zwaan, N., *Towards Legitimate Stability in CAR: External Assumptions and Local Perspectives*, SIPRI Policy Report (SIPRI: Stockholm, Sep. 2019).

⁷⁰ United Nations, Security Council, Final report of the Panel of Experts on the Central African Republic extended pursuant to Security Council resolution 2507 (2020), S/2020/622, 8 July 2020, annex 6.5.

⁷¹ EUTM RCA official 1 (note 3).

⁷² United Nations, Security Council (note 70).

⁷³ CSO representative 2 (note 66); and Researcher 1 (note 32).

⁷⁴ CSO representative 2 (note 66); CSO representative 4, Interview with local researchers, Bangui, 23 July 2020; and Ministry of Defence official 2 (note 57).



agreed their standards had improved.⁷⁵ One CSO representative working with conflict-related sexual violence claimed to have observed a decrease in the number of cases: ‘Before, we daily had two or three soldiers summoned to the legal clinic for issues related to sexual and gender-based violence, now this only happens every two or three days. This means that there is an improvement.’⁷⁶ An important caveat to attributing this potential improvement only to EUTM RCA is that misbehaviour by the FACA most likely never just stems from a lack of theoretical knowledge. To a high degree, it is also due to other factors, such as the lack of: oversight, rotation, logistical and material resources, and regular payment of salaries.⁷⁷

Due to its limited mandate, EUTM RCA cannot be deployed to track trainees in areas of FACA operations (see ‘Mandate and resources’ below). This makes it impossible for the mission to collect information on the whereabouts of trainees, identify remaining training needs or ensure trainees have not defected and joined armed groups. In other words, EUTM RCA’s contact with trainees ends when the training is finished, and it remains unknown what they are doing once deployed in the field. The mission has to make do with the minimal information on trained units’ performance provided by MINUSCA, currently the only actor in the position to monitor, investigate and report human rights violations. However, the reports do not provide a clear picture of developments over time. MINUSCA has been criticized for under-reporting because of the potentially negative impact on its image and political relations. In addition, victims may not report incidents out of fear of reprisal or stigmatization. Moreover, it is not known whether or not the perpetrators of human rights violations are EUTM RCA trainees.⁷⁸ The future detachment of personnel at the four garrisons and the establishment of mobile units—as foreseen in the new mission plan—could be a first step in monitoring trainees in the field and evaluating the effectiveness of EUTM RCA’s training.⁷⁹

EUTM RCA’s contact with trainees ends when the training is finished

V. Explanatory factors behind the impact of EUTM RCA

What factors can best explain EUTM RCA’s overall impact? Continuing to use the EPON framework, this section attempts to explain the mission’s impact with reference to: the primacy of politics; realistic mandates and matching resources; a people-centred approach; legitimacy and credibility; coordination and coherence; and promoting the WPS agenda.

Political primacy

EUTM RCA is mandated to support DSR in CAR, hence the mission does not aim to lead the country’s political security agenda. However, DSR is inherently political. As neither the EU, its member states nor the mission

⁷⁵ FACA officials 1 (note 65).

⁷⁶ CSO representative 2 (note 66) (translation by author).

⁷⁷ Researcher 1 (note 32); and United Nations, Security Council (note 46).

⁷⁸ Researcher 3, Interview with author, 8 Sep. 2020.

⁷⁹ EEAS (note 7); EUTM RCA official 2 (note 58); EUTM RCA official 2 (note 7); and EEAS official 1 (note 7).

have appeared keen to apply conditionality to their assistance or to increase political pressure on the government, EUTM RCA has not been in a position to make demands on DSR.⁸⁰ Consequently, the mission's political influence on DSR has been limited.

While EUTM RCA officials argued that the force commander's role as security advisor to the president had significantly augmented the mission's political weight, in practice it remains the CAR Government and particularly the Ministry of Defence that make the decisions. Government officials have publicly acknowledged EUTM RCA's importance and praised its assistance with the planning and drafting of policies, but most of these policies have yet to be implemented.⁸¹ CAR authorities appear to prioritize quick operationalization of the FACA over fundamental change.⁸² One official from the Ministry of Defence concluded that EUTM RCA ought 'to use its political weight so that the texts that have been made, can be applied'.⁸³

In addition, EUTM RCA has no say in the selection of trainees, implying that the vetting of trainees, conducted by MINUSCA, is particularly important to ensure trainees have not committed human rights violations.⁸⁴ Neither does the Ministry of Defence inform EUTM RCA about its HR strategy, so the mission does not know how many of its trainees were employed in relevant positions after the training, were decommissioned or had defected.⁸⁵ It also appears that the Ministry of Defence regularly sent the same people to multiple training courses.⁸⁶

Thus, EUTM RCA has predominantly addressed the operational priorities of the CAR Government.⁸⁷ The mission has provided multiple FACA training courses, but more structural change has been hampered. The 2020–22 mission plan foresees reinforcing EUTM RCA's strategic pillar by doubling the number of strategic advisors in order to support long-term reform of the defence sector.⁸⁸ Although this would contribute to a better balance between the mission's three pillars, it remains to be seen whether these advisors can address the lack of political will.

Mandate and resources

Due to the limitations in its first two mandates, EUTM RCA has relied on MINUSCA to monitor, track and follow up the performance of FACA trainees deployed in the field (see 'Promotion of human rights and prevention of conflict-related sexual violence' above). The new mission plan aims to address this situation by future detachment of personnel at the four garrisons and the establishment of mobile units. However, although MINUSCA is authorized to accompany the trained FACA units, its mandate does not include their follow-up and mentoring—in fact, MINUSCA is already overstretched.

⁸⁰ EUTM RCA official 2 (note 58); and Researcher 1 (note 32).

⁸¹ Ministry of Defence official 2 (note 57).

⁸² EUTM RCA official 1 (note 3); EUTM RCA official 2 (note 58); UN headquarters official 2 (note 3); and Parliamentarian 1, Interview with local researchers, Bangui, 27 July 2020.

⁸³ Ministry of Defence official 2 (note 57) (translation by author).

⁸⁴ Ebo, Pradier and Sedgwick (note 12), p. 115.

⁸⁵ UN, Department of Peacekeeping Operations (note 24).

⁸⁶ EUTM RCA official 1 (note 3); and FACA officials 2 (note 35).

⁸⁷ UN headquarters official 2 (note 3).

⁸⁸ EEAS official 1 (note 7).



The EU's current finance mechanism does not allow CSDP missions to provide equipment, such as weapons, uniforms, communication equipment or sanitation facilities.⁸⁹ This means that EUTM RCA training has to be carried out using weapons lent by member states (typically semi-automatic rifles and pistols), in addition to those available within the FACA, which are often outdated and in short supply.⁹⁰ This situation may change when a new funding mechanism takes over in January 2021: the European Peace Facility will allow CSDP missions to supply military and defence-related equipment, including lethal weapons.⁹¹ However, while adequate equipment is an essential requirement for successful security operations, it is also potentially dangerous. A reinforced FACA brings significant risks of increased abuses against the population, the use of the army for political gain, or even a military coup.⁹²

A reinforced FACA brings significant risks of increased abuses against the population

Further, while EUTM RCA has not faced financial restraints, it does suffer from a high turnover in personnel and from difficulties recruiting enough qualified French-speaking personnel to fill all the vacancies.⁹³ In fact, one of the trainees claimed that he was forced to take over the role of trainer due to an EUTM RCA official's low level of French.⁹⁴

Lastly, the mission's six-monthly rotation does not allow personnel to immerse themselves in the local context, hinders the establishment of sustainable relationships with local counterparts and hampers the building of institutional knowledge.⁹⁵ This particularly impacts the effectiveness of the work of EUTM RCA advisors, which depends to a large extent on relationships and mutual trust.⁹⁶

As result, EUTM RCA's HR system, its current funding mechanism and its limited mandate are not entirely fit for purpose. In particular, the mission's effectiveness suffers due to an inability to track, follow up and mentor its trainees in the field, and to evaluate the impact of its training.

People-centred approach

EUTM RCA's narrow training and advice mandate implies that the mission is not directly centred on the needs of the CAR population. It focuses on a well-trained and disciplined FACA, which, in turn, is assumed to contribute to the stabilization of the country and protection of the population (see 'Stabilization, prevention of conflict and protection of civilians' above). However, this does not mean that local actors such as CSOs have to be excluded from mission efforts. EUTM RCA did not directly involve local stakeholders in its activities nor did it engage in outreach or communication

⁸⁹ Deneckere, M. 'The uncharted path towards a European Peace Facility', ECDPM Discussion Paper no. 248, Mar. 2019; and European Parliament, 'The EU's new approach to funding peace and security', Briefing, EU Legislation in Progress, 22 Nov. 2017.

⁹⁰ EUTM RCA official 2, Written communication with author, 8 Dec. 2020; and EUTM RCA official 2, Written communication with author, 14 Dec. 2020.

⁹¹ Council of the European Union, 'Council reaches a political agreement on the European Peace Facility', Press release, 18 Dec. 2020.

⁹² Glawion, van der Lijn and de Zwaan (note 69).

⁹³ EUTM RCA official 2 (note 58).

⁹⁴ FACA officials 1 (note 65); and FACA officials 2 (note 35).

⁹⁵ FACA officials 1 (note 65).

⁹⁶ EEAS official 1 (note 7).



actions targeting local communities. Therefore, the perception of some CSO representatives was that the mission did not appreciate the value of available knowledge and lessons learned in local SSR-related projects. They expressed a strong desire to be included in the development and running of future training courses.⁹⁷

Legitimacy and credibility

Invited by interim president Catherine Samba-Panza in a letter dated 30 March 2016, authorized by the UN Security Council and deployed by the EU—CAR's main development partner and largest provider of humanitarian assistance—EUTM RCA is perceived as a legitimate and credible mission by both international actors and national authorities.⁹⁸ As a member of the CAR parliament explained: 'if . . . the President of the Republic gives medals to all the EUTM leaders who are leaving, it is because they are doing a good job. These are not just decorations of complaisance.'⁹⁹ Moreover, the UN Security Council showed its political commitment to the CAR SSR process by easing the arms embargo in 2019.¹⁰⁰

Nevertheless, general knowledge about EUTM RCA, its mandate and its restrictions are limited among national stakeholders. Military and civil society alike assumed EUTM RCA should also train the ISF and wondered why this had not yet happened.¹⁰¹ Moreover, trainees thought it was either the arms embargo or the mission's unwillingness that prohibited the provision of equipment, which led to frustration.¹⁰² This idea has been actively reinforced by politicians in order to shift the focus away from the government's lack of will to implement structural reform, and to deflect blame for the dysfunctionality of the FACA.¹⁰³ Focus group participants were not aware that the rules of the current funding mechanism are the reason that EUTM RCA cannot provide equipment (see 'Mandate and resources' above).¹⁰⁴

Next to unfamiliarity, those CAR citizens that do know about the mission tend to perceive EUTM RCA as the latest in a long history of predominantly French-led DDR and SSR efforts, which have arguably never managed to achieve a democratic, responsive security sector but have rather exacerbated the army's weaknesses.¹⁰⁵ A former colonial power, France frequently intervened unilaterally in the past, but it has sought to Europeanize its policy and interventions in CAR since the mid 2000s. Although its personnel are

CAR stakeholders tend to perceive EUTM RCA as the latest in a long history of arguably countereffective French-led DDR and SSR efforts

⁹⁷ CSO representative 5, Interview with local researchers, Bangui, 30 July 2020.

⁹⁸ Council Decision (CFSP) 2016/610 (note 2).

⁹⁹ Parliamentarian 2, Interview with local researchers, Bangui, 1 Sep. 2020 (translation by author).

¹⁰⁰ UN Security Council Resolution 2488 (note 19).

¹⁰¹ Ministry of Defence official 2 (note 57); and CSO representative 5 (note 97).

¹⁰² FACA officials 1 (note 65).

¹⁰³ UN headquarters official 1, Interview with author, 9 Sep. 2020; UN headquarters official 2 (note 3); and United Nations, 'Adopting Resolution 2507 (2020), Security Council extends Central African Republic sanctions regime, Panel of Experts mandate', Meetings coverage, Security Council, 8712th meeting, SC/14096, 31 Jan. 2020.

¹⁰⁴ FACA officials 1 (note 65).

¹⁰⁵ Lombard (note 11); Parliamentarian 1 (note 82); and CSO representative 4 (note 74).



seconded from 12 different states, EUTM RCA is often considered to be a de facto French mission carried out under EU cover.¹⁰⁶

This negative image has been further exacerbated by allegations of sexual abuse against both UN and non-UN peace operation personnel in the country. The case of the 2015 revelation of allegations of sexual exploitation by French Operation Sangaris troops was dismissed by the French high court due to lack of evidence.¹⁰⁷ In spite of increased efforts to prevent sexual abuse by UN peacekeepers, as of December 2020, the UN Conduct and Discipline Unit reported a total 198 allegations, including a number of substantiated cases.¹⁰⁸ EUTM RCA has never been implicated, but caution and suspicion have also cast a shadow over this mission.¹⁰⁹

Although not comparable to the growing local resentment of MINUSCA—which has been the target of protests and attacks—the mission’s underlying intentions have been met with doubt at the local level. As queried by a CSO representative, ‘I have never seen the EU worry about the death of Central Africans’.¹¹⁰ Some FACA focus group participants even held EUTM RCA responsible for previous extensions of the arms embargo.¹¹¹ The same CSO representative believed that EUTM RCA was ‘an operation aimed at bringing CAR to its knees in order to extend the embargo for years to come’.¹¹²

Russian media campaigns have been adding fuel to the fire of local anti-French sentiment by presenting France as an oppressive neocolonial power and Russia as in opposition to the imperialistic West.¹¹³ Among several local CSOs, FACA participants and officials from the Ministry of Defence, the Russian training had a more positive image than the courses provided by EUTM RCA. The reasons mentioned included Russia’s weapon training, the supply of equipment and the perception of being treated as fully qualified soldiers. The importance of meal provision during the programme was also stressed by FACA trainees, who complained that EUTM RCA did not do this.¹¹⁴ In addition, the Russian instructors mentored and monitored trained and deployed soldiers by accompanying them out in the field.¹¹⁵ There was

¹⁰⁶ Researcher 2, Written communication with author, 7 Sep. 2020.

¹⁰⁷ Africanews, ‘Child rape allegations against French troops in CAR dismissed’, 15 Jan. 2018.

¹⁰⁸ United Nations, Conduct and Discipline Unit, ‘Sexual exploitation and abuse: Allegations’ (note 16); United Nations, Conduct and Discipline Unit, ‘Sexual exploitation and abuse: Table of allegations (2015 onwards)’ (note 16); and United Nations, General Assembly (note 16).

¹⁰⁹ Researcher 5, Written Communication with author, 26 Sep. 2020.

¹¹⁰ CSO representative 6 (note 67) (translation by author); BBC News, ‘Central African Republic protesters lay corpses at UN’s door after clashes’, 11 Apr. 2018; and Africanews, ‘Protesters in Bangui call for expulsion of MINUSCA staff’, 18 Feb. 2020.

¹¹¹ FACA officials 1 (note 65); and CSO representative 6 (note 67).

¹¹² CSO representative 6 (note 67) (translation by author).

¹¹³ Dukhan, N., ‘Central African Republic: Ground zero for Russian influence in Central Africa’, Atlantic Council, Issue Brief, 22 Oct. 2020; Reuters, ‘How Russia moved into Central Africa’, 17 Oct. 2018; and Maślanka (note 34).

¹¹⁴ FACA officials 1 (note 65); FACA officials 2 (note 35); FACA officials 3 (note 65); Researcher 4, Written communication with author, 17 Sep. 2020; and Ministry of Defence official 2 (note 57).

¹¹⁵ CSO representative 5 (note 97); CSO representative 6 (note 67); Police official 1, Interview with local researchers, Bangui, 1 Aug. 2020; Ministry of Defence official 2 (note 57); UN headquarters official 2 (note 3); FACA officials 1 (note 65); FACA officials 2 (note 35); FACA officials 3 (note 65); United Nations, Security Council, Letter dated 8 July 2020 from the Panel of Experts on the Central African Republic extended pursuant to resolution 2507 (2020) addressed to the President of the Security Council, S/2020/662, 8 July 2020; and Ministry of Defence official 2 (note 57).



little resistance to the fact that the Russian training does not adhere to the same IHL standards as EUTM RCA courses.¹¹⁶

The active engagement of EUTM RCA in the training of USMS instructors further risks forfeiting local support. The most prominent demand of a large part of the population during the peace process was the prosecution of the perpetrators of violence. The establishment of the USMS—as well as the Khartoum Agreement’s provision to integrate the leaders of the 14 armed groups into the government—does not seem to take this popular opinion into account.¹¹⁷ Most EUTM RCA and MINUSCA officials personally saw the establishment of the USMS as problematic, but argued that the Khartoum Agreement had international legitimacy and must be implemented.¹¹⁸

Coordination and coherence

EUTM RCA is deployed in a mission area that hosts a complex constellation of peace operations and security actors. The president’s cabinet, the Ministry of Defence, the EUD, EUAM, MINUSCA and France are EUTM RCA’s main partners in CAR. However, the extent to which these actors interact in a coherent and coordinated manner and in coordination with the CAR Government differs.

The interaction between different EU entities in CAR and the various departments of the EU External Action Service in Brussels, Belgium appears to run smoothly.¹¹⁹ There has been regular dialogue between EUTM RCA, the EU Military Staff and the EU Military Planning and Conduct Capability.¹²⁰ Further, both the mission and the CAR Government evaluated their relationship and mutual trust positively.¹²¹

In contrast, coordination between MINUSCA, EUTM RCA and the CAR Ministry of Defence is challenging. Simultaneously planned activities and operations have meant FACA personnel could be double or even triple-booked and thus required to report to multiple training and field operations at the same time.¹²² As a consequence, FACA trainees have sometimes been deployed before they were adequately trained. In addition, shortcomings in logistics, structure and democratic oversight have reduced both the Ministry of Defence’s and the FACA’s capacity to effectively absorb and use the trained soldiers.¹²³

FACA trainees have sometimes been deployed before they were adequately trained

Tension between MINUSCA and EUTM RCA over different approaches to SSR stood in the way of the 2019 renewal of the 2017 Joint UN–EU Support Plan on SSR. This plan delineates SSR tasks between MINUSCA/UNPOL,

¹¹⁶ EUTM RCA official 7, Interview with author, 28 Aug. 2020; and Searcey, D., ‘Gems, warlords and mercenaries: Russia’s playbook in Central African Republic’, *New York Times*, 30 Sep. 2019, updated 4 May 2020.

¹¹⁷ Radio Ndeke Luka, Fondation Hirondelle, ‘Bangui: L’acte 2 du mouvement contre “la récompense aux tueurs du peuple”’ [Bangui: Second act of the movement against ‘recompensation of the killers of the people’], 9 Mar. 2019; Glawion, van der Lijn and de Zwaan (note 69); and Researcher 1 (note 32).

¹¹⁸ Glawion, van der Lijn and de Zwaan (note 69); and Researcher 1 (note 32).

¹¹⁹ EUTM RCA official 1 (note 3).

¹²⁰ EUTM RCA official 5, Interview with author, 27 Aug. 2020.

¹²¹ EUTM RCA official 1 (note 3); and Parliamentarian 2 (note 99).

¹²² MINUSCA official 1, Interview with author, 27 Aug. 2020.

¹²³ Researcher 1 (note 32).



the EUD and EUTM.¹²⁴ While MINUSCA propagates a more holistic and human security-oriented SSR process, EUTM RCA activities are more in line with the French military approach, which has historically prioritized short-term military stability over long-term transformation of security governance.¹²⁵ Although EUTM and EEAS officials stressed that the aim of the EUTM RCA is indeed sustainable reform of the defence sector, MINUSCA officials pointed out that, in practice, EUTM RCA had prioritized FACA training over structural reform.¹²⁶

There also appears to be friction over the practical responsibilities of the two missions. According to MINUSCA officials, for instance, EUTM RCA's involvement in securing the upcoming elections conflicts with MINUSCA's responsibility to coordinate the international electoral security assistance. Yet according to an EUTM RCA official, although MINUSCA is in charge of broader SSR coordination, it should give EUTM RCA the lead on DSR efforts.¹²⁷

Coordination between EUTM RCA and Russia has been close to non-existent. Competition between France and Russia sparked tensions in the UN Security Council when Russia demanded recognition of its role in CAR's peace process, leading to the delayed mandate renewal of MINUSCA in 2018.¹²⁸ Although multiple national stakeholders have called for stronger collaboration between EUTM RCA and Russia to optimize the coherence and complementarity of training, the formal EUTM RCA position is that an EU mission cannot collaborate with a private security company such as the Wagner Group.¹²⁹ There is no official communication between EUTM RCA and the Russian trainers in CAR, but the EU seeks to maintain contact with Russia's official in-country representation 'in order to find common ground in support of the peace process and international efforts to further stabilise the country'.¹³⁰ EUTM RCA, however, has had little access to these representatives.¹³¹

Women's representation in EUTM RCA is de facto not more balanced than the gender ratio in the FACA

The Women, Peace and Security agenda

On paper, gender equality mainstreaming and the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 is a guiding principle of all EU CSDP

¹²⁴ MINUSCA official 1 (note 122); MINUSCA official 2, Interview with author, 27 Aug. 2020.

¹²⁵ Ebo, Pradier and Sedgwick (note 12), p. 130.

¹²⁶ EUTM RCA official 2 (note 58); EEAS official 1 (note 7); MINUSCA official 1 (note 122); and MINUSCA official 2 (note 124).

¹²⁷ MINUSCA official 1 (note 122); MINUSCA official 2 (note 124); and EUTM RCA official 2, Interview with author, 7 Jan. 2021.

¹²⁸ United Nations, 'Adopting Resolution 2446 (2018), Security Council extends mandate of United Nations mission in Central African Republic by a month', Meetings coverage, Security Council, 8401st meeting, SC/13579, 15 Nov. 2018; and Hairsine, K., 'Russia and France bicker as UN extends CAR peacekeeping mission', Deutsche Welle, 16 Nov. 2018.

¹²⁹ Ministry of Defence official 2 (note 57); and EUTM RCA official 4, Interview with author, 26 Aug. 2020.

¹³⁰ European Parliament, 'Answer given by High Representative/Vice-President Borrell on behalf of the European Commission', Parliamentary questions, E-001704/2020, 4 June 2020; Parliamentarian 2 (note 99); and EUTM RCA official 1 (note 3).

¹³¹ EUTM RCA official 1 (note 3); EUTM RCA official 4 (note 129); and UN headquarters official 2 (note 3).

operations.¹³² In practice, however, the prevalent local patriarchal gender norms in CAR challenge women's participation.¹³³ The country has a gender inequality index value of 0.682, ranking it 159 out of 162 countries in the 2018 UN Human Development Index.¹³⁴ Nevertheless, due to the limited number of women personnel deployed by contributing states, women's representation in EUTM RCA is de facto not more balanced than the gender ratio in the FACA. Paradoxically, only 6.2 per cent of military EUTM RCA personnel were women in December 2019, whereas the FACA had between 7.4 and 8.0 per cent women personnel in July 2019.¹³⁵ Moreover, the FACA's 2018 recruitment plan includes a target of 10 per cent women's participation in the forces. This target has been achieved: 101 women out of 1022 soldiers recruited in 2018 attended the 2019 basic military training.¹³⁶ For comparison, in 2018 the percentage of active-duty military women in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization member states' armed forces was 11 per cent.¹³⁷

The first appointment of a gender advisor within the strategic pillar of the mission, in February 2019, has positively contributed to a context-sensitive inclusion of gender perspectives.¹³⁸ Gender and gender-related protection issues, such as prevention of conflict-related sexual violence, are now key components of all the mission's analysis, advice and training activities and all staff members receive gender training (see 'Promotion of human rights and prevention of conflict-related sexual violence' above).¹³⁹ On average, between 85 and 90 per cent of trainees have passed an oral examination on relevant gender issues on completion of their basic military training.¹⁴⁰

VI. Conclusions

During the four years of the mission's existence, EUTM RCA personnel have worked steadily towards the fulfillment of its mandate to support the CAR authorities with advice, education and training, particularly for their armed forces. To date, the mission has provided training and education to almost 7000 FACA members (although the actual number of trainees may be lower due to participation in multiple courses). Moreover, EUTM RCA has successfully assisted the Ministry of Defence with the re-establishment of the FACA's HR system and the streamlining of its retirement process, as well as with the drafting of broader structural reform policies.

¹³² Council of the European Union, 'Comprehensive approach to the EU implementation of the United Nations Security Council Resolutions 1325 and 1820 on women, peace and security', 15671/1/08 REV 1, 1 Dec. 2008.

¹³³ EUTM RCA official 3 (note 54).

¹³⁴ United Nations Development Programme, 'Human Development Report 2019: Inequalities in human development in the 21st century, inequalities in human development in the 21st century, Central African Republic', 2019.

¹³⁵ SIPRI Multilateral Peace Operations Database, <<https://www.sipri.org/databases/pko>>; EUTM RCA official 3 (note 54); EUTM RCA official 2 (note 58); EEAS, 'Women in the Central African Armed Forces (FACA)', 6 Aug. 2019; and United Nations, Security Council (note 46).

¹³⁶ All data from EEAS (note 135).

¹³⁷ NATO, 'Summary of the national reports of NATO member and partner nations to the NATO Committee on Gender Perspectives', 2018.

¹³⁸ EUTM RCA official 3 (note 54).

¹³⁹ EUTM RCA official 3 (note 54); EUD official, Interview with author, 14 Sep. 2020; and FACA officials 2 (note 35).

¹⁴⁰ EUTM RCA official 3 (note 54).



Nevertheless, there has so far been little tangible progress on the FACA's overarching transformation. It is still far from being an inclusive, effective, well-functioning and democratically accountable armed force, able to address security challenges without MINUSCA's support. Yet arguably this could not be expected within a timespan of just four years, as the sustainable operationalization of an effective army is a long-term project. In addition, EUTM RCA faces many obstacles that lie largely beyond its control: it relies on national ownership of DSR, which is not primarily a technical but a political process; and the limited political engagement of the CAR Government cannot be addressed with technical solutions alone.

Challenges

In order to understand the EUTM RCA's slow progress on the ground, this paper identifies five main challenges.

1. Limited implementation of drafted structural defence reform policies

Although EUTM RCA has made a discernible contribution to the drafting of reform policies, the mission has little political influence on DSR implementation in practice. The reform process appears to be predominantly driven by external actors. The CAR Government and the Ministry of Defence, in particular, appear to prioritize the quick operationalization of the FACA in order to fight armed groups over long-term security governance transformation. As the politics of the security sector in CAR is not conducive to serious reform, the FACA still lacks democratic oversight and a functional command-and-control system. Besides limiting the effectiveness of the mission's strategic pillar, this also severely hampers the effectiveness of EUTM RCA's training and education programmes.

2. Lack of mechanisms to follow up the performance and behaviour of trainees after training

EUTM RCA's contact with its trainees ends after the training. However, misbehaviour by FACA troops, including human rights violations, gender-based violence and extortion, remains a major issue. There is no system currently in place to keep track of where FACA personnel are deployed, thus impeding their monitoring and evaluation. Moreover, the mission's limited mandate up until 2020 has prevented it from accompanying trainees out in the field.

3. Suboptimal coordination between EUTM RCA, the CAR Government and MINUSCA

The CAR Government regularly prioritizes ad hoc operations over training attendance and the Ministry of Defence does not share essential information about its HR strategy or the deployment of trainees. This leads to double-booked troops and a lack of information on deployed soldiers' whereabouts. Simultaneously, diverging views between EUTM RCA and MINUSCA stood in the way of the 2019 renewal of the Joint UN–EU Support Plan on SSR.

There is also no official communication between EUTM RCA and Russian trainers, which restricts complementarity in their activities. These problems



in turn hinder MINUSCA from fulfilling its mandated role as coordinator of the division of labour among the different SSR actors.

4. EUTM RCA's inability to provide equipment and strengthen the logistical capability of the FACA

Under current funding regulations, EUTM RCA is not allowed to provide trained units with equipment and weapons. This leads to local frustration and opens the door for wider Russian influence. However, the new European Peace Facility, which takes over from the existing financing mechanism in January 2021, might change this situation. Nevertheless, aside from the fact that the FACA needs adequate equipment in order to function, equipping troops within a non-functional defence governance structure increases the risk of abuses against the population.

5. Insufficient involvement of local stakeholder groups in, and strategic communication about, mission activities

Although it is not an easy task to involve all the relevant parties, civil society and FACA trainees are not optimally included in the setting up of EUTM RCA's activities. Consequently, mission personnel do not always have in-depth understanding of the local context. At the same time, the mission's objectives, target groups, activities and limitations are insufficiently communicated, which leads to mistrust and misunderstanding among several local stakeholders.

In conclusion, the long-lasting impact of advice and military capacity building depends on the commitment of the CAR authorities to own and lead the DSR process. In this context and due to a complex constellation of interacting factors, including the fact that the mission has only been deployed for a short time, the effectiveness of EUTM RCA on the structural and sustainable transformation of the FACA has been limited. There is, however, broad agreement about CAR's need of EUTM RCA and the importance of its efforts in terms of military capacity building.

There is broad agreement about CAR's need of EUTM RCA and the importance of its efforts in terms of military capacity building

Recommendations

In order to address the challenges identified above, this paper makes five recommendations to EUTM RCA.

1. Focus on the mission's structural DSR efforts and on the CAR Government's ownership and lead

Given the limited implementation of DSR thus far, EUTM RCA should prioritize the longer-term, sustainable transformation of security governance over its current focus on more shorter-term tactical and operational objectives. EUTM RCA should particularly focus on ensuring the FACA's command-and-control structure, the implementation of democratic oversight and the application of military justice. Although the 2020–22 mission plan foresees reinforcing EUTM RCA's strategic pillar, the mission should ensure that national ownership and national lead of the DSR process are at the core of EUTM RCA's activities.



As the EU is the main donor to the country, the EUD and EUTM RCA should leverage this position to encourage the CAR Government to embrace its leading role and commit to medium and long-term DSR objectives. Drafted policy documents should also be translated into tangible reform. At the same time, the mission should put pressure on the government to undo impunity and actively address issues of FACA misbehavior. This could be done by making military training or the future provision of equipment for trainees under the European Peace Facility conditional on the implementation of DSR (see recommendation 4 below).

2. Establish follow-up mechanisms for trained FACA soldiers

Although EUTM RCA's limited mandate up until 2020 has prevented the mission from tracking or monitoring the performance of trained FACA cohorts deployed in the field, it should thoroughly implement its new mission plan that includes setting up small-scale follow-up and mentoring mechanisms.

For example, EUTM RCA should track trained FACA personnel, debrief them on return from field missions and select key members of staff, such as commanders, for more intensive mentoring. Debriefings should not only allow the mission to know where trained staff are deployed, but also to identify deficiencies and skill gaps during operations and integrate lessons learned into future training. Additionally, this will allow the mission to provide trained troops with ongoing refresher courses, ideally provided by FACA trainers and mentors. The deployment of EUTM RCA personnel at the four FACA garrisons and the establishment of mobile units as foreseen in the mission plan could be a first step in this direction.

EUTM RCA should refrain from providing lethal equipment at this point in time

EU member states could also consider including the accompaniment of deployed units in EUTM RCA's mandate text, while maintaining the mission's non-executive status.

Finally, EUTM RCA and MINUSCA should work together to resolve any problems within their control related to monitoring FACA performance in the field and develop a comprehensive plan that ensures FACA troops are not deployed before being trained.

3. Improve coordination among international partners engaged in SSR

There is an urgent need for stronger coordination between MINUSCA and EUTM RCA, including a clear division of labour, and the renewal of the Joint UN-EU Support Plan on SSR. The CAR Government should be in charge of the SSR process, while MINUSCA takes its mandated role as coordinator of the implementation of SSR activities and EUTM RCA leads the implementation of DSR. EUTM RCA should also continue to apply pressure on the Ministry of Defence to share essential information about its HR planning and the whereabouts of trainees.

Open collaboration between EUTM RCA and the Russian private military trainers is a highly politically sensitive issue and is not likely in the foreseeable future. Nonetheless, EUTM RCA could place pressure on the CAR Government to improve the coordination and alignment of training. In addition, EUTM RCA should emphasize the importance of complementarity



between the different training courses by using the EU's existing formal communication channels with the Russian embassy.

4. Consider non-lethal support to the FACA, but refrain from provision of lethal equipment until conditions are met

Once EUTM RCA's current funding mechanism is replaced by the European Peace Facility in January 2021, the provision of equipment for FACA trainees will be an option. As a result, the risks of doing harm need to be avoided at all costs.

Any provision of lethal equipment could be used by the FACA in human rights violations, to consolidate political power or in a military coup. Therefore, EU member states should first consider investing in non-lethal equipment such as strengthening the logistical capacity of the FACA. It could also be beneficial for the FACA's functioning and morale to invest in communication systems and provide trainees with uniforms.

Given the current shape of the FACA and the long-term character of the DSR process, EUTM RCA should refrain from providing lethal equipment at this point in time. It is essential that the supply of lethal equipment is subject to strict conditions, such as a human rights due diligence policy, a track-and-trace system for personnel and equipment, and the implementation of DSR policies that ensure transparent and accountable governance of the defence sector. Again, this points to the need for greater involvement of the CAR Government.

EUTM RCA should improve its interaction with CAR civil society and FACA trainees and foster local ownership

5. Invest in strategic communication and local stakeholder involvement

EUTM RCA should invest more in local actor engagement, outreach and strategic communications in order to improve its interaction with CAR civil society and FACA trainees and to foster local ownership.

Improved dialogue with local stakeholders will deepen the mission's understanding of the local cultural and historical context of the FACA, which will contribute to a better analysis of it as a military institution and identification of internal obstacles that hamper its transformation. This will in turn help to better adapt training to local needs and contexts. Another way to solidify the cultural and context sensitivity of EUTM RCA trainers and the mission's training curriculum would be to improve pre-deployment induction training for the mission's personnel.

Better strategic communication about EUTM RCA's objectives, activities and limitations with different target groups could also help to inform local expectations and contribute to a better understanding of the mission's mandate.



Abbreviations

CAR	Central African Republic
CSDP	Common Security and Defence Policy
CSO	Civil society organization
DDR	Demobilization, disarmament and reintegration
DSR	Defence sector reform
EEAS	European External Action Service
EPON	Effectiveness of Peace Operations Network
EU	European Union
EUD	Delegation of the European Union to Central African Republic
EUTM RCA	European Union Training Mission in the Central African Republic
FACA	Central African Armed Forces
HR	Human resources
IHL	International humanitarian law
ISF	Internal Security Forces
MINUSCA	United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic
NDP	National defence plan
SSR	Security sector reform
USMS	Special Mixed Security Units
WPS	Women, Peace and Security

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SIPRI BACKGROUND PAPER

THE EUROPEAN UNION TRAINING MISSION IN THE CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC: AN ASSESSMENT

ANNELIES HICKENDORFF AND IGOR ACKO

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