

## II. Regional trends and developments

TIMO SMIT

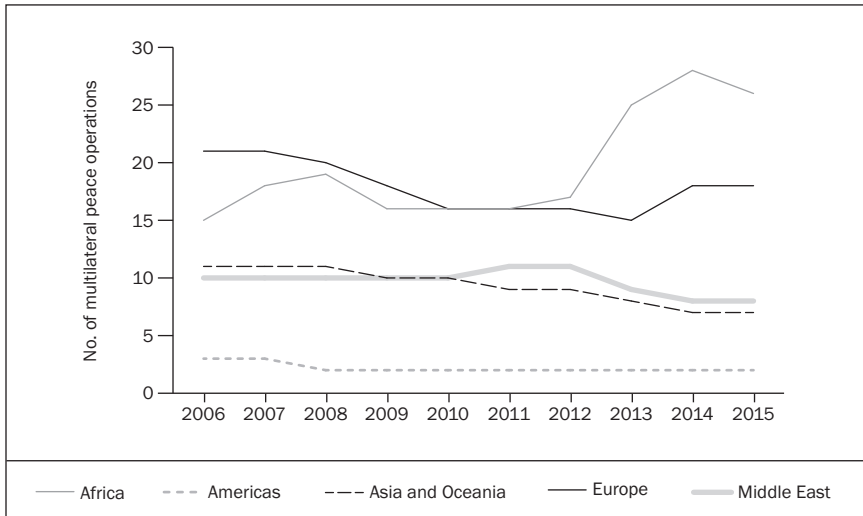
Africa has generally been the continent where most peace operations have taken place in recent years (see figure 7.5). This was certainly the case in 2015. Of the 61 multilateral peace operations that were active during the year, 26 were located in African countries, including 6 missions with more than 10 000 personnel (see section V). Three of the four missions launched in 2015 were deployed to African countries. More than 80 per cent of all United Nations peace operation personnel (94 616 of the 113 660) were deployed in Africa. Together, peace operations in Africa comprised 119 945 personnel, which was approximately 75 per cent of the total number of peace operation personnel in 2015. The remaining 25 per cent (42 758 personnel) were deployed in 35 missions in the Americas, Asia and the Pacific, Europe and the Middle East (see table 7.1).

The spectacular increase in the number of personnel deployed in peace operations in Africa may well be the most important trend in 21st century peace operations so far. In 2000, the 10 peace operations in Africa deployed about 15 000 personnel. Since then personnel deployment in Africa has on average doubled every five years. All the other regions have experienced a general decline in personnel deployment in recent years, further widening the gap between Africa and the rest of the world (see figure 7.6).

### **Africa**

There were 26 peace operations in Africa in 2015, 2 less than in 2014. Nonetheless, the number of personnel deployed in peace operations in Africa rose by 3 per cent, from 116 723 to 120 500. This is a relatively modest increase compared to the three preceding years, particularly given that a significant share of it resulted from an increase in the African Union (AU)/UN Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID). UNAMID experienced a temporary dip in strength in the second half of 2014, from which it recovered during 2015 due to the deployment of 1682 additional personnel. Thus, even in Africa there were signs of consolidation in 2015.

Given the large number of peace operations that were active in Africa this section discusses a selection of them under four cross-cutting themes: new peace operations, peace agreements, jihadist groups and asymmetric attacks against peace operations, and exit strategies; and provides a case study on Burundi.



**Figure 7.5.** Number of multilateral peace operations, by region, 2006–15

### *New peace operations in Africa*

Three of the four peace operations launched in 2015 were based in Africa. The European Union (EU) launched two new Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) missions: the EU CSDP Mission in Mali (EUCAP Sahel Mali) and the EU Military Advisory Mission in the Central African Republic (CAR) (EUMAM RCA). In addition, the Ceasefire and Transitional Security Arrangements Monitoring Mechanism (CTSAMM) was created in South Sudan to monitor the security provisions of a new peace agreement.

EUCAP Sahel Mali officially began implementing its mandate on 15 January 2015, although it had already partly deployed to Mali by then following its authorization in April 2014.<sup>1</sup> By the end of 2015 the mission consisted of 71 international staff. EUCAP Sahel Mali is a civilian mission mandated to support the Government of Mali with reforming its internal security forces (the police and gendarmerie). As such it fulfils a similar role to the EU CSDP mission in neighbouring Niger (EUCAP Sahel Niger), which deployed in 2012, and complements the efforts of the EU Training Mission Mali (EUTM Mali), which has been training and advising the Malian Army since 2013.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Council Decision 2015/76/CFSP of 19 Jan. 2015 launching the European Union CSDP mission in Mali (EUCAP Sahel Mali) and amending Decision 2014/219/CFSP, *Official Journal of the European Union*, L13/5, 20 Jan. 2015.

<sup>2</sup> Council Decision 2014/219/CFSP of 15 Apr. 2014 on a European Union CSDP mission in Mali (EUCAP Sahel Mali), *Official Journal of the European Union*, L113/21, 16 Apr. 2014.

**Table 7.1.** Number of peace operations and personnel deployed, by region and type of organization, 2015

Conducting organization	Africa	Americas	Asia and Oceania	Europe	Middle East	World
<i>Operations</i>	26	2	7	18	8	61
United Nations <sup>a</sup>	11	1	2	2	4	20
Regional organization or alliance	12	1	2	14	2	31
Ad hoc coalition	3	–	3	2	2	10
<i>Personnel</i>	119 945	5 177	13 658	9 644	14 279	162 703
United Nations <sup>a</sup>	94 616	5 156	434	1 071	12 383	113 660
Regional organization or alliance	23 979	21	13 059	7 436	60	44 555
Ad hoc coalition	1 350	–	165	1 137	1 836	4 488

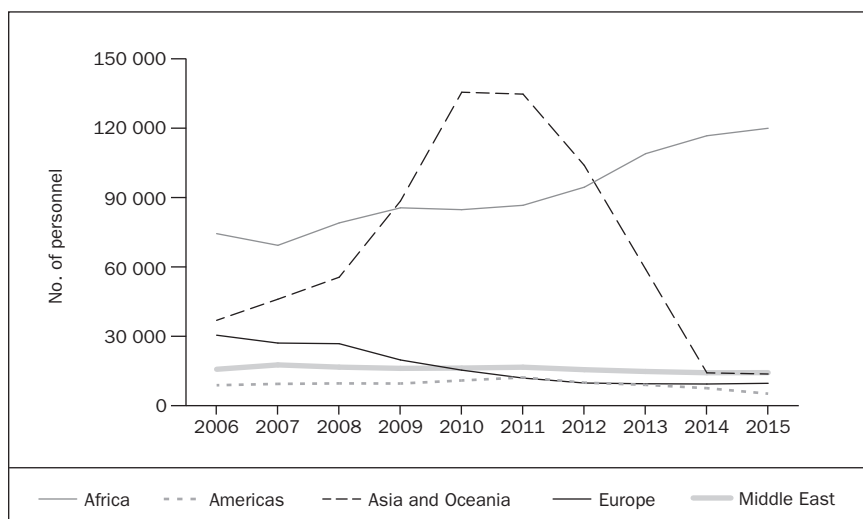
<sup>a</sup>United Nations figures include peace operations led by the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the UN Department of Political Affairs and the UN/African Union Mission in Darfur (UNAMID).

Source: SIPRI Multilateral Peace Operations Database, <<http://www.sipri.org/databases/pko/>>.

EUMAM RCA was established by the EU on 19 January and launched on 15 March.<sup>3</sup> Although its launch coincided with the end of EUFOR RCA, it is a very different mission in terms of size and mandate. EUFOR RCA was a 750-strong military operation with a narrow mandate to secure and stabilize the airport and certain districts of Bangui, which the EU deployed to help facilitate the transition of the African-led International Support Mission to the CAR (MISCA) into the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the CAR (MINUSCA), and to subsequently relieve the latter while it was building up its strength before handing over its tasks. By contrast, EUMAM RCA consists of approximately 70 military personnel and has an advisory role. It is mandated to advise the CAR armed forces on security sector reform, improving their professionalism and inclusiveness, and increasing democratic control over the military.<sup>4</sup> At the same time, MINUSCA continued deployment to reach its authorized strength, which the UN Security Council increased by 750 military personnel, 280 police and

<sup>3</sup> Council Decision 2015/78/CFSP of 19 Jan. 2015 on a European Union CSDP Military Advisory Mission in the Central African Republic (EUMAM RCA), *Official Journal of the European Union*, L13/8, 20 Jan. 2015.

<sup>4</sup> Council Decision 2015/442 of 16 Mar. 2015 launching the European Union CSDP Military Advisory Mission in the Central African Republic (EUMAM RCA) and amending Decision 2015/78/CFSP, *Official Journal of the European Union*, L72/39, 17 Mar. 2015.



**Figure 7.6.** Number of personnel in multilateral peace operations, by region, 2006–15

20 correction officers.<sup>5</sup> The political and security situation remained volatile in the CAR in 2015, and deteriorated in September. In November 2015, a 250-strong detachment of the UN Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI) quick reaction force deployed to Bangui to provide additional temporary support to the transitional authorities of the CAR during a visit by Pope Francis and the upcoming general elections.<sup>6</sup>

The CTSAMM became effective in South Sudan in December 2015. It succeeded the Monitoring and Verification Mechanism (MVM), led by the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), which had been monitoring the ceasefires between the Government of South Sudan and the armed opposition. The transition of the MVM into the CTSAMM was an outcome of the peace agreement concluded in August 2015. The CTSAMM reports to the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission (JMEC). CTSAMM is therefore a new mission, even though IGAD retains a leading role as a member and the chair of the JMEC.

#### *Peace agreements in Mali, South Sudan and Libya*

In Mali, the government signed a peace agreement with two coalitions of armed groups based in the north of the country in May and June 2015.<sup>7</sup> Briefly thereafter the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mis-

<sup>5</sup> United Nations Security Council Resolution 2212, 26 Mar. 2015.

<sup>6</sup> United Nations, Security Council, Thirty-Seventh progress report on the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire, S/2015/940, 8 Dec. 2015.

<sup>7</sup> The 2015 peace agreement in Mali is discussed at greater length in chapter 5 of this volume.

sion in Mali (MINUSMA) assumed additional responsibilities for supporting the implementation of the peace accord and monitoring the ceasefires on which it is based. The UN Security Council assigned 40 military observers to the mission for this purpose.<sup>8</sup> Although MINUSMA did not report significant ceasefire violations during the remainder of the year, it continued to face regular asymmetric attacks by jihadist armed groups that are not part of the agreement.

In South Sudan, the government and opposition groups signed a peace agreement in August 2015, agreeing to share power in a Transitional Government of National Unity (TGONU) for a 30-month transition period. National elections will then determine the future governance of South Sudan. The peace agreement also established a permanent countrywide ceasefire and a set of transitional security arrangements for the demilitarization of the capital, Juba.<sup>9</sup> While the August accord was welcomed as an important step forward in resolving a conflict that had raged since late 2013, there were many setbacks in its implementation. The TGONU was not established during the remainder of the year, while continued fighting and mutual ceasefire violations led to more displacements and continued insecurity. As a consequence, the number of internally displaced persons in UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) protection sites increased to approximately 200 000.<sup>10</sup>

The peace deal had direct implications for the MVM and UNMISS. The MVM had been established a year earlier to observe the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement of January 2014, which formed the basis for the permanent ceasefire in 2015. The peace agreement authorized a new mission, the CTSAMM, to succeed the MVM and monitor compliance with the new ceasefire and security arrangements. The transition of the MVM into the CTSAMM took place in December.<sup>11</sup> Meanwhile, the UN Security Council expanded the UNMISS mandate to support the implementation of the peace agreement by, among other things, monitoring the withdrawal of foreign forces and the disarmament of non-state actors.<sup>12</sup> UNMISS also continued to support the MVM, and later the CTSAMM, by providing protection for their monitoring teams and sites. In December, the Security Council increased the authorized strength of UNMISS by 1178 troops and police personnel, and

<sup>8</sup> United Nations Security Council Resolution 2227, 29 June 2015.

<sup>9</sup> Intergovernmental Authority on Development, Agreement on the resolution of the conflict in the Republic of South Sudan, 17 Aug. 2015.

<sup>10</sup> United Nations, Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General on South Sudan, S/2016/138, 9 Feb. 2016.

<sup>11</sup> Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission (JMEC), Report from the Chairperson of the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission (JMEC) for the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan to the African Union Peace and Security Council (PSC), Addis Ababa, 29 Jan. 2016.

<sup>12</sup> United Nations Security Council Resolution 2241, 9 Oct. 2015.

agreed to consider expanding its mandate in order to deter a further escalation of violence.<sup>13</sup>

The UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) facilitated the peace process in Libya, which eventually culminated in the conclusion of a Political Agreement on 17 December 2015. Among the signatories were representatives from Libya's two rival governments: the internationally recognized General National Congress (GNC) and the House of Representatives (HoR). The GNC and the HoR agreed to form a Presidential Council, which will form a Government of National Accord (GNA). In October 2015 reports emerged of EU contingency plans for the possible deployment of a CSDP mission to Libya following the establishment of the GNA. Options reportedly include a civilian ceasefire-monitoring mission, support to disarm, demobilize and reintegrate militants, and—in case the ceasefire does not last—a more robust military operation.<sup>14</sup>

### *Jihadist groups and asymmetric attacks against peace operations*

The continued presence and spread of jihadist organizations in Africa remained a cause of great concern to both local and international security actors. Several peace operations, most notably MINUSMA and AMISOM, continued to operate under the persistent threat of such groups.<sup>15</sup>

In Mali, extremist groups targeted MINUSMA with rockets, improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and mines, as well as occasional suicide attacks. A number of civilian UN personnel were also among the victims of attacks that took place in southern Mali, most notably in the central town of Searé and in the capital, Bamako. However, although MINUSMA suffered 12 fatalities during 2015 due to hostile acts—more than any other UN mission—this was considerably fewer than the 28 it suffered in 2014. This might suggest that the additional security measures implemented by MINUSMA to better protect its forces against asymmetric threats had some positive effect.<sup>16</sup>

In Somalia, al-Shabab continued to stage successful attacks against AMISOM. It clearly demonstrated its continued ability to inflict mass casualties on the AU forces in two major attacks against AMISOM bases in June and September. Both attacks involved vehicle-borne IEDs and more than 100 heavily armed militants. Although it has not been confirmed how many AU soldiers died in the assaults, claims by al-Shabab and witness accounts

<sup>13</sup> United Nations Security Council Resolution 2252, 15 Dec. 2015.

<sup>14</sup> Guarascio, F., 'EU mulls mission to disarm Libyan factions if unity government in place', Reuters, 20 Oct. 2015.

<sup>15</sup> The Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) against Boko Haram, which is composed of forces from the countries of the Lake Chad Basin Community (LCBC) and Chad, does not qualify as a peace operation. It became operational in 2015 but did not secure explicit authorization from the UN Security Council.

<sup>16</sup> United Nations, Security Council, Reports of the Secretary-General on the situation in Mali, S/2015/426, 11 June 2015; S/2015/732, 22 Sep. 2015; and S/2015/1030, 24 Dec. 2015.

suggest that dozens were killed.<sup>17</sup> Nonetheless, AMISOM recovered significant territory from al-Shabab in a new ground offensive supported by combat aircraft and US drone strikes.<sup>18</sup>

### *Exit strategies*

Throughout 2015, several large and long-running peace operations in Africa were either in the process of withdrawing or developing exit strategies to enable drawdown in the near future. This section discusses the ongoing, pending or potential departure of the UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), UNOCI in Côte d'Ivoire, the UN Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) (MONUSCO) and UNAMID. Both France's Operation Sangaris in the CAR and the EU Advisory and Assistance Mission for Security Reform in the DRC were also significantly reduced during the year, and are set to terminate in 2016. However, since these missions were relatively small they are not discussed.

In West Africa, UNMIL and UNOCI continued to downsize in 2015 in the light of the improving security situation in Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire. UNMIL resumed its phased withdrawal, which had previously been put on hold due to the Ebola crisis in 2014. The UN Security Council authorized a further reduction from 5465 to 1846 uniformed personnel by 30 June 2016, when UNMIL is scheduled to hand over its security tasks to the Liberian Government.<sup>19</sup> After the peaceful October elections in Côte d'Ivoire, the UN Secretary-General recommended that the Security Council decrease UNOCI's military component from 5437 to 4000 troops by 31 March 2016. The Security Council is scheduled to review the continuing need for UN peacekeepers in Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire later in the year.<sup>20</sup>

In the DRC, MONUSCO began reducing its military component pursuant to the outcome of a strategic review in 2014 on the future role of the peacekeeping operation. The UN Security Council endorsed the recommendation to withdraw 2000 troops, made possible by the improved security situation in parts of the country and measures to make the force leaner but more efficient through the creation of rapidly deployable units.<sup>21</sup> The DRC Government had requested a much larger reduction of 7000 by mid 2015, but the strategic review concluded that a reduction of more than 2000 troops would

<sup>17</sup> 'Al-Shabaab kills dozens of African Union troops at base in Somalia', *The Guardian*, 26 June 2015; and 'Al-Shabab claims "scores" killed in attack on AU troops', Al Jazeera, 1 Sep. 2015.

<sup>18</sup> 'In Somalia, African forces make gains against al Shabaab', Stratfor, 23 July 2015; and Blanchard, L. P., 'The fight against Al Shabaab in Somalia in 2016', Congressional Research Service (CRS) Insight, 19 Jan. 2016.

<sup>19</sup> United Nations Security Council Resolution 2239, 17 Sep. 2015.

<sup>20</sup> United Nations Security Council Resolution 2239, 17 Sep. 2015; and United Nations, Security Council, Thirty-seventh progress report on the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire, S/2015/940, 8 Dec. 2015.

<sup>21</sup> United Nations Security Council Resolution 2211, 26 Mar. 2015.

compromise MONUSCO's ability to implement its mandate.<sup>22</sup> However, in December 2015 the UN Secretary-General recommended that an additional reduction of 1700 would be feasible, and the resumption of consultations with the DRC on a gradual drawdown of MONUSCO.<sup>23</sup>

In Darfur, UNAMID continued to struggle to implement its mandate, while negotiations on an exit strategy for the mission officially began in February 2015.<sup>24</sup> The Government of Sudan has always resisted UNAMID's presence and requested in November 2014 that it take concrete steps to implement an exit strategy. This followed accusations by the President of Sudan, Omar al-Bashir, that the mission had become a liability and was supporting rebels rather than protecting civilians.<sup>25</sup> However, by the end of 2015 a political solution to the conflict in Darfur still seemed out of reach, and an escalation of hostilities during the year resulted in the displacement of an additional 100 000 people. In the light of the deterioration in the security situation, the UN Security Council maintained the authorized strength of UNAMID at its current level when it renewed its mandate for another year. Meanwhile, the UN, the AU and the Government of Sudan could not agree on the terms and conditions for an exit strategy for the mission, which meant that the future of the mission remained uncertain throughout the year.<sup>26</sup>

#### *Case study: the crisis in Burundi*

In Burundi, the escalation of political violence in 2015 led to fears that the country might relapse into civil war. As security deteriorated and Burundi descended into chaos, several observers warned of the potential for mass atrocities reminiscent of the ethnic conflict that killed 300 000 Burundians between 1993 and 2005. Some went so far as to draw parallels with the run-up to the genocide in neighbouring Rwanda and the costs of inaction there.<sup>27</sup> Although there were many calls for UN or AU peacekeepers, two attempts by the AU to deploy a mission to Burundi were unsuccessful before the turn of the year.

Popular unrest began in Burundi in April 2015 when President Pierre Nkurunziza announced that he would run for a third term in the upcoming

<sup>22</sup> United Nations, Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, submitted pursuant to paragraph 39 of Security Council resolution 2147 (2014), S/2014/957, 30 Dec. 2014.

<sup>23</sup> United Nations, Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, S/2015/1031, 24 Dec. 2015.

<sup>24</sup> United Nations, Security Council, Special Report of the Secretary-General on the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur, S/2015/163, 6 Mar. 2015.

<sup>25</sup> 'Sudan's Bashir slams UN peacekeepers, demands they leave', Reuters, 30 Nov. 2014.

<sup>26</sup> United Nations Security Council Resolution 2228, 29 June 2015; and United Nations, Security Council, Report on the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur, S/2015/1027, 24 Dec. 2015.

<sup>27</sup> 'Burundi violence: Africa "will not allow genocide"', Al Jazeera, 17 Dec. 2015.



elections. Violent demonstrations erupted in the capital, Bujumbura, in protest at Nkurunziza's candidacy, which was criticized as being in breach of the 2005 Burundian Constitution.<sup>28</sup> A failed coup in May led to heavy fighting in Bujumbura and set the tone for an increasingly repressive campaign by government forces and pro-government militias against all elements in society associated with the opposition. Violent confrontations between supporters of the ruling party and the opposition continued after Nkurunziza's re-election on 21 July. By the end of the year, the unrest had killed at least 400 people, while an estimated 220 000 had sought refuge in other countries.<sup>29</sup>

In December 2015, rebel attacks against different military sites in the capital resulted in the heaviest fighting seen in months, and at least 87 deaths.<sup>30</sup> They also produced new allegations of gross violations of human rights by the Burundian security forces. Reports of indiscriminate and extrajudicial killings, overwhelmingly of Tutsi men, in the aftermath of the attacks aggravated fears of ethnic profiling by the government, especially as the violence thus far had not seemed to have a strong ethnic dimension.<sup>31</sup>

The AU's Peace and Security Council (PSC) decided on 13 June to send observers and military experts to Burundi to monitor human rights and verify the disarmament of non-state armed groups.<sup>32</sup> Deployment was supposed to commence on 8 July, but was postponed at the request of the Burundian Government until after the presidential elections. The mission was subsequently delayed further because the AU and Burundi could not agree on a memorandum of understanding on its modalities. By the end of 2015 there were only 10 AU observers in Burundi, of the 100 that had been authorized. In the continued absence of a memorandum of understanding, the mission remained on standby.<sup>33</sup>

On 17 December, following the violent outbreak in Bujumbura, the AU PSC instead authorized the deployment of a 5000-strong force—the African Prevention and Protection Mission in Burundi (MAPROBU)—to prevent

<sup>28</sup> The disagreement is over whether Nkurunziza's initial post-transitional term as president, for which he was not elected by universal direct suffrage but appointed by parliament, counts as one of the maximum two terms a Burundian president is constitutionally allowed to have. If it does not, that would allow him to run for a third term.

<sup>29</sup> United Nations Human Rights, Office of the High Commissioner, Opening Statement by Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, at the Human Rights Council 24th Special Session, Geneva, 17 Dec. 2015.

<sup>30</sup> 'Burundi crisis: Army says 87 killed in day of violence', BBC News, 12 Dec. 2015.

<sup>31</sup> Gettleman, J., 'Burundi crackdown puts Hutus and Tutsis, and the West, on edge', *New York Times*, 28 Dec. 2015.

<sup>32</sup> African Union, Peace and Security Council, 515th Meeting, Communiqué PSC/AHG/COMM.2 (DXV), 13 June 2015.

<sup>33</sup> 'Dispatches from the field: Meetings with the African Union and UN Special Representatives in Addis Ababa', What's in Blue, 23 Jan. 2015.

further escalation and protect civilians.<sup>34</sup> It urged the Burundian Government to accept the deployment within 96 hours, or else it would recommend that the AU Assembly of Heads of State and Government invoke Article 4(h) of the AU Constitutive Act. This provision allows the AU to intervene in member states without their prior consent in cases of war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity. The PSC also urged the UN Security Council to authorize the operation. The Council had already adopted a resolution on Burundi in November, but that had made no reference to the possible deployment of AU or UN peacekeepers.<sup>35</sup>

The Burundian Government rejected the deployment of MAPROBU and responded that any intervention without its permission would be regarded as a violation of its territorial integrity and would be met with armed resistance.<sup>36</sup> In the end, the AU Assembly did not invoke Article 4(h) due to the opposition of several of its members.<sup>37</sup> However, given the volatile situation in Burundi and the increasing pressure on its government to accept some form of international presence, it is not unlikely that MAPROBU, AU observers or possibly UN peacekeepers will deploy to Burundi in 2016.

### **The Americas**

The Mission to Support the Peace Process in Colombia (MAPP/OEA) and the UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) were the only two peace operations in the Americas in 2015. Both missions have been running since 2004. MAPP/OEA, led by the Organization of American States (OAS), is a small mission of just 21 international staff, and the number of personnel has remained stable over many years. The overall trend in the region is therefore entirely determined by MINUSTAH.

MINUSTAH continued its gradual drawdown in 2015. In the past year its personnel decreased by 41 per cent to 5156. In October 2015 the UN Security Council extended the mandate of MINUSTAH for another year, while maintaining its personnel ceiling as authorized a year earlier. The Security Council will assess in 2016 whether security in Haiti, and the capacity of the national authorities to uphold it, continues to require the presence of UN peacekeepers, or whether it can consider their withdrawal.<sup>38</sup>

Meanwhile, the peace process in Colombia between the Colombian Government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (Fuerzas Arma-

<sup>34</sup> African Union, Peace and Security Council, 565th Meeting, Communiqué PSC/PR/COMM. (DLXV), 17 Dec. 2015.

<sup>35</sup> United Nations Security Council Resolution 2248, 12 Nov. 2015.

<sup>36</sup> 'Burundi crisis: Pierre Nkurunziza threatens to fight AU peacekeepers', BBC News, 30 Dec. 2015.

<sup>37</sup> Williams, P. D., 'Special report: The African Union's coercive diplomacy in Burundi', Global Observatory, 18 Dec. 2015.

<sup>38</sup> United Nations Security Council Resolution 2243, 14 Oct. 2015.

das Revolucionarias Colombianas, FARC) continued to make progress in 2015. On 23 September both sides agreed to set a deadline of six months to reach a final truce, by 23 March 2016.<sup>39</sup>

## Asia and Oceania

There were seven peace operations in Asia and Oceania in 2015, the same number as in the previous year. By the end of the year these missions comprised 13 658 personnel, which is a decrease of 3 per cent from the end of the previous year. After significant fluctuations in previous years due to developments in ISAF, 2015 was the first year in many that deployments in the region remained relatively stable.

Three missions were located in Afghanistan: the Resolute Support Mission (RSM), led by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO); the EU Police Mission in Afghanistan (EUPOL Afghanistan); and the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). The other four missions were the long-running UN Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP); the International Monitoring Team (IMT) in Mindanao, the Philippines; the Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission (NNSC) in South Korea; and the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI). The RSM was by far the largest peace operation in the region, with 12 905 personnel. The only mission in Asia and Oceania that experienced a significant change in staff numbers was EUPOL Afghanistan, which had its personnel reduced from 235 to 154. EUPOL Afghanistan is scheduled to terminate in 2016.

### *The Resolute Support Mission*

The most notable development in the region in 2015 was the start of the NATO-led RSM in Afghanistan on 1 January. This was also the date on which the Afghan Government officially assumed full responsibility for security in the whole of Afghanistan, which remained extremely fragile after 13 years of international military intervention. The RSM's role is to 'train, advise and assist' the Afghan security institutions and the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces (ANDSF) at the ministerial and corps levels. However, it was clear from the outset that the ANDSF still lacked a number of key capabilities, and that it would continue to rely on NATO and the United States for so-called critical enablers, including close air support in combat situations.<sup>40</sup>

During the year it became increasingly apparent that the ANDSF cannot prevail against a resurgent Taliban without continued international support.

<sup>39</sup> Brodzinsky, S., 'Colombia's government and FARC rebels reach agreement in step to end civil war', *The Guardian*, 15 Dec. 2015.

<sup>40</sup> Smith, J., 'NATO promises Afghans air support after 2014 as it shuts key base', *Stars and Stripes*, 26 Oct. 2014.

By the end of the year the Taliban controlled more territory than at any other point since it was removed from power in 2001, and the death toll among the civilian population had exceeded that of all previous years since UNAMA began recording it in 2009.<sup>41</sup> The emergence of armed groups claiming allegiance to Islamic State (IS) further exacerbated fears that a premature withdrawal of coalition forces would lead to a situation similar to that in Iraq following the withdrawal of US troops. In March, the US Government announced the postponement of its initial plans to withdraw approximately half of all US forces from Afghanistan by the end of 2015.<sup>42</sup> US President Barack Obama subsequently announced in October that 5500 troops would remain in Afghanistan into 2017, reversing his earlier decision to end the mission by the end of 2016.<sup>43</sup> This meant that the RSM could maintain its 13 000 troops and four regional command centres throughout 2015, instead of scaling down to a 5500-strong force based in Kabul, as originally planned.

## Europe

There were 18 active peace operations on the European continent in 2015, the same number as in the previous year. The number of personnel in these missions was 9644, which is an increase of 3 per cent. Except for the three missions that were established in 2014 in response to the conflict in Ukraine, the peace operations located in Europe have generally been active for many years. All but one mission—the UN Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP)—are deployed in countries that were once part of the former Soviet Union or the former Yugoslavia.

There was no significant progress on resolving the ongoing conflict in eastern Ukraine. Despite repeated calls by the Ukrainian Government for UN or EU peacekeepers to be deployed to Ukraine, it was clear that neither option was feasible in the light of the political situation and the likely objection of Russia.<sup>44</sup> The decision by the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) in March 2015 expanded the Special Monitoring Mission (SMM) in Ukraine by doubling its authorized strength from 500 to 1000 international personnel was the most noteworthy development.<sup>45</sup> By

<sup>41</sup> Raghavan, S., 'A year of Taliban gains shows that "we haven't delivered", top Afghan official says', *Washington Post*, 27 Dec. 2015; and UNAMA, 'Civilian casualties hit new high in 2015', 14 Feb. 2016.

<sup>42</sup> Jaffe, G. and Nakamura, D., 'Obama agrees to slow US troop withdrawal from Afghanistan', *Washington Post*, 24 Mar. 2015.

<sup>43</sup> Jaffe, G. and Ryan, M., 'Obama outlines plan to keep 5500 troops in Afghanistan', *Washington Post*, 15 Oct. 2015.

<sup>44</sup> 'Ukraine conflict: Poroshenko calls for UN peacekeepers', BBC News, 19 Feb. 2015; and Rettman, D., 'Kiev's call for EU mission falling on deaf ears', *EUobserver*, Brussels, 2 Nov. 2015.

<sup>45</sup> Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, Permanent Council, Decision no. 1162 (PC.DEC/1162), 12 Mar. 2015.

the end of the year the SMM had deployed 738 personnel, 315 more than in 2014. As a result, the OSCE SMM surpassed the EU Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX Kosovo) as the largest civilian peace operation in Europe. The NATO-led military operation in Kosovo, Kosovo Force (KFOR), remained the largest peace operation in Europe by a large margin. All other missions maintained personnel levels that were approximately similar to the previous year.

### **The Middle East**

There were eight peace operations in the Middle East during 2015, the same number as in the previous year. The number of peace operation personnel in the region also remained stable at 14 279, a minimal increase compared to 2014. The UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) increased its personnel by 444 during the year. Except for the UN Assistance Mission in Iraq (UNAMI) and the Multinational Force and Observers (MFO), all the missions in the Middle East operate in the Levant.

Several missions in the Middle East were affected by the volatile security situation in many parts of the region and by increasing regional tensions. In January, a UNIFIL peacekeeper was killed by Israeli artillery amid a series of hostile exchanges and mutual retaliatory strikes between Israel and Hezbollah around the southern Lebanese border.<sup>46</sup> Continued fighting and generally non-permissive security conditions in the area of separation between Israel and Syria prevented the UN Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) from returning to its ordinary positions.<sup>47</sup> In June, in the Sinai Peninsula, militants affiliated to IS fired rockets at an airbase operated by the MFOs.<sup>48</sup>

The international efforts to address the conflicts in Syria and Iraq did not involve any peace operations. The Syrian war and the international efforts to degrade IS became increasingly internationalized during 2015, most notably through Russia's involvement in Syria. Meanwhile, several European countries expanded their operations in the context of the US-led Operation Inherent Resolve, which aims to 'degrade and destroy' IS. In Yemen, an Arab coalition led by Saudi Arabia launched a military intervention, including airstrikes and ground forces, to counter the Houthi rebellion which escalated in 2015.

A positive development in 2015, which might pave the way for a future peace operation in Syria, was the progress made in the mediation of the Syrian conflict towards the end of the year. Following a breakthrough in

<sup>46</sup> 'Israel admits its fire killed Spanish UN peacekeeper', BBC News, 7 Apr. 2015.

<sup>47</sup> United Nations, Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force for the period from 29 Aug. to 18 Nov. 2015, S/2015/930, 3 Dec. 2015.

<sup>48</sup> 'Sinai Province fires rockets towards airport used by multinational peacekeepers', Reuters, 9 June 2015.

negotiations in October, the UN Security Council adopted its first resolution on Syria since the Syrian conflict began in 2011. In UN Security Council Resolution 2254 of 18 December, the Security Council agreed to initiate formal UN-facilitated peace talks between the Syrian Government and representatives of the opposition (not including IS and the al-Nusra Front) on a political transition process aimed at ending the war. The Security Council emphasized that a future ceasefire would require international monitoring and verification, thereby opening the door to the possibility of a future observer mission in Syria.<sup>49</sup>

<sup>49</sup> United Nations Security Council Resolution 2254, 18 Dec. 2015.