

WINNING THE HEARTS AND MINDS: LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE INDONESIAN PEACEKEEPING MISSION IN LEBANON

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INTRODUCTION

It is a great honor and pleasure for me to stand here before all of our distinguished guests tonight. I would like to take up this rather unique opportunity to deliver a short remarks on behalf of the TNI Garuda XXIII-A peacekeeping force, to share with you all a little about our experience in our participation in UNIFIL peacekeeping missions in Lebanon in 2006-2007. I hope that I would be able to give you some interesting perspectives on UN peacekeeping missions from our own operational experience.

HISTORY OF INDONESIA'S PARTICIPATION IN UN PEACEKEEPING EFFORTS

Although the term "peacekeeping" defies simple definition and is not found anywhere in the Charter for the United Nations when it was first drawn up in 1945, it is seen by many as a logical outgrowth of Chapter Six of the Charter, which gives the UN the power to mediate international disputes between states and

recommend terms of a settlement; stopping short of Chapter seven, which provides the UN the authority to use the armed forces of member states to maintain or restore international peace and security. As former UN Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjold put it, peacekeeping efforts belong to "Chapter Six and a



Half", in recognition of its tenuous legitimacy particularly in the context of the then Cold War era.

Indonesia has had a long-standing history in participating in peacekeeping operations. The Preamble of our 1945 Constitution clearly mandates that Indonesia actively participate in the maintenance of international peace and security. Since Indonesia's independence, this has been a cornerstone in the conduct of our "free and active" (bebas-aktif) foreign policy. The first

Garuda peacekeeping force was dispatched to Sinai in January 1957 as part of the first United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF I), which was established to secure and supervise the cessation of hostilities, including the withdrawal of the armed forces of France, Israel and the United Kingdom from Egyptian territory. Since then Indonesia has actively participated in numerous peacekeeping missions, ranging from sending in a small group of military observers to full-fledged participation such as in the case of the latest UNIFIL missions in



Lebanon. Through all those missions abroad, the TNI has continually served with distinction and brought pride and international recognition to our nation. It would be interesting to highlight as well that our current President himself took part once by serving as a Chief Military Observer under the United Nation Protection Force (UNPROFOR) in Bosnia in 1995.

BACKGROUND OF GARUDA XXIII-A PEACEKEEPING FORCE

The United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) was first set up in 1978 following the Security Council resolutions 425 (1978) and

426 (1978). This force was created for three broadly defined purposes: 1) Confirming the withdrawal of Israeli forces from southern Lebanon; 2) Restoring international peace and security; 3) Assisting the Government of Lebanon in ensuring the return of its effective authority in the area. Despite the efforts by the UN, the Israeli forces continued to occupy the southern area up to mid-2000 when the Israeli Government decided to withdraw their troops. The Government of Lebanon took the position that, so long as there was no comprehensive peace with Israel, the army would not act as a border guard for Israel and would not be deployed to the

border. Hence, near the withdrawal line -- or the so-called Blue Line -- the authorities have, in effect, left control to Hezbollah. Its members worked in civilian attire and were normally unarmed. They monitored the Blue Line, maintained public order and, in some villages, provided social, medical and education services. Since then the political and security environment remained somewhat calm though fraught with instability with numerous cases of violations and tensions across the border.

The outbreak of an intense armed conflict between Israel and Hezbollah in July 2006 brought worldwide focus once more to the volatile situation in the Middle East. The heavy exchanges of fire along the Blue Line resulted in tremendously high costs in human lives and physical damages. The United Nations brokered a ceasefire between Hezbollah and Israel in southern Lebanon in August 2006. To enforce the ceasefire, the UN

Security Council unanimously passed UN Resolution 1701, calling for a full cessation of hostilities and authorizing an increase of UN forces in Lebanon.

As pointed out by the UN Secretary-General the "tragic 34-day conflict has thrown the region back into the instability that prevailed for decades".²⁷ Official Lebanese figures showed that 1,187 people had died and 4,092 had been injured in Lebanon as a result of the 34-day conflict.²⁸ The cessation of hostilities triggered a massive and speedy return of internally displaced persons and refugees back to their areas of origin. According to UNHCR, within days of the ceasefire some 90 per cent of those displaced in Lebanon during the hostilities, which included around 900,000 or one quarter of the population, returned to their homes or were staying nearby. It was estimated then that between 100,000 and 150,000 people remained internally displaced.

²⁷ See further on UNIFIL document.

²⁸ See further on UNISPAL document.

With the objectives to help secure a permanent ceasefire and a long-term solution to the conflict, the Security Council then created a buffer zone free of “any armed personnel, assets and weapons other than those of the Government of Lebanon and of UNIFIL” between the United Nations-drawn Blue Line in southern Lebanon and the Litani river, and called for both Israel and Lebanon to support a permanent ceasefire and comprehensive solution to the crisis.

Responding to the UN's request for military personnel and equipment to support the UNIFIL, the Indonesian Government offered a Mechanized Infantry Battalion Task Force of 850 personnel, equipment, and humanitarian supplies. The Contingent, named Garuda XXIII-A, was then dispatched and joined the other UNIFIL participants in southern Lebanon in November 2006.

CHALLENGES CONFRONTING GARUDA XXIII-A

In essence, there were four broad main challenges facing the TNI troops participating in peacekeeping missions abroad. First, there is an inherent requirement to adapt the mindset of our soldiers to grasp the full meaning of peacekeeping as opposed to war-fighting or counterinsurgency operations. For regular military units whose principal responsibilities revolve around maintaining its war-fighting capabilities, there needs to be considerable adjustments to their operational concept. These challenges were made even more difficult by the fact that the TNI, for the first time ever, was fielding a mechanized battalion, comprising components from different parent units (infantry, airborne, cavalry and military police).

Second, as peacekeepers we are bound to uphold the principles of



neutrality and impartiality with all the conflicting parties. In the case of the Israeli-Lebanese conflict, the situation was much more complicated due to the peculiar relationships between the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) and Hezbollah on the one side of the Blue Line and the Israelis on the other. The fact was that the LAF had not effectively controlled the southern parts of Lebanon for decades; instead the Hezbollah had filled in that gap since the withdrawal of the Israeli forces in 2000. The instability within the Lebanese government as indicated by a number of political

assassinations in recent years and prevailing tensions between different factions (the Sunni, Shiite, and Maronite) hindered further its ability to function as a legitimate authority. The participation of Indonesia, as a country with the largest Islamic population in the world, in the UN-peacekeeping force was initially perceived by the Israelis with suspicion on the ground that it did not have diplomatic ties with Israel. Although, some would openly say that the real reason was that the Israeli government had serious concerns on the ability of Indonesia to maintain neutrality and would

side with the Hezbollah. That we had to be able to achieve our objectives and maintain impartiality with any of the conflicting parties was not an easy feat.

The third challenge is in establishing cooperation with the LAF, the UNIFIL forces from other countries and also the various UN agencies involved in the peacekeeping operations. At the time, the UNIFIL comprised military contingents from various countries such as France, Italy, Spain, Ghana, India, China, Nepal, Malaysia, Finland, Ireland, Belgium, Germany, South Korea and a few others. Each contingent is responsible for maintaining security conditions in its designated area of responsibilities between the Blue Line and the Litani River. The differences inherent in such diverse environment clearly posed its own unique challenges. Cooperation among these forces, however, is not only desirable but also mandatory for the success of such peacekeeping operations. We also needed to maintain good

communication with UN agencies on the ground to ensure that we could offer needed protection for their personnel as well as to maintain an environment conducive for these agencies to perform their functions in tending to the aid of displaced people, the majority of which include women and children, as well as carrying out other civic activities.

Last but not least, we had to be able to win the hearts and minds of the local population. From the beginning the troops were all aware that the local population needed to be treated with respect and courtesy to gain their trust and cooperation. Soldiers with weapons and armor vehicles are easily feared by the people on the streets, but not necessarily respected nor trusted. We clearly did not want to create an environment of fear for it often led only to resentment or even hatred towards the soldiers, which might ultimately make us legitimate targets of attacks, by unknown armed elements that may be living amongst the population.

We knew that to be able to carry out our missions we needed the cooperation of the local population. Thus, the challenge of winning their hearts and minds also became a priority.

OVERCOMING THE CHALLENGES

It has been observed by many, that in its long history of participation in various peacekeeping missions abroad, Indonesia's military contingent -- be it a small group of military observers or a larger

maneuver units -- has always been able to perform its functions professionally and with distinction. It is not an overstatement to say that in virtually every mission deployment anywhere, the Indonesian contingent has managed to gain the respect and acceptance by the local community as well as by the conflicting parties.

The questions that often come to the minds of many analysts or observers would be: "What is so special about Indonesian





contingents? “Are they heavily armed?”; “Are they equipped with the most sophisticated technology on earth?”; “Are they supported with a huge amount of money so that they can “buy” the goodwill of all the hostile factions?”

As a TNI officer, I personally hope that the answers would have been positive “YES, YES, AND YES” to the latter questions. Ideally, we all may share similar hopes for our country to have both strong economy and armed forces. Interestingly, though, the answers to those particular questions are “NO”, or “NOT YET” at

least. Naturally, when compared to the strengths of member countries of the NATO clearly we have to work a lot harder to catch up with those. Nevertheless, if we are to evaluate the effectiveness of our peacekeeping forces in the field, we have no reasons to be shy for, because as practical realities have demonstrated time and time again: “Money and Weapons do not serve as the best formula to solve problems, let alone terminating a conflict”. The quality and professionalism of soldiers, especially in carrying

out peacekeeping operations, are not simply determined by the level of firepower or sophisticated weaponry.

In a slightly different context, I would also argue that providing large amount of contributions in money and materiel does not necessarily guarantee winning the hearts and minds of the people living in the areas where the peacekeeping force is operating. It is never that simple. There are numerous factors that would determine the successful accomplishment of the main objectives and goals of a peacekeeping operation, which ultimately come down to creating the conditions for sustainable peace and security.

In this regard, the Indonesian contingents dispatched on various peacekeeping missions, despite all the limitations in resources that they have, have continually proven their capabilities to perform to the best of their abilities to bring pride

and international recognition to the country as a whole. In many occasions the Indonesian troops have received awards of distinction and public recognition given by the host countries for its professional achievements. Such recognition is indeed a positive evaluation of the active roles of our soldiers on the ground as peacekeepers. In addition, the seriousness, yet courteous attitude, of our troops in carrying out its humanitarian tasks also show a degree of sensitivity and appreciation of the prevailing problems and conditions faced by the community within the conflict-torn areas. Personal approaches or “human touches” through people-to-people contact have also served well and despite the difference in religious, cultural and social values, we were able to bridge the gap without having much difficulty. This is also largely due to the courteous nature and high regards for family values being inseparable parts of the Indonesian culture as well as the fact that the Indonesian troops come from cultural background just

as diverse, if not more, as the local population.

Not surprisingly, in carrying out a peacekeeping mission where the grand strategy is to maintain peace and order by persuading armed parties or other hostile elements to back away from aggressive activities, military strength is not a definite measure of success; neither could material contribution alone guarantees the “winning of the hearts and minds” of the people. What appears to be important is the day-to-day conduct of the peacekeepers on the ground; those who uphold the principles of neutrality and impartiality, as well as those who are able to carry all aspects of its operational duties exceptionally. The other important factor is the ability to “go the extra mile” to win over the hearts and minds of the people to contribute voluntarily to the improvement of order and security conditions.

Large contribution in money and materiel may be an added point, but is certainly not a prerequisite requirement for a contingent to gain the respect and trust of the local community. The absence of a level of emotional understanding between the peacekeeping troops and local community may even result in new breeds of problems. For instance, one of the contingents present was not able to gain the sympathy from the people despite continuing efforts to donate funds and building large projects. One would ask “Why?”. Apparently, the behavior and attitudes of its soldiers on the ground, especially in their interactions with the local community did not reflect any kind of emotional empathy towards the people. To put things in perspective, the local community pointed outright in a number of occasions the perceived collective arrogance or a sense of superiority complex by certain personnel even as the contingent was contributing relatively large



infrastructure projects. Such feelings of resentment – or even intense dislike in few cases - were bound to be counter-productive towards the objectives and presence of UN peacekeeping forces. In general, such condition may dent the institutional image and credibility of the UN internationally; in particular, such excesses may even increase the security risks of the personnel on the ground. Our experience on the ground showed that the local population is more receptive to UN contingents who maintain low profile, respect

their identity, religions, and cultures, treat them as equals, empathize with their daily problems and more importantly, those who do not make them feel alienated in their own homeland. Even simple gestures such as smiles, handshakes or mere exchanges of greetings are truly appreciated by the local people. Intangible values such as those are often more cherished than hundreds-of-thousand-dollar projects without sincere efforts to reach them.



The officers and men of Garuda XXIII-A were also continually reminded to uphold the principles of impartiality and neutrality during the operations. We were also able to gradually diminish the concerns of the Israelis of our impartiality by demonstrating that our troops always behaved in a professional manner and adhere strictly to the Rules of Engagement (ROE) and Standard Operating Procedure (SOP). Security conditions in the area of responsibility assigned to us were well maintained. In efforts to establish good cooperation with

the LAF and other UNIFIL military contingents, joint patrols were conducted from time to time. These patrols were also invaluable in terms of confidence building between the men out there on the ground. Our officers also participated in joint events that would build and strengthen relationships with other fellow officers from other contingents. Sharing of personal experience among fellow military professionals also helped to bridge the cultural gap that exists between officers from different countries.

During our time in Lebanon, the Indonesian contingent also initiated a different approach with the new “smart-car” programs amongst its other Civilian Military Coordination (CIMIC) efforts. These cars are equipped with books, educational games, computers, and other audio-visual devices. The objective was to reach out to children to lessen the trauma arising from the violent conflict as well as to provide educational values in fun and enjoyable ways. These smart cars were regularly dispatched to various neighborhoods and received warm welcome and support from the children and their parents. Despite the relatively tight budget constraints, such efforts proved to be hugely successful in winning the hearts and minds of the local population.

CLOSING REMARKS

In closing, the challenges confronting the Indonesian Garuda XXIII-A contingent were certainly complex and multi-dimensional. With serious efforts and full commitment, we were able to accomplish the mission in lines with the objectives set out. We returned to our country bringing home invaluable lessons and knowledge which we now share with our fellow officers and men who have since then gone on to replace us in Lebanon. In many ways, we hope all of these would build up the TNI capacity, particularly in its preparation for participation in future peacekeeping operations. What I have shared with you tonight would also hopefully bring some fresh perspectives, which may bring about new ideas that may improve the efficiency of UN peacekeeping efforts in the future.

On behalf of my fellow TNI officers, I would like to say that I am honored to have served in a UN peacekeeping mission where I have gained priceless experience, professional and otherwise, and to have been

able to participate directly in our country's efforts to contribute to the maintenance of international peace and security.

I thank you.



" IN CARRYING OUT A PEACEKEEPING MISSION WHERE THE GRAND STRATEGY IS TO MAINTAIN PEACE AND ORDER BY PERSUADING ARMED PARTIES OR OTHER HOSTILE ELEMENTS TO BACK AWAY FROM AGGRESSIVE ACTIVITIES, **MILITARY STRENGTH IS NOT A DEFINITE MEASURE OF SUCCESS; NEITHER COULD MATERIAL CONTRIBUTION ALONE GUARANTEES THE "WINNING OF THE HEARTS AND MINDS" OF THE PEOPLE.** WHAT APPEARS TO BE IMPORTANT IS THE DAY-TO-DAY CONDUCT OF THE PEACEKEEPERS ON THE GROUND; THOSE WHO UPHOLD THE PRINCIPLES OF NEUTRALITY AND IMPARTIALITY, AS WELL AS THOSE WHO ARE ABLE TO CARRY ALL ASPECTS OF ITS OPERATIONAL DUTIES EXCEPTIONALLY. "

AGUS HARIMURTI YUDHOYONO

