



## WEST AFRICA SUB-REGIONAL CRISES AND THE NIGERIAN ARMY PEACE SUPPORT OPERATION IN SIERRA-LEONE

Dr. Muhammad Bello\* & Dr. Hussaini Tukur Hassan\*\*

\* Department of Political Science, Federal University Kashere, Gombe State, Nigeria.

\*\* Department of Public Administration, Nasarawa State University, Keffi,  
Nasarawa State, Nigeria.

### Abstract:

*The end of cold war between the super powers shifted conflicts based on ideologies to regional and local conflicts which were mostly ethnic, sectional, economic, environmental and religious based. More worrisome is the changing nature of conflicts from inter-state to intra-state. This paper examines Nigeria army (NA) participation in Peace Support Operation (PSO) in Africa with sierra-Leone as a case study. The study is necessary because despite Nigeria's experience in Peace Support Operations (PSO), the NA is for long bedevilled with problems of preparation, planning, training, logistics and the conduct of the PSO. The paper will determine the extent of Nigeria involvement in PSO and its implication on the nation's economy. The objectives of the study include; examining the relationship between Army and PSO, examining the roles played by the NA in the PSO in Sierra-Leone, identify the challenges encountered and proffer strategies to enhance NA's participation in future PSOs. Data for the study were collected from secondary sources. The major findings were the NA had ambiguous mandates; poor logistics, poor training and lack of adequate planning and preparations adversely affected its performance. The study recommended that to enhance future NA performance there is the need to ensure capacity building, defined policy on PSO, coordination and cooperation with the UN. Others are need for a national policy and PSO doctrine, provision of adequate intelligence gathering before troop's deployment to mission area and adequate funding and logistics.*

**Keywords:** Peace, Peace Support Operation, Peacemaking, Peace Enforcement & Peace Building.

### Introduction:

Nigeria has been actively participating in Peacekeeping (PK) operations since its first engagement in the United Nations Mission in Congo (UNMC) in 1960. In 1964, it participated in the first Bilateral Peacekeeping Mission in Tanganyika. Since the end of the Nigerian Civil War in 1970, the Nigerian Army (NA) had deployed to several places in Peace Support Operations (PSO) in line with its foreign policy objectives in assisting to resolve intractable conflicts (Nwolise O.B.C 2004). PSOs were restricted to peacekeeping (PK) and Peace Enforcement (PE) operations at the early stage. This later assumes a much wider dimension to include other peace related operations that were before now consigned to civilians agencies. In the past two decades, PSO have become increasingly complex and multi-dimensional in outlook involving the employment of both military and non-military actors (Onoja L.A 1998). Out of the 51 UN PSO, the NA has participated in 25, three under the Economic Community of West African State (ECOWAS) and three under the defunct OAU and the bilateral mission in 1964 in Tanganyika (Tanzania).

Some of the numerous PSOs missions Nigeria participated in Africa included OAU Mission in Chad (HARMONY I&II), Africa Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS). Others are Economic Community of West Africa Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) in Liberia

(ECOMOG I), ECOMOG in Sierra Leone (ECOMOG II) and a bilateral mission in Tanzania. The NA has cumulatively deployed more than 100,000 personnel globally since its maiden participation in Congo (ONUC) in 1960 (Oni S.K. 2002). Nigeria has equally contributed Force Commanders (FCs), Units/Contingents, Contingent Commanders (Con Com), staff officers like Chief Military Personnel Officers (CMPO), Chief Operation Officers (COO) and Military Observers (MILOBs). Thus, the NA has been a key player in PSOs in the quest for global peace.

In the recent past, Africa continent has been conflict spots which were mostly intra-state resulting in civil wars. The UN tried at resolving these conflicts but the tragedies of its operation in Somalia in 1992, where the US and other nations suffered losses, led to reluctance by the big powers in intervening in Africa conflicts, and consequently reduced the UN's role in conflict management in Africa. The effect was for Africa nations to resort to regional and sub-regional arrangement for conflict management. Therefore, the Economic Community of West Africa States (ECOWAS) established the ECOWAS Monitoring Groups (ECOMOG) in reaction to the human catastrophe that ensued in Liberia in 1989 and Sierra-Leone in 1991. (Oni S.K. 2002).

At its formative stage, the NA participated in the PSO in Sierra Leone under ECOWAS and this later transformed to UN responsibility. In line with the Nigerian foreign policy thrust of ensuring peace in the region, the NA was indeed an arrow head in the operation. In spite of the confrontation with hostile rebels occasioned with uncooperative attitude of some West Africa Nations, that perceived Nigeria's act as hegemonic and suspicious of her leadership role in the sub-region, Nigerian never relaxed its effort in ensuring peace in the region (Ogomudia A.O. 2007).

With the support gained from some countries, the NA restored peace and security in Liberia and Sierra-Leone respectively. Furthermore, the international community later support to Nigerian-led ECOMOG was an affirmation of the pursuit of peace and security in Sierra-Leone and the region at large.

The PSO in Sierra-Leone was conducted with a lot of challenges arising from lack of planning, ambiguous mandate, lack of adequate funds and inexperience in the conduct of highly complex PSO. The NA will continue to participate in PSOs, hence the need to articulate the challenges and proffer strategies for the efficient conduct of future PSO. This was the motivating factor for the study.

#### **Analyses of Conceptual Issues:**

War is a highly expensive enterprise with cultural, economic, environmental, social, political and military price. Equally, it involves opportunity cost because the funds spent on purchase of arms could have been use for provision of social amenities like health care services, education, water, roads, transportation, job creation, and housing for the teeming masses. Furthermore, each war ends up sowing the seeds for other wars. (Clausewitz 1968) posits 'in war the result is never final, the defeated state often considers the outcome as a transitory evil for which a remedy may still be sort at a later date. (Momah 1994) condemned war as 'the greatest tragedy to have ever befallen mankind because to win a war it must be fought not as we may wish but as we must. War in its totality is evil... it destroys, ruins, maims, changes boundaries, brutalizes the human psyche, wrecks the precious family togetherness and most regrettably, often sow the seeds of other wars'. It is this outrageous aspect of war that makes nations to establish the means to prevent, manage, and resolve issues that generated war if it inevitably breaks out. Peace Support Operation constitute one effective strategy adopted by mankind since the devastating Second World War 1939-

1945 to try and prevent war, manage it or resolved it and to carryout follow up activities in the post conflict society to avoid relapse to war, United Nations Charter Article 1 1945.

Peace is generally regarded as freedom from conflict, war, violence, hostilities and civil disturbances. Peace can be interpreted in two ways as negative or positive. In his work 'A Testament of Hope', Martin Luther King Jnr posits: genuine peace is not simply the nonexistence of mistrust, friction, hostility but it is the presence of justice. This assertion was aptly inferred when (Raymond A. 2002) affirmed peace is a state of more or less lasting suspension of rivalry between political group. Conversely, however positive peace is the absence of war, conflict or violence. It is that condition in which there is neither overt violence nor the more slightly phenomenon of underlying structural violence.

Peace Support Operations often includes peacekeeping, peace-making, peace-enforcement and peace building (Simbine 2004). The UN Charter (1990) defines a Peace Keeping operation as involving military personnel without enforcement powers, created by the organization to help maintain or restore peace in places of conflict. According to (Diehl 1993), peacekeeping is an international effort involving an operational component to promote the termination of armed conflict or the resolution of long standing disputes. Peacekeeping operation can be divided into two viz: observer missions and peacekeeping forces. Both operate under the same principles with slight differences, while the former are unarmed the latter are provided light defensive weapons for self defence. (Thakar 1994) defines peacemaking as the diplomatic activities conducted after the commencement of a conflict. It is aimed at establishing a ceasefire or a rapid peaceful settlement. Peace enforcement operations are coercive in nature and undertaken under chapter VII of the UN Charter when the consent of any of the major parties to the conflict is not mandatory.

They are designed to maintain and re-establish peace or enforce the terms specified in the mandate when peace has become nonexistent. (Akindele 1990) defines peace enforcement as the actual use of coerce force under the auspices of the UN to deal with a proven case of armed aggression. To (Thakar 1994), peace enforcement involves the use of force against one or more parties to a conflict in a war situation by a multinational force with or without their consent. Further, he stated that this is done to suppress and regulate conflict from manifesting in disruptive tendencies. (Harbottle 1996), defines peace-building as a process of socio-economic reconstruction, development and expansion in conflict scarred and deprived areas and among underprivileged people.

In appraising the role of the NA in PSO in Sierra-Leone we shall dwell on the background of the crisis in Sierra-Leone, appreciate the NA bilateral engagement, its role under ECOWAS and its transition from peacekeeping to peace enforcement, looked at the NA in PSO under UN in Sierra-Leone and humanitarian activities embarked upon by the NA contingent in Sierra-Leone.

#### **Nigeria Political and Diplomatic Engagement in PSO:**

Diplomacy is about the management of communication and relationships between nations by their accredited representatives, who are tasked to skilfully deal with other people on issues concerning peace agreement, negotiating trade agreement or top government functionaries visits. The idea of Nigeria diplomatic engagement to conflict riddled nations has been to a large extent the provision of a platform for parties involved in conflict to negotiate peace in Nigeria as standpoint for

PSO if conflict proves inevitable (Ogomudia A.O. 2007). Nigeria has contributed tremendously in human and material resources during the PSO in Sierra Leone. However, Nigeria continued participation in global, regional and sub-regional PSO has taken a toll in its financial and human resources and created a condition of doubt amongst Nigeria citizens who do not appreciate the dividends derived in such magnanimous involvement.

Politically however, Nigeria as a nation has unilaterally or multilaterally host conflict state to provide the belligerent nations or parties to a conflict a platform to meet and resolve their disagreement. In this wise, Nigeria has participated in over 50 percent of all UN PSOs globally. The significant of Nigeria political engagement is to enable the conflicting parties engaged themselves to fashion out political solutions to end conflict. When peace is achieved, security situation is improved, internally displaced persons and refugees are protected and strategic installations and infrastructures are secured.

#### **Background to the Sierra- Leonean Crisis:**

The civil unrest in Sierra-Leone lasted over nine years with its origins traced to the interaction of numerous factors. Some of the root causes responsible for the conflict include politically discriminating repressive policies, poor governance, containment of people's freedom, electoral violence and thug-gee, opportunism and greed for power and politically motivated killing precipitated the crisis. Socio-economically, the factors responsible for the crisis include economic decline, mass poverty and unemployment, corruption, indiscipline among all levels of society, nepotism, poor working conditions among public servants and ineffective government policies. The elites in the state are a source of conflict, often became too impatient and begin to agitate when they perceive they are denied greater proportions of the national cake, man exploiting man (Rodney, 2009 edition). The external factors that fuelled the crisis were the economic opportunism vested in Sierra-Leone diamond and other mineral resources and the ideological miscalculations of some nations like Libya, Burkina Faso and Liberia that supported the rebels in Sierra-Leone. These factors precipitated distractions which the opposition- Revolutionary United Front (RUF) and other several groups capitalized on to foment the crises (Oni S.K. 2002).

#### **Nigerian Army in PSO under the United Nations:**

Article 24 of the UN Charter places the responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security on the Security Council. While article 39 places the responsibility on the Security Council to determine the existence of any threat to peace, breach of peace or act of aggression and make recommendations or decide what measures shall be taken in accordance with Article 41 and 42 to maintain or to resolve international peace and security. It is from this provisions that the world body derives the powers to mount PSO globally. In addition, the UN Charter in Article 32 (1) made provision for nations to make regional arrangements for the maintenance of international peace and security in particular regions and sub-regions like Africa, Asia, Europe, South America, Southern Africa, etc. Furthermore, the provision that nothing in the charter precludes the existence of regional arrangements or agencies for dealing with such matters relating to the maintenance of international peace and security as are appropriate for regional action, provided that such arrangements or agencies and these activities are consistent with the purposes and principles of the UN.

Consequent upon the above, the UN Security Council (UNSC) established the United Nations Observer Mission in Sierra Leone (UNOMSIL) for an initial 6 months period in June 1998. Their mandate was to monitor the military and security situation in Sierra-Leonean and to coordinate with ECOMOG in addressing peace and security issues. A ceasefire agreement was signed in Lome, Togo based on dialogue and negotiation between the Sierra-Leone Government and RUF in May 1999. Highlight of the Lome agreement included monitoring, and verification within the Joint Ceasefire Monitoring Commission to be created throughout the country. Established road blocks and check points to check movement of arms and ammunition and assist in directing refugees and displaced persons, man entry points (Land, Sea and Air) in order to prevent illegal movement of arms and ammunition in or out of the country, conduct confidence building patrols to provide free movement of people and easy distribution of relief materials, to recover hidden arms. The agreement did not hold as hostilities continued. It is, instructive to note that lack of effective political structure was instrumental to the failure of the 1999 Ceasefire Agreement (Oni S.K.2002).

The introduction of democratic rule in Nigeria in 1999 led to a rethink of continuity of ECOMOG operation considering the enormous human and material resources expended by Nigeria. This reinforced (Ogomudia A.O. 2007) position that the lack of clear mission end statement and clear strategic objectives did not justify the human and material losses. Even though, by 1999, some Western countries had started lending support to ECOMOG, the need for the UN to assume control became obvious. This belated support arising from lack of cooperation and coordination was confirmed by (Bello 2007) who asserted that the enormous resources spent on ECOMOG were about \$1 Million per day. In line with this concern, and the UNSC having assessed the situation authorized the establishment of United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) on 22<sup>nd</sup> October, 1999 under UN Security Council Resolution 1270. The resolution authorized the deployment of a maximum of 6000 military personnel including 260 military observers. The number was reviewed upward to 17,500 to meet with the unforeseen development. The troops' contributing countries (TCC) include Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Zambia, thus, making UNAMSIL to meet the criteria of multilateralism in nation's contribution to PSO.

The Lome Peace Agreement of 7<sup>th</sup> July, 1999 and the Security Council Resolution 1270 of 22<sup>nd</sup> October 1999 were the two documents that established UNAMSIL. Empowered by Chapter VII of the UN chapter, UNAMSIL was mandated to take necessary actions to ensure security and freedom of movement of its personnel and within its capabilities and areas of deployment, give protection to civilians under threat of violence, taking into account the responsibilities of the Government of Sierra-Leone (GOSL). Thus, the UN endorsed the peace enforcement action in Sierra Leone.

#### **Nigerian Army Participation in PSO under ECOWAS:**

There has been the presence of Nigerian troops in Sierra-Leone. This was due to the fact that Nigerian and Guinea had military agreement with Sierra-Leone to be there. Nigeria troops provided security to the regime in its fight against the RUF onslaught. The NA became involved in the Sierra-Leone PSO under the (ECOWAS) in 1997 in response to the coup executed by Major Johnny Paul Koromah. In an attempt to restore the democratically elected government of President Ahmed Tejan Kabbah

to power, ECOWAS Foreign ministers had after several diplomatic political initiatives, recommend the formation of ECOMOG II in Sierra-Leone.

In 1999, the NA aided Kabbah's administration to foil a coup attempt that could have disrupted the democratic process and subsequently took over the responsibility of providing personal security to President Kabbah with about 900 troops (Bello 1999). The political structure under which ECOMOG was launched into Sierra-Leone was only the diplomatic assault by Nigeria to give legal backing to her presence in Sierra-Leone.

In adopting the decision to adjust the mandate of ECOMOG to meet the special circumstances of President Kabbah's ouster and the efforts to reinstate him ECOWAS fell back to the provisions of Lome agreement. This new mandate of ECOMOG in Sierra-Leone which was ambiguous had envisaged a complete disarmament within 60days and thus set no specific time-table for the withdrawal of ECOMOG. (Enghoro 1999) asserts that there appear to be no clear strategic objectives for the NA led ECOMOG operation in Sierra-Leone. He stated further that there was lack of effective planning and coordination between the strategic and operational levels, because of the fusion of political and military authority in a military regime. (Adoba 1999) posits that the absence of clear mandate blurred the difference between peacekeeping and peace enforcement. This resulted in the logistic and personnel problems that confronted ECOMOG operations.

#### **Challenges to the Nigerian Army in PSO in Sierra-Leone:**

The major challenges that confronted the NA were ambiguous mandate and inadequate knowledge of the terrain. The Nigerian Navy whose responsibility was sealift support to the PSO has limited tonnage capacity, unserviceable equipment for embarking and disembarking from the platform. The air force carried out close air support, air offensive, anti aircraft roles and tracking of the enemy radar location was also constraint with inexperience pilots and lack of training in weapon delivery system. Others include inadequate logistic and personnel, complications arising from uncoordinated command and control as well as leadership lapses. Lack of comprehensive information and intelligence constituted a formidable shortfall to NA peace support operation in general.

Detailed pre-mission briefing has been lacking in Nigeria's preparation for PSOs. Commanders and troops were not properly briefed on the causes of the conflict, the belligerents, the key players in the conflict, the politics, history and topography of the mission areas and Nigeria's interest. Operation El Sadai as coded was aimed to contain the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) coup d'etat of 26 May 1997. (Bamali. 2006) traced the failure of the operation to lack of information and intelligence. Troops were launched into PSO in Sierra-Leone without detailed knowledge of the situation. For instance the first ECOMOG troops in Sierra-Leone in 1997 discovered while on ground that the maps given to them were outdated.

There were difficulties in command and control because most of the units which participated in ECOMOG in Sierra-Leone consisted of officers and soldiers drawn from several units. In some cases commanding officers were posted to command a unit in the mission area without prior knowledge of the unit officers and soldiers. Resulting to lack of cohesion in the unit, that affects discipline, esprit-de-coups and troops performance. Another problem posed by other countries contingents was their refusal to take orders from ECOMOG high command, which was compounded by the lack of coordination and consultation amongst the Troops

Contributing Countries (TCC). In some cases TCCS take instructions from their home Government rather than from ECOMOG commander on the ground.

Logistics constraint, battle fatigue and inadequate training affected the performance of Nigeria troops in Sierra Leone. Some of these logistic problems include airlift and sealift capability, combat ration, specialist equipment, weapons, vehicles, medicals and communication equipment, armoured vehicles, command and control. Furthermore, Rules of Engagement and inadequacy of helicopters and finance were sources of concern that usually affects the fighting morale of troops. Consequently, the operations that often commenced well quickly bogged down due to lack of sufficient logistic supply. For example each Battalion to be launched into PSO was supposed to have a minimum of 15 trucks, but none have up to four trucks (Oni S.K 2002). The fire brigade approach of rushing troops to mission area without adequate logistics backup, soldiers lacking sleeping kits and were picked up from different units without basic equipment like tents, field kitchen beds and mattresses adversely affects NA professionalism in Sierra Leone.

The NA participation in PSO has been mostly traditional peacekeeping which she partake last in Yugoslavia under United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) as military observers. Thus, ECOMOG operation becomes a major challenge for the NA with more than a brigade participating in the mission area. Most of the troops were not trained in the new multi dimensional PSO hence, lacked the necessary skilled manpower and experience for such operations. This deficiency in training led to most causality in the mission area as Nigeria was believed to have lost over 500 personnel in the mission area alone.

Indiscipline also crept into the rank and file as most of them found the complex operation very strange and resorted to inappropriate act prejudicial to the image of the NA. It was alleged that most of the NA personnel were involved in the Diamond mining, sexual abuses and illegal escort of very important persons (VIP). The NA professional stand was questioned because of the display of such unprofessional tendencies by then Indian contingent.

The poor level of cooperation and coordination between the ECOWAS and UN hampered the quality of assistance in finance and logistic in the operation in Sierra-Leone. From Liberia when the RUF invasion threatened peace and security through an ad-hoc mandate arranged by a few ECOWAS countries led by Nigeria in an emergency meeting held in Gambia. Since the UN recognizes regional arrangements in PSO, such operations must however be approved by the UN. ECOMOG commenced operation in Sierra-Leone without approval of the UN. Thus, the US and international Community remained at the back stage until UNOMSIL was established later to monitor ECOMOG activities. This poor level of coordinator affected the assistance from the UN and international community. Hence Nigeria alone shouldered the burden of the PSO in Sierra-Leone.

The lack of national policy on Peace Support Operation adversely affected planning and deployment of the NA in PSOs. Besides, the NA engagement in PSO has been predicated on ad-hoc policies at the National Strategic level. The non existence of a clear and definite policy on the preparation, entry and exit strategies and identification of the national interest, amongst others have been a major problem in Nigeria's Armed Forces participation in PSOs.

#### **Strategies for enhancing the Nigerian Army Participation in Future PSO:**

The lack of adequate information and intelligence adversely affected ECOMOG operations in Sierra-Leone. There is the need for the Nigerian government to develop

an appropriate information intelligence gathering mechanism where its national interests lied, especially in the West African Sub-region. This mechanism could include the adequate and appropriate staffing of the country's foreign missions so as to provide all relevant information/intelligence of their host countries. Nigeria could also exploits space technology taking an advantage of the recently launched Satellite NIGCOMSAT, Surveillance aircraft, Naval platforms and special forces for information gathering.

Future operational environment is complex and technologically based. The NA would require adequate equipment to cope with modern battle environment. Logistics planning and prompts provisioning is an essential strategy for meeting this challenge. Nigeria could engage the service of notable specialist private company to provide the logistics requirement for PSO.

Nigeria needs a clearly defined policy for troops participating in PSO taking into consideration strategic interest and capabilities. This policy will state clearly the mandate for PSO and in which capacity it will be participating. The participation could be either as a full TCC, medical or logistic support teams. Nigeria could also through the policy determine whether to participate only in peacekeeping, peace enforcement or peace building operations. For instance, Jordan does not participate in peace enforcement operations. In the same vein, Nigeria can also decide whether or not to base her participation in PSO on political or economic interest. This defined policy would streamline Nigeria's participation in various PSOs and afford her better participation.

The ECOMOG operation in Sierra-Leone was continually beset with financial difficulties throughout the duration of the mission. Each TCC bore the financial burden for her contingent as Western and UN assistance was slow in coming. There is need for adequate cooperation and co-ordination with the UN to forestall such shortfall in future operations. To attract the support of the UN, PSO could be conducted under the auspices of regional arrangements such as ECOWAS and AU. There is the need for Nigeria government to pursue the establishment within the ECOWAS and AU framework a political and security structure for PSO like the ECOWAS and AU standby forces. This will become the basis for subsequent sub-regional peacekeeping thus reducing the colossal financial burden.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations:**

#### **Conclusions:**

The NA has participated in various PSOs globally, continentally, regionally and in the sub-region. Apart from the contributions of Nigeria to international peace and security through PSOs, in the diplomatic and political arena it has made significant inputs worth noting in line with its foreign policy objectives and her commitment to the UN in the maintenance of international peace and security. The NA participated in these operations under the platforms of the UN, AU and ECOWAS and on bilateral basis.

The study revealed that in all these PSOs, the NA was largely ill prepared and lacked adequate PSO training especially the multi-dimensional complex PSOs. In most cases, the NA contingents could not meet the Contingent Own Equipment (COE) standards as stipulated in the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and thus lost out in the reimbursement by the UN. In the case of Sierra-Leone, the NA faced many challenges which include lack of detailed information and intelligence, difficulties in command and control, inadequate training. Others are poor level of co-operational and coordinator and lack of contingency and exit plan strategy. It was largely believed

that Nigerian spent \$1 million daily for the conduct of the operation against domestic operative.

In spite of these challenges the paper noted the high point of the NA led ECOMOG performance in Sierra-Leone which was the restoration of President Tejan Kabbah who was over thrown by a military junta. In addition, the NA participated actively in the multi-dimensional PSOs which included peacekeeping, peace enforcement, peace building. Preventive peace, forces deployment and humanitarian activities were also carried out under the platform of bilateral arrangement. Other activities include developing information and intelligence mechanism, good logistic, defined policy on PSO.

**Recommendations:**

- a. There is the need for the Nigerian government to develop an appropriate information intelligence gathering mechanism where its national interests lied, especially in the West African Sub-region.
- b. The mechanism could include the adequate and appropriate staffing of the country's foreign missions so as to provide all relevant information/intelligence of their host countries.
- c. Nigeria could also exploits space technology taking an advantage of the recently launched Satellite NIGCOMSAT, Surveillance aircraft, Naval platforms and special forces for information gathering.
- d. The NA would require adequate equipment to cope with modern battle environment. Logistics planning and prompts provisioning is an essential strategy for meeting this challenge.
- e. Notable specialist private companies should be engaged to provide the logistics requirement for PSO.
- f. There is the need for Nigeria to have a clearly defined policy for troops participating in PSO taking into consideration strategic interest and capabilities.
- g. The policy should clearly state the mandate for PSO and in which capacity it will be participating.
- h. The MOD should activate intelligence gathering mechanism through satellite Imaginary Systems and the defence attached to provide adequate information/intelligence for troops before moving to mission areas.

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