

# CONFERENCE REPORT

## THE IAPTC THIRD ANNUAL MEETING MALTA APRIL 25-26 1997

FOUNDATION FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

*The Role of Regional and Sub-Regional Organisations in International Peacekeeping* was the selected theme of the Third Annual Meeting of the International Association of Peacekeeping Training Centres.

The meeting, which was organised by the Peace and Conflict Studies Programme of the Institute of International Affairs, Foundation for International Studies, in collaboration with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Malta and the Armed Forces of Malta, was held on the premise that the changing context of peacekeeping operations must be catered for at training level.

Training centres were part of the general debate on the development of international peacekeeping, with its new emphasis on regional organisations.

The meeting was divided into two workshops.

### Workshop 1

This workshop identified and summarised for UN consideration the responsibilities, functions and capabilities which a regional/sub-regional organisation should possess.

The end of the Cold War system has lifted the lid off several

small scale yet intensive conflicts with a great potential for regional destabilisation. Many of these 'new' conflicts rest on old historical and cultural fault-lines which exist within the state structure rather than outside it. These complex and unpredictable conflicts demand international intervention if regional stability is to be maintained or restored. However, when the international community turned with considerable hope to the UN to provide an adequate response to these new crises, it found an organisation more willing than capable to respond.

Two schools of thought have emerged on mechanisms to prevent and resolve these regional conflicts. One school proposes the interposition intervention forces must come from outside the region to eliminate potential regional and cultural bias.

The other school of thought presupposes that effectively organised, equipped and staffed regional organisations are best disposed to resolve regional issues. Many political, diplomatic, legal, financial and military interoperability challenges influence both courses of action.

Participants discussed how regional organisations could facilitate effectively the organisation, training, deployment and support of a regional peacekeeping mission (from United Nations Military Observers (UNMO's) through to troop contingents).

It also sharpened understanding of realistic expectations for interaction between international and regional organisations whether peacekeepers are mobilised from within or outside a region afflicted with intra as well as interstate conflict.

## **Workshop 2**

The second workshop reviewed and validated the key elements of UNMO training proposed by the United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations.

For over 40 years, UNMOs have been a cornerstone in the United Nations mission to facilitate the peaceful settlement of disputes within and between countries. Representing the entire international community, UNMO teams have successfully observed, monitored, assisted in registration and negotiated fragile truces and ceasefire agreements in all corners of the world. Relying heavily upon their keen professional military skills, UNMOs must rapidly adjust to the unique tasks of their mission area. This adjustment demands selection of mature, culturally sensitive, mentally and physically fit, and militarily competent officers.

The elements discussed in the meeting were: UNMO selection criteria, predeployment education and training programme, and in-theatre training programme outline as the survival and success of an UNMO relies not only on an individual's competence, but also on the professional skills of fellow members of an UNMO team.

A recent survey indicates that about 30% of UNMOs arrive in a mission area incapable of effectively executing UNMO tasks. This proficiency gap not only risks success of the mandate, but survival of the UNMOs individually and as a team. While the DPKO recently published an UNMO Handbook and proposed UNMO training curriculum, UNMO training centres should agree on common UNMO selection and training programmes. During October-December 1996, senior representatives from many of the UNMO training centres worked with DPKO to refine UNMO selection and education aims.

The final proviso of the UNMOs manual discussed in the Malta meeting will be approved in Carlisle in June 1997.

Enquiries on the meeting may be made to  
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