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The above-mentioned factors put multiple challenges before BAF in carrying out smooth operations in mission areas. I shall discuss some of the challenges faced by BAF in mission areas:

a. Increasing Cost: Due to the increasing cost of the aviation materials and the maintenance, flying in support of peacekeeping operation under existing LOA is becoming difficult day-by-day.

b. Global Recession vis-à-vis Imbalance in reimbursement: Due to the prevailing global recession, financial donors are forced to cut the expenditures of the undergoing peacekeeping operations. As such, the task of maintaining forces in the mission areas is gradually becoming unbearable for the Troop Contributing Countries.

c. Interest of Developed Countries: Developed nations are showing their increased interest to get involved in the peacekeeping operations in the mineral-rich African countries. On the other hand, Bangladesh is purely involved in maintaining peace in the war-devastated countries of Africa/Middle East. This conflict of interest at times creates problem for getting a better deal in favor of Bangladesh.

d. Inadequate Maintenance Facilities: In our country, the maintenance of aircraft is carried out in 'Three Line' concept, i.e. 1st, 2nd and 3rd line maintenance. But in mission areas, we can only provide full-scale 1st line, limited scale 2nd line and no 3rd line maintenance work at all.

e. Difficulties in Logistic Support: As the mission areas are located very far from Bangladesh, and usually at remote places in the countries where deployed, it is very difficult to provide required amount of logistic and maintenance support for effective flying operations. The shipment

of spare parts and other equipment, in most of the cases, don't reach in time.

f. Adverse Environment: Tough Terrain, unfriendly environment, isolated locations, and inadequate airfield facilities add up to the already existing multiple challenges in operational flying in a Mission area. Most of the runways are rough, short and unpaved, very difficult for the operations of fixed-wing aircraft.

g. Hostile Situation: In mission areas, the absence of gunship defense coverage, BAF aircraft have to land in many unknown locations under hostile situations. As such, the risk factor for men and materials remains very high.

FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES

Technology can complement human initiative while establishing peace in a war-ravaged country. Responsibility to Protect (R2P) also demands quick reaction capabilities for forces deployed in mission areas. Being highly technology-oriented, the Air force is best suited for these types of task.

Increasing Demand for Aviation Equipment: Aviation is the main preference of the commanders in any UN Peacekeeping Ops. The outstanding image of BAF has increased the confidence of the UN commanders on the Ops capability of BAF personnel and operators. Hence, UN expects BAF to contribute more air assets to augment their operational capability. Taking this as an advantage, BAF may plan to procure assets that are best suited to the needs of UN. This in turn would keep the continued high standard of BAF personnel and the assets as well.

Job Opportunities: With the increase in the involvement in UN Peacekeeping Operations, it is necessary to have our own people working at various levels at UN to ease up the coordination. BAF has a greater

opportunity to ask for the employment of more personnel to work with UN at different professional levels including UNHQ, both for serving and retired personnel.

Gaining Experience in real time environment: BAF Pilots and other support personnel are trained at home in peacetime and they have limited opportunities to have real time operational exposure. UN mission has opened up the door of opportunity for them to be trained as well as be experienced in real time operations.

Exploitation of BAF Capabilities: BAF is now quite experienced in the management and handling of disaster relief operations, relief work, post-disaster rebuilding operations. These capabilities may be exploited in UN arena for assisting in the disaster relief operations under UN mandate.

OPTIONS FOR BAF

For the effective participation and operations in UN peacekeeping operations, BAF may continue to address the followings:

- BAF should ensure that mission assessment be carried out as critically as possible to ascertain every possible crisis BAF may have to face.
- BAF needs to prioritize the phase of deployment so that the assessment of the situation on the ground is done pragmatically, and the people and equipment are well-acclimatized before actual operation starts.
- Pre-deployment training should be so devised that actual conditions of the deployed environment is replicated and the people and equipment are exposed to the environment similar to that of the future deployment area.
- Bangladesh being a top troops contributing country (TCC), BAF needs to pursue the objective of appropriate

representation in the UN HQ for smooth coordination in mission areas.

- BAF must negotiate the issue of reimbursement for both personnel and COE with the UN through appropriate authorities.

- The complex, multi-functional character of BAF operations requires greater co-operation between the military, political authorities, NGOs, media and other contingents, and BAF must be appropriately trained to handle that.

CONCLUSION

The UN Peacekeeping Missions are established with a noble cause. Soldiers and equipment are sent to the areas of conflict not to intensify the conflict but to nullify them and promote peace. The international diplomacy of the UN has helped to make the world a civilized and better place to live. However, in maintaining world peace, the UN will need to negotiate and coordinate not only with the involved member states, but also with other international organizations as well as transnational and domestic actors.

Bangladesh Air Force has earned a very good reputation in the UN arena by displaying highly professional attitude, strict discipline, hard work and devotion to peacekeeping operations. However, BAF faces a number of difficulties in operating and maintaining its forces in mission areas. BAF needs to pursue appropriate authorities at various levels to overcome these difficulties. In the future, with the change of geo-political situation, there might be increased need of UN missions and BAF needs to be always ready to undertake any such missions with the fullest of its competence.

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