

Contingent-owned equipment and weapons and ammunition management: the Uruguayan experience

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Introduction

In fulfilment of relevant peacekeeping mandates, UNDPKO requires contributing countries to deploy their personnel, equipment, and logistical support on the ground. This is facilitated by an MoU, which is an agreement between the UN and a member state to establish the administrative, logistical, and financial terms and conditions governing the contribution of personnel, equipment, and services provided in support of PSOs. It also details the UN's standards of conduct for personnel provided by the contributing government.

As a nation state, Uruguay has been involved in PSOs since before the existence of the UN. Its involvement in the Chaco War between Paraguay and Bolivia in the 1930s is just one example (see Annexe 1). Once the Second World War ended and the UN—of which Uruguay is a founding member—was established, the country immediately began to actively participate in PSOs.

This paper covers two main topics:

- the role of COE/MoU management review boards (CMMRBs); and
- Uruguay's participation in and contribution to PSOs.

COE/MoU management review boards

Most PSOs have CMMRBs in place to oversee the implementation of a mission's COE programme and to ensure that the MoU remains aligned with the requirements of the mission.

A CMMRB comprises senior representatives of the mission's military, police, and mission support components. Some of its main responsibilities are the following:

- to review the the contingents' and mission's compliance with the terms of the relevant MoU;
- to review adherence to the established COE verification and reporting procedures (and mission SOPs) for COE;
- to identify the optimal utilization of military, police, and civilian resources in support of the mission, and to review and recommend cost-effective support measures;

- to review the results of operational readiness inspections; analyse shortfalls, surpluses, and deficiencies; and recommend appropriate remedial actions;
- to recommend amendments to the relevant MoU resulting from changes in operational and logistical support requirements and contingent performance, including reinforcements, the repatriation of surplus equipment, and the transfer of responsibilities to ensure self-sustainment;
- to review mission-specific requirements, standards, and scales of issues concerning facilities, equipment, and supplies associated with self-sustainment categories such as accommodation, communications, observation, and identification; and
- to review requirements and solutions for the disposal of COE in a mission area as an alternative to repatriation when a contingent leaves the mission area (UNDPKO, n.d.).

UNDPKO and UNDFS receive CMMRB reports and take action based on the reports' findings and recommendations. This may involve making contact and coordinating with permanent missions to resolve surpluses and deficiencies in major equipment, or other issues related to the provision of self-sustainment services and logistical support or operational capabilities.

Verification and control procedures are based on various types of inspections:

- **Arrival inspection.** The arrival inspection should take place immediately on a contingent's arrival in the mission area and should be completed within a month. If contingent equipment and personnel are already in the mission area when the MoU is concluded, the first inspection occurs on a date jointly determined by the mission and contingent authorities, and should be completed within a month of that date.
- **Operational readiness inspection.** An operational readiness inspection must be carried out at least once in every six-month period of a unit's deployment in a mission area, and whenever the mission believes that equipment or services do not meet the required standards. The unit's major equipment and self-sustainment capacity are inspected in order to assess whether the relevant capabilities are sufficient and satisfactory.
- **Repatriation inspection.** The repatriation inspection should assess all the major equipment belonging to the TCC/PCC that is to be repatriated and should verify the status of the major equipment provided under a 'dry lease' arrangement. The inspection should also ensure that no UN-owned equipment is repatriated to the TCC/PCC.

- **Other verifications or inspections.** Other verifications or inspections that the head of mission or UN headquarters consider to be necessary may also be carried out (UNGA, 2017, ch. 2, para. 24).

The main purpose of inspections is to ‘verify that the terms and conditions of the memorandum of understanding have been met, and to take corrective action when required’ (UNGA, 2017, ch. 2, para. 25). At every stage of a mission, ‘time and human resources are short, and excessive time cannot be spent beyond that required to determine that the minimum requirements have been met by the troop/police contributor or the United Nations in each area’ (UNGA, 2017, ch. 2, para. 25).

Uruguay’s participation in and contribution to PSOs

Overview of Uruguay’s participation in PSOs

Uruguay’s contribution to PSOs dates back to the very beginning of such operations. This participation has developed based on the principles enshrined in the country’s foreign policy. These are the following:

- non-interventionism;
- the peaceful resolution of disputes;
- the free determination of people and equal rights; and
- cooperation among states, in accordance with the UN Charter.

Uruguay engages in various PSOs through its contingents, military observers, staff officers, police, and civilian personnel. Table 1 provides a list of current missions. (For a list of completed missions, see Annexe 1.)

Table 1 Uruguay’s ongoing PSOs

Start date	Mission	Country
1952	UNMOGIP	India–Pakistan
1982	MFO	Egypt
1993	UNHQ	UN headquarters
2010	MONUSCO	DRC
2016	UNMC/UNVMC	Colombia

Throughout the history of its PSO contributions, Uruguay has deployed almost 50,000 members of its army, navy, air force, and police force, in addition to civilians. In total, 35 of these personnel have died in the line of duty.

A total of 75 per cent of officers and 66 per cent of NCOs have participated at least once in a PSO. Some have participated in two or three missions, while others have been deployed more than ten times.

Uruguay's experience of COE losses in PSOs

On several occasions Uruguayan soldiers have had to face hostile forces during PSOs. In general, equipment losses have been minimal or non-existent, but there have been some exceptions. One of the most significant cases occurred in December 2006 during an operation in urban terrain in Haiti, as part of a multinational task force that included URUBAT APCs. Hostile forces had ambushed the task force, leading to combat, during which the Uruguayan APCs were fired on repeatedly. One APC was immobilized and due to the firepower of the attacking forces, the company commander determined that it was impossible to rescue it, deciding instead to preserve the lives of the personnel inside.

An extraction operation was successfully carried out to remove the soldiers in the vehicle without any loss of life. Although the APC was lost, in addition to two machine guns and a sniper's rifle, the materiel was recovered the next day in a follow-up operation.

Development of Uruguay's COE management policies and procedures

Just as COE procedures and controls have evolved, training in Uruguay and procedures in the field have also done so. The author of this paper was a COE inspector in 2005–06, for example. At that time the focus was concentrated on collective armament (such as machine guns, mortars, grenade launchers, and anti-tank armament), while individual armament and any kind of ammunition were only superficially controlled. A few years later this changed when an ATO was added to the inspection personnel, who began to monitor the state of contingents' ammunition.

Leadership, discipline, attitudes, policies, and procedures

Although it is not appropriate to suggest that the leadership system and the way in which discipline is handled in Uruguay can be projected to other countries, this paper briefly explains the importance attached to these areas in our country.

From the moment a person in a leadership position enters the army, whether as an officer or an NCO, the first thing that is inculcated is the need to care for weapons and ammunition. This is approached from both a positive viewpoint (involving positive assessments for good care) and a negative one (the imposition of severe sanctions for a lack of care). This focus continues as each person progresses in their career and takes on new responsibilities. The first priority for any platoon leader, company commander, or battalion commander is always weapons and their ammunition.

Controls are conducted before, during, and after operations. Each unit has routine weekly and monthly inspections. In addition, an office in the Ordnance Service (which is part of the army) conducts inspections. In practice, the military justice system always deals with the loss of arms and ammunition, whether it occurs on national territory or abroad.

As the above illustrates, the focus on discipline and inspections begins on national territory and is then transferred to PSOs. It is worth highlighting the case of MONUSCO where, in the absence of SOPs for the control of weapons and ammunition, a Uruguayan officer who held the position of G-4 (a logistics officer) produced SOPs in line with national practice in Uruguay.

Finally, experience serves to reinforce good practice. As a result of the number of missions, which are often to the same PSO, each time a contingent is deployed sergeants, lieutenants, and captains are able to draw on their experiences in Uruguay itself, as well as in Haiti, the DRC, and other arenas.

How Uruguayans are trained in good COE practice

Over time Uruguay has developed and perfected its pre-deployment training procedures, which are implemented at different times and levels. As mentioned above, emphasis is routinely placed on reinforcing the importance of good practice in the care of weapons and ammunition.

Relevant instruction is provided in the following sequence:



ENOPU participates at the first stage, as part of which staff officers who have most recently returned from deployment to a mission communicate the latest information from the field to the members of the contingent that is about to be deployed. Additionally, logistics courses are provided for relevant personnel in PSOs.

To conclude, the maintenance of good practice in arms and ammunition management is reinforced by the following three factors:

- **Constant care.** Care of weapons and ammunition is emphasized as being crucial, even before contingents' participation in PSOs.
- **Regular inspection and reporting.** Company, brigade, battalion, and divisional commanders are required to send weekly and monthly reports in addition to ad hoc reports after operations.
- **Dissemination of knowledge.** Knowledge of how to care for weapons and ammunition is reinforced by the large number of personnel involved in PSOs who become 'knowledge multipliers' when they return.

Gaps in practice or training in COE management that could be improved on

Despite efforts to keep up to date, there are always margins of error when contingents are operating in conflict-affected areas in compliance with robust mandates and with a requirement to enter into combat to protect civilians. More robust mandates often lead to a greater probability of confrontations, which, in turn, often lead to a greater chance of losing equipment. In order to stem these losses, the controls and verification measures described above will always be necessary, at all levels of command.

Another problem that occurs is the deterioration of ammunition due to the climatic conditions of the operational area. The expiry date for ammunition reduces in environments of high humidity and heat, for example. Transporting ammunition, in particular, can be a challenge. It is important to make ammunition replacement forecasts well in advance due to the complicated and restrictive standards required by the International Air Transport Association (IATA) when ammunition is transported by air. Local authorities also generally make the transportation of ammunition more complex due to their lack of collaboration with missions.

Conclusion

- The verification and control of weapons and ammunition is a constant activity; in Uruguay it is practised from entry into military service throughout each soldier's entire career and among all ranks.
- Keeping up to date with the requirements of the COE and ATO not only allows personnel to adapt to UN requirements, but also improves efficiency.
- Beyond normal military training, regardless of their rank, and before being deployed, personnel should receive additional, specialized training (such as a course on logistics in PSOs, including on IATA standards).
- Training is enhanced when instructors are staff officers who have returned from a mission and have direct experience of the issues being discussed.
- Arrangements for ammunition resupply must be made well ahead of time, due to the difficulty of transporting dangerous cargoes and having to obey the host country's customs regulations.

References

- ENOPU (National Peace Operations Training Institute of Uruguay). n.d. 'Fulfilled Missions.'
- UNDPKO (United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations). n.d. 'Deployment and Reimbursement.'

UNGA (United Nations General Assembly). 2017. *Manual on Policies and Procedures concerning the Reimbursement and Control of Contingent-Owned Equipment of Troop/Police Contributors Participating in Peacekeeping Missions*. A/72/288 of 4 August.

Annexe 1 PSOs in which Uruguayan personnel have served, 1930–2017

Start and end dates		Mission	Country
2004	2017	ONUCI	Côte d'Ivoire
2004	2017	MINUSTAH	Haiti
2013	2015	MINUSMA	Mali
2009	2010	MINURCAT	Central African Republic
2007	2011	UNMIN	Nepal
2006	2012	UNMIT	East Timor
2005	2008	UNMISS	Sudan
2004	2006	UNFICYP	Cyprus
2004	2006	ONUB	Burundi
2003	2011	UNAMA	Afghanistan
2003	2004	MINUCI	Côte d'Ivoire
2003	2015	UNMIL	Liberia
2002	2005	UNMISSET	East Timor
2000	2008	UNMEE	Ethiopia–Eritrea
1999	2005	UNAMSIL	Sierra Leone
1999	2004	UNTAET	East Timor
1999	2010	MONUC	DRC
1998	1999	UNOMSIL	Sierra Leone
1997	1999	MONUA	Angola
1995	2002	MINUGUA	Guatemala
1995	1997	UNAVEM III	Angola
1994	2006	UNOMIG	Georgia
1994	2008	MINURSO	Western Sahara
1994	2000	UNMOT	Tajikistan

1993	1996	UNAMIR	Rwanda
1993	1997	UNOMIL	Liberia
1992	1994	ONUMOZ	Mozambique
1992	2003	UNIKOM	Iraq–Kuwait
1992	1993	UNTAC	Cambodia
1991	1993	MIDERMIN	Honduras–Nicaragua
1988	1991	UNIIMOG	Iran–Iraq
1988	1988	MARMIN	Honduras–Nicaragua
1935	1937	Military Commission	Bolivia–Paraguay
1930	1930	Military Commission	Bolivia–Paraguay

Source: ENOPU (n.d.)