Effective peacekeeping requires the proactive acquisition and prudent analysis of information about conditions within the mission area. This is especially true if the operation is conducted in a hazardous and unpredictable environment and the lives of peacekeepers are threatened, as was the case with the UN operation in the Congo (ONUC). A Military Information Branch (MIB) was established as part of ONUC to enhance the security of UN personnel, to support specific operations, to warn of outbreaks of conflict and to estimate outside interference (for example, the importation of armaments). The MIB employed signals intelligence using a wireless message interception system, photographic intelligence using airplanes equipped for the purpose, and human intelligence from lawful interrogations of prisoners and informants. A detailed description of the activities of the MIB is provided here for the first time, using newly uncovered archival files. The study points to some of the difficulties and benefits of developing dedicated intelligence-gathering bodies.

We are fully aware of your long-standing limitations in gathering information. The limitations are inherent in the very nature of the United Nations and therefore of any operation conducted by it. Secretary-General U Thant to Lt-Gen. Kebbede Guebre, the Commander of the UN Operation in the Congo, 24 September 1962 (Code Cable #6780)

The United Nations has always been sensitive about the issue of intelligence gathering. UN officials fear that Member States, many of whom possess their own powerful and established intelligence networks, would accuse the UN of violating national sovereignty if discovered probing into their affairs without invitation. They also fear that the UN's integrity would be compromised if it were discovered to be engaged in intelligence activities, since some habitually employed intelligence techniques, such as theft, eavesdropping, surveillance and bribery, are often sinister elements of the international conflicts that the UN is committed to resolving.

Such reasoning doubtlessly underlay Secretary-General Hammarskjöld's refusal in 1960 to support the establishment of a permanent UN intelligence agency and his conviction that the UN 'must
have clean hands'. Similarly U Thant was vigilant about maintaining strict limits on the scope of information gathering. That the UN today lacks a formal intelligence body shows that such views continue to prevail.

The UN's opposition to founding an intelligence network also carries over to resistance to the establishment of intelligence operations in its peacekeeping missions. Out of necessity, however, the UN has embraced at least some intelligence-gathering techniques and, on occasion, has established dedicated intelligence bodies. This paper describes the first such organization set up by the UN: the Military Information Branch of the UN Operation in the Congo (ONUC). This early attempt at intelligence gathering demonstrates both the benefits and problems of such bodies.

The ONUC Precedent

While the UN's experience in the Congo (now Zaire) has been the subject of numerous memoirs and academic works, no study has ever been devoted to ONUC's extensive intelligence operations. The fact that the UN possessed an advanced intelligence component in the Congo is not known, even to many who have studied the operation in detail. This case history merits attention, considering that the most recent peacekeeping operations are facing similar challenges as ONUC, including the need for intelligence gathering.

ONUC foreshadowed the current direction of peacekeeping operations in many ways. It was a large and complex operation, numbering about twenty thousand personnel at its peak, the largest peacekeeping operation prior to the end of the Cold War. Two hundred and thirty-four ONUC personnel perished in the Congo, the highest number of fatalities of any UN peacekeeping operation. ONUC's mandate not only covered traditional peacekeeping between belligerents, such as interposition between hostile parties and the maintenance of neutral zones, but it also included elements of policing, disarmament and enforcement. ONUC provided security for technical aid personnel, senior Congolese officials, refugees (including 30,000 Balubas in one camp) and for important installations, including major airports and certain mines. It had responsibilities for restoring law and order, preventing civil war, training Congolese security forces, and ultimately, for securing the withdrawal of foreign mercenaries, by force if necessary. In its campaign against Katangese mercenary forces, ONUC carried out air attacks, the only UN peacekeeping operation to do so to date. Lastly, the problems that attended UN efforts in the Congo — especially the absence of central government and the frequent hostility of various factions towards the UN — seem to presage the difficulties which the UN has encountered in Somalia and the former Yugoslavia.
Background

The Congo was left totally unprepared for its independence from Belgium on 30 June 1960. Even on the eve of independence, Africans were excluded from government administration and from the officer corps of the Force Publique (the predecessor to the Congolese National Army or ANC). The latter difficulty sparked a series of mutinies by Congolese soldiers beginning on 5 July. In an effort to protect European residents, Belgium deployed its troops in the Congo, in contravention of the Treaty of Friendship, which was supposed to form the basis for post-independence relations between the two countries. The Belgian action led the Congolese government to appeal to the UN Secretary-General for military assistance. Fearing superpower intervention if the request went ignored, Hammarskjöld obtained Security Council approval on 14 July 1960 to send such a force, which became known as ONUC.

The mutinies not only destabilized the political system and precipitated lawlessness, but they also represented the catalyst for the secession of Katanga province. Immediately following the mutinies, the government of Katanga - the mineral-rich province of the south - became frustrated over the poor prospects for settling its political and economic claims with the central government. Katangese independence, proclaimed on 11 July by Katangese President Moïse Tshombé, was not formally sanctioned by the Belgian government but was nevertheless supported by Belgium through military aid and by Belgian mining interests eager to retain control of the province’s mining industry. In addition to supplying armaments, Belgium also assisted Katanga in the recruitment of European mercenaries for the latter’s army. Katangese secession relied on approximately 500 well-trained and disciplined foreign mercenaries for leadership of its army (the Gendarmerie) of under ten thousand. A constitutional crisis emerged in early September after President Joseph Kasavubu dismissed Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba, who refused to step down and attempted to flee to Stanleyville where his deputy Antoine Gizenga had established a rival regime. When, in August 1960, the Baluba of South Kasai also proclaimed independence, the country was divided into four camps. Into this quagmire the UN found itself thrust under the dynamic and ambitious leadership of Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld, who lost his life in a plane crash on 17 September 1961 while on his way to meet with the Katangese leader. His successor, U Thant, led the Operation out of its impasse and brought stability to the country before finally overseeing the withdrawal of UN forces. The last UN peacekeepers left the Congo on 30 June 1964.
Uncertain Mandate for Intelligence Gathering

In the initial period of ONUC's existence an ideological fray developed between the Force's military and civilian leadership. The source of this friction was ambivalence over ONUC's role, including the role of intelligence gathering within the operation. The military elements were accustomed to military operations in which organized intelligence gathering was an accepted practice. They were critical of the lack of any comparable structures in ONUC and were concerned about the threat that this posed to ONUC personnel. The civilian leadership justified the absence of an intelligence system on the grounds that ONUC military forces were mandated to perform a strictly peacekeeping and training role. Hammarskjöld stated at an early meeting of the Congo Advisory Committee that ONUC could not afford to engage in secretive practices habitually associated with intelligence services, even though he admitted that the lack of an intelligence network was a serious handicap for the operation. According to military leaders, principles of war and basic tactical conceptions were deliberately ignored by ONUC's civilian leadership in the control and deployment of the Force. Thus, despite the demands of ONUC's first Force Commander, Major-General Carl von Horn of Sweden, who urged at the end of 1960 'the setting up of an information gathering and processing agency' in addition to an enormous increase in ONUC personnel and firepower, the absence of an organized intelligence system in ONUC's structure persisted for over a half year into its mission.

Creation of the Military 'Information' Branch

Two months of relative calm after ONUC's deployment were followed by a rapid decline in the political situation in the Congo. Civil war erupted in North Katanga and South Kasai, with the central government — the artificiality of its authority growing apparent — powerless to act. The 'Congo crisis' reached its climax after the death of Lumumba in February 1961, at which time ONUC's mandate was transformed to include an enforcement dimension to take 'all appropriate measures to prevent the occurrence of civil war...including...the use of force, if necessary, in the last resort'. It was at this stage, when ONUC acquired a more ambitious mandate, that the need for an intelligence structure was accepted by ONUC's civilian leadership and an intelligence organization was established. It was particularly important since none of the countries with embassies and intelligence officials in the Congo were willing to supply intelligence, even though many of them supported the operation in principle and voted for it in the Security Council. If the UN was to obtain any information on
sensitive political and security matters in the Congo, it would have to be through their own intelligence apparatus.

As a reflection of the UN's mindfulness of the shady connotations stemming from the term 'intelligence', ONUC's intelligence operation was known euphemistically as the 'Military Information Branch'. Memos were circulated requesting that the Branch be alluded to in ONUC correspondence as the 'Information' Branch as opposed to 'Intelligence' Branch. Force Commander von Horn suggested that the latter term was 'banned' outright from the UN lexicon. The reality is that the term persisted to an extent throughout the operation: Lts-Col. Bjorn Egge and N. Borchgrevink, the first Chiefs of Military Information, addressed themselves using the title 'Chief of Military Intelligence'; and documents were occasionally labelled as being produced by the 'Military Intelligence Branch'.

The Role of the Military Information Branch

The Military Information Branch (MIB) was established in order to accumulate and collate information, evaluate it, and disseminate intelligence. Its duty was to provide intelligence for four purposes:

1. **Enhanced Security of UN Personnel.** ONUC forces operated in a volatile political environment, in which their relations with various factions frequently changed from amicability to animosity. In this setting a principal task of the MIB was to recognize the prevailing attitudes of Congolese factions towards UN personnel, both military and civilian, so as to forewarn Military Operations, specifically the Force Commander, of security threats.

2. **Support for Specific Operations.** The potential for disaster was great if the deployment of UN forces was to be based on erroneous or insufficient awareness of the activities and capabilities of non-UN military forces. MIB was required to provide the Force Commander with intelligence prior to undertaking military actions.

3. **Warning of Possible Outbreaks of Conflict.** Factional strife could threaten the security of ONUC personnel, even if harm to UN forces was unintended by the belligerents. For example, UN personnel could be harmed in a crossfire, and ONUC's mission could be impaired by disruption of its transportation routes. Moreover, since any threat of atrocities against the European population might spark a mass exodus of inhabitants with essential skills, averting a breakdown of public services depended on early warning by ONUC of threats to the peace.

4. **Estimations of Outside Interference.** Information on arms traffic and the number of foreign mercenaries entering the Congo was especially
important in order for ONUC to estimate the military capabilities of secessionist Katanga province. As part of this mandate, the Branch monitored supply routes into the Congo from bordering countries. It was reasoned that failure to adequately and effectively gather intelligence would risk the safety of both ONUC personnel and Congolese civilians. If a tragedy occurred, the UN would inevitably be challenged by world opinion over why it had not been prevented. As an international organization still in its formative years, already a magnet of controversy and increasingly financially constrained, the UN could ill afford to be accused of lack of foresight, efficiency and professionalism in a major peacekeeping operation.

The Evolution of the MIB – Revamping and Amalgamation

Criticism, however, rapidly emerged. In September 1961, ONUC embarked on implementing SC Resolution 161 (1961) by staging a dragnet operation designed to round up and expel foreign mercenaries in the Katangese Gendarmerie. The operation illustrated the unpreparedness and lack of organization of ONUC forces to perform their enforcement mandate, and exposed the UN to international reproach. As Chief of Military Information, Lt-Col. Borchgrevink maintained that a 'main shortcoming' of the operation was inadequate intelligence. This resulted in a 'failure [by the MIB] to estimate the capabilities of the Katangese Gendarmerie'.

The military leadership, which had earlier demanded the establishment of MIB, now began urging its restructuring and requested a dramatic increase in its resources. The Military Advisor to the Secretary-General, General Indar Jit Rikhye of India, agreed in November 1961 that it was 'urgently necessary to establish an efficient intelligence service which is totally lacking at the moment'.

Information Chief Borchgrevink provided a scathing assessment of the capacity of the Military Information Branch in his report of 7 March 1962 to the Military Advisor in New York. He noted that MIB’s size and available resources did not correspond to its duties, asserting that the MIB ‘does not have proper control of the intelligence situation’. At the time, the Military Information Branch at ONUC Headquarters, Leopoldville numbered nine officers: a Chief of Military Information; an executive officer; five desk officers; and two interrogators. Some of the staff lacked intelligence training; and in a setting in which bilingualism was imperative for an effective information-gathering system, not all of MIB headquarters staff could speak both French and English. ONUC did not possess the capability for systematic interception of wireless radio messages and for routine aerial photography.
Borchgrevink also complained that ONUC procedural practices often ignored the MIB. He alluded to instances in which intelligence passed from the Force Commander to UN Headquarters in New York without evaluation by the MIB, and the practice by the Operations Branch, the main division of ONUC, of not consulting MIB prior to the deployment of UN forces. He also cited the lack of contact between ONUC's Political/Economic Branch (mandated to keep abreast of political and economic matters) and the MIB.19

A few days later, the Secretary-General's Military Advisor approved a proposal to revamp the MIB.20 The plan foresaw a heightening of the organization's resources, an increase in MIB personnel, and changes in ONUC procedure regarding intelligence flows. New MIB sections were added, including photo-interpretation and wireless monitoring. The creation of the positions Counter Intelligence Officer (CIO) and Provincial or Field Liaison Officer (PLO, and also called 'Field Intelligence Officer') was accepted. A PLO was to be designated for each of the Congo's six provinces in order 'to collect and collate military, political and tribal information'.21 By 17 September 1962 there were 27 intelligence officers either stationed at the various provincial headquarters or posted with national brigades.22 An intelligence officer was to be assigned to the Political/Economic Branch to ensure quick exchange of intelligence. Procedures were tightened to give MIB the exclusive authority to prepare intelligence reports for New York. The structure of the overhauled MIB is shown in Figure 1.
The new structure remained in place until after ONUC’s December 1962–January 1963 campaign in Katanga, in which UN forces successfully occupied most of the secessionist province and forced Tshombe to capitulate. Soon afterwards ONUC command was instructed by UN Headquarters to effect a 30 per cent reduction of its staff. This led the Force Commander Kebbede Guebre in March 1963 to amalgamate the Military Operations and Military Information Branches, reducing the total number of officers, secretaries and non-commissioned officers in Leopoldville headquarters from 36 to 26. A further abatement was the abolishment of the PLO post in August 1963. Similar reductions to ONUC’s intelligence component continued until the UN operation concluded in 1964.

Reporting Methods

From the advent of the MIB, information was disseminated within ONUC through a formal process involving four types of reports. The principal means was the daily Situation Report (SITREP), issued by units in the field to the Operations Branch of ONUC’s provincial headquarters, and submitted by the provincial HQ to ONUC headquarters in Leopoldville. Information Summaries (ISUMs), prepared by the MIB, provided a telegraphic summary of important items of intelligence obtained by provincial HQs and military units. ISUMs summarized in condensed form the recent military activities of non-UN military forces in the Congo by estimating their armaments and by outlining their movements. They also discussed the prevailing political situation in the Congo. ISUMs were intended primarily to quickly inform units in the field of changing situations. Periodic Information Reports (PERINFOREPs) presented a more lengthy discussion of the topics covered in ISUMs and were the primary means of disseminating intelligence to higher formations in ONUC. Supplementary Information Reports (SUPINFOREPs) reviewed a particular aspect of non-UN forces, for example their organization and/or strength, in readiness for a specific UN operation. ISUMs, PERINFOREPs and SUPINFOREPs were all prepared by the MIB.

Intelligence Gathering: The Means and the Achievements

As ONUC’s intelligence system developed, a variety of intelligence-gathering techniques were introduced, continued and/or expanded. These techniques were characteristic of conventional intelligence operations. They included wireless message interception, aerial intelligence, and human intelligence.
a. Wireless Message Interception. No permanent wireless message interception system existed in the early stages of ONUC. A minimal amount of interception of ANC and Katangese radio sets was nevertheless utilized on an ad hoc basis with positive results. For example, an intelligence officer was surprised when on a visit to Kabalo (in northern Katanga) he discovered that the Ethiopian battalion Commander, Lt-Col. Alemu, had established an improvised interception service. Messages were intercepted using a commercial receiver, while a local Baluba took down messages in Swahili and translated them into French. Security of Katangese radio nets was found to be 'extremely bad'.

In February 1962 the Secretary-General's Military Advisor agreed to the establishment of a broad radio monitoring organization for the MIB. Rikhye justified such a monitoring system on the grounds that it was an 'invisible' activity and therefore did not violate ONUC's agreements with various Congolese factions, notably its ceasefire agreement with Katanga.

The service was authorized to monitor broadcasts of foreign radio stations, Radio Katanga, and radio stations in Leopoldville and Stanleyville. This provided forewarning when Tshombe and his Interior Minister, Godefroi Munungo, used public radio broadcasts to incite violence against ONUC and even to call for the death of the UN representative in Elisabethville. ONUC soldiers could thus prepare themselves for threats from both Katangese civilians (including children) and military and paramilitary personnel.

ONUC was also authorized to monitor the operational and administrative wireless nets of the ANC in Leopoldville and Stanleyville, and of the Gendarmeries in Katanga. The structure provided for a staff of seven at ONUC HQ Leopoldville, including one cipher operator for breaking codes, and four operators in Elisabethville, Stanleyville, Bukavu and Luluabourg.

By May 1962 ONUC HQ in Katanga had established a system to monitor the Katangese military radio net on a 24-hour basis. In the one month period between 30 March and 30 April 1962, for example, Katanga headquarters intercepted 382 messages. Katangese radio security measures were again found to be poor, with even the most sensitive military information going on the air in clear.

The use of ciphers and codes by the Katangese Gendarmerie in some of their communications complicated the ability of the MIB to gather intelligence from radio intercepts and to do so rapidly (that is, before the information became antiquated). In early September 1962, Ulric Lindencrona, who had the task of cracking codes, determined the key to a substitution cipher, known as 'Charlie', which was used primarily by Katangese forces in Kamina sector. He was also able to break the code
frequently used in messages between Kongolo and Elisabethville. With other ciphers Lindencrona was less successful. In his submission to MIB HQ Katanga of 11 October 1962, he reported that the keys to the ‘Cessar’ cipher had eluded him. This cipher was used by all Katangese units and was regarded by Lindencrona as ‘probably the most important of all types’. While he believed that there was a possibility of breaking Cessar, the lengthy amount of time required to produce sufficient statistics to determine the system had left him unable to produce the keys. This problem persisted during the Katanga operation in December 1962–January 1963 in which UN forces successfully rounded up the majority of foreign mercenaries and eliminated Katangese air capability. Given that the monitoring service was a casualty of the cutbacks effected after this campaign, it is likely that efforts to decrypt Cessar stopped at this time.

Radio intercepts provided voluminous intelligence, and were particularly useful during ONUC’s December 1962–January 1963 Katanga campaign (‘Operation Grand Slam’) to remove foreign mercenaries, gain complete freedom of movement in the province, and bring about the end of the Katangese secession. While many messages stated mere trivialities and irrelevances of minimal use to ONUC, some described important facts and details crucial to its operations. ONUC learned of orders from Katangese authorities for bombardment missions and reconnaissance missions, and obtained information regarding troop movements, arms shortages and hidden arms caches. For example, knowledge that the Katangese Gendarmerie Commander had ordered his air force Commander to bomb the Elisabethville airfield during the night of 29 December, which was obtained by radio interception, triggered the final military push into Katanga. ONUC learned on 5 January 1963 of discussions being made for a possible attack by Gendarmeries on Albertville. On 10 January ONUC discovered – again through a radio intercept – that 1,200 gendarmes had arrived in Luena and that they were awaiting new heavy guns. Since some of these messages were sent in code, this intelligence would not have been procured without MIB’s code-cracking capabilities.

b. Aerial Intelligence. For much of its operation, ONUC possessed insufficient aircraft and photographic equipment to provide photographs and photo-interpretation of strategic installations and positions in the Congo. A minimal amount of air intelligence was gleaned in the early period of ONUC from aircrews of UN and commercial transport aircraft working for the UN and from their stops at Congolese airfields. Mandatory debriefing of all military transport and charter company aircrews was later instituted when MIB suspected that these personnel were making important observations and were not reporting them.

The absence of jet fighters left ONUC severely handicapped in its
September 1961 Katanga campaign. A lone Katangese FougaMaster jet almost paralysed ONUC forces, and compelled UN Headquarters to consider adding to ONUC a fighter aircraft dimension. This was instituted in October 1961, when four Ethiopian F86 and five Swedish J29 fighter jets, and four Indian B(1) Canberra light bombers, entered service to become the 'UN Air Force'. The primary task of the fighter force was to incapacitate the Katangese Air Force (FAK). Its secondary tasks were to provide aerial reconnaissance and air support during hostilities.

ONUC’s increased reconnaissance potential did not trigger a substantial augmentation in aerial intelligence, much to the chagrin of ONUC’s military leadership. In November 1961 a memo circulated by ONUC Air Operations alluded to a continued ‘lack of air intelligence; not even for fighter operations’ and declared that ‘officers have not got nearly as much information as needed to operate in a proper way’.

To correct this deficiency the Chief of Military Information requested in January 1962 that Fighter Operations Branch initiate an extensive air ‘recce’ (reconnaissance) programme. Such an undertaking, however, was inhibited by ONUC’s limited aerial photography capabilities. The only aircraft available for photo-reconnaissance were two Canberras of the No. 5 Indian Squadron and the odd transport plane. The cameras on the Canberras left much to be desired for effective photo work, since they could only take vertical photographs and were primarily designed for photographing bombing results. Photos from transport planes were of limited usefulness because they were taken through aircraft windows using ordinary hand-held cameras. These restrictions led the Chief of Fighter Operations, Col. S. Lampell, to assert that ‘it is not possible to carry out such an extensive air recce programme with the...aircraft available’. But even if such an ambitious recce operation had been possible, ONUC would still have faced difficulties in converting photographs into reliable intelligence; ONUC lacked photo-laboratory resources, including processing and interpretation equipment, and personnel.

Aerial reconnaissance was especially imperative since detailed maps of the Congo were unavailable, and because ONUC communication was poor in much of the country. This meant that the UN often had no other means of obtaining information except by continuous visual and photo-reconnaissance from the air. The confined use by ONUC of ground radar facilities also translated into a necessity for air intelligence. Because of the ‘exorbitant expense’ of radar, ONUC possessed only two radar sets: one at Kamina, with a maximum range of 200 miles, and one in Elisabethville, which was installed in August 1962. The shortage of radar made it difficult for ONUC to track and intercept airborne Katangese aircraft. Destruction of FAK aircraft thus depended on following up reports by ONUC troops of
aircraft movements, and on frequently combing airfields. This fact was demonstrated in ONUC’s December 1961 Katanga operation: all the Katangese aircraft destroyed were located on the ground, whereas those that were airborne evaded their UN pursuers by disappearing into the clouds.

Poor reconnaissance capabilities hindered the MIB’s efforts to estimate the strength of the Katangese Air Force (FAK). This is reflected in a Supplementary Intelligence Report in which the Branch stated that collection of accurate information on Katangese air capacity was hampered because ‘ONUC has no [dedicated] air photo-reconnaissance facilities...and lacks surveillance radar to detect or follow all aircraft movements in Katanga’. According to the report, the implication of this was that ‘[d]ue to lack of complete information, there is no alternative but to consider FAK as a dangerous enemy in the air’.

UN Headquarters in New York was able to secure improved aerial intelligence resources after the Swedish government agreed to send two Saab 29C aircraft equipped for photo-reconnaissance and a photo-interpretation detachment. Their arrival in November 1962 signalled a considerable improvement in ONUC’s ability to collect aerial intelligence, and supplied ONUC with vital information prior to its campaign in Katanga during the next month. The aerial intelligence that they provided led the MIB to reappraise its estimation of Katangese air capability. Many FAK planes which had previously been cited by ONUC were found to be unserviceable, and it was also determined that Katangese ammunition stockpiling was occurring only at several airfields. Due to the new photo-interpretation facilities, reports of anti-aircraft batteries and underground aircraft shelters at some Katangese airfields were rejected.

c. Human Intelligence – Prisoners, Informants and Agents. Captured or suspected mercenaries detained by ONUC Forces underwent a formal interrogation procedure. While this term is used sometimes to imply brutality, there is no indication that ‘interrogations’ conducted by MIB officers were anything but scrupulous. Memos were distributed by ONUC Command instructing UN forces to comply with the 1949 Geneva Convention on the treatment of prisoners. The Convention text itself was widely circulated among UN personnel.

Staging ‘detailed interrogations’ (as opposed to ‘preliminary interrogations’) was the responsibility of MIB officers. Three hundred interrogations were conducted from the beginning of the operation in July 1960 until March 1962 alone. Given the shortage of MIB officers and the fact that many interrogations took days, the procedure placed considerable strain on MIB resources. The exercise, however, sometimes led to positive results. For example, the interrogation of several suspected mercenaries in March 1962 was particularly helpful to evaluate FAK air capacity. The
intelligence obtained pointed to the presence of modest numbers of small aircraft in Katanga, and to vigorous efforts by Katanga to purchase transport and fighter aircraft. In his recent account of the Congo operation, General Rikhye states that interrogations 'proved invaluable' and that updated lists of mercenaries, so obtained, aided O'Brien in his negotiations with Tshombe for the removal of European advisers and mercenaries.

MIB officers also conducted interrogations of asylum-seekers from the Katangese Gendarmerie and bureaucracy. On occasion this was an invaluable way of gathering intelligence. For example, Cleophas Kanyinda, a clerk with the Katangese government who was responsible for paying the salaries of mercenaries, fled to the Tunisian camp of ONUC on 25 November 1962. He divulged to ONUC the names and whereabouts of several dozen mercenaries. David Sutherland and John Franklin, vehicle mechanics for the Katangese Gendarmerie, sought asylum with the UN in late summer 1962 after they were ordered to participate in transport convoys. The two disclosed the names of 52 mercenaries and revealed the location of several large weapons dumps near Jadotville. They also informed ONUC of the import of 600 Landrovers into Katanga from N'Dola, Rhodesia. On the basis of this information, MIB instructed officers to make 'discreet inquiries' (presumably with contacts in Rhodesia) in order to confirm these details. An inquiry was urged because, 'premised on the fact that Government permission would be required for their import...[confirmation of this information may even lead to our knowing if the Rhodesian Government helped [Katanga in securing] this deal.'

ONUC's use of informants has been portrayed as a 'comic' and rather scanty enterprise. In 1962, Conor Cruise O'Brien, who had served as the ONUC representative in Elisabethville, suggested that this activity was restricted to the employment in Elisabethville of 'one Greek ex-policeman with an imperfect knowledge of French' (who was known by the Katangese Gendarmerie as 'Chief of the United Nations Intelligence Services in Katanga') and 'a few Baluba houseboys.'

Informants, both paid and unpaid, were utilized more extensively than this account suggests. For example, in 1962 an intelligence officer (IO) with the Irish Battalion kept a mercenary 'on tap' in order to glean information. At the same time the Tunisian battalion IO maintained a Belgian contact in Kipushi (on the Katangese border with Northern Rhodesia) to learn of troop and arms movements. The IO also had several contacts in the Elisabethville post office, whom he regarded as a 'very useful method of collecting information'. Using these contacts, ONUC was able to locate a box of detonators consigned to a Belgian mining company and to intercept a letter to a Katangese Government minister.

One notable and successful use of informants was the search on 6 April
1962 of an Elisabethville warehouse which uncovered 40-50 aircraft engines and a wealth of other aircraft parts. The search was conducted after an inside source informed ONUC HQ Elisabethville of the location of this cache and noted that it was set to be shipped elsewhere for assembly.\textsuperscript{77} The source thus enabled ONUC to thwart an escalation in FAK's air capability.

ONUC also possessed informants within the Katangese government and contacts outside of the Congo. The MIB based its April 1961 estimate of foreign mercenaries in the Katangese Gendarmerie ('between 400-550') on 'informants in [Katangese] Government circles', in addition to statements by mercenaries.\textsuperscript{78} MIB's July 1962 assessment of Katanga Military forces was based in part on information provided by 'five regular European sources all with indirect access to military information', each of whose information was corroborated by the others.\textsuperscript{79} In March 1962 informants carried out an investigation (without any positive results) in Congo (Brazzaville) of a report that six FAK Fougamasters were stationed at Pointe Noire.\textsuperscript{80}

Information provided by informants was a mixed basket, as were details dispensed by prisoners and asylum-seekers. MIB had no means of confirming or denying much of the information provided by these sources. Informants sometimes only reported on statements made by others, for example, Katangese politicians, or Gendarmerie officers. The information they provided was consequently only as accurate as the information provided to them. Since it was in the Katangese interest to provide assurances of safety to its residents (not to mention to keep informants in Katanga misinformed), it is not surprising that information provided by some informants grossly exaggerated Katangese military capacity. For example, Jean Pignorel and Corey de Vries were each told repeatedly and separately that FAK had assembled 20-30 Fouga jets at Kolwezi by late 1962.\textsuperscript{81} As already discussed, however, aerial intelligence suggested that FAK capabilities were minimal, an opinion that was ultimately verified during ONUC's December 1962-January 1963 Katanga operation.

The use of agents by MIB touches upon the issue of the limits UN of intelligence-gathering techniques. Chief of Military Information, N. Borchgrevink, noted in 1962 that '[UN] agents have...been used on a very limited scale', and further stipulated that the 'field of work for UN agents was in the Congo and in its neighbour states, from which arms supplies and mercenaries enter the Congo'.\textsuperscript{82}

There is indication that contributing states were extremely reluctant to accept the use of agents, particularly outside Congolese borders. On one occasion, the MIB was instructed by the Force Commander to conduct a 'special mission' to gather intelligence on surrounding African countries. The Branch nominated a French-speaking Canadian officer to undertake
this mission. The Canadian contingent Commander, however, refused to accept the request, stating that Canadian personnel could not participate in missions outside of the Congo without the approval of the Canadian government, and that approval was unlikely to be forthcoming considering the 'covert' nature of the task. The Branch was unable to carry out this mission because suitable personnel were not available.

There is also evidence that within ONUC itself there was a reluctance to accept the use of agents. ONUC Force Commander Kebbede Guebre, for instance, thought it 'not advisable' at all for the UN to employ professional intelligence agents.

Fear of a fall from grace if the UN was discovered employing 'spies' in the Congo and elsewhere seemed enough to outweigh the benefits that such exercise might have provided.

MIB: The Shortcomings

The MIB was established in an effort to institutionalize within ONUC a formal information-gathering programme. An ad hoc and haphazard approach to intelligence procurement and dissemination, however, persisted to a degree even with the MIB. While MIB's structure was impressive on paper, some of the duties and personnel it envisioned were never realized. Such was the case with the Provincial Liaison Officers. In July 1962 three of ONUC's six provincial command headquarters did not possess PLOs, and this probably continued to the end. The intelligence effort in these provinces thus depended upon the priority and importance that the commanding officer gave to intelligence. Furthermore, the frequent turnover of intelligence staff was not conducive to the development of a systematic intelligence structure; nor was the inadequate intelligence training of many officers assigned to the Branch.

Established procedures for intelligence dissemination were often ignored, impairing MIB HQ in Leopoldville from having an accurate and up-to-date intelligence picture. For example, in November 1961, Katanga province's intelligence staff consisted of 'one-half man'; SITREPS contained precious little intelligence; and Katanga Command neglected to submit to Leopoldville fortnightly PERINTREPS.

The timidity of the UN's civilian leadership towards intelligence precluded MIB's establishment until after ONUC's statutory authority was transformed to include an enforcement dimension. The late start was not without serious implications. A twelve-man patrol from ONUC's Irish contingent was ambushed on 8 November 1960 by bow-and-arrow-wielding Baluba tribesmen near Niemba, in Kivu province. Only two of the soldiers survived. While it has been suggested that a Swedish officer warned the officer in charge of the patrol to exercise caution in dealing with
Baluba of this isolated area,\textsuperscript{90} there is no indication that ONUC Command was aware of the warning. The warning was not taken seriously by the patrol: one of the survivors explained that the patrol was under the false impression that the tribesmen were friendly.\textsuperscript{91} It was later determined that the tribesmen could not distinguish ONUC from other military forces who were hostile to them.\textsuperscript{92} Had ONUC possessed a well-equipped intelligence organization that oversaw a structured intelligence procurement and dissemination process, these killings might have been prevented.

In numerous instances, inadequate information on deteriorating political conditions exposed ONUC troops to extreme hazards. A bloody example is the Port Francqui incident of 28 April 1961. The incident was precipitated by the visit of the Congolese Interior Minister to Port Francqui, in northwestern Kasai province. During a public speech the minister accused the local ANC of being the cause of trouble rather than a deterrent, and denounced them for being anti-Lulua. He also threatened that the UN would disarm them if their attitudes did not change. The minister was under UN escort. The ANC troops were offended by these comments, and believed that the UN shared the same partiality towards the Lulua in the tribal conflict in northern Kasai as the Interior Minister. The next evening, ANC forces attacked UN troops stationed at Port Francqui.\textsuperscript{93} The ninety-man Ghanaian garrison was clearly unprepared for the attack. Dispersed in six different places in the town, the UN troops were quickly overpowered.\textsuperscript{94} According to UN records, 47 UN personnel were killed.

The official report of the incident concluded that the direct cause of the incident was the speech and attitude of the Interior Minister. What is striking about this is that the minister’s UN escorts did not make the connection between the minister’s threat and the potential for a violent reaction against the UN; nor did they report information on the minister’s visit to intelligence-trained officers who could have made the connection and alerted command of the possible threat. As the report suggests, the principal weakness of ONUC that was evident in the Port Francqui incident was that there was ‘no system of alert to warn troops against any aggressive action by ANC’\textsuperscript{95} — in sum, poor procedures leading to no intelligence.

The arrival of jet fighters and light bombers in late 1961 constituted a mighty increase in ONUC firepower. Unfortunately, ONUC’s aerial intelligence capabilities remained meagre and this meant that there was a high likelihood of mishap during jet attack missions. ONUC’s December 1961 campaign in the Elisabethville area of Katanga demonstrates this.

Fighter Operations Branch lacked ‘attack photographs’ of many of the intended targets prior to this campaign.\textsuperscript{96} These photographs were intended for briefing pilots on the location and appearance of targets before an attack mission. Among the targets in Katanga for which there was no photograph
was the airfield at Shinkolobwe, located northwest of Elisabethville. Unfortunately, during an attack sortie on this airfield the Shinkolobwe hospital was attacked by UN jet fighters. The Chief of Fighter Operations, Col. S. Lampell, said afterwards that the lack of these photographs made it difficult for pilots under attack conditions to distinguish between targets and non-targets. He noted that ‘[if] such photos had been available during the Katanga campaign it is most likely that the regrettable attack on the hospital could have been avoided’.97

The addition to ONUC of two photo-reconnaissance aircraft and a photo-interpretation unit was a decisive factor contributing to the success of the UN operations in Katanga in December 1962–January 1963. During the weeks preceding this operation, these aircraft undertook continuous reconnaissance flights, giving information before the operation began on the whereabouts and numbers of FAK’s fighter aircraft – two Vampire and eight to ten Harvard aircraft, according to Force Commander Guebre.98

Conclusions – Lessons for Today

The Military Information Branch that was established as part of ONUC represents a major precedent for a variety of reasons. The MIB was the UN’s first intelligence body. In its systematic information gathering, it employed such means as radio message interception, aerial reconnaissance and human intelligence. The Congo operation revealed the necessity of including an extensive intelligence element in a sophisticated UN military operation.

The initial absence of an intelligence structure placed the Force in a dangerously handicapped position which threatened the lives of UN personnel, the success of ONUC operations, and the reputation of the UN itself. Too often in this period ONUC was unaware of deteriorating conditions until after violent incidents occurred. When its mandate was transformed to include enforcement elements, ONUC’s intelligence capacities, institutionalized with the establishment of the MIB, were significant but still insufficient, leading at times to trouble.

The reluctance of the UN’s civilian leadership to embrace intelligence gathering in the Congo operation was a manifestation of a broader concern about the future of the UN in a polarized world. At the peak of Cold War acrimony, there existed no shortage of vehement opponents to the UN’s increasing authority, especially that of its Secretary-General. The UN could not afford to be seen to be engaging in sinister activities commonly associated with intelligence gathering. For political reasons, the UN thus could not institutionalize a permanent agency to collect sensitive information.
The end of the Cold War signals an important opportunity for the UN to increase its information-gathering capacity. There is no reason why the UN should not institutionalize a sophisticated information gathering and analysis system operating within the bounds of international law. This holds especially true if the UN wants to improve its early warning and preventive diplomacy abilities.\textsuperscript{99} Clearly, today’s UN peacekeeping operations must not be burdened with the intelligence handicap that ONUC faced on many occasions. The UN can also draw from the Congo experience as it considers adding new technologies, including aerial and satellite reconnaissance,\textsuperscript{100} to its information-gathering repertoire.

There exists a principled basis for such an expansion in UN capability. Information-gathering is hardly an anathema to UN policy. On the contrary, it is more in accordance with UN practice than the use or threatened use of bombers, guns and tanks. Information-gathering can help defuse an incipient crisis that might otherwise only be responded to by brute force later. Such activity therefore must be seen not only as a practical, worthwhile exercise but also an application of the principles for which the UN stands.

The establishment of the Situation Centre at the UN Secretariat in 1993 reflects an effort within the UN to expand its information capacity. The Centre, part of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, manages the dissemination of information reports from governments and the UN’s peacekeeping operations on a 24-hour basis, and also performs limited analysis of information. While peacekeeping operations have proliferated – the number of personnel engaged in these operations has increased from 15 to 75 thousand personnel in three years – there has not been a correspondingly large increase in support-level staff at UN headquarters. In a setting where decisions must be made rapidly by the UN’s leadership, the information and research capacity of the Secretariat must be sufficient to meet the task of instructed decision making. The Congo operation demonstrated this and current experience renders the same conclusions.

Future studies could examine the extent to which the information-gathering techniques employed by ONUC have been used in contemporary peacekeeping operations. The larger UN forces have at times monitored radio communications of the belligerents (for example, in the former Yugoslavia and Cambodia).\textsuperscript{101} In Cambodia, peacekeepers gathered intelligence on a battalion level. During raids of the SOC party headquarters, UNTAC teams were able to obtain documentary evidence of non-compliance with provisions of the peace treaty.\textsuperscript{102} In Rwanda, officers with the poorly equipped and understaffed UN force unsuccessfully attempted to corroborate allegations made by moderates in the Rwandan military that a plan for mass genocide was being developed. According to
Force Commander Romeo Dallaire, information was bought as part of the effort to become informed about deteriorating conditions. The information-gathering and analysis capability of the force, however, was far from adequate: without intelligence, Dallaire lamented, the peacekeepers were operating ‘deaf and blind’.

It would be unwise for the UN to employ full-time ‘agents’ to conduct covert investigations, and it is doubtful that Member States would permit such a practice; but local civilians in areas where peacekeeping operations are conducted will always be an important source of information. Covert methods are not necessary for the UN to keep informed of most conditions in its peacekeeping operations, and for the UN to identify potential political hotspots. ONUC showed how open information sources, or ‘high intelligence’, were invaluable for the conduct of a dangerous peacekeeping operation. Even today, most information on such matters is procurable from open and in-confidence sources. Moreover, according to staff at the Situation Centre, a great deal of information is available that is not being exploited. It is true that some vital information may need to be targeted using dedicated resources; but UN methods should always operate within the bounds of international law and common sense. The UN should not carry out any intelligence work that involves disguising or misrepresenting its activity. An increase in resources dedicated to UN information-gathering services, such as those in the Situation Centre, will leave the UN better equipped to face its challenges. That there existed in the formative years of UN peacekeeping an extensive information-gathering network might make it easier to accept a more far-reaching network in the future.

The Congo experience demonstrates that knowledge is power for the UN. It shows that the UN can still have clean hands and engage in extensive and necessary information-gathering for the prevention and management of conflict.

NOTES

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2. The acronym ONUC is from the French title: Opération des Nations Unis au Congo.
3. For example, Anthony Verrier states: ‘Neither in New York nor in Leopoldville was there a staff which dealt with information and intelligence’, in International Peacekeeping, London: Butler & Tanner Ltd, 1981, p.48. Similarly, Peter Jones states: ‘there is no
evidence that any of ONUC’s aerial assets were ever dedicated to aerial surveillance’, in his paper on Aerial Surveillance in Peacekeeping and International Relations, March/April 1993, p.4. Both statements are incorrect.

4. The acronym ANC is from the French title: Armée Nationale Congolaise.


6. O’Brien, p.76 (see n.1 above).

7. Chief of Military Operations, ‘A Review of ONUC Military Operations in the Congo and its Future Deployment and Organization’, 16 March 1962, DAG-13/1.6.5.4.0:17 – Reports General. [Citations beginning with DAG refer to papers in the Departmental Archive Group at the UN Archives in New York. DAG-1 contains the archival files of the Office of the Secretary-General; DAG-13 contains the files of UN Missions and Commissions; DAG-13/1.6 contains ONUC’s files.]


9. For a detailed account of the disagreement between ONUC’s military and civilian leadership over ONUC’s mandate and intelligence and military capacities, see von Horn’s Soldiering for Peace, London: Cassell, 1966. Rikhye’s memoir gives valuable insights into the personality of General von Horn, Military Advisor to the Secretary General, London: St. Martin’s Press, 1993.


17. Ibid., Annex B, p.15.


20. Memorandum, Chief of Military Information, N. Borchgrevink to Military Advisor New York, 17 March 1962, DAG-13/1.6.5.4.0:1 – ONUC Operations. The decision was made in an environment of great fiscal restraint at the UN. It was facing near bankruptcy when a campaign was launched to sell bonds in order to keep it afloat financially.


22. MIB, ‘Nominal Roll - Intelligence Officers Stationed throughout the Congo’, 17 Sept. 1962, DAG-13/1.6.5.4.0:1 – Organization and Functioning of MIB.

23. The operation was based on SC Res. 169 (1961), 21 Nov. 1961, which authorized ‘the use of the requisite measure of force’ to apprehend and deport all foreign mercenaries from the Congo.

24. Memorandum to Chief of Military Information from Chief of Civilian Personnel, 5 July 1963, DAG-13/1.6.5.4.0:4 – Civilian Operations.

25. Memorandum, Force Commander Guebre to Dr Ralph Bunch, 5 April 1963, DAG-13/1.6.5.4.0:1 – Organization and Establishment of MIB.

26. Memorandum, Chief of Staff B.A.O. Ogundipe, 20 Aug. 1963, DAG-13/1.6.5.4.0:1 – Organization and Functioning of MIB.

27. See Memorandum, Chief of Military Information, Lt-Col. Bjorn Egge, ‘Collection of Military Information’, 22 April 1961, DAG-13/1.6.5.4.0:14 – Collection of Information.
29. 'Report — Liaison visit Katanga-Orientale', 27 Nov. 1961, DAG-13/1.6.5.4.0:17, Reports General.
30. Ibid.
31. Ibid.
32. Rikhye, pp.25–89 (see n.9 above).
34. Chief of Military Information, Katanga HQ, 'Monitoring of Katangese Military Radionet from 30 March to 30 April 1962', 1 May 1962, DAG-13/1.6.5.7.2.0:18 – HQ Katanga Command, Radio Intercept.
35. Ibid. There exists some doubt as to how institutionalized the MIB’s monitoring service became, even in Katanga where the most developed service was established. In his 'Report on Completion of Assignment' to Secretary-General, Force Commander Guebre suggested that during the December 1962-January 1963 Katanga operation, MIB in Katanga possessed only 'improved interception', DAG-1/2.2.1:36.
36. Ulric Lindencrona, 'Report on Ciphers and Codes used by the Katangese Forces,' 11 Oct. 1962, DAG-13/1.6.5.4.0:16 – Monitoring General.
37. Ibid.
38. Ibid.
39. The intercepted radio transmission from Baudouinville on 15 January 1963, which stated (uncoded) that 'the most important messages passed in Cesar code cannot be broken yet', obviously could hardly have been a revelation to Lindencrona, DAG-13/1.6.5.7.2.1:1 – Misc: No.28 Intercepts.
41. Rikhye, p.304.
42. 'Secret Intercepts', 5 Jan. 1963, DAG-13/1.6.5.4.0:16 685 – Monitoring Katanga.
43. 'Secret Intercepts', 10 Jan. 1963, DAG-13/1.6.5.7.2.1:1 – Misc: No.28 Intercepts.
44. Chief of Military Information, Annex B, p.10 (see n.13 above).
49. Memorandum, 'Statement Regarding Cables No 7741–7757 from New York', 6 Nov. 1961, DAG-13/1.6.5.8.3.0:1 – 6600/F-OPS Policy.
50. As discussed in Memorandum, Chief Fighter Operations, S. Lampell to Chief of Military Information, 'Aerial Photography: Intelligence Collection Programme', 3 Feb. 1962, DAG-13/1.6.5.4.0:1.
51. Ibid.
52. Ibid.
53. MIB HQ, 'Katangese Air Capability: An Appreciation', 30 May 1962, DAG-13/1.6.5.8.4:0:1.
54. Fighter Operations, 'Enemy Opposition and the Task of Fighter Force', April 1962, p.2, DAG-13/1.6.5.8.3.0:1 F-OPS Policy.
55. Ibid.
56. Memorandum, Chief Fighter Ops Officer, Kanvar Singh, to Air Commander, 'Debriefing and Radar Reports', 8 Sept. 1962, DAG-13/1.6.5.8.3.0:1.
57. Fighter Operations, 'Enemy Opposition and Task of Fighter Force', p.2 (see n.54 above).
58. Ibid.
59. MIB HQ, 'Katangese Air Capability' (see n.53 above).
60. Ibid., p.9.
63. Ibid.
65. Chief of Military Information, N. Borghgrevkin, 'Study on Intelligence in the Congo: Annex B – The Intelligence Problem', p.10, DAG-13/1.6.5.4.0:1.
67. MIB HQ, 'Katangese Air Capability', p.2 (see n.53 above).
68. Rikhye, p.253 (see n.9 above).
69. 'Report No. 1, KANYINDA, Cleophas', 25 Nov. 1962, DAG-13/1.6.5.4.0:8 – Mercenaries Source Reports.
70. 'Operation Stag-Hound: Summary of Interrogation in Respect of Sutherland and Franklin', MIB, 25 Oct. 1962, DAG-13/1.6.5.4.0:11.
71. 'Ref. ONUC 7361', 30 Oct. 1962, DAG-13/1.6.5.4.0:14 – Arms Traffic.
72. O'Brien, p.76 (see n.1 above).
73. Ibid.
74. 'Minutes of Intelligence Conference No.4', 12 March 1962, DAG-13/1.6.5.7.2.0:18 – HQ Katanga Command.
75. 'Minutes of Intelligence Conference No.3', 5 March 1962, p.2, DAG-13/1.6.5.7.2.0:18.
76. Ibid.
77. 'Summary No.43', 6 April 1962, DAG-13/1.6.5.4.0:14 – Arms Traffic.
78. Chief of Military Information to Force Commander, 'Information Acquired at Elisabethville, 5 April 1961, p.1, DAG-13/1.6.5.4.0:8 – Mercenaries/Source Reports.
79. MIB, 'An Assessment of the Katanga military forces', 15 July 1962, DAG-13/1.6.5.8.4.0:3.
80. MIB HQ, 'Katangese Air Capability', p.7 (see n.53 above).
81. 'Interrogation Summary', Nov. 1962, DAG-13/1.6.5.4.0:3.
83. Memorandum, MIB, 'Area of Responsibility', 6 March 1962, DAG-13/1.6.5.4.0:1.
84. Ibid.
86. Memorandum, MIB, 6 July 1962, p.2, DAG-13/1.6.5.4.0:1; Chief of Military Information, N. Borghgrevkin, Annex B, p.9.
88. 'Report – Liaison visit Katanga-Orientale', p.2 (see n.29 above).
89. Ibid., p.3.
91. Verrier, p.62 (see n.3 above).
92. Ibid., p.63.
93. Operations Officer, 'Report on Incident at Port Francqui', 3 May 1961, DAG-13/1.6.5.4.0:12.
94. Lefever and Wynfred, Appendix P18 (see n.90 above).
95. Operations Officer, 'Port Francqui', p.3.
96. MIB, 'Target Folder Katanga: Description of Fixed Targets: Nov. 61–April 62', DAG-13/1.6.5.8.4.1:4.
97. Chief Fighter Operations to Chief of Military Information, 'Aerial Photography', p.2 (see n.50 above).
98. Force Commander Guebre, 'Report on Completion of Assignment', p.27 (see n.40 above).
in Res. 46/59, reflects this sentiment. The Secretary-General’s *An Agenda for Peace*, section III, and subsequent General Assembly resolutions also prescribe increased monitoring for early warning and preventive diplomacy.


101. Interview with anonymous official involved in UN peacekeeping operations.


104. Ibid.