Creation of UN Peacekeeping Missions Military Engineer Unit Manual and Japan's Contribution : @PKO Now! No.107

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As of today, Japan's main contribution to UN peacekeeping includes, but is not limited to, dispatching Japan Self-Defense Force personnel as staff officers to the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) and Japan Ground Self-Defense Force (JGSDF) engineer unit personnel as instructors to a series of heavy machinery operation trainings for African and Asian countries' military engineers conducted under the UN Triangular Partnership Project (TPP). Responding to a request by the UN, Japan as the chair also led the creation of the "UN Peacekeeping Missions Military Engineer Unit Manual."[1] Although it is another important Japan's contribution to UN peacekeeping, it is not widely recognized. This column outlines the background of creating the manual, Japan's contribution to the process and the overview of the manual, focusing on construction engineers.

Background of Creating the Manual

Every UN peace operation is given a specific mandate, taking the context of operation areas into account and intending to address local needs. In every operation, the troops offered by troop contributing countries (TCCs) implement the mandate charged for the military component. It would be inspiring that all participating countries' contingents operate in a system based on mutual respect and jointly work towards the common goal of maintaining peace and stability in the areas of deployment, which embodies one of the UN core values: Respect for Diversity. In reality, however, since not all TCCs hold the same levels of capability,

equipment and methodology, such differences sometimes create misunderstanding and hinder smooth implementation of the mandate.

The UN experiences from the field show that having a certain level of shared understanding is crucial for all countries' contingents to work effectively and efficiently. For that reason, since 2013 the UN, supported by several member states, started drafting guidelines for military components to ensure interoperability. The manuals stipulate roles, necessary capabilities and equipment of 10 categories of units, including aviation, engineering, transport, Force Headquarters (FHQ) support, logistics, military police, maritime, riverine, signals and special forces.[2]

Japan was selected as the chair of the Expert Working Group (EWG) for the engineering part because JGSDF's engineering portfolios in past UN peace operations are well-received in the international community.[3]

Japan's Contribution to the Drafting Process

In March 2014, Japan as the chair hosted the 1st EWG workshop in Tokyo to discuss with representatives from 14 countries and 3 international organizations basic thoughts and descriptive framework for the manual.[4] In June 2014, Indonesia as the vice chair hosted the 2nd workshop, where participants discussed the engineer unit's expected missions, capabilities, formation, equipment, pre-deployment training, among others. Finally, in December of that year, the last EWG workshop was held in New York to summarize what has been discussed since the 1st workshop and submitted the final draft to the UN. In September 2015, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) and the Department of Field Support (DFS)[5] released the final version. In 2018, responding to the request by the UN, Japan took a lead again in revising the manual and continues to make intellectual contribution to UN peace operations through chairing the EWG workshops.

Overview of the Manual

The manual consists of six chapters and appendix; Chapter 1: Employment Concept for the

UN Military Engineer Unit, Chapter 2: Capabilities and Tasks, Chapter 3: Organization, Chapter 4: Support, Chapter 5: Training, and Chapter 6: Evaluation. The following section sheds light on the construction engineer unit, which plays important supportive roles in the operations, and introduces its roles and responsibilities, expected capabilities, typical equipment and pre-deployment training.

(1) Roles and Responsibilities of Construction Engineers

The construction engineers are expected to support smooth implementation of the mandate through their construction capabilities. Their tasks are divided into vertical and horizontal constructions. Vertical construction, on the one hand, deals with things vertical to the ground, such as construction of buildings and wells. Once deployed to the field, the construction engineers build prefabricated offices and accommodation facilities and install basic infrastructure in the UN compound. Maintaining and repairing existing buildings constantly to prevent deterioration and damage is an important task as well. In the remote areas, since it is often difficult to access safe drinking water, the engineers dig wells to secure access to water for UN staff and local people.

Horizontal construction, on the other hand, deals with things that are horizontal to the ground. For instance, the engineers construct and rehabilitate roads and bridges not only in support of the implementation of the mandate, but also of facilitating the movement of local populations. In order not to interrupt smooth movement, they undertake drainage construction and earth work as well. For the places inaccessible by road, they construct runways at local airports to enable the UN and other aid agencies to deliver humanitarian aid and daily necessities and conduct medical evacuation by air. While the construction engineer units report to the Force Commander of the military component, they usually receive tasking orders from the Director/Chief of Mission Support (D/CMS).[6]

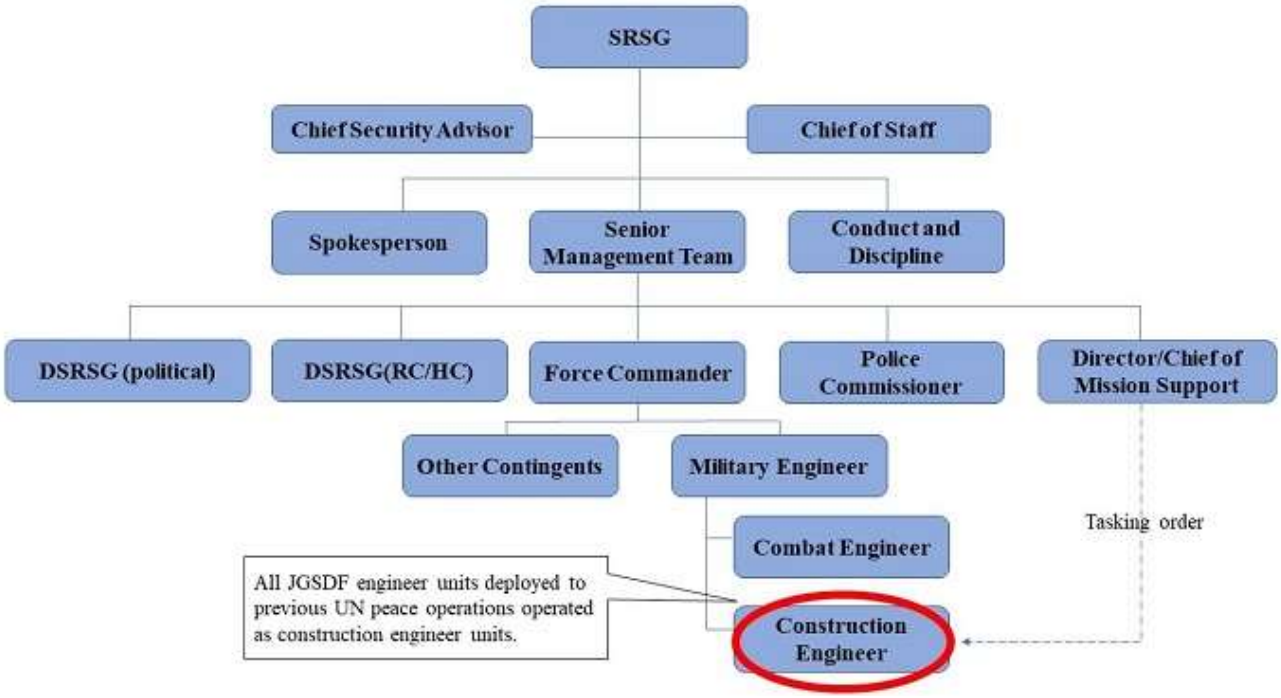

Figure : Typical organization of UN peacekeeping mission and placement of the construction engineer unit

(2) Expected Capabilities

The construction engineer units are expected to have capabilities to construct, rehabilitate and maintain road, bridge, runway and water and sewer system. Securing access to and purification of water through digging wells are expected as well.

(3) Examples of Typical Equipment

The appendix of the manual contains the list of equipment the construction engineers are likely to use. Yet, since required equipment can be contingent on various factors such as mandate, unit formation and operational environment, TCCs do not always have to prepare all the listed items. This being said, the commonly used construction machinery in the field includes support vehicles (i.e., truck and bus), bulldozers, excavators, graders, road rollers, bucket loaders, trailers and forklifts. Additionally, materials for demining and radios are useful as well.

Japan has thus far deployed JGSDF engineer units to four UN peace operations and brought different types of equipment each time. For instance, in the UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti

(MINUSTAH), the main equipment brought included large dump trucks, dozers, truck cranes, excavators and bucket loaders. JGSDF engineers were tasked with removing rubble, repairing roads and constructing simple facilities to assist Haiti in recovering from the earthquake with a magnitude of 7.0.[7]

(4) Pre-deployment Training

Before deploying troops to UN peace operations, TCCs are required to sufficiently train their personnel according to the request by the mission and tasks they will likely engage. All personnel regardless of their assigned units are encouraged to study the UN Infantry Battalion Manual (UNIBAM). UNIBAM stipulates the main roles, responsibilities and features of the infantry unit. Since supporting the infantry unit is an important task for the engineer unit, learning UNIBAM would be helpful to reconsider roles of its own unit objectively and strategically.

Other areas that require training before departure include mission rule of engagement (ROE), protection of civilians, human rights and due diligence policy, mission-specific geographical and environmental conditions which could challenge effective operation, observations from advance site visits by the incoming engineer unit commander and officers and lessons learned from the outgoing unit. Furthermore, to optimize limited resources, the ability to coordinate with both UN and non-UN actors is highly preferred. As useful communication tools with other countries' contingents, proficiency of English and French is a plus.

Conclusion

In drafting the manual, Japan fully utilized experiences and lessons learned from the previous UN peace operations it participated in and contributed to establishing the standards and guidelines for the UN military engineer unit. We hope that the manual will be referenced widely and continuously by UN staff as well as TCCs, and contribute to improving interoperability of the engineer unit.

End Notes

[1] The manual can be downloaded from UN Dag Hammarskjöld Library website after your request is approved by the library. (http://dag.un.org/handle/11176/387296)

[2] Ministry of Defense. 2019.United Nations Military Unit Manual for Engineers(https://www.mod.go.jp/e/d_act/kokusai_heiwa/p ko/engn_manual/index.html).

[3] Japan has dispatched JGSDF personnel to UN peace operations in Cambodia (1992～1993), Timor-Leste (2002～2004), Haiti (2010～2013) and South Sudan (2012～2017) and contributed to infrastructure building in the areas of deployment.

[4] Ministry of Defense. 2019.United Nations Military Unit Manual for Engineers(https://www.mod.go.jp/e/d_act/kokusai_heiwa/p ko/engn_manual/index.html).

[5] As part of the UN reform initiated by UN Secretary-General António Guterres, in January 2019, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) was changed to Department of Peace Operations (DPO), which realized the system to better address wide range of issues related to peace and security. Around the same time, the Department of Management (DOM) and the Department of Field Support (DFS) were integrated, and the Department of Operational Support (DOS) was newly established. This change aims to increase support to the field offices and simplify the process of decision-making by transferring the authority of decision making from the headquarters to the field.

[6] D/CMS is often a civilian position assumed by senior UN official higher than D-1.

[7] Ministry of Defense. 2020.International Peace Cooperation Activities (PKO)(https://www.mod.go.jp/e/d_act/kokusai_heiwa/list_pko.html).