

## Lessons Learned from the IPA Seminar

Summary:

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SHIRBRIG was deployed for the first time under the mission heading UNMEE to help bring about the cessation of hostilities between Eritrea and Ethiopia in June 2000. In an effort to understand and learn from both the positive and negative experiences of UNMEE, the International Peace Academy (IPA) brought together over one hundred military and civilian experts to discuss SHIRBRIG's performance and formulate recommendations for future missions.

While each UN mission is unique, it was deemed that many of the lessons learned from UNMEE are applicable to peacekeeping missions in general. SHIRBRIG's first deployment was lauded as a success, which partly stemmed from 5 years of careful conceptualizing and planning. There were, of course, problems and challenges that the brigade faced on the ground that could only be discovered during an actual mission. As a result, the conference members determined four key 'lessons learned' from UNMEE.

First, SHIRBRIG forces are designed to be deployable within 15-30 days of respective national approval processes. This makes them the most rapidly deployable of all forces available to the UN. But, it still means they cannot deploy until the national approval process has run its course. Given difficult experiences in Rwanda, Somalia and Bosnia, even states committed to the SHIRBRIG were hesitant to provide troops to UNMEE without careful consideration of the potential risks. Aside from extensive risk assessments, delays arose from diverse parliamentary systems, which in some cases required extensive consultation and wider approval. To effect rapid deployment, SHIRBRIG members would need to develop a more efficient decision-making process.

Second, lack of previous collective training meant that the heterogeneous staff of UNMEE had difficulties working together in an efficient manner. Problems with language, computer literacy and training for specific posts could have been solved by a concerted effort to provide coordinated training in advance of the mission.