

# Eastern Africa Standby Force: An Overview

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## Abstract

*Eastern Africa Standby Force is one of the sub-regional brigades of ASF founded with the ultimate purpose of maintaining peace and security in the Eastern Africa. EASF consists of three main elements, namely the EASF Headquarters, the LOGBASE and the PLANELM. The force is managed by a political body of three organs so as to meet its objective. The organization has been under process pertaining to its institutional arrangement and internal transformation. Moreover, it is apparent that EASF is working in the standardization of its doctrine and training and to produce forces capable of operating in line with the pre-determined scenarios.*

## Key words:

ASF; EASF; Eastern Africa; Peace; Security

## Background

When Africa Union (AU) was assigning the role of coordinating the establishment of sub-regional brigades of African Standby Force (ASF) to Regional Economic Communities (RECs), Inter-Governmental Authority for Development (IGAD) (consisting of Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Sudan, Eritrea, Uganda and Somalia) appeared to be the principal actor in peace and security activities in the region. Hence, IGAD assumed the mandate of establishing EASF. To better understand the institutional development of EASF, therefore, it is better to see IGAD first as it is the foundation for EASF's establishment.

The creation of Intergovernmental Authority on Drought and Desertification (IGADD), as early warning scheme, in 1986 was aimed at informing the international community about the humanitarian crises caused by drought and the subsequent famine in the Horn of Africa (Haile, 2006; Fanta, 2008; Siradag, 2012). While being confined to areas of drought, desertification and food Security, IGADD disregarded military or security aspects, which, in turn, endangered the economic, social and political security of the region (Haile, 2006). To avert this problem, member states transformed IGADD to IGAD in 1996, with the view to deal with the issues of conflict management, prevention and resolution, which were overlooked formerly (*ibid*). Maintenance of peace and security in the Horn of Africa was the main objective of the organization (Haile, 2006; Fanta, 2008; Siradag, 2012). Accordingly, IGAD has played a significant role to defuse conflicts in Sudan and Somalia. Moreover, it established early warning and early response mechanism, known as the Conflict Early Warning Mechanism (CEWARN), which came into force in August 2003 (Fanta, 2008). This role and function further inspired AU to grant the mandate of establishing EASF to IGAD (Fanta, 2008; Jacobsen and Nordby, 2013). IGAD assumed the interim mandate of creating EASF-formerly known as Eastern Africa Standby Brigade (EASBRIG) (Robinson, 2014).

Eastern Africa Standby Force is one of the five sub-regional brigades of ASF that was

established in 2004 as the Eastern Africa wing. Following the decision of AU to establish ASF, Eastern Africa leaders arrived at a decision to establish their brigade in the region. During the establishment of EASF there were different RECs notably the East African Community (EAC) and the Common Markets for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA). However, neither the EAC nor COMESA had a directly mandated security role (Allehone, 2008). Besides, these organizations did not encompass all the 13 member states of the region (Alusala, 2004). Due to its level of involvement in the peace and security area and its inclusion of majority of states of the region, the task of organizing the brigade was assigned to IGAD temporarily (Allehone, 2008; Siradag, 2012; Sousa, 2013; Jacobsen and Nordby, 2013).

Intergovernmental Authority for Development was given a range of coordinating role<sup>1</sup>. Accordingly, IGAD held two consecutive meetings on the establishment of EASBRIG. The first meeting of experts held in Jinja, Uganda, from 13-14 February 2004, followed by a two-day meeting of Eastern African Chiefs of Defense Staff (EACDS) from Eastern

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<sup>1</sup>The EACDS decided that the interim coordination role of IGAD would include, coordination of all activities of the EASBRIG, calling meetings of the Council of Ministers of Defence and Security for EASBRIG and the East African Ministers of Defence and Security, undertaking fundraising in conjunction with other RECs, the AU and the UN to support the work of EASBRIG, providing and sharing information to facilitate planning for the EASBRIG and establishing an EASBRIG fund to coordinate donor funding and resources offered by the international community. (see the EASF Policy Framework )

Africa countries namely, Comoros, Djibouti, Kenya, Madagascar, Rwanda, Somalia, Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda, and a representative from COMESA (Alusala, 2004; Neethling, 2005; Oloo, 2010). The meeting was accompanied by observers from the Multinational Stand-by High Readiness Brigade for United Nations operations (SHIRBRIG) and Reinforcement of African Peacekeeping Capacity (RECAMP) (IGAD, 2004). The understanding was that, once established, EASBRIG will include all the 13 Eastern African countries, including, in addition to those mentioned above, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Mauritius and the Seychelles (Alusala, 2004; Hull, *et al.*, 2011).

July 2004 was a time set for the Brigade's establishment (Robinson, 2014). However, the policy framework adopted at the meeting of EACDS was approved by Heads of State and Government at a meeting in Kigali, Rwanda, on 9–10 September 2004 (Robinson, 2014). Subsequently, in September 2004, it was formally decided to establish EASF to undertake peace-keeping activities under the general framework of the AU (Neethling, 2005; Jacobsen and Nordby, 2013). Pursuant to Article 4 of Constitutive Act of AU and the Protocol Relating to the Establishment of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union (the PSC Protocol), EASF was established.

Member countries participating in the establishment of the Brigade pledged to contribute troops and agreed to locate troops of the Brigade on their countries of origin (Neethling, 2005), which was identical with the arrangement of ASF. During the meeting, several states pledged their contributions to EASBRIG, while others needed time to consult and report back later. Just to mention a few contributions, Rwanda offered two light infantry battalions and one mechanized battalion; Sudan, Uganda and Kenya each offered one light infantry

battalion; Djibouti offered one light infantry battalion (consisting of three sub-units) and two infantry companies and one de-mining team; Somalia offered one infantry company with 10 technicians (Alusala, 2004).<sup>2</sup> As can be seen from the list above, the majority of those contributing states are IGAD member states.

However, this process of establishing the Brigade encountered a problem. As EASF was to be coordinated by IGAD member states, non-IGAD member states resisted this monopoly by a portion of states of the region (Cilliers, 2008; Robinson, 2014). The idea of integrating the Brigade to the IGAD structure was also challenged by IGAD member states, notably Kenya due to the dominance of Ethiopia in the organization (Jacobsen and Nordby, 2013). Moreover, according to *anonymous* (2014), IGAD was not ready or had no mechanism to support the force. Similarly, it is also stated that, IGAD had no command and control structures required to give technical and political coordination (EACDS, 2005). These resulted in a number of EASF member states expressing their unwillingness to accept IGAD's continued coordination role (*ibid*). After strong protest, Eastern Africa Standby Brigade Coordination Mechanism (EASBRICOM), as an independent and all-inclusive coordinating mechanism, was endorsed by the Second Extra Ordinary Meeting of the Council of Eastern Africa Ministers of Defense and Security on March 30, 2007 to take over the coordinating mandate of IGAD (Kimathi, 2010; Cilliers, 2008; Hull, *et al.*, 2011; Robinson, 2014). EASBRICOM is located in Karen, near Nairobi, despite Ethiopian antipathy for Kenyan perceived dominance, which perhaps delayed the final decision of EASBRICOM's location in favour of Nairobi (Robinson, 2014).

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<sup>2</sup> These are just some of the contributions, for more details (*see* Alusala, 2004).

EASBRICOM embraced non-IGAD member states, as well.

Currently, active members of EASF includes Burundi, Comoros, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Seychelles, Somalia, Sudan and Uganda despite the fact that EASF was expected to embrace all 13 countries of the region. Three previous members namely, Tanzania, Madagascar and Mauritius withdrew their membership and joined the southern brigade (Kimathi, 2010; Cilliers, 2008; Robinson, 2014). Eritrea is not active participant due to its hostile relations with Ethiopia and Djibouti (*ibid*). As regards the newly born South Sudan, some discussion has been made to incorporate it into the EASF since the end of 2012, though not yet successful (Robinson, 2014). The South Sudanese were invited but fail to attend a meeting in Khartoum as well as the field training exercise held in Uganda in 2013 (*ibid*). Much effort has been made for the country to join the organization. The reason why it has not yet joined the organization may be due to its internal problem.

It is to be stressed that EASF is in a formative stage. It is in the course of setting up structures and policies (Kimathi, 2010). Moreover, the name of the Brigade and the coordination mechanism are changing indicating the organization's internal transformation. Accordingly, the name 'brigade' has been changed to 'force' by the Council of Ministers' meeting held in Nairobi on June 18, 2010 to show 'multi-dimensionality' (Robinson, 2014; Hull, *et al.*, 2011). This is meant to indicate the Brigade's incorporation of not only military but also police and civilian components, which were negligible until this period. This means that police and civilian components of EASF were not well staffed until that time (Hull, *et al.*, 2011). Accordingly, the EASBRICOM was also renamed as the Eastern Africa Standby Force Coordination Mechanism (EASFCOM) (Robinson, 2014).

Hence, EASF is still in its institutional establishment and transformation.

### **The Structures of Eastern Africa Standby Force**

Eastern Africa Standby Force has three policy organs namely, the Assembly of Heads of State and Government, the Council of Ministers of Defense and Security, and the Committee of Chiefs of Defense Staff. The Memorandum of Understanding on the Establishment of the Eastern Africa Standby Brigade (MoU) outlined the functions of the three policy organs under article 6, 7 and 8, respectively. The Assembly of Heads of State and Government is the supreme organ of EASF with the function of formulating policy, directing and controlling the function of EASF and authorizing the deployment of EASF. However, once EASF is deployed in a crisis area, it is to be under the control of the AU or the United Nations (UN). The Council of Ministers of Defense and Security appoints the commander of EASF, while the Committee of Chiefs of Defense Staff has advisory role to the above two policy organs and oversees, directs and manages the Planning Element (PLANELM), the EASF Headquarters, and the Logistics Base (LOGBASE). The whole mandate of these policy organs is to manage the EASF towards achieving its vision and mission. Member states assume the position of the chair, vice-chair and rapporteur of these policy organs through rotation (Allehone, 2008).

EASF has also three basic structures namely, the EASF Headquarters, the LOGBASE, and the PLANELM. The first two are co-located in Ethiopia, while the third one is in Kenya. Their functions are outlined in the MoU under article 9, 10 and 11, respectively. The EASF Headquarters “serve as a command headquarters for force preparation and operational command” of the EASF (IGAD, 200). The PLANELM

“serve as multi-national full time planning headquarters” for the EASF (*ibid*). LOGBASE, on the other hand, “serve as the Central regional base for maintenance, storage and management of the logistical infrastructure” of the EASF (*ibid*). As agreed on the MoU, the head of PLANELM needs to be a military officer of the rank of colonel or equivalent. Ethiopia, being the host of the Headquarters, appointed the first commander of the EASF, while other officers were seconded by member countries (Allehone, 2008). The commander of the EASF rotates annually in alphabetical order among member states (Hull, *et al.*, 2011). However, at the time of deployment, the African Peace and Security Council (PSC) will take over the mandate of appointing the commanders (Allehone, 2008). Countries appointing officers in the above discussed EASF structures shoulder the cost of paying their salaries; EASF pays only the allowances (*ibid*).

### **Standardization of Doctrine and Training**

The expectation is that multipurpose and multinational capability constituted from different countries having different background, techniques, doctrines, experience, values and traditions will work together towards the same goal, which is maintaining peace and security in the Eastern Africa. As stated by Cilliers and Malan (2005), “A multifunctional peace operations capability for the ASF would require standardized doctrine and a clear concept of operations that are consistent with UN missions”. The same works for each of the sub-regional capabilities. Accordingly, countries that pledged to contribute troops are required to train and equip their forces in line with common standards. As can be understood from the ASF framework, ASF in general and sub-regional brigades in particular, need to follow the UN doctrine and training standard

in a way fitting to African reality. Besides, member states need to harmonize their training cycle with UN and other external training plans. In this regard, EASFCOM is also intended to harmonize its training standards and, practically, International Peace Support Training Center (IPSTC) has attempted in standardizing the courses to be delivered for the trainees (UNDP, 2011). Besides, the EASF trained forces have been evaluated for their readiness through AU training doctrine and standards (Kilimo, 2013).

Moreover, to be effective in the joint peace support operations, multinational personnel need to have a joint pre-deployment training and exercise. This is crucial in order for diverse forces to have common understanding. To this end, there is a need to have common training centers. In this regard, Eastern Africa countries identified three centers of excellence for peace-keeping training. Accordingly, Kenya, Rwanda and Uganda have provided the peace support training centre. These are the IPSTC and the Humanitarian Peace Support School (HPSS) located near Nairobi, Kenya, the Military Academy at Nyakinama, in Rwanda, and the Jinga Staff College in Uganda (Cilliers and Malan, 2005; Kithami, 2010). These institutions are delivering training to forces contributed from member countries of the region.

More recently, EASFCOM signed memorandum of understanding with two Regional Training Institutions in Sudan and Ethiopia to strengthen the training pillars of the EASF. Accordingly, EASFCOM signed memorandum of understanding with the Sudan Peace Operations Training Centre on March 11, 2014 to conduct training in Khartoum (EASFCOM, 2014). EASFCOM also signed memorandum of understanding with the Ethiopian Police University College, on the same day, on March 11, 2014 to conduct training in Sendafa (*ibid*).

Thus, EASFCOM is in the process of expanding its centers of excellence to prepare trained forces to peace support operations.

In addition, in conducting a joint field exercise, EASF is on the right track. EASF has successfully conducted multinational Field Training Exercises as well as Command Post Exercises at different times to evaluate the level of preparedness and interoperability of forces to respond to conflicts effectively (Bouhuys, 2011; UNDP, 2011).

Standardization of doctrine and trainings as well as provision of a joint field exercise enable states to have similar standards with regard to the training and preparation of forces to the EASF. These also improve interoperability of troops with diverse background and know-how thereby enhancing successful operation of the force (Bouhuys, 2011; UNDP, 2011; Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Defense, 2011).

### **The Aim of Eastern Africa Standby Force**

The establishment of EASF has been strongly linked with the peace and security issue of the region, which is most volatile. As stated under Article 3 of the MoU on the establishment of the EASBRIG, the objective of the force is to undertake the functions of maintaining peace and security at the appropriate time in accordance with the authorization of the PSC. Member states committed themselves for the achievement of this objective. In the preamble of the MoU, they recognize maintenance of peace, security and stability as a precondition for improvement of cooperation and elimination of any form of threat in the region. To realize the aforesaid objective, EASF needs to effectively work in handling various conflicts of the region. This is stated in the

EASF's vision, which is "to contribute to regional and continental peace through a regional conflict prevention, management and resolution capability able to respond effectively to crisis within Eastern Africa and across the African continent" (Bouhuys, 2011: 27).

In the realization of this vision, the EASF has a tough assignment to do. The stipulated mission of EASF is "to develop a fully operational and multidimensional integrated Eastern Africa Standby Force ready for deployment by 2015, with an initial operational capability by 2010" (*ibid*). Hence, through building its deployment capability in the aforementioned periods, the force intended to prevent and react to conflicts in the region. Based on the stated objective, vision and mission, it is apparent that the very establishment of EASF was aimed to serve as a regional mechanism of responding to the prevailing as well as future occurrence of conflicts in Eastern Africa, and thereby securing peace in the region (*ibid*).

### **Mission Scenarios of the Eastern Africa Standby Force**

In realizing its ambitious objective, EASF is intended to act in line with its mission scenarios, which are identical with the ASF mission scenarios developed by the AU. It has six mission scenarios. In the first scenario, EASF intends to provide military advice to a political mission. In the second scenario, the force will co-deploy with the UN mission. This is similar to the case of United Nations – African Union Mission in Darfur (UNAMID) (Abubakar, 2008; Allehone, 2008; Alusala, 2004). The third scenario, however, requires EASF to be deployed as a standalone observation mission. This is evident in the AU Mission in Burundi (AMIB), AU Mission in Sudan (AMIS), AU Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), and AU Mission in the

Comoros (AMIC) (Abubakar, 2008; Alusala, 2004). This means that, EASF will be deployed in the disputed area independently without being co-deployed with other forces. The fourth scenario is concerned with the role of regional peace-keeping missions as conceived by Chapter VI of the UN Charter, including preventive deployment. The fifth scenario addresses peace-enforcement operations as envisaged in Chapter VII of the UN Charter (like operation in Burundi) and complex multidimensional missions (Allehone, 2008). The last and most difficult scenario, as envisaged by AU, is intervention. In this case, EASF is, up on the authorization of AU, fully empowered to conduct intervention whenever international community fails to respond quickly to grave circumstances like genocide and other massive violations of human rights (*ibid*). Hence, EASF is duty bound to secure AU's approval first to intervene militarily in cases of grave circumstances.

### **Conclusion**

Eastern Africa standby force is one of the five sub-regional brigades of ASF. It was established in 2004 with the aim of undertaking the functions of maintaining peace and security in the Eastern Africa in particular and the African continent in general. The force has three policy organs, namely the Assembly of Heads of State and Government, the Council of Ministers of Defense and Security, and the Committee of Chiefs of Defense Staff with the overall mandate of managing the EASF towards achieving its vision and mission. It has also three basic structures, namely the EASF Headquarters, the LOGBASE, and the PLANELM with their respective functions. EASFCOM is intended to employ standardized doctrine and training. Accordingly, it is practically attempting to create uniformity. In realizing its ambitious objective, EASF is expected to act in line

with its mission scenarios, arranged in their incremental order, from military advice to intervention.

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