

# **The psychological effects on Kenyan troops participating In operation Linda Nchi in Somalia 2011 - 2012**

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## **Abstract:**

The former United Nations Secretary General Dag Hammarskjold (1905-1961) once said that, “peacekeeping is not a job for Soldiers, but only soldiers can do it”.<sup>1</sup> This is because, the military personnel are trained to conduct combat operation and undertake many other functions such as stability and relief operations.<sup>2</sup> While this assertion is true that the military has unparalleled capabilities to accomplish some of the most difficult tasks, these operations present the soldiers with significant challenges that often lead to serious psychological impact that current mitigation and identification support systems such as the military command and chaplains may not optimally perform. The study examines the nature of Kenyan intervention in Somalia and the psychological trauma arising from hot pursuit of Alshabab among the first contingent of Kenya Defense Forces (KDF) troops in Somalia. It begins on the premise that ‘psychological impact of peacekeeping operations have not been subject to much analysis among peace practitioners and military officials in Kenya. In spite of Kenya having served in several peacekeeping missions - in a range of countries - including the war torn Somalia. Therefore, not much has been documented on the plight of Kenyan troops in such missions. This study attempts to put into perspective the traumatic and psychological effects during the operation on the first contingent of Kenyan troops in Somalia 2011-2012. The study uses both the psychological and historical lens to explore some ramifications and lasting implications of peacekeeping operations on Kenyan soldiers in Somalia. The project paper is particularly concerned with the psychological effects among the first contingent of troops during peacekeeping and peace enforcement following the incursion of Kenya Defense Force (KDF) into Somalia in pursuit of Al-Shabaab on 14th October 2011. The central thesis of the study is to examine the psychological effects among Kenyan troops. The study also seeks to determine the role of KDF intervention in Somalia. In the preliminary chapters, the study highlights the historical background of Kenya’s engagement in peacekeeping 1 Robert M. Perito, *Guide For Participants in Peace Stability and Relief Operations*, United States Institute of peace Press, Washington, DC 2010, P.279. 2Ibid. vi operation since 1973. It then examines the Somalia conflict and how armed militia groups have thrived in the war torn and stateless nation. One such group is Al-Shabaab which prompted the KDF intervention. The study then looks at the Kenya’s military intervention in Somali, the challenges troops encountered and how the operation experiences resulted in psychological trauma, hence the subject of the study, which is investigated in the next chapter. In chapter four the study examines the psychological effects among troops that arose from the intervention. Finally the study discusses the management of the psychological effects arising from the operations. The study involved both library and

field research. Field data was collected through oral interviews, focused group discussion and questionnaires. Observation was used to capture non verbal cues that enriched the study. Where necessary, research assistants were involved. Collected data was grouped, collated, analyzed and presented using qualitative techniques. The study concludes that the first Kenyan contingent to enter Somalia experienced both positive and negative psychological effects during these operations. The negative psychological effects arose from the stressors during pre-deployment and deployment phase. The major included: the crowded and austere living conditions, harsh weather, high workload, mission uncertainty and concerns about the family.

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