

Naej DRANER

Naej.Draner@gmail.com

Updated on September 14, 2020 :

Following the cease-fire of July 27, 2020, the beginning of a cease-fire monitoring system appeared. It remains to be strengthened and reorganized. Since 2014, the SMM and the JCCC both claim to be THE cease-fire monitoring system, and this continues in 2020. Each has a complementary competence and role. The "systems" have a system logic and a hierarchy that pushes them to work without the other. There has not yet been a frank and non-diplomatic explanation, but I think it will happen soon, and could be stormy, although they are both to be congratulated for the work they have done since July.

September 7, 2017

Image comparison with forest fires - observers and firefighters

Let's imagine that there is a large area of forest with a high risk of fire in the middle of summer. What device do you imagine to prevent the slightest brush fire from turning into an uncontrollable forest fire ?

First of all, time is important. If you arrive two hours after the brush fire has started, it's too late: it has become an almost uncontrollable fire. The device will therefore integrate the fact of reducing the intervention time to the maximum:

- Observation points are set up in such a way that any fire start can be spotted immediately, 24 hours a day.
- Firefighters are pre-deployed in different locations to be able to intervene as soon as a fire starts.
- As soon as a fire is spotted, information is given immediately from the observers to the firefighters.
- In addition, various preventive actions are launched to prevent people from unintentionally setting fire to the bushes (do not throw cigarette butts, etc, etc ...).

All this is obvious to those in charge of fire risks in a very dry area.

If we were to compare this system with the current cease-fire monitoring system in Ukraine, we could say:

- There are observer : SMM
- But we do not see the rest of the mechanism within the OSCE:
 - o There are no pre-deployed firefighters on site.
 - o The information can be transmitted 24 hours later and never in the minute.
 - o No preventive action is taken to ensure the orders received by the combatants on the spot.

Is it caricatural? Probably, but it is indicative of today's reality: it is a passive system that is made simply to observe, as if it were enough to watch a fire to extinguish a fire. One could imagine that the JCCC does a bit of a firefighter's role, since it has contact with the military hierarchies, but since its official role does not exist in the OSCE, the OSCE has a cease-fire observation system, but no cease-fire monitoring system. Moreover, since September 2014 there has never been a real cease-fire, only lulls.

2020/09/14 : we now see firemen

Passive and active system

When an SMM patrol sees a prohibited weapon in an area where it should not be, what does it do?

It notes the observation and transmits it to its hierarchy or to the JCCC: the system is passive.

The system would be active if the patrol made contact with the servants of the prohibited weapon, asked them to remove that weapon and insisted until the weapon was stored in a place where it could be verified that it remained there. This is what I call inspection patrols, as opposed to observation patrols.

As far as I know, all SMM patrols are observation patrols. They have excellent reasons to do so, but it will never work.

And relaying the information to the JCCC that is not on site is practically useless: the armament will certainly be elsewhere when the JCCC moves and if it moves. It would be better to have one on the spot in the patrol: first of all he could at least remind the combatants what they have to do and ask their direct superior if he does not want to comply: this would help the patrols in their missions. This is what I call the liaison officer.

Whatever the good reasons presented by the SMM representatives and the OSCE, I find them bad and stupid.

Of course, not every SMM observer will be able or willing to become an inspector. There is a language problem (solvable if you have the right people and a liaison officer), a behavioral problem (it can be dangerous depending on how you do it) and then you may not be comfortable making such requests to armed individuals when you are not (being armed for an observer could be dangerous): without proper training, he could make mistakes and an armed fighter will not hesitate to shoot if he sees that his interlocutor is armed, whereas he will hesitate if his interlocutor is disarmed).

This will require volunteers and making sure they have the ability to handle these kinds of situations with composure.

2020/09/14: the system became active at the central level but remains passive in the field. Not a single observation report on mercenaries from another country or foreign armaments in 6 years (there are some in both camps). I have not yet understood the SMM blockage on inspection patrols: they do not want ... and cannot without integrating liaison officers from each camp (who are not necessarily members of the JCCC).

Organization

A passive system is usually organized into a single territory with fixed points.

An active system is organized to reorganize itself according to events.

An active system only works with good local knowledge. It therefore requires a territorial breakdown into sectors with dedicated staff for each sector.

Today we are talking about 3 sectors: Luhansk, Donetsk, Mariupol. In practice these sectors correspond to the zone of incidents and do not cover other territories in which nobody intervenes. In the short term we can limit ourselves to these 3 sectors, in the long term it will be necessary to completely review the sectorization according to the needs of surveillance in a stable environment to cover the whole territory of Donbass and not only the contact zones.

Each of these sectors should have a coordination center called an operational PC.

An operational PC should be in a room organized accordingly:

- wall map or projected video map
- possible radio links to all patrols in the area
- identification of the usual areas of incidents
- taking into account observations (reported incidents)
- reorientation of patrols according to events
- a radio frequency that can be used by all forces in the field to report an incident and listen to what is happening

At least 2 people are needed in an operational PC. The military usually knows how to operate an operational PC without being given long explanations. JCCC members should help to make them work. On the other hand, it would be preferable that operational PCs are not under the responsibility of a JCCC member. Depending on whether he is Ukrainian or Russian, he will be reproached for reorienting the sector's system to satisfy his camp.

The mission of the operational PC should be to intervene with combatants and their hierarchies to calm down when incidents begin and before they escalate.

To do so, the operational PC must reorient its device, essentially a few dedicated patrols to observe and act.

In the case of excessively large incidents or areas with repeated incidents it should be possible to define sub-areas. A few patrols will be dedicated to the sub-sector and one of the patrols will act as the operational PC for the sub-sector. The definition of a sub-sector depends on the sector with overall coordination to the sectors, which must provide the resources necessary to operate the sub-sector.

2020/09/14: the sub-sectors do not officially appear. It seems that they began to operate in June or the first half of July 2020. At the end of August, it seems

that they disappeared in the face of regular incidents in the Donetsk sector and it seems that they have reappeared and are reorienting towards actions allowing dialogue between the 2 camps and possible local disengagement driven by the sub-sectors. I have not been able to get confirmation information on these points.

Managing

There is a need for coordination between sectors. This can be done in different ways: either a dedicated structure that does the overall coordination, or a COPIL (a body with representatives of the sectors and a few other participants such as a representative of the inspection patrols, OSCE and JCCC) that meets on a weekly basis.

Communication

The SMM's survey of combatants from different sides on the retransmission of cease-fire orders and instructions on the SMM shows that combatants were not informed of a cease-fire monitoring mechanism.

If an active system of control is defined, it must be explained so that it is known and the combatants inform this system of control rather than taking justice into their own hands and thus causing an escalation.

2020/09/14 This is the great breakthrough of the cease-fire of July 27, 2020. The combatants have had the right information, even if in detail we do not know if they got it orally through their hierarchy or by a more formal means.

Means of action of the control system

It is mainly persuasion that allows him to intervene. The control system is not a hierarchy of combatants in the field.

If the combatants had all received a one-page, A4-size text of the cease-fire order, and if the local stakeholders had copies of it, they would be able to recall, in the event of a blunder or violation, what their superiors had asked them to do.

Without a paper trail, stakeholders will only have their own ability to convince the fighters.

We can do without a paper trail, but it might have made the task easier. It is not known today (according to the survey made by the SMM and published in the daily reports) what instructions the combatants received to respect the cease-fire.

Inspectors must be able to persuade their interlocutors without having any written record of the orders they have received, but it would be simpler to have reusable writings by local stakeholders.

Conclusion 2020/09/14 :

Only part of the Cease-fire Control System is working. The JCCC-SMM integration is still partial and causes jolts from time to time, always on

the same basis where each one intends to be THE cease-fire control system by itself whereas each one has only a part of it.

The system became officially active on July 27, 2020. My perception is that it had been partially functioning as a pseudo-system for several months before July. The reformatization of the July 27th cease-fire allowed it to be institutionalized.

Among the important points to be consolidated in the short term :

- *transparency: the system should be able to report regularly on its activities, incidents and their resolution. There has never been any public visibility of JCCC activities. The SMM superbly ignores the cease-fire monitoring system in its current form.*
- *internal traces (logbook) of all incidents and actions*
- *Inspection patrols that seem to be a SMM sticking point for reasons that are not very clear and not very rational.*