

Portrait of Major Yang HUAN HUAN



Yang Huan Huan is an officer of the Chinese People's Liberation Army, with the rank of Major. She holds a Master's degree from the Military Academy of her country. She currently serves as a MONUSCO military observer based in Bukavu, South Kivu province. She explains here, in a few words, what her job within the UN Mission Force consists in. "As a military observer, I take part in patrols every day and I am always in touch with the local people," she says, expressing her pride "to be the first lady from her country to work for the United Nations Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUSCO) as a Military Observer"

Referring to her interactions with her colleagues and with the local people, Yang says she is happy to live in peace with everyone, to maintain "friendly and mutually respectful relations with all" and to do her "best to preserve the image of our

mission ". This is confirmed by the following testimony from the MONUSCO Force Deputy Commander, General Bernard Commins: "As a member of the first group of Military Observers sent by China, Yang Huan Huan and his teammates conscientiously perform the tasks and missions assigned to military observers. Every day they patrol, monitor the security situation and report on it. Yang accomplishes this task by using her gender status to reach out to the Congolese women and children in their local communities. While providing assistance to the local population, she offers gifts to children and shows her friendship, she is embraced and welcomed by the Congolese population".

It is worth noting that this is not Major Yang's first experience with a UN peacekeeping mission. Before joining MONUSCO, she served as PIO for the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) from 2009 to 2010. To serve the United Nations was "my choice", she says, "for I love peace".



Expressing her feelings about relations with local people and villagers, Major Yang says she is touched by their hospitality and desire to learn about other cultures. "I am touched by the stories I experience daily, as I come in contact with the local people and villagers. I am deeply moved by their simplicity, hospitality and eagerness to learn new things. Whenever our patrol vehicle drives into a village, children come out running after it and joyfully shouting "MONUSCO", obliging us to drive very slowly, careful not to raise much dust to avoid harming their health".

Turning back to her current role as Military Observer, she highlights the difficulties she and her teammates encounter in their daily fieldwork as well as the challenges faced. "Given that I am the first female Military Observer from China, my family and friends back home are very concerned

about my life in Africa. But as a soldier, I am prepared for all kinds of hardships. Here in Bukavu, there is neither enough water or electricity, added to the poor condition of roads”.

When you see the suffering of others, you feel obliged to come to their rescue, says Major Yang. “Before coming to Africa, I expected to see a vast grassland with mysterious creatures. But in actual fact, I find myself in a devastated thatched cottage or a mud house, surrounded by barefoot children and villagers with no clothes. Every time I see this, I think that I should do something. How can we help the villagers to move from poverty to prosperity? I think the only way is through acquiring the knowledge that changes the future of a people. Therefore, when we go patrolling, I often bring books, notebooks, pens and footballs, especially for children,” she says. “And I have involved my colleagues in this process,” she adds. Her view of the work of the United Nations in the DRC is that the Organization effectively contributes to the maintenance of peace in the country, and as such its presence is necessary.

Besides her job with the UN stabilization Mission in the DRC, she loves writing news articles as she is also journalist. On top of that, she loves cooking. Working in a country with music overheating, Major Yang says “I do enjoy nice music; I particularly love the DRC’s music though different from ours.” The young lady, bursting with energy, is single and has no children, she is the kind of persons who can give back hope to the most underprivileged by interacting with them; with her smile and sense of humanity she can boost the morale of the people sharing the same environment with her.

Her very best inmost dream for the DRC, she further says, “ is to see the Congolese people live peacefully. About the memories of the DRC after leaving this country, Major Yang said: “UN Mission is a big family; we come from different countries, with different cultures and backgrounds; it is a very good experience for every one of us to learn a lot from one another and to maintain good relationships. I will remember the friendship ties I had with the Congolese people, especially the smiling women and children, always confident, in spite of the hardships. I have learnt many lessons in DR Congo,” she concluded, with an amazing look...

***By Tom Tshibangu
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