

## Portrait of Ian Sinclair



With his British composure, I would not mean, it is hiding a hot temper, not knowing him very well, to take the liberty to affirm this; however, I may undoubtedly confirm he is quick-tempered. Ian Sinclair is the man not to be seen anywhere in MONUSCO (except for those with meeting mania) but who is everywhere, a man with bright blue eye overseeing everything that is happening in the mission. And with good reason, he is the pillar, the right and left hand as well as the eyes of the Mission's **"big boss"**.

Before joining the United Nations Mission, Mr. Sinclair, should I rather say "Officer Sinclair," much to our surprise, served under Her Majesty the Queen of England's command. Let us hear from himself about his wonderful career at that time: ***"I joined the British Army in 1974 and I served for 35 years as an artillery officer, army commando and officer of Special Forces. This helped me travel a lot around the world to take up positions of command and others and, as a result, I gained lots of experience in the field of multi-national and multi-agencies operations with the North Atlantic Treaty (NATO) and the United Nations. I also served in the North Irish Army, in Bosnia, in Kosovo, in Afghanistan and elsewhere."*** I am tempted to say: "call the Bond, James Bond."

Did you join the UN by chance or was it your choice: ***"It was my choice. I volunteered to be an officer on secondment to the UN Headquarters in New York in 2005 and here I am eleven years later! In Congo! I have served eleven years with the United Nations, almost exclusively in Peacekeeping, both in the field and at Headquarters. My first experience was as a Sector commander in the 90s (and later as Chief of Staff) in the UN Force in Cyprus. In 2005, I deployed on two verification missions in Lebanon in support of the Special Envoy and more recently in 2011 deployed on TDY as the Chief of Staff of the new UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) to assist its start-up. At UN Headquarters in New York, I first served as the Chief of Military Planning during the peacekeeping "surge" in the 2000s, planning the military forces needed for the peacekeeping operations in Darfur and Chad, as well Special Political Missions in Nepal and Somalia. I later became the Chief of Staff, in the Office of Military Affairs in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations."*** Would you explain how you became civilian because since I have been seeing you in MONUSCO, I note that suit and ties are no more secret to you? ***"Yes, it is in 2009 that I became a civilian and was selected to be the Chief of the Peacekeeping Situation Center, which subsequently "grew" into the UN Operations***

*and Crisis Center (UNOCC). I became the first Director of the UNOCC in December 2012, before coming to MONUSCO a year later".*

Will you explain your job with MONUSCO? *"I arrived in November 2013 from UN Headquarters in New York. I am the Chief of Staff of the Special Representative of the UN Secretary General in the DRC. I have been Chief of Staff five times in my career, which can only mean that I am a glutton for punishment or I needed the practice!"* No, you are a trustworthy man but keep on *"Being Chief of Staff is a privilege and a tremendous experience, but there are lots of constraints."* I further enquired: *"it means I am responsible for managing the day-to-day work of the Mission on behalf of the SRSG, as well as coordinating the pillars and components of the Mission to ensure that we all function effectively together"*. I sought the word: *"effectiveness"*, it is the word that fits to portray him better. If you send him a mail, his response will arrive faster than a racing horse would bring it to you.

Maman Sambo Sidikou, the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General in DRC from whom I requested a testimony about his closest aid had this to say about him: *"Ian is hard-working and organized staff who provides strategic guidance for the mission and treats everyone with respect. I served in many countries and had all kinds of close aids; honestly, I rarely saw such a highly conscientious staff with a keen sense of commitment to his job. His capacity to give his time to both the mission and the staff is boundless. As the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General in DRC, I extend to him both my gratitude and congratulations. I would also like to urge all the staff to follow his example and make our mission successful"*. Please M. Sidikou, would you elaborate further for me? My immediate supervisor does agree...

Ok, back to Ian. Calmly, Her Majesty's subject disclosed his career: firstly the classics (Latin, Greek, Philosophy and Ancient History), and gained a Bachelor degree at Oxford University (Worcester College). You see, philosophy can lead anywhere, even to military career! I have never heard of a philosopher - military, he must be the only one, if you know someone else, let me know, I am keen to see another specimen. A military officer who is philosopher, I guess he will think before shooting a bullet, right? In a battlefield, I confess...! With a smile on his face, he acknowledges that there are very few in town. *"I am British"*. Ha I understand better, that is why...I am not teaching you anything new when I say English people like to do things differently. If one takes a walk in London, one may see a passer-by holding a frog on leash, no one giving a damn, it is quite normal and no one would care a damn! He goes on: *"I was born and raised in Liverpool, famous for two football teams and the Beatles! But I left the UK at 17 and have since lived all over the world in America, Africa, Europa, the Middle East and the Far East."*

## PROTECT

## STABILIZE

## CONSOLIDATE PEACE

Ha, all right I would like to get your view on the overall situation in the DRC compared to other places. ***"DRC is a country with huge potential in the region and in Africa. It has been blessed by nature with resources but it has been and still is hampered by conflict. The future could be bright if the country and its leaders could harness its potential for the benefit of the people".*** What could we add to such a lucid approach? He is telling the truth. Do you think the UN can do better in term of its support to the DRC's institutions and authorities ***"The UN tries hard to be a force for good in the DRC. Sometimes we do well and enjoy success; sometimes we could do better. We are called upon to deliver a challenging mandate in a context of shrinking resources, even as the demands on the UN seem to increase. So we should be proud of our achievements but determined to do better where we lack progress or fail to deliver. I used to belong to a unit whose ethos was the "pursuit of excellence". I still try to follow that ethos".***

All right but you also need to relax every now and then. What is your hobby apart from your job? ***"I like to walk with my wife and my two dogs along the coastal paths of South West England, where we live. The walk will often include a visit to a traditional English "pub" (public house) for a drink and perhaps some food. I also love to sail. That comes from my childhood; whenever I was going on vacation, from the age of seven, on a small sailing yacht on Lake Windermere in England. I find a true relaxation aboard a boat".*** It is now clear that the Gentleman has been married ***"for 31 years, to Ms. Keely, my beautiful, wonderful, long-suffering wife,"*** he said, with shining eyes, ***"They both went through ordeals. He has two children, both now adults. Her daughter Caitlin is 27, she works in the US and his son Harry is 24 and he is taking his degree in Russian at University College London".*** The son is following in his father's footsteps with regard to the love of languages, a special language, in which were written the greatest works of fiction for the past centuries. Culture is well grounded in Sinclair's family!

Regarding the taste? ***"Yes, I like to cook, particularly family meal of roast meat with vegetables".*** Ha men, they always prefer the easiest part: the barbecue, the roasted, the beef brochettes, porridge...But what about the ***"1Nodlé"*** and ***"2Tiebou Dieune"***, no one would like isn't it? For this, women are expected to use the pestle and mortars! Just for fun Mr. Sinclair, what you do, many women would like to see their husbands get used to; to allow them to rest on Sunday.

Besides, Ian does a lot more at home: ***"I like to light the fires in our house".*** No, he is not a

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<sup>1</sup> \*Nodlé": Cameroonians' favorite food

<sup>2</sup> \*Tiebou Dieune": Senegalese national food

pyromaniac! You will certainly be amazed. He lives in England, it is cold and they use what we call chimneys in a house; that is why they light fires. Ian does more than that: ***"I also like to do handyman tasks around the house, putting shelves in the cupboards, fixing things etc"***. And here we find the word ***"effective"*** that speaks volume. Are you not a feminist? ***"Yes, I am; I shall follow Barack Obama's example, reported recently in the New York Times) that he was fond of doing household chores"*** (me) I wonder how he finds the time for all that ?...Michelle must be pouting grievances somewhere.) Well, Ian, let us keep on: ***"I support equality for women and I fight sexism. It is high time that we had a female Secretary General of the United Nations"***. Here we are. So as you may realize I too work for this to materialize but as you know men are always the obstacle, I should not teach this to an ex-military officer, should I Ian?

Let us now talk about something different, as you are aware, all of us shall leave the DRC one day, what memory would you ever take with you from the DRC? ***"I will remember the beauty of the country and the courage of its people, as well as my colleagues in the Mission and the UN Country Team. I hope for peace and prosperity for the DRC. The country has all it needs to become an economic power in the region"***. Do you like to listen to or dance the Congolese Rumba: ***"I know that the Congolese are fond of their music; but in all honesty, I have slightly different tastes in music"*** Doubtless, your ear should be rather keen to listen to Chopin, Beethoven, and Tchaikovsky or, ha ha I have found the Beatles! And regarding the dance you have not responded to my question. Well, between ourselves, I believe you can swing very well to the rhythm of the bagpipe.

By Aissatou Laba Toure

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