

College girl's one-year peacekeeping mission in South Sudan

A Chinese college student has completed a one-year peacekeeping mission in South Sudan this year with one of the 13 female infantry squads, which is carrying out humanitarian relief and protecting the rights of women and children.

Zhang Qin was majoring in Radio and Television Art in Chengdu University before joining the mission.

Zhang had wanted to become a soldier since she was in high school, and had felt regret for not entering the military academy. She later joined the army in her sophomore year, despite her family's disagreement.

After joining the army, she was selected to be a monitor in 2014, during her first year in the army, due to her talent. She then showed her ability in a variety of military skills and several languages, such as English, Arabic and Japanese.

Zhang was a member of China's third peacekeeping infantry battalion to South Sudan. All the members of this group were awarded the "Honor Medal of Peace" at this year's Mid-Autumn Festival, the highest honor of the UN peacekeeping force, for their contributions to maintaining peace in South Sudan during the past year.

South Sudan has been assessed by the United Nations as one of the world's most dangerous and volatile countries, it is common to hear gunshots at night and be awakened by gunfire. However, Zhang still insisted on volunteering to go there.

China has previously sent UN peacekeeping units and medical units as wars have broken out there many times. Two Chinese soldiers died in armed conflict while protecting civilians in July, 2016.

"One time, we were closest to danger; a gun was pointed at us," Zhang remembered. The gunmen, who had broken into the forbidden zone, were eventually deterred by their force and handed over their weapons.

Zhang rarely spoke to her family about these dangerous experiences. She preferred to tell her parents that the peacekeeping forces had often entered refugee camps to provide help, and when the patrol cars pass by, refugees often chase the car and shout "China."

Zhang and her comrades also sent gifts to the village children on Children's Day and held cultural exchange activities with Juba University, leading students and staff there to praise Chinese peacekeepers by saying "China good."

The wars are not yet over, and the traces of war can be seen everywhere, but

promising scenes are starting to appear on the streets of the capital Juba, where shops are opening, and more pedestrians walk on the roads.

Zhang said, she will leave the army and return to school to continue her studies in the near future. She wrote sincerely in her diary, "This military career is the most extraordinary scene of my life and my dream has been half realized. The remaining half, I will continue to pursue unceasingly."