
Confronting New Challenges Facing United Nations Peacekeeping Operations

By

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I am particularly pleased to make my first appearance on the Hill as the U.S. Permanent Representative to the United Nations (U.N.) to discuss an issue that has enjoyed such strong bipartisan support for more than sixty years. From the Truman Administration's backing of the first dispatch of the U.N. military observers in the Middle East in 1948 to the Bush Administration's support for unprecedented growth in U.N. peacekeeping between 2003 and 2008, the United States has repeatedly turned to the U.N., and its peacekeeping capacity, as an essential instrument for advancing our security.

Increasing the effectiveness and the efficiency of peacekeeping is one of the Obama Administration's highest priorities at the U.N. The Administration recognizes that many of today's peacekeeping operations face significant limitations and challenges. But like our predecessors, we know that the U.N. peacekeeping addresses pressing international needs and serves our national interests. There are five compelling reasons why it is in the U.S. national interest to invest in U.N. peacekeeping.

First, U.N. peacekeeping delivers real results in conflict zones. U.N. peacekeepers can provide the political and practical reassurances that warring parties often need to agree to and implement an effective cease-fire. Their deployment can help limit or stop the escalation of armed conflict and stave off wider war.

Today's U.N. operations do much more than just observe cease-fires. They provide security and access so that humanitarian aid can reach the sick, the hungry, and the desperate. They help protect vulnerable civilians and create conditions that will allow refugees to return home. And they help emerging democracies hold elections and strengthen the rule of law.

Many countries are more peaceful and stable today due to U.N. peacekeeping. In recent years, U.N. peacekeepers helped avert an explosion of ethnic violence in Burundi, extend a fledgling government's authority in Sierra Leone, keep order in Liberia, and take back Cité Soleil from the lawless gangs in Haiti. All of these countries, I should note, now enjoy democratically elected governments.

Second, U.N. peacekeeping allows us to share the burden of creating a more peaceful and secure world. America simply cannot send our fighting forces to every corner of the globe wherever war breaks out. Today, U.N. peacekeeping enlists the contributions of some 118 countries, which provide more than 93,000 troops and police to fifteen different U.N. operations. We are grateful for our partners' efforts to forge a safer, more decent world.

This is burden sharing at its most effective: The U.S., as was mentioned earlier by Mr. Delahunt, currently contributes 93 military and police personnel to U.N. operations, approximately 0.1 percent

of all uniformed U.N. personnel deployed worldwide. Sixty-five countries contribute more than the United States, including the other four permanent members of the Security Council.

Third, U.N. peacekeeping is cost-effective. The total cost of U.N. peacekeeping is expected to exceed \$7.75 billion this year. As large as this figure is, it actually represents less than 1 percent of global military spending. The United States contributes slightly more than a quarter of the annual costs for U.N. peacekeeping. The European Union countries and Japan together pay more than half of the U.N.'s peacekeeping bill. We estimate that the U.S. share of the Fiscal Year (FY) 2009 costs will reach, as Ms. Ros-Lehtinen had pointed out, about \$2.2 billion. We are grateful to Congress for the appropriations that will enable us to make our payments in full during FY 2009, as well as address arrears accrued from 2005 to 2008.

But let's be plain. \$2.2 billion is a lot of money; but the costs of inaction would likely be far greater, both in blood and treasure. According to the same Government Accountability Office (GAO) report that Mr. Delahunt referenced in 2006, the U.S. contribution to the U.N. mission in Haiti was \$116 million for the first 14 months of the operation, roughly an eighth of the cost of a unilateral American mission of the same size and duration. That works out to 12 cents on the dollar money that seems particularly well-spent when one recalls that the arrival of U.N. peacekeepers in Haiti let American troops depart without leaving chaos in their wake.

Fourth, the U.N. is uniquely able to mount multi-faceted operations. We have learned in Iraq, Afghanistan, and elsewhere how important it is to have an integrated, comprehensive approach. The U.N. has particular expertise here and can pull political, military, police, humanitarian, human rights, electoral, and development activities under the leadership of a single individual on the ground.

Fifth, sometimes warring parties won't let other outside actors in except for the U.N. Governments, rebels, warlords, and other antagonists often do not want foreign forces in their country. But the U.N.'s universal character and its unique legitimacy can make it a little easier for some governments and opposition elements to decide to let constructive outsiders in. All of these factors make the U.N. peacekeeping an effective and dynamic instrument for advancing U.S. interests. At the same time, we must be clear about the very real challenges facing U.N. peacekeeping, especially its missions to Africa. And let me highlight three of these challenges.

First, the sheer volume and growth of peacekeeping has put the U.N. and its missions under severe strain. Over the past six years, the U.N. has had to launch or expand eight missions in rapid succession. In 2003, the U.N. had about 36,000 uniformed personnel deployed around the world. Today, as I just said, it's more than 93,000. U.N. officials are the first to acknowledge that it has been difficult to generate, recruit, and deploy the numbers of personnel required, while keeping quality high and ongoing improvements on track. A series of initiatives started in 2000 and continued in 2007 greatly enhanced the U.N.'s administrative and logistical support capabilities, but they never envisioned the scale and scope of today's deployments. So, there is much still to be done.

Second, the U.N. is being asked to take on harder, riskier operations, often without the support and capabilities it needs from member states. The Security Council has recently given some very ambitious mandates to peacekeeping operations in Africa, such as protecting civilians under the threat of physical violence, including sexual violence, in vast and populous territories with limited infrastructure, faltering peace processes, ongoing hostilities, and uncooperative host governments.

Consider what the world is asking of the United Nations - African Union Mission in Darfur (UNAMID). Darfur is about the size of California, with a pre-war population of 6.5 million people.

Only 20,000 peacekeepers, and we are not even yet at that strength, are inherently limited in their ability to patrol territory so vast and to protect so many civilians. Imagine how much more difficult their task becomes, as it has, when the host government actively hinders their efforts, the parties balk at cease-fire talks, and the peacekeepers are deployed below their full operating capacity.

The government of Sudan has repeatedly failed to cooperate with international peacekeepers and humanitarian workers, denying them access, expelling international humanitarian groups, refusing entry visas for desperately needed personnel, and blocking the delivery of critical logistical support. While President Obama's Special Envoy on Sudan, General Scott Gration, helped persuade the government of Sudan to let four new humanitarian non-government organizations (NGOs) in, we continue to urge Khartoum to fill the gaps in critical humanitarian aid services and to improve its cooperation with UNAMID.

The UNAMID is now only at 69 percent of the 19,500 troops it was authorized to field and only 45 percent of its authorized police strength. The United States has provided over \$100 million worth of heavy equipment and training, as well as \$17 million worth of airlift assistance for African peacekeepers in Darfur; and as was just mentioned, we helped secure a pledge of five tactical-helicopters for UNAMID from the government of Ethiopia. But you may recall that UNAMID continues to plead with the international community, now for over two years, for eighteen medium-sized utility helicopters and about 400 personnel to fly them and maintain them. The missions in Chad and the Congo also lack critical helicopter units to enable them to quickly deploy to areas where vulnerable civilians need their help most.

And, third, host governments often lack the security and rule-of-law capacities needed to take over successfully from U.N. peacekeepers when they leave.

Let me flag one brief example: Liberia, which has made considerable progress during the last six years that United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), the U.N. Mission, has been on the ground, I saw for myself in May 2009, when I led a Security Council mission to Liberia. But Liberia's army, police, justice, and prisons systems are very weak; poverty, unemployment, and violent crime are high; disputes over land and ethnicity persist. The country's hard-won progress would unravel if peacekeepers leave too soon. So, it will take concerted action by many actors to meet these difficult challenges facing U.N. peacekeeping. It will also take U.S. leadership in areas where we are uniquely able to provide it. And the new Administration is moving ahead swiftly on five particularly important fronts.

First, we are working with our fellow Security Council members to provide credible and achievable mandates for U.N. operations. And we are working on a Presidential Statement with our partners that would outline a better process for formulating peacekeeping mandates and measuring progress in their implementation.

We have demonstrated our commitment to resist endorsing unachievable or ill-conceived mandates, for example by opposing in the present circumstances the establishment of a U.N. peacekeeping mission in Somalia. Peacekeeping missions are not always the right answer; some situations require other types of U.N.-authorized military deployments, such as regional efforts or multinational forces operating under the framework of a lead nation. And effective mediation needs to precede and accompany all peacekeeping efforts, if they are to succeed.

Second, we are breathing new life into faltering peace processes where peacekeeping operations are currently deployed. Our objective is to get the parties in fragile peace talks to abide by their

commitments, to cooperate with peacekeepers, and build mutual trust. Our most immediate priorities in Africa are Darfur and Sudan's North-South peace process, the Great Lakes region, and the Horn of Africa.

Third, we will do more to help expand the pool of willing and capable troop and police contributors. Our immediate priority is to help secure the capabilities that the missions in Darfur, Chad, and the Democratic Republic of Congo need to better protect civilians under imminent threat. But we are also pursuing more long-term efforts.

Since 2005, the U.S. Global Peace Operations Initiative (GPOI), and its African component, Africa Contingency Operations Training Assistance (ACOTA), have focused on training the peacekeepers needed to meet this spike in global demand. And as of this month, the program had trained more than 81,000 peacekeepers and helped deploy nearly 50,000 of them to peacekeeping operations around the world.

We must also prime the pump to generate even more peacekeepers. Other countries' willingness to provide troops and police is likely to increase if they see that key Security Council members, including the United States, not only value their sacrifice but respect their concerns. The United States, for our part, is willing to consider directly contributing more military observers, military staff officers, civilian police, and other civilian personnel, including more women I should note to U.N. peacekeeping operations. We will also explore ways to provide initial enabling assistance to peacekeeping missions, either by ourselves or together with partners.

Fourth, we will help build up host governments' security sectors and rule-of-law institutions, as part of an overall peace-building strategy. Our immediate priorities in this regard are Haiti, Liberia, and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), three places where such efforts could help let U.N. peacekeeping missions depart sooner.

As a host government's capacities grow, the role of a U.N. mission can be reduced. But we will not be rushed out of lasting results. We have made it abundantly clear to our Security Council partners that while we seek to lessen the peacekeeping load, as appropriate, we will not support arbitrary or abrupt efforts to downsize or terminate missions.

And finally, the United States will pursue a new generation of peacekeeping reforms from the U.N. Secretariat. We will support reforms that help achieve economies of scale and realize cost savings that:

- Strengthen oversight, transparency, and accountability
- Improve field personnel and procurement systems
- Strengthen the process of mission planning
- Reduce deployment delays and encourage stronger mission leadership
- Clarify the roles and responsibilities of all U.N. actors, in the field and at headquarters

The Administration is also encouraging reform efforts that elevate performance standards and prevent fraud and abuse, including sexual exploitation. The U.N. has taken several critical steps in recent years to establish and implement a zero-tolerance policy for sexual exploitation and abuse by U.N. peacekeeping personnel—including establishing a well-publicized code of conduct and creating Conduct and Discipline Units in the field to perform training, carry out initial investigations, and

support victims. The Administration strongly supports these measures, and we will remain vigilant to ensure that they are implemented effectively.

It is pragmatism and a clear sense of America's interests that drives us to support U.N. peacekeeping. And it is also pragmatism and principle that drive us to pursue critical reforms in this important national security tool. We need peacekeeping missions that are planned well, deployed quickly, budgeted realistically, equipped seriously, led ably, and ended responsibly. I look forward to your questions, your good counsel, and your continued support as we work together to build a more secure America and a more peaceful world.