

United Nations Peacekeeping Operations: An Underfunded International Mandate – The Role of the United States

**House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on International Organizations,
Human Rights and Oversight**

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OPENING STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN BILL DELAHUNT

This briefing will come to order. Today's briefing and hearing are entitled "United Nations Peacekeeping Operations: An Underfunded International Mandate – the Role of the United States."

In American political jargon, when states are required to implement a federal program, but no federal funds are provided, we call that an unfunded mandate.

The international community has been giving the United Nations more and more assignments – particularly in the area of peacekeeping. But these assignments rarely get the necessary level of funding. And what funding they do get is often not delivered on time. So while UN peacekeeping may not be an unfunded mandate – it is certainly an underfunded one.

This has been an ongoing concern. And it deserves our attention. Because it makes thoughtful planning for these missions problematic. Which has major consequences for international peace and stability. And implicates American national security and priorities.

And we bear some of the responsibility. Estimates are that the US owes the UN approximately 1 billion dollars for peacekeeping missions that the US voted for and supported as a Permanent Member of the Security Council.

Let me be clear: the US is not the only country in debt to the UN for peacekeeping. Japan – for example – only recently paid its dues – some 775 million dollars. And there are indisputable inequities in the assessment formula. While the US pays 26% of peacekeeping costs, China only pays 3%. And Russia pays just 1%. These levels should be adjusted to reflect today's global economic realities.

But I would also note that other countries often pay, not with cash, but by contributing troops and police. India and Pakistan, for example, provide over 20,000 uniformed personnel for these missions between them.

And make no mistake: these forces are needed. There are currently 17 missions in operation. Once the Darfur mission gets fully underway – a mission that President Bush has said is urgent – there will be 140,000 UN peacekeepers in the field. As recently as 2004, there were only 65,000 UN peacekeepers. And of that projected 140,000, only 313 are American military – who are primarily in administrative positions – or police. No US combat troops are at risk in a UN peacekeeping mission. There are no reports from those battlefields of US combat deaths and casualties.

To put it bluntly, UN peacekeeping is a bargain for the US, despite the inequities of the assessment formula. My Ranking Member, Mr. Rohrabacher, and I commissioned a Government Accountability Office report a few years ago to compare the costs of US and UN military missions. It found that US-only missions cost American taxpayers eight times more than an equivalent UN mission would. Eight times more. And of course, a UN mission entails no risk to American lives.

One only has to imagine the cost in American blood and treasure if US military forces, for whatever reason, were tasked with keeping the peace in Liberia, East Timor, or Lebanon. Or Somalia. Or Haiti. All of which are US priorities. All of these are missions that have had the support of successive US Administrations. We voted for them. If the UN did not exist, we would most likely have to address them directly, and often alone.

It is also important to put the costs in perspective. As I said before, there are estimates that we are in excess of 1 billion dollars in the hole to the UN for peacekeeping funds. That sounds like a lot of money. And it is a lot of money. But let's compare that to the burden that American taxpayers are shouldering in Iraq.

1 billion dollars is about the cost of three days in Iraq. Let me repeat that. For the cost of three days in Iraq, we could fight Islamist terrorists in Somalia. Keep the peace in West Africa. Prevent a refugee crisis in the Caribbean. And protect Israel's northern border with Lebanon. In my opinion, that is a bargain. And well worth the money. Especially when no US troops are at risk.

I would note that while the UN's peacekeeping duties have increased rapidly over the last twenty years, there has not been the same expansion in the UN's capacity to run these missions. It's only been through the valiant efforts of people like Jane Holl Lute that the UN has been able to produce such remarkable results with such limited resources.

Furthermore, it is important to note that the UN, unlike most nation-states, has no standing army that can be sent out to put out fires as needed. The UN has to start each peacekeeping mission from scratch, begging and cajoling countries to contribute troops. Which means those countries can attach all sorts of strings to the operation. In fact, even when these forces are wearing the blue helmets, the UN

doesn't really control them. And I have long supported efforts to reform these operations, to provide more accountability and clearer lines of control.

And the logistical problems are even greater. These troops need food. And water. And transport. They often operate in places where there aren't roads or airstrips or electricity. All that has to be put together as well. And all of that costs money.

That's why I am happy that we have Jane Holl Lute here today to brief us. I will introduce her more formally later, but let me simply say that Ms. Lute is the woman who has kept UN peacekeeping together over the past few years. So she is the one who can tell us exactly what the challenges are. How our money is spent. And what are the practical consequences when we don't give what is necessary.

Now, let me turn to my Ranking Member, Dana Rohrabacher of California, for any remarks that he might like to make.