

**Peace and Stability Operations:
Challenges and Opportunities for the Next U.S. Administration***

**Testimony before the Subcommittee on International Operations and
Organizations, Democracy and Human Rights Committee on Foreign
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by

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Introduction

Mr. Chairman, members of the Committee, I am honored to be invited to testify before this Subcommittee. I am a senior associate at the Henry L. Stimson Center, where I co-direct the Future of Peace Operations program, which focuses on modern challenges for peacekeeping internationally. Stimson is an independent research center that develops practical policy solutions to pressing international security problems, including the problems faced by United Nations peacekeeping operations. United States support for these operations has never been more important and the challenges that they face have never been more daunting.

Peace seems like it ought to be self-enforcing, but the most peaceful states are those with effective police—and fair laws, competent courts, and consent of the governed. States emerging from civil war usually have none of these. Sustaining whatever fragile peace they initially achieve may require outside help, and that help may be needed for several years. In 1995, for example, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) poured 60,000 troops into Bosnia to cement the Dayton Accords; today, 2,300 troops and police remain, under European Union (EU) command. So the effort is less but the presence remains. Other places where peacekeepers go are much bigger and more dangerous than Bosnia was when NATO deployed there. Bosnia itself was a very dangerous place before U.S. pressure and NATO air strikes brought its own civil war to a halt, a war where UN peacekeepers had earlier been deployed with neither the power nor the mandate to create and sustain peace. Yet that earlier operation was authorized by unanimous votes of the UN Security Council, votes in which the United States participated; votes that helped to discredit UN peacekeeping in the West for the remainder of the 1990s, because they sent UN forces into dangerous combat environments with which the United Nations cannot cope.

In this decade, the UN found its feet once again as major reforms in how peacekeeping is managed and mandated began to take hold. But in recent years, and especially the past twelve months, the Security Council has again begun to overuse its tools, with the result that UN peacekeepers find themselves in situations better suited to combat forces. One of the lessons of the 1990s is that peacekeepers must be able to defend themselves and their mandates when subject to violent tactical challenge, but such challenges must be balanced by high-level, political acceptance of the UN's presence. The Democratic Republic of Congo (or DRC) is one such dangerous place where the UN nonetheless has the support of the elected government and works

closely with it against various violent opponents of the peace, especially in this large country's lawless east. Darfur, Sudan, on the other hand, is a dangerous place where the government gives little more than lip service to the UN presence and does everything it can to delay and obstruct its deployment, up to the possible use of proxy forces to attack UN personnel.

Most peace operations in difficult places struggle to attract the manpower and funds they need to create real change over time. The United Nations promotes stability in the DRC, for example, with one-third as many troops as NATO started with in Bosnia, spread over an area six times as large that is teeming with well-armed and vicious militias. At the end of May, the UN deployed 88,000 troops and police globally. Few of those deployed in its toughest operations (which are mostly in Africa) come from developed states, which are the UN's major funders. Not only are in-kind contributions to UN operations from these states rather rare but late payments keep UN operations perennially underfunded. At the end of May, 11 months into its peacekeeping fiscal year, the UN was still short \$1.6 billion on a \$6.8 billion peacekeeping budget. In one of life's greater ironies, the UN may not borrow funds to cover that shortfall, a rule enforced by the most indebted government on the planet: our own.

As imperfect as the United Nations may be, people around the globe understand, accept, and applaud most UN actions. Compared to regional organizations and ad hoc coalitions, the UN has both broader political legitimacy, greater political reach, and a deeper logistics network supporting both humanitarian relief and peace operations—a network that leans heavily on private sector service providers. But the United Nations also needs consistent U.S. political, financial, and material support to make its operations work. Each of these is well worth strengthening.

Early in the next Administration, the President should begin that strengthening process by:

- Affirming that the United States and the United Nations share common goals in expanding the writ of human rights and realizing human dignity, which in turn requires international peace and individual human security.
- Offering strong support—in cash and in kind—to every UN peace operation for which it casts its vote in the Security Council, setting an example for others by promptly contributing the U.S. share of UN peacekeeping costs.

- Supporting the continued restructuring and strengthening of UN headquarters offices that plan and support peace operations.
- Pledging strong and sustained U.S. diplomatic and political support to UN peacekeeping operations, especially in volatile states and regions.
- Promising temporary U.S. military support, in collaboration with its NATO allies, for UN operations that experience trouble from local spoilers or terrorist action.
- Continuing to train foreign peacekeepers, contingent on their governments' willingness to discipline troops who violate international humanitarian law.
- Announcing that the United States will expand its own capacity to contribute to the non-military elements of peace and stability operations.

A Brief History of Peace and Stability Operations

Contemporary peace operations got their start after World War II, when some 200 unarmed military observers wearing UN armbands patrolled cease-fire lines between India and Pakistan and armistice lines around the new state of Israel.¹ Six decades later, 110,000 troops, police, and civilian personnel in 20 UN missions on four continents use presence, persuasion, and modern weapons to support the rebuilding of peace under tough conditions. The African Union-UN “hybrid” mission in Darfur (UNAMID) will, when fully deployed, drive that total near 130,000. NATO manages a further 50,000 peacekeepers in Kosovo and Afghanistan, the EU manages 2,300 in Bosnia, and the African Union (AU) managed about 7,000 in Darfur through the end of 2007, when that force merged into UNAMID. Washington has authorized, endorsed, or supported all of these operations through its votes in the UN Security Council or on NATO’s North Atlantic Council.

In the past two years, in fact, the United States has supported a substantial increase in the size, use, and deployment of UN peacekeeping around the globe, including:

- A new peacekeeping mission in Somalia;
- A seven-fold expansion of the UN’s peacekeeping mission in Lebanon;
- The four-fold expansion of the peacekeeping mission in Darfur;
- Reauthorization of the UN’s large peacekeeping missions in Haiti and Liberia;
- A renewed peacekeeping mission for East Timor; and
- New missions in Chad, the Central African Republic, and Nepal.

Peacekeeping today costs \$10 to \$12 billion annually, not including counterinsurgency in Iraq or Afghanistan. The UN's peacekeeping budget accounts for just over half of that total and Washington pays for roughly one-quarter of the UN peacekeeping budget.

The costs of UN peacekeeping operations are pro-rated among member states according to a "peacekeeping scale of assessment," which is based on states' shares of the regular UN budget. The five permanent members of the Security Council each pay a 20% larger share of peacekeeping costs than they do of the UN Regular Budget, given their special responsibility under the UN Charter for international peace and security, and because they can veto any operation they dislike. UN operations, as currently conducted, are a relative bargain for their major funders, costing less than one-fifth of what they would cost if conducted exclusively by the funders' own military forces.

The costs of other peacekeeping missions are borne primarily by the troop contributors. NATO and the EU collectively fund mostly minor "common costs" for their missions. Occasional subsidies from wealthy states allow less-wealthy states to send troops to non-UN operations. Substantial outside cash and in-kind support (airlift and civilian contractors) have enabled the AU, for example, to deploy and support its observer force in Darfur.

The Case for International Cooperation

In deciding how best to defend themselves and their interests, all states face tough policy choices. Small, poor states have few options and often find their choices dictated by others. Big, rich states have more choices—but each choice comes with consequences. America can act on its own in many matters of peace and security, but there are times when acting in concert—through coalitions, alliances, regional groupings, or global institutions—is not only useful but necessary, because even a superpower has finite resources, as the US experience in Iraq and Afghanistan continue to demonstrate. And where resources needed to shore up the peace can be found among many implementing partners and organizations, smart engagement argues for leveraging those resources to accomplish common goals and to better manage hard problems multilaterally.

The United States has found it increasingly cost-effective and politically helpful to lean on other states and organizations to help it advance shared strategic interests in international peace, security, justice, and prosperity. The available forms of collaboration have complementary

strengths: Coalitions of the willing are better at suppressing violence but typically lack staying power and means of joint finance. Regional organizations have greater legitimacy and cohesion when working within their regions but risk losing both when they venture farther afield. The UN cannot handle full-scale combat since it lacks both full control over the forces it receives and the cohesion of the best alliances and coalitions, but what it lacks in combat power, the UN makes up for in its legitimacy and staying power.

Compared to regional organizations and ad hoc alliances of states, the UN has greater political reach and a deeper network supporting humanitarian relief as well as peace operations. Those who think of the UN system as desk-bound should witness its fieldwork firsthand, since more UN staff members work in field postings than in headquarters. Peacekeeping operations are supported by a global system of financial assessments that enable the UN to tap the strengths of the private sector, with more than 100 “systems contracts” in place for essential mission support.

Given the growth in this area, it is a sure bet that the next Administration will face serious questions of resource allocation regarding the UN and global peace and stability operations.

Coping with Growth in Peacekeeping Operations

In the face of explosive growth in UN peacekeeping over the past decade, the first question is whether the world, and the United States in particular, are providing sufficient resources to support this growth—which they have promoted. The answer to this question would have to be “no.” The surge in UN peacekeeping has not been met with steady funding, by commensurate increases in the number of staff in the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO), or in the number of troops or police volunteered to the UN by its richest members for the UN’s toughest missions. The result has been forces of highly variable professionalism. In the past three years, the UN has asked states to take back hundreds of troops and police as investigations have implicated them in sexual abuse and exploitation of local populations.

The United States chronically under-budgets its share of UN peacekeeping costs, even as it votes for more and expanded peacekeeping missions on the Security Council. As of February 2008, the U.S. had built up \$1.2 billion in essentially permanent prior-year debt for UN peacekeeping and was likely to fall at least another \$500 million short in its peacekeeping dues for 2007–08.²

Beyond this challenge, ever since operations in Somalia (1992–93), the United States has declined to provide troops for the riskier UN peacekeeping forces. The Force Commander and majority of UN forces in Haiti (1995–96) were American but the last U.S. military unit to serve in a UN-led mission came home in 1999. Subsequent U.S. non-participation means that our government has no military commanders in any current UN field missions and dwindling institutional memory of how UN operations work. U.S. contributions of police officers to UN operations also has dwindled in this decade, from 849 in December 2000 to 230 this June.

The second big question is whether the world and the United States are lining up the right kinds of capabilities to meet the world's needs in the peace and stability arena. In peace operations, the military's real exit strategy is successful peacebuilding, or "transition and reconstruction." This involves many tasks—from arranging and supervising elections, training novice lawmakers, and jumpstarting economic activity to rebuilding police forces and promoting independent judiciaries—all tasks for which armed forces are poorly suited or totally inappropriate. Successful peacebuilding, and therefore a successful exit strategy, require complementary civilian capacity working alongside the military.

What Washington Should Do: Recommendations for Action

As UN peacekeeping's largest and most influential donor, the U.S. government, under a new Administration, should make it clear, very early on, that it supports an effective UN that, in turn, supports international peace and security in irreplaceable ways—not as a tool of U.S. policy but as a venue for leveraging scarce funds and people toward a just public order that improves people's lives and contributes to our national security.

Early in the new term, while the UN Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations is in session, the President should set out the following principles and policy goals:

- **Affirm that the United States and the United Nations share common goals in expanding the writ of human rights and realizing human dignity, which in turn requires international peace and individual human security.** The majority of UN member states are poor, less than free, and often difficult to deal with. As a global institution, the UN includes the world's worst human rights offenders but also its strongest human rights proponents. Moreover, the UN Charter and the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights reflect Western values on a global stage.

The General Assembly regularly votes budgets for peace operations that Washington sees fit to support in the Security Council, and those budgets are cleared first by a committee of 16 states on which the United States has nearly always had a strong voice. The UN system also provides a wide range of services through its operational agencies that work beyond the realm of high politics and security, in food aid, refugee support, human rights support, global public health, vaccinations against childhood diseases, and nuclear non-proliferation.

• **Offer strong support—in cash and in kind—to every UN peace operation for which it casts its vote in the Security Council and set an example for others by promptly contributing the U.S. share of UN peacekeeping costs.** The UN is precluded from borrowing to finance its operations, so when the Security Council votes to support a mission, the UN must rely on Member States’ payments toward the mission’s “assessed” budget to get things underway. The Administration frequently under-budgets for UN peacekeeping operations, and the Office of Management and Budget in recent years has cut State Department requests, making it up later with “supplemental” requests. This sleight-of-hand approach means that money shortages have driven U.S. dealings with the UN on matters of peace and security that should have been driven by U.S. interests. Even UN missions launched with urgent U.S. backing may not receive U.S. funds for months unless they can hitch a ride on a timely supplemental in the Congress. U.S. delays encourage other member nations to hold back funds. The bottom line? Mission deployments slow down to match the flow of funds, jeopardizing the people, places, and peace they are intended to protect.

• **Support the continued restructuring and strengthening of the UN headquarters offices that plan and support peace operations.** Secretary-General Ban-Ki Moon proposed, and the General Assembly approved, splitting the Department of Peacekeeping Operations into two parts, one (which keeps the old name) that is focused on policy, strategy, and planning, and another (the Department of Field Support) that is focused on finance, personnel, logistics, and communications. The General Assembly also agreed to add 287 staff to UN Headquarters support of peacekeeping, bringing the total New York staff to about 1,200, to manage up to 130,000 personnel in the field. Its cost, together with that of the UN’s main peacekeeping logistics base at Brindisi, Italy, is five percent of the UN’s peacekeeping budget. It is difficult to find any other agency (or company) in defense and security that runs on five percent overhead.

• **Pledge strong and sustained U.S. diplomatic and political support to UN peacekeeping operations, especially in volatile states and regions.** Every successful peace operation has had the strong support of at least one great power. Such support does not guarantee success, but its absence is a near guarantee of failure.

• **Promise temporary U.S. military support, in collaboration with its NATO allies, for UN operations that experience trouble from local spoilers or terrorist activities.** In spring 2000, in Sierra Leone, Britain turned a non-combatant evacuation operation into a mini-counterinsurgency campaign against the armed gangs who had threatened both the country's fragile peace and a wobbly UN peacekeeping operation. Most of the British troops withdrew within four months, leaving behind a training mission to rebuild Sierra Leone's army. The UN operation restructured itself and ended up doing a creditable job, withdrawing in 2005. In 2004, in Haiti, U.S. armed forces led a coalition of the willing that preceded a UN operation, instead of serving in parallel. There is no good reason why such U.S. deployments could not be made in parallel, however, as Britain and the EU have done, should a UN operation run into trouble.

• **Continue training foreign peacekeepers, contingent on their governments' willingness to discipline troops who violate international humanitarian law.** The U.S. supports the G8's Global Peace Operations Initiative, which aims to train 75,000 peacekeepers, primarily in Africa, by 2010. This is a valuable program worth sustaining and extending, but it could also be used to give the UN better leverage over troop-contributing states whose troops commit crimes while on UN duty. The U.S. government should tie continued assistance under this and similar initiatives to recipients' demonstrated willingness to discipline troops who violate their own military codes of justice or UN standards of conduct while serving in UN operations.

• **Announce that the United States will expand its own capacity to contribute to the non-military elements of peace and stability operations.** This includes police personnel, political advisors, and civilian substantive experts who specialize, for example, in infrastructure repair, human rights, or de-mining. In the past two years, the US government has taken important steps toward the goal of building its non-military capabilities for stabilization and reconstruction. The next Administration should reinforce this nascent interagency process for recruiting, training, and deploying civilian personnel, acting on the knowledge that effective "transition and

reconstruction” programs are the best exit strategy for peacekeepers—our own and everyone else’s.

Lives and Leadership: Both on the Line

For nearly half a century, Washington was the recognized leader of the free world, earning that distinction by investing in and protecting the freedom of others. In the new century, as in the last, alternatives to western-style liberty and self rule are being offered to—or forced upon—peoples in Asia, Africa, Latin America, and the borderlands of Europe, especially in countries recently torn apart by war. Preserving liberty and fostering democracy among such countries is critical to America’s interests. It is too big a job for any one country to shoulder alone, but by working with allies and institutions like the UN, we can share that burden and earn back the respect of the world.

NOTES

¹ Some peacekeeping missions still deploy along international borders: between Israel, Egypt, Lebanon, and Syria, for example, or between Ethiopia and Eritrea. Some keep the peace within split but relatively stable states like Bosnia and Herzegovina, with its largely separate Serb and non-Serb populations, and Cyprus, where the “Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus” is recognized only by Turkey but backed by 36,000 Turkish troops. Most peace operations, however, deploy within states that are rather less stable, with recently ended wars that no local party was strong enough to win. Note that the counterinsurgency wars in Afghanistan and Iraq are not included in this tally, as they far exceed reasonable definitional limits of peace/stability operations. For discussion, see William J. Durch and Tobias C. Berkman, *Who Should Keep the Peace?* (Washington, D.C.: Stimson Center, September 2006), pp. 1–5.

² Better World Campaign (BWC), “FY 2009 Budget Request: Growing Debt to the United Nations and Peacekeeping,” fact sheet, February 2008. BWC estimate.