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Strengthening the Management of UN Peacekeeping Operations

An Agenda for Reform

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Author background/Disclaimer

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It is widely recognized that the expansion of UN peacekeeping missions since 1988 has outpaced the organizational capacity of the United Nations to properly plan for, manage, and support the complex military and civil operations now being conducted around the world. When there were only a few operations going at any one time and no new missions were being initiated (as in the period between 1978 and 1988), the ad hoc planning and supervision conducted by the peacekeeping staff within the UN Secretariat seemed adequate. The present situation is, however, quite different and there is increasing debate about the conduct of such operations. The number of UN peacekeepers in the seventeen missions is well over 80,000 personnell and the annual UN peacekeeping budget adds up to almost three billion US dollars. It is clear that substantial changes in how we manage these demanding enterprises are needed now

Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali's *An Agenda for Peace* has provided a sound basis for rethinking the UN's approach to peacekeeping. The General Assembly's Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations has made a number of valuable recommendations to improve the UN management of peacekeeping. The following encouraging changes are in progress now:

1. A UN situation center in New York is now operating on a 24-hour basis to maintain communication with the peacekeeping operations in the field.

2. The staff of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DKPO) in the UN Secretariat is being expanded with the additional political officers and seconded military officers to handle the myriad actions associated with the numerous peacekeeping operations.

3. DKPO has recruited special advisers to address the areas of training, demining, and civil police operations.

4. The process has begun to identify the requirements for UN standby forces, ready on short notice to deploy on peacekeeeping duty, and to have nations earmark military units for this purpose.

5. A common UN logistics doctrine for peacekeeping operations is being developed.

6. The Field Operations Division, responsible for the personnel logistical, and financial administration of peacekeeping operations, is to be integrated into DKPO, permitting a long-awaited unity of effort.

7. A policy planning cell will be established in DKPO to address general peacekeeping policy, as well as the emerging crises to which the UN may need to respond.

8. Initial arrangements are being made for DKPO to receive intelligence information about ongoing or potential peacekeeping missions, from nations with appropriate resources.

All these actions are to be strongly commended; however, we must recognize that these changes are the minimum first steps to improve the system. To enable the UN to truly meet the challenges of peacekeeping as we enter the 21st century, I propose four further improvements to the way we plan, conduct, and manage the 'peace' missions which employ military and civil resources to achieve important political objectives. Our goal should be to make peace-keeping operations as profesional and competent as the best military operations of a national armed force. The four actions are: the strengthening of the role of

to the Military Adviser to serve as the UN's Peacekeeping IG. To ensure a high degree of independence and objectivity, it would be preferred that, like the Military Adviser, the IG be a retired military officer, desirably a general officer with extensive peacekeeping experience. The IG would be assisted by two deputy IGs, one military, in the rank of colonel and possibly a retired officer as well, and one civilian of equivalant rank from the Secretariat staff, both with solid peacekeeping background. They would be supported by a staff of six assistants, four active duty military officers, of the rank of major or lieutanant colonel, seconded from their nations for three-year tours, and two civilians of equivalent rank from the professional staff of the secretariat. All of the assistant IGs would also require on-the-ground peacekeeping experience as a prerequisite.

The IG and his staff would be responsible for the monitoring of standards in training, operations, logistics, administration, and organization for peacekeeping forces and for ensuring the continuing relevance of the standards to the ongoing and potential operations. The designated standards would have to be met before a unit or personnel would be permitted to deploy on a peacekeeping mission. Naturally these standards would have to be described in some specificity in documents distributed to all member states.

The actual conduct of inspections could be accomplished in a fairly simple manner. The assistant IGs would be assigned specific responsibility for a group of nations which are currently providing forces for peacekeeping or which have identified themselves as probable contributors to future missions. The assistants would develop a schedule of announced inspections to be conducted on units due to replace existing formations in peacekeeping operations, as well as those earmarked for standby peacekeeping duty. The Military Adviser, the IG, or a deputy IG would lead each inspection team, supported by the responsible assistant IG and two or three qualified persons, military or civilians, drawn on a temporary basis from the troop contributing nations. No team member would participate in an inspection of his own nation's

forces. Such inspections would normally take three our four days and would be timed to allow correction of identified problems before deployment. They would involve checks of unit equipment, testing of troop knowledge of critical subjects, such as rules of engagement, performance of a short peacekeeping field exercise, and discussions with the unit leadership. The team would not be limited to checking military elements, but would also look at the preparation of civilian contingents, such as civil police detachments and medical teams, to be posted to a peacekeeping mission.

The logical extension of the inspector general function would be the addition of a similar staff element in the headquarters of each peacekeeping organization, to act on behalf of the force commander or civilian head of mission to check on the maintenance of standards by the staff as well as the contingents while in the mission area. Where there might be the possibility of serious misconduct or mismanagement by peacekeeping personnel, the IG might be called upon to lead an investigation by a special team of experts drawn from the UN Secretariat or several nations to inspect records, interview witnesses, and provide a formal report to the Under Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations. The advantage of a team from outside the mission area would be objectivity, especially important if there may have been friction between a particular national contingent and force headquarters.

Standby Force Headquarters

To adequately support the concept of UN standby forces ready to deploy on short notice for peacekeeping missions, I recommend the establishment of a multinational standby force headquarters. This element would be available to command the standby forces and be prepared for worldwide operations with an advance team able to depart within 72 hours of notification. Having forces on

standby for an urgent crisis without creating a similarly responsive headquarters is completely illogical.

The standby force headquarters would have to be "lean" and capable. It would provide the "skelton" on which would eventually be built a full-size force staff, tailored to the particular requirements of a mission. It should consist of a full-time cell of 15 personnel within the office of the Military Adviser plus an on-call group of up to 100 experienced military and civilian personnel, from within the UN Secretariat or nominated ny nations. These persons would be selected based on their specific abilities to perform the principal staff functions and other likely activities associated with potential peacekeeping operations.

The UN Secretariat would maintain a list of qualified force commanders, ready to fill in at the top of this standby headquarters and familiar with its procedures. Among the full-time members of this element would be a military officer designated as the interim chief of staff of the deploying headquarters and a political officer nominated as the interim civil deputy to the force commander.

All personnel would have to be available for worldwide deployment of up to six-months on new peacekeeping missions. There would be a system of rotating, incremental alert status for the headquarters personnel with one-third of the personnel on a 72-hours' notice for movement (the advance team), another third on a seven-day alert (the center team), and the remainder ready within two weeks (the rear team). Every month individuals would rotate as a group to another alert posture.

The day-to-day supervision of the standby force headquarters would be the responsibility of a staff cell within the office of the Military Adviser, led by a military officer, probably in the rank of colonel. He would have both a military and a civilian deputy, as well as a staff of 12 military and civilian officers with solid peacekeeping experience. The cell would provide the key elements of the standby headquarters and would conduct visits to operational force headquarters around the world to ensure their familiarity with the

problems encountered in the ongoing missions. The cell would also maintain accountability of personnel assigned to the headquarters. At least twice a year they would conduct a call-out exercise on short notice to bring together most of the personnel of the standby headquarters to simulate the establishment of a new peacekeeping mission. In addition all members of the standby headquarters would be required to spend a week each year performing similar duties in a current peacekeeping operation. For their standby service those in the on-call group would receive an appropriate compensation, either from their nation or the United Nations.

The communications and support of the standby headquarters will present some challenges. The list of standbye forces will include communications units necessary for a force headquarters to command its subordinate formations and to stay in contact with UN Headquarters in New York. However, some of these units may not be immediately available. The solution would be the procurement of several sets of commercially available, portable satelite communications radios to be operated by members of the advance team of the standby headquarters. The radio operators would come from the on-call group of the standby headquarters, drawn from nations or from the personnel of the UN situation room. The headquarters would also have to have a set of basic staff supplies and equipment prepared for air shipment on short notice, with optional add-on packages to support operations in particular climatic conditions. Some four-wheel drive vehicles would be ready to be moved by air, if the ground situation required.

Conclusions

The four measures outlined above will naturally have costs that will have to be paid by the UN, costs for the salaries of additional staff personnel and costs to implement several of the programs. In the cost-benefit analysis the concerned

member states of the UN, especially the consistently loyal troop contributors, should also calculate the costs of not taking these steps, the costs of continuing to try to run multibillion operations, where peace is at stake, on shoestring budgets. We should not ask any more of our peacekeepers than absolutely necessary, when their lives are already in danger. The most important question is really whether the UN can afford to not make these changes and not achieve a professional standard of competence and excellence in managing these critical missions.