

UN Peacekeeping Overview & U.S. Support

by Thomas W. Jacobson (January-February 2012)

The 51 founding nations of the United Nations, including the United States as a primary leader, granted authority to the UN to conduct military operations utilizing troops from Member Nations for approved international peace and security purposes. The wisdom of that decision is questionable. The first peacekeeping operation started in 1948, to attempt to keep the peace between Israel and its neighboring Arab nations. To date, the UN has conducted a total of 66 operations, 15 of which are current. (This does not include 13 other “political and peacebuilding missions” also directed by the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations.) Most are in Africa and the Middle East.

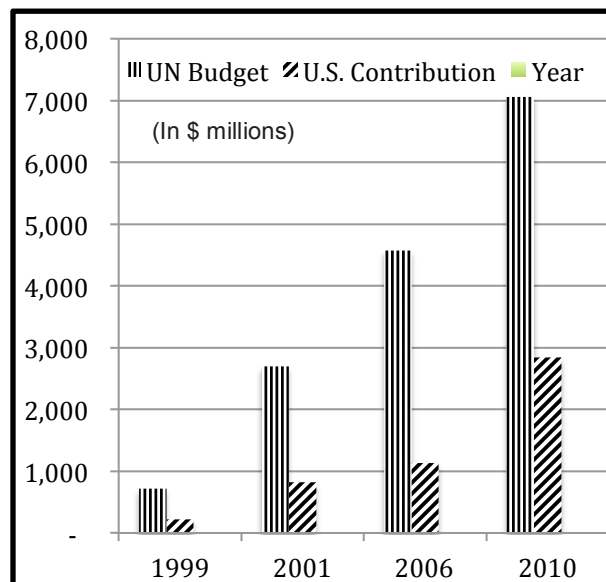
The UN peacekeeping budget skyrocketed from \$720 million in 1999, to 2.7 billion in 2001, to 4.6 billion in 2006, to over \$7 billion for both 2010 and 2011.¹ The U.S. remains the largest contributor, paying \$220 million (30.6%) in 1999, \$818 million (30.3%) in 2001, \$1.135 billion (24.8%) in 2006, and \$2.8 billion² (40.3%) in 2010. The U.S. contribution in 2010 exceeds the entire UN peacekeeping budget for 2001, and far exceeds the 27% authorized by law.

Countries in Africa and Asia provide 79 percent of the troops. Unfortunately, 39 percent of the fatalities of troops serving under the UN result from accidents.

This brief provides an overview of UN peacekeeping, but the next brief will cover successes and failures, exploitation and abuses. Some operations have been total disasters, as in Rwanda in 1994.

UN Charter & Military Leadership

The first paragraph of the first article of the Charter declares that among “The Purposes of the United Nations” is first “To maintain international peace and security” by taking “effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to peace...” Those collective measures include the obligation of Member Nations to provide armed forces and other assistance for “operations by air, sea, or land” for the purpose of peacekeeping.³



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The Charter does not grant the Secretary-General (SG) authority to call up armed forces, nor did it designate him as the commander-in-chief. The General Assembly may discuss matters related to international peace and security, but only the 15-member Security Council can authorize and define the scope of UN military actions, and only with the concurrence of all five Permanent Members (PMs) – the United States, China, France, Russian Federation, and the United Kingdom.⁴

The Charter authorized the establishment of a Military Staff Committee, comprised of high-ranking military delegations from the PMs, to oversee all UN peacekeeping operations; the chairmanship rotates monthly among the five nations.⁵ For 2012, the U.S. held the chairmanship in January, and will again in June and November.

Current practice, in part, appears to contradict the Charter. The Security Council still must authorize all peacekeeping operations. But in 1992, the UN established the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) as its own entity within the Secretariat (UN administration), headed by an Under-Secretary General for Peacekeeping Operations (USG). Further, the SG appoints a separate Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) to head each peacekeeping operation, and he reports directly to the SG, technically through the USG.⁶ This appears to have shifted the oversight and control of UN peacekeeping operations from the Military Staff Committee – and thus Member Nations – to the UN leadership, especially the three mentioned above and the DPKO.

Current Missions & Costs

The United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO) was created in 1948 as the first peacekeeping operation to keep the truce between Israel and the Arab nations surrounding the tiny country. UNTSO is presently comprised of 152 military observers (including two U.S.) and 232 civilians, but no troops or police. History indicates the mission’s effectiveness in keeping the peace is highly questionable and cannot prevent wars or attacks.

Two more ongoing peacekeeping operations that began decades ago surround Israel: Syria (1974-), and Lebanon (1978-). Two other ongoing operations began earlier: India and Pakistan (1949-), and Cyprus (1964-). Two additional have continued for at least 13 years: Western Sahara (1991-), and Kosovo (1999-). Other current missions started between 2003 and 2011. The table below shows the 15 active operations, personnel, and annual costs.

Active United Nations Peacekeeping Operations, Personnel, & Costs⁷

Region	Country	Mission Acronym	Start Year	Troops	Military Observ.	Police	Other Person.	Total Personnel	Budget (\$millions)
Africa - 7	Congo, DR	MONUSCO	2010	16,813	714	1,362	4,402	23,291	\$1,419.9
	Ivory Coast	UNOCI	2004	9,417	194	1,367	1,410	12,388	\$486.7
	Liberia	UNMIL	2003	7,769	131	1,283	1,726	10,909	\$525.6
	Sudan (Abyei)	UNISFA	2011	2,779	74	0	7	2,860	\$175.5
	Sudan (Darfar)	UNAMID	2007	17,626	247	4,977	4,529	27,379	\$1,689.3
	Sudan (South)	UNIMISS	2011	4,914	168	446	1,985	7,513	\$722.1
	Western Sahara	MINURSO	1991	25	198	7	281	511	\$63.2
Asia - 1	India & Pakistan	UNMOGIP	1949	0	39	0	76	115	\$10.5
Caribbean	Haiti	MINUSTAH	2004	8,856	0	3,582	2,164	14,602	\$793.5

Europe-2	Cyprus	UNFICYP	1964	856	0	69	151	1,076	\$58.2
	Kosovo	UNMIK	1999	0	9	7	388	404	\$44.9
Mid. East-3	Israel	UNTSO	1948	0	152	0	232	384	\$35.1
	Lebanon	UNIFIL	1978	11,959	0	0	1,021	12,980	\$545.5
	Syria	UNDOF	1974	1,047	0	0	144	1,191	\$50.5
Oceania-1	Timor-Leste	UNMIT	2006	0	33	1,202	1,490	2,725	\$196.1
Totals		15 Active		82,061	1,959	14,302	20,006	118,328	\$6,816.6

Due to the present turmoil within Syria, the Arab League is appealing to the Security Council to create a joint Arab-UN peacekeeping – really a forced peacemaking – operation in Syria, though China and Russia used their veto power to block the first resolution.⁸

Personnel Source Countries

Of the 192 UN Member Nations, 114 are providing troops, police, military experts, or civilians for the above missions, under UN command. About 79 percent of peacekeeping personnel are from nations in the regions of Asia and Africa.

Regional Summary of Countries Providing UN Peacekeeping Personnel⁹

Region	Countries	Troops	UNMEM ¹⁰	Police	Total	Portion
Africa	33	31,754	725	5,205	37,684	38.1%
Americas & Caribbean	16	7,379	226	423	8,028	8.1%
Asia	19	34,265	556	5,445	40,266	40.6%
Europe	32	5,720	311	457	6,488	6.6%
Middle East	5	2,402	107	2,367	4,876	4.9%
Oceania	9	1,209	59	406	1,674	1.7%
Totals:	114 nations	82,729	1,984	14,303	99,016	100%

Only 10 nations provide 59 percent of the UN peacekeeping personnel. The top three (and the ninth) are in Asia, but five are in Africa. Personnel are “paid by their Governments according to their own national rank and salary scale,” even though the UN reimburses the Governments about “\$1,028 per soldier per month.”¹¹ Thus, UN peacekeeping is a source of revenue for Governments that pay their personnel less than the flat rate.

UN Peacekeeping: Top 10 Personnel Contributing Countries¹²

Country	Region	Rank	Troops	UNMEM	Police	Total
Bangladesh	Asia	1	8,233	77	2,084	10,394
Pakistan	Asia	2	8,446	95	875	9,416
India	Asia	3	6,997	79	1,039	8,115
Ethiopia	Africa	4	6,116	99	9	6,224
Nigeria	Africa	5	4,948	75	726	5,749
Egypt	Africa	6	3,573	80	430	4,083
Jordan	Middle East	7	2,038	49	1,976	4,063
Rwanda	Africa	8	3,234	13	418	3,665
Nepal	Asia	9	2,809	53	735	3,597
Ghana	Africa	10	2,591	52	346	2,989
Totals	3 regions		48,985	672	8,638	58,295
% of Total (see table above)		8.7%	59.2%	33.9%	60.4%	58.9%

U.S. Personnel Under UN Command

As of 31 January 2012, the United States has 127 troops, military experts, or police serving under UN command on five peacekeeping missions.¹³ Most are serving as police in Haiti.

Country	Active Mission	Start Year	U.S. Troops	U.S. Military Experts	U.S. Police	Total U.S. Personnel
Congo, DR	MONUSCO	2010		3		3
Liberia	UNMIL	2003	4	4	13	21
Sudan (South)	UNIMISS	2011	3		4	7
Haiti	MINUSTAH	2004	9		85	94
Israel	UNTSO	1948		2		2
Totals			16	9	102	127

Fatalities

The saddest part of peacekeeping and humanitarian operations is the fatalities. More than a few military, police, or civilian personnel have been killed while serving water or food to innocent refugees and civilians, or otherwise doing peaceful acts. The term “malicious act” includes murder, terrorist acts, and tragic deaths in the midst of armed conflicts between opposing factions.

Fatalities of Personnel Serving UN Peacekeeping Missions¹⁴

Region	Country	Mission	Accident	Illness	Malicious Act	Other	Total
Africa - 7	Congo, DR	MONUSCO	17	15	3	0	35
	Ivory Coast	UNOCI	35	46	2	6	89
	Sudan (Abyei)	UNISFA	4	2	0	0	6
	Liberia	UNMIL	37	116	3	8	164
	Sudan (Darfar)	UNAMID	16	50	34	10	110
	Sudan (South)	UNIMISS	0	1	0	0	1
	Western Sahara	MINURSO	10	4	0	1	15
Asia - 1	India & Pakistan	UNMOGIP	9	2	0	0	11
Caribbean-1	Haiti	MINUSTAH	127	23	13	7	170
Europe-2	Cyprus	UNFICYP	98	45	15	23	181
	Kosovo	UNMIK	11	23	12	8	54
Mid. East-3	Israel	UNTSO	14	8	26	2	50
	Lebanon	UNIFIL	125	62	92	14	293
	Syria	UNDOF	19	6	7	11	43
Oceania-1	Timor-Leste	UNMIT	4	6	1	1	12
Other/Prior Missions 1949-2011			645	471	550	77	1,743
Totals Fatalities: 1948-2011			1,171	880	758	168	2,977
Percentages			39.3%	29.6%	25.5%	5.6%	100%

Because the highest percentage of deaths is by accident, the UN should once again review its safety practices and procedures. Most personnel serving the UN on foreign operations do not feel safe.

Troops who serve on UN peacekeeping missions are placed in a difficult position. They are authorized to “carry light weapons,” but are only “allowed to use minimum force in self-

defense, or if armed persons try to stop them from carrying out their authorized tasks.”¹⁵ Consequently, they do not operate like a normal military or police, but are vulnerable to attack and cannot stop acts of aggression unless directed at them. These are some of the reasons why the U.S. does not put many of our troops under UN command, though the first and foremost reason should be that our military personnel took an oath to uphold the U.S. Constitution, not the UN Charter.

Concluding Comments

Both the United States and the United Nations (with enormous support from the U.S.) have become the world’s policemen, resulting in an exponential increase in military and peacekeeping costs, with limited or questionable success, and sometimes catastrophic failure (addressed in next brief). UN peacekeeping efforts have expanded far beyond what was envisioned and authorized in the Charter, and beyond the financial capacity of Member Nations. The U.S. effectively borrows from future generations every dollar it pays to the UN, and the Obama Administration has authorized payments to DPKO that far exceed Congressionally approved limits. The U.S. and other Member Nations should reevaluate the role of the UN in peacekeeping, and whether UN leaders and officials are acting beyond the authority granted in the Charter.

¹ “United Nations Peacekeeping Operations,” Fact Sheet: 31 December 2010, & 31 December 2011.

² “Contributions for International Peacekeeping Activities” table with actual payments for 2010, plus estimates for 2011, in “International Organizations” budget of the U.S. Department of State, p. 678.

³ United Nations Charter, Chapter VII, Articles 42-43.

⁴ United Nations Charter, Articles 11, 12, 15, 18, 24, 34, 39-50.

⁵ United Nations Charter, Chapter VII, Article 47.

⁶ “Handbook on United Nations Multidimensional Peacekeeping Operations,” Peacekeeping Best Practices Unit, Department of Peacekeeping Operations, United Nations, December 2003, pp. 3-4, 9-22. In explaining all the authorization and practical procedures for creating a Peacekeeping Operation, this Handbook does not once mention the Military Staff Committee.

⁷ “United Nations Peacekeeping Operations,” Fact Sheet: 31 December 2011.

<http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/documents/bnote010101.pdf>. And, “Peacekeeping Fact Sheet.”

<http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/resources/statistics/factsheet.shtml>

⁸ “Arab League Calls for Joint Mission with UN in Syria,” by Liz Sly, *Washington Post*, Feb. 12, 2012.

⁹ “Contributors to United Nations Peacekeeping Operations,” Monthly Summary of Contributions, as of 31 December 2011. http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/contributors/2011/dec11_1.pdf

¹⁰ UNMEM = UN Military Experts on Mission, including Military Observers, Military Liaison Officers, and Military Advisers.

¹¹ “Financing Peacekeeping.” <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/operations/financing.shtml>

¹² “Ranking of Military and Police Contributions to UN Operations,” 31-Dec-11.

http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/resources/statistics/contributors_archive.shtml

¹³ “UN Mission’s Summary detailed by Country,” 31-Jan-12.

http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/contributors/2012/jan12_5.pdf

¹⁴ “Fatalities by Mission, Year and Incident Type,” up to 31 January 2012.

<http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/resources/statistics/fatalities.shtml>

¹⁵ “50 Years of United Nations Peacekeeping Operations.”

<http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/sties/50years/2.htm>