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U.N. PEACEKEEPING: AN EMPTY MANDATE

INTRODUCTION

Born in 1945 from the devastation of a world war that produced almost 49,000,000 military and civilian deaths, the United Nations was to many a new hope for a more peaceful world. The U.N. Charter, ratified by the U.S. Senate in July 1945, ambitiously stated the primary aim of the U.N. to be the maintenance of international peace and security. For this purpose, the Charter's framers attempted to revive an unsuccessful proposal for the League of Nations by calling upon "all members of the United Nations...to undertake to make available to the Security Council... armed forces, assistance, and facilities."¹

Yet the world has hardly enjoyed the peace and security that the United Nations and its advocates promised. British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher told the U.N. Second Special Session on Disarmament in June 1982 that, since 1945, the world has witnessed some "140 conflicts, fought with conventional weapons, in which up to 10 million people have died."² Certainly these conflicts are not the fault of the U.N. Still, the U.N. has done little to prevent them or to restore the peace--despite an expenditure of at least \$3 billion on peacekeeping, of which the United States paid about \$1 billion.

An expert on the U.N., Mark Zacher, has identified 93 conflicts between 1946 and 1977 in which the U.N. generally had very little influence.³ The United Nations, Zacher maintains, engaged

¹ U.N. Charter, Article 1 and Article 43.

² Address by the Right Honorable Margaret Thatcher before the U.N. Second Special Session on Disarmament, June 23, 1982, U.N. Doc. A/S-12/PV. 24, June 26, 1982, p. 4.

³ Mark Zacher, International Conflicts and Collective Security, 1946-1977 (New York: Praeger, 1979), p. 54.

in even limited debate on only 40 of these conflicts and did not contribute significantly to the resolution of any of them. Fifty-three of the conflicts were not even debated. The U.N. peacekeeping efforts, in short, amount to a chronicle of an empty Mandate.

Major conflicts that the U.N. either did not address at all or addressed only ineffectively include the Pakistan-Afghanistan conflict (1955 and 1961); the Soviet invasion of Hungary (1956); the war between the Netherlands and Indonesia (1962); the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia (1968); the Vietnam Wars (1945-1975); the Ethiopia-Somali conflict (1977); Cuban aggression in Ethiopia (1977 to the present); the Zaire-Angola conflict (1977); the Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia (1977 to the present); the Sino-Vietnamese border war (1979); the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan (1979 to the present); the Iran-Iraq war (1980 to the present); the Ecuador-Peru conflict (1980); and the Falkland Islands war (1982).

In some cases, where the U.N. has actually intervened with peacekeeping or observer missions, it has fueled the violence by supporting wars of national liberation and by failing to control international terrorism.⁴ In almost all cases, particularly during the last two decades, the U.N. has exacerbated the tensions between nations by "globalizing" each crisis as it arises; by opening up sensitive regional and international issues to the divisive scrutiny of the General Assembly; and by allowing the Soviet Union, through its veto in the Security Council, to exercise its influence in situations where maintaining tensions works to Soviet advantage.

The framers of the U.N. Charter proposed a complete system of international peace and security to address the problems arising from the World War and to seek solutions to these conflicts. As the implementing arms of this system, they envisioned the formation of peacekeeping forces under the control of the Security Council. In twelve of the scores of conflicts since 1945, the U.N. has established peacekeeping or military observer operations to carry out often unclear and ambiguous functions.

The most recent of these efforts was the 1978 establishment of the U.N. Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL). Its indefinite mandate and its inability to control the terrorist activities of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in Southern Lebanon clearly helped rekindle the conflict in June 1982.

Instead of U.N. peacekeeping forces, multinational units under French, Italian, or American command now stabilize the region, secure and protect the civilian populace in and around

⁴ See L. C. Green, "The Legalization of Terrorism," in Yonah Alexander et al. eds., Terrorism: Theory and Practice (Boulder: Westview Press Inc., 1979), pp. 175-197.

Beirut, and provide time for negotiations toward the eventual withdrawal of Israeli, Syrian, and PLO forces. In the Sinai, peace is maintained also without U.N. help. A Multinational and Observer Force (MFO) has been established in accord with a protocol to the Camp David Treaty.

Multinational or national forces have been used before and after the creation of the United Nations to protect or evacuate nonbelligerents and patrol and maintain cease-fire lines. These have included: the deployment of British Royal Marines to Tanganyika in 1964 to quell a national army uprising; U.S. intervention in Lebanon in 1958 with 10,000 troops deployed simultaneously with two British battalions; and French and Belgian intervention in Zaire in 1977 to protect nonbelligerents and prevent Communist forces in Angola from gaining control of mineral rich Katanga. In at least two instances--the Congo in 1960 and Cyprus in 1964--national forces, if properly employed, could have precluded the later deployment of U.N. forces.⁵

The United Nations clearly deserves failing grades for peacekeeping. The primary rationale for establishing a costly United Nations was that it would help build a more peaceful world. After nearly four decades, however, the U.N. peacekeeping record is very poor. This should prompt serious questioning of the U.N.'s raison d'etre.

THE RECORD OF U.N. PEACEKEEPING

The Machinery for U.N. Peacekeeping

The United Nations Charter gives "primary responsibility" and considerable discretion for maintaining international peace and security to the Security Council.⁶ It is authorized under Chapter VII of the Charter to determine the existence of any threat to peace, breach of peace, or act of aggression, and to make recommendations and decisions as to whether economic or even military sanctions should be employed.⁷ Such a decision of the

⁵ This would have been the case if the interested Western powers had either provided their forces with more authority at an early stage in the conflict (the Belgian forces in the Congo in 1960) or maintained a longer presence in the country (the British forces in Cyprus in 1964). For a criticism of the Belgian intervention in the Congo, see Ernest W. Lefever, "The Limits of U.N. Intervention in the Third World" (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1968), p. 13. For an examination of the British involvement in Cyprus, see Anthony Verrier, International Peacekeeping (London: Penguin Books, 1981), pp. 82ff.

⁶ U.N. Charter, Articles 27 and 39.

⁷ U.N. Charter, Articles 38, 41, 42.

Council is binding upon member states under Article 25. At the same time, the five permanent Security Council members can veto any enforcement action. Permanent members never have agreed on the specific forces that were to have been made available to the Security Council under Article 43. The Soviet Union and the United States, in particular, have not been able to agree on such matters as size and composition of the armed forces to be contributed by the permanent members, the provision of the bases, the basing of forces when not in action, and the time of their withdrawal.⁸ For this and other reasons, the Security Council has not made binding decisions to use force. The frequent threat or use of the Soviet veto over peacekeeping operations has contributed to the collapse of the Charter concept of Security Council acting in concert and supported by a permanent peacekeeping force.⁹

The concept of a permanent peacekeeping force was first set forth in a 1947 report of the U.N. Military Staffs Committee, whose authority was established by Chapter VII of the Charter, and whose representatives came from the military chiefs of staff of the five permanent members of the Security Council. The concept called for forming trained units of all arms and services, earmarked for U.N. service and provided with adequate support.¹⁰ The West European Allies' reluctance to encourage the independence of their former colonies and their desire to maintain control of disputes arising in those countries, however, worked against translating the notion of a permanent peacekeeping force into reality.¹¹

The concept of U.N. peacekeeping forces "with teeth" was also resisted by the Soviet Union, which had no intention of allowing the U.N. or any other military force to interfere with its existing empire in Asia or the recently gained territory in Eastern Europe--a policy which continues to this day. Moscow remains in arrears, in fact, for assessed contributions to peacekeeping operations in the amount of approximately \$119.3 million.

With the rejection of the concept of a permanent force, U.N. peacekeeping has been limited to a "watchdog" function--serving, with their consent, as a buffer or "plate glass window" between the parties to a dispute.¹² It is a referee rather than a peace enforcer.¹³

⁸ Leland M. Goodrich, The United Nations in a Changing World (New York: Columbia University Press, 1974), p. 113.

⁹ John Murphy, The United Nations and the Control of International Violence (Totowa, New Jersey: Allanheld, Osmun and Co., Inc., 1982), p. 21.

¹⁰ P.W. Bowett, United Nations Forces: A Legal Study of United Nations Practice (London: Stevens and Son, 1964), pp. 12-18.

¹¹ Verrier, op. cit., p. xx.

¹² Murphy, op. cit., p. 22.

¹³ William E. Mulligan, "Military Peacekeeping in the Middle East," The Link, Volume 16, No. 1 (January-March 1983), p. 1.

Among the few exceptions was the Korean War of 1950-1953. At that time, a procedural device was adopted to allow General Assembly action if a veto paralyzed the Security Council. This technique is the famous "Uniting for Peace" resolution, calling on the "good offices" of the Secretary General to investigate "any matter which in his opinion may threaten the maintenance of international peace and security."¹⁴ The resolution provided the United Nations a means to exercise "enforcement" against Communist aggression in Korea when the Soviet Union vetoed Security Council resolutions on September 6, 12, and November 30, 1950.

The lack of specific authority in the Security Council has meant that the individual units of U.N. forces are subject only to the authority of their own governments. The commanders of those forces, on the other hand, are appointed by the Security Council or Secretary General and are subject to U.N. authority. This compounds the difficulties when units are "directed" to carry out action to which their governments or commanders object.¹⁵

The individual units also reflect national attitudes toward peacekeeping. In many cases, these differ dramatically from a realistic interpretation of resolutions or from the demands of the local situation. Some U.N. soldiers, for instance, in Cyprus after 1964 and in the Congo after 1960,¹⁶ impressed with the idea that peacekeeping must involve the exercise of peaceful measures, surrendered their weapons on demand of local warring factions.

U.N. supervisory and observer missions have been mounted in twelve different crises since 1948:

- oo The U.N. Truce Supervisory Organization (UNTSO), established in 1948 to monitor the cease-fire between Israel and neighboring Arab states;
- oo The U.N. Observer Group in India-Pakistan (UNMOGIP) sent to observe lines of armistice between India and Pakistan in 1949;
- oo The first U.N. Emergency force (UNEF-I), established in 1956 and lasting to 1967, to patrol the Egypt-Israel border and to interpose itself between forces of both countries;

¹⁴ In 1947, the Military Staffs Committee Report, referred to earlier, was sought by the General Assembly as the basis for U.N. Operations. Under the terms of the "Uniting for Peace Resolution," the U.N. forces in Korea held authority under Chapter VI of the U.N. Charter ("Pacific Settlement of Disputes"), and not Chapter VII.

¹⁵ Verrier, *op. cit.*, p. xxiii.

¹⁶ One observer of U.N. peacekeeping operations maintains in the Congo, U.N. forces gave up their weapons because of fear or confusion. But there was a common demonstration of lack of training and discipline in both the Congo and Cyprus operations. See: Verrier, *op. cit.*, p. xxiv.

- oo The U.N. Observer Group in Lebanon (UNOGIL) set up in 1958 for six months to patrol Lebanon's borders;
- oo The U.N. Organization in the Congo (ONUC) which functioned from 1960 to 1964 for purposes of internal pacification;
- oo The U.N. Yemen Observer Mission lasting fifteen months;
- oo The U.N. Security force (UNSF) in Dutch West New Guinea (West Irian) for internal pacification of that region (1962-1963);
- oo The U.N. force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) for the internal pacification of Cyprus from 1964 to the present;
- oo The U.N. India/Pakistan Observer Mission (UNIPOM), established in 1965 for six months, to supervise a cease-fire in the Ram of Kutchian India-Pakistan border;
- oo The second U.N. Emergency Force (UNEF-II) established in the Sinai in 1973 to serve as a buffer force between Israel and Egypt;
- oo The U.N. Disengagement and Observer Force (UNDOF) established in the Golan Heights in 1974 as a buffer force between Israel and Syria;
- oo The U.N. Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), established in 1978 for internal pacification.

These operations have fielded almost 370,000 troops and officers from more than 50 U.N. member states. More than 600 soldiers have been killed on duty. The costs of the UNEF-II, UNDOF, and UNIFIL operations alone are estimated at \$973 million, of which the U.S. has contributed between 27 and 30 percent. The Soviet Union has paid virtually nothing.¹⁷ There also have been substantial costs for planning the operational and logistical support for such forces and for moving those forces into place.

Of the twelve operations, five remain active--the U.N. Truce Supervisory Organization (UNTSO), which has worked closely with UNIFIL in Lebanon since 1978; UMOGIP on the India-Pakistan

¹⁷ The Soviets do pay a small amount, about 10 to 15 percent of their assessment for the U.N. Disengagement and Observer Force in the Golan Heights (UNDOF). However, the three Soviet U.N. member states alone have withheld \$21.5 million for support of UNDOF and the U.N. Emergency Force in the Sinai (UNEF-II) since 1973.

border; UNFICYP in Cyprus; UNDOF in the Golan Heights; and UNIFIL.

What have these forces achieved? Have they enforced armistice lines and improved the prospects for peace in the areas in which they operate? The record is disappointing. In the cases of the Sinai in 1956, the Congo beginning in 1960, Cyprus beginning in 1964, and Lebanon in 1978, the opportunities for continued conflict were not reduced by the U.N. In several instances, the poor performance of some U.N. operations led to the reemergence of intensive levels of fighting.

The varied levels of performance of these operations and, in particular, the significant problems that U.N. peacekeeping and observer missions encounter, if not employed at an early stage in conflict or after a settlement between the conflicting parties has been achieved, is apparent from analysis of several such operations.

The U.N. Truce Supervisory Organization (UNTSO)

In Spring 1948, when the United Kingdom issued its Mandate for Palestine and the State of Israel emerged, the United Nations created its first international military peacekeeping organization. The Security Council appointed a Palestine mediator, Count Folke Bernadotte, who formed UNTSO with several hundred officer-observers from member states of the Palestine Truce Commission--Belgium, France, and the United States. The first round of the Arab-Israeli conflict was fought between May 1948 and March 1949. During this time, there were two truce periods during which UNTSO encountered the first of many problems that would beset that organization for the next 35 years.

During the truce, Israel received increased stocks of arms and ammunition in contravention of the truces, as did the Arab nations in the area. U.N. military observers from UNTSO were not permitted on the docks or at the airports through which this material flowed. They were therefore unable even to attempt to enforce the truce provisions.¹⁸

After armistice agreements were concluded in 1949, UNTSO remained in the Middle East for 34 years, providing staff and support to four other U.N. peacekeeping operations: UNEF-I and II, UNDOF, and UNIFIL. During this time, there were five conflicts in the Middle East--in 1956, 1967, 1978-1971, 1973, and 1982. By the time of the Six Day War of 1967, UNTSO had grown to 140 officer-observers and 400 staff. Equipment included a DC-3 observation aircraft, a fleet of jeeps and other vehicles, and an excellent communications system, which gave UNTSO direct contact with U.N. headquarters in New York.¹⁹ Despite the burgeoning

¹⁸ Mulligan, op. cit., p. 2.

¹⁹ Mulligan, op. cit., p. 3.

staff and resources, UNTSO had become even less able to inspect military units for arms in demilitarized zones or to monitor border violations. UNTSO had no authority to prevent or control such violations and could only report any infractions to the U.N. headquarters in New York or to other peacekeeping mission commanders. With only indirect influence over local events, the UNTSO observers have been aptly described by one Middle East correspondent as mere "adjuncts to persuasion."²⁰

The U.N. Observer Group in India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP)

Peace in the Middle East is clearly a more difficult goal for the U.N. than was the border conflict between India and Pakistan. Today the question of Kashmir, over which the Indians and the Pakistanis have waged two wars, is no longer a pressing matter before the Security Council or the General Assembly, although it remains an important issue between the governments of Pakistan and India.

In 1949 UNMOGIP was formed to observe the armistice lines drawn between India and Pakistan at the conclusion of a 14-month border war. U.N. observers continued to perform this function through January of 1957, when India annexed Kashmir. Despite U.N. disapproval of this annexation, observers were unable to prevent it. UNMOGIP went right on observing the situation through August 1965, when war again erupted. By the end of August, U.N. truce observers arranged a cease-fire--perhaps their greatest achievement in sixteen years of observing, but not of much help in the resolution of the conflict. Success was short-lived, collapsing in September when Pakistan launched a major offensive across the cease-fire lines.

At last, both parties agreed to a lasting cease-fire--but only after the U.S., Great Britain, and Australia had halted arms shipments, and Communist China threatened Indian border positions in the Himalayas. UNMOGIP then became the nucleus of yet another U.N. mission, this time named the U.N. India/Pakistan Observer Mission (1965-1966), which assisted in supervision of the new cease-fire. This temporary Observer Mission was soon phased out, but UNMOGIP still operates. Anthony Verrier, a British correspondent and analyst of U.N. peacekeeping efforts, could find no higher compliment to pay UNMOGIP than that "Its continued existence shows that when nations fail to settle disputes and seek U.N. help, they are usually loth [sic] to dispense with it."²¹

Throughout the history of U.N. peacekeeping operations, nations involved in conflicts and faced with the intervention of

²⁰ Verrier, op. cit., p. 13.

²¹ Verrier, op. cit., p. 5.

the U.N. either during or afterward have indeed found that U.N. peacekeeping operations seem to have a life of their own. But once they determine that their objectives cannot be reached without resort to the use of force, these nations do not let the presence of U.N. forces stand in their way.

The U.N. Emergency Force in the Middle East (UNEF-I) (1956-1967)

UNEF-I is considered the U.N.'s first police and patrolling force. It was organized under General Assembly auspices as part of a "Uniting for Peace" initiative for a cease-fire in the 1956 Arab-Israeli War, "to secure and supervise the cessation of hostilities" and to provide a buffer force along truce lines, achieved by consent of the parties concerned and not by direct military action.²²

Most scholars who analyze this U.N. effort agree that the ten years of UNEF-I patrolling the Sinai (1956-1966) brought an era of peace that may be considered one of the U.N.'s greatest contributions to the Middle East.²³ Yet this interpretation requires a strange definition of "contribution." For one thing, UNEF-I exhibited extraordinary weaknesses in its command structure. Writes Verrier:

UNEF would not be a force whose units would take 'orders' from their commander; it would not be a force with a deterrent function. Not only was UNEF in the territory of and of the borders of only one combatant--on whom a cessation of hostilities had, indeed, been imposed by its enemy--but its freedom of movement would be subject to the acts of a 'host' government which had accepted U.N. intervention to cover the humiliation of defeat.²⁴

For another thing, UNEF-I can hardly be credited with contributing to peace since it failed to halt that long series of incidents that brought the Middle East two more major wars. Through the latter part of 1966, UNEF-I watched helplessly as the Fedayeen, precursors of al-Fatah militant wing of the PLO, attacked Israel with increasing intensity. Israel eventually lost patience and, exasperated by UNEF's inaction, launched reprisal raids.²⁵ Neither the observer machinery nor the peacekeeping capabilities of UNTSO and UNEF-I had provided effective protection against Fedayeen terrorists.²⁶

²² Mulligan, op. cit., p. 3.

²³ See Milligan, op. cit., p. 4; Verrier, op. cit., pp. 14-38; Zacher, op. cit., pp. 73-74.

²⁴ Verrier, op. cit., p. 21. The problem of restrictions on freedom of movement would reoccur in the Congo and in Lebanon.

²⁵ Shubtai Rosenne, "Israel and the United Nations: Changed Perspectives: 1945-1976," American Jewish Yearbook, 1978, pp. 25-26.

²⁶ Brian Urquhart, Under Secretary General of the U.N. for Special Political Affairs, in Hammarskjold (New York, 1973), quoted in Ibid at note 30.

Another problem which beset the UNEF-I force was financing. Paying for the force was intended to be a matter of adjustment among the U.N., Egypt, and the troop-contributing nations.²⁷ This adjustment was never made, and the lack of proper financing became an issue that would haunt the U.N. for the next 27 years.

In May 1967, Egyptian President Nasser demanded that U.N. Secretary-General U Thant withdraw UNEF forces from the Egyptian-Israeli border. Without consulting the General Assembly or the Security Council, Thant complied.²⁸ The Secretary-General's decision was symptomatic of the weakness and limitations of U.N. peacekeeping capabilities in the face of firm local opposition. U Thant himself, in the 1967 report on UNEF-I, wrote:

An operation such as UNEF's is not an end in itself.... It is not an enforcement agent and can expect at best to exercise only a very limited degree of authority; an authority, moreover, which, unless specifically defined in its mandate and consequent agreements with the host country, automatically and instantly vanishes once it is challenged by the host government.²⁹

The U.N. Organization in the Congo (ONUC) 1960-1964

The U.N. force in the Congo at best was a stopgap until the basic structure of central authority and internal security could be established. At worst, the U.N. mission postponed effective assistance from the industrialized countries and complicated the resolution of major internal crises within the country by internationalizing what was basically a local crisis.³⁰ For this effort, the U.N. invested \$411.2 million, of which the U.S. contributed \$170.7 million or 41.5 percent. Financing the other 58.5 percent of the costs was a serious problem for the U.N., and the issue of peacekeeping costs remains critical today.

The U.N. Force Cyprus (UNFICYP) 1964 to the Present

The U.S. established UNFICYP in 1964 with the consent of the Government of Cyprus after an unsuccessful U.S. and British attempt to establish an international peacekeeping operation. The need for an effective peacekeeping force became particularly critical when armed clashes between Greeks and Turks spread throughout the island, following the efforts of Archbishop Makarios, first President of Cyprus, to revise the Cypriot Constitution to reduce the rights of the Turkish minority. British troops might have been able to maintain the peace on the island, leaving the

²⁷ Verrier, op. cit., p. 20.

²⁸ Verrier, op. cit., p. 36. Many participants in UNEF already felt its usefulness was at an end by that point.

²⁹ Quoted in Verrier, op. cit., p. 36.

³⁰ Lefever, "The Limits of U.N. Intervention," p. 11.

U.N. to concentrate on other matters, if Great Britain had been willing to provide the security force on other than a temporary basis.³¹

During the ten years following the establishment of the U.N. mission, UNFICYP had only mixed success in deterring violence. It was, however, clearly incapable of deterring the 1974 Turkish invasion and seizure of the north coast of Cyprus. The conflict reignited because Turkey became convinced that the Turkish Cypriot minority was in grave danger and that the United Nations could not protect it.³² UNFICYP, like the U.N. Organization in the Congo, did not have the proper tools for pacification and patrol. Other problems also prevented UNFICYP from fulfilling its mandate. Among them:

- oo The distinct difference in the initiative and training between various contingents of the U.N. peacekeeping force. For example, Scandinavian commissioned and noncommissioned officers in UNFICYP, unlike those in the British and Canadian contingents, were not expected to act on their own initiative. These officers, when ordered by a British or Canadian commander to act, often referred the order to their home governments.³³
- oo The resistance and aggression offered by armed bands of Greek and Turkish Cypriots to the UNFICYP contingents. The U.N. forces had, great difficulty in knowing whom to trust.³⁴
- oo The overwhelming lack of logic in the initial deployment of U.N. forces on Cyprus. Deployment that was, for example, tactically sound in Nicosia would have been pointless in open country.³⁵

³¹ Verrier, op. cit., p. 82. While they were on Cyprus before coming under U.N. command, the British forces deterred various communities by a presence that would have forced the warring elements to involve the peacekeepers in direct conflict.

³² John F. Murphy, The United Nations and the Control of International Violence (Totowa, New Jersey: Allanheld, Osmun, and Company, Inc., 1982), p. 54.

³³ Verrier, op. cit., p. 84.

³⁴ In late 1973 and early 1974, regular Turkish and Greek Army units supported their national counterparts on the island of Cyprus. Arms smuggling was endemic and, unlike the second U.N. Emergency Force in the Sinai (UNEF-II), UNFICYP was unwilling or unable to establish any means to curtail it.

See Verrier, op. cit., p. 85.

³⁵ Verrier, op. cit., p. 86.

- oo The drastic reduction in force in UNFICYP, beginning in 1966, to a level far too low for effective operations. In early 1974, UNFICYP numbered less than 3,000, down from around 6,500 a few years before.³⁶
- oo In some instances of local conflict on the island, U.N. forces stood their ground against various Cypriot groups; in other instances, however, they withdrew from the conflict area rather than get involved in the fighting itself.

In general, UNFICYP helped keep the level of violence on Cyprus to tolerable levels, except in those instances where either the government of Cyprus or that of Turkey decided to engage in large-scale military assaults. In these instances, the force could not be expected to prevent violence, since it was not equipped by its mandate to serve as an enforcer of the peace, but only operated as a peacekeeping force designed to cope with small-scale outbreaks of violence. It depended, in particular, on the continuing consent of the Cypriot government for the fulfillment of its mandate.³⁷

The United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) (1978-present)

UNIFIL is the most recent example of the U.N. peacekeeping efforts and of a mission which, like many of its predecessors, has failed on at least three levels.

At one level, UNIFIL has failed to fulfill its mandate because that mandate was unclear and poorly defined. At another level, UNIFIL has suffered from factors beyond its control--such as the numerous often indistinguishable groups of Muslim and Christian factions and members of various wings of the Palestine Liberation Organization. Finally, UNIFIL failed because of the uneven performance of its various contingents, many of which wittingly and unwittingly encouraged violence and raised the level of tension among warring factions in the entire region.

Before and after the 1967 war, Israel had suffered a variety of guerrilla attacks from Egypt, Jordan, and Syria. With the defeat of the Arab armies in the October War of 1973 and the Israeli occupation of the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, and the Golan Heights, Lebanon became a refuge for the Palestine Liberation Organization, a center for the training of terrorists from around the globe, and, in particular, a jumping-off point for guerrilla attacks into Israel. Israel brought the issue of these attacks

³⁶ The U.N. forces dispatched to the Sinai and Syria in the aftermath of the October 1973 Arab-Israeli War drew initially, and heavily, on UNFICYP. Even if they had not done so, there is little doubt that financial stringency would have led to a reduction in the latter's numbers. See Lt. Col. R.C. Harvey, The Operational Effectiveness of United Nations Peacekeeping Forces, unpublished thesis, Keele University, October 1973-September 1975, quoted in Verrier, op. cit., p. 92 at note 25.

³⁷ Murphy, op. cit., p. 53.

to the Security Council on several occasions, but its protests were in vain.³⁸ The Soviet veto, as in many previous instances, paralyzed the Council.

On March 14, 1978, Israeli forces attacked the PLO terrorists at their base camps in Lebanon. In response, the Security Council adopted a U.S. sponsored resolution calling on Israel to observe a cease-fire and withdraw from Lebanon. At the same time, the Security Council established a peacekeeping force, the U.N. Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL).

Security Council Resolution 425 (1978) gave UNIFIL the mandate to (1) confirm the withdrawal of Israeli forces, (2) restore international peace and security, and (3) assist the Lebanese government to reestablish its authority in the occupied area. There was an option to renew this six-month mandate for a further period if necessary. This force was initially to number 4,000 troops and remain in Lebanon for six months. The force is still in Lebanon and has grown to 6,300.

Most analysts generally agree that the UNIFIL assignment has been difficult and that the U.N. force, for reasons beyond and within its control, has failed to carry out its responsibilities effectively. Evidence shows in some cases that UNIFIL units facilitated the movements and activities of the PLO in southern Lebanon, thus contributing to the destabilization that triggered the renewal of hostilities in June 1982.

Among the most important factors affecting UNIFIL performance are:

1. Uneven ability of UNIFIL to assert necessary authority in pursuing its mandate.

The UNIFIL performance demonstrates that active deterrence of conflict can only be carried out by trained soldiers determined to assert authority when necessary.³⁹ Among the UNIFIL contingents, the Nepalese, Fijians, and French have earned the respect of all other forces in the area. French and Fijian units, for instance, have acted boldly against PLO contingents moving through their areas of control, particularly in 1978 and 1979. But because not all units exercised such authority, the adversaries were able to identify soft spots in the UNIFIL line through which they could and did maneuver.

2. Lack of familiarity with terrain.

Lack of familiarity with local terrain and inadequate intelligence were problems UNIFIL shared with earlier U.N. missions.

³⁸ See: Yehuda Z. Blum, "The Beirut Raid and the International Double Standard," American Journal of International Law, 64 (1970):73, pp. 98-104.

³⁹ Verrier, op. cit., p. 136.

3. Lack of freedom of movement and inability to control movements within the area of operation.

Former U.N. Secretary-General Kurt Waldheim failed to deal adequately with the issue of "freedom of movement" at the time of the initial UNIFIL mandate. Continuing inability to resolve this problem has been at the root of many UNIFIL difficulties.

4. The warring factions and religious groups in Lebanon.

The presence of various factions of the PLO, the Syrian armed forces, Maronite Christians and Druse, and Shi'a and Sunni Moslems pose enormous problems for the Lebanese government and all peacekeeping efforts. There are severe limits to what any outside agency can do in a state torn by tribal, class, and religious conflict.⁴⁰

5. The Christian Militia in southern Lebanon.

Following the initial Security Council resolution, the Israelis persisted in their intention to keep the Christian Militia, commanded by Major Sa'ad Haddad, in a buffer zone along the Israeli border with southern Lebanon, resisting the replacement of these forces with UNIFIL. U.N. officials who set up the UNIFIL mission, particularly Brian Urquhart, Undersecretary-General for Special Political Affairs and Director of all U.N. peacekeeping operations, maintain that the exact role Haddad was to play was left entirely unclear and made the UNIFIL mission that much more difficult.

Major General E. A. Erskine, the Chief of Staff of the U.N. Truce Supervisory Organization (UNTSO) and the interim Force Commander of UNIFIL established fourteen Observation Posts in the Christian Militia area and patrolled through it. This deterred the Christian Militia from any direct attack on PLO positions north and east of the Litani River.⁴¹ It also weakened any excuse the UNIFIL forces might otherwise have had for not better deterring the PLO infiltration and aggression in these same areas.

6. The inability of UNIFIL to control PLO attacks.

The PLO managed to use the U.N. "peacekeepers" to create chaos and confusion in Lebanon. Reports issued after the Israeli forces swept through the PLO camps in Lebanon during 1982 have indicated that there was "close and systematic intelligence cooperation between UNIFIL personnel and the PLO," and that UNIFIL officers and soldiers had even passed intelligence information to the PLO on a regular basis.⁴² On one occasion, the PLO

⁴⁰ Lefever, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

⁴¹ Verrier, *op. cit.*, p. 135.

⁴² Joshua Brilliant, "Eitan Accuses U.N. Troops of Passing Information to the PLO," *Jerusalem Post*, July 29, 1982.

was able to induce UNIFIL to supply it with sophisticated communication equipment.⁴³ As reported by John Laffin, a noted military historian and as confirmed by additional documents made available to The Heritage Foundation, other advantages gained by the PLO through UNIFIL beneficence include:

- oo PLO liaison officers were allowed to move fully armed with an armed escort through UNIFIL "controlled" territory;
- oo Explosives were carried into Israel by individual UNIFIL officers for use by PLO terrorists;
- oo UNIFIL officers were persuaded by the PLO to inform village leaders 24 hours in advance of any impending search for concealed weapons.⁴⁴

Further evidence uncovered after the 1982 Israeli operations (and almost ignored by the Western press) confirmed that the PLO had used refugee camps established by the U.N. Relief and Works Agency in Lebanon to teach fellow terrorists Marxist ideology and such tactics as those used in the devastating attacks on Israelis at the Munich Olympic Games in 1972 and Lod Airport in 1974.

The UNIFIL mandate, which had emphasized a particular need to restore "international peace and security" in Lebanon, remained unfulfilled at the time of last year's Israeli strike into Lebanon and is unfulfilled today. It is true that Lebanon provided an unusual test for U.N. peacekeeping operations and that, under enormously difficult circumstances, some contingents of the UNIFIL force did exercise enforcement authority against both the PLO bands and Haddad's Christian Militia.⁴⁵ But UNIFIL did not take those measures that would have made PLO infiltration of the Israeli-Lebanese border more difficult. UNIFIL did not maintain "peace and security" in southern Lebanon, and for this reason, has earned widespread skepticism and distrust--particularly of the Israelis.

FINANCING U.N. PEACEKEEPING OPERATIONS

The financial problems that have confronted U.N. peacekeeping efforts have created a large cash deficit.⁴⁶ Some nations,

⁴³ John Laffin, The PLO Connection (London: Corgi Books, 1982), p. 58. This information has also been corroborated by unpublished documents.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 59.

⁴⁵ The United Nations has lost 89 UNIFIL troops in Lebanon since 1978, most in confrontation with one of the major combat groups or in attacks on U.N. positions.

⁴⁶ Ruth B. Russell, The United Nations and United States Security Policy (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1968), p. 333.

primarily the Soviet Union and its East bloc allies, failed to pay their assessments for the first and second U.N. Emergency Force in the Sinai (UNEF-I in 1956, and UNEF-II in 1973), the U.N. Organization in the Congo (ONUC in 1960-64), the U.N. Disengagement and Observer Force in the Sinai (UNDOF in 1974), and the U.N. Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL in 1978).

The dispute over peacekeeping financing remains unresolved. In practice, some peacekeeping efforts are financed voluntarily, as in the case of operations in Cyprus. Others, such as UNEF-II and UNDOF, have been created by the Security Council, with maintenance costs included as "expenses of the Organization" under Article 17 of the Charter.⁴⁷ The Soviets and their allies continue to oppose the application of Article 17 to peacekeeping. When they feel their interests are served by so doing, the Soviet Union abstains from voting on peacekeeping issues, rather than exercise its veto power to block them. Even when it allows peacekeeping forces to be established, however, it pays almost nothing for their support and maintenance.

By December 31, 1982, the deficits for three separate peacekeeping operations were substantial.

--For the U.N. forces in the Sinai (1973-79) and in the Golan Heights (1974-present), \$62.2 million, which includes a deficit of \$35.9 million in the "Special Account."⁴⁸ For these two operations, current estimated Soviet arrears are \$21.5 million, or 35 percent of the entire U.N. deficit for these operations.

--For the U.N. Interim Force in Lebanon (1978-present), \$143.7 million, which includes a deficit of \$19.5 million still existing in the Special Account. Since 1978, the Soviets have withheld approximately \$97.8 million for UNIFIL, or 68 percent of the total deficit for this operation.

The U.N. deficits would be much larger if not for the financial support of the United States in assessed and voluntary contributions. For the above operations, the United States has paid the U.N. \$279.6 million in assessed contributions and \$13.1 million in voluntary contributions. This total of \$292 million is about 30 percent of the total cost of these operations.

For the 1960 peacekeeping operation in the Congo, the U.N. is still \$13.1 million in the red, despite \$35.9 million realized

⁴⁷ Murphy, *op. cit.*, p. 83.

⁴⁸ The Special Account is a bookkeeping device used by the General Assembly to cover the deficit from unpaid assessed contributions. This device allows the General Assembly to keep current peacekeeping operations going, by shifting funds from one account to another. It is basically a bail-out for the Soviet Union, which is the system's largest debtor.

from the sale of U.N. bonds. The total cost of the Congo operation was \$411.2 million, of which the U.S. paid \$132.3 million in assessed contributions. This figure includes cash contributions and airlift services of \$10.3 million for which the U.S. did not charge the U.N. Voluntary contributions, however, bring the total figure close to \$170.7 million, or 41.5 percent of the total U.N. costs in the Congo. When the Soviet Union refused to contribute any funds to this U.N. operation, the U.S. purchased \$100 million in U.N. bonds to cover additional Congo operation costs. At the time of the bond issue, the U.S. accepted the provision that interest and amortization payments be included in the regular budget assessment each year. Thus the U.S. has paid for the Congo operation four times: through assessed contributions, through additional voluntary contributions, through the purchase of U.N. bonds, and through the payments for interest and amortization on those bonds.

A year's operating expenses for the U.N. Interim Force in Lebanon is \$180 million. In 1982, the U.S. contributed about \$54.5 million to UNIFIL or about 32 percent. In the same period, the Soviet Union withheld its total assessed contribution of \$21 million or 12 percent. Since 1978, the Soviets have withheld \$97.8 million from UNIFIL, representing 58 percent of their total withholdings from the U.N. budget. The U.N. forces in Lebanon continue to provide the Soviet Union with some influence in determining the outcome of current negotiations. As long as they can continue to threaten the existence of the UNIFIL mandate through their veto power in the Security Council, the Soviets will continue to have such influence.

At some point, perhaps by the end of this decade, the Soviet Union will be in danger of losing its voting rights under Article 19 of the Charter which provides that a U.N. member may lose his vote in the General Assembly if he falls behind in his assessed contributions to the U.N. by an amount equal to or greater than his previous two years' assessed contributions.

The United States, however, should not wait until then to raise the issue of Soviet delinquency on peacekeeping assessments. The UNIFIL mandate will have to be considered again this June, by which time the issue of Soviet nonsupport should be raised.

For the U.S., the question must be: What does the U.S. gain from its large investment in U.N. peacekeeping? Is the U.S. actually improving the prospects for peace and security in Lebanon and the Middle East by supporting the concept of U.N. peacekeeping? There are few Americans probably who would not have the U.S. take some risks in the Middle East and provide financial support for the peacekeeping, if this investment genuinely improved prospects for attaining and maintaining peace in the region. UNIFIL, however, fails to fulfill the U.N. Mandate. In the light of the steps it has already taken to try to stabilize the current situation, particularly through the deployment of U.S. Marines in the Multinational Force in Beirut, the U.S. should examine closely the future viability of the UNIFIL mission.

NON-U.N. MULTINATIONAL FORCES IN PEACEKEEPING

In August 1982, a Multinational Force, led by the United States, and comprised of troops from the U.S., Italy, and France, moved into Beirut to handle the peacekeeping duties traditionally handled by United Nations troops. The U.N. was left on the sidelines for the second time that year.⁴⁹ At the conclusion of the Camp David Peace Treaty in 1979, the Soviet Union opposed and thereby defeated a plan to have the Treaty monitored by U.N. forces. A separate protocol was subsequently negotiated, and in March 1982, the Multinational Peacekeeping Force and Observers (MFO) was created. Nine nations contributed almost 2,100 peacekeeping troops to the MFO force. U.N. peacekeeping forces were not used in Lebanon primarily because these forces had proved ineffective.

The experience of the Multinational Force (MNF) in Beirut has demonstrated that peacekeeping in such a complex political environment as that of Lebanon today is by no means an easy task. The original mandate of the Multinational Force--to assure the safety of departing PLO forces, to assure the safety of the civilian population in the area, and to foster the restoration of the sovereignty and the authority of the Government of Lebanon over the Beirut area⁵⁰--has posed an enormous challenge to the participating Multinational Force countries. Yet using U.S. forces as part of the Multinational Force may be preferable to once more relying on the U.N. peacekeeping operation which has not thus far contributed to the improvement of security in that region.

CONCLUSION

The U.N. peacekeeping forces have not been able to deter aggression and conflicts or maintain peace between factions, groups, or nations. Crossing the "thin blue line" of U.N. peacekeeping operations has become all too common.

In his recent report on the work of the U.N., Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar affirmed that:

Peacekeeping operations can function properly only with the cooperation of the parties and on a clearly defined mandate from the Security Council. They are based on

⁴⁹ Madeleine G. Kalb, "The U.N.'s Embattled Peacekeeper," The New York Times Magazine, Sunday, December 19, 1982, p. 43.

⁵⁰ Letter from the Lebanese Deputy Prime Minister of Foreign Affairs to Robert Dillon, U.S. Ambassador to Lebanon, August 18, 1982.

the assumption that the parties, in accepting a United Nations peacekeeping operation, commit themselves to cooperating with it. This commitment is also required by the Charter under which all concerned have a clear obligation to abide by the decisions of the Council. United Nations peacekeeping operations are not equipped, authorized, or indeed made available, to take part in military activities other than peacekeeping. Their main strength is the will of the international community, which they symbolize. Their weakness comes to light when the political assumptions on which they are based are ignored or overridden.⁵¹

This report and the Secretary-General's comments on U.N. peacekeeping and peacemaking have been rightfully lauded as one of the first efforts by a Secretary-General to make that organization more effective in maintaining international peace and security. Yet a single speech cannot erase thirty-four years of history. The U.N.'s peacekeeping performance at best has been ineffective. Many U.N. peacekeeping contingents have not maintained a neutral stance in a dispute and might have harmed the already damaged reputation of the U.N. in many areas of the world, particularly the Middle East.

Fifteen years ago, Ernest Lefever, writing on U.N. peacekeeping operations in the Congo, concluded: "In the management of crises between states that threaten the peace, the U.N. instrumentality can be effectively employed only at an early stage or after a settlement between the conflicting parties has been achieved."⁵² Today, U.N. forces may be ineffective even in these situations, particularly since, as the recent conflicts in Lebanon and the Falkland Islands demonstrated, a "settlement" between conflicting parties may be very difficult to attain, and if attained, may not last. If U.N. peacekeeping forces are inserted after the settlement between parties is achieved, they may be caught in a situation where they have no enforcement authority if the settlement is broken and conflict renewed. This happened in the Congo in 1964, in the Sinai in 1967, and in Lebanon in 1978.

In an interview with The Heritage Foundation in January 1983, Brian Urquhart, Under Secretary-General of the U.N. for Special Political Affairs, maintained that one of the advantages of the U.N. Interim Force in Lebanon is that its contingents take "necessary risks," and that they accept the casualties incurred in taking such risks. Urquhart also noted, however, that it was necessary for U.N. forces to stay above the conflict and to

⁵¹ Report of the Secretary-General on the Work of the Organization, General Assembly, Thirty-Seventh Session, September 7, 1982, Doc. a/37/1, p. 7.

⁵² Lefever, op. cit., p. 14.

enforce certain "rules" by passive measures only. The Under Secretary-General admits, as do several of his colleagues at U.N. Headquarters in Manhattan, that even the record of attempted enforcement has been less than consistent with the needs of peacekeeping, particularly in Lebanon, and that some contingents will not take the "necessary risks."

Since the Security Council is not likely in the foreseeable future to authorize enforcement measures against a state under Chapter VII of the U.N. Charter, U.N. peacekeeping forces will not have the authority to enforce the peace and deter aggression. For this reason, the United States should be wary of supporting future U.N. peacekeeping operations that do not carry such authority. And Americans should be wary of crediting the U.N. with "successes" in peacekeeping that the U.N. has failed to achieve.

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