

United States Policy on United Nations Peace-Keeping Operations

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On June 17, 1992, U.N. Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali called for member states to make forces available for U.N. peace-keeping operations.¹ The United States should accept this invitation and prepare to contribute troops to operations sanctioned by the Security Council for four reasons.

First, even as the world becomes a smaller place, it remains a dangerous place. Regional wars, ethnic and border conflicts, and terrorist states continue to threaten U.S. tourists, investments, trade, and embassies. Moreover, if such conflicts are not prevented or promptly ended, the United States ultimately will incur tremendous costs as we fund relief operations and refugee programs, and as we tailor our foreign policy to meet the instability and insecurity that come with international chaos. Just as we would not want to live in a local community that had no police force, so we cannot live in a world community that has no police force.

Second, the United States cannot serve as the primary world policeman to halt every aggression, stamp out every dispute, or track down every rogue leader who threatens the peace and security of the world in whole or in part. Other nations will not long permit the United States to play the dominant role in world law enforcement that we played in the Persian Gulf. Furthermore, the American public will not long permit the United States to bear the greatest burden in international military conflicts. The United States may still need to have a residual unilateral role, but with few exceptions, the United States should not be the first line of defense or attack.

Third, because we would not wish any other single nation to be a unilateral policeman, and because no other single nation or regional group of nations is both able and willing to perform that role, a U.N.-sponsored force must be able to serve as the world policeman.

Fourth, the United States cannot expect other nations and their young citizens to incur risks and bear burdens in connection with U.N. peace-keeping operations if we are not willing to accept the same risks and burdens. The United States has a larger stake in world peace under law than any other nation, due to the global reach of our interests. In addition, as the world's only military superpower, the United States is best positioned to contribute substantial manpower, weapons, and logistical support to U.N.-sponsored

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1. *Agenda for Peace: Preventative Diplomacy, Peacemaking and Peace-Keeping, Report of the Secretary-General*, U.N. SCOR, 47th Sess., at ¶ 45, U.N. Doc. S/24111 (1992).

peace-keeping operations. In short, this country has an obligation to lead the way by contributing our proportionate share to U.N.-sponsored forces.

To satisfy this responsibility, the United States should take the following steps.

First, the United States should take the lead in strengthening and streamlining the United Nations Security Council, making it a small, effective executive body. The United States should encourage the Security Council to organize regular summits for foreign ministers and heads of government, secret, executive sessions (when necessary to facilitate negotiation), and subcommittees. This may in fact marginalize the General Assembly, but to some extent, the General Assembly marginalized itself long ago.

Second, the United States should maximize the role of the Security Council in building, making, enforcing, and keeping peace around the world. We should utilize both the Security Council and analogous regional organizations more frequently as our first line of military activity in every dispute.

Third, the United States should formally state that we are now willing to make troops available on a permanent basis that, on relatively short notice, could be contributed to U.N. peace-keeping and peace-enforcing missions at the request of the Security Council. Previously, we promised to provide logistics, communications, and intelligence support for such U.N. operations; now, we should promise to contribute troops as well.

Fourth, the United States should amend the Mission Statement of our armed forces to include cooperation with and participation in U.N. collective security operations among the explicitly stated missions of our armed forces.

Fifth, the United States should establish a new major U.S. military command, headed by a three-star or four-star officer, for the purpose of supporting U.N. military operations. This command would be responsible for planning U.S. military involvement in U.N.-sponsored operations and for training U.S. forces for participation in such operations.

Sixth, the United States should designate, train, and equip two specific brigades based in this country for use in U.N. operations.

Seventh, the United States should move the funding for its financial contribution to U.N. peace-keeping efforts from the State Department budget to the Defense Department budget. These funds are a large and controversial part of the State Department budget. By contrast, these funds would represent less than one-half of one percent of the total Defense Department budget. Thus, moving this financial contribution to the Defense Department budget will place the cost of United Nations peace-keeping to our national security in proper perspective.

Eighth, the United States and other U.N. member states together should develop a standing United Nations command structure. Given that all collective security operations are subject to United States approval, inasmuch

as we have veto power in the Security Council, there need be no constitutional or political impediments to committing U.S. troops to participation in these U.S.-approved operations under a mixed U.S.-U.N. command. Mixed commands of this kind are not unprecedented for American forces and should not be eschewed by U.S. policy-makers.

Ninth, the U.S. Secretary of State should remain the President's principal adviser and spokesman on foreign policy matters, including the U.S. commitment to international organizations such as the United Nations. However, the Secretary of State should share responsibility with the Secretary of Defense on collective security operations. The minimal time, attention, priority, and staff devoted to U.N. military operations in both the State and Defense Departments (prior to Somalia) should be substantially increased.

Finally, the United States should promptly pay all past dues and special assessments owed to the United Nations — approximately \$1 billion — and hereafter stay current in meeting those obligations. It is time to end our reputation as the world's biggest deadbeat.

I do not claim that this list of proposed actions is uncontroversial or written in stone. The State Department will complain that the Defense Department is infringing upon State's responsibilities. The Defense Department will complain about U.S. forces participating in battles not initially planned and directed at the Pentagon. Congress will complain that the responsibility for U.N. funding decisions is being shifted from one Appropriations subcommittee to another. Small nations will complain that the participation of the United States and other great powers in U.N. military operations will invite old-fashioned colonial intimidation, and that every popular uprising to overthrow a corrupt regime will be deemed a sign of instability or insurrection that must be repressed. U.S. citizens will complain that other nations are not doing their share, and that all U.N. operations are wasteful and inefficient. Internationalists will complain that the United Nations is now being given too many assignments of too great a magnitude that it cannot digest, risking renewed disillusionment and failure. Isolationists will complain that American lives will be wasted in foreign wars not of our making or choosing.

All of these complaints deserve attention. Nevertheless, we cannot forever dither and delay in doubt and deliberation. We stand today at a foreign policy crossroads at which we must choose a path that will affect the world and our role in it for generations to come. As Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali said in the *Agenda for Peace*, "[t]he United Nations was created with a great and courageous vision. Now is the time, for its nations and peoples, and the men and the women who serve it, to seize the moment for the sake of the future."²

2. *Id.* ¶ 86.

