

Memorandum on United States Support to United Nations Peace Operations
September 28, 2015

Memorandum for the Heads of Executive Departments and Agencies

Subject: United States Support to United Nations Peace Operations

As articulated in the 2015 National Security Strategy, the United States has a critical national security interest in mitigating state fragility and preventing, containing, and resolving armed conflict. There are currently dozens of fragile and conflict-affected states. Their numbers are now rising globally, and may continue to do so over the next decade or more. Left unassisted, many of these fragile states, where conflict festers and development stagnates, could become hosts of violent extremism; afford safe havens that transnational terrorists and criminals exploit; generate large flows of refugees and displaced persons that can destabilize neighboring countries and sow regional instability; create humanitarian emergencies; facilitate the spread of pandemic disease; and increase the risk of mass atrocities. The United States has a compelling national security interest in preventing the outbreak, escalation, and spread of conflicts that could contribute to these threats, but we cannot and should not seek to assume that burden on our own. To the contrary, it is in our interest to strengthen international response mechanisms that enable the burden to be shared globally.

Multilateral peace operations, particularly United Nations (UN) peace operations, will, therefore, continue to be among the primary international tools that we use to address conflict-related crises. These operations include a spectrum of conflict prevention, peacemaking, and peacebuilding interventions authorized by the UN Security Council. The scale and scope of activities they now perform have expanded significantly since the issuance of the last formal Presidential guidance on multilateral peace operations (Presidential Decision Directive–25 of May 3, 1994). This memorandum takes into account evolutions in UN peace operations over the last two decades. PDD–25 remains in effect to the extent it does not conflict with this memorandum.

Today, personnel in UN peace operations mediate among local, regional, and international stakeholders to prevent the outbreak, resumption, or spread of fighting. They promote confidence-building measures to help a peace process take root. They help implement peace agreements or cease-fires, including through monitoring of and voluntary disarmament and demobilization of combatants. Many UN peace operations enable the delivery of humanitarian and development assistance. They can play an important and direct role in protecting civilians, including from sexual and gender-based violence, and in human rights monitoring. They support the conduct of elections and build host government capacity to govern effectively, including by promoting human rights and the rule of law. Where applicable, UN peace operations support the monitoring and implementation of multilateral sanctions and justice and accountability mechanisms, which include the investigation and prosecution of atrocity crimes. In select and exceptional cases, UN peace operations even conduct offensive military operations against armed groups that act as spoilers outside of a peace process, seek to thwart the implementation of peace agreements, threaten weak but legitimate governments, and perpetrate violence and atrocities against civilians.

United Nations peace operations have now reached all-time high levels of cost, complexity, and risk—and the international demand for them is only growing. The UN

currently manages 16 peacekeeping missions, with more than 100,000 uniformed personnel and more than 19,000 civilian staff deployed globally. The UN also currently has 11 field-based political missions and peace-building support offices in Africa, the Middle East, and Central Asia. In addition, the African Union and African sub-regional organizations have recently deployed UN Security Council-authorized missions to Somalia, Mali, and the Central African Republic in advance of or alongside UN peace operations.

United Nations and regional peace operations face significant challenges. Nevertheless, these operations are among the most meaningful forms of international burden-sharing to address the global challenges that exist today. More than 120 countries now contribute military or police personnel for UN peace operations, and all military units today are provided by countries other than the United States. In some instances, these operations are deployed in countries such as Haiti and Liberia, where in the absence of a UN peacekeeping operation, historic and other ties might have led to longer-term deployment of U.S. forces that would entail far greater risks and costs for the United States. The United States derives other indirect benefits from our support to UN peace operations, including strengthened military-to-military collaboration, diplomatic, and other ties with countries to which we provide training. United States military, police, and civilian personnel deployed within these missions gain indispensable field experience working alongside personnel from many other nations. Military forces in UN-led peace operations can also replace national or coalition military forces in operations once an area has transitioned from an immediate crisis to a more permissive environment.

The United States has compelling reasons to support the effective conduct of UN and other multilateral peace operations, but must be judicious about where we advocate their establishment since they are not the appropriate response in all instances. For instance, UN peace operations are not ordinarily designed and equipped to deploy into situations of active armed conflict where the main protagonists (and their external backers) are not yet ready to stop fighting. Even when there is a partial peace in place, UN peacekeepers can face severe difficulties when opposed and overmatched by well-armed and organized adversaries seeking to deny their involvement and presence. As such, peace operations cannot substitute for diplomatic solutions to end a war, nor for more forceful military interventions that need to be carried out in non-permissive environments by individual states or coalitions that possess the will and capacity to do so. Nor should UN peace operations be treated as the sum total of the necessary international assistance to fragile and conflict-affected states. Such states usually require a broad range of political, economic, development, and security assistance provided by many different international actors, well before peacekeepers arrive, throughout the time they remain in theater, and long after they depart.

Our support for UN peace operations also must entail a consistent and constructively critical review of their shortcomings and where systemic reform is required. It is in that spirit that we will work with other UN member states to evaluate and implement the recommendations of the UN Secretary-General's High Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations. This Panel recognized in its 2015 report that UN and regional peace operations face a number of critical structural, bureaucratic, operational, and political challenges that need to be addressed to maximize their effectiveness in a complex and changing conflict landscape.

The United States is well positioned to play a leading role in driving reform and shaping the future of UN peace operations, working closely with the UN and with partners in every region. As a permanent member of the UN Security Council, we play a key role in crafting and

authorizing each operation's mandate. As the top financial contributor to UN peacekeeping, we scrutinize each mission budget and the regulations, rules, and policies that govern the allocation and oversight of resources. As the top provider of training and equipment for military and police contingents, we have a role to play in promoting the highest standards of conduct and discipline. Ultimately, the United States has both significant interests in, and influence on, multilateral peace operations and the systems that support them.

Accordingly, building on the 2015 National Security Strategy, the 2015 Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review, the 2014 Quadrennial Defense Review, and the 2015 National Military Strategy, it shall be the policy of the United States to strengthen and modernize UN peace operations. We shall do so principally through three core lines of effort:

- A. Building partner capacity to support UN peace operations;
- B. Contributing U.S. diplomatic support, enabling capabilities, and personnel; and
- C. Leading and supporting efforts at the UN for systemic reform.

All executive departments and agencies will ensure that the Presidential priority the United States attaches to effective multilateral peace operations, and these core lines of effort for supporting that objective, are appropriately reflected in national strategy, policy, and planning guidance documents. As we pursue the core lines of effort (and associated actions) outlined below, U.S. policy will continue to be to fulfill our treaty obligations to the UN by paying our assessed dues in full and on time.

A. Building partner capacity.

Subject to applicable law, U.S. efforts to build partner capacity will be guided by the following division of labor, prioritization, and general principles:

- **Conflict Mediation and Resolution.** The Department of State will increase U.S. support, including by seeking increased funding, for UN mediation, preventive diplomacy, and other conflict prevention and resolution capacity-building activities, recognizing that UN peace operations can rarely be successfully mounted or terminated in the absence of viable political processes and sustainable solutions.
- **Leadership.** The Department of State and the U.S. Mission to the UN, in coordination with the Department of Defense in the case of military personnel, will attach high priority to working with the UN, troop contributing countries (TCCs), and police contributing countries (PCCs) to ensure strong civilian, military, and police leadership teams are in place in every peace operation, absent which efforts to improve operational capacity will not succeed.
- **Well-trained and well-equipped high quality military forces.** The Department of State, in coordination with the Department of Defense, will prioritize the need to develop, for UN and regional peace operations, skilled, deployment-ready, high quality forces and enablers, with capable leadership at the contingent, brigade, battalion, and company levels. United States peacekeeper training and other peacekeeping support programs will continue to be calibrated with these priorities in mind. Such U.S. capacity-building efforts will be consistent with Presidential Policy Directive–23 of April 5, 2013, on Security Sector Assistance.

- The Department of State will seek to increase funding for programs, as appropriate, to support U.S. efforts to enhance TCC capability consistent with the needs articulated by the UN.
- The Department of State, in coordination with the Department of Defense, will focus on ways to increase the ability of TCCs to provide critical enabling capabilities and support functions, including maintenance and sustainment of provided equipment.
- The Departments of State and Defense will work together to ensure the various security sector assistance programs they are undertaking are being appropriately leveraged to help meet critical capabilities gaps faced by peace operations and the host government security forces to which peacekeepers must ultimately transfer responsibilities. Both departments will also deepen cooperation with foreign partners on peacekeeping capacity-building efforts to mobilize additional resources for this enterprise and reduce redundancies in its implementation by multiple donors.
- **Gender diversity.** All executive departments and agencies will promote gender diversity in leadership teams, and will work closely with our UN and international partners to promote gender diversity in the leadership ranks (and all levels) of UN peace operations.
- **Joint Exercises.** The Department of Defense will conduct regular military exercises with invited TCCs that feature preparing for peace operations as a major component. In select cases, the Department of Defense will deepen military-to-military relations and security cooperation with committed TCCs as an incentive for them to enhance contributions.
- **Police.** The Department of State and the U.S. Mission to the UN will work with the UN and PCCs to expand the pool of police contributing countries ready and able rapidly to deploy Formed Police Units and Individual Police Officers with specialized skills needed by UN peace operations. United States assistance to PCCs will prioritize the elements required for timely deployment and effective performance, including: doctrine, recruitment and selection, training, leadership, command and control, equipment, logistics and maintenance, and accountability mechanisms. We will emphasize the development of the capacity of PCCs to prepare and sustain independently police deployments, including to meet operational requirements.
- **Joint training, assessment, planning, and doctrine development.** The Departments of State and Defense will seek to make available to the UN, regional organizations, TCCs, and PCCs, upon request and as appropriate, U.S. expertise gained as a global leader in pre-deployment training, leadership education and training, joint planning, and doctrine development and implementation. This will include remaining ready to provide current or increasing levels of assistance in the following areas, to the extent permissible under domestic law: building standards of training and performance of troop and police contingents; providing assessment, planning, and analytic support to UN peace operations; strengthening the UN's ability to plan and train for scenarios and contingencies that occur in conflict-zones; and developing and sharing U.S. doctrine and training on the protection of civilians in peace operations.
- **High performance standards.** The Department of State will prioritize support for professional TCCs and PCCs that have demonstrated the will to implement UN Security Council mandates, including those for the protection of civilians, with full respect for the human rights and safety of individual members of civilian populations. The United States remains committed to the promotion and protection of human rights. The Department of

State vets potential foreign security force-unit recipients of U.S.-funded training, equipment, or other assistance, consistent with applicable law, and the United States restricts the provision of such assistance to units for which it has credible information that such units have committed a gross violation of human rights. Additionally, the Departments of State and Defense will strongly consider withholding, suspending, or reducing peacekeeping capacity-building assistance from those TCCs and PCCs that repeatedly field non-performing units. The Departments of State and Defense will directly raise non-performance with the TCCs and PCCs concerned in diplomatic, defense, and military-to-military engagements. The United States will also continue to support strongly the repatriation by the UN and TCCs and PCCs of non-performing and poorly performing contingents. At the same time, the United States also believes that the UN should work more closely with TCCs and PCCs to ensure the missions and mandated tasks their troops are asked to assume are better aligned with their levels of risk tolerance.

- **Accountability and oversight.** The Departments of State and Defense, as well as the U.S. Mission to the UN, will work with the UN and regional organizations to achieve heightened accountability and recognition for troop and police performance. The United States will continue to support an active mechanism that conducts regular, critical, and independent monitoring and evaluation of missions' performance and efficiencies; the adequacy of pre-deployment training and readiness; additional financial incentives and disincentives relating to performance; and significantly enhanced structures and measures to address sexual exploitation, trafficking, abuse, and corruption to help safeguard the security, safety, and human rights of local populations.
- **Ending Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA).** The United States fully supports the UN's zero tolerance policy against SEA by UN personnel and supports aggressive action by the Secretary General to root it out of peacekeeping, including by strengthening mechanisms for investigating SEA allegations. The Departments of State and Defense will ensure that any U.S.-provided peacekeeping training includes a component on the prevention of SEA. They will condition peacekeeping training or related assistance on the commitment of the TCCs and PCCs to ensure that adequate disciplinary measures for SEA violations exist. In cases in which TCCs and PCCs lack the capacity either to investigate credible allegations or hold those responsible to account for alleged SEA by their own nationals, the United States Government will explore means to assist them in doing so, including through capacity building. The Departments of State and Defense will engage the UN and TCCs and PCCs at senior levels to stress the imperative of investigating allegations thoroughly and prosecuting where appropriate. The Department of State will discourage the UN from deploying uniformed personnel from those TCCs and PCCs that routinely block investigations or fail to hold those responsible for SEA to account and will identify such TCCs and PCCs in its annual country reports on human rights.
- **Force Generation for Key Gaps.** The Departments of State and Defense and the U.S. Mission to the UN will urge, through senior-level engagement in diplomatic and defense channels, fulfillment of commitments made by member states and the UN at the 2014 UN Summit on Peacekeeping Operations and 2015 Leaders' Summit on Peacekeeping and at future high-level engagements; encourage, in partnership with the UN, capable militaries and police forces to increase their participation in UN peace operations and contributions of needed capabilities, in particular those that enable UN peace operations to protect civilians and implement robust mandates; elevate requests for TCC and PCC contributions in our regular diplomatic, defense, and military-to-military engagement with our allies and

partners, including annual dialogues; and intensify efforts to increase the number of female military and police personnel in UN missions.

- **Partnerships with Regional Organizations.** The Department of State will intensify consultations with relevant international partners on how the UN and other organizations—including the African Union, the European Union, and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization—can better cooperate in expanding the collective pool of high caliber, rapidly deployable troops and police for UN and other multilateral peace operations. These consultations should also include identifying where non-UN bridging forces may be required to establish the conditions for follow-on UN missions.

B. Contributing U.S. diplomatic support, enabling capabilities, and U.S. personnel.

In addition to the capability-building efforts outlined above, the United States will also seek to provide direct contributions and enabling support to UN peace operations. The United States Government will review its authorities and funding to support these lines of effort. Our immediate priorities for such support—which take into account existing U.S. global commitments to fulfill our top national security requirements, our areas of comparative advantage, and the UN's priority needs—will be in the following areas:

- **Support for Conflict Prevention and Resolution.** To ensure that the United States can most effectively drive, support, and partner with others in advancing peace processes that result in the success and drawdown of peace operations, we must strengthen our own capacity for conflict prevention and resolution, including through mediation. The Department of State will take additional steps, as feasible within the legal framework of the Department's personnel system to ensure that ambassadors serving in countries hosting UN peace operations receive appropriate training to serve as mediators and otherwise promote conflict resolution; to develop a cadre of personnel skilled in conflict prevention and resolution, including by crediting tours that involve close work with UN peace operations and supporting career paths with assignments in multiple conflict-affected countries where multilateral peace operations are deployed; and to develop a roster of U.S. envoys and officers for conflict prevention and resolution purposes to serve in a U.S. or international capacity. The Department of State will also increase its efforts to build internal institutional capacity for strong and systematic support to U.S. ambassadors and missions in conflict-affected countries, capture best practices and outside expertise on mediation and other techniques of conflict prevention and resolution, and strengthen links with UN and regional organizations' standing capacities to engage in such efforts.
- **Technological and other enabling support.** The United States will, consistent with our national security interests, authorities, and available resources, increase the provision of material support to the UN. In particular, the United States will seek to become a leading "technology contributing country" to UN peace operations. The Departments of State and Defense will seek to assist the UN, regional organizations, TCCs, and PCCs to integrate technologies into, and apply innovative concepts to address operational requirements and capability gaps in, its operations in areas such as expeditionary basing and logistics, protection of forces and civilians, information-led operations, situational awareness, planning, training, and medical support.
- **Direct personnel contributions to UN peace operations.** The United States will strongly consider providing military, police, and civilian personnel to support or participate in UN peace operations, if such support would: (1) constitute a capability in which the

United States has specialized expertise or capability; (2) have the potential to improve substantially the overall effectiveness of the UN mission, particularly one with significant implications for U.S. national security; and (3) not adversely impact current or projected U.S. operations elsewhere. As determined in PDD-25, the President retains and will not relinquish command of U.S. forces but, as Commander in Chief, has the authority to place U.S. forces under the operational control of a foreign commander when doing so serves U.S. national security interests, as Presidents have done numerous times in U.S. history.

- The United States Government remains committed to protecting our personnel and will continue to seek protections for our military and civilian personnel participating in UN peace operations or other UN-authorized missions. As appropriate, this would include confirming with the host nation that any applicable Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) with that nation applies to such U.S. personnel or seeking a SOFA with the host nation, and otherwise seeking other appropriate protections.
- Recognizing the significant impact that participating U.S. uniformed and civilian personnel regularly have on the effectiveness of peace operations, the relevant departments and agencies will proactively identify priority positions in UN field missions, and work with the Department of State to facilitate the placement of U.S. military, civilian, and police personnel in these positions. The United States will also support UN Headquarters with subject matter experts, upon request and as appropriate. The U.S. Mission to the UN will work with the UN to ensure timely and appropriate requests for U.S. personnel, and the Departments of State and Defense will substantially reduce the timeline from a UN request to secondment of any U.S. personnel that the United States Government may decide to make available.
- The United States recognizes the essential role that UN peace operations can and should play in helping conflict-affected countries address key deficits in law enforcement, criminal justice, and corrections systems to support these countries on a path toward sustainable political and economic transitions. To that end, the United States will reinforce its role as a significant PCC, by sending U.S. police officers and criminal justice experts to serve in management, advisory, and training positions in UN field missions. We will also increase our engagement with the UN Secretariat and member states on policing, law enforcement, and criminal justice requirements, to strengthen coordination, policies, and standards for effective management and implementation of policing and the rule of law in peacekeeping operations.
- The Departments of Defense and State will seek to find ways to credit, professionally reward, and more readily track UN mission experience and expertise of U.S. military and civilian personnel within their respective personnel systems. The Department of Defense will also develop a cadre of military personnel able to serve in leadership roles in UN Headquarters and field missions.

C. Leading and supporting efforts at the UN for systemic reform.

Without major reforms, critical shortcomings in the design, planning, resourcing, execution, and oversight of UN peace operations will severely diminish the effectiveness of any support and assistance along the lines described above. Given the implications for U.S. national security interests and resource commitments, the United States must continue to lead the drive for reform of UN and regional peace operations. The United States will strongly advocate for

the following reforms, both with the UN directly and in diplomatic, defense, and military-to-military engagements with member states:

- Development of prioritized and sequenced UN Security Council mandates for UN operations, drawing on best practices and lessons learned across missions, but also tailored to the unique circumstances of each country concerned;
- Rigorous UN Security Council oversight of mission mandate execution complemented by regular, rigorous, critical review of mission performance by the UN Secretariat;
- Strong, capable leadership in field missions and merit-based leadership selection;
- Further professionalization of mission planning and assessment, including more systematic contingency planning for crises, and clearer, conditions-based articulation of the critical path towards mission closure and transition to host government responsibilities;
- Strengthened in-theater rapid response capabilities for missions deployed in high-risk environments, including for medical and casualty evacuation and for force protection;
- A strategic UN force generation system, with an improved standby arrangement process geared towards the most needed capabilities;
- An improved assessments process for troop readiness, including equipment verification;
- Enhanced efforts to improve troop and police performance once deployed in the field;
- Strong mechanisms to ensure greater accountability, particularly in relation to SEA;
- A sustained effort to implement protection of civilian mandates;
- Improved human resources management and procurement practices that enable missions to deploy more quickly, effectively, and flexibly;
- Greater use of inter-mission cooperation to leverage efficiencies and assets across peace operations;
- Options for UN cooperation with and support to regional peace operations over the longer term;
- Greater coordination among UN missions, the UN peacebuilding architecture, and bilateral donors to promote peacebuilding and sustainable capacity building;
- A more rational peace and security bureaucracy at UN Headquarters that efficiently manages and supports the full spectrum of peace operations and is more focused on effectively and expeditiously meeting the requirements of personnel in the field.

D. Implementation.

The Departments of State and Defense and the U.S. Mission to the UN will submit a plan to implement this guidance to the National Security Council staff within three months of the date of this memorandum.

BARACK OBAMA

Categories: Communications to Federal Agencies : U.N. Peace Operations, U.S. support, memorandum.

Subjects: Civil rights : Women's rights and gender equality; Law enforcement and crime : Sexual assault; United Nations : Peacekeeping operations.

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