

Opinion

Commentary

In world at war, peacekeeping is essential

Traditional-minded Cold War veterans will oppose an expanded U.S. role in international peacekeeping. Their predominant reasoning makes good sense: Peacekeeping operations, either conducted by the United States alone or under the auspices of the United Nations, takes the military away from its primary mission of national defense. Their view would be that what forces we have, regardless of size, must be trained and ready for combat.

This is not a matter to be taken lightly. Training for combat is a full-time occupation. Trained and ready forces take time and energy to build. The defense of the United States must remain the paramount duty of our uniformed services.

Yet, in the new international order, it appears that America will continue to engage actively in peacekeeping missions. This is a political reality that some senior officers and defense analysts have yet to come to grips with.

Somalia provides a good example. At the beginning of Operation Restore Hope, few analysts were able to define a recognizable and obtainable goal. Understandably, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, led by Gen. Colin Powell, resisted launching a humanitarian mission into Somalia. Obviously, the use of force was required, and some U.S. soldiers would be endangered. Still, our elected leaders led by President Bush demanded a solution. A humanitarian mission was conducted with an implied peacekeeping role. American troops are now leaving Somalia, turning over an un-

pleasant burden to the new U.N. command.

How to prepare for worldwide peacekeeping missions without significantly degrading the U.S. military's combat capabilities is the rub, for the answer requires the United States and other nations contributing peacekeepers to take action in concert with U.N. authorities — no easy task.

It should be obvious that the United Nations has any number of structural problems that prevent it from creating efficient and effective military units. The idea of full-time U.N. combatant forces is not sound. The United Nations could not train, sustain, nor command and control such forces.

Combatant forces used in peacekeeping will continue to be donated by nations that have interests and capabilities to perform such missions. No change to this system is likely in the foreseeable future. What can be done is to create a command and control, administrative and logistical structure in the form of a U.N. Peacekeeping Command.

This command could be modeled after U.S. combatant commanders in chief. A CinC's staff, like Gen. H. Norman Schwarzkopf's U.S. Central Command before the Persian Gulf War, owns no forces. But Central Command did plan to command and control, administer and support armies, and did so successfully. Commanders in chief have big staffs to deal with the large-scale movement of troops, resupply, intelligence and a dozen other related functions. CinCs periodically exercise forces earmarked for their use, control their own budgets and have significant say over the employment of troops, when assigned to the command.

Soldiers of many nations would serve on this U.N. staff in much the same way they serve NATO. American officers could serve a normal tour as staff peacekeepers and receive joint and combined credit. The peacekeeper commander in chief would own no forces until they are assigned for one or more specific missions, thus the issue over the sovereignty of those forces would remain moot. The Security Council, where the United States has veto power, in concert with the remaining U.N. body, would have to approve the use of such forces, which would be predesignated by the contributor nations.

This is important. Nations who will provide peacekeeping forces must identify, hold in reserve and train those predesignated forces for peacekeeping missions. Currently,

the overwhelming majority of forces provided are untrained in the sometimes ambiguous political realities and the practical difficulties of peacekeeping operations.

For example, rules of engagement in peacekeeping often puts soldiers at greater risk than more conventional operations. Peacekeepers need training in the discriminate use of force. Additionally, there is no current U.N. doctrine for peacekeeping. There has been no rigorous analysis concerning how such operations should be conducted.

From a U.S. perspective, for example, a combat arms brigade or division could be designated for a period of two years to handle international peacekeeping requirements, alongside forces of other nations. The unit would train for peacekeeping and deploy if required. After the two-year period elapsed, a replacement would be designated. This would prevent a serious degradation of combat capability. The unit must train in its usual areas, as well. What would be required is an adjustment of their mission-essential task list. Peacekeeping training requirements simply go to the top of the training list.

The Army, as the executive agent for peacekeeping within the Defense Department, is one of the obvious choices to help the United Nations develop the necessary doctrine and organizational structure for a U.N. Peacekeeping Command.

Peacekeeping operations would become less ad hoc. Command and control of forces can be practiced. Logistical and administrative support can be developed and planned. Soldiers can be trained. Implied missions — troop movements, the establishment of communications nets, the development of strategic plans — can all be done well before actual deployments.

Given the likelihood of expanded U.S. participation in peacekeeping, it is time to develop trained and ready staffs and forces to deal with these contingency operations at the national and international level. Standing up a U.N. Peacekeeping Command and predesignating multinational combatant forces to serve that command, when required, is an imperative the United States and United Nations can no longer ignore.

Lt. Col. Robert B. Adolph Jr. is assigned to the U.N. Transitional Authority-Cambodia and has served with U.N. observer groups in Egypt and Lebanon.



**Robert B.
Adolph**