

REPORT FROM THE SECURITY COUNCIL



Iraqi Invasion of Kuwait

■ On 2 August, the Council met and condemned the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. The resolution demanded the immediate withdrawal of Iraqi forces from Kuwait and called on the two countries to begin immediate, intensive negotiations. Iraq told the Council that the "Free provisional government of Kuwait" had requested its assistance to help establish "security and order" in that country. The US accused Iraq of having "carefully planned" the invasion. "They invaded Kuwait and then staged a coup d'état in a blatant and deceitful effort to try and justify their actions," US ambassador Thomas Pickering told the Council.

Resolution 660, which was co-sponsored by Canada, was supported by fourteen of the fifteen Council members. Yemen did not vote because its delegate had not received instructions.

Four days later on 6 August, the Council adopted Resolution 661 mandating comprehensive economic and trade sanctions against Iraq. The resolution was supported by thirteen Council members with Yemen and Cuba abstaining, and in rarely-used tough language conveyed the Council's decision that all States were thereafter obliged to prevent:

the import into their territories ... of all commodities and products originating in Iraq or Kuwait.... [A]ny activities by their nationals or in their territories which would promote ... the export or trans-shipment of any commodities or products from Iraq or Kuwait.... The sale or supply by their nationals or from their territories or using their flag vessels of any commodities ... including weapons or any other military equipment, whether or not originating in their territories,

but not including supplies intended strictly for medical purposes, and, in humanitarian circumstances, foodstuffs, to any person or body in Iraq or Kuwait.... [and] [D]ecides that all states shall not make available to the Government of Iraq or to any commercial, industrial, or public utility undertaking in Iraq or Kuwait, any funds or any other financial or economic resources...

Like the earlier Resolution 660, 661 was co-sponsored by Canada.

Western Sahara

■ On 27 June, the Security Council unanimously adopted a peace plan for Western Sahara and called on Morocco and the Polisario guerrillas to extend indefinitely a temporary cease-fire. Resolution 658 calls for the peace plan to be implemented over a thirty-five week period during which a UN supervised referendum would be held. Western Sahara's 75,000 indigenous inhabitants would be asked to choose between independence under the Polisario or remaining under Moroccan control. Secretary-General Javier Pérez de Cuellar is optimistic that a referendum can be held by early 1991.

Middle East

■ On 31 May, the Council granted a six month extension to the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF). The force, located in the Golan Heights, includes 227 Canadian military observers. On 1 August, the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) also saw its mandate extended for six months.

In other business, on 3 May, the Council met to continue its ongoing debate on the issue of settlement in the Occupied Territories by newly arriving Soviet Jews. On 25 May, the Council met for the first time in Geneva, Switzerland. The Council shifted location as the result of a compromise to enable PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat

to participate without running the risk of being denied a visa by the US should he attempt to speak in New York. The meeting was prompted by an upsurge of violence in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank following the killing of seven Palestinians by an Israeli said to be mentally disturbed. During a speech, Arafat called for an international force to protect the Arab population.

On 31 May, the US vetoed a resolution which would have sent a commission to the occupied territories to determine how best to ensure the safety of the Palestinians there. Canada and thirteen other members voted in favour of the resolution. After the meeting, a US official told reporters that Washington favoured a solution in which the Secretary-General would send a personal representative to the area. After meeting the Secretary-General, Jochanan Bein, Israel's ambassador, announced on 13 June that his country was ready to receive the UN representative who would "be able to go where he wants to in Israel."

Cyprus and the Peacekeeping Deficit

■ On 19 July, the Council met and expressed its support for the Secretary-General's plan to help Greek and Turkish Cypriots reach a negotiated solution. Reflecting on the failure of negotiations to advance, the Secretary-General said "the time has come to stop mutual recriminations and to concentrate efforts on promoting reconciliation."

The Council action comes in the wake of a 15 June decision to approve, once again, a six-month extension to the mandate of the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP). During the Council meeting, Canada and seven other members issued a statement pointing to the financial problems facing the force, particularly the drop in voluntary contributions to UNFICYP.

Saying they were "gravely concerned," that the situation put an "unfair" burden on those members providing contingents to the force, the eight countries proposed that rather than relying on voluntary contributions, the force should be financed from assessed contributions. As of last year, the accumulated shortfall had reached almost US\$175 million.

The issue has taken on added urgency as Council members ponder future peacekeeping operations. Recent progress in negotiations between the five permanent members of the council and the parties involved in the Cambodian conflict have raised hopes of a major UN role there both in peacekeeping and overseeing elections. On 28 June, the Secretary-General briefed the Council on a request by Haiti's provisional president Ertha Pascal-Trouillot for UN help in organizing elections.

As the UN is called on to monitor elections, some members of the General Assembly are expressing wariness at this new role. Countries such as Cuba and Columbia have expressed concern that in future, the Council may use this new function as a form of intervention. They prefer that any action involving elections be handled through the General Assembly, where the permanent members wield less power.

On 4 May, the Council extended the mandate of the United Nations Observer Group in Central America (ONUCA) for six months. The resolution was adopted with the understanding that ONUCA's involvement in the ceasefire and demobilization of members of the Nicaraguan Contras cease no later than 10 June. On 8 June, the Council extended its deadline to 29 June 1990. On 27 June, a final demobilization ceremony was held in Nicaragua. □

— TREVOR ROWE