

TOWARDS A RAPID REACTION CAPABILITY FOR THE UNITED NATIONS



should not call into question its potential value to the international community. It is a civilized response to an urgent problem.³⁷

If short to medium-term options prove inadequate, and as the political landscape evolves, it may be worthwhile to explore how such a force might be established and the many issues that surround consideration of such an unprecedented step. This section develops the idea of a UN Standing Emergency Group. While this is an evolutionary approach, it in no way precludes the possibility of faster, more dramatic innovations in peacekeeping, should international consensus develop in this direction.

The foundation of a permanent, UN standing force, or UN Standing Emergency Group, would be the establishment of a UN Rapid-Reaction Base. Such a multinational base would begin by housing an operational headquarters, the tasks of which might be: forecasting detailed contingency plans; coordinating civilian and military aspects of operational planning; confirming standing operating procedures; developing arrangements for equipment procurement and stockpiling; establishing readiness and training standards; promoting interoperability, and refining training curricula and courses for both military and civilian elements. The base would provide a single facility at which the elements of the UN's rapid-reaction capability could gradually be consolidated.³⁸

Once a functioning base had been established, military and civilian units from participating UN member states could be assigned to the UN base for a period of about two years. Although these units would remain under national authority and would require national authorization to be deployed, they would train collectively under the direction of the Secretary-General. Working together at a common base should also increase confidence in multinational operations, thereby diminishing some potential national concerns over the deployment of stand-by contingents. Consolidating standing elements at the base would provide the UN with a core capability at relatively high states of readiness, ensuring the UN of a relatively reliable response to crisis situations. Common basing offers the best way of enhancing cohesiveness among national military and civilian units and advancing national training and professional development objectives. Deployment of a force composed of national contingents pursuant to a Security Council decision and national authorization would be more rapid than deployment from dispersed national locations.

Common basing need not be an exorbitantly expensive endeavour for either the UN or participating Member States, as participating countries would simply be re-locating existing national units, subject to recall in the event of national requirements. As they would remain under national command, national authorities would retain primary responsibility for their administration, pay and benefits. For the UN, cost-sharing might be arranged on a basis slightly less taxing than that of field operations, in which the UN frequently assumes responsibility for incremental costs, transportation of national elements to and from the site, operation and maintenance costs, as well as the provision of accommodation and allowances.

To ensure the availability of sufficient personnel for all foreseeable operations, there would need to be considerable redundancy of capabilities. This would also provide the UN with options for the selection of national contingents to serve in regions having particular political, ethnic, cultural or religious sensitivities. At this