



TOWARDS A RAPID REACTION CAPABILITY FOR THE UNITED NATIONS

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Transportation and Infrastructure

A major consideration in the rapid deployment of any peace operation is the ability to transport personnel and equipment to a theatre of operations quickly and, on arrival, to house, feed and equip personnel to implement their mandate. Current UN procedures for contracting strategic lift are ponderous and costly. With over-reliance on systems of centralized control, initiatives at other levels to arrive at workable solutions to transportation and infrastructure problems are effectively discouraged. There have been several innovative management practices introduced into the UN in recent years, including a better partnership with the private sector. But even more creative procedures, such as taking greater advantage of technology in securing bids for air lift, would save time and money while preserving the principle of accountability. These and other initiatives, such as standing contractual arrangements with commercial firms, making greater use of partnerships with the private sector and utilizing the strategic transportation assets of Member States, need to be developed if a rapid-reaction capability is to be realized.

UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL)

19 March 1978

Security Council authorizes establishment of UNIFIL at a level of 4,000 troops

5 May 1978

UNIFIL reaches mandated strength of 4,016

"The entire UNIFIL operation was beset with problems. The deployment of troops was made to suit the circumstances and availability of each of the contingents. . . a number of the contingents arrived ill-equipped for the mission; some lacked transport, others had inadequate radio sets. . . the build-up of the force took several months. . ."

-Major-General Indarjit Rikhye, former Force Commander, UNEF I

The DPKO has launched a significant move towards enhancing the UN's rapid-response capability by establishing a data bank of relevant infrastructure, transportation and pledged contributions from Member States. Another initiative, a trial Peacekeeping Services Agreement¹⁶, is designed to simplify and speed up a response on the part of contributing states once a political decision is made. This system of agreements is now undergoing a trial in UNMIH in Haiti. It should eventually contribute to securing a more rapid response on the part of the UN. These efforts have placed demands on the planning staff of DPKO well beyond current staffing levels. But they tend in the right direction and should be supported by troop-contributing countries which have loaned personnel to DPKO.

Logistical Support

Logistics is a key component of any operation and is vital to a rapid-reaction mission. Logistics involves getting what the "customer" needs to the right place at the right time and for the right cost. It includes functions such as procurement, warehouse management and inventory control. For a variety of reasons, including an ineffective decision-making process, inadequate contingency planning and archaic procedures,