BACKGROUND

Peacekeeping may be defined as the employment, under the auspices of a recognized international authority, of military, para-military or non-military personnel or forces in an area of political conflict, for the purpose of restoring or maintaining peace. The purpose of peacekeeping is to enable the parties to disengage and to give them confidence that their differences can be settled by negotiation. Peacekeeping activities range from unarmed missions with a role of observation and reporting only, through roles of investigation, supervision and control, to the interposition of armed military units and formations between the parties.[1]

In the late 1940s, international observer missions were established along the India-Pakistan border, and in the Middle East following the 1948 Arab-Israel war. In 1950, the UN General Assembly adopted the "Uniting for Peace" Resolution granting it the authority to recommend specific measures deemed necessary to maintain international peace. That same year, a UN Security Council resolution, sponsored by the United States in the absence of the Soviet Union, led to the creation of a unified military command to counter the North Korean offensive into South Korea. This action was unprecedented and has never been repeated.[2] The first large-scale UN peacekeeping operation was the UN Emergency Force (UNEF), established with the help of Canada to supervise the cease-fire following the 1956 Suez Crisis. Since that time the UN has sent peacekeeping and observation missions to conflict areas including the Congo, Cyprus, the Middle East and Indochina. The 1988 Nobel Peace Prize was awarded to the UN peacekeeping forces.

In addition to participating in sixteen UN peacekeeping missions, Canada has also contributed to five non-UN operations: the International Commission for Supervision and Control (ICSC), created in 1954 to oversee the cease-fire in Cambodia, Vietnam and Laos; its successor, the International Commission for Control and Supervision (ICCS), established in 1973; the Observer Team to Nigeria (OTN), created to supervise the 1968 elections in that country; the Commonwealth Monitoring Force, established in 1979 to observe the elections in Zimbabwe; and the Multinational Force and Observers (MFO) in the Sinai, responsible for monitoring the security provisions of the 1979 Egypt-Israeli Peace Treaty. The Canadian contribution to the MFO began in 1986 and in 1988-1989 consists of 128 Canadians providing helicopter transportation for both troops and civilian observers.

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[1] Colonel R.B. Mitchell, "Peacekeeping and the Canadian Army in the 21st Century" (Paper presented to the Seminar on "The Role of the Canadian Army in the 21st Century," Royal United Services Institute of Nova Scotia and the Centre for Foreign Policy Studies, Dalhousie University, Halifax, 17 March 1989), pp. 2-3.

[2] UN operations in Korea, 1950-53, and the subsequent United Nations Command Military Armistice Commission (UNCMAC), 1954 to the present, fall outside the current definition of peacekeeping. (*Peacekeeping*. Ottawa: Canadian Institute for International Peace and Security *Factsheet* No. 4 (October 1988, updated and reprinted March 1989), p. 2.) One Canadian attaché is posted at UNCMAC on the Participating Nations Advisory Group.