



TOWARDS A RAPID REACTION CAPABILITY FOR THE UNITED NATIONS

capacity. Even the Secretary-General does not envisage the UN as acting in a leading military role when it comes to enforcement under Article 42 (for example, in such cases as the Gulf War). For these reasons, this study's primary focus is restricted to peace operations as defined by the Secretary-General.

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A number of states and at least one international organization (NATO) already have the capacity to react rapidly. We have looked at a number of these capacities as part of the study (see Chapter Three). They possess all of the elements required for a rapid-reaction capability to function effectively: political coherence, an early-warning system, a capacity for contingency planning, potentially effective and timely decision-making machinery at the political/strategic level, and well-trained, adequately-equipped mobile forces properly structured at the operational/tactical level. The costs of maintaining this capability at adequate levels of readiness are relatively high, but in each case resources have been made available to ensure that these capabilities can function effectively.

In the case of the UN, the situation is much different. Peacekeeping emerged in the UN, not as one element of a coherent approach to international peace and security, but as an ad hoc response to a particular crisis, namely, the Suez conflict of 1956. Peacekeeping had no specific basis in the UN Charter. The UN's capacity in this area was built up incrementally, slowly and through the experience of various operations over ensuing decades. When political will has been firm and the Security Council has reached a strong consensus, the UN has been able to respond quickly. But this capability is not a permanent fixture of the UN system. In contrast to NATO, with a sophisticated force planning system and a high degree of force commitment and availability, the UN has had to rely on a much more informal, cumbersome process to acquire its operational and tactical resources. This approach may have been adequate prior to 1988, when the UN had few operations in the field, and when a rapid-reaction capability would have been seldom used. But this approach is simply no longer adequate in the face of the challenges of the post-Cold-War period.

Based upon our examination of rapid-reaction capabilities elsewhere and our examination of the UN system, this study takes the idea of rapid-reaction to mean the following:

- the ability to acquire, analyze and take **timely decisions** based on early-warning data from a wide variety of sources;
- the organizational capability to prepare **generic plans**, including provision for transportation and logistic support, in advance of a specified crisis;
- the ability to undertake **concurrent activities**, such as allowing implementation actions to be initiated at early stages of the decision-making process;
- the capability to deploy the minimum necessary **operational-level command and control** facilities to a theatre of operations within seven days;
- **the capability to deploy a group** of sufficient size to deal with the immediate stages of an emergency (approximately 5,000 military and civilian personnel) within an additional three to five weeks.