

A Canadian decision to make a contribution includes consideration of whether:

- there is a clear, achievable mandate from a competent political authority like the Security Council;
- the parties to the conflict have accepted the presence of a UN peacekeeping operation and the participation of Canadian troops within that operation;
- the peacekeeping operation is taking place against the backdrop of a process aimed at achieving a political settlement to the conflict;
- the number of troops and the international composition of the operation are suited to the mandate;
- the operation is adequately funded and has a satisfactory logistical structure; and
- the risks to Canadian soldiers are within reasonable limits.

As well, a number of more specific considerations go into deciding whether Canada will contribute to a peacekeeping operation. The Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT) examines whether a Canadian contribution would be compatible with Canada's overall political relations with the country or region concerned and it evaluates the request with respect to Canada's existing multilateral engagements.

If the request is for a military contribution, the Department of National Defence assesses the availability of personnel and the Canadian capacity to fulfil the proposed requirements. If civilian police officers are requested, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and other police forces make a similar calculation. If the request involves monitoring elections, Elections Canada is consulted.

Canada has a strong desire to help the UN whenever possible. Nonetheless, resource constraints compel Canada to make choices about which operations to support and how to support them. On only a few carefully selected occasions is Canada able to contribute formed military units, as in Bosnia and Herzegovina. More often, senior officers are made available and unique Canadian capabilities are provided. Decisions about contributions are guided by several considerations.

First, Canada places an emphasis on assisting the "front end" of peacekeeping operations. This means developing ideas to make the UN Secretariat more responsive to international developments, offering personnel to the UN for explicit planning functions, helping the UN plan and co-ordinate the initial phases of operations, and offering leadership on the ground through the provision of senior officers. This focus on improving UN planning and administrative functions, which is based on Canada's extensive experience with peacekeeping, helps to ensure that operations can function with maximum effectiveness.

Second, within UN missions, Canada assumes roles that take advantage of particular Canadian strengths. For example, Canada provided communications, logistics and medical support in Rwanda and demining assistance in Cambodia.

Third, Canada makes an effort to contribute not only in the peacekeeping phase, but also in the broader reconstruction of society — the "peacebuilding" phase that follows a peaceful settlement. In Kigali, Canadian troops opened airports and helped restore vital communications. In Haiti, the RCMP provided training to help transform the local police force into a professional unit appropriate to a democratic society.

Fourth, Canada strives to act quickly when needs arise and the international community requires an urgent response.