



TOWARDS A RAPID REACTION CAPABILITY FOR THE UNITED NATIONS

General. The key function to be performed by the Situation Centre, in collaboration with the rest of the Secretariat, especially DPKO and DPA, would be to prepare assessments enabling the Secretary-General to act on his authority under Article 99 of the Charter to bring to the attention of the Security Council "any matter which in his opinion may threaten the maintenance of international peace and security."

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Current early-warning systems could be substantially strengthened by working towards an element of "automaticity" in early-warning arrangements. Ideally, as Dr. Jessica Tuchman Mathews, of the Council on Foreign Relations, New York, has suggested, "The UN should develop an automatic system of responses.... The key is that a certain set of findings would trigger a set of predetermined responses for rapid reaction."²⁸ In such a system, the Security Council would automatically review a potential crisis situation in close coordination with the Secretary-General. Such events would simultaneously trigger contingency planning efforts, or at least "contingency thinking", within the UN Secretariat. Over time, regional organizations could both feed into the system and also receive information from such a system, allowing them to play a greater political role.

These measures would have two important and complementary results. They would help reduce the decision-making time of the Security Council during a crisis by increasing the timeliness and quality of information available. They would also activate at an early stage the types of contingency planning efforts that are indispensable to an integrated response to crisis on the part of the UN.

- 9. Member states and the Secretary-General should work toward the development of an "early-warning alert" system, which would draw potential crisis situations to the attention of the Secretary-General and the Security Council and initiate contingency planning, or at least initial "contingency thinking", within the Secretariat.**

Strengthening the UN Secretariat

The Security Council requires comprehensive, corporate political/military advice on a continuous basis to improve its decision-making. This includes advice which weighs the security implications of early warning information and the feasibility of various military options. In recent years, a number of Council decisions have been criticized on the grounds that mission mandates have been impractical and unimplementable, leading to inevitable military problems as operations have been mounted. Nothing can tie the hands of the Security Council in making decisions. However, the possibility of more reasoned judgements would be enhanced if the idea of military advice were more firmly imbedded in the traditions of Council deliberations and the culture of the UN system. The Charter originally assigned the Military Staff Committee (MSC) a primary role in providing this strategic advice and direction. The Cold War subsequently arrested the development of the MSC and led to the evolution of the Secretariat to fulfill this vital function. In today's environment, the Secretariat will continue to play a central role in advising the Security Council in the conduct of peace operations.

At the same time, building the ability to obtain sound military advice is no easy task. Structural innovations are unlikely to be accepted at this time in the UN's