



warning would be applicable at the political and strategic levels, while improved surveillance capabilities could be applied at both the strategic level, with appropriate "down links" to the UN Secretariat, and also the operational and tactical levels, in order to monitor local movements and activities within a theatre of operations. To some degree, surveillance technologies and information management systems could be integrated into an organization-wide system to enhance contingency planning, logistics preparations and the management of a significantly decentralized operation between the Secretariat and Field Missions. Communications technologies might be a key to the successful devolution of responsibility and authority within a global UN system which currently suffers from excessive centralization.

Over the long term, the acquisition of advanced technologies for the UN in peace operations faces two major, related obstacles: political and financial. On the political side, a number of UN Member States are bound to be wary of systems and equipment designed for advanced surveillance, intrusion detection, early warning and enhanced analytical capabilities, even if similar systems are already part of the national inventories of neighbours or adversaries. Some of these systems, even those available commercially, might be considered too "intrusive" for use by an inter-governmental organization. Even if these political hurdles can be overcome, acquisition of these capabilities faces enormous financial obstacles. A number of studies have contended that there are "real cost savings in terms of manpower...when compared to traditional methods of peacekeeping",<sup>35</sup> but the costs of some systems are well beyond the foreseeable capacity of the UN. Financial considerations, in fact, go beyond the purchase price of individual items, since advanced technological systems usually require extensive supporting infrastructure, including a qualified management structure.

---

**Over the long term, the acquisition of advanced technologies for the UN in peace operations faces two major, related obstacles: political and financial**

---

A prudent, long-term approach to these issues would focus initially on the acquisition of advanced communication/information management systems for UN headquarters and the field. These would be "secure" systems which could readily be linked electronically to a variety of national systems provided to the UN under memoranda of understanding. The UN could then build upon this base, adding a variety of cost-effective "operational" elements, depending upon the nature of the UN's current peace operations, possibly by way of the Standby Arrangements System, under agreements with Member States similar to current practice with respect to personnel and conventional equipment.

Given the virtually limitless technological options available and the potential costs of technology, any program to investigate the acquisition of such capabilities must be highly disciplined. There are key questions which will demand firm answers. Can the use of advanced technology increase the effectiveness of peace operations? Can it reduce overall costs? Which technologies are appropriate for the UN? What is the "value-added" of these systems both at headquarters and in the field? How would new technologies help the UN in moving more rapidly in response to crisis? These questions raise the issue of the management infrastructure required to employ these types of systems effectively. It is worse than useless to embark upon an expensive program of equipment acquisition if the information which these systems yield goes unanalyzed or underutilized. The current financial crisis of the UN argues that many of these issues are best dealt with over the long term, despite possibilities of