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CANADA QUARTERLY

Dept. of External Affairs
Min. des Affaires extérieures
1997
RETOURNER À LA BIBLIOTHÈQUE DU MINISTÈRE

October 1995

Volume 3 Number 4

Promoting international security through peacekeeping has been a central element of Canada's foreign and defence policies for four decades. More than 100,000 Canadians have taken part in United Nations and other multilateral peacekeeping operations.

Foreign Affairs Minister André Ouellet announced in September 1994 that Canada would use its peacekeeping experience to conduct an in-depth study of options to increase the U.N.'s rapid reaction capability.

On September 26, 1995, Mr. Ouellet presented the study's final report to the U.N.'s 50th General Assembly. It calls for significant changes in the way the organization responds to emerging crises.

The report centres around the "vanguard concept": the idea that the U.N. should be able to mobilize a multidisciplinary force of up to 5,000 and quickly deploy it to stabilize conflict situations. The force would be made up of military and civilian personnel kept on standby by member states. It would be deployed on the authority of the Security Council and controlled by a new operational-level headquarters of 30 to 50 people responsible for intelligence analysis, planning and advance preparations.

Canada undertook the study because of widespread concern that the U.N.'s recent peace efforts have failed, in the words of the report, "to meet reasonable targets of rapid response." The failure was particularly evident in Rwanda, where a small, poorly equipped peacekeeping force could not prevent the massacre of hundreds of thousands of people. Rwanda's lesson, the report says, is that "modest but timely measures can make the difference between a situation which is stable or contained and a humanitarian disaster which has spiralled beyond control."

The U.N.'s experience in Rwanda also demonstrates the escalating financial cost of postponing intervention. While the U.N. assistance mission sent to Rwanda in 1993 received only a fraction of the US\$200 million budgeted for it, the United States alone spent US\$350 million in aid in the first six weeks after the massacres began in the spring of 1994.

CANADA PROPOSES U.N. PEACEKEEPING REFORMS



AP Photo/Kathy Wilens

Canada's Minister of Foreign Affairs André Ouellet, left, presents U.N. Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali with a study of the U.N.'s rapid reaction capability.

A joint effort by Canada's departments of foreign affairs and defence, the rapid reaction study had input from outside experts and other countries involved in peacekeeping. It placed particular emphasis on the need for a multidisciplinary response to conflicts, with civilian as well as military components. The study produced 26 recommendations for the short, medium and long-terms, none of which would require changes in the U.N. Charter.

Most of the recommendations relate to implementing the vanguard concept, which depends upon quick decision-making, advance planning and the availability of well-trained troops at short notice. A key proposal is for troop-contributing countries to provide more information to the U.N. in advance about the training and combat readiness of standby military forces, equipment specifications and civilian expertise. The report also

recommends that the U.N. establish an early warning alert system that would trigger decision-making in the Security Council and contingency planning by the new operational headquarters, upgrade the military advice provided to the Security Council, develop standardized training procedures and contract in advance for equipment and transport.

Given the U.N.'s current financial crisis, the report does not recommend increased spending but rather a streamlining of procedures and a reallocation of funds. Changes such as developing a unified peacekeeping budget (replacing separate budgets for each mission), delegating financial authority from U.N. headquarters to field operations and doubling the Peacekeeping Emergency Fund, the report says, would help establish a more secure financial support system for peace operations.

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