

CIVILIAN ASPECTS OF UNITED NATIONS'

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PEACEKEEPING

by Robin Hay

INTRODUCTION

The popular conception of peacekeeping has been of blue-helmeted soldiers keeping vigil over a fragile ceasefire in some far-flung, war-torn region of the world. While by no means false, this characterization ignores the rich history of civilian involvement in peacekeeping.

Civilians have been used only sparingly in peacekeeping operations in the past, but in 1989 they led the UN effort to oversee Namibia's transition to independence. A similar peacekeeping operation is getting underway in the Western Sahara, and Cambodia, and is being considered for Angola.

The increasing prominence of civilians, or non-military personnel in peacekeeping, is cause for examining the gamut of the often ignored civilian aspects of peacekeeping. These aspects include the administrative roles traditionally played by civilians in support of a peacekeeping operation, the non-military tasks¹ and responsibilities that have been carried out by peacekeeping troops as part of, or incidental to, their mandate, and the direct use of civilians in a "peacekeeping" capacity.

THE CHAIN OF COMMAND: ADMINISTRATION AND SUPPORT OF PEACEKEEPING OPERATIONS

Though peacekeeping began as an *ad hoc* response to a particular crisis, the UN has since developed an administrative model for handling such operations. Every UN peacekeeping force or mission has ultimately been responsible to a civilian, the UN Secretary-General. The Secretary-General,

reporting to the Security Council, is assisted in the day-to-day direction, management and execution of peacekeeping operations by two Under-Secretaries-General for Special Political Affairs², who, along with their staff, make up the Office for Special Political Affairs. This office is responsible for overseeing each operation.

The Office for Special Political Affairs turns to the Field Operations Division (FOD) at UN headquarters for executive and support personnel for the civilian administrative staff, or Force Secretariat, attached to each operation. These two departments, along with the Office of Programme Planning, Budget and Finance, prepare the budget for each peacekeeping operation, presenting it to the appropriate General Assembly budget committees. The FOD is also responsible for troop transportation, communication with the force, conducting meetings and investigations in the field, the security of UN staff and mission, and the safe custody of archival material.

The Chief Administrative Officer and staff of the Force Secretariat, along with the Military Logistics Staff, are responsible for the logistics of the operation, including financial aspects, procurement of equipment and supplies, communication between the mission and UN headquarters, and direction and coordination of personnel and troop movements in the mandated area. They also act as liaison with the host government on logistics and administrative matters. If need be, the force may recruit local civilian personnel to work in administrative positions.

Command of a peacekeeping force in the field is usually vested in the Military Force Commander appointed by the Secretary-General. He is assisted