



TOWARDS A RAPID REACTION CAPABILITY FOR THE UNITED NATIONS

The UN began to construct a system of standby forces in 1964, but only a handful of Member States entered into an arrangement with the UN. The explosion in demand for troops in the early 1990s led the Secretary-General to establish a Task Force on Standby Forces Arrangements in 1993 to recommend how the UN might improve its approach. After more than a year of intensive work, the team developed a new framework for concluding agreements between Member States and the UN through the completion of comprehensive memoranda of understanding (MOUs). While such MOUs in no way prejudge national decisions on participating in operations, they provide organizational and technical details sufficient to allow generic planning and the development of logistic support packages. The recent MOU signed by Denmark, covering the provision of a brigade-sized headquarters, is a good example. The current system could usefully be enhanced if additional information were contained in such agreements, which specified the range of operations in which units or individuals might participate, or indicated readiness targets which Member States agreed to meet. The 1994 Canadian Defence White Paper strongly endorsed this approach.³¹

The Standby Arrangements System is one of the pillars of the current UN approach to peacekeeping. The Secretary-General should be encouraged to continue his emphasis on refining these arrangements as one of the keys to an effective rapid-reaction capability. Yet much more could be done. As the former Military Adviser to the Secretary-General, Major-General Maurice Baril, has remarked, "we need a better system than to beg every time there is a crisis."³² The "building block" approach currently being pursued by the the Standby Arrangements Management Unit of the UN Secretariat could be complemented by the conclusion of Peacekeeping Services Agreements (PSAs) between the UN and Member States. These PSAs, along the lines of the Canadian model currently undergoing a trial run in Haiti, would provide detailed specifications of equipment and personnel, as well as costing, reimbursement and other financial data, enabling the UN to prepare mission budgets quickly. Standby arrangements MOUs might usefully contain readiness targets, which would indicate the number of days required to move or the degree of warning necessary to move to shorter readiness states.

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- 13. The Secretary-General and Member States should continue to refine and strengthen the Standby Arrangements System, with special emphasis on the ability of Member States to meet specific readiness targets for potential service in rapid-reaction operations.**
- 14. The Secretary-General should be encouraged to use new techniques, such as the "peacekeeping services agreement" concept, to facilitate more rapid deployment of missions and more effective and efficient administrative and logistic support for deployed missions.**

Standby MOUs should also contain data specifying types and levels of training. Redressing gaps in training could be done through the use of the UNTATs, based on agreed training standards developed in DPKO's Training Unit. Ideally, contingency planners would identify a range of potential tasks in future peace operations, including missions of a multidimensional nature. The Training Unit would then develop training standards for each discrete task which could be disseminated to troop contributing nations. The Standby Arrangements Unit could coordinate information on contributing states, their units and their standards of training. Further steps, either training or exercises, could then be taken towards ensuring the availability of mission groups