



**TOWARDS A RAPID REACTION CAPABILITY FOR THE UN:
UPDATE**

The Canadian study *Towards a Rapid Reaction Capability for the United Nations (UN)*, provides a comprehensive review of the UN's rapid reaction capabilities and makes practical proposals for improving the organization's ability to respond in times of crisis. The study was presented to the UN General Assembly (UNGA) in September 1995.

Foreign ministers, meeting at the time the study was tabled, agreed that an informal mechanism, "Friends of Rapid Deployment," chaired by the Canadian and Dutch Permanent Representatives, would be organized at UN headquarters in New York. The Friends group currently includes 23 countries, plus the UN Secretariat, but does not include any members of the Security Council, or P-5. A second Ministerial meeting of the group will take place on the margins of UNGA 51.

The Friends group meets on a regular basis to discuss the implementation of the study's key recommendations, which include:

- improving the quality of military advice in the UN, leading to better and faster decision making by the Security Council;
- filling the current vacuum at the operational level of the UN by creating a UN operational headquarters for a rapid reaction group;
- enhancing the UN's standby arrangements system to make it more amenable to rapid reaction; and
- improving other aspects of the UN's approaches to peace operations, including logistics, training and equipment.

The UN Secretariat has indicated that it has either implemented or is in the process of implementing 19 of the 26 recommendations made in the Canadian study, including the priority identified by the Friends group — the creation of an operational level, deployable headquarters. The Secretariat is in the process of establishing a small implementation team to develop this headquarters.

The headquarters is expected to be multi-functional in nature, including civilian components that will plan for civil emergencies, humanitarian contingencies and administrative support. It will be fully deployable so that both the military and civilian officials can continue their work immediately upon arrival in a theatre of operations.

The UN Secretariat will be responsible for selecting which countries will be asked to provide personnel and other resources to the headquarters. Canada has offered to staff one military position on the implementation team and one civilian position at the headquarters in 1997. As well, Canada has agreed to sponsor the position of an individual from a less-developed country through a trust fund that will most likely be managed by the UN.

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