

# News Release

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## CANADA ANNOUNCES A STUDY TO IMPROVE THE UN'S RAPID REACTION CAPABILITY

Foreign Affairs Minister André Ouellet and National Defence Minister David Collenette announced today that Canada has begun an in-depth review of the short-, medium- and long-term options available to strengthen the United Nation's rapid reaction capability in times of crisis.

"I announced Canada's intention to conduct such a study to the UN General Assembly last September," said Mr. Ouellet. "A review of several missions over the past five years clearly indicates that a more rapid, coherent response to an emerging crisis could have had a dramatic impact on the evolving situation," he added.

"This will allow us to bring to the table substantial recommendations based on expert study and drawing on Canada's peacekeeping experiences throughout the world over the last 40 years," said Mr. Collenette.

The objective of the study is to make practical proposals to enhance the UN's rapid reaction capability in the field of peace operations.

In order to provide the broadest possible international input to the study itself, an international consultative group is being established to review the work in progress. Throughout the study process, Canada will also consult extensively on a bilateral basis with member states, the UN Secretary-General and his staff, and interested observers.

The findings of the Canadian study are scheduled to be tabled at the 50th anniversary of the UN General Assembly in September 1995, and presented to the Secretary-General for consideration.

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## Backgrounder

# IMPROVING THE UN'S RAPID REACTION CAPABILITY: A CANADIAN STUDY

### Introduction

At the UN General Assembly in September 1994, Foreign Affairs Minister André Ouellet proposed a concrete step toward the goal of enhancing the UN's responsiveness in the field of peace operations. In committing Canada to making a direct contribution to this end, Mr. Ouellet said:

The experience of the last few years leads us to believe that we need to explore even more innovative options than those considered to date. Recent peacekeeping missions have shown that the traditional approach no longer applies. As we have seen in Rwanda, rapid deployment of intervention forces is essential.

In light of the situation, the Government of Canada has decided to conduct an in-depth review of the short-, medium- and long-term options available to us to strengthen the UN's rapid response capability in times of crisis. Among these options, we feel that the time has come to study the possibility, over the long term, of creating a permanent UN military force. We will ask the world's leading experts for their input and will inform all member states of the results of the study.

The Government of Canada has now begun this extensive study.

### Context

The rapid increase in the size, scope and number of peace operations since the end of the Cold War reflects both the ongoing transformation of the international system and the new expectation that the United Nations can and should play a pivotal role in the emerging global order. There have been both startling successes and troublesome failures among the over 21 new missions launched since 1988. However, no firm consensus has developed regarding how and why UN peace operations succeed, or on when the UN should avoid engagement in a given situation that is not yet amenable to an effective peace mission.

Certainly, there have been many recent improvements in how the UN undertakes peace operations. These range from greater political understanding of the mechanism itself in member state capitals, to enhancement of the means available to the Secretary-General in

the Secretariat, to a growing sophistication organizationally and operationally at the level of field missions. Many member states remain actively engaged in promoting these improvements and in working incrementally on the full spectrum of peacekeeping issues.

One particular, seemingly intractable issue that to some extent reflects the broader problems outlined above, is that of responsiveness. A review of several missions over the past five years clearly indicates that a more rapid, coherent response to an emerging crisis could have had a much more dramatic impact on the evolving situation than that which actually occurred. The example of Rwanda illustrates the problem in bold relief. Despite various unco-ordinated indications that a crisis was imminent, even a minimal response had to await the onset of crisis. At this point, the detailed planning and mounting of the operation were excruciatingly slow, with deployment of troops taking place months after they were officially committed.

Improving the UN's rapid reaction capability is not a new theme. The first UN Secretary-General, Trygve Lie, raised the subject as early as 1948. Considerable attention was devoted to this issue as early as 1957 in the aftermath of the successful deployment of UNEF I in the Sinai. The Special Committee on Peacekeeping (Committee of 34) has also devoted considerable energy to the concept in the intervening years. Today, this topic is again near the top of the peacekeeping agenda, with a particular focus on the idea of a UN standing force as one means to achieve this end.

The resurgence of the theme of enhanced responsiveness reflects a number of recent developments in the international arena. With the end of the Cold War, there is no obvious reason why the UN cannot react more quickly to crisis. The absence of bipolar confrontation, and consequent minimal recourse to the veto on the part of permanent members of the Security Council, as well as the apparent end to rigidly defined spheres of influence, suggest that improved Great Power comity should lead to more effective and efficient international co-operation. At the same time, human rights and humanitarian concerns, once held hostage to the Cold War, have surfaced in a compelling way. This has led to a shift in political and strategic calculations from a strict emphasis on order to a more subtle one, in which the idea of justice enjoys priority. Finally, global media coverage continues to generate domestic and international pressure to act quickly, albeit on a selective basis.

These factors pose challenges to the international community. Equally, they offer opportunities to act constructively in developing the necessary instruments to deal quickly and effectively with genuine threats to international peace and security.

## Objective

The aim of the study is to make practical proposals to enhance the UN's rapid reaction capability in the field of peace operations.

## Scope

The Canadian study will analyse the problem of rapid reaction capability from the perspective of the UN system as a whole. The functions that need to be performed at the political, strategic, operational and tactical levels will be identified. A key component of this analysis will be a clear description of the crucial interrelationships among these levels, based on the premise that deficiencies and inadequacies in any one sphere directly influence success or failure throughout the system. For example, the ready availability of an operational element remains dependent upon both the generation of political will, and adequate ongoing strategic planning and direction for its effectiveness.

The focus of the study will be at the operational and tactical levels. The greatest challenges lie here, given the virtually complete ad hoc nature of mounting today's peace operations and the slow, inefficient assembly of disparate tactical units in the theatre of operations. Even given adequate warning and the existence of strategic plans to react, there is a virtual vacuum at the operational level in the UN system. At present, there is no standing headquarters that is capable of organizing, integrating and directing forces based on common doctrine and standards.

In keeping with the requirement to make practical recommendations that respond to today's needs, as well as the achievement of potential advances in the future, the study will develop proposals for the short, medium and long terms. In this context, the study of the concept of a UN standing force will involve both its feasibility and *modus operandi* once established over the long term, as well as the relationship between short- and medium-term projects and their possible cumulative contributions to its ultimate creation.

Finally, the study will look at the impact of a standing force on the activities of regional organizations and their capabilities in this area. Regional actors and organizations should have a high motivation to react quickly to emerging crises in their own regions. Similarly, in some important respects at least, they should be inherently more capable of moving quickly into a theatre of operations. The comparative advantages of operating at a global or regional level will be addressed, and proposals will be developed to achieve a balanced effort in accordance with

the intent of Chapter VIII of the UN Charter, and along the lines recently advocated by Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali.

### **Structure**

The study will be guided by a steering group of senior officials and military officers, co-chaired by the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade and the Department of National Defence. The steering group will oversee the study and commission supporting technical studies as appropriate.

In order to provide the broadest possible international input into the study, an international consultative group is being established. This group, drawn from well-known and accomplished diplomats, government officials, soldiers and academics, will review the work in progress and exchange views as the study proceeds. Three conferences will also be organized under the aegis of the study, to which various member states, non-governmental authorities and specialists will be invited. The first two conferences will draw primarily on Canadian experts, and will focus on the operational/tactical and the strategic/political levels, respectively. The third conference will be international in scope, and will be organized around a meeting of the international consultative group in April 1995. The results of all of these conferences will be incorporated into the final report.

Throughout the study process, Canada will consult on a bilateral basis with member states interested in monitoring the progress of and exchanging views on the study. Canada would also hope to collaborate with other member states pursuing similar or complementary ideas.

A key consultative partner during the study will be the UN Secretariat. The steering group will keep the Secretary-General informed of the progress of the study, seek his views as appropriate, and invite relevant Secretariat officials to the conferences.

### **Content**

The study is intended to focus on enhancing the UN's rapid reaction capability. It is not a study on how to improve UN peacekeeping generally. Nonetheless, these two themes have much in common that must be taken into account in the overall context of the study. Therefore, the study will review past experience relevant to the aim of this project, including a review of major concepts and initiatives that represent significant milestones on the road to the present. Particular attention will be paid to developments since the end of the Cold War. Furthermore, the study will be guided by the orientation and concepts articulated

by the Secretary-General in *An Agenda for Peace*. Due regard will be accorded to non-military aspects of peace operations, such as preventive diplomacy, the political component of all such operations and peacebuilding. Peacekeeping will be treated in its broadest context.

The study will focus on the specific issue of improved responsiveness, given the structure and nature of contemporary peacekeeping. This will take account of the interrelationships among the political, strategic, operational and tactical components of any peace operation, as well as the relevance for rapid reaction of the integration of political, humanitarian, police and military elements, including non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Similarly, the study will address the question of command and control systems and their contribution to an improved rapid reaction capability. The conditions under which nations are willing to make their resources available to the UN are crucial to their political commitment and readiness to act. Paramount among these concerns is the nature and competence of command and control structures and relationships. The role of the Security Council in mobilizing political support and providing ongoing guidance is essential.

The study will elaborate the component elements of a rapid reaction capability in a generic sense. This section of the study will address the requirement for, and provision of, among other things, early warning, integrated planning capability, command and control systems, logistics capability and doctrine/standards/interoperability. An important element will be the nature of standing forces, options for their development and a discussion of their potential utility.

Having established the basis for rapid reaction, the study will address in concrete terms what can be done to achieve this capability. The study will outline proposals that logically fit into one of the three time frames envisaged. The implications of a given proposal at one of the four levels (political, strategic, operational and tactical) for the remaining levels will be explored. For example, the establishment of regional stocks in two or more locations has direct implications for how these stocks will be allocated and co-ordinated at the strategic level in New York.

In many cases, short-term proposals will suggest additional measures that might logically follow in the medium and long terms. For example, virtually all proposals for the medium and long term imply an increased capability in the UN Secretariat to cope with additional responsibilities. Therefore, reform and enhancement of the UN Secretariat, a necessary stand-alone requirement to enhance the UN's rapid reaction capability, will also cumulatively establish the necessary strategic apparatus to handle a series of additional medium- and long-term improvements.

Any plan to operate a standing force presupposes adjustments at the political, strategic and tactical levels, which in many cases must be put in place on an incremental basis, starting as soon as possible.

The study will arrive at recommendations and conclusions regarding the desirability and feasibility of implementing a variety of potential measures. It will also make observations and recommendations as to their associated costs.

The study will be submitted to the membership of the UN at the General Assembly in September 1995, and presented to the Secretary-General for his consideration.