

Closing Remarks

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At the close of the BLUE HELMET FORUM let me thank you for your active participation. I was impressed with the quality of the presentations and the discussions in the various sessions. The findings of the discussion groups as presented by the two rapporteurs demonstrated the intensive work of the participants. I would like to emphasize some of the points made.

Force generation

For effective peacekeeping a full range of capabilities is essential. It is often difficult to find specialised services or key capabilities. On the other hand, small countries find it difficult to provide larger combat units. One answer to this problem is to specialise in key enabling capabilities to fill existing niches. Another course of action would be to prepare multinational force packages. Thus a group of smaller countries could make a meaningful contribution to a peace operation to reasonable costs for the participants. The concept of pre – established force packages would require enhanced regional cooperation already prior to the deployments. We already see a number of initiatives in this respect. Both courses of action should be explored more systematically.

Headquarters

Like a human being a headquarters acquires experience with its length of existence. The UN has to generate a

headquarters every time they start up a mission. In addition, they have to take carefully into account a balanced country representation at the staff officers' level. These are not the best conditions to form an efficient command and planning element. Under these circumstances the best option is to build a headquarters around a nucleus of experienced staff. SHIRBRIG has been used several times to provide this experience for the start up phase. The filling of the remaining staff positions should be in accordance with qualification. To optimize country representation a transparent system should be used. SHAPE uses a system, where countries get points depending on their contributions to evaluate their staffing levels. A combination of the SHIRBRIG package with a long term transparent manning system, based on qualification, could help to improve staff efficiency.

Logistics

Logistics is a field where we see a rapid transformation. The use of civilian contractors is growing. Very often they can provide a service more efficient and more cost effective. Professional soldiers are expensive and their capabilities and equipment are for war fighting. Civilian contractors are therefore less suitable at higher end of the deployment spectrum. A participant quite rightly stated, "If civilians can do a job, let them do it". On the other hand many commanders feel that this trend may limit their options for military action. A participant from the UK mentioned that in the UK certain contractors are obliged to hire a number of employees, who are willing and able to join the reserve force. In high risk operations they could continue their service as soldiers and reinforce military logistics. This system seems to combine the best

of both worlds and could help to alleviate the many logistic problems in peace operations, particular in those areas where nations are responsible themselves.

Tour length

Longer tours mean less rotation and more continuity. A typical tour in peace operations is 6 months followed by 9 to 24 months of service at home. But there is a need to vary the length of tours. For intelligence and CIMIC personnel six months are too short, because they need to interact with locals and build up good contacts. For a soldier sitting in a desert camp six months are very long. Too many tours in the same mission should be avoided. This might cause an attitude change like: "I know already everything". The tour length should be kept flexible. The difficulty is to balance political demands and personnel preferences versus military efficiency.

Finances

Peace operations are costly. The UN reimbursement does not cover the cost for troop contributions from countries with high living standards. This may be one reason to limit participation of those countries. On the other hand, why should the UN pay more? Other organisations pay less or even anything. Nations contribute troops because it is in their national interest. In each country there is only a single set of forces available and they will be committed where they serve the national interest best. It would be worthwhile to compare the funding arrangements of UN, NATO and EU and to harmonize those aspects, which have an operational impact in the field.

Special attention should be given to the additional cost for rapid deployment. A commitment by a country to provide high readiness units should result in an increased reimbursement during the first 4 to 6 months of deployment. This may help the UN to reach an initial operational capability in a new mission more quickly.

Training

Training of troops to effective military standards is a national responsibility. From the discussions and the presentations it is clear that multinational training has to start already in 'peace time' and needs to be complemented before deployment. Many specialized training institutions, centres of excellence, have been established. Sufficient common standards and procedures are needed. The civilian-military nature of peace operations also requires a new and common approach to training. Common training builds mutual respect and confidence. Both are key criteria for functioning multinational forces.

Finally let me thank you for your active participation. I hope this forum could again make a modest contribution to the improvement of our peacekeeping capabilities. From the questionnaire you returned I note that you found the forum to be of great value and that you enjoyed being here. You were a very dedicated group and you made this forum a great event. I also thank the organizing committee and the supporting staff for their excellent work. Let me now present to you the certificates of participation and officially conclude the BLUE HELMET FORUM AUSTRIA 2006.