

Back in the Game: Potential Canadian Contributions to UN Peace Operations

DPR Consultation Submission by Dr. W. Dorn (dorn@rmc.ca), 10 May 2016

The Prime Minister has declared that “Canada is back” on the world stage. He has mandated his Ministers of National Defence and Foreign Affairs to re-engage in UN peacekeeping. What can be done? Lots! Here is a list (with elaboration) of ideas.

- Place several military officers in the Office of Military Affairs (OMA) of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) in New York to help the UN and serve as valuable Canadian “eyes and ears” within the world organization. A Canadian general (Maurice Baril) once headed OMA but Canada is not currently included among the 70 countries in OMA. Canada could contribute several key officers, including to help with peacekeeping intelligence.
- Place Canadians (military, police and civilians) in the field operations as individuals and in formed units. Canada currently has **less than 30** military personnel on UN deployment. That’s a record Canadian low, while the United Nations is at a record high (92,000). Canada ranks number 77, with Canadian police forces contributing more than the military does. The Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) could increase its numbers ten-fold to the level it had in 2005 (almost 300). And for urgent situations, Canada could multiply that number tenfold again, to where Canada was in 1993 (3,300 military personnel in UN peacekeeping operations).
- The UN is putting an emphasis on woman military personnel. Canada is ahead of many nations in employing female soldiers, though still well under the DND target of 25%. Canada can offer skilled female military personnel for both UN headquarters and field operations, including in leadership positions. The UN appointed the first female UN Force Commander (from Norway) in 2013.
- Offer leaders, e.g., a Canadian Force Commander to lead the military component of a UN mission. Canada provided five in the 1990s but none since; similarly for the mission head or Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG). Canadians have held the SRS G position only once or twice in the past decade. Canada should lobby for highly qualified candidates to serve as heads of mission and the military components.
- Create a special list (roster) within DGA and DND, like the RCMP does, for civilians and military personnel seeking to deploy on UN missions. Create a number of permanent posts for UN duty, like Canada does for NATO.
- Support UN prevention missions, including preventive deployments of forces to potential conflict areas. The United Nations did that successfully in Macedonia (UNPREDEP) and could do so again in many cases.
- Re-instate standby bodies like the Standby High-Readiness Brigade (SHIRBRIG, 1996-2009), whose demise was caused mainly by the Western militaries’ preoccupation with Afghanistan. But the need remains as great as ever, especially as Western countries, like Sweden and The Netherlands in Mali, re-engage in peacekeeping.
- Support the creation of a standing (permanent) peacekeeping unit for rapid deployment. (See Peter Langille’s concept of a United Nations Emergency Peace Service or UNEPS.)
- Revitalize the Canadian proposal for a Rapidly Deployable Military Headquarters (RDMHQ). Canada served as chair of the governmental group Friends of Rapid Deployment and could re-establish such a group in the future.

The UN is setting up a new mechanism for Strategic Force Generation and it is a good time for Canada to engage as the new process is being developed.

- Increase training for peace operations. (Detailed background and proposals can be found in my [report](#) of February 2016). Create a Canadian international peace operations centre for joint training/education of military, police and civilians, including both Canadians and internationals. The Pearson Peacekeeping Centre (PPC, closed in 2013 due to lack of funding and support) is a good model upon which to build. The Peace Support Training Centre (PSTC, located at Canadian Forces Base Kingston) can expand its courses but it is not a good home for the new centre because it is too tactical and military centric. The new centre could be located nearby while working to build an effective civil-military “partnership,” a fundamental part of peace operations that aim to advance political/diplomatic peace processes. Partnerships with the International Association of Peacekeeping Training Centres ([IAPTC](#), founded at the PPC in 1995) could also be developed.
- Create a civilian deployment capacity. At the heart of peace operations is civilian-military-police cooperation and integration. As Canada discovered in Afghanistan, civilians are key on missions but well-trained deployable civilians are very hard to find. The Martin government was toying with the idea of a “Canada Corps” to promote good governance and institution-building in unstable regions. Such ideas (and even names) can be explored once again, with the peace operations centre playing a key role.

In terms of specific **activities** and equipment, as opposed to personnel and institutions, I also have a few suggestions to offer: Provide some tactical and strategic lift using Canada’s helicopters (Griffons and Chinooks) and heavy-lift aircraft (C17) as well as the usual Hercules aircraft. Offer advanced intelligence-surveillance-reconnaissance (ISR) capabilities, especially a squadrons equipped with the Coyote Reconnaissance Vehicle, which proved so effective in the Ethiopia-Eritrea mission. Contribute to technological innovation in UN peace operations, through the UN’s Partnership for Technology in Peacekeeping and by contributing experts. Contribute specialized enablers, like engineering and signals/comms units, traditional areas of excellence for Canada, well used in past operations. For mission support, Canada could offer medical units and, during an emergency, humanitarian relief personnel and units, including the Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART). Help the UN evolve doctrine, standard operating procedures (SOPs) and training modules with case studies for key areas such as ceasefire support & monitoring technology (much needed in places like Syria, Yemen and Libya), etc. Show the UN how protection of civilians can be done through example and through case studies of UN, Canadian and other nations’ actions in the past.

Canada has so much to offer UN peacekeeping both at UN Headquarters and in the field. The country has real strengths, giving it a competitive advantage in potential deployments: a multicultural mosaic, a bilingual civil service, minority rights protection, the rule of law and long-standing (though diminished in the last decade) service to UN causes. It is also a country free from colonial baggage that the Great Powers still bear in many conflict-ridden areas. Canada has a modern military that, with some new training and updating, can provide excellent peacekeepers. It can particularly help in Francophone countries like Haiti, Mali, and the Central African Republic.

There’s much to do to (re)engage in peace operations. My suggested *modus operandi* would be “push what moves.” Start working quickly on a wide array of initiatives and see which ones gain momentum. Then make them signature projects to show that Canada really is a constructive force on the international stage, helping bring peace to the war-torn areas of the world. Only then can we help heal the open wounds on the world body that hemorrhage problems to the rest of the globe. Only then can refugee flows be diminished, diseases eradicated and terrorism cut off at its source. Only then, can Canada truly say it is back.