# Soldiers of Misfortune

The blue-helmeted troops working to keep the most dangerous hot spots from collapsing are captives of a broken system. Following a series of successful missions—in East Timor, Sierra Leone, and Liberia—U.N. peacekeepers came to be seen as a conflict panacea, and were expanded faster than any country's military, a nearly sevenfold increase since 1998. But now that peacekeepers are the largest number of deployed troops in the world after the United States, expectations are rising more quickly than they can handle. | BY ELIZABETH DICKINSON

Mission Creep

Peacekeeper deployments have risen dramatically—not to fill additional missions, but to meet the mounting number of duties they are expected to perform. When the U.N. Truce Supervision Organization was launched following the first Arab-Israeli war in 1948, it had just one simple task: observing the cease-fire. Today, blue helmets' jobs are vast (enough to fill a 205-page handbook). They are expected to practically rebuild failed states from the ground up, often training local forces, guarding infrastructure, ensuring the rule of law, facilitating elections, and protecting civilian lives.
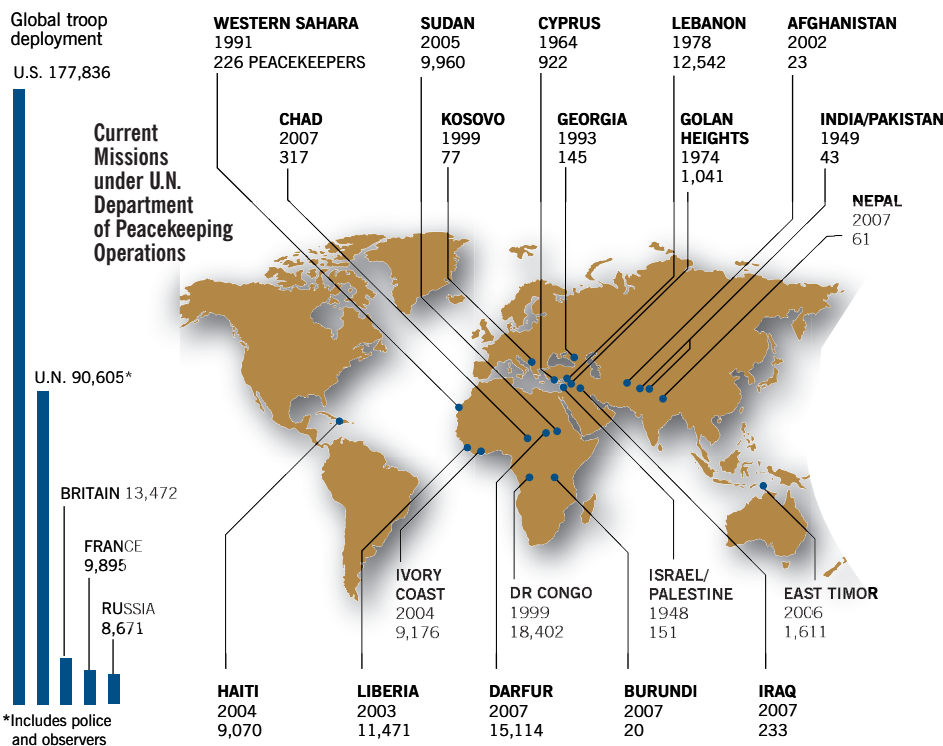
Global troop deployment

U.S. 177,836

Current Missions under U.N. Department of Peacekeeping Operations

U.N. 90,605*

BRITAIN 13,472

FRANCE 9,895

RUSSIA 8,671

*Includes police and observers

WESTERN SAHARA 1991 226 PEACEKEEPERS

SUDAN 2005 9,960

CYPRUS 1964 922

LEBANON 1978 12,542

AFGHANISTAN 2002 23

CHAD 2007 317

KOSOVO 1999 77

GEORGIA 1993 145

GOLAN HEIGHTS 1974 1,041

INDIA/PAKISTAN 1949 43

NEPAL 2007 61

IVORY COAST 2004 9,176

DR CONGO 1999 18,402

ISRAEL/PALESTINE 1948 151

EAST TIMOR 2006 1,611

HAITI 2004 9,070

LIBERIA 2003 11,471

DARFUR 2007 15,114

BURUNDI 2007 20

IRAQ 2007 233

Rent an Army

The United Nations depends on troop "donations" to staff each mission, but often those armies are ill-prepared for the job. Poor countries are drawn to peacekeeping for political and economic reasons. Serving as blue helmets gives their militaries international credibility, and their soldiers receive added training and experience. The United Nations reimburses donor countries for the salaries and benefits of soldiers, as well as any equipment they bring along, allowing dysfunctional states such as Bangladesh, Nepal, Nigeria, and Pakistan to sustain larger militaries than they might otherwise have. And because U.N. compensation rates are often higher than local salaries, peace-keeping can be a moneymaker.

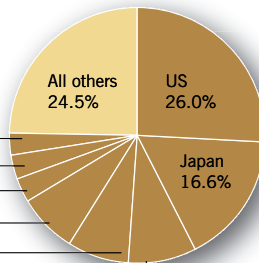| Country	Troops
Pakistan**	10,989
Bangladesh*	9,424
India	8,640
Nigeria*	6,001
Nepal*	3,924
Rwanda**	3,635
Ghana	3,283
Jordan*	3,109
Italy	2,565
Uruguay	2,538
Ethiopia*	2,496
Egypt**	2,401
France	2,308
China**	2,146
South Africa	2,030

**Not Free *Partly free
As ranked by Freedom House, 2008

Who Pays?

Because peacekeepers now operate in more of the world's most hostile environments, budgets have ballooned to match. Most of the funding comes from rich countries, but donations often aren't enough. The largest contributor, the United States, is the worst offender. This year, its budget contributions will fall short by $669 million. The lack of funding is one reason that missions—particularly the most unpleasant ones—go understaffed. Indeed, 11 current U.N. missions are under-staffed by a total of 23,000 personnel. Knowing their troops will be inadequately paid or poorly resourced, some troop-contributing countries are reluctant to send in manpower.

Percent of peacekeeping budget

All others 24.5%
US 26.0%
Japan 16.6%
Spain 3.0%
Canada 3.0%
China 3.1%
France 7.4%
UK 7.8%
Germany 8.6%

BUDGET GROWTH: 1999/$0.96 BILLION   2004/$2.6 BILLION   2009/$7.1 BILLION

GRAPHICS BY LINDA ECKSTEIN; PHOTOS: GETTY

Armed and Ready?

Not all troops are created equal in training, equipment, and experience when they reach the field. The United Nations offers some in-country instruction and a host of standards and materials, but preparing the 200,000 blue helmets and civilian staff who rotate through the system annually remains a job for donating countries. While Pakistani, Indian, and Rwandan troops have a reputation for being better prepared, for example, Bangladeshi and many African troops come less well-trained and equipped.

Gear and logistics, from helicopters to armored vehicles to combat boots, are also in short supply. Many U.N. missions are staged in treacherous territory where convoluted supply chains slow the arrival of provisions. It took nearly two years after the U.N. mission in Darfur (UNAMID) was authorized in July 2007 for the United States to airlift in long-awaited cargo for blue helmets lacking everything from tents to ration kits. Donor countries are also often unable or unwilling to contribute vehicles, weapons, and logistics. UNAMID still lacks the 18 utility helicopters it has requested.

	U.N. troop contributors	NATO
Average budget per active soldier	$30,744	$213,467

Did not receive pre-mission training

24% Military **33%** Police **81%** Civilian
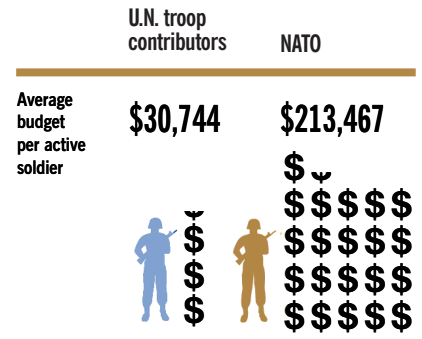
143:1
For every 143 peacekeepers in the field, just one handles logistics

1:2
For U.S. troops in Iraq, there are two to three people handling logistics for every person in the field

Tooth-to-tail ratio

Standard U.N. reimbursement rates to troop donor countries:

Personnel	$1,028/month
Equipment (personal)	$68/month

Comparison with average salary for someone in the Pakistani military: between $62.50-$87/month.

In 2007, the U.N. reported **748** allegations of peacekeeper misconduct ranging from sexual abuse to trafficking to theft.
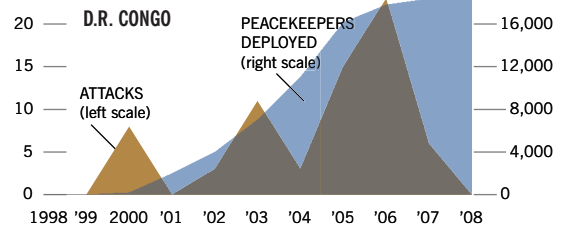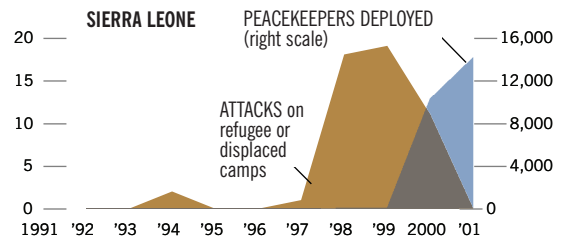
Getting Down to Business

Although there is little data on how effective peacekeepers are, strong initial deployments seem much better equipped to stem violence than staggered troop arrivals. In Sierra Leone, for example, a contingent of about 10,000 reached the country within the first year of the mission—and violence against displaced persons immediately declined. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where it took about three years to reach that same troop strength, attacks continued for six years before finally petering out.

Likewise, missions in Darfur and the DRC, areas the size of France and Western Europe respectively, suffer from desperately low troop numbers compared with the sizable area they must police.

Effectiveness of deployment in ...

SIERRA LEONE — PEACEKEEPERS DEPLOYED (right scale) — ATTACKS on refugee or displaced camps
1991 '92 '93 '94 '95 '96 '97 '98 '99 2000 '01

D.R. CONGO — PEACEKEEPERS DEPLOYED (right scale) — ATTACKS (left scale)
1998 '99 2000 '01 '02 '03 '04 '05 '06 '07 '08

MISSION	DEPLOYED	EST. AREA (SQUARE MILES)	SQUARE MILES PER TROOP
Congo	18,402	905,000	49.18
Darfur	15,114	114,000	7.54
Liberia	11,471	43,000	3.75
Haiti	9,070	10,714	1.18
Lebanon	12,542	4,500	0.36