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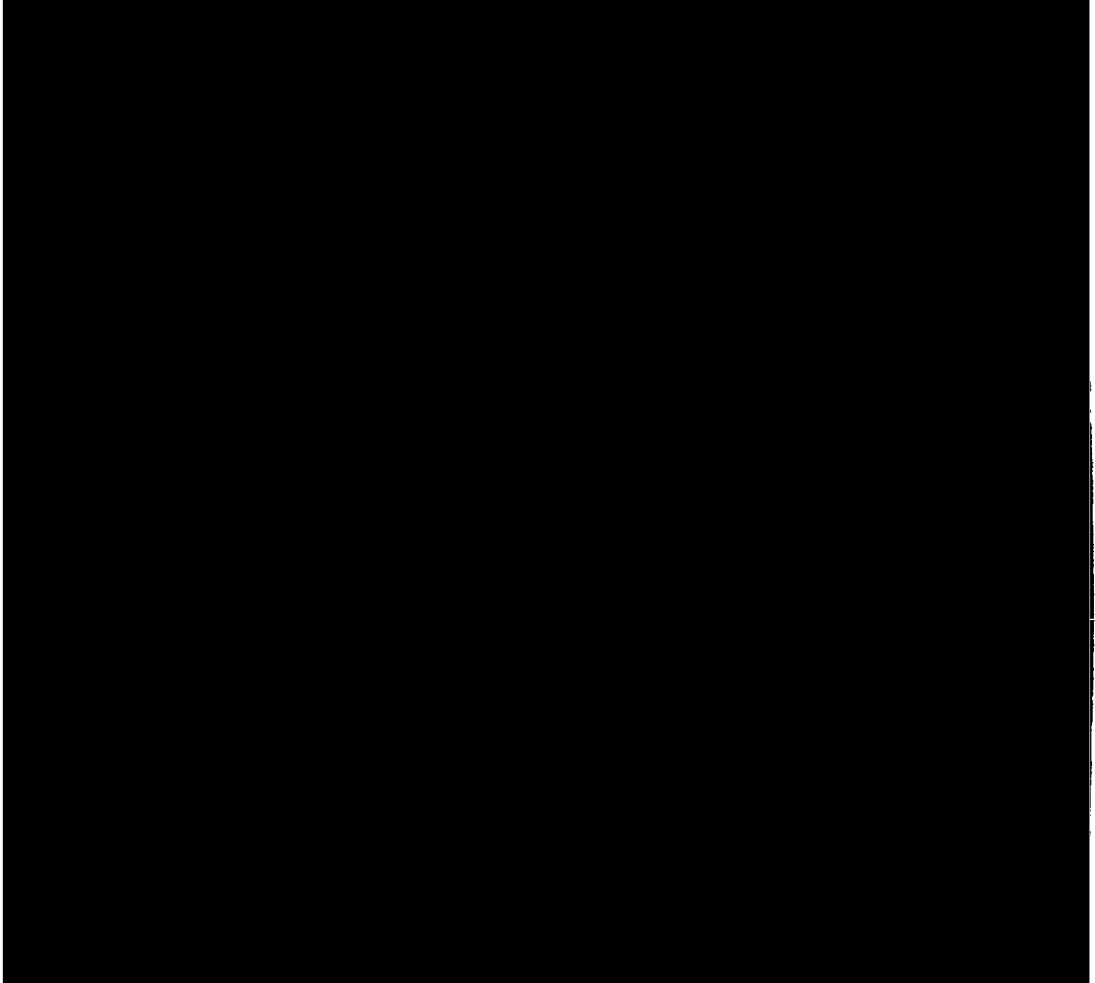
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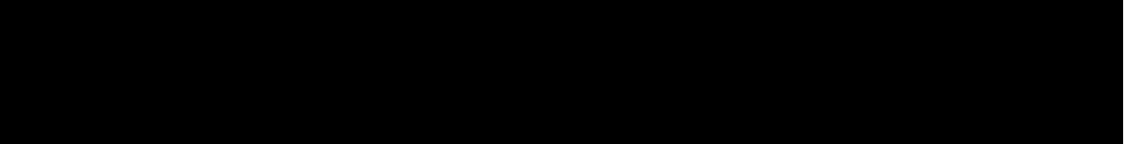
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International: Outlook for UN Peacekeeping Operations 12



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Special Analysis

INTERNATIONAL: Outlook for UN Peacekeeping Operations

As some 350 UN observers begin to monitor the cease-fire between Iran and Iraq today, they are likely to encounter the same sorts of problems that bedevil the other seven current multinational peacekeeping operations. At least initially, their mobility will be limited by whatever transportation the belligerents are willing to provide, and they will be hard pressed to cover the more than 925 miles (1,490 kilometers) of border. None of these problems is likely to undermine the mission, however, as long as both Iran and Iraq remain committed to the cease-fire.

The UN Iran-Iraq Military Observer Group (UNIIMOG) will enjoy several advantages that other UN peacekeeping operations lack:

- Tehran and Baghdad have agreed to an internationally monitored cease-fire, whereas in Afghanistan, for example, the insurgents are not a party to the Geneva Accords that established the UN Good Offices Mission.
- The belligerents have the capacity to implement the agreement, whereas in Lebanon the government is unable to control armed factions in the south that challenge the UN buffer force.
- Unlike the underfunded UN force in Cyprus, there is enough outside support to provide the necessary personnel and funds.

Although the conditions for the UN group in Iran and Iraq are promising, the group will need to be sustained well beyond the initial six-month mandate if UNIIMOG is to help resolve the conflict. In the India-Pakistan conflict—which is similarly complex—UN military observers have been deployed to Kashmir for almost 40 years, and there is still little prospect that they can be safely withdrawn.

Demand Way Up for Peacekeeping Operations

The Iran-Iraq mission is the second multinational peacekeeping operation to be launched in the past four months, and at least two more may be undertaken within a year. In April, the UN Good Offices Mission in Afghanistan and Pakistan was established with a group of 50 observers. A much larger force, including 7,500 UN troops, is planned to monitor Namibia's transition to independence. Peacekeeping and support of a referendum in Western Sahara might involve several thousand UN troops.

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Meeting the new requirements will be difficult even though many countries value the experience that peacekeeping operations provide. The best-trained and most highly qualified peacekeeping troops—including those from Canada and the Nordic countries—are already heavily committed to existing operations. For any contributing country, moreover, the impact on national military forces goes well beyond the number of troops deployed. Peacekeeping units normally are rotated every six months, and such rotation requires annual training of at least twice as many forces as are actually deployed.

Requirements for pilots and technicians are particularly burdensome because they are in short supply in many armed forces. Furthermore, many of the countries that contribute troops absorb the bulk of the financial burden because peacekeeping operations tend to be underfunded. Costs for these operations now account for more than half of the UN debt.

Prospects

The UN has accumulated considerable experience in more than 20 peacekeeping operations over the past 40 years, but even so it is not well prepared to meet the increasing demand. Regional organizations like the Organization of American States and the Organization of African Unity that also have attempted peacekeeping operations are even less prepared for new efforts. The UN's lack of preparation is indicated by inadequate stockpiles of communications and other necessary equipment and by an absence of standardization of equipment. Advanced technology that would enable more effective monitoring of military activity, including a wide range of remote sensors, generally has not been used by peacekeeping forces. No minimum training standards have been established for peacekeeping duty.

These shortcomings and others, along with personnel and financial constraints, will not preclude future peacekeeping operations but will make the job more difficult. In particular, financial pressures are likely to result in the deployment of forces that are insufficient for the tasks they face.