

September 6, 2006

Re: Lift the Cap on U.S. assessed contributions to UN Peacekeeping

Dear Conferee:

We urge you agree to the Senate version of the Defense Department Authorization Bill (S. 2766) in regards to SEC. 1092, "Limitation on the United States Share of Assessments for United Nations Peacekeeping Operations." This section, which is supported by the Bush administration, will lift the 25% cap on the payment of U.S. assessments for U.N. peacekeeping. U.N. peacekeeping is an important tool the U.S. must use to address the threat to U.S. national security posed by instability and state weakness/failure.

U.N. peacekeeping is a cost-effective way of responding to failed or failing states. The Bush Administration has stated that failed states can pose a security threat to the U.S. by becoming safe havens, bases of operation, and transit areas for the activities of organized criminal networks and international terrorist organizations. With international pressure for a robust U.N. force to move into South Lebanon intensifying, and the recent escalation of crises in Darfur and the Democratic Republic of Congo, it is crucial for the U.S. to honor its full financial commitment to U.N. peacekeeping. In addition, continued instability, humanitarian crises, and violence in places like Chad, Somalia, Burundi, and East Timor, America's moral leadership is also at stake. Supporting more effective U.N. peace operations, which cannot happen without adequate funding and resources, is clearly in the U.S. national interest.

Accordingly, U.S. government officials have praised U.N. peacekeeping. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, testifying before the House SSJC Appropriations Subcommittee on March 9, 2005, said "*[U.N. Peacekeeping] is much more cost effective than using American forces. And of course, America doesn't have the forces to do all of these peacekeeping missions, but somebody has to do them. And the United States has to pay its share of people doing them.*"

Speaking before Senate Appropriators in early 2006, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld cited the U.N. operation in Haiti as "*one example of the benefit of empowering partner nations,*" noting that "*[W]ithout the major help of other nations, it would have cost the U.S. taxpayers almost eight times as much in dollars, to say nothing of the added stress on our forces.*" Secretary Rumsfeld was alluding to a recent General Accounting office (GAO) study that concluded U.N. peacekeeping is eight times less expensive than funding a U.S. force (because the U.N. is half as expensive and the U.S. only pays a quarter of the costs).

In addition, OMB has given the Contributions for International Peacekeeping Activities (CIPA) account its highest (three star) rating under its Program Assessment Rating Tool (PART), judging CIPA funds to be effective, achieving their stated goals, and linked to the State Department's objectives.

Yet the United States has consistently failed to appropriate enough money to meet its obligations. The current U.S. shortfall for U.N. peacekeeping stands at nearly \$400 million. The problem is compounded by the U.S. law that limits the U.S. contribution to 25% of total U.N. peacekeeping costs, even though the U.S. is assessed at slightly over 27%. Clearly, the impact of accruing arrears as a result of this cap— \$100 million per year at current levels — needs to be addressed. Continued U.S. arrears poisons our relationship with other U.N. member states at a time when consensus is key. Moreover, the growing financial crisis may have dire consequences for U.N. peacekeeping efforts around the globe.

When the U.S. or other countries fail to pay or defer their peacekeeping bills, the U.N. is forced to adjust its bill-paying strategies. The U.N. will pay deadline sensitive bills, like paying for equipment, travel, and short-term logistical expenses, but defer payments to troop contributing nations. The chief problem in a failure to keep up with U.N. peacekeeping assessments is that it makes it harder and harder to get these nations to continue to serve as peacekeepers, especially in big missions with complex logistics and high costs. As the US seeks a robust UN mission in places like Lebanon or Darfur, potentially the most serious consequence is that there will be no troops for the mission.

At UN headquarters, fewer than a thousand people support over 60,000 troops, plus an additional 25,000 police and other civilians, deployed in UN peacekeeping operations. The system is severely under resourced. Yet a 2005 report from the RAND Corporation comparing UN and US histories of conflict intervention found the UN's Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) more capable and --- even given its perennially strained resources --- more efficient at instilling peace.

Put simply, UN peacekeeping is a national security bargain for the US. We urge you to retain bill language in the Defense Department Authorization Bill that lifts the 25% cap on US payment for UN peacekeeping for calendar years 2005 through 2007.

Sincerely,

Amnesty International USA
CARE
Citizens for Global Solutions
Better World Campaign
Democracy Coalition Project
EarthAction
Friends Committee on National Legislation
General Federation of Women's Clubs
Genocide Intervention Network
International Rescue Committee
International Crisis Group
Mercy Corps
Open Society Policy Center
Oxfam America

Refugees International

Save the Children

United Nations Association of the USA

United Methodist Church, General Board of Church and Society

CC: Defense Authorization Conferees