

PEACEKEEPING II

"Eighteen months after Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Congo agreed to stop fighting, [they] ... are again on the verge of war. ...

The UN peacekeeping force in Congo (MONUC), the world's largest, is supposed to be disarming [genocidal Rwandan rebels there] ..., but has failed to neutralize them. '

Indeed, since MONUC was first deployed to Congo in 1999, it has consistently failed to keep anyone in the region safe. ...

MONUC's chiefs have [10,000 troops, to be expanded to 16,000, but] military experts guess [they need] about 50,000. Why then, is the UN in Congo at all?. ... Whom does it deter?

...It would be hard to exaggerate the UN's unpopularity. Some Congolese ... throw lumps of mud at passing UN patrols. ... 'Is MONUC here to do anything apart from count the bodies?' asked a Congolese witness. ...

Morale among the blue helmets is not high. Many regard their posting to Congo as the height of misfortune. Some are ashamed to be part of such an indolent force. During massacres in Ituri's main town of Bunia last year, some Uruguayan peacekeepers suffered nervous breakdowns after watching atrocities they had been ordered not to prevent."

"Congo, Rwanda, and the UN" Is this the world's least effective UN peacekeeping force?", The Economist, **December 4th, 2004**.

"The United Nations is not simply a reflection of its major members, but a vast organization with a distinct culture and code -- one in desperate need of repair. ...

But real reform means realistic reform, not more fantasies. U.N. peacekeeping is particular needs fundamental rethinking. If countries will not sanction a force robust enough to do the job, then the U.N. should have the courage to refuse the mission. ... This sounds cruel but, really, how is it different from what is happening right now? What exactly are U.N. forces doing in Congo? At least in Sudan ... there is no pretense of an international effort to stop the savagery.

Whatever the U.N. might say about the rules of engagement and who drew them up, the reality on the ground is that when the U.N. goes into these grim parts of the world, people see the blue helmets and U.N. flag and believe that help has arrived. By its very presence the United Nations is offering hope -- and it is cruel to offer false hope. ... If we will not help these people, let us at least not lie to them."

Fareed Zakaria, "When the UN fails, we all do", Newsweek International, **December 13, 2004**, p. 15.

"Kofi Annan, the UN secretary-General, has two problems -- the Bush administration's continuing annoyance with the United Nations and the organization's actual, pressing problems in fulfilling its key missions.

So, Annan is doing the right thing by planning further management changes ... Major shakeups are needed in critical areas like peacekeeping and refugee assistance.

... Helping the poor and desperate ... demands strengthening the management of peacekeeping operations. Some kind of appalling nadir was reached last month with reports that members of an international contingent of UN peacekeepers in Congo had been raping the young girls they had been sent to protect. Annan and his staff must spare no effort to see that these crimes are prosecuted and punished. Further steps must be taken so that adequately armed and trained troops are quickly available to back up truce agreements in the world's multiplying trouble spots ...

Given the unremitting hostility of the Bush administration, the survival of the United Nations as an effective organization cannot be taken for granted. Annan will have to challenge the self-protective bureaucracy more radically than it has ever been challenged."

"Housecleaning at the UN", International Herald Tribune, **January 12, 2005**.

"I recall the day in 1960 when the UN took charge of the Congo ... after the Belgian colonial government had hastily evacuated, triggering massacres.] Various European powers were ready to move in to restore order and save lives, but ['world opinion'] deemed that only the UN could do the job, as it was the only body with 'clean hands.'

That was 45 years ago, and the UN has been involved ever since. The fighting has continued -- flaring up and dying down, with no end in sight. It's estimated that about 5 million have died. UN secretaries-general have come and gone (one was killed in the Congo), but the UN 'mission' grinds on, expensive and totally ineffective.

The Congo is only one of scores of failed UN missions in Africa alone. These failures don't seem to be taken very seriously by top UN bureaucrats. For example ..., Boutros Boutros-Ghali, ... [mentioned in the current UN oil-for-food scandal, replied that] ... 'There are a lot things that I am responsible for that were ten times worse than this, such as the genocide in Rwanda.'

That is, when you think about it carefully, an amazing remark to make."

Paul Johnson, "The UN is for talk, not actions," Forbes (US), **March 14, 2005**.

{Note: Mr. Johnson is an "eminent British historian and author."}

"The United Nations controversial peacekeeping operation in eastern Congo has received a further blow ...

[An internal report,] ... obtained by the *Financial Times*, charged that UN troops had not been tough enough in defending against renegade Congolese Army commanders ... It said this inaction called into question the 'very purpose of the mission' and 'emboldened potential enemies of Monuc [the peacekeeping mission]' ... [which] threatened the shaky peace process ...

Among its criticisms, the report cited poor leadership, misleading statements by the mission and the failure of a commander to follow orders ...

The failure of the mission to use force during the crisis 'smeared the mission with the taint of impotence and cowardice', said the internally-commissioned report, and gave the perception 'that it had again failed the Congolese people at a critical moment.'

Monuc ... the UN's most expensive peacekeeping operation, ... has been widely criticized for incompetence, for failing to protect civilians, and becoming mired in sex scandals. ...

A number of senior officials have since left Monuc, but William Swing, the political head, remains in place. In February there were reports that he would resign, but the UN later said he would complete his term."

Andrew England, "UN report accuses peacekeepers of failing the Congolese people", Financial Times (UK), **March 23, 2005**.

"A U.N. report on peacekeeper sex abuse released Thursday describes the U.N. military arm as deeply flawed and recommends withholding salaries of the guilty and requiring nations to pursue legal action against perpetrators.

[The report] said abuses had been reported in missions ranging from Bosnia and Kosovo to Cambodia, East Timor, West Africa and Congo. While allegations of abuse have dogged peacekeeping missions since their inception 50 years ago, the issue was thrust into the spotlight after the United Nations found [renewed problems in the Congo] earlier this year. ...

One of the tasks of [Prince Zeid al Hussein, Jordan's U.N. ambassador and author of the report], was finding ways to hold peacekeepers more accountable ...

With the United Nations burdened by scandals ... in the [Iraq] oil-for-food program and allegations of

sexual harassment by U.N. staff, officials have sought to deal with the peacekeeper sex abuse issue quickly.

...

Zeid set 2007 as a target date to complete many of his recommendations ...

"Parliaments, and especially those legislatures of the largest contributors to the U.N. peacekeeping budget, may feel ill at ease over continuing to extend support to peacekeeping in the absence of any significant change," Zeid said."

"U.N. report: Peacekeeping ops troubled," Associated Press, **March 24, 2005**.

" ... The annual U.N. peacekeeping budget is currently \$4 billion to cover 17 global missions. [The] ... 75,000 U.N. personnel in the field now ... will grow to about 90,000 by mid-2005 because of Sudan. ...

Jean-Marie Guehenno, [head of U.N.] peacekeeping operations said [concerning the allegations of abuse]... "Across the board, doctrine ... training and leadership need to be strengthened, or we will simply be unable to cope with the weight of responsibility with which we are now charged' ...'[adding] that the U.N. should have a basic framework of policies and guidelines on this issue in place by the end of 2005. ...

Many say more needs to be done to make sure the police and troops being sent on missions don't have a history of sexual abuse or any other type of shady past. ...

This week [Kofi Annan] reiterated a 'zero tolerance' policy on sexual offenses.

But [a US congressman] said: 'The biggest problem we've had in this is zero accountability ... 'zero tolerance' has equaled 'zero compliance' and that has got to end.'

[He] has sponsored a bill ... [to ensure UN preventive measures] ... before any U.S. peacekeepers are sent on missions."

Liza Porteus, "U.N. not at peace with its 'Blue helmets'", Fox News, **March 24, 2005**.

"The UN mission [Monuc] ... in Congo has been incessantly lambasted for failing to protect civilians. Since December, fighting has displaced more than 80,000 people. ...

Monuc has recently given an indication that it may finally be gaining teeth. ...

In the past, UN troops failed to intervene as militias or renegade soldiers slaughtered civilians and captured towns ...

[A] damning report, which analysed the UN's abysmal response to an attack on Bukavu in 2004, accused Monuc's leadership -- headed by William Swing, an American former ambassador -- of numerous failings, implying incompetence at all levels. Mr. Swing remains in office, but other senior officials ... have left. Says one UN official, 'It's now or never. There cannot be another Bukavu, or Monuc packs up and goes.' ...

Says Ross Mountain, the newly appointed deputy head of mission ... 'Certainly there was a recognition we had to be very much more focused on achieving results.' ...

But the task will not be easy and the 5,000 UN troops in Ituri, a huge area, remain a tiny presence and lack decent intelligence ... Whether they are serious remains to be seen."

Andrew England, "UN soldiers talk tough in attempt to pacify Congo", Financial Times (UK), **March 29, 2005**.

Note: Detailed information about a very serious past and current UN peacekeeping problem is contained in the archive subsection on Refugee Sexual Abuses .

Useful Sources

(Note: informally assembled by IO Watch, roughly ranked from "most useful" on down, and subject to change as new sources are added)

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[Note: The author served as a wartime journalist in Somalia, Rwanda, and Bosnia and elsewhere in the 1990s]

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