

# United Nations: Rush Hour Ahead

By Hans Binnendijk

LONDON — The United Nations turns 43 today, rejuvenated by its Nobel prize for peacekeeping operations and by its successes in managing conflict in Southwest Asia. It will not have time to rest on its deserved laurels. The new tide in East-West relations and regional settlements brings in tough challenges for UN peacekeepers and arms control monitors.

The United Nations has 10,000 troops in blue helmets engaged in seven peace operations at a cost of more than \$250 million annually. This requirement could easily double next year.

The first challenge will be to design operations that meet the needs of emerging settlements in Namibia, the Western Sahara and Cambodia without overwhelming UN capabilities. It will not be easy, because these peacekeeping missions would be much more complex than most past ones.

Monitoring cease-fire lines or disputed borders has proved easier than enforcing peace in a civil war. Among the most dangerous peacekeeping operations have been the 1960 Congo effort and the current UNIFIL patrols in Lebanon. In both cases, UN troops had to engage local forces in combat.

The conflicts in Namibia, Western Sahara and Cambodia are all civil wars with some element of foreign intervention. Settlements would include varying degrees of UN participation in election monitoring, refugee resettlement and police actions against dissidents opposed to the peace accords.

For the Namibia operation alone, UN officials estimate that 7,500 troops and 2,500 civilians would be needed to monitor the transition to independence, at a cost exceeding \$600 million. A mooted UN presence there next month, well before a settlement is reached in Angola, could prove particularly dangerous.

Cambodia could be even more dangerous. One can imagine a situation in which the Security Council approves UN operations there pursuant to a Vietnamese settlement with Prince Norodom Sihanouk that the Khmer Rouge opposed. That would put UN

forces in conflict with 40,000 well-supplied and ruthless guerrilla fighters. Even a settlement with tacit Khmer Rouge approval could quickly deteriorate into civil war, with UN forces caught in the middle.

Peacekeeping needs are changing in other regions where peace negotiations are under way, such as the Iran-Iraq theater, Afghanistan, Cyprus and possibly Korea. For example, a final settlement of the Iran-Iraq war could be enhanced by UN use of commercial satellites to warn either side of major troop concentrations.

Another challenge for UN peacekeepers comes from recent proposals by Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister Vladimir Petrovsky. The most controversial would have the Security Council "stave off emerging conflicts by setting up observer posts in explosive areas." Mr. Petrovsky also envisioned using large-scale UN deployments stationed in one country to protect that state from outside interference.

Dozens of UN deterrent forces could thus be deployed around the world, each at the request of only one party to a conflict. This could place the Blue Helmets in harm's way around the world without negotiated cease-fire agreements or even support from contending parties.

The Soviets have coupled their call for the new UN commitments with bold ideas for meeting these commitments. They envision what amounts to a UN army made up of seconded national forces trained in new UN peacekeeping schools. The superpowers would be participating in the new UN army, adding to the tension and risk in already difficult situations.

The Soviet proposals cannot be rejected out of hand. Underlying them may be a Soviet desire consistent with their so-called "new thinking" to reduce their own military involvement in regional conflict. Their general approach in tabling these proposals this year has been to seek consensus rather

than confrontation. The United Nations has to find ways to take advantage of the new Soviet interest in the United Nations without at the same time setting dangerously impossible tasks for its peacekeeping forces.

Another challenge, this time to UN arms control monitoring capabilities, stems from world pressure to stop chemical warfare. Both the upcoming Paris conference to reinvigorate the 1925 Geneva Protocol and the ongoing Geneva negotiations could create new UN responsibilities. The United Nations could be called upon to investigate all possible violations of the 1925 ban on the use of chemical weapons or to verify a worldwide ban on chemical weapons possession.

Verifying a worldwide chemical weapons ban would be a nearly impossible task requiring continual inspection of production facilities, potential storage areas and frontline military units in signatory countries. Yet the United Nations could be asked to take this on, since its International Atomic Energy Agency verifies the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty.

New financial resources, manpower, training and technology will be required if the United Nations is to have any chance of meeting even the most modest of these challenges. The United States has now successfully reformed UN budgetary and personnel policies, and appears ready to pay its back dues when these reforms are carried out. It has also taken steps to set aside an additional \$150 million out of other accounts to meet these new UN contingency requirements.

Sustaining this new, more positive U.S. approach will be critical if the United Nations is to be guided through these difficult challenges. The Soviet Union, for its part, should avoid bold new proposals which only complicate an already complex set of requirements for the United Nations.

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