

WASHINGTON NOTES ON AFRICA



UPDATE --February 1995

*P*eacemaking is a vital priority in Africa.

Development and democratization cannot move ahead in countries where civil conflicts rage. In 1995, therefore, a major goal of Africa advocacy is to ensure sustained U.S. support for United Nations and African peacemaking and peacekeeping efforts.

This goal is threatened in the current climate. Although the House Republican Contract With America does not mention Africa by name, its provisions, if enacted, would almost certainly have a negative impact on the United States' already limited support for peacekeeping. The National Security Revitalization Act (H.R. 7) contains the Contract's provisions regarding foreign policy and defense. It would impose numerous restrictions on U.S. support for U.N. peacekeeping, while calling for sharply increased spending on Cold War programs such as Star Wars. In particular, it would deduct U.S. voluntary payments for U.N.-endorsed operations (such as those in the Persian Gulf and even in South Korea) from the amount the United States owes as regularly assessed contributions for peacekeeping.

This provision was approved in the version of the bill passed by the House

Support for Peacekeeping at Risk in New Congress

International Relations Committee. If it becomes law, instead of the United States being responsible for an estimated \$1.2 billion in peacekeeping assessments in 1994 (more than half as yet unpaid), the United Nations might owe the United States \$400 million. If other countries followed suit, U.N. peacekeeping would essentially be shut down, except for voluntary contributions for operations given priority by one or more great power. Debate on the House floor is expected in mid-February, and action on a parallel bill in the Senate (S. 5) will also be coming up soon.

Last year's African Conflict Resolution Act resulted in a small allocation (less than \$30 million per year) for troop demobilization and capacity building in conflict resolution. This amount has not been directly challenged.

The bill was, in fact, co-sponsored by Sen. Jesse Helms (R-N.C.) as well as other Republicans in both the House and Senate. But with the influx of new members of Congress and an emerging trend toward slashing Africa aid, it is essential to reaffirm our support so that such measures do not get lost in the budget-cutting frenzy.

Rising Demand for Peacekeeping

The post-Cold War era has seen the United Nations take on a dramatically higher profile in mediating conflicts around the world. In 1994 the U.N. was involved in preventive diplomacy or peacemaking in 28 conflicts, up from 11 in 1988. Peacekeeping operations were deployed in 17 conflicts, as compared with 5 in 1988. And the peacekeeping budget expanded from \$230 million in 1988 to \$3.6 billion last year.

Major peacekeeping assignments for the U.N. in Africa in recent years have included Namibia, Mozambique, Angola, Somalia and Rwanda, with smaller observer roles in Chad, Liberia, South Africa and Western Sahara. Outside Africa the U.N. played a major role in El Salvador, sent over 20,000 troops to the former Yugoslavia, and was in charge of supervising elections and a transitional government in Cambodia. It will soon take over in Haiti from a unilateral U.S. force. There were smaller missions in Tajikistan and Georgia, and long-established mandates in the Middle East, Kashmir, Cyprus and Lebanon.

The Security Council has not accepted the proposal for a standing U.N. rapid-response force. Each operation therefore depends on a slowly assembled patchwork of support from member countries contributing troops or other resources.

Last year the United States provided \$1.2 billion for U.N. peacekeeping. This included payment of arrears and part of the 1994 assessment, but at the end of 1994 the United States still owed about \$700 million in peacekeeping assessments not yet paid. The United States is assessed 31% of the

peacekeeping costs, but the Administration has pledged to reduce the U.S. share to 25%. The Administration budget presented to Congress early this month calls for only \$400 million for peacekeeping, although administration officials acknowledged that they might seek a supplemental appropriation later in the year.

Even if last year's higher allocation were to be repeated this year, the total U.S. contribution for peacekeeping would be less than one-half of one percent of the \$258 billion military budget request.

Learning the Wrong Lessons

Congressional opposition to funding U.N. peacekeeping in part reflects isolationist trends. But it also is a reaction to the lessons learned from the deaths of American soldiers in Somalia in 1993 and the general image of failure attached to U.N. missions, particularly in Africa.

It is true that the rapid expansion of peacekeeping missions has been accompanied by many mistakes, for which the inadequacies of the U.N. bureaucracy are partly to blame. Many conflicts are intractable, and a large outside presence may in some cases be of little help. Like bilateral intervention, multilateral international involvement may aggravate a conflict or strengthen one side under the guise of impartiality. No one should see U.N. peacemaking as a magic remedy to be applied to all problems.

But the most common lessons learned seem to be based on misinformation and wild over-generalization. In the case of Somalia, for example, some Republicans blamed the deaths of the 18 American soldiers largely on "wrong-headed foreign commanders" (New York Times, Jan. 29, 1995). Yet John Sommer, author of a comprehensive study of the Somalia experience, noted that the attack leading to those deaths was under U.S., not U.N. command (New York Times, Feb. 7, 1995).

While there is debate over various aspects of the Somalia debacle, informed observers agree that a fundamental fault was

the failure to establish a smaller U.N. presence much sooner. If this had been done, the conflict which provoked the U.S. troop intervention in late 1992 and the massive U.N. operation which followed might have been diminished in scope, even if the chances for a comprehensive solution were low. Sommer notes, "One of Somalia's several tragic legacies is the Congressional mood to withhold such [preventive] action, which is likely to foster more Somalias in the future."

On the other hand, U.N. peacekeeping missions that turned out successfully have attracted less notice, and have had little impact in countering the aura of failure attached to the Somalia experience. The independence of Namibia in 1990 and elections held successfully in Mozambique in October 1994 were both possible only due to large U.N. missions. In 1994 a small observer group helped monitor withdrawal of Libyan forces from disputed territory on the border with Chad after an International Court ruling against Libya. Outside of Africa, the U.N. can claim credit for substantial contributions to peace in Cambodia and El Salvador, despite continuing problems in both countries.

The lesson most American opinion leaders seemed to have learned from Somalia was "don't get involved." The more rational lesson would have been that earlier, more limited involvement in peacemaking could have avoided the need for large-scale intervention after disaster had reached impossible proportions.

The price of learning the wrong lesson was paid almost immediately, by over half a million Rwandese killed in a genocidal slaughter in April and May 1994. More timely response by the world community might have contained the violence, saving hundreds of thousands of lives. In April 1994, as the planned campaign of genocide was beginning, the U.N. Security Council, with the United States in the lead, voted to reduce the U.N. peacekeeping force in Rwanda from 2,500 to only 250 troops. Yet the Canadian U.N. commander on the spot and many other

observers say modest additions to the U.N. force at that time and an expansion of its mandate would have made it possible to keep the slaughter from spreading.

This did not happen; instead, the U.N. force was expanded only months later, after most of the killing was over. So it was that the United States ended up unilaterally sending 2,300 troops and spending some \$220 million to provide relief to more than a million Rwandese refugees in Zaire.

The Debate Ahead

Several peacekeeping operations are now under way in Africa. The United States has supported an expansion of forces to assist in maintaining the cease-fire in Angola, but has imposed numerous restrictions which may limit the scope of the operation. With respect to Rwanda, the United States has supported the existing U.N. force inside the country. But the U.N. has been unable to find support for efforts to provide better security in the Rwandese refugee camps in Zaire or for even a token presence in neighboring Burundi, where political instability threatens to erupt into large-scale ethnic violence. In Liberia, a small U.N. presence is an essential supplement to the West African regional peacekeeping force.

Even before the new Republican initiatives, the U.S. response on African issues in the U.N. was ambivalent. It has been marked as much by fear of getting involved as by an intent to deal effectively with the issues. The result has been, in the words of Council on Foreign Relations fellow Jessica Matthews, "rising resentment against a country that seems to want to match a high-flying self-image and set of goals to a chintzy bank account."

The new legislative drive against U.N. peacekeeping funds threatens to make this default of moral leadership even more damaging.

The House may vote on H.R. 7 as early as Feb. 13 or 14. But consideration of the parallel bill in the Senate, which has not yet been discussed in committee, is expected to

take longer. If the bills pass both houses, a joint conference committee will have to reconcile the differences between the two versions. U.S. Ambassador to the U.N. Madeleine Albright and others have suggested that the President should veto the bill if it passes in its present form. If the President does veto the bill, it would require a two-thirds vote in each house to become law.

There is a real need for improvement in the United Nations capacity to aid in peacemaking around the world, and particularly in Africa. But that requires better use of resources, not a scaling-back of resources that are already inadequate. In the Cold War era, the United States helped lay much of the groundwork for today's African conflicts, pouring arms into the continent and strengthening oppressive leaders. Support for peacemaking in Angola, Liberia and Somalia (to name only a few cases) is in part simply payment of the moral debt that is owed. It is also a prudent investment for the future. Failure to invest in peace now will mean greater costs later for relief operations, as well as lost opportunities for new economic ties.

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

Write your Representative and two Senators. Tell them you oppose cuts in U.S. funding for United Nations peacekeeping and peacemaking operations in African countries. The United States has the obligation to take the lead, not by sending its own troops for peacekeeping or relief, but by strongly supporting the capacity for effective and timely multilateral involvement. This support should go both to African institutions and to the United Nations. Continued and improved support for peacemaking now is not only a humanitarian obligation, it is also the most cost-effective way to avert more costly disasters in the future.

Ask your members of Congress to:

✓ Oppose measures such as H.R. 7, which would sharply cut U.S. support for U.N.

peacekeeping while calling for large increases in U.S. military spending.

✓ Continue support for the African Conflict Resolution Act, passed last year, which mandates U.S. support for troop demobilization and efforts to build African conflict resolution capacity.

The Honorable _____
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable _____
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Send copies of your letter to:

Mr. Anthony Lake, National Security Advisor
The White House
Washington, DC 20500
Fax: (202) 456-2883

Sen. Jesse Helms, Chair, Foreign Relations Committee
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510
Phone: (202) 224-6342
Fax: (202) 224-7588

Rep. Benjamin Gilman, Chair, International Relations Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515
Phone: (202) 225-3776
Fax: (202) 225-2541

Sen. Nancy Kassebaum
Chair, Africa Subcommittee, U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510
Phone: (202) 224-4774
Fax: (202) 224-3514

Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, Chair, Africa Subcommittee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515
Phone: (202) 225-3931
Fax: (202) 225-5620

—
Washington Office on Africa, 110 Maryland Ave., NE,
Suite 112,
Washington DC 20002, Tel.: (202) 546-7961