Canada in Peacekeeping and Peacekeeping Training in Africa

Dr. H. Peter Langille

For over forty years Canada was a leader in peacekeeping and a reliable troop contributor. Canadians could boast participation in all United Nations (UN) missions up to 1994. At that time, approximately 4 500 Canadian troops were deployed to 12 UN missions. This represented over 10% of all peacekeeping troops to the UN.¹

As of February 2007, Canada only had 14 troops and 41 military observers in UN peacekeeping. Overall, this represents 0.1% of the current troop contributions to UN peacekeeping. From being at the forefront of participating member states in the early 1990s, Canada now ranks 62nd in UN troop contributions.²

Canadian contributions to UN peacekeeping have declined markedly over the past decade. The peacekeeping training assistance provided by Canada to Africa has increased over the past five years. Although this training has been both beneficial and substantive, there are legitimate concerns as to whether it will remain available at current levels.

The future of Canada in peacekeeping – like the future of Canadian assistance for peacekeeping training in Africa – is uncertain. As such, both need to be encouraged by Canadians and Africans.

Canada in Peacekeeping (1956–1996)

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Since the Suez crisis of 1956 and the pioneering efforts of UN Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld and Prime Minister Lester Pearson, over 100 000 Canadians have served abroad in UN peacekeeping. For the Canadian public, peacekeeping was consistently the most popular military role.⁴ This

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role even helped to shape a unique national identity, influencing expectations of Canada’s responsibility in the world. As early as 1967, John Holmes noted that the art and science of peacekeeping is of special interest to Canadians because they have been involved in it more than almost any other country, and it has, in fact, been incorporated into their image of their role in the world.5

Canadian experience in peacekeeping was seen as equating expertise, which generated wider demand for ideas and training.6 In 1986, John Sigler described Canada as having the best military peacekeeping training programme anywhere in the world.7 The development of the Lester B. Pearson Peacekeeping Training Centre (PPC) at a former CF training base (CFB Cornwallis) in 1994–95 signalled a commitment to assist other UN member states with diverse training courses, both on-site and abroad. Simultaneously, Canada was also well-represented in the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (UNDPKO), with approximately eight officers provided on a cost-free (gratis) basis.

Various national and multinational studies and initiatives were launched to improve UN peacekeeping.8 For example, in 1995 Canada joined Denmark and The Netherlands to initiate the Multinational Standby High Readiness Brigade (SHIRBRIG), which was designed to facilitate rapid deployment to UN peacekeeping operations.9 With 15 participating member states, SHIRBRIG was viewed as the most advanced partnership and standby formation for UN peacekeeping.10 It was also a model of cooperation that others might emulate. In 2004, Canada announced that it would take a lead-role in SHIRBRIG.11 Over the next two years it was well represented, with the Commander of SHIRBRIG and four officers within the Headquarters or Planning Element.

As a middle power with well-trained, well-equipped armed forces, Canada was often among the UN’s preferred sources. Other regular troop contributors respected the CFs for their military professionalism and competence. As a frequent contributor to international peace and security, Canada also earned considerable diplomatic influence abroad.

Canada out of Peacekeeping (1997–2007)

As of February 2007, Canada only had 14 troops and 41 military observers in UN peacekeeping. Overall, this represents 0.1% of the current troop contributions to UN peacekeeping. From being at the forefront of participating member states in the early 1990s, Canada now ranks 62nd in UN troop contributions.12

Canada does not have a single officer within the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations. Nor is there a single Canadian officer participating within SHIRBRIG Headquarters or Planning Element. There is little, if any, prospect of Canada providing a substantive contribution to UN peacekeeping, and less prospect it will assume a lead role within a SHIRBRIG deployment.

According to Michael Valpy, “Canada has turned down so many United Nations’ requests to join peacekeeping missions during the past decade that the UN has stopped asking.”13 As one within the UNDPKO lamented, “You Canadians are increasingly like the Americans; always telling us what to do, but no longer willing to help.”14

While peacekeeping appealed to the majority of Canadians, it was never accorded the status of being a distinct defence priority. Further, for the influential ‘old guard’ of Canada’s defence establishment, peacekeeping was not a preferred mission.15 Their choice is to retain the ‘big-league professional soldiering roles,’ interoperability with American and (North Atlantic Treaty Organisation) NATO forces, and a capacity to ‘fight alongside the best, against the best.’16 Their institutional preference is not the UN, but the Pentagon and NATO. UN peacekeeping was an undesirable, complex challenge, a departure from war-fighting, insufficient to ‘keep the old game alive’ or ‘service’ their diverse interests.17

Yet, Canada was not alone in the departure from UN peacekeeping. By 1997, Western militaries had largely abandoned UN operations.18 Like other NATO allies, Canada shares responsibility for the ongoing ‘commitment-capacity gap’ in UN peace operations.19 Canada’s defence establishment was simply desperate to shift the peacekeeping burden onto the new troop contributors from the South.

After 1994, training others (and controlling their training) acquired near-urgent attention. Notably, scant consideration would be accorded to peacekeeping training in Canada or training new troop contributors until the early 1990s.20 Clearly, the interest in providing training assistance arose with a parallel interest in minimising Canadian troop contributions.21

At its inception in 1994, the PPC was privatised and awarded to those largely opposed to a dedicated, centralised peacekeeping training centre. The Cornwallis training base would not be used for training CFs’ formed units or larger troop contingents from anywhere. Instead, in 1996 the
Department of National Defence (DND) would open a small Peace Support Training Centre (PSTC) in Kingston to assist with the mission-specific training of Canadian troops. The on-site courses provided at the Cornwallis-based PPC were gradually phased out, with a small staff and fewer courses relocated to offices in Montreal and Ottawa.

With Americans and NATO leading an active war in Afghanistan, peacekeeping was conveniently and quietly dropped off the political agenda. The ‘war on terrorism’ was the new option for generating status and relevance, as well as the larger budget and additional equipment. Writing in 2005, Bill Robinson and Steven Staples drew attention to the accompanying shift in defence spending priorities:

In 1992-93, participation in UN missions accounted for more than nine of every ten dollars spent on international operations. By this year, 2004-05, the United Nations has been nearly abandoned, accounting for a mere thirty cents of every ten dollars of Canada’s spending on military missions abroad.22

In short, Canada’s role in peacekeeping has changed markedly over the past fifteen years.21 Confusion, contradictions and mixed signals abound. The convenient myth is that Canada shifted to civilian peacebuilding and then peacekeeping under NATO, while training new troop contributors largely because the UN consistently failed in all operations. And, despite substantive evidence to the contrary, a few would even argue that peacekeeping was actually dead.24

Canadian Support for Peacekeeping Training in Africa

In recent years, Canada has provided extensive support for peacekeeping training in Africa. Three Federal departments manage and fund this assistance: the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA); the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA); and the DND, supported by the CFs.25 They support the following three agencies, which are responsible for providing training programmes and courses: the Directorate of Military Training Assistance Programmes (D MTAP); the PSTC; and the PPC.26 The primary source of funding for the majority of related training abroad is now the DND.

One of the more promising related initiatives has been the ‘Canada Fund for Africa.’ This fund was intended to support ‘African efforts to prevent, manage and resolve conflict, and to address the needs of civilians.’27 $500 million was allocated for programmes between 2002 and 2007. The following are among those, which pertain to peacekeeping training:

- Strengthening the Peace and Security Capacity of the African Union (AU);
- West Africa Peace and Security Initiative (PSI);
- Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS);
- Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre (KAIPTC); and
- West African Police Project.

It should also be noted that Canada has provided both funding and training to assist in the development of the African Standby Forces (ASF).28 Similarly, Canada also provided equipment (100 Bison Armoured Personnel Carriers) as well as training and financial support for the AU force in Darfur (AMIS).29

Directorate, Military Training and Assistance Programme (D MTAP)

The D MTAP promotes Canadian defence and foreign policy interests abroad through training assistance in three specific areas:

1. Language training to improve communication between NATO and other armed forces;
2. Professional development and staff training to enhance common standards with foreign militaries; and
3. Peace support operations training to improve skills and understanding of military requirements in multilateral peacekeeping.30

By training approximately 1,300 students from over 60 countries a year, MTAP develops the competence of foreign troops, enhances their compatibility with the CFs, and generates additional peacekeeping capacity among other troop contributors. Ensuring that new and recent troop contributors can share a greater burden of peacekeeping is a frequently cited objective.31

Aside from training hundreds of foreign military officers in Canada annually, MTAP conducts ‘Expert Team’ visits abroad and provides for foreign delegations to visit Canada.32

Each of these three specific areas of training provided by MTAP may be helpful in addressing African peacekeeping training challenges. Providing training assistance to Africa has been a priority for the past five years. Prior to 2002, this programme focused on the Caribbean and Eastern Europe.
Their annual report from 2005–2006 stressed that:

MTAP offers the training that African countries, and the African Union (AU), are seeking to build up their security forces and prepare them for peace support operations. For example, this fiscal year MTAP facilitated Canada’s co-sponsorship, with France, of one in the ongoing series of training workshops for the African Standby Force (ASF). The Canadian contribution to the working groups was co-funded by Foreign Affairs Canada’s Global Peace Operations Program, through MTAP, and has been met with great appreciation by the organising body, the Economic Community of Central Africa (ECCAS,) and by the participants themselves. As illustrated by this example, MTAP training has a strategic effect in that it enables Canada and its partners to promote shared values, protect shared interests and preserve international security and stability.

MTAP is viewed as a key instrument of defence diplomacy. The training assistance provided is also to secure future access and influence. Notably, MTAP helps to co-ordinate staff and funds both the PSTC and the PPC.

**The CFs’ PSTC**

Developed in 1996, the PSTC provides courses for CFs’ members selected for deployment on an individual basis, as well as two ‘training assistance teams’ (TATs) to assist formed units and contingents in Canada and abroad. The support from a TAT “can vary from providing training documentation and comprehensive courseware packages to co-ordinating and conducting the training for short notice deployments.”

Staff at the PSTC offer a five-day basic training course for CFs’ personnel selected for international operations, and an 18-day course to prepare officers for assignments as military observers. Officers from foreign militaries are frequent participants. Further, while a small centre, the staff have also designed and delivered courses abroad.

Through a combination of classroom lectures, field exercises and simulations, students are provided with a general understanding of diverse topics, including negotiation and mediation techniques; the laws of armed conflict; cultural awareness; stress management; risk and threat assessment; and preventive medicine.

The areas in which courses are now provided by the PSTC include:
- Individual Pre-deployment – Basic;
- Military Observer (MILOBs);
- Civil Military Cooperation (CMIC) Operator;
- Psychological Operations (PYOPS); and
- Information Operations (Info Ops).

**The PPC**

The PPC offers training programmes in Canada and abroad to each of the principle sectors involved in peace operations – civilian, military and police – in a multinational, multidisciplinary and multicultural environment. Gender and human security dimensions are incorporated into all course materials, as are ethical imperatives in field operations and inter-cultural awareness.

In contrast to the military focus of the PSTC, the new niche of the PPC is on integrated operations and integrated training. This aspect is well reflected in staff, courses and curricula. To cite one example, the PPC hosts an integrated staff officers’ course (UNIMSOC) to prepare individuals for work within an integrated mission headquarters. Participants from up to 30 countries attend this course for six weeks. Sponsored by D-MTAP, this course includes seminars, lectures, simulated conflict scenarios, as well as field trips to explain how the Canadian military prepares for peace operations.

Courses are offered in English, French and Spanish. They are designed for three levels: foundation, advanced and exercises. As advertised, “Foundation courses focus on basic knowledge skills required to be effective in peace operations, while advanced courses delve into more challenging material. Exercises place participants in realistic simulations, providing them with an opportunity to review options and learn from experience in a safe, controlled, simulated environment – where the cost of mistakes is not measured in lost lives.”

While course availability varies, the following are among those currently offered:
- Civilian Core Competencies in Peace Operations;
- Police Core Competencies in Peace Operations;
- United Nations Integrated Mission Staff Officers’ Course;
- Military Core Competencies in Peace Operations;
- Early Warning-Early Response for Peacebuilding;
- Human Rights in Peace Operations;
- Negotiation for Peace Operations;
- Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration;
- Administration and Logistics in UN Operations;
● Emergency Response in Peace Operations; and
● Conflict-Sensitive Programming in Fragile States.

Both the PPC and the PSTC have experience in providing courses in Africa, and both can tailor courses to specific African needs. Both centres are linked to wider networks through the UNDPKO and the International Association of Peacekeeping Training Centres (IAPTC). Both include staff who have worked on joint initiatives with other African peacekeeping training centres.

Over the next year it is anticipated that each programme may be subject to financial and personnel constraints (imposed by Canada’s Conservative Government), possibly limiting further peacekeeping training assistance.

The combination of Canadian participation in the NATO-led war in Afghanistan and a forthcoming Federal election make it very difficult to speculate on Canada’s future in peacekeeping or in assisting Africa with further peacekeeping training.

Regrettably, with a minority Conservative government, there is no assurance that Africa will remain a priority, or that the Federal Government will continue to support peacekeeping training efforts in Africa. There are already indications that related programmes and funding may be redirected toward Afghanistan, Latin and Central America.38 At this particular time, the government is engaged in a review of military operations and Canadian assistance for peacekeeping training.

Defence officials have indicated CFs’ trainers will be needed at home to help with CFs’ training and modernisation as the first defence transformation since the Cold War is underway. Rather than the former 3-to-1 ratio of CFs’ personnel based at home to those deployed abroad, this government plans on a further reduction to a 5-to-1 ratio. Even with additional troops being recruited, fewer are to be available for foreign deployments.

Yet, it is evident that the CFs retain considerable capacity to contribute to UN peacekeeping. In fact, the majority of major capital acquisition programmes have increased Canada’s potential to respond to UN operations in a rapid, robust and effective manner. A more progressive government would likely shift military priorities toward peacekeeping.

Similarly, Canada clearly has the people, resources, centres and programmes to provide additional peacekeeping training assistance in Africa. Again, this will be determined by political will and military priorities.

While Canadian training assistance may continue to be very helpful in specific areas, there are areas where a distinctly African approach may be best. Hopefully, Africans will ignore northern military culture with the traditional glorification of old wars and new technology.39 Instead, it is time for the AU to set a higher standard in promoting a modern culture of peace, with an emphasis on preparing to prevent new wars.

Would Africans benefit by following Canadian and NATO interest in preparing for the ‘three block war’?39 As with the American, British and Canadian interest in a long war policy, there may be substantive costs and consequences. With sound doctrine being developed within the UNDPKO, it should gradually become easier to develop appropriate training, discipline, competence and confidence.

To be effective in developing five well-trained, well-equipped regional peacekeeping brigades will require substantive funding, deep co-operation, good health and high morale. It may be unreason-able to expect a highly competent ASF by 2010.

Given additional time and training, the ASF may be among the more advanced of UN peace operations. Over the past five years it acquired valuable experience in complex, integrated operations. This included experience in robust operations authorised under Chapter VII of the UN Charter, as well as mixed experience in protecting civilians at risk. If anything, the AU experience likely suggests the need for further preparation, planning and training. Yet few, if any, northern member states have a similar level of recent experience in contemporary peacekeeping.

Far more important, however, is that many member states within the AU have the will to do this task well, and this commitment matters. Further, Africa has an expanding network of dedicated institutions and training centres in each region. With cooperation in consolidating lessons-learned, there is a better prospect of turning experience into wider expertise. Encouraging a broad peacekeeping partnership between universities, institutes, training centres, civil society organisations, the military, and police services will also help to develop the unity of purpose and effort essential in integrated peace operations.

Of course, there are areas that will continue to pose daunting challenges, such as what remains to be accomplished and what is relatively new, which may warrant additional emphasis in training:

● Integrated planning and integrated operations.
● Operations authorised under Chapter VII of the UN Charter.
● Robust operations with a deterrent capacity.
● Protection of civilians (i.e., ‘R2P’).
● Prevention of armed conflict.
Rapid deployment.
Equitable gender representation (Women Peacekeeping units are doing very well).

It is reasonable to anticipate the demand will increase in each category, therefore, the training requirements are likely to be more demanding, more comprehensive and increasingly sophisticated.

Rapid deployment to prevent armed conflict and to protect civilians is an exceptionally demanding task, even for the world’s wealthiest states. In a multinational UN operation, which must gather military, police and civilian personnel from countries either world-wide or regionally to initiate prompt and effective mission start-up, there are hundreds of critical requirements. The absence of one may stymie or delay a deployment.

As SHIRBRIG could not overcome the related impediments to provide a rapid response, this task may also be very difficult for the ASF.

There is one innovation that would complement the AU’s initiative and ensure a more reliable, prompt and cost-effective response: the proposed UN Emergency Peace Service. A permanent UN lead service or first responder, capable of immediate deployment and sustainable for up to six months, would definitely help to ease African training and equipment requirements, as well as the related costs.

Conclusion

The future of Canada in peacekeeping – like the future of Canadian assistance for peacekeeping training in Africa – is uncertain. As such, both need to be encouraged by Canadians and Africans.

Canadian contributions to UN peacekeeping have declined markedly over the past decade. The peacekeeping training assistance provided by Canada to Africa has increased over the past five years. Although this training has been both beneficial and substantive, there are legitimate concerns as to whether it will remain available at current levels.

Attitudes and priorities are changing. There are new challenges, which will prompt shifts in national policy, ASF training requirements, as well as broader systemic approaches.

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and embarrassing incidents may have been influential, but they were far from decisive. Nor was the divorce from peacekeeping a product of ‘9/11,’ the wider war on terrorism, or the high priority status accorded to the war in Afghanistan. While reductions in the defence budget may have hurt morale, inadequate funding was not the cause. Further, Canada’s withdrawal from peacekeeping did not follow from any national debate or a specific Federal policy announcement. It was accomplished slowly and by stealth, primarily through a well-coordinated misinformation campaign.

Canadian-American military integration has been underway since World War II. This is one of the deepest, most influential, yet least understood cooperative relationships between the two countries. As the junior partner with the far smaller budget, the CFs are in a constant uphill struggle to remain respected and sufficiently interoperable. Notably, both armies were humiliated in Somalia. With a horrific failure shortly thereafter in Rwanda and a stalemate in Bosnia, the UN was all too easy to ‘scape-goat’ as a mismanaged farce. Many of the new troop contributors were insufficiently professional, had lower military standards, and were far from interoperable with the best.

Peacekeeping is not a capital intensive, high-technology dependent mission. It does not require the advanced weapon systems developed in the so-called ‘revolution in military affairs.’ As a result, it does not demand ever larger defence budgets. With respect to military status, peacekeeping is far from the forefront of ‘big-league, professional soldiering.’ Worse, peacekeeping does not even need large sectors of modern militaries, as the role of an air-force or navy is likely to be confined to transport.

As Bill Robinson writes, “Canada is not alone in having virtually abandoned UN peacekeeping. In fact, most of the Western aligned middle-power states now contribute very little to UN missions. The 26 members of NATO contribute in total only 2,173 military personnel (or 3.4% of the UN total), despite the fact that NATO military organizations account for 70% of the world’s military spending. Canada ranks 7th in total military spending among the NATO countries, but 8th among the NATO members in contributions to UN missions. There are eight non-NATO countries that each contribute more military personnel to UN operations than do all the members of NATO combined.”


For example, those with the most advanced capacity and resources have been the least committed in contributing to UN peace operations over the past decade, while those with less advanced capacities and resources now carry the heavy burden of contributing to peace operations.

Ironically, the official interest in sharing peacekeeping training with other countries did not arise from within the Federal Government, Foreign Affairs, the Department of National Defence (DND) or the Canadian Forces (CFs). Training for peacekeeping was prompted and institutionalised by a loose network of students, scholars, NGOs, a defence-dependent community and a provincial government.

Rather than tangible contributions of personnel, resources or substantive training programs, the preferred option was initially in modest training assistance teams.


From being an alleged Liberal Government priority in the 1994 Defence White Paper, the un and UNDPKO were hardly evident in their 2004 policy statement, A Role of Pride and Influence in the World, (Defence).

For example, see Michael Ignatieff, 2006, ‘Ignatieff on the Record: Peacekeeping died in Rwanda,’ The Toronto Star, 30 August 2006.

The CFs are recognised as a very professional military. They have extensive experience in multinational operations abroad. Canada maintains a multi-purpose, combat-capable army, navy and air force. The vast majority of officers are bilingual, speaking both official languages of the UN and NATO: English and French. The CFs are also closely integrated with American Forces. They train together in North America, as well as in NATO, to remain interoperable. Neither earmark nor designate special forces to peacekeeping. At present, neither devotes substantive resources to peacekeeping nor substantive time to peacekeeping training.


The $100 million Canada Fund for Africa was launched at the G8 Summit in Kananaskis, Alberta in June 2002. It supports the G8’s Africa Action Plan, developed in response to the priorities set out in the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD). NEPAD is the first made-in-Africa plan intended to put the continent on a path of sustainable growth and development, and into the mainstream of development in the 21st century.


To cite one example, as a step towards fulfilment of the AU’s mandate to stand up the ASF in 2010 as a quality, well-prepared armed force, Canada co-sponsored one in a series of five workshops designed to create management capacity.

With respect to training, in FY 05/06, MTAP through the Peace Support Training Centre (PSTC) in Kingston, began Military Observer (MILOB) training to prepare troops from AU troop contributing countries (TCCs) for deployment to Darfur. Training has occurred both in Canada, at the PSTC, and in Africa, at the PSTC in Mali.


According to the annual report, the objectives of D MTAP in all initiatives they run are to:

- Promote Canadian foreign and defence policy interests;
- Target assistance to achieve influence in areas of strategic interest to Canada;
- Promote Canadian bilateral defence relations;
- Raise Canada’s independent national profile as a valuable player in the international arena;
- Build peace support operations capacity among Canada’s peacekeeping partners; and
- Contribute to the global war against terrorism through select assistance;
- Promote democratic principles, the rule of law, international stability, and the protection of human rights.


As noted in their documents, ‘MTAP-trained countries are likely to cooperate with and offer the Canadian Forces access to their country and their forces, when necessary. Countries with a core group of Canadian-trained professional leaders with a personal knowledge of Canada will make a difference in winning access and influence for Canadian diplomatic and military representatives.”


In general, military culture helps to sustain a culture of violence, which serves to rationalise aggressive policies, a preference for military solutions and highly subsidised defence industries.

Preparing for the three block war was emphasised in Canada’s International Policy Statement, A Role of Pride and Influence in the World, Defence, Ottawa, 2004, p B. Available: www.international.gc.ca

The term ‘three block war’ (3BW) was coined by US General Charles Krulak in 1997, then head of the US Marine Corps, to describe the complex spectrum of challenges likely to be faced by soldiers in the contemporary theatre of operations. “In three city blocks, soldiers may be required to conduct combat operations, separate warring factions, and provide humanitarian aid to affected civilian populations. The rubric of the 3BW offers the military a logical framework for the variance of their activities in a way that makes sense to a combat-centric profession.” See, Sarah Jane Meharg & Ryan Marks, 2006, Three Block Wars and Humanitarianism: Theory, Policy, Practice, Final Report of a consultation hosted by Humber International Development Institute and PPC, 12–14 September 2006.

For the book which developed the initial concept, case, model and plans for a UN Emergency Service, see H. Peter Langille, 2002, Bridging the Commitment – Capacity Gap: A Review of Existing Arrangements and Options For Enhancing UN Rapid Deployment, Wayne: Center for UN Reform Education. Available: http://www.globalactionpw.org/uneps/BridgingTheCommitment-CapacityGap.pdf

