

Time for a UN Emergency Capacity

What is the UN Emergency Peace Service?

In order to address ever-increasing needs for the international community to respond rapidly and effectively to emerging crises, the United Nations Emergency Peace Service (UNEPS) was proposed as a permanent emergency response service designed to complement, *not replace* existing peace operations. UNEPS would have first in – first out capabilities, designed to supplement the U.N.'s capacity to provide stability, peace, and relief in deadly emergencies.

The need for UNEPS was best explained by former U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan. He compared his job of building support and raising funds for each new U.N. peacekeeping mission to that of a volunteer fire chief, who is forced to raise funds, find volunteers and secure a fire truck for each new fire. “The core challenge to the Security Council and to the United Nations as a whole in the next century,” he declared, is “to forge unity behind the principle that massive and systematic violations of human rights – wherever they may take place – should not be allowed to stand.”

UNEPS would individually recruit, train and employ 10,000 - 18,000 personnel with a wide range of skills, including civilian police, military, judicial experts and relief professionals. This ensures that missions would not fail due to a lack of skills, equipment, cohesiveness, experience in resolving conflicts, or gender, national or religious imbalance. The Service would have special expertise in conflict resolution, environmental crisis response and emergency medical relief. Its military component would have two complete mission headquarters with military, police and civilian staff, technical reconnaissance units, light armored reconnaissance squadrons, motorized light infantry, armored infantry, a helicopter squadron, an engineer battalion and a logistics battalion.

The need for a standing UN Peacekeeping service is nowhere more evident than in the current situation in Libya. The international community, specifically the United Nations Security Council and NATO, struggle with the correct course of action to protect Libyan civilians while simultaneously refusing to commit individual state's ground troops – as the world is discovering, it's difficult to protect innocents from 30,000 feet. If the international community had UNEPS in its arsenal when the atrocities in Libya began the ability to protect civilians would have been greatly strengthened. By the time national peacekeepers were ready to replace UNEPS, the situation on the ground would have stabilized or, at minimum, become more manageable. It's not too late for the US to take leadership to establish UNEPS now.

UNEPS would help prevent early stage crises (caused by violent conflict or natural phenomenon) from escalating into national or regional disasters. It is a timely and important step in providing the world community with the international emergency service it desperately needs in order to fulfill its “responsibility to protect.”

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Key Talking Points

The need for rapid response

UNEPS will be *immediately* available to respond to a crisis. Currently, “rapid deployment” is defined as 30 days for a “traditional” peacekeeping mission (where all parties agree to allow in peacekeepers) and 90 days for “complex” missions (where spoilers attempt to derail a peace agreement). This delay not only proves fatal for civilians whose lives depend on fragile accords, but also for the strength of the accords themselves.

A better tool for the international community

The United Nations Emergency Peace Service will be equipped:

- To take action in face of serious threats to human security and human rights;
- To offer secure emergency services to meet critical human needs;
- To assist in the establishment of institutions to maintain law and order;
- To initiate peace-building processes with focused incentives; and
- To restore hope for local people that their society and economy have a future.

Rapid response to crises is cost-effective

- The amount of money saved on post-conflict reconstruction will exceed the startup and operational costs of the United Nations Emergency Peace Service. According to the Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict, the international community could have saved nearly \$130 billion of the \$200 billion it spent on managing conflicts in the 1990s by focusing on conflict prevention rather than post conflict reconstruction.
- A 2006 General Accounting office (GAO) study concluded that U.N. *peacekeeping is eight times less expensive than funding a U.S. force* – the U.N. is half as expensive and the U.S. only pays a quarter of the costs of a U.N. mission.
- UN Peacekeeping has a record of success: A 2005 RAND report suggests the U.N. is better suited for peacekeeping missions than unilateral U.S. action. The study compared 16 U.S. and U.N. nation-building missions and found that of the “eight UN-led cases, seven are at peace. Of the eight U.S.-led cases, four are at peace; four are not—or not yet—at peace.”

Supporting UNEPS enhances security of the United States

Fragile states provide breeding grounds for terrorism and international crime; preventing destabilizing events is in the interest of the United States and the rest of the world. Like all institutions, the United Nations needs retooling to meet new challenges. No Congressional effort to reform the United Nations is complete unless Congress explores ways to enhance the United Nations ability to *effectively* prevent and respond to natural disasters, violent conflict, and humanitarian emergencies. Sharing innovative solutions and inspiring international teamwork is the American way.

Individual and Organization Support

54 non-governmental organizations (NGOs) sent a letter urging Members of Congress today to co-sponsor H. Res. 213, the resolution calling for the establishment of a United Nations Emergency Peace Service (UNEPS). As envisioned, UNEPS would be capable of intervening in the early stages of civil conflicts, genocides or other humanitarian crises. Signatories include an array of NGOs representing the peace and conflict resolution community, think tanks, civil rights, faith-based and human rights organizations. Among the groups signing the letter are: Save Darfur, Refugees International, and the Center for American Progress and National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the Presbyterian Church, USA and Human Rights Watch. Support for the United Nations Emergency Peace Service is increasing throughout the world.

64% of Americans supports a standing peacekeeping force led by the United Nations.