

# The UK and United Nations peace operations

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Since the first deployment of military observers to the Middle East in 1948, UN peace operations have come to play an integral role in conflict prevention, conflict resolution and peace-building initiatives across the world. Mandated by the UN Security Council (UNSC) and overseen by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO), today's 16 ongoing peace operations operate in some of the most fragile and violent regions of the world. Over 124,000 military, civilian and police personnel from 122 nations support these operations, with a budget of over \$8 billion.

## The UK's track record

On the UNSC, the UK plays an active role in developing mission mandates. The UK serves as penholder (responsible for the drafting of resolutions and the chairing of negotiations) for peacekeeping, as well as for regions including Central Africa, Cyprus, Libya, Somalia and Darfur.<sup>1</sup> It also coordinates the UNSC working group on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict.

The UK has consistently remained among the top ten financial contributors to UN peacekeeping, currently providing 6.68% of the budget, ranking 5<sup>th</sup> behind the US, Japan, France and Germany.<sup>2</sup>

Since a peak in troop contributions in the 1990s, it has not deployed significant numbers of troops to a UN mission, ranking 53<sup>rd</sup>. While the Government has recently signalled a shift in its approach to troop contributions (see below), recent UK personnel contributions include:<sup>3</sup>

	2014		2015		2016	
	Military	Civilian	Military	Civilian	Military	Civilian
UNFICYP (Cyprus)	274	0	274	0	274	0
MINUSMA (Mali)	2	0	2	0	2	0
UNMISS (South Sudan)	4	2	3	0	3	0
MONUSCO (DRC)	5	1	5	1	5	0
UNSOM (Somalia)	0	0	2	0	2	0
UNSMIL (Libya/Tunisia)	0	0	1	1	1	1
MINUSTAH (Haiti)	0	3	0	3	0	3
UNMIL (Liberia)	0	0	0	1	0	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>285</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>287</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>287</b>	<b>5</b>

Figures correct as of 1 March 2016, see overleaf for details of additional planned deployments.

## A shift in UK policy

Recent developments signal a shift in the UK's policy on UN peace operations that sees an increase in troop contributions and – we hope – a new strategy for the UK's engagement. Internationally, threats from transnational terrorism have increased security concerns about fragile states in the Middle East and Africa, which were previously considered to be of lower geopolitical importance. At the UN, recent contribution drives and calls for improved force generation have amplified appeals for troop contributions from European and NATO states.<sup>4</sup> In the UK, the withdrawal from Afghanistan has provided the scope to consider operations that deliver operational experience, whilst also contributing to national security goals.

The 2015 National Security Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review (NSS/SDSR) stated that:<sup>5</sup>  
*Peacekeeping is one of the UN's most important roles. The UK will continue to champion reform to increase the efficiency and impact of UN engagement. **We will double the number of military personnel that we contribute to UN peacekeeping operations.** We will also increase UK law enforcement and civilian experts on UN peace operations and in UN headquarters, and we will continue to train international peacekeepers. **We will form a cross-Whitehall joint UN Peacekeeping Policy Unit** to maximise our military and civilian impact...hosted by the FCO,*

<sup>1</sup> Security Council Report (2016) Chairs of Subsidiary Bodies and Penholders for 2016.

<sup>2</sup> United Nations (2012) Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations peacekeeping operations.

<sup>3</sup> Hansard (2016) United Nations: Peacekeeping Operations: Written question - 28162.

<sup>4</sup> See, for example, the High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations.

<sup>5</sup> Cabinet Office (2015) National Security Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review. UNA-UK's emphasis.

*consolidating existing MOD and FCO expertise to formulate UK policy on UN peacekeeping missions.*

## **Increasing military, civilian and police contributions**

At a US-led contribution drive in September 2015, the Prime Minister announced that the UK is to deploy personnel to UN peacekeeping missions in Somalia and South Sudan<sup>6</sup>. Up to 70 troops will be deployed to UNSOM (Somalia), while between 250 and 300 personnel will participate in UNMISS (South Sudan) over the course of multiple deployments in the near future.

In January 2016, around 12 armed forces personnel deploy to South Sudan to assess how the UK should provide support as part of its wider contribution to UNMISS.<sup>7</sup> In addition, in February 2016, Defence Secretary Michael Fallon announced that the UK will provide around 100 troops to a non-UN peacekeeping mission in Egypt;<sup>8</sup>

In September 2016, the UK is expected to host a follow-up to last year's US-led summit on contributions to UN peacekeeping.

## **Why take part in UN peace operations?**

There are a number of arguments for increasing the UK's role. UN peace operations are a tool for achieving UK interests in preventing conflict, sexual violence, mass displacement and extremism. They provide a framework for the UK to make strategic deployments to missions that have the legitimacy of UN authorisation and address situations of potential risk to UK interests, where unilateral or NATO action is not feasible.

The UK already invests considerable sums of money and political energy in UN peace operations. It should capitalise on its investment by strengthening its practical engagement with these operations. The UK is well-placed to provide diplomatic and military expertise that would help to improve the overall quality of a mission.

A physical presence would: enhance the effectiveness of UN peace operations on the ground; contribute to UK national security priorities; contribute to training and co-deployment experience; and ensure that the UK is ready to engage with future UN missions in countries of UK interest. It would also raise the UK's international standing as a country that shares the burden of addressing global conflicts.

## **Recommendations for parliamentarians**

To continue to strengthen the UK's engagement with UN peace operations, Parliamentarians should:<sup>9</sup>

- Encourage HMG to form a coherent strategic approach to UN Peace Operations;
- Support an increase in contributions of military, police and civilian personnel both in missions and at UN headquarters and ask questions about progress on its recent commitments;
- Demonstrate support for the establishment of secondment to the UN as a desirable career enhancing activity in all relevant departments;
- Hold HMG to its commitments in the NSS/SDSR and ask for updates about the work of the cross-Whitehall Joint UN Peacekeeping Policy Unit.

## **About UNA-UK**

The United Nations Association – UK (UNA-UK) is the UK's leading source of independent analysis on the UN and a longstanding advocate for UN peacekeeping.

In partnership with the Royal United Services Institute and UNA-Westminster Branch, UNA-UK will hold the 14<sup>th</sup> annual conference and memorial service to mark the International Day of UN Peacekeepers on 25 May 2016. Please visit [RUSI's website](#) for more details.

For more information on UNA-UK's programme on peace operations, please contact Alexandra Buskie, Policy and Advocacy Manager, [buskie@una.org.uk](mailto:buskie@una.org.uk), 020 7766 3445, or visit [www.una.org.uk](http://www.una.org.uk).

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<sup>6</sup> Prime Minister's Office (2015) [PM pledges UK troops to support stability in Somalia and South Sudan](#).

<sup>7</sup> Ministry of Defence (2016) [UK team deploys to South Sudan to assess peacekeeping commitment](#).

<sup>8</sup> Ministry of Defence (2016) [Defence Secretary announces UK support to peacekeeping mission](#).

<sup>9</sup> See also, Dr David Curran/UNA-UK (2015) [The UK and United Nations peace operations: Identifying a way forward](#).