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**First Steps towards a Police Doctrine for UN Peace  
Operations (2001-2006)**

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**ABSTRACT**

As a response to the rapid growth of the role and numbers of United Nations police in peace operations, the Secretariat's Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) has started to develop formal doctrine to guide the work of its police officers in missions around the world. Based on published and unpublished sources as well as a series of interviews with UN officials and external experts, this article examines the establishment of an organizational infrastructure for doctrine development within DPKO and the key factors that have contributed to the success or failure of several recent doctrine development processes.

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## **First Steps towards a Police Doctrine for UN Peace Operations (2001-2006)**

*Philipp Rotmann*

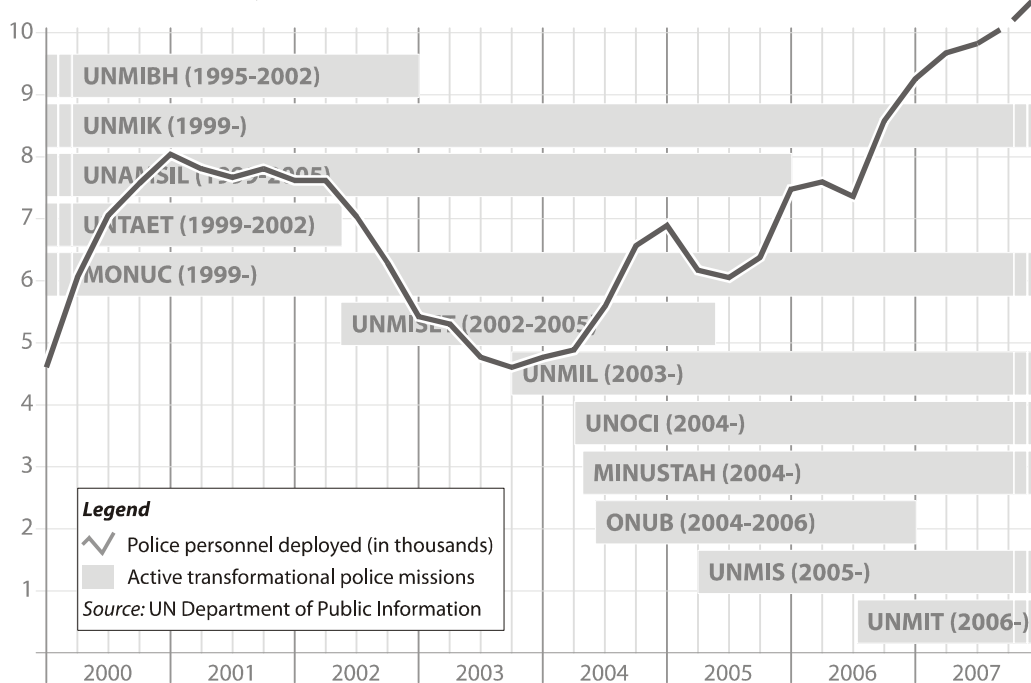
### **Police are at the center of modern peace operations<sup>1</sup>**

In the wake of the continuing and unprecedented expansion of peace operations deployed and led by the United Nations (UN), the role of police forces in international peacebuilding is quietly being revolutionized. The sheer numbers are staggering (Fig. 1 shown on next page). In January 1988, there were only 35 UN police officers from a handful of countries serving in a single peace operation in Cyprus (Boutros-Ghali, 1995, para. 11). A decade later, in 1998, the UN deployed nearly 3,000 police in a handful of missions, and as of May 2008, there are more than 11,000 police officers from 90 countries serving in 15 UN field operations around the world. Approximately 99% of personnel are concentrated in eight large-scale operations with comprehensive peacebuilding mandates, mostly in Africa.

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<sup>1</sup> This article presents some of the results of a larger project entitled “Learning to Build Peace? The United Nations, Peace Operations and Organizational Learning,” undertaken by the Global Public Policy Institute with generous support from the German Foundation for Peace Research, as well as the author’s MA dissertation (Rotmann, 2007). The author thanks Thorsten Benner for helpful comments as well as Sarah Brockmeier and Justin Sosne for excellent research assistance.

### UN peace operations with transformative police mandates and deployment numbers of police personnel, 2000-2007



**Fig. 1:** UN Police Operations with reform mandates, 2000-2007 (without small observer and advisory missions or the new ones to Chad and Darfur)

The qualitative aspect of this development is even more significant in terms of the challenges faced by the UN. As a result of the shifting mandates of UN missions from the traditional monitoring role to the more complex task of building state institutions, the role of police has also shifted from being an afterthought to assuming the position of a ‘missing link’ between military stabilization and civilian statebuilding (Cockayne & Malone, 2005). In this context, police are being deployed in many different roles, including public order provision under an executive law enforcement mandate, training and advising local police personnel, and even reforming and rebuilding whole national police services in war-torn countries. This growing diversity of job descriptions for post-conflict police has obvious consequences for recruitment. Beyond the traditional need for just ‘a few good cops’ (Call & Barnett, 1999), the United Nations now requires a range of specialists such as criminal investigators, border police, drug, organized crime, and forensics experts, and even constabulary police forces, i.e. ‘armed forces of the state that have both military capabilities and police powers’ (Perito, 2004, pp. 46-47).

At the UN Secretariat in New York, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) is tasked with the planning and management of peace operations, including police components. Despite the long history of peacekeeping since the first mission in 1948, the department was only established in 1992 (Benner & Rotmann, 2008, p. 45). In August 2000, the *Report of the Panel on UN Peace Operations* (also called the *Brahimi Report* after the panel's chairman, former Algerian Foreign Minister Lakhdar Brahimi) argued that the crisis-driven and centralized management culture that kept DPKO in "constant emergency mode" was no longer able to meet the growing challenges that resulted from the increasingly ambitious mandates of the Security Council. For a long time, no investment was made toward the development of common operational standards for the makeshift teams of police officers from dozens of countries, each with different police cultures and levels of training. In recent years following the Brahimi Report, however, the senior leadership of DPKO recognized the need for the development of formal operational doctrine for the full spectrum of contemporary UN police missions and took a number of important steps toward this goal.

The following section provides a brief introduction to the external constraints on UN police operations, the concept of doctrine and the academic analysis of doctrine development. The next section surveys the establishment of an institutional foundation for effective doctrine development (2001-2003) and the first building blocks for a future UN police doctrine (2004-2006). The concluding section summarizes the contributing factors to these developments and puts the achievements in context with regard to the challenges for UN peace operations at large. The article is based on the analysis of official and unofficial UN documents as well as a series of interviews with UN and external officials.

### **Doctrine and doctrine development for UN police operations**

Outside the military context, the term doctrine is hardly ever defined or consistently used, which makes it appear 'notoriously elusive' (Rid, 2007, p. 16). In 2001, for specific use in UN peace operations, DPKO's Military Advisor issued an official definition of military doctrine as the 'fundamental principles, practices and procedures that guide the military component of UN peacekeeping

missions in support of mandated UN objectives' (UN DPKO, 2001). In 2005, when the head of DPKO, Under-Secretary-General Jean-Marie Guéhenno placed doctrine development at the core of his *Peace Operations 2010* reform agenda, he formulated the aim in a letter to his staff as follows: 'to define and clearly articulate ... what it is that UN peacekeeping can do and how, ... followed by the development of effective guidance on how to achieve these standards. ... We need uniform practices and procedures that ... will be the basis for guiding you in carrying out your job. It will be a living doctrine that adapts to ongoing experiences and conditions' (Guéhenno, 2005, para. 11).

This understanding of doctrine as a set of principles and standard operating procedures is at the core of any bureaucracy, including national police services and other civilian institutions. Together, the various pieces of doctrine establish a hierarchy of guidance on various levels of abstraction that translate the normative principles and objectives of the so-called "Capstone Doctrine" at the strategic level into progressively more fine-grained and technical standard operating procedures (SOPs) on the operational and tactical levels (Nitzschke & Wittig, 2007; UN DPKO/DFS, 2008). However, it is crucial to recognize that in a post-conflict situation and with regard to the field of security, even the most "technical" details are often neither apolitical nor objectively true. Instead, they reflect the normative principles of their doctrinal context, be it the United Nations or the home country of each individual police officer. While many administrative and logistical tasks can indeed be standardized and specified in detail across the whole range of UN post-conflict activities, the crucial political tasks of police operations can only be defined in such a way that sufficient flexibility for adaptation is left to managers in the field. This requires a large degree of contextual sensibility both in formulating doctrine (in terms of generalizing from previous operations) and in its application in the field when general rules and guidelines need to be adapted to the specific circumstances of the situation at hand.

While doctrine is by definition official, i.e. endorsed by the leadership of the organization concerned, it is not necessarily written down. The British Army, for example, started to formalize doctrine only after World War II. But of course it had common principles and procedures that were captured in training materials,

war plans and even individual orders (Nagl, 2005, p. 7). Similarly, at the United Nations, ‘there is still no single document entitled “doctrine for UN peace operations”’ (Ahmed, Keating, & Solinas, 2007, p. 13), nor is there a similar document which covers the whole of UN police. Nevertheless, there are mission-specific directives and operational plans ‘[from which to] infer the *de facto* doctrine guiding UN peace operations’ (ibid., emphasis in original). A formal process of doctrine development started only at the end of 2005.

The academic analysis of doctrine development has been pursued most comprehensively and fruitfully by military scholars (Downie, 1998; Rid, 2007). Most of these studies rely on a relatively simple model of doctrine development as a consecutive process. Ideally, a continuous feedback loop feeds practical lessons back into revisions of the doctrine. Various factors internal or external to the bureaucracy itself influence this process by supporting, hindering or reshaping it. A “successfully” completed process of doctrine development implies only the official promulgation of new or changed doctrine but makes no assumptions about either the practical implementation of the new guidelines in organizational action (are people acting differently?) or the impact of these changes for policy results (are we more successful at building peace?). Therefore, doctrinal change is not to be confused with organizational learning (Benner, Binder, & Rotmann, 2007, p. 17).<sup>2</sup>

Nonetheless, effective doctrine development is an indispensable condition for the UN to become the kind of knowledge-based organization it wants and needs to become in order to meet the complex challenges of contemporary peace operations. The development and effective implementation of common operational standards is imperative for overcoming vast differences in individual training and cultural backgrounds, constant rotations, and minimal incentives for individuals to identify with the institution of ‘UN Police.’ Without a single set of guidelines, it remains a game of chance whether individual leaders will or will not be able to make the motley teams of UN police officers in the field work effectively toward a common goal.

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<sup>2</sup> John Nagl, for one, boldly takes this mental leap for the admittedly different context of Western military organizations (Nagl, 2005, p. 8). Thomas Rid, however, provides a powerful counterargument to his assumptions, precisely with regard to the case of the U.S. military (Rid, 2007, p. 23).



### **First steps toward an infrastructure for doctrine development (2001-2003)**

The recognition of the need for a professional doctrine for UN police operations dates to August 2000, when the Brahimi Panel presented a comprehensive set of recommendations to improve UN peace operations after the failures of the 1990s. The panel called for a ‘doctrinal shift in how the Organization conceives of and utilizes civilian police in peace operations’ and for its role to be ‘better understood and developed’ (United Nations, 2000, para. 40). This is the closest the drafting team came to calling for better operational doctrine in the face of clear warnings from member states that it had already been ‘pushing the edge of the envelope with the few doctrinal points it had made’ (Ahmed, Keating, & Solinas, 2007, p. 18). A substantial group of states, especially from the developing world, feared that the creeping institutionalization of peace operations would contribute to the erosion of their national sovereignty.

In parallel to the work of the Brahimi Panel, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan appointed Jean-Marie Guéhenno of France as the new Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations and head of DPKO. Halvor Hartz of Norway was appointed Police Adviser and head of DPKO’s Police Division. In the same year, the Police Division published a concise and accessible handbook entitled *United Nations Civilian Police Principles and Guidelines* (UN DPKO, 2000). The so-called “blue book” was the first formal statement of doctrine for UN police. However, the executive law enforcement powers that had just been given to UN police in Kosovo and East Timor implied a whole new set of operational and doctrinal challenges.<sup>3</sup> The handbook’s ten-point-plan for the reform and restructuring of police services probably remained too abstract to be very useful for practitioners. Moreover, it remained ‘divorced from reality,’ as hardly anybody outside the Civilian Police Division in New York was aware of its existence, let alone implemented its principles (Hansen, 2002, pp. 43-44).

Despite repeated announcements, no further official pieces of doctrine were developed after the publication of the “blue book.” There are two reasons for this. One reason is the high operational burden placed on the Division by the rapid rise

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<sup>3</sup> The *Principles and Guidelines* devote a scarce two pages to the headings of ‘executive policing’ and ‘formed police units’.

of demand for police. The number of policemen grew from a modest 2,411 in July 1999 to 4,613 after six months and eventually to nearly 8,000 a year later (January 2001), mostly due to the two massive transitional administration missions in Kosovo (authorized on June 10, 1999) and East Timor (authorized on October 25, 1999). The other reason is the lack of an effective “organizational infrastructure” for doctrine development, i.e. dedicated managers and staff with effective support by the organization’s leadership to advance doctrine development and organizational learning (Benner & Rotmann, 2008). In addition, the continuity of work and strategic capacity of the Police Division suffered from the fact that every one of its 17 staff were either seconded – usually for at most a year – by their governments or worked for the UN on a short-term contract without a career perspective. Despite the subsequent growth of the Division and DPKO, these dysfunctional personnel arrangements continue to the present day. Other UN agencies, independent research institutions and some member state governments, such as those of the United States and Canada, made a variety of attempts to substitute for the lack of in-house capacity. Such outside contributions range from logistical and financial support for conferences and workshops to the provision of funds for research projects and consulting assignments to the production of entire draft doctrines (Broer & Emery, 1998, p. 389; Malone & Nitzschke, 2004; Serafino, 2004, p. 11). These contributions allowed a number of important advances to be made in recent years, but they could not and cannot make up for the lack of in-house infrastructure for doctrine development and learning.

Fig. 2 (shown on next page) shows all processes of police doctrine development between 2001-2006; the following analysis picks only the most interesting examples from this set. Until 2003, despite the urgent calls from the Brahimi Panel, there have been effectively no doctrine development efforts. Mission-specific documents reveal, however, a number of tactical and operational innovations developed in the field. New concepts such as the local command and control arrangement for joint military-police operations of UN police and NATO troops in Kosovo remained limited to specific field missions though, as no attempts at extracting general lessons or doctrine was made (Blume, 2004, p. 97).

Fig. 2: Doctrine Development Processes for UN Police Operations, 2001-2006



<sup>1</sup> The issue was later folded into a general Policy on Authority, Command and Control in UN Peacekeeping Operations, approved in February 2008.

At the same time, Annan and Guéhenno successfully requested a budget increase to create for the first time a Policy and Planning Unit within the Police Division. With a staff of eight, the Unit was tasked with the ‘development of policy guidelines for the Division and ... field missions’ (UN Secretary-General, 2001, para. 40). However, the reality hardly matched the formal situation as presented on paper. The budget did not include a dedicated manager for the Unit, so each person reported directly to the Police Adviser – a position that was vacant since mid-2001 because the UN had problems finding qualified and politically acceptable applicants. This lack of leadership, in turn, held up the hiring of staff for newly established positions. If a post was indeed filled, the candidate was required to go through the UN’s cumbersome recruitment system, a process which in most cases took between nine months to more than a year to complete (Durch, Holt, Earle, & Shanahan, 2003, pp. 82-83).

In addition, since a huge backlog of mission support and field recruitment tasks awaited new arrivals regardless of their formal job descriptions, the increase of resources did not effectively translate into greater capacity for conceptual tasks until several years after the fact. Therefore, despite being explicitly responsible for the ‘development of policy guidelines,’ the Policy and Planning Unit turned out to be far more preoccupied with planning than with formulating policy. Hardly any time and resources were left for doctrine development (Durch, Holt, Earle, & Shanahan, 2003, p. 52; UN Secretary-General, 2004, para. 26).

## **Beginnings of a UN Police Doctrine (2004-2006)**

In early 2003, Kiran Bedi of India assumed her duties as the new head of the Police Division as a number of large peace operations were drawing down while no new mission with police involvement had been authorized for nearly four years. In September, demand for UN police reached a low point with only 4,435 officers deployed globally. The temporary slump in operational needs provided the division with the much-needed breathing space to begin standardizing some of the administrative and operational guidelines for field missions. Subsequently, a number of initiatives sprang up at different levels that represent the first attempts at developing general guidelines on the substantive work of UN police in the field. There was still no formal doctrine development process in place in 2003, nor was there a specific interest in formalizing guidance on Bedi's part, but the more successful of these initiatives would lay the groundwork for official doctrine development in the years thereafter.

The first two important examples originated with practical operational challenges that mid-level Police Division officials began to address individually, only to re-use and informally mainstream their solutions later. As part of the unusually orderly and well-timed planning phase for the new United Nations Mission to Liberia (UNMIL) in the summer of 2003, Police Division staff developed its first detailed and practical operational concept for the use of constabulary police forces ("formed police units", or FPUs) in peace operations. This concept served as the foundation for all later FPU concepts of operation and, having been embraced by the subsequent Police Adviser after another leadership change in early 2005, heavily influenced the basic FPU doctrine issued in November 2006.

Similarly, in December 2004, DPKO's Military Planning Service started to develop a partial doctrine to govern the tactical cooperation between blue helmets and formed police units in joint operations in response to problems in Haiti. In contrast to the basic FPU guidelines, this project failed to secure active support from the Department's leadership and became bogged down in bureaucratic turf fights. After the first draft was issued, the UN police component in Haiti presented at least two additional drafts in the following years. Despite a rising number of violent attacks against UN police, repeated complaints by the Police

Commissioner to DPKO in New York, and a series of field visits by the DPKO leadership and Security Council diplomats in April 2005, there was neither an official solution found for Haiti nor a general set of guidelines established for such situations before early 2008. Nevertheless, a practical compromise had been devised elsewhere when the NATO-led Kosovo Force (KFOR) and the UN interim administration (UNMIK) had faced the same problem in the then-Serb province of Kosovo in 2000. Even the directive issued in 2008 is being regarded by some insiders as a face-saving compromise, not a practical solution.

Beyond these examples of operationally driven developments, there are two other interesting cases of more conceptual, headquarters-driven efforts. In March 2004, largely based on the Police Adviser's personal priorities and her background in the national police service of India, the Division convened an expert workshop at the International Peace Academy to develop guidelines for community policing as a paradigm for post-conflict policing and police training (Baker, 2008; Mobekk, 2002). The United Nations contracted an external consultant to draft a "community policing doctrine," which he delivered in May 2005 (Bayley, 2005). Then the process stagnated, however, likely for a number of reasons. For one, the operational workload had increased again by that time as a number of new missions needed to be planned and staffed. Also, the next leadership change at the helm of the Police Division in early 2005 likely shifted priorities. In addition, policy disagreements within the Police Division on the merits of the community policing paradigm for post-conflict situations have precluded further developments up to the time of this writing in summer 2008.

The establishment of the Standing Police Capacity (SPC), a rapidly deployable unit of police officers with extensive post-conflict experience to help start new UN operations and to support existing ones, is a more successful case. After earlier initiatives to create various kinds of standby capacities and reserve rosters of police had failed for lack of participation of member state governments, Under-Secretary-General Guéhenno's office came up with the idea of a small standing police unit directly assigned to the UN Secretariat. With the diplomatic support of traditionally UN-friendly members such as Canada, Australia and the Scandinavian countries, the office of Under-Secretary-General Guéhenno and the Police Division waged a shrewd campaign to obtain a mandate and budgetary

approval from the General Assembly. Mark Kroeker, head of the Police Division since early 2005, managed to overcome longstanding concerns on the part of many developing countries about any kind of executive forces under UN control by organizing an open, participatory process of consultations to develop the basic principles for the role of the SPC. As a result, the plan was approved as part of the 2005 World Summit and received budgetary approval for an “initial operating capability” of 25 officers.

The following year, 2006, saw further significant doctrinal advances such as the completion of the basic FPU doctrine, the operational establishment of the SPC and the initial development of principles for police restructuring and reform. The increasing speed and productivity was mainly due to a more effective organizational infrastructure for doctrine development which became fully operational only with the appointment of the first head of the policy section in November 2006. The combination of a strong and politically astute Police Adviser with a small planning section and leadership support by Under-Secretary-General Guéhenno as well as the procedural assistance provided by DPKO’s Peacekeeping Best Practices Section made effective drafting, internal and external advocacy and decision-making possible.

The support of DPKO’s leadership for doctrine development had been available at least since Guéhenno had unveiled his reform agenda in 2005. Inside the Police Division, however, it was only in Kroeker’s term of office that a full-scale revitalization took place, according to many sources. This included the recruitment of competent professionals, even if they were not police officers in their home countries, for the strategy and planning unit (which regulations had precluded earlier), institutional outreach to external experts in Doctrine Development Groups, the establishment of an advisory board of “wise men and women” of international policing (the International Policing Advisory Council) and the use of doctrine and guidance from partnering organizations such as the OSCE, where applicable. Even as most of the effects of these changes will only become apparent in due course, the productivity of the Police Division has already increased.

## **Summary and Recommendations**

Doctrine, understood as a set of formally codified guidelines and regulations, is an indispensable part of professionalizing United Nations police operations and peace building efforts as a whole. The institutional conditions for the development of such doctrine to cover the core activities of international post-conflict police assistance have for the most part been established in recent years. Between 2000 and 2002, the policy development capacity created in response to the Brahimi Report existed only on paper, as the Police Division essentially drifted without a leader and was overwhelmed by the explosion of operational demands. In the next two years, with a more stable organization, its operational workload sharply reduced and under a new Police Adviser, the division began to standardize their administrative regulations and to lay the foundations for formal doctrine development. Only further improvements to the organizational infrastructure combined with the positive impulse provided by the departmental reform program and Mark Kroeker's strong leadership beginning in early 2005 enabled the Division to make deeper and more rapid progress. This progress came despite the resurgence of operational demands as new operations were deployed – until the point of overstretch was reached with the mandate to recruit and deploy 6,000 police officers into Darfur. Since then, doctrinal activities have again had to take a back seat to mounting operational demands.

Even the few and often sketchy pieces of formal doctrine that exist, however, have by and large not been broadly implemented in the field. The extremely decentralized nature of the peace operations bureaucracy, short deployment times and a low level of individual identification with “UN Police” as an organization certainly play their parts in making this a very difficult task. At the same time, despite the few substantial advances cited above, the organizational infrastructure for doctrine development only became operational at a basic level of capacity when the first ever Chief of the Strategic Policy and Development Section was appointed in November 2006. Despite the title of his unit, its staff of six professionals and two assistants is still responsible for planning all UN police deployments, which leaves a negligible amount of time for doctrine development.

Taking the need of a comprehensive set of principles and guidelines for even the core aspects of UN police operations seriously, the number and scope of its products as well as training and dissemination instruments would need to expand significantly. This will be hard to achieve, largely because the UN's paymasters appear to believe in a false analogy between the planning needs of military peacekeepers (about 75,000 are serving in 20 missions, supported by 23 planners) and police officers (about 12,000 of which are also spread over 20 missions, supported by 6 planners). Conspicuously absent from this simplistic analogy is the vast difference in the complexity of mandated tasks as well as the simple fact that capacity requirements for planning grows by the number of different environments and contexts, i.e. *per mission* rather than per officer deployed. Taking the ratio of about 1 police officer per 6 troops literally, the Secretariat is actually accused of having too *many* planners in the Police Division. Quite to the contrary, member states should at the very least allow the Secretariat to increase its planning capacity and to firewall its doctrine developers from the day-to-day needs of operational planning.

At the same time, the Police Division and DPKO need to prioritize doctrine development and move forward in implementing broad-based training and evaluation systems to promote the actual implementation of doctrine. Apart from providing more financial resources to the UN in support of this agenda, member states could do a lot in terms of decentralized provision of training in regional facilities such as the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre (KAIPTC) in Ghana. With a moderate amount of funding, DPKO could convene experienced practitioners world-wide to create a core of common doctrinal and personnel selection standards for post-conflict police assistance and training, on the basis of which regional training institutions could conduct trainings and individual donors could fund course participation for police officers from developing countries.

Even more importantly, however, the single most important roadblock toward the recruitment of the quantity and quality of police officers required for international deployments is the lack of dedicated personnel pools for this purpose in member states. Police officers, unlike most militaries, have a day job in their local or national police service in which they are often hard to replace even for the



duration of a short-term deployment. Member states need to follow the example of the Australian government which established, within the Australian Federal Police, a 300-strong personnel pool solely for international deployments, funded from the federal budget. Without similarly radical changes on the part of member states, any piecemeal improvements of formal guidance and training will have limited impact.

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