

THE PUBLIC SECURITY CHALLENGE AND INTERNATIONAL STABILITY POLICE UNITS

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Even though security is the foundation upon which all other aspects of a peace mission must build, peace operations have routinely been plagued by serious gaps in public security. There are three distinct aspects to this public security challenge:

- A Deployment Gap
- An Enforcement Gap, and
- An Institutional Sustainability Gap

To address these gaps requires robust policing organizations that are able to perform specialized missions involving disciplined group action. These capabilities are found in police units with a military structure such as the Italian Carabinieri or French Gendarmerie. Owing to the nature of the missions they perform when deployed internationally, these forces could be described as “International Stability Police Units” or ISPU.

There are a number of hurdles to be overcome before the use of International Stability Police Units to address the public security challenges of peace operations can reach its potential. Chief among these are the need for interoperability and the limited availability of such units from countries with solid democratic orientations.

Accordingly this essay will address:

- The nature of the public security challenges to peace operations and the relevance of International Stability Police Units for coping with them, and
- Thoughts on how to develop greater international capacity to provide ISPU.

The Nature of the Challenges and the Relevance of International Stability Police Units

- The Deployment Gap

At the inception of most peace enforcement and stability operations, there is likely to be an immediate need to combat rampant lawlessness, revenge killings, and major civil disturbances that are aimed at thwarting the peace process.

In the early days of a mission, the military is often the only source of order due to the inherent delay involved in mobilizing and deploying international civilian police, or CIVPOL. Mobilizing a CIVPOL contingent is time-consuming because, unlike the military, most domestic police forces do not have a significant surge capability or preparation to operate beyond national borders. The lag time between the arrival of the

military contingent and the fielding of operational police contingents creates a **deployment gap**. This gap is temporal in nature—and it has profound consequences that can severely weaken a mission.

During the deployment phase, a peace mission is apt to be tested, and a void in public security creates a crucial vulnerability. If a single soldier errs by using excessive force, the entire mission can be placed in jeopardy because local consent may be squandered. Inaction, on the other hand, risks the loss of credibility and can give the impression that the mission is incompetent and failing. In either case, the peace operation may confront a “*defining moment*” before it is well postured to respond. The media spotlight will be unavoidable, moreover, invariably producing dramatic TV news clippings. The impact on public opinion and the credibility of the peace mission can be destructive and enduring.

What is required to address the Deployment Gap? The **capacity to deploy rapidly in unit strength** is the answer. Military forces possess this capacity; most police organizations do not—unless they are police units organized along military lines. The European Union has recognized this and developed the capacity to deploy 1,000 police on 30 days notice, the majority of which are from police units with a military status.

- The Enforcement Gap

Whereas the deployment gap is about timing, the gap in enforcement is about capabilities. An **enforcement gap** arises when there is a need to perform functions that fall between the lethal force at the disposal of combat units and the minimal level of force available to the individual policeman.

As the US has again demonstrated in Iraq, the military is a blunt and unsatisfactory instrument when used alone to meet the challenge of public disorder and lawlessness. Military combat units possessing overwhelming force are not maximized for deterring and limiting loss of life or destruction of property. Military forces are ill-suited to engage in confrontations with civilians because, with the exception of constabulary or military police units, they are generally not trained in the measured use of force, control of riots, negotiating techniques, or de-escalation of conflict. Individual CIVPOL are not capable of handling such large-scale, strategic challenges, either.

Just as vital is a continuing need throughout the mission to defeat vicious threats to a sustainable peace in the form of political-criminal power structures, rogue intelligence organizations, warlords, fanatical religious groups, global terrorists, or some combination of the above. Orchestrated civil disturbances or “rent-a-mobs” are really a symptom of this underlying source of resistance to the peace process. Such obstructionism has repeatedly plagued peace enforcement missions in the Balkans, Afghanistan, Africa, and now Iraq.

To confront these challenges effectively requires more than the presence of combat units. Organized police units with a military structure, such as the Carabinieri and Gendarmerie, armed with **non-lethal weapons and a robust law enforcement capacity** are essential to fill this crucial aspect of the security gap. In addition, to cope with political violence and extremism, a sophisticated criminal intelligence, surveillance, evidence gathering, border patrol, close protection, and high-risk arrest capacity must be mobilized.

- The Institutional Sustainability Gap

The two gaps discussed above pertain to the relationship between the military and civilian police components of a peace operation. The **institutional sustainability gap**, in contrast, refers to the incapacity of the host government to establish and sustain the rule of law. To close this gap, the local justice system must develop the ability to afford equal access to justice to politically disadvantaged groups and overcome the impunity that is associated with the use of politically motivated violence.

Rather than becoming a surrogate for malfunctioning institutions of law, order, and justice, the international community aspires to foster their progressive development. Domestic institutions, however, are often ill trained, inadequately equipped, and lacking in discipline. They usually do not command the trust or respect of the citizenry and are often themselves among the more notorious criminal offenders. In addition, ex-combatants may be tempted to join the criminal underworld, and international criminal syndicates may have exploited the conflict to insinuate themselves into the structures of power. The justice system must be transformed from an instrument of state repression into a servant of the people. Such a role reversal will profoundly affect the domestic distribution of power. Unless this becomes irreversible, however, the stage will be set for another cycle of institutional decay, disorder, and collapse.

Closing this gap in a sustainable manner will require more than reconstituting the local police force and judiciary and heading for the nearest exit. If we are honest with ourselves, we will acknowledge that these fragile institutions will not be capable of resisting efforts by former criminalized power structures or divisive political factions to capture them. To sustain the rule of law over the medium term while these nascent institutions mature requires continuous international safeguards to provide oversight, assistance and an ample degree of conditionality. One way to accomplish this could entail a **transition from the initial, large-scale military presence to a more modest presence involving International Stability Police Units**. Their role ought to continue until the rule of law is fully self-sustaining, with an emphasis on converting criminal intelligence into evidence and solidifying international regimes of cooperation to sustain a permanent effort against transnational crime and global terrorism.

Developing International Capacity to Meet the Public Security Challenge

International Stability Police Units are uniquely suited for the anarchic environment of societies struggling to emerge from conflict since they possess a hybrid

of police and military attributes. Not all nations maintain such forces, however. As a result there is an acute shortage of this vital international capacity, especially from countries with solid democratic traditions.

Even when they have been available and the mandate has permitted involvement in law enforcement, there has sometimes been reluctance to use stability police units. The failure to develop a proper international understanding about how to employ ISPUs and integrate their efforts with those of military contingents also debilitates the international capacity to stabilize these situations successfully.

What can be done to increase international capacity to provide constabulary police units?

- Support Existing Initiatives

Within the European Union, France has proposed the expansion of the existing capability. Currently the EU has 1,000 personnel in what they refer to as “Integrated Police Units”. They are available for international duty on 30-day notice. This number could be doubled as the EU incorporates new members, many of which have substantial numbers of police units with military status.

- Promote Interoperability among the EU, NATO, and the UN

To date, doctrinal development in NATO and the EU for use of police units with a military structure has progressed along the same path because the same individual from the Italian Carabinieri has been responsible in both cases. To preserve this doctrinal convergence and promote interoperability, both among the countries that provide stability police and among the international organizations that use them, a Center for Doctrine and Training of International Stability Police Units should be established. The European Union, NATO, and the United Nations should be regarded as the Center’s leading customers. The Center should perform the following functions:

1. Serve as the recognized international depository for doctrine, tactics, and procedures for the use of ISPUs in peace support and stability operations (i.e., changes to existing doctrine could only be accomplished by the Center).
2. Develop courses designed to convey the concepts derived from doctrine.
3. Conduct training programs that prepare trainers from around the world to conduct these courses.
4. Establish specifications for items of equipment that must be common among all ISPUs to achieve interoperability.
5. Develop and provide pre-deployment courses and exercises for the leadership cadres of ISPUs.
6. Coordinate and cooperate with national doctrine centers, training facilities, and headquarters located in countries that provide ISPUs.

The Center would ensure that training is grounded in accumulated field experience and that lessons learned in the field are incorporated into international practice.

- Expand International Capacity

The Center could also facilitate national, regional, and international efforts to expand the capacity to provide ISPU for peace and stability operations by engaging in the following activities:

1. Offering on-site assistance to countries seeking to establish their own ISPU training programs.
2. Establishing guidelines for assessing the level of readiness of ISPUs to serve internationally.
3. Providing technical assistance and advice to countries seeking to prepare ISPUs for international deployment.

The area of greatest potential contribution for the United States would be to provide essential items of equipment. By helping to equip stability police from other countries, with items such as communications gear, four-wheel drive vehicles, armoured vehicles, crowd-control equipment, and technical devices for surveillance and evidence-gathering, the US could play a useful role in expanding international capacity.

- Promote Interoperability between Military Combat Units and International Stability Police

It will also be crucial to prepare military combat units that are assigned to peace enforcement missions to integrate their efforts effectively with stability police units. This will require pre-deployment training and exercises, and the Centre for Doctrine and Training should assist in the development and conduct of military exercises designed to achieve interoperability between international military forces and ISPUs.

In sum, bridging the gaps in public security that have repeatedly confounded peace and stability operations requires the capacity to mobilize and effectively employ International Stability Police Units. A coordinated effort to promote common doctrine and prepare such police units for international service ought to be placed at the top of the international agenda.