



A Crucial Global Step to Achieve 'Freedom From War'

A UN-administered multifunctional service is needed to ensure a cost-effective capacity to help with a wider array of tasks, including peace, security, humanitarian, health, and environmental crises.

PETER LANGILLE, June 12, 2021

Humanity's urgent trillion-dollar question is what will stop war and violent conflict?

Aside from vast human suffering and death, with ever-higher risks in war, people and the planet just can't afford more.

Now, the cost of preparing for **more war** at \$2-trillion annually is dwarfed by the damage caused, with the **Global Peace Index** reporting the economic impact of violence at \$14.5-trillion annually. That's a yearly burden of nearly \$2000 on everyone, everywhere. No, neither cost is sustainable—those resources are **urgently** needed for our climate, health, and social emergencies.

UNEPS is designed to help prevent armed conflict and genocide, to protect civilians at extreme risk, to ensure prompt start up for peace operations, and to address human needs where others either cannot or will not.

The future—if there is to be one—will depend on far deeper cooperation occurring within the next few years.

Yet it seems unlikely that war will end simply from opposition, protest or just more calls for cuts. A useful point from Buckminster Fuller was that "you never change things by fighting the existing reality. To change something, build a new model that makes the existing model obsolete."

In 1961, President J.F. **Kennedy** and officials from the State Department suggested a new model in ***Freedom From War***. Then, the process was understood to entail scaling down national armaments while scaling up a stronger United Nations, with a UN Peace Force to maintain peace as disarmament proceeds.

Now, there is a viable update on that model that may even be the elusive game changer: a proposed UN Emergency Peace Service (UNEPS).

No, it's not "mission-impossible." In 2005, Congressman Albert Russell Wynn attracted eight co-sponsors to introduce **H-Res 180** "...that the United States should use its voice and vote at the United Nations to support the creation of a permanent United Nations Emergency Peace Service..."

With 29 co-sponsors in 2007, Wynn introduced **H-Res 213**, to express "...the sense of the House of Representatives that a United Nations Emergency Peace Service capable of intervening in the early stages of a humanitarian crisis could save millions of lives, billions of dollars, and is in the interests of the United States."

Then, presidential candidate **Barrack Obama** responded that he did not "...support the creation and funding of the United Nations Emergency Peace Service." Although Hillary Clinton's response was a "maybe," the push for UNEPS was off the agenda.

So, with senior Administration officials now speaking of a renewed commitment to the United Nations, perhaps it's time to step up for a third try.

After all, the UN was established after the last World War, primarily to prevent further war, just never given the means. Yet the UN remains the one universal organization, with wider legitimacy and a Charter priority to "save succeeding generations from the scourge of war."

With this one development—effectively a standing "UN 911" first responder for complex emergencies—the UN would finally have a rapid, reliable capacity to fulfill four of its toughest assigned tasks. A UNEPS is designed to help prevent armed conflict and genocide, to protect civilians at extreme risk, to ensure prompt start up for peace operations, and to address human needs where others either cannot or will not.

The future—if there is to be one—will depend on far deeper cooperation occurring within the next few years.

The core principles underlying the UNEPS proposal are that it be: a permanent standing, integrated UN formation; highly trained and well-equipped; multidimensional; multifunctional; gender-equitable; and a complement to existing UN arrangements.

This would be a standing UN formation, ready to serve in diverse operations, immediately available upon authorization of the UN Security Council. With dedicated UN personnel, advanced doctrine, training and equipment, UN operations could get off to a good start quickly at the outset of a crisis.

It's also to be a first-in, first-out service, limited to deployments of six months. With a prompt, coherent start-up, it is to de-escalate and calm the crisis,

averting the need for more or, if required, lay a solid foundation for follow-on efforts.

Clearly, this is more sophisticated than just a force.

As a "UN 911" first responder for complex emergencies, a UNEPS is not intended for war-fighting, but primarily to provide prompt, reliable help. Yet it has sufficient strength to serve as a vanguard, a strategic reserve, a robust protector and a security guarantor, both to deter violent crime and respond, when necessary, to prevent and protect.

As a multidimensional service, a UNEPS would include sufficient police to restore law and order, a military formation to deter aggression and maintain security, as well as civilian teams to provide essential services for conflict resolution, human rights, health care, disaster assistance and quick impact peacebuilding projects.

A multifunctional service is needed to ensure a cost-effective capacity to help with a wider array of tasks, including peace, security, humanitarian, health, and environmental crises. With its modular formation, responses can be tailored for specific operational requirements.

Another distinct feature of a UNEPS is that it would be composed of 13,500 dedicated individuals recruited worldwide within a permanent UN service rather than drawn from national forces. After screening and selection based on merit, skill and commitment, its personnel would be extensively trained, equipped and employed by the UN. They would also be co-located on a UNEPS base under an operational headquarters and two mobile mission headquarters.

Thus, a UNEPS is a new model that would help to offset the political pressure governments face when confronted with awkward decisions about whether to deploy their people into potentially high-risk operations. There would be no shortage of applicants from the best and brightest worldwide as this would be a unique opportunity to serve humanity.

Unlike previous proposals, a UNEPS is to complement existing UN arrangements, with a gender-equitable service, which would also help with conflict resolution and to develop higher standards system-wide. Aside from being a more rapid and reliable lifesaver, this option appears to be a huge a cost-saver.

Developing a UNEPS will entail approximately \$3 billion in start-up costs, with annual recurring costs of \$1.5 billion, shared proportionally among 193 Member States.

Yet a UNEPS should help to prevent the escalation of volatile conflicts; deter groups from violence; and cut the size, length, cost and frequency of UN operations. Success in just one of these areas would provide a real return on the investment.

Equally important, would be the development of a legitimate UN security guarantor to build confidence and facilitate a wider disarmament process; one that must start to free up the vast resources currently wasted on constant preparation for more war.

That the proposed UN service should also save millions of lives and trillions of dollars may yet help to motivate and mobilize the effort required.

Sure, the bonus of a big joint project involving the Permanent Five members of the UN Security Council (Britain, China, France, Russia and the United States) is that in draining the fuel from confrontation to encourage cooperation, governments will have far more resources to help both their own people and the more vulnerable.

A United Nations Emergency Peace Service has the potential to help and to be one big step toward "freedom from war."

Who might be up for a third try?

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