



United Nations Issues: U.S. Funding of U.N. Peacekeeping

The United States is the single largest financial contributor to United Nations (U.N.) peacekeeping activities. Congress authorizes and appropriates U.S. contributions, and it has an ongoing interest in ensuring such funding is used as efficiently and effectively as possible. The United States, as a permanent member of the U.N. Security Council, plays a key role in establishing, renewing, and funding U.N. peacekeeping operations. For 2020, the United Nations assessed the U.S. share of U.N. peacekeeping budgets at 27.89%; however, since 1994 Congress has capped the U.S. payment at 25% due to concerns that U.S. assessments are too high. For FY2021, the Trump Administration proposed \$1.07 billion for U.N. peacekeeping, a 29% decrease from the enacted FY2020 level of \$1.52 billion.

U.N. Peacekeeping Funding

The United Nations currently operates 13 U.N. peacekeeping missions worldwide, with more than 80,000 military, police, and civilian personnel from over 100 countries. The Security Council adopts a resolution to establish each operation and specifies how it will be funded. Historically, the Council has authorized the U.N. General Assembly to create a separate assessed account for each operation to be supported by member states contributions. Recently, due to concerns about budget shortfalls, the General Assembly has temporarily allowed peacekeeping funding to be pooled for increased financial flexibility.

The General Assembly adopts the scale of assessments for U.N. member contributions to peacekeeping operations every three years. The peacekeeping scale is based on a modification of the U.N. regular budget scale, with the five permanent council members assessed at a higher level than for the regular budget. For example, the United States is assessed at 22% of the regular budget; however, its current peacekeeping assessment is 27.89%. Other top contributors include China, Japan, and Germany (Table 1).

Table 1. Top Financial Contributors to U.N. Peacekeeping, 2020, by Assessment Rate

| Country | Percent | Country | Percent |
|--|---------|---------------------|---------|
| 1. <i>United States</i> | 27.89 | 6. <i>France</i> | 5.61 |
| 2. <i>China</i> | 15.22 | 7. <i>Italy</i> | 3.31 |
| 3. <i>Japan</i> | 8.56 | 8. <i>Russia</i> | 3.05 |
| 4. <i>Germany</i> | 6.09 | 9. <i>Canada</i> | 2.73 |
| 5. <i>United Kingdom</i> | 5.79 | 10. <i>S. Korea</i> | 2.27 |
| Rest of Membership, Total Percent: 19.48 | | | |

Source: U.N. document, A/73/350/Add.I, December 24, 2018.

Note: *Italics* represent permanent Security Council members.

U.N. members voluntarily provide military and police personnel for each U.N. mission. Peacekeepers are paid by their own governments, which are reimbursed by the United Nations at a standard rate determined by the Assembly (about \$1,428 per soldier per month). The U.N.

peacekeeping financial year runs from July 1 to June 30; the Assembly usually adopts resolutions to finance peacekeeping missions in late June. The total approved budget for the 2019-2020 peacekeeping year is \$6.51 billion. Operations with the highest annual budgets are UNMISS (South Sudan), at \$1.18 billion; MINUSMA (Mali), at \$1.13 billion; and MONUSCO (Democratic Republic of the Congo), at \$1.01 billion.

U.S. Policy

Background and Context: The Enacted U.S. Cap

In the early 1990s, the U.S. peacekeeping assessment was over 30%, which many Members of Congress found too high. In 1994, Congress set a 25% cap on funding for all fiscal years after 1995 (P.L. 103-236). Over the years, the gap between the actual U.S. assessment and the cap led to funding shortfalls. The State Department and Congress often covered these shortfalls by raising the cap for limited periods and allowing for the application of U.N. peacekeeping credits (excess U.N. funds from previous missions) to fund outstanding U.S. balances. For several years, these actions allowed the United States to pay its peacekeeping assessments in full. However, since FY2017 Congress has declined to raise the cap, and in mid-2017, the Trump Administration allowed for the application of peacekeeping credits up to, but not beyond, the 25% cap—which has led to the accumulation of an additional \$900 million in U.S. arrears since FY2017.

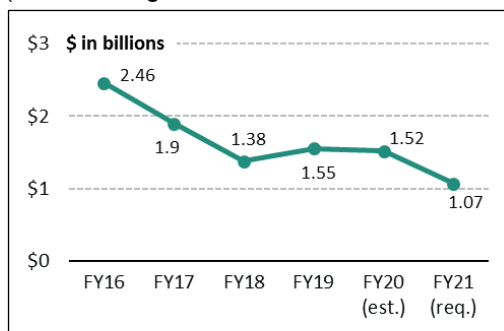
Key Accounts and Recent Funding Levels

U.S. assessed contributions to U.N. peacekeeping operations are provided primarily through the *Contributions for International Peacekeeping Activities* (CIPA) account, which is funded through annual State Department-Foreign Operations (SFOPS) appropriations acts. CIPA funds 11 of the 13 U.N. peacekeeping operations, as well as the U.N. criminal tribunals and mission monitoring and evaluation activities. In addition to CIPA, the *Contributions to International Organizations* (CIO) account funds two observer missions, UNTSO (Israel and the Palestinians) and UNMOGIP (India and Pakistan), through U.S. contributions to the U.N. regular budget. The *Peacekeeping Operations* (PKO) account, which funds most non-U.N. peacekeeping and regional stability operations, provides assessed contributions to the U.N. Support Office in Somalia (UNSOS), a U.N.-authorized logistics mission that supports the African Union Mission in Somalia. (The executive branch generally requests UNSOS funding through CIPA; however, Congress usually funds UNSOS through PKO.)

For FY2021, the President requested \$1.07 billion for U.N. peacekeeping through the CIPA account, a 29% decrease from the enacted FY2020 level of \$1.52 billion (Figure 1). In its request, the Administration highlighted its

“commitment to seek reduced costs by reevaluating mandates, design and implementation” of peacekeeping missions.

Figure 1. CIPA Account Funding, FY2016-Present
(Actual funding levels unless otherwise indicated.)



Source: State Department congressional budget justifications.

Notes: CIPA funding does not include UNMOGIP and UNTSO, which are funded through the U.N. regular budget in CIO. The executive branch requests funding for UNSOS through CIPA, but Congress usually funds the mission through PKO.

U.S. funding may fluctuate annually depending on several factors, including discrepancies between the peacekeeping assessment and the enacted U.S. cap, changes to the scale of assessments, timing of U.N. billing processes, application of peacekeeping credits, and changes to individual operations. In some years, the timing of State Department reports to Congress (which are required by SFOFS acts) have delayed some U.S. payments.

Selected Policy Issues

Funding and Growth of U.N. Peacekeeping

Associated with debates over the level and extent of peacekeeping funding is the broader issue of the changing nature of U.N. peacekeeping. The concept of peacekeeping has evolved since the first mission was established in 1948. “Traditional” peacekeeping involves implementing cease-fire or peace agreements; however, in recent years, the Security Council has increasingly authorized operations in complex and insecure environments where there is little peace to keep and no clear outcome. Peacekeepers may be required to protect civilians, disarm violent groups, monitor human rights violations, or assist in delivering humanitarian assistance. Such activities can place additional financial demands on U.N. members. Some experts argue that current peacekeeping funding cannot effectively support the some of the broad mandates authorized by the Council.

The United States and Peacekeeping Arrears

In the mid-1990s, the United States accumulated significant arrears to U.N. peacekeeping operations accounts and the U.N. regular budget. Many U.S. policymakers were concerned that the United States could lose its vote in the General Assembly unless it made substantial payments on its outstanding dues. In 1999, Congress and the Administration negotiated what is known as the “Helms-Biden Agreement,” which established conditions under which some U.S. arrears, including peacekeeping arrears, were paid. Since the enactment of Helms-Biden, some U.S. arrears remain. As of March 2020, U.S. arrears accumulated

prior to 2001 for both open and closed peacekeeping operations total about \$328 million. (Most of these are from the gap between the 25% U.S. cap and the U.N. assessment pre-2001, while others are the result of congressional policy holds. The State Department has no plans to repay these arrears.) As previously noted, the United States has also accumulated more than \$900 million in new cap-related arrears since FY2017. Some U.S. policymakers disagree about the status of peacekeeping arrears and argue that they should be paid, while others do not recognize them as arrears and claim the United States is under no obligation to pay them. Some have also raised concerns about the impact of arrears on the effectiveness of U.N. peacekeeping.

Sexual Abuse & Exploitation by U.N. Peacekeepers

Congress has sought to link U.S. peacekeeping funding to the issue of sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) by U.N. peacekeepers. Since FY2008, SFOPS acts have prohibited the obligation of peacekeeping funds unless the Secretary of State certifies that the United Nations is implementing effective policies and procedures to prevent U.N. employees and peacekeeping troops from human trafficking or acts of illegal exploitation or other violations of human rights. Since FY2017, SFOPS bills have also prohibited assistance to any unit of the security forces of a foreign country if there is credible information that such unit has engaged in SEA until the Secretary certifies the country is taking steps to hold the unit accountable. The Department of State Authorities Act, FY2017 (P.L. 114-323) also requires the Department to report to Congress on U.N. efforts to hold perpetrators accountable for SEA prior to renewing or establishing a mission.

U.N. Peacekeeping Financial Situation

Some experts and observers have expressed concern regarding the financial status of U.N. peacekeeping operations. In a March 2019 report to the General Assembly, U.N. Secretary-General (SG) António Guterres noted an increase in the number of peacekeeping missions that are frequently cash constrained. Causes include member state payment patterns and arrears, and “structural weaknesses” in peacekeeping budget methodologies, including inefficient payment schedules and borrowing and funding restrictions. According to the SG, these issues have led to cash shortages, delays in reimbursements to some troop contributing countries, and increased risks to “not only the functioning of its [U.N.] peacekeeping operations but also the people who serve in difficult environments” (see U.N. document A/73/809). To help address these issues, SG Guterres proposed reforms that have been adopted or are under consideration by U.N. member states. For example, in July 2019 the Assembly approved, for a trial period, the management of cash balances of all active peacekeeping operations in pool (while maintaining the balances in separate funds for each mission), and requested the SG issue assessment letters for the full budget period approved by the Assembly (see Assembly resolution 73/307). The United States has generally supported these efforts, stating that it “continue[s] to support overall improvements to the [peacekeeping] budget methodology.”

Luisa Blanchfield, Specialist in International Relations

IF10597

Disclaimer

This document was prepared by the Congressional Research Service (CRS). CRS serves as nonpartisan shared staff to congressional committees and Members of Congress. It operates solely at the behest of and under the direction of Congress. Information in a CRS Report should not be relied upon for purposes other than public understanding of information that has been provided by CRS to Members of Congress in connection with CRS's institutional role. CRS Reports, as a work of the United States Government, are not subject to copyright protection in the United States. Any CRS Report may be reproduced and distributed in its entirety without permission from CRS. However, as a CRS Report may include copyrighted images or material from a third party, you may need to obtain the permission of the copyright holder if you wish to copy or otherwise use copyrighted material.