



## Taking Leadership to the Next Level: UN Peace Operations 2020

### Challenges Forum Workshop

Hosted by the Peacekeeping and Stability Operations Institute in partnership  
with the Geneva Centre for Security Policy, Carlisle, 28 February-1 March 2017

Presentation by Mr Mark Swayne, Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary of  
Defence for Stability and Humanitarian Affairs, Department of Defence, United  
States

### Welcome and Introductory Remarks

### Check Against Delivery

## Introduction

It is an honor to be here and share with you some ideas about leadership. Leadership is something that the Department of Defense takes very seriously. I would like to thank today's many participants including: Challenges Forum Partners and Annika Hilding-Norberg and her staff; the United Nations (CAPT Auffret, Oliver Ulich, and former dignitaries); PKSOI (Col. Greg Dewitt; Col. Brian Foster; and Bill Flavin); and the wonderful luminaries joining us on the panel discussions.

## Good Leadership

Capable and disciplined leaders are essential. They can make all the difference on mission performance, because even the best trained and equipped troops can fail if poorly led. Getting the right military and civilian leadership into positions from the strategic to tactical levels is essential and will enable the UN to resolve many of the problems peacekeeping now faces.

Good leaders:

- Set the example with their knowledge, competency and professionalism.
- Encourage subordinates, leading to more pro-active mandate execution to include better protection of civilians.
- Are visible throughout organizations. They know the most important thing happening in their organization daily and ensure to influence its outcome.
- Know how to look at themselves and their organizations to improve. They embrace constructive criticism to benefit the organization.
- Make difficult decisions which usually fall in the realm of doing the harder right over the easier wrong.
- Hold their troops accountable, which should have a major impact on reducing Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and other criminality.
- Articulate the training and equipping needs of their missions, which will help the UN Headquarter and the Troop Contributing Countries (TCCs) meet these needs.
- Understand their people and their mission, but most importantly the context of the environment in which they operate that helps them make the best decisions to accomplish the mission.
- Exercise discipline - correcting and re-training non-performing personnel to include repatriating units that are sub-standard.

## UN Reform

Some of the Peacekeeping leadership failures we have seen recently are not isolated problems, but are the result of a peacekeeping leadership-selection system that prioritizes politics over capability, and connections over experience.

Despite claims that leaders for UN peacekeeping operations are chosen using a merit based system, this does not always happen. Political considerations, geographic balance, and various forms of horse-trading have often played far too large a role in leadership selection.

We should strive for a selection system based on standards, merit, and on holding leaders accountable. Some degree of political consideration will be part of the equation; but operational considerations must be paramount.

It is critical that leaders be empowered and given the necessary tools to conduct operations and to manage their forces in complex and austere environments. The amount of actual control over in-mission resources that the UN gives field commanders is disproportionate to their responsibilities.

- United States government is pushing, as part of its UN reform agenda, to give Force Commanders more control over the resources available to them in mission; and to use these resources when and where they decide rather than have them managed by the Director of Mission Support.

The UN must also assess the performance of deployed units and leaders in mission. We urge the UN to ensure that all senior mission leaders receive annual performance evaluations, and that these evaluations are both honestly carried out and used to take remedial actions. Without consequences, performance assessments are of no consequence.

The UN provides very little career oversight of officers in middle management and can improve its ability to groom future leaders. We encourage the UN to take steps to build a cadre of mid-level officers and to better recruit and retain experienced senior and mid-level leaders.

## Going Forward

Multi-dimensional UN Peacekeeping missions are inherently complex undertakings.

- In the way they are organized; the military contingent must work in concert with its civilian and police counterparts for the Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG).
- Where they operate: often in demanding physical environments at the confluence of warring parties, violent extremism, criminality, and lack of governance; and,
- Given their robust mandates: the troop to task analysis often does not match.

We need to ensure future Force Commanders, Deputy Force Commanders, and Chiefs of Staff have the training, knowledge, and understanding about how to operate within the UN system prior to their first day in a UN peacekeeping operation.

Selecting strong leaders, investing in leader development and training, empowering them to succeed, and demanding that they be held accountable will help to build an enduring legacy for successful UN peacekeeping operations.

The Challenges Forum, with its unique ability to reach UN supporters throughout the globe, can play a major role in ensuring that these reforms are carried out, holding UN and national policymakers accountable.

- We applaud the Challenges Forum for helping to organize this conference focused on helping the UN to improve the grooming and training of prospective leaders.

The stakes have never been higher. UN peacekeeping operations are operating in some of the most dangerous environments in the world. We all need to continue to work to implement the recommendations of the High-Level Panel on UN Peace Operations. For its part, the United States government will continue to push the UN on peacekeeping reform in a variety of areas to include leader development.

UN peacekeeping has great potential, but without major reforms in execution and improvements in the design, planning, resourcing, and oversight of UN peace operations, they will not be as effective as they ought to be.