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THE FAT LADY *HAS* SUNG: THE MULTINATIONAL FORCE AND OBSERVERS IN THE SINAI

BY

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USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

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ABSTRACT

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TITLE: The Fat Lady *Has* Sung: The Multinational Force and Observers in the Sinai

FORMAT: Strategy Research Project

DATE: 10 April 2000 PAGES: 37 CLASSIFICATION: Unclassified

Organized as a result of a requirement found in the 1979 Camp David Accord negotiations, the Multinational Force and Observers (MFO) was created in 1982 to supervise treaty security protocols on the Sinai peninsula between Israel and Egypt.

Today, the MFO is an independent, international organization supported financially by the governments of Egypt, Israel and the United States. Through the military contributions of the U.S. and 10 other countries, it stands as an example of a highly successful peacekeeping organization. That success has helped to alter the Mid East environment which is stunningly different from 1979. And yet the MFO has changed very little over the years. Based on world and regional developments, changes are appropriate for the MFO which can herald a more mature Egyptian--Israeli relationship, relieve contributing nations of resource burdens, and free U.S. forces for other, more pressing, obligations. A critical review of the MFO is particularly relevant today as the U.S. contemplates whether to provide peacekeepers to help secure another Arab-Israeli treaty, in this case between Syria and Israel.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The advice and assistance of Dr. David Jablonsky as Project Advisor was invaluable and is gratefully recognized. Additionally Major Tom Mahoney, Headquarters, Department of the Army and Mr. Robert Krantz, Department of State provided much appreciated information concerning the Multinational Force and Observers.

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THE FAT LADY *HAS* SUNG: THE MULTINATIONAL FORCE AND OBSERVERS IN THE SINAI

On March 17, 1982, under fair skies and warm weather, Lieutenant Colonel William Garrison, in command of six hundred and seventy officers and men of the 1st Battalion, 505th Airborne Infantry Regiment, landed at a remote airfield in the southern part of the Sinai Peninsula. Amidst media and senior dignitaries, Colonel Garrison and his battalion arrived to take their place as the historic first echelon of a U.S. contribution to the newly constituted Multinational Force and Observers (MFO).[1] Born in the 1979 Camp David Accord negotiations, the MFO was tasked to supervise treaty security protocols between Israel and Egypt. Little could Colonel Garrison have known that his battalion would be merely first in a line of over thirty-nine rotations of U.S. Infantry Battalions committed to the MFO mission, spanning a period over seventeen years.

Today, the MFO is an independent, international organization supported financially by the governments of Egypt, Israel and the United States. Through the military contributions of the U.S. and 10 other countries, it stands as an example of a highly successful peacekeeping organization. That success has helped to alter the Mid East environment which is stunningly different from 1979. And yet the MFO has changed very little over the years. As the familiar saying goes, "it ain't over 'til the fat lady sings." The "fat lady" is indeed ready to sing for this phase of the Mid East peace process. Based on world and regional developments, changes are appropriate for the MFO which can herald a more mature Egyptian--Israeli relationship, relieve contributing nations of resource burdens, and free U.S. forces for other, more pressing, obligations. A critical review of the MFO is particularly relevant today as the U.S. contemplates whether to provide peacekeepers to help secure another Arab-Israeli treaty, in this case between Syria and Israel.

BACKGROUND

In the last fifty years, the desert of the Sinai Peninsula has been the scene of much conflict and subsequent peacekeeping activity. In the convulsions following the creation of the state of Israel, the United Nations authorized its first peacekeeping

mission, the UN Truce Supervisory Organization (UNTSO), to supervise the peace between Israel and its Arab neighbors in 1948. Surprisingly, this mission still exists today, and continues to operate six outposts in the Sinai.[2] Following Israel's withdrawal from the Sinai after its successful 1956 invasion, the United Nations (UN) placed the UN Emergency Force (UNEF I) in the Sinai as a peacekeeping force in early 1957. Just prior to the 1967 war, UNEF I was withdrawn at the request of Egyptian President Nasser.[3] The removal of this force contributed to an Israeli mistrust of the UN peacekeeping system. During the 1967 "Six Day War" Israel seized the entire Sinai Peninsula and occupied it until the 1973 Yom Kippur War. Following the cease-fire in 1973 and Disengagement Agreements in 1974, the UN deployed another peacekeeping mission, UNEF II in 1974. UNEF II grew to over seven thousand military personnel. In 1976 in response to Israeli insistence, the U.S. also organized and deployed a small group of U.S. civilian observers called the Sinai Field Mission (SFM) to assist in truce observation and monitoring of sensors at the Giddi and Mitla passes. The cease-fires and agreements that UNEF I, UNEF II and the SFM supervised were no more than military truces however and never reflected a final solution.[4]

The Treaty of Peace signed March 26, 1979 by Prime Minister Menachem Begin, President Anwar Sadat, and witnessed by President Jimmy Carter marked a fundamental change in the Middle East geopolitical environment. It also represented a monumental risk for all concerned—Egypt for parting with the Arab block, and to Israel for relinquishing the Sinai. The treaty was crafted to accommodate both nations' primary concerns: Egypt regained sovereignty over the Sinai, and Israeli obtained a guaranteed peace. It remains one of the greatest achievements of an American President in diplomacy. As written, the Peace Treaty called for United Nations peacekeeping forces to supervise the security measures. The security measures described in the treaty were some of the most thorough and detailed ever formulated. The Sinai was divided into sectors. Strict limits of military forces were detailed for each zone.[5] The envisioned UN peacekeeping force was to supervise the withdrawal of forces and the subsequent adherence by both nations to the zone troop limits and to other restrictions.

Anticipating that the U.S.-brokered peace treaty might encounter problems garnering support in the UN Security Council, Israel insisted on a provision that the U.S. would take the lead in establishing an alternative peacekeeping organization if required. As the date for the treaty signing grew near, pressure to decide whether the U.S. would provide such a guarantee grew intense. In the end, the agreement that the U.S. would take the lead in organizing a non-UN force, if the need arose, was not finalized until the day the actual treaty was signed. This promise was transmitted in identical letters that Carter sent to both Begin and Sadat.[6]

Israel's suspicion that the UN would not favorably consider a request for a UN Sinai peacekeeping mission proved accurate. In what can be considered a "casualty of the Cold War," the UN Security Council notified the U.S. on May 18, 1981 that it was unable to reach consensus on organizing a UN peacekeeping force to undertake the missions of the peace treaty.[7] This failure has been attributed to the strong positions taken by "embittered Arab states, the jilted Soviet bloc and pro-Arab states of the Non-Aligned Movement."[8] Additionally, UN Secretary General Kurt Waldheim was reportedly not enthusiastic about establishing the precedent of conducting peacekeeping operations when a final peace treaty was already in place.[9]

At the same time, there was a growing need to identify an organization to supervise the security aspects of the treaty. Between July 1979 when UNEF II was dissolved and May 1981, the SFM had supervised treaty security arrangements. After the UN declined to provide a force and under pressure from the Israelis, who proposed to delay withdrawal until an adequate peacekeeping force could be put in place, the U.S. was forced to implement its least preferred course of action: the establishment of a new, non-UN sponsored peacekeeping organization.[10] Representatives from Egypt and Israel (referred to as the "Parties" in the treaty) and the U.S. gathered to devise the rules and operating procedures for what became known as the Multinational Force and Observers (MFO). This effort culminated in the signing of the Protocol to the Treaty of Peace on August 3, 1981. The Protocol translated the terms of the treaty into executable tasks and responsibilities. Also on that same day, Secretary of State Haig sent a letter to both governments promising that the U.S. would contribute an Infantry battalion, a logistics unit, and civilian observers to the MFO.[11] Significantly, the Protocol

specified that changes to the MFO would be made only by "mutual agreement of the Parties."[12] Perhaps concerned about the ephemeral nature of previous UN missions, Israel resisted efforts to include a mechanism within the Protocol to consider periodic changes to the MFO.[13]

Although preparation time was limited, through a concerted effort on the part of the Parties and the United States, as well as the contributing nations, the MFO was prepared to assume its mission on April 25, 1982 as required. Nations were identified to provide military forces, units were trained and construction of necessary facilities was expedited. [14] For the first time in its history, U.S. troops became the mainstay of a multi-national presence under non-UN auspices. Perhaps there was some comfort for the U.S. to take in the fact that MFO facilities construction was planned based on a requirement to last ten years.[15]

THE MFO TODAY

Unlike recent peace enforcement operations undertaken in countries such as Bosnia, Kosovo, and East Timor, the MFO mission is based on "traditional peacekeeping:" the use of military forces, with the consent of previously warring parties, to maintain cease-fires, truces or other interim agreements. The mission of the MFO is to monitor military activities in Zones A, B, C and D in the Sinai; follow up on requests from either Party requesting additional observations; and using several small patrol craft, ensure freedom of navigation through the Strait of Tiran.[16] See Map 1 for the location of the treaty zones. In addition to its independence from the UN, what distinguished the MFO from other peacekeeping operations at the time is that it was the only such operation constituted and maintained to supervise a finalized peace treaty.[17]

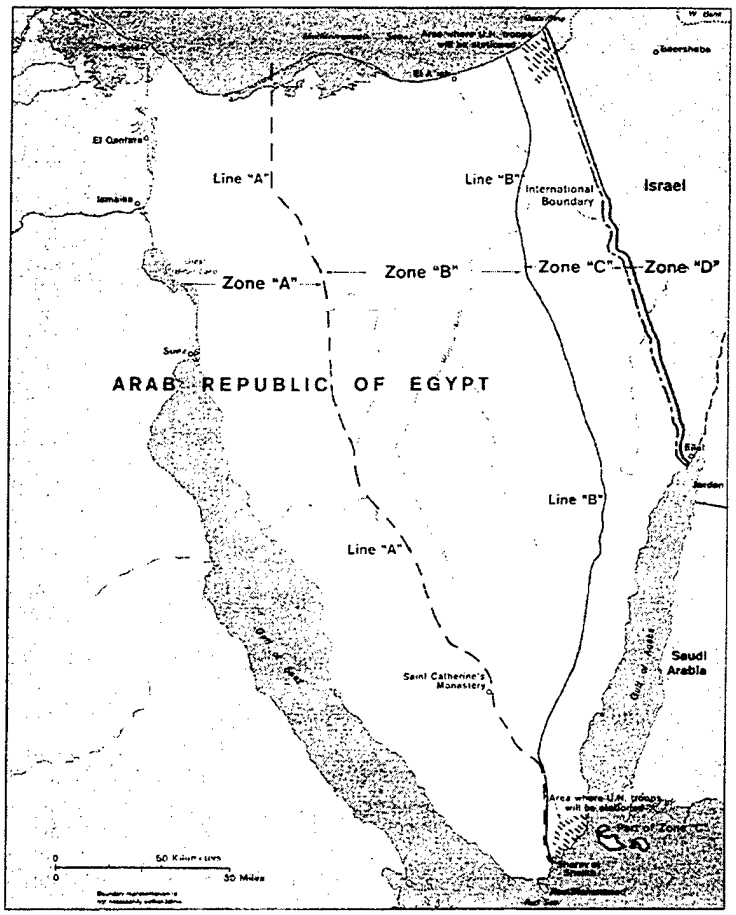

FIGURE 1 - MAP OF TREATY ZONES

MFO headquarters is located in Rome; its Force and Observers are located on the Sinai Peninsula. The MFO Director General, with his staff, directs all activities of the MFO. The Director General maintains contact with the Parties through liaison officers located in Cairo and Tel Aviv. A general officer, located at el Gorah in the northern Sinai, commands the MFO forces, observers and support units. Although ten nations are considered official contributing nations, Norway also provides some staff officers, bringing the number of participating nations to eleven. The organization and major units of the MFO are shown in Chart 1, with U.S. elements highlighted.[18]

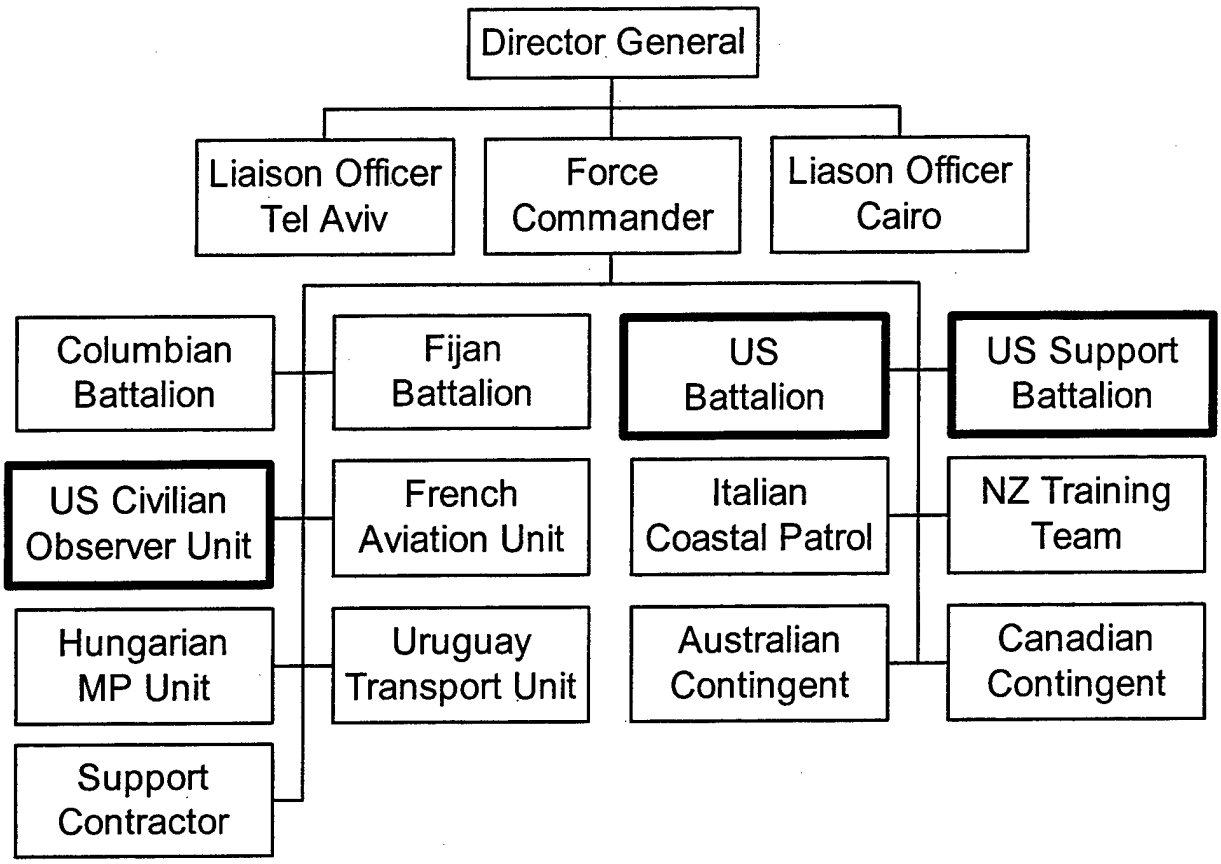

FIGURE 2 - ORGANIZATION OF THE MFO

To operate, the MFO requires three primary types of resources: military equipment, funding, and military manpower. Military equipment needs are modest, and except for periodic replacement are already in place. Examples of equipment that has been provided are coastal patrol boats from Italy and helicopters from the U.S. By agreement, funding responsibilities for the MFO are shared equally by Egypt, Israel and the U.S. Since 1995, the total annual MFO budget has remained approximately $51 million. The MFO has been able to achieve an approximately 30 percent reduction in expenses since 1988 through the use of cost cutting and efficiencies. Similarly, the MFO has reduced manpower requirements from 2,692 in 1984 to 1844 today. Of this number, about 870-885 are from the United States.[19]

The MFO conducts two basic types of operations: observation from predetermined points within Zone C by the three Infantry Battalions and mobile observations and inspections by the Civilian Observer Unit (COU) conducted throughout

Zones A, B, C & D. Zone C, the area of military observation, is approximately 375 km long and 20 km wide, and is manned by the Fiji battalion in the north, the Colombian battalion in the center, and the U.S. battalion in the south.[20] During the negotiations concerning treaty security measures, the U.S. had hoped to rely primarily on observers; but Israel insisted on military forces, presumably seeking added political U.S. commitment.[21] The Civilian Observers Unit (COU), a direct descendent of the SFM, is the long-range asset of the MFO. Accompanied by liaison officers from both Israel and Egypt, COU officers make periodic inspections throughout the Sinai to ensure that the Parties comply with force limitations and other restrictions. They also follow up on challenges raised by either Party.[22] On these and other operations, the MFO is greatly facilitated by the geography and demography of the Sinai. Unlike the challenges faced by the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) for example, there is considerable space with which to separate the former combatants; and the area is generally free of third-party factions seeking to undermine the peace process.[23] Additionally, the MFO was fortunate to have an extremely well defined mission and a tradition of Sinai peacekeeping on which to build. Indeed, as John Mackinley points out, "no other peace force has been proceeded by such a panoply of negotiations and interim forces."[24]

The MFO is internationally recognized as a uniquely successful non-UN peacekeeping organization, and has been studied by numerous experts to determine whether such success can be replicated elsewhere. These studies have concluded that while competent management has played a part in MFO effectiveness, the overall force behind the continuing peace in the Sinai has been political commitment by the Party nations to fully comply with treaty terms. Given similar geographic, political and organizational circumstances experts have concluded that other peace organizations such as the UN can achieve comparable results.[25]

TODAY'S GEOPOLITICAL ENVIRONMENT

Since 1979 the political landscape has radically changed in the Middle East. Almost as the last shot echoed across the 1973 battlefields, Arab nations, led by Egypt, realized that there was no military solution for dealing with Israel.[26] The demise of the Soviet Union further defused the situation by eliminating the possibility for conflict

between superpower client states in the region. Since Camp David, nations such as Egypt and Syria have fought alongside the U.S.-led coalition forces to defeat Iraq in a combined operation that would have been inconceivable a decade earlier. Jordan and Israel concluded a peace treaty in 1994, and Syria and Israel have recently resumed peace negotiations. Coming into office in May 1999 with a campaign pledge to negotiate peace with Syria, Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak seems intent on forging a final peace settlement. Finally, any major issues between Egypt and Israel currently revolve around economic versus security issues.[27] All in all, the relationship between these nations today resembles that of two cautious neighboring states, a normal situation in international relations, common throughout the world.

Similarly, U.S.-Israeli relations have progressed significantly since the 1970's. It was only during the decade 1967 – 1977, that successive U.S. Administrations began to forge what Former U.S. Ambassador to Israel, Samuel W. Lewis termed "rudimentary strategic relationships." Despite this change, the U.S. continued to consider the Arab-Israeli conflict within the larger context of the U.S. – U.S.S.R. competition. Beginning with the Carter Administration, however, the U.S. increasingly entered into more robust security commitments. This approach continued with President Reagan who unequivocally categorized Israel as a "key ally." Today, Israel enjoys unquestioned status in the U.S. as an official, non-NATO ally. To illustrate this point, Lewis writes: "The contrast with the 1970s could not be greater. Despite the unfinished and often contentious business of peacemaking, which dominates the headlines, largely out of the glare of publicity Israel and the United States have consolidated a strategic relationship which is surely an alliance in all but name." [28]

While not as close as those between the U.S. and Israel, relations between Egypt and the U.S. are at an unparalleled high point. The two countries are cooperating closely in facilitating Syrian-Israeli and Palestinian-Israeli negotiations. Moreover, U.S. and Egyptian military forces routinely operate together in combined exercises. While in Egypt in September 1999, Secretary of State Albright highlighted the "strength of our bilateral relationship, our friendship, and our shared commitment to peace." [29]

Both Israel and Egypt obviously value the close relationship that they have carefully built with the U.S. While these nations would obviously act in accordance with their vital interests, it is clear that neither would capriciously jeopardize this relationship.

Another consequence of the end of the Cold War has been the increase in peace operations. Between 1948 and 1988, the UN authorized and supported thirteen peacekeeping missions. Since 1988 however, the UN has mounted thirty-six such missions.[30] This increase has generated some concern among U.S. leaders, particularly within the Department of Defense (DoD), in terms of overcommitment of U.S. military forces.[31]

While both Egypt and Israel officially support the continued maintenance of the MFO in its current configuration, there have been indications over the years that Egypt would like to explore alternatives ranging from outright withdrawal of the MFO to replacement of that organization by a UN observer force.[32] Israel reportedly rejected any such changes, citing security concerns and a belief that the MFO might be called upon to serve in support of a future Syrian – Israeli pact.[33] This unqualified support for the MFO has typified Israeli's official position, which has not visibly wavered since 1982. A major factor, of course, is cost-effective security. Today, Israel has only a minor force presence on the Sinai border; prior to the MFO's inception, Israel maintained two heavy Army divisions on that border. Although not technically a "Party" nation, the U.S. commands considerable influence with both Egypt and Israel, and can bring substantial leverage to bear should it choose.[34]

Within the U.S. government, there is currently a DoD-led movement towards reducing U.S. support to the MFO. Deputy Secretary of Defense John Hamre has publicly indicated that DoD believes changes are appropriate: "we certainly think it (the MFO) can be scaled down. I think we're seeing a fundamental change in the way that Israel and Egypt relate to each other and it doesn't require this beefy U.S. presence."[35] Since the Department of State has the lead for the MFO, any changes in the U.S. position must first be approved in the interagency system. In 1999, several interagency meetings were held without conclusive results.[36]

ASSESSING THE MFO AND U.S. NATIONAL INTERESTS

U.S. national interests represent the best framework to analyze the value of support to the MFO. U.S. foreign policy must act in direct support of U.S. national interests, and to be effective and relevant, this foreign policy must be constantly assessed in light of global developments. It is proper, therefore, to routinely examine the nature of U.S. support to the MFO in order to determine whether that support continues to best serve the national interests.

Three vital U.S. interests are germane in this regard. The first is to field a ready military force capable of winning the nation's wars – an interest that is enshrined in the current U.S. National Security Strategy (NSS). That document also addresses the U.S. vital interests concerning stability in the Mid East and a peace settlement for that region. The United States, President Clinton concludes in the NSS, has "enduring interests in pursuing a just, lasting and comprehensive Middle East peace, ensuring the security and well being of Israel, helping our Arab friends provide for their security, and maintaining the free flow of oil at reasonable prices."[37] A rational assessment of these three interests is the key in determining the appropriate path for future U.S. support of the MFO.

A. DEFENSE SECURITY INTEREST

Surprisingly, a large organization like the U.S. military is affected by missions as relatively small as the MFO. These effects are manifested in an incremental increase in the overall operational tempo (OPTEMPO) and in the ability of the military to train its force. The 870 U.S. military members committed to the MFO mission serve in the logistics battalion, the Infantry battalion and as part of the staff to the MFO. Members of the logistics battalion and MFO staff serve for one year in the MFO, while a new U.S. Infantry battalion rotates to the Sinai every six months.[38]

Missions such as the MFO reduce DoD's ability to deploy ready forces when needed for priority missions by the National Command Authority (NCA). Like the geopolitical environment, the U.S. Army (the sole contributor of U.S. forces) has also undergone considerable change. The Army (active and reserve) is one-third smaller

than the force that existed in 1979, yet as a result of an active global engagement strategy, supports many more overseas missions.[39] The result of this change is an Army with considerably less flexibility and much greater OPTEMPO than the one that deployed Colonel Garrison and the 1-505 in March 1982. Some requirements of the MFO mission are not immediately obvious. For example, to maintain one Infantry battalion in the Sinai in fact involves three Infantry battalions: one in a four to five month training cycle preparing for deployment, the one actually in the Sinai, and one in a four to six month recovery period, retraining from the Sinai rotation. Additional requirements levied upon the parent headquarters in the battalion train-up and recovery missions are another significant facet. Complicating recovery from the Sinai duty is the fact, as many studies have demonstrated, that units retraining from a traditional peacekeeping mission need more time than those returning from a peace enforcement-type mission, due to the considerable difference in orientation and required skills between peacekeeping and warfighting.[40] Apart from the actual unit requirements, the need to maintain over 800 soldiers in the Sinai incrementally increases the pressures on the remainder of the force to support the inelastic missions already confronting the Army.

In addition to the increased OPTEMPO, support to the MFO also effects the Army's ability to train soldiers. There are, of course, some elements of the MFO such as helicopter pilots, truck drivers, and explosive ordnance personnel that receive outstanding individual training during their assignment.[41] For the supporting Infantry battalion however, training is severely diminished. General Maxwell Thurman in testimony before a House committee in 1993 characterized the problem bluntly:

> The troops in the Sinai today—the battalion that's located there—are not conducting battalion-level activities. They're on stationary outposts, where 8 to 12 people are located. They're not doing the kind of duty that you'd want them to do if they were getting ready to go to war...Soldiers must go through an extensive training regime to regain the level of operational proficiency that they held at the outset.[42]

These developments also have national policy implications as well. As a result of experiences in Bosnia and Somalia, the Clinton Administration retreated from the policy of "aggressive multilateralism" in 1994 with the publication of Presidential Decision Directive 25 (PDD-25) *Reforming Multilateral Peace Operations.* U.S. involvement in

peace operations, that document emphasized, must be "selective, and ... peace operations should not be open-ended." Moreover, the duration of peace operations should be "tied to clear objectives and realistic criteria for ending the operations." [43] While it is admittedly difficult to identify these aspects in the recent peace operations undertaken in Bosnia and Kosovo, that omission does not justify neglecting to attempt to apply this policy to an operation such as the MFO. The seventeen-year old MFO mission falls well short of the objectives outlined in the PDD.

In this context, a failure to periodically consider peacekeeping operations, such as the MFO, using the carefully designed criteria of PDD-25, will result in a U.S. military deployed piecemeal throughout the globe, unable to use decisive force when required. The increased operational demands occasioned by such deployments, the Army leadership recently pointed out, "are stretching the fabric of our Army..."[44] It is a truism that with increasing frequency, the world looks to the U.S. to provide the vanguard of forces into hostile and complex environments. These worldwide obligations place a high premium on U.S. forces and suggest their use should be reserved for only those situations requiring clear U.S. leadership and the leverage provided by U.S. technology. When circumstances allow, reducing force commitments to existing missions is one key method of ensuring that ready and trained forces will be available for these higher priority missions. The specter of a possible near-term requirement for another MFO (MFO II?) to be deployed on the Golan Heights in support of a Israeli-Syrian treaty lends additional importance to this review.

B. STABILITY AND SECURITY FOR ISRAEL AND EGYPT

The security and stability of Israel and Egypt remains a vital U.S. interest. The MFO, as presently constituted, however, is no longer necessary to guarantee that interest, given policy decisions engrained at the highest levels in both Party nations. Further, given the strong U.S. security guarantees consistently given to Israel, and to a lesser degree to Egypt, as well as the U.S. prestige involved as the broker of the Camp David accords, it is inconceivable that any future Party nation administration could miscalculate the U.S. response to a treaty violation.

The MFO was created to provide Egypt and Israel with a professional, impartial body to help administer the new peace treaty. This was necessary and proper in 1979 in light of both parties' concerns over territorial security and sovereignty. As described above, however, the world of 2000 is a far different place. Since the establishment of the MFO in 1982, there have been no substantive violations of the peace treaty by either Party.[45] It is possible that the MFO deterred violations during this period; but clearly the peace has been primarily maintained through the determination of both Egypt and Israel to abide by the treaty terms. Peacekeeping experts point to the consent of the concerned parties and their intent to abide by treaty terms as the single most important ingredient to long-term peace.[46] Seventeen years of strict adherence to the treaty provides a firm justification to support the belief that the basic regional geopolitical "calculus" has been fundamentally altered between Egypt and Israel, with the result that armed aggression is no longer considered a viable national tool. The presence of the MFO, while clearly essential during the early years, must be considered an independent factor in the maintenance of this policy by the Parties.

An advocate of the MFO's role as a stabilizing regional force might argue that absent the presence of the MFO to deter or report violations, there might be a return to the hostile conditions between the two states. A worst case scenario would suggest a rogue leader coming to power within one of the Party nations. Or perhaps to satisfy an extremist faction, a leader might consider violating the terms of the treaty.[47] The obvious counter to any such actions, however, would be the knowledge that U.S. reconnaissance assets would almost immediately detect changes in military force dispositions in ample time for strong preemptive action. The Sinai desert with its open expanses, sparse vegetation and generally clear skies is ideally suited for overhead reconnaissance. As the primary sponsor of the Camp David talks, it is extremely unlikely that the United States would allow a treaty violation to go unchallenged and risk severe damage to its prestige.

Some suggest the U.S. presence in the MFO provides a visible symbol of U.S. commitment to Israel's security.[48] In today's world however, the physical presence of some eight hundred soldiers has been completely overshadowed by the unparalleled status of the U.S.–Israeli security relationship. As described earlier, this relationship

has grown since 1977 to the extent that in today's world U.S. Presidents consistently express unqualified military support for Israel in the event her security is threatened.[49] A final factor, which deters treaty violations, is the risk of incalculable damage to the relations that both Israel and Egypt have carefully built with the U.S. over the past twenty years.

Even apart from political realities, examined as an instrument to verify treaty compliance and ensure security, the MFO is no longer the best tool. The distinction between the capabilities of the COU and the military force units is significant. Although the COU numbers less than 30 personnel, by capitalizing on its ability to move throughout the Sinai, it provides the majority of the confidence that the treaty is being observed. Conversely, in order for the Infantry battalions to detect a treaty violation, violators must literally drive within "binocular-range" of the outposts in Zone C. It is an axiom of peacekeeping doctrine that "in cases where peacekeeping is achieving successful control, it may be reduced to an observer group."[50] At a minimum, such a change is warranted at this point. U.S. overhead reconnaissance working in combination with a small mobile force of observers operating throughout the Sinai could provide more reliable and economical reporting of possible treaty violations.

C. COMPREHENSIVE PEACE SETTLEMENT

Altering U.S. support for the MFO at this particular juncture could affect the US goal for a lasting peace in the Middle East. Israel has already achieved agreements with Jordan and Egypt. But full implementation of the 1998 Wye River Accords with the Palestinians is still problematical; and most importantly, the U.S.-brokered negotiations with Syria are still underway. It is widely believed that once agreement is reached with Syria, peace with Lebanon will follow. Significantly, Syria is the last country on Israel's borders with an army capable of engaging Israel. A Clinton Administration official recently characterized the benefits of a Syrian-Israeli treaty as potentially including the preemption of a potential alliance between Syria, Iraq, and Iran, while serving as a basis for a comprehensive peace in the Arab-Israeli conflict, stability on all of Israel's borders, isolation of Iraq, and increasing pressure for moderation on Iran.[51] The obvious

challenge in the Israeli/Syrian negotiations is to provide Israel with adequate security guarantees in exchange for relinquishing control of the Golan Heights.[52] Maintaining the MFO in its current configuration during negotiations supports the goal of a lasting regional peace by publicly demonstrating U.S. commitment to a previously concluded peace treaty and by providing a peacekeeping organization that may be potentially called upon to supervise security measures on the Golan.

Transfer of the Golan Heights to Syria is a contentious, emotional issue for Israel. The Heights dominate northern Israel and were the scene of hard-fought battles in the 1967 and 1973 wars. That it will be difficult for Prime Minister Barak to achieve internal support for a treaty with Syria is underscored by a poll that showed 90 percent of Israeli citizens believe the country should not relinquish the Golan.[53] Given Israel's "constant need for reassurance" concerning its security, adding the variable of changing the MFO structure in the midst of the Syrian negotiations could jeopardize Prime Minister Barak's attempt to forge domestic support for a treaty.[54]

Although the UN has maintained the UN Disengagement Force (UNDOF) on the Golan since 1974, there is widespread speculation that Israel will demand the stationing of "pseudo-MFO" type peacekeeping force as a condition for turning over the Golan.[55] Former Israeli Prime Minister Rabin has stated that he would use the MFO as a model for the Golan, and the Israeli Labor party in general is believed to support this concept.[56] Israel favors the MFO model for two reasons: it provides Israel much greater control as a "managing partner" of the peacekeeping organization than under the diffused supervision of UN peacekeeping, and the MFO is not subject to the vagaries of the UN in securing a renewal of its mandate.[57] Given U.S. enthusiasm concerning the achievement of a Syrian - Israeli peace treaty, it is difficult to envision a U.S. President declining such a condition if it were key to the negotiations.

While the MFO could be shifted and/or expanded to cover the Golan, that would be unfortunate because UNDOF is widely perceived to be a professional and successful peacekeeping organization.[58] Given the expected adherence by Syria and Israel to the treaty terms, UNDOF could be expected to continue to perform capably in a role in which that organization has considerable experience and expertise. A realistic assessment of the situation must, however, consider the nearly inevitable inclusion of

U.S. peacekeepers in a U.S.- brokered treaty. Until the Golan peacekeeping issue is resolved it would be imprudent to enact sweeping change of the MFO.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND SUMMARY

Setting aside the relatively short-term requirement to support ongoing peace negotiations between Syria and Israel, it is clear that support to the MFO in its current configuration no longer best serves U.S. national interests. Maintenance of U.S. forces in the Sinai strains an already overburdened military with a requirement that can be accomplished more effectively by other means. Peacekeeping operations are designed to monitor and facilitate implementation of existing truces or cease-fires and support diplomatic efforts to reach long-term political settlements.[59] The MFO reflected a wise departure from that doctrine. Because of the history of conflict between Arabs and Israelis, and Israeli security concerns, at the time, establishment of the MFO was appropriate to help forge trust. Twenty years later, to the credit of all concerned, the settlement has ultimately proved binding on the Parties. Several options are available to enact the change now appropriate given the global and regional situation: termination of the MFO mission, submission of the MFO mission to the UN for approval as a peacekeeping observer mission under UNTSO, persuasion of the Parties to evolve the MFO into an observer force, or a combination of the above approaches.

A critical analysis indicates that complete dissolution of the MFO should be the ultimate goal. In a mature Egyptian-Israeli relationship the MFO is an anachronism. Dissolution of the MFO would signal to the world community that Israel and Egypt have taken the final step towards complete normalization of relations and that conflict termination, if handled correctly, can lead to conflict resolution. There are, however, legitimate treaty restrictions still binding on both parties that require the supervision of a disinterested party. Until relations between Israel and Egypt progress to the stage where these restrictions are mutually agreed to be either unnecessary or "self-policed," some type of external treaty monitoring mechanism must be maintained.

To fulfill this requirement, it is appropriate to propose that the UN assume the MFO mission and pass the task to UNTSO as an observer requirement. After all, the

UN already has observers in the Sinai, an internationally recognized headquarters, and vast experience with peacekeeping between Israel and its Arab neighbors. This option also contributes to an increased international perception of the UN as the unquestioned leader in peacekeeping operations, which adds to its prestige and strength.[60] Unfortunately UNTSO, at least the headquarters, does not enjoy a high reputation within the Middle East. Israel in particular, probably because of its experiences with UNEF I and UNIFIL, has never favored UN or UNTSO supervision of the Sinai security arrangements and is likely to veto any such suggestion.[61] Israeli reluctance however, should not dissuade U.S. policy makers from exploring this avenue. With some amount of agreed-upon reform within UNTSO, Israel might be persuaded to adopt this course of action.

While transfer to the UN is pursued, U.S. efforts to influence the Parties to change the MFO structure to reflect political realities and efficiencies should commence on a parallel track. The U.S. should propose that the military forces, in particular the Infantry battalions, should be returned to the providing countries and that all the MFO support structure, except for what is required to support a slightly larger COU, should be disestablished. The COU should be moderately expanded and diversified to include observers from countries other than the U.S. The U.S. should agree to place a small cell within the MFO force headquarters capable of receiving U.S. national intelligence, including imagery. When appropriate, this cell could suggest to the Force Commander that COU inspectors be dispatched to certain locations to investigate suspected treaty infractions, without violating foreign disclosure requirements.

The "fat lady," in other words, is ready to sing in the MFO performance. Nevertheless, the interaction of the three vital U.S. interests involved with the MFO suggests that the aria should be postponed until current Israeli-Syrian negotiations play out. Substantive changes should be held in abeyance for a period of one year, which should be sufficient to determine whether a treaty is possible. As these Syrian-Israeli talks progress, the U.S. would be well advised to apply the lessons learned from the MFO experience. Given the wise requirements of PDD-25, the U.S. should insist on three key points if the presence of U.S. peacekeepers on the Golan is required to complete the settlement. The first is a "quid pro quo"-- in exchange for U.S.

peacekeepers on the Golan, the MFO in the Sinai must be severely reduced or transferred to the UN as an observer requirement. Secondly, the treaty protocol must include a mechanism for periodic review of Golan peacekeeping requirements, with the U.S. as a full partner in that evaluation. Thirdly, because of the impact on the U.S. military, a requirement to provide military "observers" versus "forces" should be pursued, but is of lesser importance than the previous two conditions. These conditions have the added benefit of signaling to the world that the peacekeeping missions, especially those that are U.S.-led, are not permanent and that nations should be prepared to operate in their eventual absence.

Finally, it is crucial to remember that the concerns of both Egypt and Israel must be fully addressed in deciding what changes should take place in the Sinai and for the MFO, since their continued support of peace is fundamental to the achievement of U.S. vital national interests in the region.

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ENDNOTES

[1] Angus Deming, "Waiting for the Zero Hour," Newsweek, 29 March 1982, 33. Washington Post Foreign Service, "U.S. Troops Assigned to Multinational Peacekeeping Force Take Position in Sinai," Washington Post, 18 March 1982, sec A, p 18.

[2] Joshua Sinai, "United Nations and Non-United Nations' Peacekeeping in the Arab-Israeli Sector: Five Scenarios," Middle East Journal, Volume 49, No. 4, (Autumn 1995): 633. Mala Tabory, The Multinational Force and Observers in the Sinai (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1986), 115. Tabory states that Egypt desires that UNTSO remain in the Sinai in the hope that the peacekeeping mission can be eventually transferred to the UN.

[3] Nathan A. Pelcovits, Peacekeeping on Arab-Israeli Fronts (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1984), 5.

[4] Tabory, 3-7 and 36.

[5] John Mackinlay, An Assessment of Peacekeeping Operations at the Arab-Israeli Interface (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989), 177-180.

[6] William Quandt reports that there were other problems also resolved the day the treaty was signed, such as oil arrangements and security guarantees to Israel, but that "the problems of the draftsman and mapmakers would not stand in the way of the signing ceremony on March 26, 1979. "William B. Quandt, Camp David, Peacemaking and Politics (Washington DC: The Brookings Institution, 1986), 312-313, and also Tabory, 3.

[7] Rodney Goutmann, Bondi in the Sinai (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1996), 30.

[8] Ibid., 19.

[9] Secretary General Waldheim argued that UN peacekeeping was appropriate to maintain a cease-fire while the parties to a dispute worked out a political solution, but that it was inappropriate in the cases where a formal peace treaty had already effectively ended the conflict. Sinai, 635.

[10] Tabory, 6-7.

[11] Multinational Force and Observers, Servants of Peace: Peacekeeping in Progress 1999 Annual Report (Rome, Italy: Multinational Force and Observers, 1999), 8-9 & 60-61.

[12] Tabory, 107.

[13] Mr. Robert Krantz, Officer-in-Charge, Office of Multinational Force and Observers Affairs, Peace Process and Regional Affairs, Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, U.S. Department of State, interview by author, 1 December 1999, Washington DC.

[14] Tabory, 15.

[15] Pelcovits, 79.

[16] Multinational Force and Observers, 13.

[17] Robert B. Houghton and Frank G. Trinka, Multinational Peacekeeping in the Middle East (Washington DC: Foreign Service Institute, 1984), 57.

[18] Multinational Force and Observers, 18-24.

[19] Ibid., 27-29. Numbers vary.

[20] Mackinlay, 177, 183, and 184-186.

[21] Tabory, 3.

[22] Multinational Force and Observers, 20.

[23] Houghton and Trinka, 21-26.

[24] Mackinlay, 160.

[25] Frank Gregory, The Multinational Force—Aid or Obstacle to Conflict Resolution? (London: Institute for the Study of Conflict, 1984), 3. See also Houghton and Trinka, 56 & 94. and Pelcovits, 70.

[26] Moshe Ma'oz, "From Conflict to Peace? Israel's Relations with Syria and the Palestinians," Middle East Journal, Volume 53, No 3, (Summer 1999): 401.

[27] In this regard, there has been some disappointment, primarily on the part of Egypt, that a more robust economic relationship has not developed between the two countries. Stephen J. Glain, "Israel's Neighbors Miss Economic Bounce—Peace Treaties Were Aimed Mainly at Security Items, Not Investment or Trade," Wall Street Journal, 27 July 1999, sec A, p. 19.

[28] Former U.S. Ambassador to Israel, Samuel W. Lewis, argues that "during the Carter Administration in the late 1970s, the overall theme then was that Israel was seen as anything *but* a strategic asset for the United States. Rather, Israel was regarded in the Pentagon and much of the rest of the U.S. government as a complicating factor for overall U.S. regional strategy directed towards thwarting Soviet influence...." Samuel W. Lewis, "The United States and Israel: Evolution of an Unwritten Alliance," Middle East Journal, Volume 53, No 3 (Summer 1999): 375. A good example of today's close relationship can perhaps best be seen in the area of ballistic missile warning—Israel today is provided nearly direct missile launch reporting from U.S. satellites. Lewis, 367-370.

[29] Secretary of State Madeleine K. Albright and Egyptian Foreign Minister Amre Moussa, "Press Conference," 2 September 1999, available from <http://www.state.gov/www/statements/1999/990902.html>; Internet; Accessed 17 January 2000.

[30] Robert L. McClure and Morton Orlov II, "Is the UN Peacekeeping Role in Eclipse?" Parameters Volume 29, No. 3 (Autumn 1999): 96.

[31] Deputy Secretary of Defense John Hamre, in response to the question: "Are we stretched too thin for the force structure we have?" responded, "My personal view is that we are about as far as we can go...." John Hamre, "Military Readiness Despite Kosovo War, Top Defense Official Says Pentagon Can Handle Another Contingency," interview by Morton Kondracke. Roll Call, 17 May 1999, 3. Also Louis Caldera and Dennis J. Reimer, A Statement on the Posture of the United States Army Fiscal Year 2000, Posture Statement provided to the 106th Cong., 1st sess. (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of the Army, 1999), 73.

[32] Pelcovits, 73 and also Tabory, 115.

[33] Sharone Parnes, "Egypt Seeks Sinai Force Withdrawal or Cutback," Defense News, 9-15 January 1995, p. 10.

[34] Issues concerning the MFO are discussed annually at a MFO Trilateral Conference in Rome. Krantz interview, 1 December 1999.

[35] Hamre, 3.

[36] Krantz interview, 1 December 1999.

[37] William J. Clinton, A National Security Strategy for a New Century (Washington, D.C.: The White House, October 1998), 5 and 51.

[38] Colonel Ronnie Foxx, "Multinational Force and Observers Briefing," XVIII Airborne Corps G-3 MFO Division, October 1999.

[39] Caldera and Reimer, 82.

[40] Jenny Solon, "The Effects of Peace Operations on Unit Readiness," (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Center for Army Lessons Learned, 8 June 1998) 3, Available from <http://call.army.mil/CALL/spc_sdy/unitrdy/execsumm.htm> Accessed 19 November 1999. See also Charles C. Moskos, Peace Soldiers: The Sociology of a United Nations Military Force, (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1996), who analyzes the effect that the development of the constabulary ethic among peacekeeping forces has on the warfighting ethic.

[41] Sergeant First Class Larry Lane, ""Flying for the Multinational Force and Observers," Soldiers, April 1997, 14 and Steve Harding, "Soldiers in the Sinai," Soldiers, August 1998, 48.

[42] John G. Roos, "The Perils of Peacekeeping, Tallying the Costs in Blood, Coin, Prestige and Readiness," International Peacekeeping, Volume 1, No. 3, (Autumn 1994):17. Although the MFO has attempted to increase the amount of training opportunities by allowing for example, platoon live fire exercises, training still suffers. At the midway point during a Sinai rotation, 41 percent of the members of the U.S. Sinai Infantry battalion said they were bored, a sign that they were not being challenged by the mission or training David R. Segal and Ronald B. Tiggle, "Attitudes of Citizen Soldiers Toward Military Missions in the Post-Cold War World," Armed Forces and Society, Volume 23, Number 3, (Spring 1997): 383.

[43] William J. Clinton, "The Clinton Administration's Policy on Reforming Multilateral Peace Operations," (Washington, D.C.: The White House, May 1994), 59-61. See also Ivo H. Dalder, "Knowing When to Say No: The Development of US Policy for Peacekeeping," in UN Peacekeeping, American Policy, and the Uncivil Wars of the 1990s, William J. Durch, ed. (New York: Henry L. Stimson Center, 1996) 35-67 for a discussion of the development of PDD-25.

[44] Caldera and Reimer, 73.

[45] Krantz interview, 1 December 1999.

[46] Houghton and Trinka, 56; Pelcovits, 14; and Gregory, 3.

[47] Krantz interview, 1 December 1999.

[48] Tabory, 118.

[49] William J. Clinton, "Joint Statement by President Clinton and Prime Minister Ehud Barak," 19 July 1999, available from <http://www.state.gov/www.regions/nea/990719>; Internet; Accessed 23 November 1999. In this conference, President Clinton reiterated the steadfast commitment of the U.S. to Israel's security.

[50] James J. Allen, Peacekeeping: Outspoken Observations by a Field Officer, (Westport, CT: Praeger Series in War Studies, 1996), 136.

[51] Martin Indyk, Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs, "I Must Be Optimistic About Arab-Israeli Relations," interview by Daniel Pipes and Patrick Clawson, Middle East Quarterly, March 1999, 72.

[52] David Makovsky, "What Price Peace? The Key is the Golan Heights, but Israel and Syria Still Have a Lot of Dickering to Do," U.S. News and World Report, 23 August 1999, 28.

[53] Ma'oz, 414.

[54] Lewis, 376. Lewis describes Israel's constant need for reassurance concerning its security.

[55] Brent Scowcroft, "A U.S. Role on the Golan Heights?" New York Times, 6 January 2000, sec A, p 25.

[56] Parnes, 10.

[57] Sinai, 641

[58] Mackinlay, 5 and 149. See also Sinai, 642, who states "UNDOF is universally considered one of the UN's most effective peace-keeping operations."

[59] On the criteria for traditional peacekeeping developed as a result of the experience of the Second United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF II) see UN Document S/11052/Rev, 27 October 1973; Brian Urquhart, "Beyond the Sherriffs' Posse," Survival 36 (May/June 1990), 198; and Brian Urquhart, A Life in Peace and War (New York: Harper and Row, 1987), 241-242.

[60] See Houghton and Trinka, 94, who concluded that "for the maintenance of prestige and strength of the UN, it is in the interest of the international community to continue to place primary reliance on the UN for peacekeeping operations in the world's trouble spots."

[61] Tabory, 3. See also Allen, xvi & 43. Allen shares Israel's perception of UNTSO and the UN: "UNTSO headquarters showed itself to be slow-moving, inflexible, hostile to constructive suggestions, and excessively bureaucratic." In referring to UN peacekeeping in general, Allen suggests "there can never be enough criticism of the UN bureaucracy," and that, "to save the UN peacekeeping bureaucracy, it must be first destroyed."

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