Peacekeeping chronicle of events
June 1996 - December 1996

20 June
European governments were reluctant to accept the idea that the U.S. would press for a quick consensus to block Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali from a second term at the UN. In contrast to U.S. disapproval of him, most other Western governments have been comfortable with Mr. Boutros Ghali's performance. His desire not to resort to stronger military force in Bosnia - the major complaint about him in the U.S. - was in line with the wishes of Britain and France, the countries with the largest peacekeeping contingents on the ground at the time. (IHT, 21 June)

7 July
Stung by charges of waste and mismanagement, from Congress and the Clinton Administration, UN officials are fighting back against criticisms that say they are politically motivated and based on misinformation or no information at all. Joseph Connor, who was recruited in 1994 by Secretary of State Warren Christopher to join the UN as Under-Secretary-General for administration, took exception last week to Washington's assertion that Boutros-Ghali, the Secretary-General, was holding up reform. 'Concrete results in reform are already visible, and more are to come,' Mr. Connor told reporters after returning from the Group of Seven meeting in Lyon. Listing steps already taken, Mr. Connor said the core staff of the UN Secretariat had been cut to 9000 from 10,000, in the last year. A major factor in the financial problems is that the U.S. is $1.5 billion in arrears on dues. Peacekeeping officials say that when Washington provides equipment to UN forces, it demands immediate payment, forcing other nations - among them Britain, France and a number of poor countries who send troops - to wait for reimbursement. (NYT, 7 July, p.49)

19 July
A mobile military headquarters capable of fielding command within hours of Security Council action on any crisis is likely to be established at the UN soon, officials said. A group of 24 countries formally proposed the move to Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali on Thursday. The headquarters, to be part of the UN peacekeeping department, would be staffed by about 21 military officers and civilian experts in relief and human rights missions. Their services would be donated to the organization by their respective countries. Headquarters teams would aim to set up rudimentary missions in a matter of days and then turn over command to peacekeeping forces once they arrived. The U.S. supports the proposal, but is not part of the 24-country group that would bear the costs of implementing it. In an interview, the Secretary-General welcomed the proposal as fostering a 'culture of prevention.' The existence of a rapid-reaction headquarters with mobile teams could also have a restraining effect on combatants, he said. 'Even if it will not be used, it is a kind of dissuasion. The member states know now that even if a resolution is taken tomorrow, it will have to be five months before the troops will be on the ground, and meanwhile they can continue or even accelerate their confrontation.' Mr. Boutros-Ghali, who is expected to approve the establishment of the headquarters soon, said he was concerned about the reluctance of Security Council members to act quickly and to authorize large enough forces for the tasks they would be expected to fulfill. Being able to field a quick command team only partially meets the need, Mr. Boutros-Ghali said. Mobilizing the political will of member nations to quickly send peacekeepers in a situation is also necessary. 'If the political will is there, then the protagonists know something can be done in one week,' he said. 'These rapid-deployment forces will give credibility to the political decision.' The countries that have proposed the mobile command center are Argentina, Australia, Bangladesh, Canada, Chile, Nicaragua, Egypt, Finland, Indonesia, Ireland, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Malaysia, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Norway, Poland, Senegal, South Korea, Sweden, Ukraine and Zambia. (NYT, 21 July, p.9)

25 July
A failure by the U.S. to pay the UN a promised $ 80 million in back dues means that the organization will run out of money this month the UN's chief financial officer, Joseph E. Connor, said. To keep its normal activities going through December, the UN will have to borrow money to cover the shortfall from the peacekeeping account. Therefore it must postpone reimbursing countries that have contributed troops to peacekeeping operations. (IHT, 26 July)

15 August
The U.S. repeated their call today for an international agreement to ban the use, stockpiling and production of land mines and said it would spend $50 million next year to help clear the devices from Bosnia and other former war zones. Land mines pose the greatest physical danger to peacekeepers and hinder peace agreements by blocking the movement of people and resources, the U.S. Deputy representative to the UN, Ambassador Karl Inderfurth, said. In Bosnia, as many as three million mines were laid during the nearly four-year conflict and about 20 UN peacekeepers have been killed by land mines since 1992. The NATO peacekeeping force, which replaced the UN in Bosnia last year, had suffered 55 casualties in land-mine accidents, including ten deaths. The Clinton Administration decided last May against banning American use of land mines even though it has called for a permanent world-wide ban. The U.S. military sees land mines as an important defensive weapon. (NYT, 16 Aug., p.11)

16 September
In an interview UN General-Secretary Boutros Boutros-Ghali asserted that the UN failed in Bosnia because it was asked to defend safe heavens without the 34,000-strong force that he requested. The force numbered just over 7000. Besides criticised it that it took the international community two years to get to this number and the soldiers came with very light armaments. He suggested many governments have taken their eye off world affairs. He acknowledged, however, that the member states were simultaneously battering the UN and its credibility by repeatedly using it as a scapegoat, when international peace efforts go awry. Mr. Boutros-Ghali rejected accusations that he has not been strong enough in standing up for the UN when it has been given jobs beyond its capability by the Security Council. Once a decision is taken he has to carry it out. He cited the establishment of peace in Salvador and Mozambique as his successes. (IHT, 17 Sep, p.9)

24 September
In a speech to the UN General Assembly Russian foreign minister Yevgeny Primakov deplored tendencies in the UN to ignore peaceful means of settling disputes and resorting to a desire to apply sanctions and other coercive measures. The UN should take such measures only in exceptional cases after all other avenues have been fully exhausted. He did not mention the Clinton administration's policy explicit. (WP, 25 Sep., p. A28)

27 September
U.S. President Clinton has approved an ambitious plan to organize, train, equip and help deploy an all-African military force of 10,000 troops to intervene in that continent's recurrent crises, senior administration officials said. The African Crisis Response Force, or ACRF, would be sent to countries where insurrection, civil war or campaigns of ethnic or mass civilian casualties. The ACRF would not intervene in the fighting but would establish and protect safe areas where civilians could gather and receive humanitarian assistance. It would cost about $25 million to set up the force next year and about $40 million if the troops had to be deployed, officials estimated. The U.S. is prepared to pick up half the cost, officials said, and is counting on European allies to come up with the rest, in cash or in equipment and training. The U.S. also is preparing to airlift the troops on a deployment, officials said. The force will be created only if the U.S. can get necessary support from African and European countries. This week, Assistant Secretary of State George Moose is leading a team through Africa, soliciting troop commitments from Zimbabwe, Botswana, Ethiopia, Uganda, Zambia, Kenya, Mozambique and Senegal, officials said. Some African countries had expressed strong interest. Administration teams also visited several European capitals last week to present the plan and seek commitments to help fund or otherwise support the force. Officials were briefing the conversations with the Europeans said there were some 'favourable initial responses.' However, a Republican congressional staff member who has been briefed by administration officials said the Europeans have no interest and added the Republicans are strongly opposed. The intervention plan was developed the past few months as it became clear UN Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali would not succeed in his quest to organize a standby force for the central African country of Burundi under UN auspices, officials said. Driving the planning was administration fear that a rising tide of violence in Burundi would erupt into slaughter on a scale similar to that in neighbouring Rwanda two years ago and the lack of any international plan to stave off mass civilian casualties. Neither the U.S. nor any European country is willing to commit its troops to get involved in African conflicts, officials said, so the fallback plan is to enable Africans to do the job. In the past, African states would have rejected such a plan out of hand because it would violate the principle of the Organization of African Unity that no member would intervene in the internal affairs of another. But African leaders said that principle is no longer inviolable, as demonstrated by de-
ployment of a multinational African force in Liberia in 1990 and the joint decision of several countries to impose economic sanctions on Burundi after the coup. Even so, one official said, some African states have expressed reservations about the plan, either because they interpret it as abandonment by the U.S. and Europe or because they fear the crisis force would be a ‘stalking horse for an outside power.’ Officials acknowledged there is a long list of questions, including the communication of the different languages speaking troops, a possible refusal by a neighbouring country to be used as a staging site or the resistance by the government of the country where the crisis occurs. (WP, 28 Sep., p. A01)

4 October
Canada’s Minister of Defence, David Collenette, resigned, a day after an army official testified that top military officials had altered documents to cover up responsibility for the beating death of a Somali teenager at the hands of Canadian peacekeeping troops in 1993. He was replaced by the Human Resources Minister, Doug Young, and will keep his Parliament seat for the governing Liberal party. Members of Canada’s elite Airborne Regiment were sent to Somalia in 1992 as part of a UN mission. Photographs later showed some of the soldiers torturing the 16-year-old Somali. (NYT, 5 Oct., p. 2; NRC, 5 Oct., p. 1)

5 October
The U.S. intended to pay more than $660 million to the UN in the coming months, bringing its 1996 dues up to date and making a dent in its debt for peacekeeping ventures, American officials said. With the UN nearly bankrupt because of the $1.6 billion U.S. debt, representatives of nearly every country speaking in the General Assembly, especially wealthy allies that foot most of the UN bills, recently criticised the U.S. as a deadbeat for the last two years. President Clinton signed on the 30th of September an omnibus spending bill that provides funds for the UN and other international organisations. The bill included $329 million for the UN regular budget and $282.4 million for current peacekeeping operations and $50 million more for peacekeeping arrears. (NYT, 5 Oct., p. 5)

8 October
It was more than three years ago that trigger-happy members of the Canadian Airborne Regiment, based in northern Somalia as part of a UN peacekeeping mission, shot and killed one Somali looter and tortured another to death. But the reverberations of those shots were still shaking up the government of Prime Minister Jean Chretien, claiming the head of the Canadian Armed Forces chief of staff, General Jean Boyle, former senior air force, centre pilot, was relieved of his command, the second chief of staff whose military career has been terminated by the Somalia scandal. Six soldiers, including two officers who had been charged and convicted for their varying degrees of responsibility for the torture and death of a Somali terrorist while in custody. (Ind, 10 Oct., p. 17; NRC, 9 Oct., p. 4)

10 November
A four-nation European force, Eurofor, was unveiled in Florence. Eurofor was designed to step into crises in the Mediterranean area. The force will be able to dispatch up to 10,000 troops from Italy, France, Spain and Portugal to undertake humanitarian and peacekeeping missions in the Mediterranean region. There is also to be a new joint naval force called Euromarfor, led by a French aircraft carrier. Both forces will be at the disposal of NATO and the UN as well as the Western European Union. (TL, 13 Nov.)

B. Operations

Angola/UNAVEM III

11 October

15 October
The UN special envoy to Angola, Alainou Blandin Beye, held three hours of talks with Savimbi, Angola’s opposition UNITA leader, at his base in Bailundo. Beye said, Savimbi agreed to send a timetable before the end of next week for executing all the remaining steps, which would be completed by Nov. 15. He said Savimbi had reaffirmed his commitment to peace. (WP, 17 Oct., p. A26)

17 October
Savimbi, criticised by the Security Council for delaying a peace plan to end two decades of civil war, told the UN he will complete remaining steps in the pact within a month. The Security Council had threatened to implement sanctions against UNITA after November 20 if it failed to meet its obligations under the pact signed with the government two years ago. (WP, 17 Oct., p. A26)

16 October
Mr. Savimbi, the long-time enemy of the government of President Jose Eduardo dos Santos, declined an invitation to meet Secretary of State Warren Christopher. Thus, Mr. Christopher left behind his assistant secretary for African affairs, George Moore, to track down Mr. Savimbi and tell him that he had delayed long enough in fulfilling the terms of a two-year-old peace agreement, designed to reconcile Mr. Savimbi’s UNITA rebel movement with the government. In his public remarks, Mr. Christopher said the Dos Santos government also lagged on some of its commitments, such as the confining to quarters of a feared paramilitary force known as the Rapid Intervention Police. They said UNITA had delayed designating which of its fighters were to be integrated into the national army, as required by the agreement, and has refused to take the seats in Parliament and posts in the government granted to it under the Lusaka accord - including a vice presidency for Mr. Savimbi. This all appeared to be an effort to open the agreement to further modifications. There was not much time for protracted negotiations, U.S. officials said, because the mandate of the UN peacekeeping force expires in February, and the U.S. is reluctant to extend it. The UN mission costs $1 million a day, with a quarter of that amount charged to the U.S.. “Our money and our patience are both running out,” a U.S. official said. (IHT, 16 Oct.)

Burundi

25 June
African heads of state met in Tanzania to discuss Burundi’s deteriorating security situation. Pressure for foreign intervention has been mounting as the fighting intensifies between rebels of the Hutu majority and the military which is dominated by the Tutsi minority. Among those due to attend the talks in Arusha are the presidents of Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Ethiopia, Rwanda and Burundi. Zairean President Mobutu Sese Seko, whose involvement is seen as crucial to a negotiated solution, has been represented by his deputy prime minister and foreign minister. The meeting had been attended by the head of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), Salim Ahmed Salim, and former Tanzanian president Julius Nyerere, who is mediating in ongoing peace talks. The leaders will be reviewing diplomatic efforts to stem the violence in Burundi. The U.S., in particular, has been intensifying efforts to halt what the State Department has called ‘acts of genocide against ethnic groups’ in Burundi. The UN Security Council has been considering contingency plans if such a conflagration were to ensue. The plans demand the provision of a multi-national intervention force and the establishment of ‘safe zones’ for refugees in neighbouring countries. The OAU has agreed to intervention if the move has UN support. The UN Secretary-General, Boutros Boutros, has issued repeated calls for a ‘multinational force’ rather than a UN-commanded mission. (Ind, 25 June, p. 8)

29 June
Uganda and Tanzania are poised to send troops to prevent continued ethnic violence in Burundi, and will meet the defection ministers of other countries in the region to discuss details of the mission. The plan, which has the backing of Western powers and the UN, is certain to be resisted by Hutu and Tutsi extremists. The force of Tanzanian and Ugandan troops, supported by Kenyan police, could be deployed rapidly to stop ethnic bloodshed in Burundi developing into genocide or mass slaughter, diplomatic sources said. The move came after a summit of regional leaders, who this week expressed determination to ensure that the genocide which engulfed Rwanda in 1994, when a million Tutsis were slaughtered, does not happen again. No timescale has been set for the deployment of the African peace enforcement contingent. Diplomats said it could be swiftly ordered to Burundi if Tutsi and Hutu tribesmen failed to end a cycle of slaughter in which an average of 100 people are dying daily. (TL, 29 June)

2 July
African military intervention to end bloodshed between Hutus and Tutsis in Burundi came a step closer after regional defence ministers met to draw up operational details for such a mission. Edgar Majojo, the Tanzanian Defence Minister, said after the talks that Burundi, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda and Ethiopia had agreed to set up an intervention force capable of guaranteeing security in Burundi and providing the right atmosphere for former Tanzanian President Julius Nyerere’s peace efforts. Diplomats said that the U.S. and Belgium had offered to pay for a large part of the all-African intervention force as well as to help with the logistics. But no date has been set for its deployment, since Tutsi and Hutu...