

UN chief calls for creation of UN rapid deployment force

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UNITED NATIONS, Jan 5 (AFP) - Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali called Thursday for the creation of a UN rapid deployment force and proposed a series of measures to address failings attributed to the world body.

In a supplement to his Agenda for Peace, published to mark the 50th anniversary of the United Nations this year, Boutros-Ghali noted that the availability of troops and equipment has "palpably declined."

Arrangements for standby forces - troop commitment from member countries - have provided no guarantee that forces will be provided for a specific operation, he said. This was illustrated during the crisis in Rwanda last year, he noted.

As a result, the secretary general said there is a need for a troop contingent to be placed under UN command for rapid deployment in a crisis.

"In these circumstances the

United Nations needs to give serious thought to the idea of a rapid reaction force," Boutros-Ghali said in his report.

The document, which was to be presented Thursday to the Security Council, appeared to be an accounting of UN activities since the publication of the Boutros-Ghali's Agenda for Peace in June 1992.

"It is now opportune to assess the United Nations' experience since then, to learn the lessons of its successes and failures, and to take the necessary decisions and corrective measures," he said.

Boutros-Ghali, 72, has been criticized in recent months, particularly in the United States, for what is perceived as the UN's failure to end the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Addressing the difficulties of peacekeeping operations, Boutros-Ghali recalled that it requires the consent of the parties to a conflict.

"Nothing is more dangerous for a peacekeeping operation than to require it to use force when its existing composition, armament, logistic support and deployment deny it the capacity to do so," he said.

"It is therefore important to avoid mandating enforcement tasks to a peacekeeping mission."

The secretary general also stressed that "unity of command is an important principle." Alluding to Somalia, he wrote that governments who provide troops should not give direct orders to their contingents on operational matters.

Noting that often countries provide troops with no equipment or training, Boutros-Ghali proposed establishing a stock of reserve materials as well as partnerships between governments in need of equipment and those willing to provide it.

He said that the use of force to impose peace "is beyond the capacity of the United Nations except on a very limited scale.

"It would be folly to attempt to alter this reality at the present time," he wrote.

He also emphasized that there were the limits to military action by member states acting under a Security Council mandate, such as the French intervention in Rwanda or the US action in Haiti.

The UN chief warned that such mandates could have a negative impact on the stature and credibility of the United Nations, and there also was a danger that the member states involved could claim approval for actions not envisaged by the Security Council.

At a time when conflicts increasingly are occurring between armies and irregular forces within states, Boutros-Ghali expressed his preference for preventive diplomacy and proposed that budget contingencies be made to support it.

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