

## INTERNATIONAL PEACE OPERATIONS: THE AUSTRIAN EXPERIENCES

### MEDNARODNE MIROVNE OPERACIJE – AVSTRIJSKE IZKUŠNJE

Pregledni znanstveni članek

**Povzetek** Slika nam v spomin priključuje puščavsko skupino za globinsko delovanje (Long Range Desert Group) iz druge svetovne vojne: kolona puščavsko maskiranih motornih vozil, težko natovortjenih in oboroženih, ki se premikajo po pesku. Toda to ni Zahodna puščava leta 1942, to je vzhodni Čad leta 2009, vozila pa pripadajo avstrijskemu kontingentu evropskih sil (Eufor), ki je bil na to območje nameščen, da bi izboljšal varnost begunskih taborišč v regiji. Mirovne operacije in sodelovanje Avstrije v njih so se od časa, ko je bil leta 1960 na misijo OZN v Kongo poslan prvi avstrijski kontingent, precej izboljšale. Namen tega članka je predstaviti pregled sodelovanja Avstrije v mirovnih operacijah<sup>1</sup>.

**Ključne besede** *Ohranjanje miru, Avstrija, Združeni narodi, OVSE, Nato, EU.*

**Abstract** The image recalls the Long Range Desert Group of the Second World War: a column of desert-camouflaged Jeeps, heavily loaded and armed, making their way through the sand. But this is not the Western Desert in 1942; it is eastern Chad in 2009, and the vehicles belong to the Austrian contingent of the European Force (EUFOR), deployed there in order to improve the security of refugee camps in the region. Peacekeeping operations, and Austrian participation therein, have indeed come a long way from the days the first Austrian contingent went out on a UN mission in the Congo in 1960. This paper intends to present an overview of Austria's involvement in peace operations since then.<sup>2</sup>

**Key words** *Peacekeeping, Austria, United Nations, OSCE, NATO, EU.*

<sup>1</sup> V tem članku lahko predstavimo samo pregled. Obsežnejše poročilo je avtor objavil leta 2005 (besedilo je v nemškem in angleškem jeziku): *Going International – in the Service of Peace: Das österreichische Bundesheer und die österreichische Teilnahme an Friedensoperationen seit 1960* (Graz: Vehling, 2005).

<sup>2</sup> *By necessity, this paper can only present an overview. A more extensive account was published by this author in 2005 (text in German and English): Going International – in the Service of Peace: Das österreichische Bundesheer und die österreichische Teilnahme an Friedensoperationen seit 1960* (Graz: Vehling, 2005).

## 1 AUSTRIA AND THE UNITED NATIONS

Austria participated in a UN mission for the first time in 1960, contributing a field hospital to the UN Operation in the (former Belgian) Congo (now the Democratic Republic of Congo). This was a continuation of Austria's foreign policy, practiced since regaining her sovereignty in 1955, of participating as actively as possible in international organisations. This policy was mainly shaped by Bruno Kreisky (as deputy and then minister of foreign affairs from 1953 to 1966, and as chancellor from 1970 to 1983), who perceived active participation in the international arena as the best foreign policy option for a small country, especially in an exposed strategic position like Austria, right at the "Iron Curtain". In fact, Austria, having sworn in the spring of 1955 to adopt "neutrality based on the Swiss model" as a precondition to the State Treaty of that year, already deviated from that model before Christmas by joining the United Nations Organization. In 1957, Austria achieved remarkable success when the new International Atomic Energy Agency accepted Austria's invitation to locate its headquarters in Vienna. This was the first step toward establishing Vienna as the "third UN city" along with New York and Geneva. In 1961 and 1963, UN conferences dealing with diplomatic and consular relations were held in Vienna, followed in 1968 and 1969 by UN conferences on space exploration, road transport and treaty law. In 1966, the new United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) also opened its headquarters in Vienna. The Vienna International Centre was handed over to the UN in 1979 with exterritorial status and now houses both the IAEA and UNIDO as well as other UN organisations. The VIC is a visible symbol of Austria's active participation in the UN.

The UN Operation in the Congo in 1960 provided Austria with a further opportunity to gain credibility within the United Nations. This was especially important in the summer of 1960. After Italy had rejected Austria's right to interfere in the "internal Italian" issue of the rights of the German-speaking population in South Tyrol, Foreign Minister Kreisky wanted to "internationalise" the issue by bringing the matter before the General Assembly in the autumn of 1960. The ensuing negotiations carried out at the behest of the UN eventually became the basis for the "package" solution for South Tyrol.<sup>3</sup>

## 2 THE AUSTRIAN MEDICAL CONTINGENT IN THE CONGO, 1960–63

The question of Austrian participation in the Congo operation first arose at the end of July in discussions between Austrian diplomats and the Secretariat in New York. In August, the UN formally requested that Austria provide a field post office, a hygiene team and a field hospital with 400 beds. However, it was not clear to what extent Austria as a neutral state could even participate in a UN operation, as Austrian law did not allow units to be sent abroad. Therefore, it was only after lengthy discussions that the Austrian government decided to comply with the United Nations' request, and the Ministry of Defence set up the "UN Medical Contingent of the Republic of

<sup>3</sup> *Austria and Italy formally declared to the UN in 1992 that their differences had been settled. This was also a precondition for Austria joining the EU in 1995.*

Austria". This contingent was not an existing army unit but was raised on a voluntary basis. Just fifteen years after the end of World War II, many Austrians were highly sceptical of such an operation, and the "absolutely voluntary nature" of participation was emphasised to ensure acceptance by the public.

In the meantime, other states – India and Italy in particular – had already promised medical support for the Congo operation, and the UN accordingly reduced its original request to a hospital with 100 beds. The Austrian contingent eventually consisted only of a 50-man medical unit, deployed in five rotations from December 1960 to 1963.<sup>4</sup>

The unit's deployment started with a serious incident that was an acid test of Austria's willingness to participate in UN operations altogether: shortly after its arrival in Bukavu (in Kivu Province), the unit was taken prisoner by Congolese forces, who accused them of being Belgians in disguise, and had to be freed by force by a Nigerian UN unit. Fortunately, in the "Battle of Bukavu" no Austrian lives were lost (one Nigerian soldier was killed, however, as were a dozen Congolese), but all equipment was lost, and back home there were demands that the operation be broken off. However, Foreign Minister Kreisky won the day, convincing the reluctant Minister of Defence Ferdinand Graf that the "serious loss of prestige [...] if Austria were now to withdraw its help in the Congo [...] would be an unimaginable embarrassment for the Austrian Army and for Austria".<sup>5</sup>

The first Austrian UN medical contingent stayed in the Congo, catering for refugees in Kasai Province, and returned to Vienna at the end of May 1961. As the UN operation continued, a new contingent (with new equipment) was dispatched to the Congo in July 1961 for six months. When its tour ended, only about half the personnel were replaced by new volunteers, while the remainder stayed on. This principle of replacing not the whole unit but only a part was due to a lack of personnel and not the result of planning. All the same, it proved very successful because it allowed greater continuity in the field. In similar form, it is still practiced in most missions today.

After the last Austrian volunteer had returned from the Congo, Foreign Minister Kreisky, in a speech to Parliament on 10 December 1963, stated that "this Congo contingent has brought great honour to Austria's name and, what is even more important, has helped tens of thousands of poor people who are plagued by terrible diseases regain their health, in some cases, even saving their lives." Referring to Austria's membership of the United Nations, Minister of Defence Graf said in 1961 that "it is impossible to conclude agreements and enter into obligations on paper, without

<sup>4</sup> This is not the place to describe this mission in detail. See Erwin A. Schmidl, *The Austrian Medical Unit in the Congo, 1960-63: Austria's First Participation in a UN Operation*, in: *Maintien de la Paix de 1815 à aujourd'hui, Actes 21* (Ottawa: Commission canadienne d'histoire militaire 1995), 629–635.

<sup>5</sup> Translation by the author. Because of the overview character of this article, no detailed quotations are given. For a detailed analysis and quotations, the reader is referred to the article listed in Footnote 3, and to this author's extensive study published in German: *Blaue Helme, Rotes Kreuz: Das österreichische UN-Sanitätskontingent im Kongo, 1960 bis 1963* (= *Innsbrucker Forschungen zur Zeitgeschichte* 13, Innsbruck – Wien: StudienVerlag, 1995).

being willing to fulfil them. Such action would seriously endanger the prestige that our country has worked so hard to build up abroad.”

### 3 THE EARLY DAYS OF THE CYPRUS OPERATION

Austrian participation in the Congo operation ended in 1963, and the UN mission there came to an end one year later. This was not the end of Austrian peacekeeping, however. Because the Austrians had acquired a good reputation in the Congo, the UN once more approached Austria in 1964 with a request to contribute an infantry battalion of between 700 and 800 men to the new operation which was just beginning on Cyprus. However, Austria was reluctant to deploy an armed battalion, as there was still no legal basis for such a step. Instead, Austria once more offered to equip a field hospital with a staff of 54 and also fulfilled another UN request for civilian police.<sup>6</sup>

This shows another important element – again, not planned but developed by chance – of Austrian participation in peace operations. Not only were all personnel volunteers, as they are to this day, but the gradual move from a field hospital (1960) to police (1964), and later military observers (1967), then one (1972) and eventually two infantry battalions (1973) made it easier for the public to accept this involvement. Acceptance would have been much harder to obtain had a combat unit been sent out in the beginning. The Austrian police contingent remained on Cyprus until 1977.

The conclusion of agreements between the UN and the sending states concerning the legal status of the contingents on Cyprus in the summer of 1964 once more raised the question of the status of the Austrian units. As had been the case with the Congo operation, the government had improvised. The Austrian constitution then made no provision for the deployment of Austrian military units outside Austria. Therefore, the volunteers were granted special leave for the duration of their UN mission and were simultaneously re-employed with new contracts for UN service. This was unsatisfactory and was remedied by the Foreign Service Act of 30 June 1965, which regulated the secondment of Austrian units to render assistance abroad at the request of international organisations.<sup>7</sup> This remained the legal foundation for Austrian participation in international missions until 1997. According to the 1965 Act, participa-

<sup>6</sup> *The Cyprus mission was not the first mission to include police elements (police from Ghana and Nigeria had been deployed to the Congo), but there the name CIVPOL (for »civilian police«) was used for the first time to distinguish the police component from military police elements. In recent years, the term CIVPOL has been largely replaced by the term »UN Police«.*

<sup>7</sup> *Bundesverfassungsgesetz vom 30. Juni 1965 über die Entsendung österreichischer Einheiten zur Hilfeleistung in das Ausland auf Ersuchen internationaler Organisationen, BGBl. 173/1965. See Wolfgang Strasser, Die Beteiligung Österreichs an internationalen Hilfseinsätzen; in: Österreichische Militärische Zeitschrift 12/6 (November/Dezember 1974), 427–433; and Ivo G. Caytas, Internationale kollektive Friedenssicherung: zwanzig Jahre österreichischer Praxis. Eine juristische, politische und militärische Studie aktiver Neutralität im Rahmen der Vereinten Nationen (Schriften des Europäischen Arbeitskreises für Internationales Recht Berlin, O.J.), 44 f.*

tion in international missions requires the consent of the government as well as the main committee of Parliament (this did not change with the new law of 1997). The 1965 Foreign Service Act also formed the basis for the establishment of an Austrian reserve UN battalion to be made available to the United Nations on a stand-by basis, following the Scandinavian model. This 600-man reserve battalion was raised by an order issued on 1 September 1965, and the first call-up for refresher training took place in Vienna on 24 and 25 March 1966. The battalion exercised regularly in the years that followed but was never called up for service. There seemed little likelihood of a new UN operation, and the probability that the Austrian battalion would be called upon to replace an existing UN contingent was also low. In addition, the defence ministry was hardly unanimous in its enthusiasm for Austrian participation in UN operations. While young officers who had volunteered for UN operations hoped to be deployed soon, General Otto Seitz (then responsible for planning and operations) expressed his concern about personnel shortages in July 1967. In the event of this battalion being deployed, “some 400 full-time officers and other ranks would have to go” in addition to the reservists, he said.<sup>8</sup> This would have been particularly difficult in the late sixties, because in 1967 the Austrian Army had to deploy three battalions at the Italian border to prevent cross-border support of insurgents in South Tyrol, and in 1968 the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia once again demonstrated Austria’s exposed position at the Iron Curtain. Well into the 1990s, many high-ranking officers in the Austrian military saw peacekeeping as an aberration, as well paid holidays for those who preferred to shirk their real jobs back home. Consequently, volunteering for international duty would damage rather than further an officer’s career. This situation has changed, of course, since then, but it is important to note that for a long time the military establishment scorned peace operations (even today, there are some who still don’t think much of UN operations, preferring seemingly more “soldierly” missions under NATO command).

While the Austrian (reserve) UN Battalion remained designated as a “stand-by” unit for the UN, the 1967 “Six Day War” in the Middle East led to an increase of the UN Truce Supervision Organisation (UNTSO), and Austrian officers served for the first time as military observers.<sup>9</sup>

#### 4 THE SERVICE OF AUSTRIA’S TWO UN BATTALIONS DURING THE COLD WAR

An Austrian battalion was finally deployed to a UN operation in 1972 after Ireland reduced the size of its contingent on Cyprus from 400 to 100. Moreover, an Austrian, Kurt Waldheim, had just been appointed the new Secretary-General (taking office on

<sup>8</sup> *A series of documents regarding the early years of Austrian UN service was collected by the Austrian Army Museum’s Department of Military History in the 1980s and 1990s, later handed over to the Austrian State Archives (Archiv der Republik, Vienna), BMLV collection.*

<sup>9</sup> *The possibility of deploying Austrian UN observers had already been raised in 1965 when the UN established a new mission along the Indian-Pakistani ceasefire line. However, Austria once again delayed its answer to the UN request for so long that the need passed.*

1 January 1972), and Waldheim immediately enquired whether Austria would agree to send a battalion to Cyprus. While the Ministry of Defence said that such a mission was almost irresponsible considering the personnel shortages in the armed forces, it also recognised the political arguments for the mission. It would have been extremely inappropriate to reject such a request made by an Austrian Secretary-General, especially as Austria campaigned for election to the Security Council for the first time.<sup>10</sup> In addition, it would have been difficult to argue why the opportunity for deployment of the UN reserve battalion was rejected after it had prepared for such deployment for seven years. On 8 February 1972, the cabinet decided to agree, and a week later the formal UN request was submitted.

The establishment of the new UN battalion began on 2 March, using personnel who had already undergone training with the stand-by battalion. The advance party reached Cyprus on 24 March, and the 238-man Austrian battalion assumed full responsibility for the Paphos District in the west of the island on 3 May 1972. In October 1973, after the Yom Kippur War, more than half of this battalion was flown to Egypt as part of the new (Second) UN Emergency Force (UNEF II).<sup>11</sup> Eventually, both units were reinforced,<sup>12</sup> and in 1974 the Austrian battalion in Egypt was transferred to the Golan Heights in Syria as part of the new UN Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF), where it serves to this day. Within a short period, from early 1972 to late 1973, Austrian participation in UN operations had increased from about 100 men to almost 900 in two battalions, in addition to observers, medical staff and civilian police.

It was during the build-up phase of these new operations that Austria suffered its first losses in the service of United Nations peacekeeping. Early in 1974, a non-commissioned officer was injured in Egypt when he drove his Land Rover over a landmine. His lower leg had to be amputated. Shortly after the transfer to the Golan Heights, four young soldiers died in a landmine accident there on 25 June 1974. And on 14 August 1974, during the second phase of the Turkish invasion of Cyprus, three Austrian soldiers were killed near Goshi when a Turkish fighter jet mistook their UN Land Rover for a Greek Cypriot one and dropped napalm on them. These events were a shock for Austria, but remarkably the determination to continue engagement in UN operations was never in doubt, despite occasional complaints about the UN in general and its tardiness in refunding expenses incurred in peace operations in

<sup>10</sup> Austria served as a non-permanent member on the Council in 1973–74, and then again in 1991–92 and 2009–10.

<sup>11</sup> Christian Clausen, »Operation Dove« -- die Verlegung von UN-Truppen von Zypern nach Ägypten: Ein Beitrag zur Frage der Luftbeweglichkeit von Einsatzverbänden, in: *Österreichische Militärische Zeitschrift* 13/2 (März/April 1975), 102–109.

<sup>12</sup> The Cyprus battalion was moved from Paphos to Larnaca in the process of UNFICYP reorganisation, and the Austrian Field Hospital was reduced to a smaller medical centre, which operated until 1976. In 1977, the Austrian battalion on Cyprus moved again, to Famagusta in the east, where it remained until its withdrawal in 2001.



particular.<sup>13</sup> This shows that by then participation in peace operations was already accepted as “normal” and positive by large segments of the population. Altogether, 48 Austrians have lost their lives “in the service of peace” since 1974.<sup>14</sup>

At the end of 1973, 889 Austrian soldiers were serving in UN operations. From then through the end of the Cold War, Austria was constantly among the most important troop-contributing countries. In 1974, an Austrian officer was appointed to command a UN force for the first time.<sup>15</sup> Both on Cyprus and the Golan Heights, Austrian commissioned and non-commissioned officers were assigned to headquarters in various functions.

In the 1970s, Austria was careful not to become involved in operations that had been set up under controversial circumstances. A case in point was the UN operation in southern Lebanon authorised by the UN Security Council in 1978. To Secretary-General Waldheim’s disappointment, the government in Vienna rejected his request for a third Austrian UN battalion, as there was no clear mandate, the parties to the conflict had only limited will to enforce the ceasefire, and it was not really possible to control all the factions. Austria insisted that all parties to the conflict agree to the stationing of a UN force, and in view of the many local warlords in southern Lebanon, this was impossible.

## 5 FROM COLD WAR TO HOT PEACE: 1989 AND BEYOND

In the early 1980s, renewed East-West tensions meant that the UN played a less active peacekeeping role than in the 1970s. There was no new large-scale UN operation during this period. Two smaller military observer missions were established after 1984 to monitor the ceasefire lines between Iraq and Iran, and the border between Afghanistan and Pakistan, and Austria contributed to both of them. This also illustrates the Austrian “peacekeeping policy” adopted at this time, largely due to the interest of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in having Austria figure in the troop contributors’ lists in as many operations as possible, even if only with a few observers or police. This policy intensified in the “mushrooming” phase of UN peace operations in the 1990s, when Austrian military or civilian observers, police officers or medics were present in almost every mission established after the Cold War.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>13</sup> This »legend« of the UN not paying its dues stems largely from the Cyprus operation, which since 1964 had been financed by troop contributors, with possible reimbursement from voluntary contributions (which were never available in sufficient amounts). Only in 1993 was the UNFICYP changed to assessed contributions, albeit on a reduced scale only.

<sup>14</sup> This includes those killed in the field as well as traffic accidents and suicides.

<sup>15</sup> On 15 December 1974, Major General Hannes Philipp was appointed commander of the UN force on the Golan Heights. He was later succeeded by Major General Günther G. Greindl (1979–81; later commander of the UN force in Cyprus from 1981–89 and commander of the UN observer mission between Kuwait and Iraq in 1991–92) and Major General Adolf Radauer (1988–91). In 1997–99, Brigadier Bernd Lubenig commanded MINURSO (1997–99), and since 2001 Major-General Hermann K. Loidolt has been Chief Observer of UNMOGIP.

<sup>16</sup> This is not the place to list all these missions. For more detailed information, see *In the Service of Peace* mentioned in Footnote 1, which includes a complete list.

For Austria, this new phase began with the deployment of 50 police officers to the UN Transition Assistance Group (UNTAG) to oversee the transfer of the former German colony of South West Africa, which was still administered by South Africa under a League of Nations' mandate, to attain its independence as Namibia in 1990. Following Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in 1990, Austria had at first considered sending a medical unit to the Gulf, but the government finally decided not to participate in the Second Gulf War for reasons of its neutral status. This was despite the fact that in 1991–92 Austria was, for the second time, a member of the UN Security Council, and the Austrian Permanent Representative had been chosen as president of the Council's sanctions committee monitoring the embargo against Iraq in January 1991 (which was hardly a convincing example of "neutrality"). Austria did, however, participate in those UN operations to stabilise the situation in the theatre after the end of the campaign in 1991. These included the United Nations Iraq-Kuwait Observation Mission (UNIKOM) to monitor the Iraqi-Kuwaiti frontier (an Austrian, Major General G. Greindl, was actually its first Chief Observer),<sup>17</sup> the United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM) to destroy Iraqi nuclear, biological and chemical weapons of mass destruction, the deployment of an Austrian field hospital in Iran (under UNHCR auspices) to assist Kurdish refugees there, and the less than successful experiment to deploy UN guards to protect humanitarian relief operations providing aid to Kurdish and other refugees in Iraq.

As the operation in Namibia was generally considered to have been successful, and in view of the United Nations' apparently regained strength after the end of the East-West Conflict demonstrated in the Kuwait conflict, new and more ambitious UN operations were set up in the Western Sahara, Cambodia, Somalia, Liberia, Rwanda and elsewhere in the early nineties. To most of these, Austria contributed small numbers of military and police personnel, as well as civilian election monitors.

On several occasions, the idea of sending a third battalion to one of these new missions was discussed but was eventually dropped. One reason why some circles in the Austrian military viewed this favourably was that the military had become increasingly frustrated with the fact that two battalions had been constantly serving on Cyprus and in Syria for decades. It was hoped that deployment of a battalion to Cambodia or Somalia or to some other mission would in due course facilitate the withdrawal of the battalion from Cyprus. Thus, only one battalion would be tied to a "never-ending" mission, and resources would then allow deployment of another battalion for shorter engagements. (The preference to serve for limited periods of only one or two years was taken up ten years later, in the course of the 2003 discussions about army reforms and the transformation process.) Early proposals to send a larger contingent to the UN force in Cambodia (Austria had been actively involved in the Cambodian peace process) were rejected, however, as the climatic conditions would have required a long period of training and special equipment. The Somalia

<sup>17</sup> *At first, the observers were supported by infantry seconded from other UN operations, including 115 Austrian infantry from Cyprus. Later, Austria also contributed a medical platoon (1993–95), and a logistics contingent of 34 men (1996–99).*



operation is now generally judged to have been less than successful, but it was seen as a major challenge, and indeed chance, for the UN in 1993. Austria considered contributing a battalion of mechanised infantry, and had even informally agreed to do so, but the idea was eventually rejected due to internal political differences in Austria over the best foreign policy course.<sup>18</sup>

Military observers, police and civilian observers continued to serve in a number of UN operations throughout the 1990s, in addition to the continuing service of the two UN battalions in Cyprus and in Syria. Usually, between 800 and 1,000 Austrians were deployed on active UN service at any given time. About two thirds of these were reservists, and therefore brought in civilian skills and life experience which proved very valuable in peace operations – perhaps more important in many cases than pure fighting skills. Also, internal organisational changes indicated the increasing importance which international operations took on after the end of the Cold War. Participation in military operations was still directed from a small cell in the General Staff, but training and preparation had been centralised at a special command in Vienna-Stammersdorf in 1987, which rose from lieutenant-colonel to one-star level and eventually was relocated at Götzendorf in 1999. Because of experience gained since the sixties, Austrian instructors were invited abroad, and the number of international participants in Austrian training courses increased. A number of Austrian officers were seconded to UN headquarters in New York at the same time.

UN peacekeeping, hailed as a “miracle recipe” for crisis management in the early nineties, went through several crises following the debacles in Somalia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. Among many efforts to improve the UN’s capabilities, the stand-by system of forces earmarked for UN service (originally established in the wake of the Congo crisis in the 1960s) was revived. Austria – again – pledged to contribute one battalion for UN service, and in May 1993 the government decided to create an organisational framework for the provision of up to 2,500 soldiers and 50 police officers for international missions. By the end of the nineties, as many as 1,500 Austrians were serving in missions abroad at any given time.

In this context, two regional arrangements should be mentioned: SHIRBRIG and CENCOOP, both created in the mid-nineties. SHIRBRIG is an acronym for the “short-notice high-readiness brigade” created by Denmark and other countries in 1996, partly in response to UN calls to revive the stand-by arrangements. Austria participated in SHIRBRIG from the beginning. In addition, Austria initiated another regional network, the “Central European Nations’ Cooperation in Peace Support” (CENCOOP), in 1998 to create structures facilitating regional cooperation between Central European countries.

<sup>18</sup> *Because of earlier positive signals in New York, Austria’s change of mind was seen as an annoying gesture by the UN. It also was an indication of the deadlock into which the coalition government of the day had manoeuvred itself then. Earlier differences between the two coalition parties about participation in peace operations (about continuation in the Cyprus operation, for example) had usually remained hidden from both the public and the international community.*

Regional cooperation was at the same time implemented in the Austrian contingents deployed to UN operations in Cyprus and on the Golan Heights. A Hungarian contingent was integrated into the Austrian battalion on Cyprus in 1995 and a Slovenian one in 1998. (In 2001, when the Austrians withdrew from Cyprus, the Slovenians also withdrew, but the Hungarian company remained with the Slovak battalion which took over from the Austrians.) On the Golan Heights, a Slovak contingent (a platoon at first, and then a company) was integrated into the Austrian battalion in 1998; it was replaced by a Croatian company in 2008. At the time of this writing (in late 2008), the Austrian battalion has served in Syria for almost 35 years and is most likely to remain there for some time to come.

## 6 PEACE OPERATIONS IN SOUTH EASTERN EUROPE

Although Austria remained active in peace operations worldwide, the focus of Austrian peacekeeping activities clearly switched to the Balkans in the mid-nineties, and to the new missions established there.

In June and July 1991, the short conflict in Slovenia showed that war had not yet become extinct in Europe. The Austrian Army was deployed to the Slovenian border to prevent any armed incursions or border incidents, and suddenly even politicians who some years before had opposed the purchase of Saab J-35 “Draken” interceptor planes started to understand that “the noise of the jets is the price of freedom”. For the Austrian military, it was the first and so far only deployment in a border-protection role.

Austria did not participate in the European Community Monitor Mission (ECMM, later EUMM) sent to Slovenia and Croatia in July 1991 to supervise the ceasefire arrangements, however, nor in the UN operations which started in Croatia in 1992 and soon extended to Macedonia and Bosnia-Herzegovina.<sup>19</sup> Because of the geographical proximity, and as the former “colonial power” in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Austria was not accepted as truly impartial by all parties involved. Austria provided logistical support, however, and played an active role in the CSCE monitoring and mediating missions sent to the crisis region. After joining the EU in January 1995 and participating in the Partnership for Peace programme that had been initiated by NATO in February 1995, this gradually changed. Austrian police participated in the EU administration of Mostar (the police component was organised by the WEU). From 1996, Austria participated more actively in the various operations in the region. The Dayton-Paris Framework Peace Agreement of December 1995 ended the fighting in Bosnia-Herzegovina, and the UN force there was replaced by the NATO-organised “Peace Implementation Force” (IFOR). Although the nucleus of this force was provided by European troops already stationed there (who merely

<sup>19</sup> In 1995, the UN Protection Force (UNPROFOR) in the former Yugoslavia was reorganised as three separate forces: UNPROFOR in Bosnia-Herzegovina (approx. 25,000 men) kept its name, while the force in Croatia was renamed UNCRO (United Nations Confidence Restoration Operation, approx. 7,000 men) and that in Macedonia was renamed UNPREDEP (United Nations Preventive Deployment Force, just under 1,000 men).

exchanged their blue UN berets for their national green or black ones), this development proved a major watershed in the history of peace operations. IFOR was limited to a term of one year and was then re-organised as a smaller “Stabilization Force” (SFOR) at the end of 1996.

Within the framework of IFOR and SFOR, Austria contributed a 238-man contingent to BELUGA, a mixed transport unit comprising Belgian, Luxembourgian, Greek and Austrian elements and stationed in Visoko to the west of Sarajevo. This deployment represented a new challenge for the Austrians, as NATO requirements were far stricter than those of the UN. NATO insisted that armour be fitted to lorries and required soldiers to wear helmets and flak jackets at all times. Neither were the costs of the operation refunded. The Austrians soon acquired an excellent reputation in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Earlier distrust of the former colonial power had largely been replaced by gratitude for the humanitarian help (especially that provided by the “Nachbar in Not” [Neighbour in Need] charity programme). When the Belgian and Luxembourgian contingents were withdrawn from BELUGA in 1998, this transport unit was reorganised under the name HELBA, with Greek, Bulgarian and Austrian troops. Austria also contributed police officers to the UN-led International Police Task Force (IPTF) and additionally provided training programmes in Austria for Bosnian police officers.

The IFOR/SFOR operation constituted only the military component of the international presence in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The police element there – known as the International Police Task Force, IPTF – was provided by the UN, and Austria contributed up to 40 police officers. In addition, Austria also organised training courses for the reformed local police.

In Eastern Slavonia, the sole Serb-controlled area of Croatia which remained by 1995 (the other Serb enclaves had been conquered by Croatian forces in 1994–95, pushing away UN “protection forces” and leading to a mass exodus of the ethnic Serb population from Croatia), a UN transitional administration was established which accomplished the peaceful transfer of this territory to Croatian control within three years. This UN Transitional Administration for Eastern Slavonia, Baranja and Western Sirmium (UNTAES) had military, police and civilian administration components under a centralised UN command, thus avoiding many of the problems which had arisen in Bosnia-Herzegovina, where the different components were split among various organisations. UNTAES was among the more successful but generally ignored UN peace operations of the nineties. Austria again contributed police officers, including the operation’s police commissioner, General Walter Fallmann (who himself had had earlier UN police experience in Cyprus and in the Western Sahara).

Early in 1997, a new crisis erupted in the neighbourhood. Many Albanians had lost their life savings in fraudulent pyramid games, which led to serious political unrest and waves of refugees fleeing the country to go to Italy. The EU and OSCE attempted to find a solution that would pacify the country and offer the people a perspective

for the future. The OSCE appointed former Austrian Chancellor Franz Vranitzky to negotiate with the two major political parties on holding elections. To support the stabilisation efforts, Italy organised the 7,000-man-strong Multinational Protection Force (Forza Multinazionale di Protezione – FMP – also known as Operation “Alba”) in April 1997. This force also included an Austrian Special Forces company (115 men). Unlike most other Austrian contingents in peace operations, this company largely consisted of professional soldiers and also had a broader mandate, which included protecting the FMP headquarters in Tirana.

Owing to this broader mandate and because this operation was not organised by any international organisation, Austria had to redefine the legal basis for its participation in missions abroad. The 1965 Foreign Service Act was therefore replaced by the Cooperation and Solidarity Act (KSE-BVG) of 1997.

Operation Alba ended in August 1997 after elections had been held, without having significantly improved the situation in Albania. A small police-training group, the 120-man Multinational Advisory Police Element (MAPE), was organised within the framework of the WEU. Austria contributed police officers to MAPE (1997–2001).

The EU presidency in the second half of 1998 represented a special challenge for Austria. The presidency’s responsibilities included command of the ECMM monitoring mission and staffing its headquarters in Sarajevo. During this period about 70 Austrians served in this mission. Ambassador Franz Parak was head of mission, with Ambassador Herbert Grubmayr (who had already served as advisor to the ALBA mission in 1997) and Brigadier General Klaus Köhler as his deputies for political and operational matters, respectively. The Austrians performed so well that the subsequent German presidency even retained certain Austrians in key positions.

In 1998–99, Austria was actively involved in the negotiations to find a peaceful solution to the Kosovo problem, and Ambassador Wolfgang Petritsch was the EU’s chief negotiator at the Rambouillet negotiations. When these failed and NATO started its air campaign (Operation “Allied Force”) against Yugoslavia in March 1999, Austria – still a neutral country, notwithstanding its accession to the EU in 1995 – did not participate in the war.

When hundreds of thousands of refugees flooded into neighbouring Albania and Macedonia, however, Austria decided to set up a field hospital and refugee camp in northern Albania. In April 1999, the Austrian Army, together with volunteers from the Red Cross, the Knights of Malta and other relief organisations, established this hospital near Shkoder in northern Albania. A total of 400 soldiers were stationed there, including a security detachment, engineers and four Agusta-Bell 212 helicopters.

In June 1999, Yugoslav President Milošević finally agreed to an international presence in Kosovo. As this was a UN-mandated operation, Austria participated in both the UN Administration Mission (UNMIK), contributing police, justice and

other experts, and the NATO-led Kosovo Force (KFOR) from the very beginning. A 480-man infantry battalion equipped with “Pandur” armoured personnel carriers was stationed in southwestern Kosovo as part of the German-led brigade there. The Austrian base in Suva Reka became known as “Camp Casablanca”. Swiss and German contingents were included in the Austrian battalion. In addition, Austrian officers served at the brigade headquarters. Like other international operations in the past, the Kosovo mission demonstrated that although Austrian soldiers have extremely limited financial resources, their training meets the highest international standards.

In addition to the KFOR battalion, Austrian police officers were attached to the UN Police to assist in the maintenance of law and order as well as monitoring and training the new Kosovo police force comprising both Albanians and Serbs. Austrian judges, policemen and judicial personnel also served in Kosovo as well as on behalf of the UN war crimes tribunal in The Hague. As in Bosnia-Herzegovina, parallel international structures sometimes complicated cooperation between the military and civilian components in Kosovo.

While becoming increasingly engaged in Kosovo operations in 1999, Austria after its 1998 presidency reduced the contingent to the ECMM and at the same time also reduced its commitment to the SFOR operation in Bosnia-Herzegovina, to a 55-man unit in Rajlovac near Sarajevo within the framework of the German brigade. In February 2001, this Austrian contingent was withdrawn as well, but Austrian officers remained in various positions in the operations headquarters in Sarajevo.

When both the UN-led police mission and the NATO-led military operation were taken over by the European Union in 2003 and 2005, respectively (becoming the EU Police Mission EUPM and the EUFOR “Althea”), Austria again stepped up its participation. From late 2004 on, additional troops were deployed, and in 2005–06 Austria led the brigade-size Multinational Task Force North in Tuzla – the first time ever that Austria had taken on a comparable responsibility in an EU operation. Brigadier generals Karl Pronhagl and Rudolf Striedinger each acted as task force commanders for half a year. At the same time, Austrian participation reached battalion size, including headquarter elements, aviation and intelligence assets, guard and reconnaissance companies, and three Liaison and Observation Teams (“LOT houses”) providing close contacts with the local communities.

Following handing over command of Task Force North to Greece at the end of 2006, Austrian participation in the Bosnia-Herzegovina operation was gradually reduced again. But the next challenge was already in the offing: on 29 May 2008, Austria took command of KFOR’s Multinational Brigade South in Prizren for a year. This was first led by Brigadier General Robert Prader, and then from 27 November 2008 by Brigadier General Thomas Starlinger. The 3,700-man brigade comprises soldiers from Bulgaria, Germany, Switzerland and Turkey in addition to the Austrian contingent of 700 soldiers.

## 7 AUSTRIAN HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE ABROAD

Missions in which Austrian soldiers render assistance after natural disasters such as earthquakes or floods cannot be considered international peace missions in the narrow sense of the term, but they can certainly be classified as military operations abroad. Austria started sending military contingents to provide disaster relief in neighbouring states very early on – in 1963 to Skopje, in 1976 to Friuli, in 1978 to Titograd and in 1980 to southern Italy. In 1968, the Austrian Army even organised three small medical teams to assist the suffering population in the secessionist Nigerian province of Biafra. In December 1988, Austria sent 134 engineers (including 16 civilians) to help in the aftermath of the severe earthquake in Armenia. This operation formed the basis for the establishment of the Austrian [Armed] Forces Disaster Relief Unit (AFDRU).

In August 1997, an Austrian team also provided rapid and effective assistance after the floods in Poland. In August 1998, Austrian helicopters were sent to help extinguish forest fires in Croatia. In 1999, earthquakes in Taiwan and Turkey once more required the presence of AFDRU helpers. In March and April 2000, an Austrian team flew to Mozambique to organise water treatment after the devastating floods that had occurred. In 2003, AFDRU teams were sent to Algeria and Iran to assist after the earthquakes there. In 2005, following the tsunami disaster, an Austrian water purification team was sent to Sri Lanka. In October 2005, an assistance team was deployed following the severe earthquake there. And in 2006, Austrian planes assisted in combating forest fires in Greece.

From the beginning, Austria has also been involved in improving the organisational basis for international cooperation in international humanitarian missions. The contributions made by Brigadier General Norbert Fürstenhofer, the “father” of AFDRU, must particularly be mentioned in this regard.

## 8 PARTICIPATION IN INTERNATIONAL OPERATIONS – AN OUTLOOK

Taking over the brigade commands in Bosnia-Herzegovina in 2005–06 and in Kosovo in 2008–09 fitted well into the aspirations of Austria as formulated in the Army Reform Commission’s report in 2003 and consequently realised by the “Management 2010” task force. According to these documents, Austria is dedicated to building up and maintaining its capabilities of participating in international operations across the whole spectrum of missions, from traditional peacekeeping to more robust operations, as well as in humanitarian operations.

This includes service of up to three battalions plus smaller elements in peace operations and being able to contribute a “framework brigade” (i.e. deploying a brigade command with headquarter and support elements) for service of about one year every three to four years.



Besides the continued deployments in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo, and the service of the UN battalion in Syria, smaller contingents have been deployed in numerous other missions as well. These notably included the service of company-strong contingents in Afghanistan in 2002 (in Kabul) and again in 2005 (as part of the German-led Provincial Reconstruction Team in Kunduz). Smaller elements and observers were seconded to a number of other missions, but Austria refrained from sending larger contingents or participating at all in the operations in Iraq following the 2003 war.

It was only in early 2008 that a significant contingent – about 160 soldiers – was sent to participate in the EU mission in eastern Chad, sent there to provide security and stability in the region, especially the refugee camps set up there by international organisations. For the first time since 1960, this deployment to an international operation was hotly debated in public. This operation was perceived by many as supporting French interests in Africa and the local regime, rather than contributing to security and long-term stability in the region, and politicians (as well as journalists and a significant portion of the public) questioned the moral and political wisdom of becoming engaged in this operation. The defence minister (at the time and currently Norbert Darabos, a Social Democrat) stood by his decision, however, and the public discussion gradually faded away once the mission had begun and actually proved quite successful. Austria contributed an engineer element at first and special operations forces, and the Austrian contingent commander was put in charge of all of EUFOR's special operations forces, which again can be seen as recognition of Austria's contribution.

**Conclusion** Notwithstanding several changes over the years, participation in UN and other international peace operations remains a key component of Austrian foreign policy. In view of the increasing role of the EU in international crisis management and peace and stability operations, in November 2000 Austria expressed its willingness to provide an organisational framework for up to 3,500 soldiers and 110 police officers for EU crisis reaction forces (Helsinki Headline Goals). At any given time, up to 2,000 soldiers could be deployed abroad. In 2003, Austria also decided to contribute to the EU “battle group” concept.

By December 2008, 1,359 soldiers (as well as 25 police officers) were deployed in a dozen missions worldwide. Since 1960, about 65,000 soldiers have served in about 60 missions – quite an achievement for a small country of 8 million inhabitants.

Recruiting the necessary number of volunteers for these missions remains a challenge. In previous missions it was not always easy to recruit sufficient personnel. For the time being, the volunteer principle will be maintained, but changes are possible, notably for career soldiers. The volunteer system has its advantages as well as disadvantages: planning is rendered more difficult and requires greater personnel reserves, but it also ensures the high level of motivation among Austrian peacekeepers. Between two thirds and three quarters of all Austrian soldiers serving on

missions abroad are reservists. Their age and greater civilian experience means that they are in fact more suitable for peace missions than younger professional soldiers whose military training does not always adequately prepare them for the mental stress of peace operations. The difficulties faced by certain states in recent years are clear evidence of this fact.

To enable it to respond faster when new missions come up, the Austrian Armed Forces devised the PREPUN system of pre-established unit modules. This was eventually developed further into the Forces for International Operations system (known as KIOP in German).

For the Austrian Armed Forces, participation in international missions has increasingly become an important or even its primary task. With the international situation as it is, peace operations will remain in demand for a long time. For Austria, active participation in these missions has been an important aspect of its foreign policy – and there is no reason to change this direction. Contributing to international solidarity helps re-establish or preserve stability, and thus is of benefit to the contributing countries as well.

In the future, Austrian foreign and security policy will have to set priorities for international missions, taking into account the special commitments entailed by our EU membership as well as the need to take part in more robust operations in the spirit of international solidarity. To fulfil these increased responsibilities, however, it will also be necessary to provide greater financial, material and personnel resources than before.

## Selected bibliography

1. Caytas, Ivo G.: *Internationale kollektive Friedenssicherung: zwanzig Jahre österreichischer Praxis. Eine juristische, politische und militärische Studie aktiver Neutralität im Rahmen der Vereinten Nationen (Schriften des Europäischen Arbeitskreises für Internationales Recht Berlin, O.J.)*.
2. Clausen, Christian: „Operation Dove“ -- die Verlegung von UN-Truppen von Zypern nach Ägypten: Ein Beitrag zur Frage der Luftbeweglichkeit von Einsatzverbänden, in: *Österreichische Militärische Zeitschrift* 13/2 (März/April 1975), 102–109.
3. Schmidl, Erwin A.: *The Austrian Medical Unit in the Congo, 1960–63: Austria's First Participation in a UN Operation*, in: *Maintien de la Paix de 1815 à aujourd'hui, Actes 21 (Ottawa: Commission canadienne d'histoire militaire 1995)*, 629–635.
4. Schmidl, Erwin A.: *Blaue Helme, Rotes Kreuz: Das österreichische UN-Sanitätskontingent im Kongo, 1960 bis 1963 (= Innsbrucker Forschungen zur Zeitgeschichte 13, Innsbruck – Wien: StudienVerlag, 1995)*.
5. Schmidl, Erwin A.: *Going International – in the Service of Peace: Das österreichische Bundesheer und die österreichische Teilnahme an Friedensoperationen seit 1960 (Graz: Vehling, 2005)*.
6. Strasser, Wolfgang: *Die Beteiligung Österreichs an internationalen Hilfseinsätzen; in: Österreichische Militärische Zeitschrift* 12/6 (November/Dezember 1974), 427–433.