

Contributor Profile: Argentina

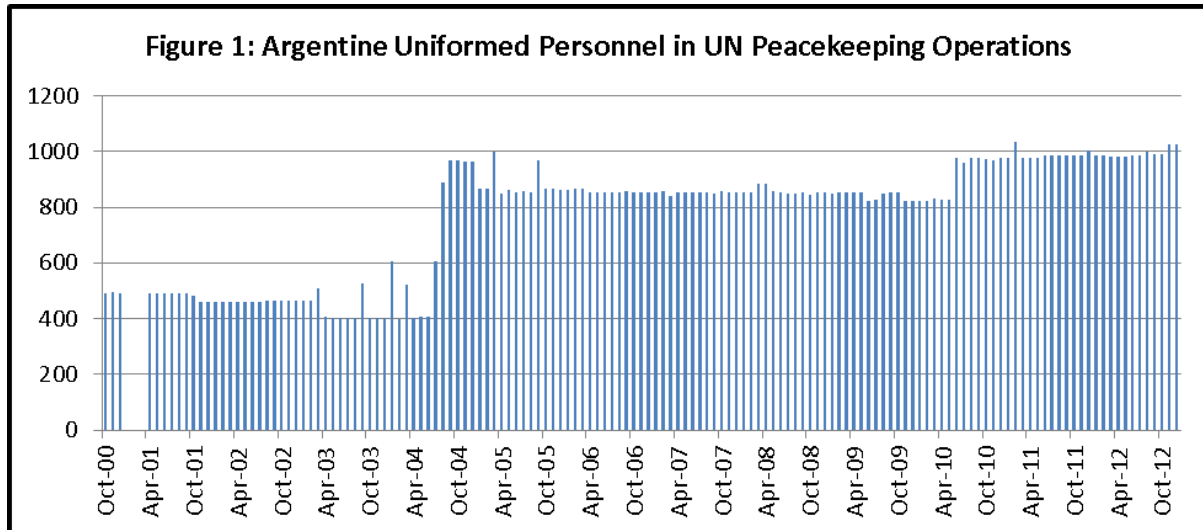
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Active Armed Forces ²	Helicopters	Defense budget	Uniformed UN peacekeepers	UN contribution breakdown	Other Significant Deployments
73,100 World Ranking (size): 52 Army: 38,500 Navy: 20,000 Air Force: 14,600 Paramilitary: 31,240	Attack: 6 Multi-Role: 36 Transport: 80+3 (Medium: 11+ 3 on order; Light: 67) Search & Rescue: 5	2010: \$3.22bn (0.87% of GDP) 2011: \$3.1bn (0.71% of GDP) 2012: ³ \$4.353bn (0.92% of GDP)	1,025 (66 female) (14 January 2012) Ranking: 23rd (3 rd largest contributor from the Americas)	UNFICYP: 269 troops MINUSTAH: 733 troops UNTSO: 3 experts MINURSO: 3 experts UNMIL: 13 police UNMISS: 4 police	None
Defense Spending / Troop: ⁴ US\$35,978 (compared to global average of approx. US\$59,000)					

Part 1: Recent Trends

Argentina's first contribution to United Nations (UN) peacekeeping was in 1958 when service members participated in the UN Observation Group in Lebanon (UNOGIL). Since then, Argentina has deployed more than 35,000 uniformed personnel in over 30 peace operations. Troop contributions surged in the 1990s as a result of a reassessment of Argentina's foreign policy goals during the Menem administration (1989-99). As part of a strategy aimed at forging convergence between national priorities and U.S. interests, the Argentine government increased its UN peacekeeping contributions significantly. Consistent with the objective of reintegrating Argentina into the global community, Argentina deployed two battleships and 450 uniformed personnel in the U.S.-led coalition that enforced the naval blockade against Iraq in 1991.

Argentine troop contributions remained relatively stable (around 500-600) from 1998 through 2003, but this changed in 2004 with participation in MINUSTAH in Haiti (G9 group under the 2x9 Model).⁵ As a consequence of the earthquake that devastated Haiti in early 2010, Argentina increased its contribution to MINUSTAH to more than 700 troops, thus becoming the fourth largest contributor to the mission. Argentina's increased commitment to Haiti's recovery reveals both the increasing emphasis placed on Latin America within the country's foreign policy priorities and the emergence of a rather distinct and regional, approach towards international crisis management. To a large extent, this approach is the result of an evolving consensus amongst Argentina, Brazil, Chile and Uruguay that the region has to take on new roles in order to increase its autonomy.



This new strategic rationale paved the way for the creation of the [South American Defense Council](#) (*Consejo de Defensa Suramericano – CDS*) in 2008 as part of the Union of South American Nations ([UNASUR](#) in Spanish). Within the framework of UNASUR, the CDS aims to consolidate South America as a zone of peace by constructing a shared vision on defense, strengthening cooperation, and building consensus towards common positions in multilateral fora. South American involvement in Haiti signals this recent development. In 2004, the critical situation in Haiti unexpectedly triggered a concerted response on the part of Argentina, Brazil, and Chile, among others, in the form of MINUSTAH. This combined effort would in the longer term reveal a convergence of these countries’ understanding of the challenges faced by multilateral missions in particularly complex scenarios. Given that Haiti is conceived of as part of the Latin American community, its recovery was understood as a shared responsibility. Contextual variables largely contributed to this: Brazil was willing to lead the mission, Argentina was seen as having a long history of participating in UN peacekeeping, and Chile was already involved in the Multinational Interim Force. This evolving regional approach also presupposed a shared consensus regarding the notion of proportional means as essential in order for MINUSTAH to be perceived as legitimate by Haitians.⁶ Equally important was the extent to which cultural affinity paved the way for South American troops’ achievement of this aim.

In 2006 the Southern Cross Joint and Combined Peace Force (*Fuerza de Paz Conjunta Combinada Cruz del Sur* in Spanish) was created by Argentina and Chile, in order to be deployed under the UN Stand-by Arrangements System (UNSAS). *Cruz del Sur* comprises a Joint and Combined Command, as well as a land component (two self-sustaining infantry battalions, alongside the Chilean engineer company and the Argentine mobile hospital); a naval component (a transport vessel, four Dabur type patrol boats, and two Meko 140 Corvettes provided by Argentina, plus a missile frigate operated by Chile) and, an aerial component (four sections of helicopters, two from each country’s army and air force). A Bilateral Working Group has been established to further develop combined resources and capabilities regarding logistics, procurement, exercises, and doctrinal guidance. Taken into account both countries’ successful experience in training for peace operations, it was agreed that each national training center (CECOPAZ in Chile and CAECOPAZ in Argentina) would continue performing this role. A computer-based simulation system (*Sistema Computacional de Simulación para Entrenamiento en Operaciones de Paz - SIMUPAZ*⁷ in Spanish) for peace operations has nonetheless been developed by Argentine and Chilean armies to further combined training. With regard to its impact on both states’ relationship, *Cruz del Sur* signals

a shared political understanding about the strategic character of such a collective good in order for the region to increase its autonomy.

Another relevant development has been the creation in 2008 of the General San Martin Combined Engineering Company (*Compañía de Ingenieros Combinada Peruano-Argentina* in Spanish) by Argentina and Peru. The company, which comprises 168 military personnel, was established in 2006 and is the result of bilateral cooperation developed as part of the Permanent Committee of Coordination and Cooperation on Security and Defense (COPERSE in Spanish). Significantly, the capabilities of this combined unit have been specifically designed to address some of the most pressing humanitarian needs in Haiti, most notably the collection, purification and distribution of water in densely populated areas and improve infrastructure and housing for the most vulnerable sectors.

Argentine cooperation with other South American defense ministries has also developed in the context of institutional partnerships among different military training centers for peace operations throughout the region. Argentina's Joint Training Center for Peace Operations ([CAECOPAZ](#) in Spanish) has played a growing role in this field. Furthermore, a major initiative – largely sponsored by Argentina – was the creation of the Latin American Association of Training Centers for Peace Operations ([ALCOPAZ](#) in Spanish) in 2008. ALCOPAZ seeks to foster common doctrine and operative capabilities for South American countries that participate in UN peace operations. The member states are Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Guatemala, Paraguay, Peru and Uruguay, while Canada, the United States, France and Russia Federation have been granted observer status.

Part 2: Decision-Making

The [1998](#) and [2010 White Papers](#), the 2001 Defense Review, and the 2009 National Directive of Defense Policy define participation in UN peacekeeping as a subsidiary mission of the Argentine armed forces. The decision to contribute to UN peacekeeping operations rests with the executive branch of government, which dominates the foreign policy decision-making process more generally. Input comes from the Argentine mission to the UN, where requests for contributions are received from the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO). After the decision to contribute has been taken by the executive branch, a formal procedure follows in accordance with both the [National Constitution](#) and the [National Act on the Entry and Exit of Troops](#). While the former stipulates that the Parliament is entitled to authorize the entry of foreign troops into the territory and to allow national armed forces to leave the country, the latter establishes the procedure, timeframe and possible exceptions which are to support the executive branch's request of authorization from Parliament. Despite occasional debate in Parliament about Argentina's contribution to peacekeeping operations – as was the case of Haiti in 2004, legislative approval remains a formal rather than a substantive process.

Argentine decisions to participate in UN peacekeeping are made after certain criteria have been met: the level of threat posed by the crisis to international stability, the legal basis for the operation, an unambiguous mandate, and the consent of the potential host country. In addition, Parliament is to be provided with a detailed report by the Ministry of Defense on key aspects of the UN-led mission in question: the nature and aims of the military operation, the political and strategic rationale for contributing, the other participating countries, the number and composition of contingents, the type of military equipment, and the financing mechanism. Although the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is the lead agency in the decision-making process, Parliament remains an important actor only to the extent that it provides legal consent from political parties in both the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate. In turn,

the Ministry of Defense's role remains rather a supportive one in terms of the technical and logistical feasibility of troop deployments abroad. Institutional assessment for a military deployment involves different agencies within the Ministry of Defense, such as the Secretariat of Defense International Affairs, through its General Directorate for Peacekeeping Cooperation, with the advice from the Joint Chiefs of Staff through its Operational Command and Chiefs of Staff from each Armed Service Branch.

Part 3: Rationales for Contributing

The international dimension of Argentina's defense policy revolves around its commitment to maintaining international peace and security. To that end, Argentina advances a twofold strategy: to foster cooperation with countries mainly, though not exclusively, in South America, and to contribute to the UN's key role in maintaining international peace and security. In the 1990s, there was a [quantitative as well as qualitative change in Argentine participation in UN-led operations](#) to further two core and mutually supportive objectives: reintegrating the country into the international community and advancing the democratic transformation of the armed forces.

Although Argentina remains committed to UN peacekeeping in general, there has been a reassessment under both the Néstor Kirchner (2003-07) and Cristina Kirchner (2007-present) administrations, which has signaled a more selective – that is, regionally-oriented – rationale for contributing. Argentine participation in MINUSTAH has signaled this re-orientation in foreign policy priorities (see Part 1).

Political and Security Rationales: Although Argentine participation in UN-led operations is not defined as a core mission of the armed forces, peacekeeping remains relevant in light of Argentina's traditional commitment to the system of collective security embodied in the UN Charter. More generally, Argentina's military contribution to UN operations is thought to enhance national prestige and the country's political leverage in the global arena.

Institutional Rationales: Argentina's contribution to UN peacekeeping is thought to have a positive impact on the military since it improves their overall professional status by furthering the degree of readiness, interoperability amongst the three armed services branches, and providing operational integration with foreign armed forces. Equally important is the extent to which this is seen to further strengthen civilian control of the Argentine military.

Economic Rationales: The UN's reimbursement system provides the Argentine government with an economic incentive only to the extent that it supports the country's contributions – the national government pays their troops the whole amount provided by the UN and covers approximately 30% of total costs. Significantly, the Ministry of Defense established the Joint Equipment Procurement Program for Peacekeeping Operations (*PECOMP* in Spanish) in 2006 in order to manage UN payments more efficiently. As a result of this program, a new mobile hospital was acquired and general conditions for deployed peacekeepers were considerably improved. This is particularly important because UN reimbursements had been at the center of political and bureaucratic competition between the Finance and Defense Ministries prior to 2006. UN compensation payments constitute a significant economic incentive for individuals to serve as peacekeepers, since peacekeepers are provided with additional allowances for their service. These allowances consist of the UN payment of US\$1,028 per month, along with the US\$1,200 foreign per diem that the Argentine government pays to deployed personnel on a monthly basis.

Normative Rationales: Argentina's UN peacekeeping policy has traditionally been considered a foundation of the country's support for the UN's role in international politics. Specifically, Argentine participation in the UN's multilateral initiatives is seen as a way to contribute towards global stability through inter-state cooperation, peaceful resolution of conflicts, human rights and democracy promotion, and the development of international humanitarian law. Argentina has traditionally advocated for multilateral responses to international humanitarian crises as a way to support UN collective security system. The country has contributed to the debate on humanitarian intervention and the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) in the context of the UN; it actively participated in the 2000/01 International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS) – its foreign ministry was a member of the Counseling Board; the 2001 Ministerial Representatives of the Rio Group-ICISS Conference; the 2004 High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change – a posture statement was issued at the time; and, the 2009 Thematic Dialogue on the R2P sponsored by the UN General Assembly.

Part 4: Barriers to Contributing

Alternative institutional preferences for crisis management: This is not relevant, since Argentina remains fully committed to UN-led management of international crisis through peacekeeping.

Alternative political or strategic priorities: Maintaining a military capacity and resources for self-defense partially accounts for Argentina's level of contribution to UN peacekeeping.

Financial costs: Economic factors may play a role in the decision-making process but only as a result of political considerations regarding the availability and allocation of national resources – as decisions are taken against future reimbursements from the UN. Beyond this, financial costs are not particularly relevant insofar as they amount up to 30% of total costs – UN reimbursements cover the remaining 70%.

Discomfort with the expanding UN peacekeeping agenda: Not relevant.

Exceptionalism: This is not relevant. Argentina is willing for its armed forces to serve in UN missions as part of its efforts to support the maintenance of international peace and security.

Absence of pressure to contribute: This is an important barrier to contributing, since defense matters more generally, and national contributions to UN peacekeeping in particular, are not issues that are subjected to considerable public debate or concern. Indeed, even in the context of more pressing demands on scarce national resources, defense matters are still not a major priority in domestic politics.

Difficult domestic politics: This is also relevant to the extent that national contributions to UN peacekeeping are not actively promoted by politicians or the public.

Damage to national reputation: Not relevant.

Resistance in the military: This is not relevant, since the economic benefits derived from UN peacekeeping provide both the armed forces and its individual members with financial incentives for participating.

Legal obstacles: Re-democratization in the early 1980s created the political conditions necessary for a new legally-constituted civil leadership in defense matters. In an effort to foster civil control of the military, a series of laws were enacted, namely, the National Defense Act 23.554 (1988), Domestic Security Act 24.059 (1992), Volunteer Service Act 24.439 (1994), Armed Forces Re-Organization Act (1998), and National Intelligence Act 25.520 (2001). With regard to the political orientations informing civilian conduct of national defense, a number of key documents have been issued, such as the 1998 and 2010 White Papers, the 1999 Military Strategic Directive, the 2001 Defense Review, and the 2009 National Defense Directive. This new legal order managed to disentangle national defense from domestic security in order to prevent the military from participating in domestic security matters. This was the result of the appalling human rights record of the armed forces during the military regime that ruled the country between 1976 and 1983. Legislation prohibiting the military's involvement in activities related to domestic security, most notably policing, intelligence, and prosecution of citizens, was enacted as a consequence of their previous pattern of gross and massive human rights violations.

This new approach served as the basis for reforming the regulatory framework for the sector, which aims to prevent the armed forces from participating in domestic security matters. It is because of such legal constraints that Argentine military are prevented from participating in certain security activities – mainly policing – in the context of UN peace operations. That being said, the latter is not a major obstacle to the involvement of Argentine troops in certain non-traditional missions. These may comprise logistical and operative-led tasks as part of humanitarian assistance to civilians affected by natural disasters or life-threatening contexts, as well as those oriented towards the economic and social well-being of local communities. Finally, legal constraints such as those faced by the Argentine military should come as no surprise, especially in light of article 43(2) of the UN Charter, whereby states' contribution to the maintenance of international peace and security is based on agreements which “shall govern the nature of the facilities and assistance to be provided”. Furthermore, legislation should not be considered a serious obstacle to Argentina's ability to participate in UN peacekeeping. Indeed, Argentina has contributed a significant number of paramilitary personnel (gendarmerie and coast guard contingents) to different UN operations, as these forces are not constrained by the aforementioned legislation.

Part 5: Current Challenges and Issues

There is no indication that Argentine policy towards UN peacekeeping will change significantly in the foreseeable future. Argentina remains fully committed to international crisis management through operations with UN mandates. There is nevertheless an evolving re-orientation in Argentina's traditional focus on peacekeeping which should be understood in light of the subordination of defense policy to foreign policy goals under the Néstor (2003-07) and Cristina Kirchner (2007-present) administrations. One such goal is reflected in the extent to which relations with South American neighbors have been reasserted over the last few years. Thus, while in the 1990s most Argentine peacekeeping troops were stationed outside the region, today the largest military contingent is in Haiti (MINUSTAH).

Part 6: Key Champions and Opponents

There is no major public debate about Argentine participation in UN peacekeeping. Nevertheless, there is broad consensus amongst politicians as to the dividends derived from the country's involvement in UN peace efforts.

Part 7: Capabilities and Caveats

Argentina has a long tradition of contributing paramilitary forces such as the gendarmerie and coast guard. Since the early 1990s, it has provided 2,756 paramilitary personnel in different UN-led operations in Angola, Timor-Leste, Kosovo, Congo, Cyprus, Ivory Coast, Liberia and, more recently, South Sudan and Haiti. The Gendarmerie Training Center for Peace Operations ([CENCAOPAZ](#) in Spanish) was established in 1992 and has since trained Argentine and foreign personnel in police and security-related capacities for UN peace operations. It remains the only center of its kind in South America. Throughout its long-standing contribution to the UN police, Argentine paramilitary forces have undertaken a wide range of tasks including replacing local police, assisting in the development of new security forces, law enforcement, monitoring elections, protecting UN personnel, diplomatic and governmental facilities.

Another successful initiative is the Argentine White Helmets Commission ([Comisión de Cascos Blancos](#) in Spanish), which was created in 1995 in order to provide the international community with a volunteer organization for humanitarian assistance. As a civilian peace corps, “White Helmets” has since been involved in humanitarian and recovery activities in many parts of the world, such as New Orleans in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina (2005); in Central America and the Caribbean after the devastation left behind by hurricanes and tropical storms (2007); and in Southeast Asia after Cyclone Nargis (2008). The Commission has recently signed an agreement with UNASUR to provide assistance related to food supplies at schools in Haiti.

Part 8: Further Reading

[Argentina's Defense White Paper](#) (MINDEF, 2010).

Rut Diamint, “[Security Communities, Defense Policy Integration and Peace Operations in the Southern Cone: An Argentine Perspective](#),” *International Peacekeeping*, 17:5 (2010): 662-677.

Monica Hirst, [South American Intervention in Haiti](#) (Fride Comment, April 2007).

Notes

¹ Thanks go to my research assistant Florencia Ghigliione.

² Unless otherwise stated, data is drawn from IISS, *The Military Balance 2012* (London: IISS/ Routledge, 2012).

³ Data is drawn from [Atlas Comparativo de la Defensa en América Latina y Caribe](#) (Buenos Aires: RESDAL - Edición 2012).

⁴ Armed Forces Spending is a country's annual total defense budget (in US dollars) divided by the total number of *active* armed forces. Figures from IISS, *The Military Balance 2012*.

⁵ The “2x9 model” stands for the political coordination which has been developed amongst the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Defense of Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Ecuador, Guatemala, Paraguay, Peru and Uruguay as part of their involvement in MINUSTAH. This initiative has proved to be a successful experience of South American cooperation in response to the endemic political and institutional crisis in Haiti. It has also been conceived mainly by Argentina, Brazil and Chile as a means by which to increase regional leverage in the context of UN debate on global governance and peacekeeping.

⁶ The notion of proportionality here refers to the limited use of force in the context of a complex peace operation as a means by which to foster legitimacy. In the particular case of Haiti, South American states understood that an excessive reliance on military force might potentially preclude MINUSTAH from achieving its challenging mandate, since a worst-case scenario would one in which Haitian population perceived blue helmets as invaders, and thus, as an illegitimate actor.

⁷ SIMUPAZ was first used in 2007 in the context of the XXVII Conference of American Armies that took place in Montevideo, Uruguay, as part of a combined peacekeeping exercise.