Contributor Profile: Uruguay

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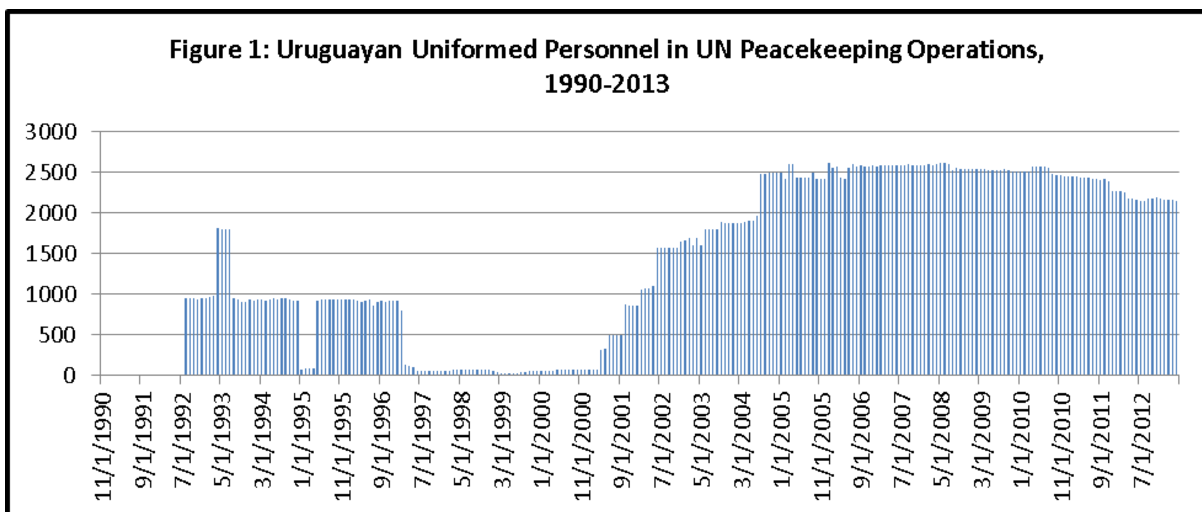
Active armed forces[1]	Helicopters	Defense Budget	Uniformed Peacekeepers	UN Contribution Breakdown	Other Significant Deployments
24,650 World Ranking (size): 84 Army 16,250 Navy 5,400 Air Force 3,000 Paramilitary 800	Multi-Role: 1 Transport: 10 light	2011: $484m (1.46% of GDP) 2012: $447 m (1.35% of GDP)	2,154 (108 women) (30 April 2013) Ranking : 11 8th largest contributor 2000-10 Largest contributor from the Americas 2000-10	MINUSTAH: 941 (936 troops, 5 police) MONUSCO: 1,197 (16 experts, 1,181 troops) UNISFA: 1 troop UNMIL: 4 police UNMOGIP: 2 experts UNOCI: 8 (4 police, 4 experts) MINURSO 1 expert	58 soldiers in the Multinational Force in the Sinai.
Defense Spending / Troop:[2] US$17,880 (compared to global average of approximately US$68,000)					

Part 1: Recent Trends

In 1992, Uruguay sent its first peacekeeping battalion to Asia as part of the UN Transitional Authority to Cambodia (UNTAC): 1,330 soldiers (about 5.5% of the country's total armed forces) were deployed in four military units across the country. Uruguay had previously participated in peacekeeping missions during the 1950s and 1960s, when it sent military observers to missions in Sinai and India–Pakistan. But the 1992 decision to participate in UNTAC was significant for two main reasons. First, it was the first large-scale deployment abroad, involving troops and contingents from different services. Second, it symbolized a radical departure in military politics, shifting the focus of the armed forces away from domestic politics toward international affairs. The deployment took place only six years after the country's return to democracy following thirteen years of dictatorship.



Within a decade of the 1992 deployment, Uruguay became one of the world's largest troop-contributing countries (TCCs). The number of blue helmets sent to UN missions increased from fewer than one hundred observers in 1982, to more than 1,000 peacekeepers in 1993, to over 2,000 blue helmets in 2013 (see figure 1). In 2013, Uruguay was involved in six different peacekeeping operations. By late 2011, 24,335 of the country's soldiers had been involved in at least one UN peacekeeping mission. In relation to its population (fewer than four million people), there is one Uruguayan peacekeeper for every 280 citizens; making Uruguay the world's largest UN TCC per capita. In absolute terms, Uruguay was the eighth-largest UN TCC between 2000 and 2010. It is also Latin America's leading supplier of blue helmets.

Currently, close to 90% of Uruguay's troop contributions are concentrated in two UN stabilization missions: MONUSCO in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), and MINUSTAH in Haiti. Uruguay first deployed blue helmets to the DRC in 2000, when the Security Council approved the creation of a UN mission (then called MONUC) to monitor a ceasefire agreement. By 2004, Uruguay had become MONUC's leading TCC, providing over 21% of all UN military personnel. To date, Uruguay maintains close to 5% of its total military strength in the DRC. Uruguay's commitment to MINUSTAH began in 2004, when a battalion of 57 officers and 500 soldiers was deployed. In 2006, Uruguay doubled its force by supplying an additional battalion. It also contributed 40 air force pilots in support of UN air contingents (known as UNFLIGHT). In 2009, the Uruguayan Navy assisted Haiti's Coast Guard Commission in safeguarding the island's maritime sovereignty. Uruguay's Maritime Peacekeeping Unit (URUMAR) was created with 187 marines and 21 patrol boats to control the Haitian coasts. By 2010, with over 1,130 troops, Uruguay became MINUSTAH's second-largest TCC (with about 14% of the entire force, second only to Brazil). While troop commitments for Haiti have decreased since 2011, Uruguay maintains close to 5% of its total military strength on the Caribbean island.

Since 1992, peacekeeping has become the Uruguayan military's *raison d'être*, with close to 10% of the military's personnel serving in multiple UN missions. In addition, an equal number of soldiers are presently training for the next peacekeeping tour; troops are deployed for six-month rotations. Since Uruguay does not have a specialized peacekeeping unit, its blue helmets are enlisted from different services and military divisions nationwide. Ultimately, this means that close to 25% of Uruguay's military is fully committed to UN peacekeeping missions every year. The organizational purpose of the military as an institution is thus focused on addressing issues related to logistics, deployment, training, and budgeting for UN peace operations.

Part2: Decision-Making Process

Historically, UN peacekeeping has not been a diplomatic or foreign policy vehicle for Uruguay, but a military endeavor, in which peacekeeping policies are driven by the armed forces. Until 2012, the core of the decision-making process resided in Uruguay's National Defense Council and its National System for the Support of Peacekeeping Operations (SINOMAPA in Spanish). SINOMAPA coordinated peacekeeping policies between military organizations and governmental agencies. It also ensured that the units were prepared for the mission and guaranteed economic, political and technical support, once participation in a UN peacekeeping mission had been decided upon by the President and the Ministry of Defense. This meant that civilians were de facto under-represented. The President chaired SINOMAPA, but its regular attendees were always the service commanders. The statutory director of the system was the Joint Chief of Staff, who reported directly to the army's

commander-in-chief. The heads of other executive departments and agencies (such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Economics), as well as other senior officials, were invited to attend meetings, but only when appropriate.

SINOMAPA guaranteed the centralization of the decision-making process within the Ministry of Defense, mostly staffed by military officers. Diplomatic or civilian input was virtually non-existent and consequently there was no concrete correlation between Uruguay's foreign policy and its peacekeeping strategy. Peacekeepers were deployed to countries with which Uruguay had no diplomatic or bilateral relations, and in regions that were beyond its national interests. As indicated above, Uruguayan blue helmets are concentrated in the DRC and Haiti, yet Uruguay did not have embassies in either of these countries. Similarly, the coordination of peacekeeping policies between Montevideo and New York was dealt with mostly by military attachés, who served as *liaison* officers between the Ministry of Defense and the UN DPKO, developing links and contacts between military organizations and the UN system. Hence, peacekeeping deployments were mostly influenced and shaped by military dynamics and preferences.

In 2012, the National Defense Act (also referred to as law No. 18.650) was enacted. This legislation transformed and strengthened the Ministry of Defense by placing the National Defense Council and its other agencies (including SINOMAPA) outside of the services command and within the purview of the presidency and four other ministries (defense, interior, foreign affairs, and finance). As a result, the policy leverage of the service commanders has been eroded, at least on paper. Civilian input into the decision-making process might increase if the law is effectively implemented. This could finally bring some changes to current military and peacekeeping policies, although it is too soon to conclude if the law has had any direct impact on civil-military relations.

Part 3: Rationales for Contributing

Institutional rationales: In the early 1990s, military advisors in Uruguay reasoned that UN peacekeeping was a relatively inexpensive exercise that could divert the armed forces away from domestic politics and budgets to external roles; thus effectively transforming the dominant national security culture of the armed forces (which had focused mostly on internal missions). Indeed, UN peacekeeping provided an opportunity to cope with an institutional crisis in the military. After democratization (in 1984), the Army experienced an identity crisis, which in large part stemmed from its inability to define its political mission in the post-dictatorial era. It is in this critical domestic context that participation in UN peacekeeping provided an opportunity to cope with the institutional crisis in the military. The need to reform the national security culture of the armed forces prompted an interest in peacekeeping affairs. Hence, beginning in the 1990s, the armed forces began to focus its energies and limited resources on supporting UN peace operations. Slowly but surely, the armed forces transitioned from being an inward-oriented institution (focused mostly on anti-guerrilla tactics) to an outward-oriented military, committing troops abroad, while assuming an entrepreneurial role in the provision of peacekeeping services.

Furthermore, UN peacekeeping provided institutional incentives to involve all services (Army, Navy, and Air Force) in joint efforts. In fact, Uruguay is one of the few Latin American states that can conduct maritime and aerial peacekeeping operations, involving naval diplomacy, port management, medical evacuation, enforcement of sanctions, escort and protection of civilian vessels, pollution control in shores, environmental programs in public beaches, as well as air support. For the Uruguayan Navy, peacekeeping provides an

opportunity to test its naval and coastguard capabilities and to project force into an area beyond Uruguay's shores. Likewise, Uruguay's Air Force provides 40 pilots in support of UNFLIGHT, which helps maintain operational and flying capabilities. As a result, the organizational purpose of the military, as an institution, is focused on addressing issues related to logistics, deployment, training, and budgeting for peace missions that take place miles away from Uruguay's borders. In other words, UN peacekeeping has become institutionalized within the armed forces.

Economic rationales: Uruguayan decision-makers thought that UN peacekeeping would also help alleviate budgetary ailments by providing additional salaries and perhaps operational resources. In the period after democratization, the military found itself with a shrinking budget and a relatively large force that needed to be fed and paid. The absence of purpose, low salaries, and decreasing budgetary allocations led to a downward spiral of morale. Peacekeeping offered a partial solution to these economic constraints. Indeed, individual military personnel had strong monetary incentives to join UN efforts because their salaries could be more than tripled during peacekeeping service. For example, a lieutenant colonel in Uruguay is paid roughly US$700 per month but while on a UN mission the same officer can make up to US$6,000 per month; which is more than four times his/her normal salary because of all the extra incentives the state provides, such as a 50% pay hike. Likewise, a Navy non-commissioned officer makes US$100 per month, but while on a UN mission can make up to US$1,000 per month.

Uruguay has also assumed a much more active, logistical role in UN peacekeeping, taking over tasks that included not only the deployment of observers and units, but also the provision of services for the UN peacekeeping system. For instance, in MONUC, Uruguay maintains three battalions responsible for air and river transportation. A corps of Army engineers has also been responsible for installing water treatment plants, which supply drinking water to all UN units in the DRC. Nowadays, there are six operating plants in the DRC and four in Haiti. Gradually, Uruguay established not only a way of keeping its armed forces busy, but also a niche specialty area in the UN peacekeeping support system that generates additional sources of income.

Part 4: Barriers to Contributing

In spite of its large troop commitment, recent trends in Uruguay suggest that its UN peacekeeping contributions might have reached a plateau, primarily because of economic and reputational factors.

Financial costs: The Uruguayan economy, like those of its neighbors, is experiencing an economic boom. In this context, the incentives to provide peacekeepers are less enticing than they were in the recent past. For instance, it has become increasingly difficult to recruit staff for peacekeeping missions because there is less unemployment and wages in the country are now better. Specifically, the Air Force, which provides air support in Port-au-Prince as part of UNFLIGHT, has found itself in a dilemma as most of its pilots have joined commercial airlines as soon as they have returned from their UN peacekeeping assignment. Hence, it has become increasingly difficult to recruit volunteers for future UN missions.

Damage to national reputation: A series of scandals and cases of abuse committed by Uruguayan peacekeepers have placed the military under considerable scrutiny. The first signs of controversy appeared in 2003 in the UN mission in the DRC when Uruguayan soldiers were accused of corruption and improper behavior during the conflict in Bunia.[3] A second

scandal erupted in 2011, when five Uruguayan peacekeepers in Haiti were accused of sexually abusing and assaulting a teenage boy.[4] The scandals prompted Uruguayan authorities to dismiss URUMAR's commander, while the five sailors accused of sexual assault were withdrawn from the mission, decommissioned, and then put under investigation. However, these measures did not satisfy Haitians, and public demonstrations broke out in the streets. The angriest protests were reported in Port Salut, where residents demanded the complete withdrawal of Uruguayan blue helmets. Ultimately, these incidents eroded Uruguay's commitment to peacekeeping, especially in Haiti.

Part 5: Current Challenges and Issues

The incidents in MINUSTAH involving allegations of sexual abuse have had an effect on UN troop deployments. To date, peacekeeping policies are much more scrutinized, and critical voices within Uruguay are requesting that troops return home after two decades of large UN troop contributions. To some extent, there is increasing domestic discomfort with the military's expanding UN peacekeeping participation. Political opponents of the government would prefer if the armed forces were more heavily invested in national security and less focused on peacekeeping.

Similarly, the military is still facing domestic obstacles stemming from human rights abuses committed during the dictatorship. In 1986, two years after democratization, the government approved an amnesty law protecting officers from prosecution. In 2011, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights (IACHR) ruled that Uruguay's amnesty law breached the Inter-American Convention on Human Rights and thus lacked legal effect. The Uruguayan Congress acted immediately, approving yet another law that scrapped the amnesty and declared the dictatorship's misdeeds crimes against humanity, not subject to the statute of limitations. Courts opened investigations into more than 50 cases of murder, torture and forced disappearance under the military. Nevertheless, the Supreme Court ruled that much of the 2011 law was itself unconstitutional, because it was retroactive.[5] This, once again, has created civil-military tension, where opponents of the military have denounced the lack of justice regarding human rights abuses committed in the past. The armed forces thus often find themselves justifying their acts and continue to be the target of human rights groups. This ultimately undermines the legitimacy of the military and its ability to identify alternative missions in a post-dictatorial era. In other words, the military faces continuous domestic and societal challenges.

Part 6: Key Champions and Opponents

The military is obviously the most active institution in supporting peacekeeping deployments. As mentioned above, the armed forces themselves have benefited the most from peacekeeping. However, domestically there are varying opinions among civilians. Critics of the armed forces (mostly NGOs focused on human rights) argue that peacekeeping missions have merely transferred military anti-guerrilla tactics from domestic to international environments. The fact that Uruguayan peacekeepers committed abuses abroad has raised concerns about how they are being trained. Members of the opposition and human rights activists have thus demanded the return of all Uruguayan troops. Other critics, mostly members of the opposition in Congress, argue that peacekeeping has diverted the core mission of the armed forces from national defense to UN operations. In their view, the military should not overcommit resources and capabilities for peace operations at the expense of Uruguay's national security. These critics have requested a full review of peacekeeping policies.

Part 7: Capabilities and Caveats

Uruguay has the capabilities to deploy peacekeepers and support UN naval, air, and logistical operations (mostly through water purifying plants). It has put an emphasis on training for joint peace operations and has even conducted peacekeeping exercises with Argentina and Brazil. Nevertheless, these military capabilities are limited by resource and budgetary constraints.

In 2009, a Uruguayan military plane crashed near the border between Haiti and the Dominican Republic, killing 11 blue helmets (6 from Uruguay and 5 from Jordan).[6] The accident raised concerns about the conditions of the Uruguayan fleet, which some suspected was out-dated. In fact, a 2010 routine inspection by a UN delegation in Haiti found that 70% of Uruguay's battalion equipment was not operational. [7] Uruguay's peacekeeping commitment could thus be jeopardized unless it modernizes its force. Peacekeeping, however, has not been able to subsidize such a modernization effort, since the UN only reimburses member states for equipment depreciation costs, not the original procurement or subsequent replacement of the equipment.

Similarly, Uruguay's peacekeeping commitment is limited to military contingents, since it can rarely deploy police forces. Law enforcement agents are in high demand at home to cope with the challenges posed by crime and drug trafficking. Moreover, the recruitment of police forces has become increasingly challenging for the Ministry of the Interior. In 2011, the lack of police units forced the Uruguayan government to allow one thousand soldiers to be recruited by the national police as a means of improving public safety in Montevideo.[8] This policy stirred controversy and prompted a public debate in Congress. Consequently, Uruguayan police contributions for UN operations have been ruled out for the time being.

Part 8: Further Reading

Julián González, "Punching Above its Weight: Uruguay and UN Peace Operations." In Kai Michael Kenkel, (ed.) *South America and Peace Operations* (Routledge, 2013).

Julián González, "Uruguay 2012, two International Credentials" in *A Comparative Atlas of Defense in Latin America and the Caribbean* (Resdal: Buenos Aires, 2013).

Arturo C. Sotomayor, "Uruguay" in A.J. Bellamy & P.D. Williams (eds.), *Providing Peacekeepers: The Politics, Challenges and Future of UN Peacekeeping Operations* (Oxford University Press, 2013), pp.312-31.

For thematic and policy discussions about Latin America's contributions to UN operations (including Uruguay), see Resdal's "Observatory of Women in Peacekeeping Operations and Latin America in Peacekeeping Operations."

Notes

[1] Unless otherwise states, data is drawn from the IISS, *The Military Balance 2013* (London: IISS/Routledge, 2013).

[2] Defense Spending/Troop is the total defense budget (in USD) divided by the total number of active armed forces. Uses latest figures available from IISS, *The Military Balance 2013*.

[3] See "Acusan a cascos azules de Uruguay por torturas en África" [Uruguayan Peacekeepers Accused of Torture in Africa], in *Clarín*, 21 September 2003. El Mundo [The World].

[4] See "Uruguayan peacekeepers in Haiti accused of abuse," *BBC News Online*, 4 September 2011.

[5] See "Uruguay: Justice or Democracy"? *The Economist*, 23 March 2013.

[6] El País, "Un Avión militar uruguayo se estrelló en Haití: 11 muertos," [An Uruguayan Military Plane Crashes in Haiti: 11 death], in *El País*, 20 October 2009.

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[7] Pablo Melgas, "Haití: Batallón uruguayo no superó inspección de ONU; 70% inoperative," [Haiti: Uruguayan UN battalion does not Pass Inspection, 70% is non-operative], *El País*, 21 September 2010.
[8] See "Inseguridad: Uruguay pone militares en funciones policíacas," [Insecurity: Uruguay places soldiers in law enforcement functions], *Urgente 21*, 16 February 2011.