Pathfinders for Peace:
A Report to the UN Secretary-General on the Role of Special Representatives and Personal Envoys

By Cyrus R. Vance and David A. Hamburg

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Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict
1779 Massachusetts Avenue, NW
Suite 715
Washington, DC 20036-2103
Phone: (202) 332-7900 Fax: (202) 332-1919
e-mail: pdc@carnegie.org

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Pathfinders for Peace

Jean Monnet observed that there are two paths in life: to become somebody or to accomplish something. Most UN special representatives and personal envoys pursue the second path. With little fanfare and often at considerable personal risk, these men and women have worked to promote peace in scores of trouble spots around the world. They operate in complex situations of deprivation and violence, but with few of the instruments and protections available to traditional diplomats. They cannot always depend on conventional protocols, the support of a local embassy, covert intelligence, threats and promises of military and economic measures, or even secure communications and ready transportation.

These emissaries are an important post-World War II diplomatic innovation. The drafters of the UN Charter gave the head of an international organization, for the first time, political-diplomatic prerogatives to conduct impartial third-party mediation on behalf of the international community. There are three categories of high-level appointments that the secretary-general is allowed to make:

- Special representatives and other high-level positions in peacekeeping or observer missions authorized by the Security Council
- Envoys and other representatives appointed to assist the secretary-general in the exercise of good offices and related functions
- Other special high-level positions, including special advisors to the secretary-general[1]

Special representatives of the secretary-general that have been authorized by the Security Council are commonly referred to as SRSGs, while those acting only at the request of the secretary-general are his "personal envoys." Most "special advisors" have responsibilities at UN headquarters beyond the scope of this essay.

By the mid-1990s the secretary-general typically maintained a roster of more than 20 special representatives and envoys. This was about four times the average number normally used by previous secretaries-general. According to the secretary-general's spokesman, there were 25 "Special/Personal Representatives or Envoys" as of January 28, 1997 (see appendix).[2] Those on this list have been either formally approved by the Security Council or at least announced by the secretary-general. Information about other personal envoys currently engaged in fact-finding or preventive diplomacy remains confidential. Of the 25 special appointees, all but four are engaged in conflict prevention and peacemaking activities: eight in Africa, three in Asia, five in Europe

(the Balkans, Cyprus, and Georgia), two in Latin America/Caribbean, two in the Middle East, plus one envoy who serves as the secretary-general's special "trouble-shooter." The other four special appointees deal with other matters of concern to the secretary-general.

The deployment of personal envoys is difficult to determine because the secretary-general may choose to use them on confidential exploratory preventive missions. On the basis of the public record, however, there can be little doubt that former Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, prompted by renewed Security Council activism and his own diplomatic ingenuity, developed the personal envoy and special representative function into one of the most intriguing and promising aspects of UN diplomacy of the post-Cold War era. Secretary-General Kofi Annan appears poised to expand the use of personal envoys and special representatives in conflict prevention and resolution with the help of a new strategic planning unit and Senior Management Group that he announced in July 1997 as part of his proposed program of UN reform.[3]

Yet the use of such emissaries is not without controversy. The General Assembly instructed Boutros-Ghali to keep all special high-level appointments to a "minimum" and requested that "their functions and responsibilities should be more clearly defined and streamlined."[4] The United States and other governments have said that the role of the secretary-general should be defined even more narrowly and limited to that of a manager.[5]

This essay advocates a more activist approach for personal envoys and special representatives of the secretary-general as a low-cost, low-risk instrument for advancing the UN's role in preventing and resolving deadly conflict. It suggests ways to expand the pool of candidates available to serve in these capacities and to increase the modest funding required to support these appointments. Currently, the contributions of personal envoys and special representatives are undermined by the growing gap between the demand for more effective UN diplomacy and the number of qualified candidates and the limited financial resources. At a time when the UN is encountering severe budget pressures and allegations of bureaucratic bloat, perhaps member governments and the public underestimate the contributions that the secretary-general's personal envoys and special representatives can make to preventing deadly conflict and to building peace.

The Roles of Special Representatives and Personal Envoys

Prior to the 1990s special representatives and personal envoys of the secretary-general were sent primarily on fact-finding missions, to mediate interstate conflicts, and in some cases to oversee lightly armed peacekeeping monitors invited by the parties who had agreed to a cease-fire. More recently, Security Council -- mandated UN missions to deal with complex emergencies have required special representatives of the secretary-general to assume large, difficult, and highly visible responsibilities that require management as well as diplomatic skills. During the UN's first 40 years, the only mission of such scale and complexity took place in the Congo during the early 1960s, as UN forces sought to restore peace and preserve the territorial integrity of that newly independent state. The UN was not given similar responsibilities until peace agreements were finally negotiated in Cambodia, Namibia, and Yugoslavia nearly 30 years later. Since 1990, SRSGs have been given far-reaching mandates by the Security Council to oversee more than a dozen complex emergencies involving various mixes of peacekeeping, peace enforcement, humanitarian, diplomatic, and other operations.[6] In contrast to the skills and scale of operations

required of special representatives in complex emergencies, personal envoys of the secretary-general are primarily prized for their diplomatic abilities and familiarity with the history, key issues, and leaders of the areas to which the secretary-general sends them.

The most obvious function of representatives and envoys is to provide the secretary-general with firsthand authoritative information about what is going on in the field. While the secretary-general has no independent intelligence network comparable to those available to members of the Security Council, he does have multiple sources of information from governments and the media that flows into the Department of Political Affairs (DPA). Within the DPA, regional bureaus are able to provide the secretary-general with policy planning and analysis so that he can better prepare to deal with potential and current crises, and more confidently and effectively deploy special emissaries for fact-finding, mediation, and peacemaking efforts.

In addition to fact-finding, these missions historically have been of value to conflict resolution in at least four ways:[7]

- Once the parties have accepted their involvement, special representatives and envoys have repeatedly demonstrated the importance of their persistence, patience, and presence in order to keep the peace process alive when it might have collapsed.
- As SRSGs or envoys become increasingly familiar with the substantive issues of the dispute, and if they maintain impartiality and credibility with both sides, they can reformulate the outline or vision of a compromise package that may lead to an agreement that otherwise would have eluded the antagonists.
- International interests and norms are injected into the negotiating process by the special representative. While local issues invariably predominate in civil and regional conflicts, usually neither side in a dispute wishes to be isolated internationally and instead seeks political, economic, and security assistance. The willingness of the international community to provide current or prospective "carrots and sticks" can help the mediator to nudge the two sides from a "zero-sum" to a "positive-sum" outcome.
- Within the UN -- and more importantly the Security Council -- the special representative often plays an important role in helping to shape and sustain international consensus regarding the need for a peaceful resolution of the conflict. In some cases representatives also help forge a broader international consensus for preventive action or peace and humanitarian operations by informing the international media. In other cases, the SRSG has been a voice of realism in curbing the Security Council from issuing inadequately funded and overly ambitious mandates to deal with complex emergencies.

Demand for personal envoys will likely continue to increase much more rapidly than for special representatives for at least three reasons. First, as the traditional norms of nonintervention in the internal affairs of member states continue to weaken, it should become easier for the secretary-general to gain the necessary local acquiescence and tacit international support to send personal envoys sooner and more often. Second, if personal envoys are successful, there will be fewer complex emergencies and violent conflicts that require more substantial missions backed by the Security Council. Third, should envoys fail in their preventive efforts, their familiarity with the conflict and preparatory work can be vital to later mediation, relief, and peacekeeping missions.

The Sovereignty Issue

For many UN members the reluctance to strengthen the capacity and role of personal envoys and special representatives no doubt reflects the traditional desire to strictly limit the capacity of international organizations to intervene in the internal affairs of sovereign states. But if the UN is to play a role in preventing and resolving deadly conflict, it can hardly ignore the hard reality that nearly all of today's wars occur not among but within countries. Inevitably, the UN is being drawn into redefining sovereignty and accountability with regard to how governments deal with domestic demands for greater self-determination.

It is important, therefore, to recall that the Security Council summit on January 31, 1992, requested the secretary-general to prepare and circulate "his analysis and recommendations on ways of strengthening and making more efficient . . . the capacity of the UN for preventive diplomacy, for peacemaking and for peace-keeping."[8]

Four and a half months later, Boutros-Ghali released *An Agenda for Peace* and outlined, among other things, a growing role for personal envoys and special representatives:

Preventive diplomacy requires measures to create confidence; it needs early warning based on information gathering and informal or formal fact-finding; it may also involve preventive deployment and, in some situations, demilitarized zones.[9]

An Agenda for Peace received prompt endorsement from the September 1992 summit of the nonaligned states in Jakarta, and by the General Assembly three months later.[10] The General Assembly specifically noted that "timely application of preventive diplomacy is the most desirable and efficient means of easing tensions before they result in conflict."[11] The resolution endorsed "confidence-building, early-warning, fact-finding and other measures," but not "preventive deployment" or "demilitarized zones" and emphasized that "discretion, confidentiality, objectivity, and transparency should be combined as appropriate." Expanded use of personal envoys by the secretary-general would appear to satisfy these recommendations, although there is still much ambivalence and criticism, as already noted, about the extent to which envoys have been used.

With the publication of *An Agenda for Peace*, however, it appeared that the international community was beginning to adjust to post -- Cold War realities and that this was causing what Sir Brian Urquhart, former under-secretary-general for Special Political Affairs, has described as "an historical shift in two fundamental aspects of the nature of the United Nations":

The first is that the United Nations was originally a bureaucratic and diplomatic organization that has increasingly become involved in complex emergencies. Secondly, the United Nations was set up to deal with problems of conflicts *between* states, but is increasingly required to deal with problems *within* states, often involving nongovernmental groups. In this transitional period the job of the secretary-general is particularly demanding.[12]

A More Active Role

All secretaries-general have resisted attempts by the Security Council to limit the little autonomy granted them under the Charter. In defending the freedom to select special representatives and to dispatch personal envoys whenever and wherever the secretary-general chooses, much more is at stake than narrow institutional interests. The sooner the secretary-general can begin to plan and undertake preventive action, the better will be the chances for peace. This requires the freedom and flexibility to act quickly in a nonbureaucratic fashion so that personal envoys can provide the secretary-general with prompt reliable reporting, whether informally or by invoking the authority granted under Article 99. A Security Council mandate is not always possible in the timely manner necessary to deploy fact-finding missions. Today's need for third-party mediation to prevent and resolve deadly regional conflicts is greater than ever, and the UN secretary-general should be granted much more latitude for preventive diplomacy, not less.

The minimal authority granted to the secretary-general to select a personal emissary in any crisis needs to be maintained and strengthened. It is vital to the success of every mission that SRSGs speak, and are perceived to speak, for the secretary-general. Strong backing by the Secretariat is a necessary, if not always sufficient, condition for effectiveness in the field. In cases where the secretary-general is responding to Security Council mandates, the special representatives must be free to function impartially without being undermined by public criticism and second-guessing from Security Council members.

While some UN members want to limit the secretary-general's capacity to do preventive diplomacy, particularly in the absence of a Security

Council mandate, others have not been afraid to suggest ways to strengthen this office. Former Norwegian prime minister Gro Harlem Brundtland, a member of the Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict, declared in her address before this year's 51st Session of the General Assembly:

We need more preventive action and more preventive diplomacy. Here at the UN we need to develop the institutional, legal and managerial capacity to act -- as a model for regional action. Preventing conflict and human suffering must not be hampered by the traditional norm of what is essentially within states' domestic jurisdiction. . . . A lot could be achieved if the UN were better able to send experienced diplomats and support missions to conflict-ridden areas.[13]

The steps that Dr. Brundtland and others have identified to strengthen the secretary-general's hand in preventive diplomacy, conflict mediation, and overseeing international programs in complex emergencies include the establishment of a special *Fund for Preventive Action*, which is discussed below. Such enhancements are not expensive, nor do they contradict or undermine the UN Charter. The tensions surrounding such proposals have more to do with the relationship of the Security Council to the UN Secretariat than with the prevention and resolution of deadly conflict.

With some 40 conflicts currently raging around the world and many more threatening, the sharp rise in the number of UN personal envoys and special representatives engaged in preventive diplomacy and conflict resolution is scarcely surprising. To be effective and to gain the support of UN member states, the increased volume of missions must be matched by improvements in

the quality and continuity of these undertakings. Even when an operation has been relatively successful, as in Cambodia, continued UN special representation may be needed, albeit on a smaller scale, to help prevent further conflict and ensure that the transition to sustainable self-government becomes irreversible.

Much has been learned in the past five years about the difficulties of mounting multidimensional interventions in complex emergencies. By now, neither the Security Council nor the secretary-general and the Secretariat staff can have any illusions about the difficulties of mounting these operations and the importance of an effective coordinating mechanism in the field. The record shows the importance of investing the special representative with sufficient authority, staff, and resources.

What follows are brief assessments of the evolving role of special representatives and personal envoys, their current capabilities and constraints, and suggestions for improving the recruitment process, financial base, and staff and logistical support of these missions.

Precedents and Prerogatives

Ever since Ralph Bunche was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for his peacemaking efforts in the Middle East in the late 1940s, special representatives of the secretary-general have served the cause of collective security on the frontiers of United Nations engagement.[14] Some have been high-profile: Gunnar Jarring in the Middle East, Olof Palme interceding with Iran and Iraq, Martti Ahtisaari in Namibia, Yasushi Akashi in Cambodia, and Cyrus Vance in the former Yugoslavia. But most emissaries garner little attention from press or public. Information about the roles of special representatives and personal envoys is sparse because these missions typically are undertaken without publicity by practitioners of "quiet diplomacy" who tend not to reveal what they do and how they do it. Scholarly research and policy-relevant information has been meager; the subject remains, in the words of one UN expert, "an academic mystery."[15]

Each mission has special characteristics, in the tasks and authorities mandated, the personal and political strengths and liabilities of the emissaries, and the nature of the conflict. At the height of UN intervention in Somalia, for example, SRSG Jonathan Howe not only acted with the full backing of the secretary-general but, as a recently retired senior U.S. military officer, he was perceived as enjoying a special relationship with the nation most responsible for the operation. In other circumstances, e.g., Burundi, the SRSG has had to operate without a local peace agreement or any troops to support humanitarian and diplomatic efforts.

Special representatives derive their authority from Security Council mandates, but the legal standing of personal envoys and others not explicitly requested by the Security Council is more ambiguous. Under Article 99 of the UN Charter, the secretary-general is permitted a vague but significant independent role to look into and bring to the attention of the Security Council any situation that, in his opinion, may threaten the maintenance of international peace. In addition, Article 33, which does not explicitly mention the secretary-general, has been interpreted as allowing mediation by the secretary-general or designated representatives without a Security Council mandate, should the parties to a dispute decide that they need assistance. For these special positions, the secretary-general is allowed to select the individuals under Article 101 of

the Charter, although this process can entail extensive consultation with interested governments and must take into consideration nationality and other political factors.

Special representatives and personal envoys enjoy diplomatic status, and most have the rank of under- or assistant secretary-general. Those with the backing of the Security Council obviously carry more political weight, as they signal to all leaders in the target country or countries that there is a consensus among the major powers regarding the mission's importance and mandate. These mandates, however, can carry risks to the authority and credibility of the UN if they are not backed by sufficient financial and political support by the Security Council and other member states. Personal envoys, on the other hand, can be dispatched without a Security Council consensus mandate.

Not needing approval of the Security Council is an advantage for envoys. They can be sent more quickly and quietly than representatives. Sometimes special envoys can achieve much through low-cost periodic visits to the trouble spot, and some envoys prefer for political or personal reasons not to take up residence in a country. It has also proven relatively easier in some cases to gain the acquiescence of the target country or countries for a personal envoy than for a more prominent SRSG.

Current Capabilities and Constraints

In January 1995 Boutros-Ghali issued *Supplement to An Agenda for Peace*, in which he identified serious constraints on his capacity to respond to Security Council mandates or requests from member governments to dispatch personal envoys or special representatives for third-party mediation and other peace operations.[16] One is the growing difficulty of finding persons who have diplomatic skills and are willing to serve. As a result of the streamlining of the senior levels of the Secretariat, many senior staff positions--held by individuals who served as envoys and representatives in earlier years--no longer exist.

The other main constraints are inadequate financing and inflexible procedures to expedite the deployment of personal envoys and special representatives. Among UN interventions, the arrangements for launching and supporting peacekeeping operations are the most developed, although some mandates have been badly underfunded. Other missions, including the recent responses to complex emergencies, are done *ad hoc*, with the result that they are too brief and too impoverished to succeed. More generally, the capacity for effective preventive diplomacy is greatly enhanced if continuity can be ensured by the presence on the ground of a small support mission on a full-time basis, and in complex emergencies these missions can require large and costly staff and support arrangements. For missions mandated by the Security Council, the secretary-general must depend upon appeals for special voluntary contributions that frequently fall short of the mandate's goal or are insufficient to meet unexpected requirements. The secretary-general typically has had to finance personal envoys and unfunded special representatives from a small account in the regular budget for "unforeseen expenses." To finance the rapid deployment of personal envoys to help prevent new crises from arising, the chronic lack of funds has forced the secretary-general to seek grants from private sources, such as the Ford Foundation.

Case Studies of Special Representatives

The requirements of SRSGs in the complex emergencies of the past five years exceed traditional diplomatic and mediating functions and include a host of difficult management and operational responsibilities. Typically, when there was a natural disaster, the nearest United Nations Development Program (UNDP) resident representative would assume overall charge of relief operations, augmenting his/her staff with experts from New York, Geneva, or elsewhere. But the unprecedented scale, complexity, and violence that characterize recent UN operations in Cambodia, the former Yugoslavia, central Africa, and elsewhere have required UN special representatives who can speak with the full and immediate authority of the secretary-general, with backing from the Security Council, and can pull together the diplomatic, humanitarian, and military strands of UN involvement.

A badly fragmented UN system further complicates the task of the SRSG. During the UN's first 50 years, a plethora of largely autonomous organizations have developed. These specialized agencies have their own budgets and powerful political constituencies which greatly limit the ability of the secretary-general to influence or to coordinate their programs. UNDP, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), not to mention the World Bank and other international financial institutions, all have vital roles to play in complex emergencies. Jealousies over budgets and institutional prerogatives are not uncommon, and efforts to coordinate operations of these agencies from New York can further hurt effectiveness in the field.[17] In addition, some SRSGs are given Security Council mandates so ambitious and with means so modest that to declare their mission a failure, e.g., in Afghanistan, says very little about the personal strengths or shortcomings of the SRSG.

Despite these difficulties, several resident SRSGs -- with sufficient staff members, resources, and political backing -- have been remarkably successful in managing complex operations in the field (e.g., Aldo Ajello in Mozambique, Akashi in Cambodia, or Lakhdar Brahimi in Haiti). In some cases, SRSGs have been able to convert their lack of any real power into a diplomatic advantage by playing the honest broker in coordinating the efforts of international agencies. Overall, the record shows the increasing importance of special representatives as the principal coordinators of international involvement in complex emergencies.

Afghanistan, Cambodia, Mozambique, and Somalia

Ambassador Jonathan Moore, in *The UN and Complex Emergencies*, compares special representatives in four diverse post -- Cold War situations: Afghanistan (UNOCHA), Cambodia (UNTAC), Mozambique (ONUMOZ), and Somalia (UNOSOM).[18]

The most elaborate and ambitious of the four was UNTAC, where the special representative had overall responsibility for implementing the terms of a complex peace agreement (the Paris Accords) that were signed by the major powers. With unusually strong international financial support, primarily from Japan, the operation had seven components: military, civil police, elections, human rights, civil administration, repatriation, and rehabilitation. The mission is regarded as a major, if qualified, success because its mandate was carefully constructed and supported by all concerned, with the UN Secretariat as the focal point, and with a skillful SRSG,

Akashi, in the field, who was given the leeway to adapt the plan as necessary. The SRSG focused his mission on improving political stability by facilitating the repatriation of refugees, holding elections, and ensuring the installation of a coalition government, while avoiding costly military operations against the Khmer Rouge.

With strong backing from Boutros-Ghali, Akashi was able to work with a reluctant incumbent government and devise a division of labor with UN agencies and departments. This case also shows, as Moore notes, that one key to success for an SRSG is to know what elements in a Security Council mandate simply will not work in the heat of a given conflict situation and to avoid undercutting the rest of the mission by overreaching. Although it is still too soon to judge whether the reintegration of refugees, the fragile democratic process, and reconstruction of the war-torn country can be consolidated, major progress has been achieved. To help ensure that these gains are not undone during the next phase of a difficult transition in Cambodia, the continued presence of an SRSG or envoy, albeit with a much more limited staff and mandate than the previous SRSG, would seem a small but essential price for the international community to pay.

A second relatively successful operation was the much smaller intervention in Mozambique, where skillful management and political shrewdness by the SRSG again proved to be a vital element. The secretary-general allowed the representative freedom to work out a sensible division of labor among peacekeeping, repatriation, electoral, and socioeconomic agencies; the representative even set up a separate unit (UNOHAC) for coordinating relief and rehabilitation among the diverse mix of national, international, and nongovernmental donors. None of this would have happened without central direction from the special representative.

By contrast, Ambassador Moore concluded that the efforts by special representatives in Afghanistan and Somalia have been less fruitful. In both cases the core problem was the intractability of local conflicts and the lack of an incumbent government willing and able to work with the UN on a transition to national peace and reconciliation. In addition, the Security Council mandates lacked sufficient realism and resources. In Afghanistan the UN operation was based in Islamabad, Pakistan, which tainted the special representative's claim to impartiality. The mission remained small and was further inhibited by a requirement that the SRSG and his small staff operate under dual directives from the departments of Humanitarian Affairs and Political Affairs in New York.

The intervention in Somalia was far grander but with a far worse outcome for the UN. The collapse of over two decades of repressive military rule, rising clan violence, and the specter of mass starvation prompted strenuous diplomatic efforts by the UN in early 1992 to mediate a cease-fire among warring factions. A precarious peace was achieved in April and the UN Security Council authorized a peacekeeping force of 3,500 soldiers (UNOSOM), but UN member governments were able to muster only 500, who could do little more than hold the Mogadishu airport. Under these circumstances the representative of the UN secretary-general was left in an untenable position as the prospect of a major humanitarian disaster loomed. In December the U.S. suddenly offered to send an armed force of 30,000 ("Operation Restore Hope") to ensure the delivery of humanitarian relief, and the Security Council authorized the use of all necessary means for this objective. Under these circumstances the SRSG was able to

oversee a successful effort to save the lives of at least 250,000 people, avert further mass starvation, and, in the process, create sufficient security to open the way for a reconciliation conference.

The role of the SRSG took a major turn in April 1993 as the U.S. relinquished its singular military role to a smaller 18,000-strong UN multilateral force (UNOSOM II). The Security Council expanded the mandate for this force beyond providing security for humanitarian relief to include peace enforcement with the aim of creating conditions for reconciliation and reconstruction of the Somali nation. In June this force sustained the UN's biggest loss since the Congo operation three decades earlier; 24 Pakistanis were killed in an ambush on June 5, and later that month five Moroccans and two more Pakistanis were killed. The UN, with strong military backing from the U.S., responded by trying to capture the clan leader believed responsible for the ambush, General Mohamed Farah Aidid. This campaign suddenly collapsed when on October 3, 1993, Aidid's forces ambushed a group of U.S. soldiers, killing 18 and wounding 78. The U.S. government blamed the UN for the loss and immediately announced that all of its troops would be withdrawn within six months, thereby placing the UN mission under the SRSG in an untenable situation once more. UNOSOM II was finally extricated from Somalia in March 1995. The UN Secretariat has sought to sort out this complex series of events and often bitter lessons in a major study, *The United Nations and Somalia, 1992 -- 1996*.[19] But much controversy still surrounds the U.S. disengagement from this operation, UN mandates that changed in ways that often seemed to ignore realities in the field, and the role of the UN and its special representatives. One thing is clear, however: there was never a peace settlement providing a viable framework within which an SRSG could operate, as prevailed in Cambodia, Mozambique, and Haiti.

Despite this mixed record, the huge human and material costs of complex emergencies should be sufficient reasons for the Security Council and the General Assembly to reaffirm their support for more strenuous preventive diplomacy by the secretary-general, including frequent use of personal envoys. Member states should provide greater funding and political backing to enable the secretary-general to dispatch quickly and quietly as many personal envoys as he/she deems necessary to investigate incipient conflicts and to explore whether and how third-party mediation might help to avert mass violence.

Attracting the Right People

Two criteria in selecting individuals have always been and remain paramount. First, the person must have the full confidence of the secretary-general, since the appointee must be able to function in the field and be perceived by all concerned as a bona fide surrogate of the secretary-general. Second, special representatives and personal envoys must be acceptable to the parties to the dispute in which the UN is intervening. The latter criterion is especially important when the emissary is primarily engaged in mediating a dispute. In recent complex emergencies where the parties are still at war and where humanitarian and military operations are also under way, it may be impossible to gain the consent of all parties, and other criteria may come into play, including diplomatic experience, familiarity with techniques to pressure parties to negotiate (e.g., sanctions or threats of force), and extensive knowledge of the region and peoples in conflict. Finally, a

familiarity with one or more UN agencies engaged in the operations and the larger political context is also desirable.

Special representatives must also be able to take criticism, however unfair. They are often blamed for an operation's failure, even though they have little real authority over the agencies that they are attempting to coordinate and much less influence over the actions of the local factions and any foreign powers that might be backing one side or the other. Several recent surrogates of the secretary-general have attracted extraordinary attention from the international media and become lightning rods in the U.S. domestic debate about the cost and effectiveness of UN operations.

While it obviously helps if all emissaries of the secretary-general are knowledgeable about the internal workings of the UN, this may be less of a requirement for personal envoys than for special representatives, who must oversee the work of largely autonomous UN relief and other service agencies, plus UN military commanders where peacekeeping and other troops are deployed. In all cases, shrewd political skills have been shown to be the most crucial qualification for a representative or envoy of the secretary-general. Such skills can create common ground among local antagonists to strengthen and sustain cooperation among the external actors that have joined the intervention, and maintain backing from key UN members and the Secretariat.

The challenge for the secretary-general is twofold: to expand the pool of outstanding and available candidates to serve as mission leaders, and to reform the UN personnel system so that it will respond more quickly and effectively to particular staffing needs of these special operations in preventive diplomacy and peace building. The latter task will require many years and the cooperation of many departments and agencies. Boutros-Ghali opened the way for greater responsiveness within the Secretariat by creating the Department of Political Affairs and with improved coordination among the under-secretaries-general of Political Affairs, Peacekeeping Operations, and Humanitarian Affairs. Kofi Annan's plan to strengthen coordination through a Senior Management Group should also help. Meanwhile, important progress is possible and needed in fulfilling the first task of expanding the pool of qualified candidates to lead these missions as the secretary-general's surrogate.

Traditionally, most personal envoys and special representatives have come from within the senior ranks of UN officials and from among other public servants with long experience in UN affairs. The advantages of recruiting within the UN are obvious. These men and women are generally well-known to the secretary-general, whose personal trust and confidence in any candidate is an important criterion for selection. Those inside the system are also likely to be much more familiar than any outsider would be

on such crucial matters as what resources can be marshaled to broker and implement a settlement, how to forge interagency cooperation, and what will be acceptable to the Security Council and other member states with special interests in a particular conflict. Moreover, in addition to significant expertise and familiarity with a broad range of conflict resolution skills, substantial experience with internal UN operations and the interagency process is especially important for special representatives in complex emergencies.

But as Boutros-Ghali noted in his *Supplement to An Agenda for Peace*, recent cutbacks in senior UN Secretariat staff will require that a greater proportion of his surrogates be recruited from outside the UN system. For reasons noted earlier, priority should be given to assigning

the most outstanding candidates from within the UN system to represent the secretary-general in managing UN operations in large-scale complex emergencies. Finding qualified and available candidates outside the UN, even for short-term, nonresident attempts to explore the possibilities for preventive diplomacy, will be difficult.

These individuals need to be knowledgeable about the target country or countries but must be seen by all of the antagonists as impartial. They usually must satisfy several special concerns, such as language skills, ethnicity, religion, or race. They must avoid criticism of representing the interests of one or more foreign powers with a stake in the outcome of

the conflict. Another major hurdle is that individuals who are excellent candidates cannot or will not uproot their professional and personal lives in order to immerse themselves in what can be an indefinite period of service to the UN. Thus, even though the secretary-general may only need a handful of new surrogates each year, the net has to be cast widely for candidates to be personal envoys and special representatives.

The recruitment and vetting process does not have to be costly or require another layer of bureaucracy. The candidate pool presumably will consist of people around the world who are easily identified for their past service to the UN, regional, and other international organizations and agencies, or at the highest levels of their national governments and ministries of foreign and national security affairs. Boutros-Ghali asked member states to propose distinguished individuals with relevant experience.

In addition, the UN can draw on various nongovernmental transnational groups to help identify candidates. Members of the Commission on Global Governance, the Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict, and the International Negotiators Network of The Carter Center are three examples. Over the years the UN has had many "eminent persons groups" which represent another obvious source for nominations.

The UN's Department of Political Affairs has the capability to develop an accurate and up-to-date data bank on potential envoys and SRSGs, in order to supply the secretary-general on short notice with a list of candidates whose background, interests, and availability appear most suited for the task at hand. The staff would also need to maintain a parallel data bank on individuals within the UN system with relevant experience for special assignments, so that they could be quickly identified and the process of freeing them for temporary duty on a pending special mission expedited. Experience shows that the most difficult recruitment challenge is not to identify capable people but to locate those who are able to disengage from whatever currently occupies them and to make themselves available when they are most needed.

If the pool of candidates for these sensitive assignments is to be expanded, then ways must be found to develop personal ties with key UN personnel and familiarity with UN interagency networks. At a minimum, the Department of Political Affairs could draw in various UN experts

and scholars from the major universities and think tanks in the New York vicinity and beyond, for periodic meetings with the cohort of recent and prospective emissaries from outside the UN system.

Training

Improving the readiness of prospective SRSGs and personal envoys poses another set of challenges for the Secretariat. For candidates from outside the UN, perhaps a geographically diverse group of those with the highest chances of being asked to serve could be included in periodic workshops and intensive "refresher courses" on UN operations in preventive diplomacy and complex emergencies. There are obvious diplomatic sensitivities and other constraints that limit the UN's ability to do contingency planning or recruit emissaries for potential conflicts because the countries deemed to be at risk will likely resent such efforts as an infringement of their sovereignty.

To improve the prospects for success of future missions, there are several low-cost steps that could be taken by the UN and its supporters to prepare better those selected to represent the secretary-general in conflict situations. One weakness, often cited by senior UN officials, is an absence of staff and leadership training. UN diplomats and veterans of complex emergencies frequently express the hope that future representatives and envoys will be better prepared and briefed on the lessons learned from previous operations.

Ideally, the UN should have its own staff college, a proposal that has been talked about for years without ever gaining sufficient political and financial support. A more limited training facility to satisfy the specific concerns of this report might be a "UN Institute for Preventive Action and Peace Operations." Such an institute could offer a variety of short- and longer-term courses open to prospective special representatives and personal envoys, UN secretariat staff, personnel from the specialized agencies, bilateral donors, national officials charged with working on UN issues, and NGOs that are increasingly finding it necessary to coordinate their activities in complex emergencies and other UN peace operations. Finding even minimal resources for such an institute seems extremely unlikely in the current budget crisis, however.

There are training capabilities currently scattered throughout the UN system. Examples include: UNDP and UNHCR programs to prepare people for work in complex emergencies; a more general UN training center for lower-ranking staff that was established by the International Labor Organization in Turin, Italy; the UN Institute for Training and Research in Geneva; and the more academic research and workshops of the UN University in Tokyo. None are really appropriate for the needs of SRSGs and personal envoys, however.

National centers, notably the new Lester B. Pearson Canadian International Peacekeeping and Training Centre, are attempting to fill this vacuum. On a smaller scale, the nongovernmental International Peace Academy, located near the UN headquarters in New York, has for many years also played an important educational function for those engaged in UN peace operations.

Perhaps one day the international community will find the political will and the financial means to equip the UN with a training and research capability for the diplomatic side of peace

operations comparable to the World Bank's Economic Development Institute or the U.S. State Department's Foreign Service Institute. The UN, after all, remains the most authoritative voice of the international community, and it will continue to be the main arbiter of international involvement in local and regional disputes, authorizing, monitoring, and validating the actions of others.

Unfortunately, the UN Secretariat does not have now, nor is likely to have, the money and political support from member states to create even a small training institute for this purpose. A less ambitious step would be to commission a multidisciplinary team of experienced practitioners from the humanitarian, diplomatic, and security elements of recent complex emergencies to compile a case book that would summarize the histories of each UN intervention in ways that might be useful for future special representatives, their staff, and the representatives of other agencies likely to be involved in such operations. The UN publishes a useful but general "Blue Book" series on previous peace operations.[20] More focused and salient briefing materials are needed on representing and working within the UN, as more personal envoys and special representatives are recruited from outside the UN.

With a little additional funding, the same team of experts who compile the case studies and briefing materials might prepare more technical and operational handbooks. These would be for the men and women working on the front lines of complex emergencies, and would include standard operating procedures and requirements as well as ways for effecting better interagency cooperation under difficult local circumstances. Such materials might be similar to the very useful handbooks that the International Peace Academy has produced for generations of UN peacekeeping forces.

Special Financing for Representatives and Envoys

Providing minimal staff support, communication links, and transportation for personal envoys, not to mention the more elaborate but essential facilities in the field to sustain the work of special representatives, has become increasingly problematic.[21] A contingency fund would be a major step forward in ensuring money to deploy special representatives and personal envoys. The UN is committed to a "no-growth" biannual general operating budget of $2.6 billion in 1996 -- 1997 and in 1998 -- 1999. In the latter cycle the Secretariat proposed that $70 million be reserved to meet unfunded Security Council mandates, for which the secretary-general and his special representatives will be held accountable.[22] No provisions were made in 1996 -- 1997 for extending existing mandates beyond their original termination dates, or for the establishment of new missions, notably for Haiti and Guatemala--two operations that ironically were strongly pushed by the United States, the country that is most delinquent in meeting its own financial obligations to the UN. The costs of these unfunded operations are being absorbed under the current budget ceiling, to the detriment of other commitments in Angola, Haiti, Mozambique, and elsewhere. This grim situation leaves the UN exposed to unfair accusations of not implementing approved mandates adequately.

Finding sufficient funds and staff, even for the small and inexpensive missions by personal envoys, has become a major problem for the UN Secretariat. The proposed $70 million for the

special missions during 1998 -- 1999, even if approved, will not be available for over a year and will probably require a Security Council mandate to be used.

At least one prominent UN member sees the need for a special discretionary account to allow the secretary-general the flexibility and readily available resources to use personal envoys. Norway has proposed a major step toward alleviating this small but critical financial problem. In her speech at the 51st Session of the General Assembly, former Prime Minister Brundtland announced:

Norway is ready to make an extra contribution. We offer to establish a *Fund for Preventive Action* here at the UN. We pledge to fill it with several million dollars, and we invite other governments to join. That fund would facilitate immediate deployment of first class expertise for pro-active diplomacy.[23]

Only with the creation of a special fund as proposed by Norway is the secretary-general ever likely to have even the small modicum of diplomatic freedom to try to prove the value of SRSGs and envoys.

In addition to the efforts of Norway and other governments who support a more active role for the UN in preventive diplomacy, the secretary- general might also consider naming a small group of prominent individuals to articulate the case for expanding and endowing the fund. In the short-term, it may be necessary to raise private funds. If the value of this enhanced capability of the Secretariat can be demonstrated, this might persuade governments who are skeptical or opposed to the idea to change their positions. The fund might also serve as another important sign of the growing public/private partnerships that have become essential to UN-led relief, reconciliation, and reconstruction efforts in many war-torn countries, where preventive diplomacy was not tried or proved inadequate. There is, however, the risk that such private support would divert scarce resources from essential nongovernmental humanitarian activities, or it might merely lead governments to shirk further their responsibilities to fund the UN. If governments mean what they say about the value of preventive diplomacy, this fund should be part of the UN's regular budget. In any event, it must not become an excuse for governments to avoid paying their fair share for UN preventive diplomacy and peacebuilding.

This group of prominent advocates of UN preventive diplomacy could also serve an important public education function and enlist practical support for special representatives. For example, they could work with the UN Business Council to enlist financial and in-kind contributions (e.g., communication equipment, transportation, and other essentials). In countries where there is strong public support for the UN and for peacekeeping, perhaps United Nations associations and other foreign affairs groups could design special programs and initiatives aimed at winning greater financial and political support for the Secretariat's capacity to do preventive diplomacy and support interventions in complex emergencies.

While it is difficult to forecast the number and cost of personal envoy missions that would be tolerated by the Security Council and that the secretary-general could usefully undertake in any year, a discretionary Fund for Preventive Action, if maintained at around $10 million, would make a huge difference. These funds could cover a wide range of fact-finding, confidence-

building, and low-key mediation efforts each year. The money would meet the salary reimbursements and per diem expenses of personal envoys and their staffs and pay for in-country support, secure satellite communication links, chartered air transport, and other needs.

Coordinating Efforts of Other International Actors

The UN has not, could not, and should not attempt to monopolize preventive diplomacy. One or more regional and subregional organizations, national governments, and nongovernmental organizations may have comparative advantages in preventing intrastate or interstate conflicts. But in all cases, it helps for the secretary-general to have a clear sense of current developments and assurance that the most effective division of labor among the governments and organizations is accomplished. Early engagement by the secretary-general's personal envoy is also desirable should the conflict escalate and more substantial international efforts be required. The UN does not always have to be in the lead, but it should be sufficiently engaged to ensure that various initiatives are not at cross-purposes or that local actors do not attempt to exploit differences among outside actors for their own advantage.

The UN has begun to work out new "burden-sharing" arrangements with regional and subregional organizations, despite persistent uncertainties about their institutional capabilities and the willingness of their members to provide financial and political backing. The most extensive cooperation has been with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). In the former republics of the Soviet Union, regional organizations have both contributed to third-party mediation in Tajikistan and Georgia, while the OSCE has taken the lead in Latvia, Estonia, Chechnya, and Nagorno-Karabakh. The active but discreet preventive diplomacy by the OSCE high commissioner on national minorities also provides early warning, fact-finding, and confidence-building functions in lieu of UN personal envoys or special representatives. Other regional bodies, such as the Organization of American States (OAS) and the Organization of African Unity (OAU), are beginning to show a greater interest in preventive action, including more active opposition to military coups, severe human rights abuse, and intergroup violence within states.

But the need for the UN to lead, advise, or support regional efforts remains paramount. In Africa the OAU has recently adopted a new mechanism for preventing and resolving conflicts within member countries, although without strong backing from the UN, this hopeful development will likely founder amid proliferating crises across the continent. Also essential is more robust UN oversight of subregional peacekeeping and peace enforcement, such as the efforts in Liberia initiated by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and led by Nigeria, which preceded the July 1997 elections. In the Great Lakes region, former Tanzanian president Julius Nyerere and the five central African heads of government are working to head off worse violence in Burundi and promote greater regional stability and cooperation. Strong and sustained backing for the SRSG to the region, Mohamed Sahnoun, will be vital. African-led initiatives in conflict prevention and resolution should support and be supported by the work of the UN. Unfortunately, the UN is so constrained by current commitments and cutbacks of human and financial resources that it is unable to give adequate support to regional and other international organizations as they attempt to prevent or end violent conflict.

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Personal envoys and special representatives of the secretary-general undertake some of the most difficult and vital missions in post -- Cold War diplomacy. Their work in support of others recalls the words of Machiavelli: "There is nothing more difficult to take in hand, more perilous to conduct, or more uncertain in its success, than to take the lead in the introduction of a new order of things."

Inexplicably, those who are called upon to represent the secretary- general to help sustain or reestablish national or international order are expected do so most often with inadequate staff and logistical support. Typically, Security Council members will authorize missions that lack the equipment and backup that they would consider minimal for their own representatives on far more routine and less dangerous diplomatic assignments.

As member states deliberate about how the UN might better promote their collective security, they must not overlook the role that the Charter grants to the secretary-general to use personal envoys and appoint special representatives. In today's violence-prone world, no one can seriously question the need for more timely and impartial third-party mediation. The UN secretary-general has a mandate to explore these uncharted waters. Personal envoys and special representatives may be the best guides.

Appendix

Special/Personal
Representatives or Envoys
of the Secretary-General
Afghanistan Norbert Heinrich Holl (Germany)
Head of UN Special Mission (10.7.96)*

Angola Alioune Blondin Beye (Mali)
Special Representative (28.5.93)

Burundi Marc Faguy (Canada)
Special Representative (26.12.95)

Cambodia Benny Widyono (Indonesia)
Special Representative (5.4.94)

Cyprus Han Sung-Joo (Republic of Korea)
Special Representative (1.5.96)

Georgia Edouard Brunner (Switzerland)
Special Envoy (18.5.93)

Great Lakes Mohamed Sahnoun (Algeria)
Special Representative (designate)

Greece and Former Yugoslav
Republic of Macedonia

Cyrus Vance (United States)
Special Envoy (1.8.93)

Guyana/Venezuela Sir Alister McIntyre (Grenada)
Personal Representative (1.2.90)

Haiti Enrique Ter Horst (Venezuela)
Special Representative (5.3.96)

Liberia Anthony B. Nyakyi (Tanzania)
Special Representative (11.11.94)

Middle East Chinmaya R. Gharekhan (India)
Special Representative to the Multilateral
Negotiations on the Middle East Peace Talks
(1.1.93)

Sierra Leone Berhanu Dinka (Ethiopia)
Special Envoy (1.2.95)

Sudan Vieri Traxler (Italy)
Special Envoy for Humanitarian Affairs
(24.5.93)
Occupied Territories Peter Hansen (Denmark)
Special Coordinator in the Occupied Territories
(Provisional) (30.10.96)

Tajikistan Gerd Merrem (Germany)
Special Representative (3.5.96)

Western Sahara Sahabzada Yaqub-Khan (Pakistan)
Special Representative (24.3.93)

Erik Jensen (Malaysia)
Acting Special Representative and Chairman of
the Identification Commission (1.6.94)

Yugoslavia (Former) Jacques Klein (United States)
Transitional Administrator UNTAES
(UN Transitional Administration for Eastern

Slavonia, Baranja, and Western Sirmium)
(1.2.96)

Henryk Sokalski (Poland)
Special Representative and Chief of Mission for
UNPREDEP (UN Preventive Deployment
Force in the Former Yugoslav Republic
of Macedonia) (Mid-March 1996)

Special Assignments
Secretary-General's
Preventive and
Peacekeeping Efforts

Lakhdar Brahimi (Algeria)
Personal Representative in support of the
secretary-general's preventive and
peacemaking efforts

Sylvia Fuhrman
Special Representative for UNIS (1.1.67)

Gertrude Mongella (Tanzania)
Special Envoy on Women and Development
(1.1.96)

Vladimir Petrovsky (Russia)
Personal Representative for Conference on
Disarmament (also Director-General of UN
Office in Geneva) (5.12.93)

Joseph Verner Reed (United States)
Special Representative for Public Affairs
(15.3.92)

Note: This list was provided by the Office of the Spokesman for the Secretary-General, 28 January 1997.

* Dates of appointment are in parentheses (day.month.year).

Notes and References

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2. Office of the Spokesman for the Secretary-General, *Special/Personal Representatives or Envoys of the Secretary-General, 1997.* According to the spokesman, this list was current as of January 28, 1997. It does not include the names of many of the most important SRSGs and personal envoys whose assignments had ended by this date. For a more comprehensive status report, see: U.N. General Assembly, Fifth Committee, *Special Representatives, Envoys and Related Positions. Report of the Secretary General,* A/C.5/50/72m, 20 September 1996. According to this report the total number of individuals serving in high-level special positions that Boutros-Ghali had created in response to Security Council mandates or at his personal discretion, peaked at 44 in 1994, and by July 31, 1996, had dropped to 32. This list differs from the one provided on January 28, 1997, by the secretary-general's spokesman, because it includes force commanders and several special positions unrelated to peace operations, and recent personnel shifts.

3. United Nations, "Renewing the United Nations: A Program for Reform," Report of the Secretary-General, 14 July 1997.

4. UN General Assembly, Fifth Committee, *Special Representatives, op. cit.* p. 1.

5. Edward Mortimer, "A Useful Scapegoat," *Financial Times*, September 25, 1996. Mortimer attributes to then U.S. ambassador to the UN Madeleine Albright the belief that the secretary-general should be only the UN's chief administrator.

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7. See: Donald J. Puchala, "Mediators and Conciliators," in Benjamin Rivlin and Leon Gordenker, eds., *The Challenging Role of the UN Secretary General* (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 1993), pp. 85 -- 91.

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9. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, *An Agenda for Peace*, Report of the Secretary-General pursuant to the statement adopted by the Summit Meeting of the Security Council on 31 January 1992, A/47/277-S/24111, 17 June 1992.

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13. Gro Harlem Brundtland, Prime Minister of Norway, Address to the 51st Session of the UN General Assembly, New York, 23 September 1996, p. 2.

14. See: Brian Urquhart, *Ralph Bunche, An American Life* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1993), Chap. 16, "The End of the Mediation and the Nobel Prize."

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16. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, *Supplement to an Agenda for Peace*, Position paper of the Secretary-General on the occasion of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the United Nations, A/50/60-S/1995/1, 3 January 1995.

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18. Jonathan Moore, *The UN and Complex Emergencies,* Rehabilitation in Third World Transitions (Geneva: United Nations Research Institute for Social Development, 1996).

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21. Moore, *op. cit.*, p. 60.

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Members of the Carnegie Commission On Preventing Deadly Conflict

David A. Hamburg, *Cochair*
President Emeritus
Carnegie Corporation of New York

Cyrus R. Vance, *Cochair*
Partner
Simpson Thacher & Bartlett

Gro Harlem Brundtland
Former Prime Minister of Norway

Virendra Dayal
Former Under-Secretary-General and
Chef de Cabinet to the Secretary-General
United Nations

Gareth Evans
Deputy Leader of the Opposition
and Shadow Treasurer
Australia

Alexander L. George
Graham H. Stuart Professor Emeritus
of International Relations
Stanford University

Flora MacDonald
Former Foreign Minister of Canada

Donald F. McHenry
University Research Professor of Diplomacy
and International Affairs
Georgetown University

Olara A. Otunnu
President
International Peace Academy

David Owen
Chairman
Humanitas

Shridath Ramphal
Cochairman
Commission on Global Governance

Roald Z. Sagdeev
Distinguished Professor
Department of Physics
University of Maryland

John D. Steinbruner
Senior Fellow
Foreign Policy Studies Program
The Brookings Institution

Brian Urquhart
Former Under-Secretary-General
for Special Political Affairs
United Nations

John C. Whitehead
Chairman
AEA Investors Inc.

Sahabzada Yaqub-Khan
Former Foriegn Minister of Pakistan
Chairman, Board of Trustees
Aga Khan International University--Karachi

Special Advisor to the Commission

Herbert S. Okun
Visiting Lecturer on International Law
Yale Law School
Former U.S. Representative to the German
Democratic Republic and to the UN

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Minister for Foreign Affairs
Republic of Indonesia

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Douglas Dillon Professor of Government
John F. Kennedy School of Government
Harvard University

Robert Badinter
President Emeritus
Constitutional Council of France

Carol Bellamy
Executive Director
United Nations Children's Fund

Harold Brown
Counselor
Center for Strategic and
International Studies

McGeorge Bundy*
Scholar-in-Residence
Carnegie Corporation of New York

Jimmy Carter
The Carter Center of Emory University

Lori Damrosch
Professor of Law
Columbia University School of Law

Francis M. Deng
Senior Fellow
Foreign Policy Studies Program
The Brookings Institution

Sidney D. Drell
Professor and Deputy Director
Stanford Linear Accelerator Center
Stanford University

Lawrence S. Eagleburger
Senior Foreign Policy Advisor
Baker Donelson Bearman & Caldwell

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Council on Foreign Relations

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Vice President
National Security Research
RAND

Andrew J. Goodpaster
Chairman
The Atlantic Council of the United States

Mikhail S. Gorbachev
The Gorbachev Foundation

James P. Grant**
Executive Director
United Nations Children's Fund

Lee H. Hamilton
United States House of Representatives

Theodore M. Hesburgh
President Emeritus
University of Notre Dame

Donald L. Horowitz
James B. Duke Professor of Law and
Political Science
Duke University School of Law

Michael Howard
President
International Institute for Strategic Studies

Karl Kaiser
Director
Research Institute of the German Society
for Foreign Affairs

Nancy Landon Kassebaum Baker
Baker Donelson Bearman & Caldwell
Sol M. Linowitz
Honorary Chairman
The Academy for Educational Development

Richard G. Lugar
United States Senate

Michael Mandelbaum
Christian A. Herter Professor of American Foreign Policy
The Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies
The Johns Hopkins University

Robert S. McNamara
Former U.S. Secretary of Defense

William H. McNeill
Professor Emeritus of History
University of Chicago

Sam Nunn
Partner
King & Spalding

Olusegun Obasanjo
President
Africa Leadership Forum

Sadako Ogata
The High Commissioner for Refugees
United Nations

Javier Pérez de Cuéllar
Former Secretary-General
United Nations

Condoleezza Rice
Provost
Stanford University

Elliot L. Richardson
Milbank, Tweed, Hadley & McCloy

Harold H. Saunders
Director of International Affairs
Kettering Foundation

George P. Shultz
Distinguished Fellow
Hoover Institution on War, Revolution, and Peace
Stanford University

Richard Solomon
President
United States Institute of Peace

James Gustave Speth
Administrator
United Nations Development Programme

Desmond Tutu
Archbishop Emeritus of Cape Town

James D. Watkins
President

Consortium for Oceanographic Research
and Education

Elie Wiesel
President
The Elie Wiesel Foundation for Humanity

I. William Zartman
Jacob Blaustein Professor of International
Organizations and Conflict Resolution
Director of African Studies and Conflict Management Programs
The Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies
The Johns Hopkins University

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*** Deceased September 1996.**
**** Deceased February 1995.**

About the Authors

Cyrus R. Vance, cochair of the Commission, is a partner in the New York law firm of Simpson Thacher & Bartlett. Mr. Vance was U.S. secretary of state from 1977 to 1980 during the Carter administration. He was secretary of the army from 1962 to 1964 and deputy secretary of defense from 1964 to 1967. From 1991 to 1993 Mr. Vance served as personal envoy of the secretary-general of the United Nations in the Yugoslavia crisis and as UN cochairman of the International Conference on the Former Yugoslavia (Lord Owen was the European Community cochairman of the conference). Mr. Vance was also personal envoy of the secretary-general in Nagorno-Karabakh and South Africa in 1992, and in the negotiations between Greece and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM) in 1993. He has served as special representative of the president in civil disturbances in Detroit (1967), in the Cyprus crisis (1967), and in Korea (1968), and he was one of two U.S. negotiators at the Paris Peace Conference on Vietnam (1968 -- 1969).

David A. Hamburg, cochair of the Commission, is president emeritus of Carnegie Corporation of New York, having served as president of the Corporation from 1983 to 1997. In addition to holding academic posts at Stanford and Harvard universities, he has been president of the Institute of Medicine, National Academy of Sciences. He has also been president and chairman of the board of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. Dr. Hamburg has served on the Chief of Naval Operations Executive Panel and currently serves on the Defense Policy Board of the U.S. Department of Defense. He is also a member of the President's Committee of Advisors on Science and Technology. He has long been concerned with the

problems of human aggression and violence, especially with violence prevention and conflict resolution, and he is the author or coauthor of numerous publications on these subjects.