

## Defending Peacekeeping Mandates: the Use of Force Summary of the March 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2011 Panel Discussion

**Introduction: Ambassador John McNee**

Former Permanent Representative of Canada to  
the United Nations

**Chair: Richard Gowan**

Associate Director of Crisis Diplomacy and  
Global Peace Operations

**Panelists: General Maurice Baril (ret'd)**

Former Chief of the Defence Staff For Canada,  
Former Military Advisor to the Secretary-  
General of the United Nations and Former  
Inspector General in the Department of  
Peacekeeping Operations

**Mona Khalil**

Senior Legal Officer in the United Nations  
Office of Legal Affairs

Following opening remarks by Ambassador John McNee, Permanent Representative of Canada to the UN, and introductory comments by Mr. Gowan, General Baril discussed how robust peacekeeping should be viewed as one of many tools at the disposal of the Security Council, the Secretariat, and mission leadership. Ms. Khalil discussed the legal prerogative for the use of force within peacekeeping, emphasizing judicial accountability to enhance greater credibility and morale within missions.

While the selective use of tactical force within peacekeeping missions is widely accepted, overcoming challenges of political consensus will be required to consolidate an effective strategy. In this respect, the panelists focused on several perceived shortcomings of the use of force in the context of today's peacekeeping initiatives. Referring back to principles outlined in the Brahimi Report, many participants reiterated that projection of force should not function in a vacuum, but must operate in conjunction with political processes. This can include enhancing dialogue within the TCC's own political apparatus and implementing greater integration with local political processes.

In addition to political obstacles, other shortcomings addressed during the discussion included the strategic implications of operational constraints. Mandates, as discussed by participants, must more clearly and actively reflect resource requirements and what can be asked of peacekeepers. It was also noted that ambiguity within mandates and rules of engagement persists regarding self-defense and defense of mandate, and that improved training and education for troops could enhance overall effectiveness and mission credibility.

Regardless of the differences of opinion about how and when use of force is best utilized, there was clear recognition that in order for peacekeepers to successfully engage in robust actions, missions must be better resourced with clear and functional command and control and communications systems. Additionally, political strategies – including mediation, dialogue, and negotiation – must remain paramount. The session ended with a

reflection that the debate should not get sidetracked in terminological arguments about what “robust peacekeeping” means, but instead should focus on negotiating substance first and vocabulary second.