

Contributor Profile: The Republic of Serbia

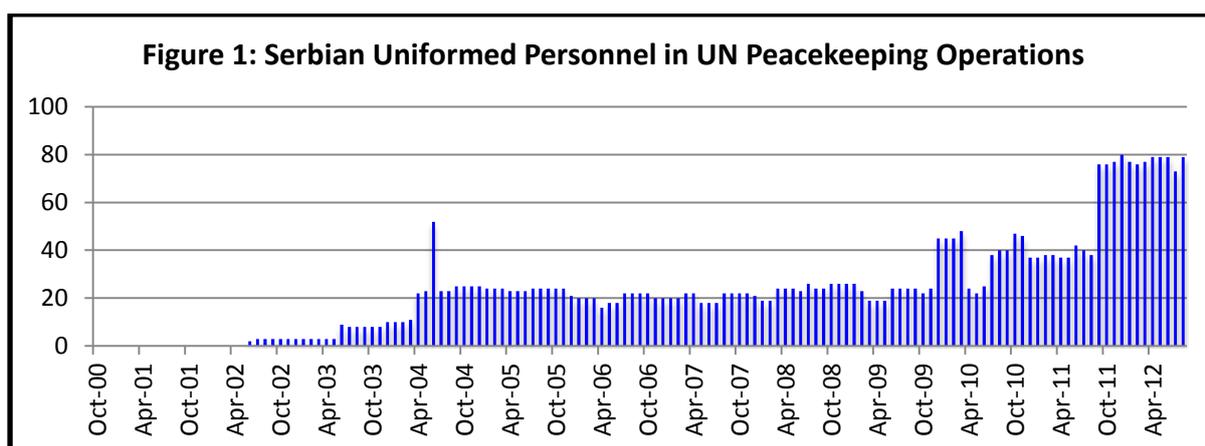
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Active Armed Forces ¹	Helicopters	Defense Budget	Uniformed UN Peacekeepers	UN Contribution Breakdown	Other Significant Deployments ²
28,184 World Ranking (size): 79 Army: ³ 12,260 Air: 4,262 Training Command: 3,013 MoD: 6,826	Attack: 2 Multi-role: 51 Transport: 7 medium	2010: \$905m (2.37% of GDP) 2011: \$975m (2.12% of GDP)	79 (5 female) (31 August 2012) Ranking: 67 th	MINUSTAH 5 police UNOCI 3 milex UNFICYP 48 (2 police, 46 troops) MONUSCO 8 (2 milex, 6 troops) UNIFIL 5 troops UNMIL 10 (6 police, 4 milex)	EUNAVFO: 2 EUTM Somalia in Uganda: 1
Defense Spending / troop: ⁴ US\$34,594 (compared to global average of approx. US\$59,000)					

Part 1: Recent Trends

The ten years since 2002 have seen Serbia’s steady re-engagement with UN-led peacekeeping after a period of international isolation and hiatus in the 1990s. Serbian military and police personnel have been deployed to eight UN-led operations in this time. In all cases, Serbian contributions have been modest, though increasingly ambitious over time. The largest Serbian contingent is currently to the UNFICYP mission in Cyprus, though a larger phased deployment to the Spanish contingent of UNFIL in Lebanon will take place over 2012-13. Individuals from the Serbian Armed Forces (SAF) also participated in EUNAVFOR Somalia and EUTM Somalia in Uganda in 2012. Serbian peacekeepers have not yet been able to deploy in an independent capacity, but have been attached to or integrated within other national contingents (such as the Hungarian-Slovak contingent in UNFICYP).



Serbia’s contribution to UN peacekeeping follows the fall of authoritarian president Slobodan Milošević in 2001 and has paralleled the country’s wider efforts towards democratic reform and closer integration with European institutions. As part of this process, successive governments have pursued the reform and modernization of the country’s armed forces, police and security services; an endeavor which has gathered pace since the (peaceful) separation of Serbia and Montenegro into two independent states in 2006. As of 2012, the armed forces have been reduced considerably in size (from 105,500 in 2001 to approximately

28,000 today), been placed under democratic civilian control and begun a process of restructuring from a conscript to an all-volunteer force. While funding remains constrained, a [National Defence Strategy](#) (2009), the [National Security Strategy \(NSS\)](#) (2009) and a [White Paper on Defence](#) (2010) all point the way towards a smaller, more professional SAF in the future, with a continued commitment to participate in UN, EU or OSCE-led peacekeeping operations. Serbia signed a [framework agreement with the EU](#) on participation in crisis management operations in June 2011 and a Memorandum of Understanding with the UN on to commit a military contingent to the United Nations Standby Arrangements System in November 2011. In June 2012, Serbia elected a new nationalist government, which has reaffirmed the country's intention to contribute further to UN missions.

Part 2: Decision-Making Process

The decision making process for deploying Serbian troops and police to multinational operations takes place within a strict legislative framework. Key documents include the [Law on Police](#) (2005), the [Law on Defense](#) (2007) and, most recently and importantly, the [Law on the Engagement of the Serbian Armed Forces and other Defence Forces in Multinational Operations outside the Republic of Serbia Borders \(LMNO\)](#) (2009).

The deployment of the SAF and other defence forces (including police and civil actors) to multinational operations is decided on the basis of an Annual Engagement Plan (AEP) (Article 8, LMNO). The AEP is prepared by the MoD (and/or Ministry of Interior (MoI) for police) and proposed by the government for final approval by the Serbian parliament (National Assembly). The National Assembly may also approve the engagement of SAF personnel in multinational operations abroad in ways not envisaged by the AEP "provided [the] security or humanitarian situation ... has considerably deteriorated" (Article 8, [LMNO](#)). "Exceptionally," the government may approve the participation of Serbian defence forces in specifically "humanitarian operations" not envisaged by the AEP in the case of urgent natural disasters and crisis situations.

Parliamentary responsibility for the deployment of police to multinational operations is somewhat less clear, at least with regard to deployments that fall outside of the AEP process. Article 8 of the Law only specifies the need for National Assembly approval "of the participation of SAF personnel in multinational operations," while article 10 states that decisions on the engagement of police and other actors which fall outside the AEP are the responsibility of the government and so potentially not subject to parliamentary oversight.

Part 3: Rationales for Contributing

Serbian attitudes towards UN peacekeeping are influenced by a conflicted historical legacy. On the one hand, many Serbs look back proudly to the important peacekeeping contribution made by the armed forces of the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY), including the participation of over 14,000 SFRY troops in UNEF 1 over 22 rotations. On the other, as part of the former-Yugoslavia, Serbia found itself on the wrong side of the UNPROFOR intervention in the 1990s and faced direct military action by NATO during the Kosovo war of 1999. These experiences have left a deep suspicion of military intervention in general and outright hostility towards all external engagement in the Kosovo question.

Political and Security Rationales: Political and security rationales are prominent in justifying Serbian participation in UN-peacekeeping, though these are not linked in any systematic way to foreign policy goals. "Cooperation and partnership with international security organizations..." is identified as one of the three "vital defence interests" of the Republic of

Serbia in the [Defence Strategy](#) and “participation in multinational operations” is included as one of the four components of Serbian defence in the [Law on Defence](#) (Article 5). This is justified on the basis that “participation in building and maintaining peace in the region and the world is realized by participating in international military cooperation and multinational operations” ([Defence Strategy](#), p.14). Similar narratives are echoed in the [NSS](#) and [White Paper on Defence](#), though it is notable that in all cases these are rather generic and vague in nature. There is no direct linkage in any of the documents between the specific risks and challenges that are seen to characterise the Serbian security environment and the role of multinational operations in meeting these. Participation in peacekeeping also helps demonstrate Serbia’s re-engagement with the norms and practices of European institutions. This connection is not articulated in any formal sense in Serbian foreign policy or security documentation. However, it is implicit in, for example, the country’s [Individual Partnership Action Plan \(IPAP\)](#) with NATO, which includes a commitment to contribute to UNSAS.

Economic Rationales: Economic rationales for contributing to UN-led missions are relevant at the level of individual participants. The [LMNO](#) outlines some financial benefits for personnel deployed on multinational operations, including a pay increase and increased years of service (with every 12 months deployed counted as 18 months for the purposes of pensions and so on) as well as the standard UN *per diem*. Peacekeepers are paid for from the national budget rather than defence budget specifically so there may also be some marginal financial advantage to the Ministry of Defense and Ministry of Interior of sending personnel on UN missions. Even so, in most cases any such benefits are likely to be outweighed by the organisational costs of preparing personnel for multinational roles. At the individual level, the financial benefits of participation may be outweighed by potential career disincentives for returning personnel. Individual participation in multinational missions has not been formally recognised by or integrated within the career structure or promotions process. In the worst cases, returnees appear to have actually missed out on promotion opportunities or favourable assignments due to their participation in overseas missions. This has led to a reticence amongst some personnel to volunteer for multinational operations.

Institutional Rationales: The armed forces of the SFRY had a long tradition of participating in UN peacekeeping. Today’s SAF look back fondly to these legacies and their participation in contemporary operations is generally seen as a reference point for their re-emergent professionalism. It is likewise a visible representation of Serbia’s international “normalization” after the isolation of the Milošević years.

Normative Rationales: Serbian defence documentation emphasizes normative (if generalised) commitments to regional and global peace and security, while the [White Paper on Defence](#) identifies participation in peacekeeping as “an attribute of our responsibility.” The [Defence Strategy](#) and [National Security Strategy](#) both prioritise collective security and the maintenance of international order, specifically through a strengthened role for the UN, OSCE and EU.

Part 4: Barriers to Contributing

Alternative institutional preferences for crisis management: Serbia prioritizes the UN, OSCE and EU for crisis management activities. It is actively hostile to military intervention outside the auspices of the UN.

Alternative political or strategic priorities: Membership in the EU remains a key strategic priority for Serbia, though the EU’s popularity amongst the Serbian public has recently

declined in response to the European financial crisis. Serbia applied to join the EU in 2009 and was granted official candidate status in 2012. Serbia made its first contributions to EU missions in 2012 and these could increase in significance in future if the accession process gathers pace. Serbia's other main strategic priority concerns to the status of Kosovo, with the [National Security Strategy](#) identifying the "unlawfully and unilaterally proclaimed independence of Kosovo" as the "greatest threat to the security of the Republic of Serbia." Under current circumstances, direct Serbian intervention in Kosovo is extremely unlikely and the country is committed to a peaceful solution to the problem. However, the issue remains a thorn in the side of Serbia's relationship with the UN and contributes to narratives of Serbian exceptionalism, discussed below.

Financial costs: The Serbian defence budget remains constrained. UN reimbursements cover much of the cost of Serbian peacekeepers whilst deployed. However, these do not provide for the structural costs of preparing and training personnel to an adequate standard for multinational operations. Serbia spends only the equivalent of 1% of its defense budget on peacekeeping activities, compared to a figure of around 4.7% for its neighbor Croatia.

Discomfort with the expanding UN peacekeeping agenda: Serbia participates in traditional blue helmet peacekeeping or military observer missions. It is actively opposed to more intrusive forms of intervention, particularly "interference in the internal affairs of sovereign states, as well as [the] concept and practice of preventative attacks and military interventionism" ([National Security Strategy](#), p.5).

Exceptionalism: Serbian exceptionalism with regard to peacekeeping derives from the country's experiences during the 1990s, particularly the Kosovo war (1999). This manifests itself as a general suspicion of military interventionism, a continued hostility to the independent status of Kosovo, and the prioritization of bodies such as the UN, OSCE and EU over NATO. To date, Serbia has favored parent contingents for its peacekeepers from states that do not recognize Kosovan independence, though there are increasing indications of greater flexibility on this issue, including under the new nationalist government.

Absence of pressure to contribute: Serbia's small size and recent history means that there is no strong external pressure for it to contribute way to peacekeeping operations in any more substantive way than at present, though Serbia's [IPAP](#) with NATO includes a pledge to participate in UNSAS.

Difficult domestic politics: Serbian domestic politics can be heated and polarized between different political factions. In this context, nationalist parties in the Serbian parliament have sometimes opposed Serbian engagement in multinational operations, arguing instead that the government should prioritise the return of the SAF to Kosovo in a peacekeeping capacity, under UN auspices and on the basis of Annex 2 of UN SCR 1244. Even so, in and of itself, peacekeeping is not an especially charged issue in Serbian politics and a strong political (or foreign policy-driven) narrative or debate on about participating in such missions is mostly absent. Largely for these reasons, support for peacekeeping amongst the Serbian public is lukewarm at best; with a 2006 poll suggesting that only a third of respondents had a positive attitude to the deployment of Serbian forces in multinational operations.

Resistance in the military: The SAF has a broadly positive view of peacekeeping and see it as a marker of their professional identity. Even so, the institutionalization of peacekeeping

within the military, for example through the career structure, has proceeded slowly. It is also noteworthy that the Serbian mission to the UN has no military adviser.

Lack of fit with legislative, procurement and operational timelines: In most cases, the timeframe for the commitment of Serbian personnel to UN-led operations is long-term in the sense that it needs to be planned in advanced through the AEP process, though this can also include the allocation of declared formations for short-notice deployment, for example through UNSAS.

Legal obstacles: The [Serbian Constitution](#) commits "...all state bodies to uphold and protect the state interests of Serbia in Kosovo and Metohija in all internal and foreign political relations." In practice Serbian Kosovo policy has constrained the actors with which it is willing to cooperate in peacekeeping and restricted its engagement in some international. However, there are some signs that these restrictions are relaxing, at least in relation to peacekeeping issues and including discussions over a potential future deployment with Italy.

Part 5: Current Challenges and Issues

There is a general lack of capacity in the Serbian armed forces and police to contribute anything more than individuals or small groups of adequately trained personnel UN-led missions. The Serbian defence budget is small compared to the days of the SFRY and the (ongoing) reform and restructuring of the SAF has had to take in an environment of considerable financial constraint. The armed forces established a [Peacekeeping Operations Centre](#) in 2003 in order to plan, select and train Serbian peacekeepers. They also maintain a "declared company" that is available for peacekeeping missions. Even so, capacity issues within the force structure remain. In particular, there is a general lack of foreign language skills amongst uniformed personnel, an issue which intensifies the pre-training demands of peacekeeping, especially for the police.

Without a clearer and more specific foreign policy rationale for participating in multinational operations, it seems unlikely that Serbian contributions will increase very significantly beyond their current modest levels. At the same time, the institutionalisation of the peacekeeping mission in the military and police is limited. While some financial inducements for deployed personnel have been put in place, there may also be potential career disincentives for participants and few formal mechanisms for knowledge transfer from previous missions.

Part 6: Key Champions and Opponents

Serbia elected a new nationalist president in May 2012 and agreed a new nationalist-led government in June the same year. In opposition, the nationalist parties opposed Serbian participation in peacekeeping operations. Even so, and while the detailed contours of the new government's foreign policy are yet to emerge, early indications suggest considerable continuity with past policy in this area. Institutionally, the main proponent of peacekeeping is the Ministry of Defense, which has taken the lead on the LMNO, the AEP and the establishment of the [Peacekeeping Operations Centre](#). The Ministry of Interior has shown less interest, while during 2008-12, cooperation between the Ministry of Defense and Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the issue was undermined by animosity between the two ministers concerned.

Part 7: Capabilities and Caveats

The small size and relatively constrained funding of the SAF mean that its peacekeeping capabilities are limited and dependent on cooperation/integration with other contingents. Even so, Serbia has particular expertise (and an established track record) in contributing medical teams to UN operations. The deployment of an infantry platoon to UNFICYP and the Serbian contribution to UNFIL indicate that similar, infantry-style contributions may also be possible in future. Since 2002, around 13 per cent of Serbian peacekeepers have been women, with stronger representation in medical and police deployments. The Serbian Ministry of Interior also maintains a paramilitary force (The *Žandarmerija*) which could hypothetically fulfil gendarmery-style roles on future operations. However, its current commitment to internal duties and lack of specific preparation for external deployment make this unlikely in the foreseeable future. At present, Serbian peacekeepers only contribute to traditional UN peacekeeping missions. They are unlikely engage in more robust peace support or peace enforcement activities.

Part 8: Further Reading

[Defence Strategy of the Republic of Serbia](#) (Belgrade: October 2009).

[Law on Engagement of the Serbian Armed Forces and Other Defence Forces in Multinational Operations outside the Republic of Serbia Borders](#) (LMO), *Official Gazette*, No.88-09, 26 October 2009.

Milošević, Marko, “[Small Steps into the Big Picture: Challenges and Obstacles to Serbia’s Participation in Multinational Operations](#),” *Western Balkans Security Observer*, Vol.5:16 (January-March 2010).

[National Security Strategy of the Republic of Serbia](#) (Belgrade: October 2009).

[White Paper on Defence of the Republic of Serbia](#) (Belgrade: Ministry of Defense, 2010).

Notes

¹ Unless otherwise stated, data is drawn from IISS, *The Military Balance 2012* (London: IISS/Routledge, 2012).

² Data from [Republic of Serbia Ministry of Defence website](#).

³ The Navy of Serbia and Montenegro was transferred to Montenegro on independence in 2006. The SAF’s river flotilla is integrated into the Army.

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