

Contributor Profile: The Republic of Macedonia

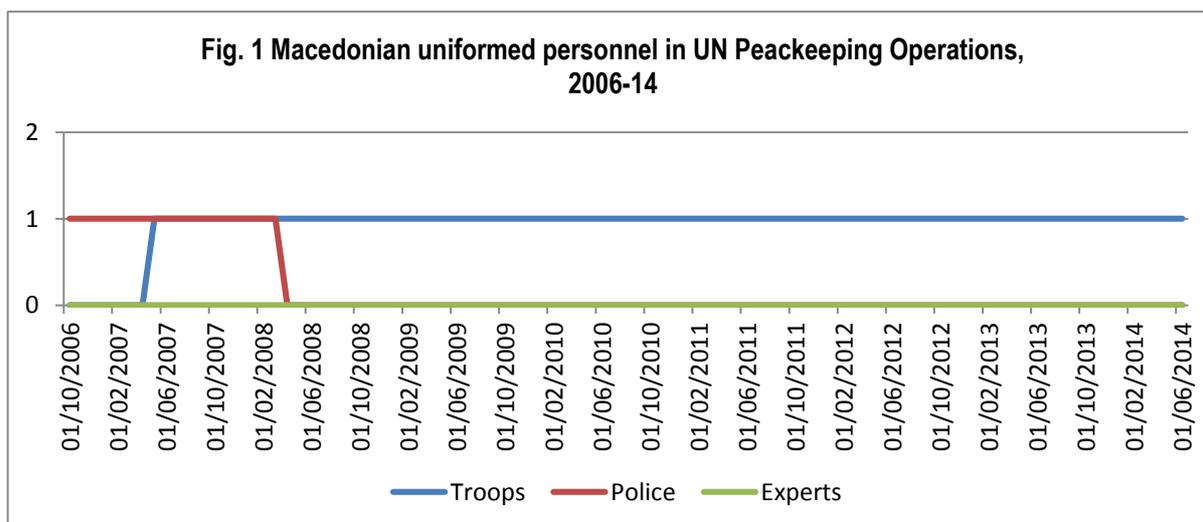
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Active Armed Forces ¹	Helicopters & fixed-wing transport	Defence Budget	UN Peacekeepers	UN Contribution Breakdown	Other Significant Deployments
Active (2014) 8,000 joint	<u>Helicopters</u> 4 attack 6 multirole 2 transport (light)	2013: no data available	1 male (30 June 2014) Ranking: 121 st	UNIFIL 1 troop	ISAF Afghanistan 158
World Ranking (size): 130th	<u>Aircraft</u> 1 transport (light) 5 training	2012: US\$129m (1.27% of GDP) 2011: US\$130m (1.22% of GDP)			EUFOR ALTHEA 11
Defence Spending/ Troop (2012): US\$16,125 compared to a global average of US\$70,000. ²					

Part 1: Recent Trends

Over the past decade, Macedonia has provided only a few peacekeepers to UN peace operations. Instead, it has almost exclusively focused on participation in EU and NATO missions. Macedonia’s participation in UN peace operations began in October 2006 when it deployed a single police officer to UNMIL in Liberia to work on gender issues. Currently, it contributes a single soldier to UNIFIL in Lebanon. Macedonia has offered a limited contribution to UNIFIL since 2007, with one staff officer in charge of collecting information from both sectors East and West based in the mission’s Joint Operational Centre in Naqoura. As such, Macedonia lags behind its neighbors in the Western Balkans in terms of contributions of uniformed personnel to UN missions.



In contrast, Macedonia maintains a larger presence in operations led by regional organizations. The primary reason for contributing to such missions is to support Macedonia’s two principal foreign policy objectives: accession to the EU and NATO. Currently Macedonia contributes 158 soldiers to NATO’s ISAF mission in Afghanistan. It

also contributes a medical team to the EU's ALTHEA mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Moreover Macedonia's recent participation in the EU Battle Groups is believed to further strengthen the country's bid for accession. Since its independence in 1991, Macedonia has sent approximately 3,000 soldiers to international peace operations.³

The scheduled withdrawal of forces from Afghanistan in late 2014 will leave Macedonia with one medical team deployed in Bosnia and Herzegovina and one soldier in Lebanon (UNIFIL). Despite this drawdown, participation in international missions has been institutionalized in practice and is a consistent part of Macedonia's foreign policy. Moreover, the withdrawal from Afghanistan creates space for more thinking and reflection on Macedonia's contributions to other missions. According to President Ivanov, Macedonia will enhance its UN peace operations contributions in the medium-term.⁴ Another reason for debate among policymakers about greater UN participation is the disappointment among Macedonian authorities at the country's diminished prospects of joining NATO in the near-term as a result of the name dispute with Greece. Macedonia is also blocked on its EU integration path for the same reason. After applying for EU membership in 2004 (a year later than Croatia) Macedonia became an official EU Candidate in 2005. However, despite the European Commission's recommendation to open accession talks with the EU in 2009, Greek objections meant led the European Council to reject this option five years in a row.

Part 2: Decision-Making Process

The process of contributing troops, police and civilians is not comprehensively dealt with under a single law, but is dispersed throughout different pieces of legislation. The modalities of sending the Armed Forces abroad vary slightly depending on the organization they would be attached to (EU, UN or NATO etc.). Regardless of the organization, all military deployments must be approved by the Macedonian parliament. The Ministry of Defense is the first to consider any invitation to contribute troops. A draft proposal for sending troops is developed and then sent to the relevant Parliamentary committee, which in Macedonia's case is the Committee on Security and Defense. Once the Committee approves the proposal it is then sent to a Parliament Plenary session.

For participation in NATO missions, changes in procedure will come into effect when Macedonia becomes a NATO member state, which is unlikely to happen very soon due to the unresolved name dispute with Greece. These changes would circumvent the need for approval from the Parliament, instead allowing the government to take the decision without parliamentary approval. The need for such a solution is unclear. For example Croatia (a NATO member state since 2008) does not have such a legal provision. Instead all the powers regarding sending troops abroad are vested in Croatia's Parliament.

It should be noted that because Macedonia's military capacities are rather small, the timing and planning process must usually take into account the considerations of other, larger states on which Macedonia relies for certain strategic components, such as transportation. For example air transport for Macedonian peacekeepers in ISAF is done with the support of the United Kingdom covering financial costs based on MoUs signed between the two countries.

Part 3: Rationales for Contributing

Political rationales: The primary political rationales for Macedonia's contributions to peace operations are related to the perceived contribution they make to Macedonia's prospects for NATO and EU membership. There is a shared feeling among policymakers that, as a candidate country for both organizations, Macedonia should actively participate in their

operations abroad. Specifically in the case of NATO, Macedonia cooperates closely with the United States, which is seen as the country's main advocate for accession. As a result, Macedonia has invested a great deal by sending troops to Afghanistan. It is the fourth largest ISAF contributor based on contributions per capita. Additionally, Macedonia also took part in Operation Iraqi Freedom for several years (2003-08). As per the [Adriatic Charter](#), a plan by officials in Washington to expedite NATO accession for several countries in the Balkans, there has been an increased focus by NATO in promoting regional security cooperation as well as a regional approach to peace operations. This is intertwined with the notion that the countries from the region, which used to import peace, can now export peace.

Economic rationales: From a purely financial perspective, Macedonia's contribution to international peace operations is rather costly: estimated to be around €80 million.⁵ This, of course, comes primarily as a result of the large deployments in Afghanistan. In contrast, the minimal participation in UN-led operations has had a limited impact on Macedonia's finances. For example the costs for transportation and accommodation for Macedonia's single contribution to UNIFIL are covered by the UN, and the salaries from the Ministry of Defense. Yet, there is scepticism among some policymakers in terms of how well the UN's reimbursement policy functions.⁶ There may be additional untapped potential for participation in EU Civilian Missions, where the EU reimburses similarly to the UN.

Security rationales: With its own turbulent past, the Western Balkans region is still transitioning towards positive peace. Deploying troops abroad, primarily to NATO and EU operations, is closely linked with regional security constellations in the Balkans. The region's political elites believe that integration into NATO and then the EU would help to stabilize the region, with these international organizations acting as guarantors of stability. Macedonia is no exception to this. Moreover, deploying the Macedonian Armed Forces to peace operations enhances the skills and experience of Macedonian troops, ultimately contributing to the readiness of Macedonia's security forces.

Institutional rationales: The Macedonian Armed Forces have always taken the lead on the issue of building trust between state institutions and the public. Their engagement in peacekeeping missions, as well as the lack of major political scandals at home, has enhanced their reputation, establishing a high degree of trust among the public. Polls suggest overwhelming support for Macedonia's peacekeepers: 73% of those polled in 2010 assessed the role of the Armed Forces in peace operations positively.⁷ Moreover, participation in multinational operations was seen as providing incentives for the Armed Forces to reform. Because participation with troops abroad is closely tied to Macedonia's ambitions for NATO membership, many of the reforms that were undertaken as part of the preparations for joining NATO missions had to satisfy strict NATO criteria. According to the [Long-term development plan of the defense sector 2011-2020](#) approximately 4,000 soldiers (or half of the Macedonian Armed Forces) should be able to join international missions by 2015.

Normative rationales: As a result of its internal armed conflict in 2001, later resolved through a power sharing agreement, Macedonia is in a position to share and export models of security. This is especially relevant today given the internal, inter-ethnic, and/or religious nature of many of today's conflicts. This puts Macedonia in a position to share know-how when it comes to post-war stabilization and reconstruction as well as preventive diplomacy. In this sense, Macedonia can develop civilian capacities that could be incorporated as part of various UN missions abroad. In the short-term, it can provide expertise and knowledge in policing by sending police officers to peace operations. But with only one police officer deployed abroad

in 2007, Macedonia is lagging behind its neighbors. There is an initial roster of around 200 police officers ready to be deployed abroad and many have already received trainings. Their [tasks might include](#) border security, police training, elections monitoring etc. Apart from policing, Macedonia has the potential to share expertise in conflict management and media trainings for officials in crisis regions.

Participation in operations abroad is also seen as a prestigious undertaking. Being a small country Macedonia boosts its international image through peace operations. The country's first representative to UNIFIL, Lt Col Simeon Mitrev, suggested that through UNIFIL "...many people from distant countries heard about Macedonia for the first time. I find it of particular importance that our army continues its participation in such missions."⁸ Moreover, around 1,400 medals have been awarded to Macedonian soldiers for their contribution to operations abroad, which, if compared to the total number of troops deployed (around 3,000), signals the appreciation and level of professionalism exhibited.

Part 4: Barriers to Contributing

Alternative institutional preferences for crisis management: Because of its foreign policy priorities, Macedonia is currently focused almost exclusively on the EU and NATO when it comes to providing peacekeepers. This, in turn, subtracts from the resources – both financial and military – available for contributing to UN operations.

Alternative political or strategic priorities: Macedonia's priorities lie squarely in securing membership to NATO and the EU. Although it is not yet as engaged in EU operations as it has been in NATO missions, Macedonian officials are making considerable steps in that direction. Macedonia's recent participation in EU Battle Groups together with Belgium, Luxembourg, Spain, Netherlands and Germany (July–December 2014), although costly (if a decision for deployment is adopted by the EU Council of Ministers), is believed to further strengthen the country's bid for accession. Macedonia is the only country from the Western Balkans that, although not an EU member state, has participated in the EU Battle Groups. Additionally, in 2012, Macedonia concluded [an agreement](#) with the EU enabling it to participate in Crisis Management operations, which covers both civilian as well as military missions.

Financial costs: As a result of the European economic crisis and stalemated NATO accession process, Macedonia has significantly reduced its military budget. The biggest chunk of the budget is used for Macedonia's current operations in Afghanistan and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Macedonia currently allocates around 1.1% of its GDP to defense, but there are increasing calls among officials in NATO to increase this figure. With the long-term development plan for the defense sector in Macedonia, the aim is to increase the defense budget to 1.6% of the country's GDP by the end of 2023.⁹

Discomfort with the expanding UN peacekeeping agenda: There are no major debates among civil society and other stakeholders related to the expanding UN peacekeeping agenda.

Exceptionalism: Exceptionalism is not a factor in Macedonia's contribution decisions.

Difficult domestic politics: The belief that participation in peace operations strengthens Macedonia's integration into the Euro-Atlantic community is supported by the vast majority of citizens and rarely questioned. Therefore, participation in peace operations has not been a major point of contention for any of the political parties. Indeed, one of the consequences of

this prevailing attitude is that parliamentary discussions on this matter take the form of rubberstamping decisions rather than substantial debate. In 2008 Macedonia lost eleven members of its armed forces when a helicopter (as part of EU's ALTHEA mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina) crashed on its way back to Macedonia. Even though there were no direct political casualties (i.e. resignation of a Minister) the loss of life resulted in more restricted participation in the mission. For example, Macedonia participated with a helicopter unit from 2006 to 2008, but this was withdrawn and replaced with a medical unit. As of now, there have been no Macedonian casualties in Afghanistan.

Legal obstacles: Generally speaking, there are no legal barriers when it comes to participation in missions abroad. However, the only problematic area that is still not regulated is the participation of police officers in operations where executive forms of policing might be involved. This is because use of firearms by police outside of Macedonia is not permitted. Macedonian police officers would therefore not be able to use firearms (except in self-defense) on missions abroad.¹⁰ For the time being, more suitable postings might include monitoring and mentoring.

Part 5: Current Challenges and Issues

Overall, the government supports participation in peace operations regardless of the political party in power. However, UN participation has never been high on the agenda and has never been singled out. It is considered much less of a priority than participating in NATO and EU operations. The economic downturn since 2009 had a negative impact on the overall national budget, including cuts to the defense budget. The large sums devoted to Afghanistan come at the expense of projects for modernization of the Armed Forces. Dependence on other countries for operational support can be seen as one of the challenges. This is visible when it comes to strategic transportation. Especially relevant for the case of UN peacekeeping is the lack of language skills other than English, an increasing challenge given that many of the recent calls for participation in peace operations have come from French-speaking Africa.

Macedonia's strong relationship with the US might temporarily open new venues for cooperation in peacekeeping as well. There were media reports suggesting joint cooperation between Macedonia's armed forces and the Vermont National Guard in training Senegal's military.¹¹ This arrangement would be beneficial for Macedonia's armed forces because it would be the first time they would be deployed in an African country, which indirectly could further its UN engagement on that continent.

Part 6: Key Champions and Opponents

In the Macedonian context, it is very difficult to discuss peacekeeping away from the mainstream EU and NATO integration agenda. As such, it receives wide support from almost all political forces in the country. Not many organizations from civil society work directly on peacekeeping-related issues. Probably the most active are [Analytica think tank](#) and the [Euro-Atlantic Council of Macedonia](#) (working mainly on advocacy questions). However, there has been some limited discontent, primarily among members of the [academic community](#) and one civic organization called [Lenka](#), concerning missions with more controversial mandates, such as the US-led coalition in Iraq.

Part 7: Capabilities and Caveats

Financial constraints reduce the possibility for greater participation in UN operations. With regards to capabilities, one of the challenging areas is mobility and airlift, specifically the overreliance on partners such as the US and UK. After the helicopter accident in Bosnia and

Herzegovina (2008), where Macedonia participated with two helicopters, the military has not since deployed helicopters in peace operations. Currently the armed forces are equipped with old transporters (vehicles) that are not appropriate for missions abroad. With regards to enabling units, Macedonia has declared one demining unit, which is formed on a specific needs basis. More advanced is the NATO-certified medical section, which includes a level-II hospital (meaning medical check-ups and smaller surgeries are possible). Additionally, there are reconnaissance capabilities that have been employed in Afghanistan and Iraq. In this regard, the military has at its disposal UAVs for data collection.

Part 8. Further Reading

[National Security Strategy 2010-2015](#), *Official Gazette*, No.30, 2010.

[White Paper on Defence](#) (Skopje, 2012)

[Long-term development plan of the defence sector 2011-2020](#) (Skopje, 2011)

[Law on Defence](#), *Official Gazette*, No.185, 2011.

Andreja Bogdanovski, [Macedonia's preparations for civilian contribution to peace operations - the next big thing after the withdrawal from Afghanistan?](#) (Belgrade Centre for Security Policy, July 2014)

Notes

¹ Unless otherwise stated, all data is drawn from the IISS, *The Military Balance 2014* (London: Taylor & Francis for the IISS, 2014).

² There is no data provided in the IISS, *The Military Balance 2014* for Macedonia's defense spending per troop.

³ Srbinovski, Aleksandar, and Dejan Srbinovski, "Ризикуваме животи и чекаме пред порти [We are risking lives and waiting in front of the gates]," *Nova Makedonija*, May 29, 2014.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Srbinovski, Aleksandar, "Осумдесет милиони евра не чинеле мировните мисии [Peace operations cost us eighty million Euros]," *Nova Makedonija*, January 1, 2012.

⁶ Interview with High Level Official from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, February 21, 2014

⁷ Trpkovski, Goce, "Македонците најголеми поддржувачи на своите војски во странство [Macedonians biggest supporters of its military abroad]," *Nova Makedonija*, May 17, 2010.

⁸ Ivan Petrushevski, "Professional and accountable to a higher purpose", *Stit*, December 2012

⁹ Plevski K, Igor, "Десет членки на НАТО со помал процент за одбраната од Македонија [Ten NATO member states with lower defence budgets than Macedonia]." *Dnevnik*, June 25, 2014.

¹⁰ Interview with High Level Official from the Ministry of Interior, February 27, 2014.

¹¹ Srbinovski, Aleksandar, "Македонската армија ќе обучува африкански војници [Macedonian Army will train African soldiers]," *Nova Makedonija*, October 22, 2013.