

**CONDITIONS OF INFLUENCE:
A CANADIAN CASE STUDY IN THE
DIPLOMACY OF INTERVENTION**

John B. Hay

**OCCASIONAL PAPER
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ABSTRACT

When the Canadian government asserted leadership of an intended intervention in eastern Zaire in 1996, it faced the problem of persuading the United States government to contribute forces. What followed was a strenuous effort of Canadian diplomacy, directed at influencing the U.S. government while assembling and managing a multinational coalition capable of mounting a military intervention. The episode, and its disturbing outcome, engaged Canadian political leadership and diplomats in critical issues of Canadian decision-making, multilateral bargaining, Washington politics and the conduct of a large intervention in a remote and complex emergency—all issues of recurring importance in the formulation and execution of Canadian foreign policy.

FOREWORD

The author gratefully acknowledges the wisdom, candour and generous patience of public servants whose contributions were indispensable to the conception and completion of this case study. A rather longer version of the narrative, with theoretical speculations about how Canadian governments generally might influence the United States in intervention cases, is contained in an unpublished 1998 thesis by the author at The Norman Paterson School of International Affairs, Carleton University. This research was supported by the John Holmes Fund and the Canadian Centre for Foreign Policy Development in Ottawa.

ABBREVIATIONS

ADM	Assistant Deputy Minister
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
DART	Disaster Assistance Response Team
DFAIT	Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade
DM	Deputy Minister
DND	Department of National Defence
ex-FAR	ex-Forces Armées Rwandaises
MNF	multinational force
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
OAU	Organization of African Unity
P5	permanent five member states of the UN Security Council
PCO	Privy Council Office
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
ZIT	Zaire Interdepartmental Task Force

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INTRODUCTION

Even with the passage of time, it remains a disturbing episode in the course of Canadian diplomacy. Late in 1996, quite suddenly and untypically, the Canadian government asserted leadership of an international military intervention into eastern Zaire. All at once, under intense pressures of time in a deadly conflict, there was a convergence of two core questions in the conduct of present-day Canadian foreign policy: How best should Canadians contribute to humanitarian intervention abroad? And how best can the Canadian government, in such emergencies, influence the actions of the United States government?

The very oddity of the Canadian response to the crisis in Zaire—along with its worrying and enigmatic outcome—inspired artful explanations from journalists and scholars. The prime minister (it was said) was overcome by Nobel ambition. Or the Department of National Defence (DND) had schemed to rescue its own reputation from the ignominy earned in Somalia. Or the government itself, and its most skilled diplomats, had been duped by the Clinton administration—gulled into claiming command of a phantom intervention that the White House never intended to make real.

In the account that follows, there is no evidence to support a diagnosis of Nobel fever. There is no evidence whatsoever that DND seized on intervention to redeem itself, and abundant evidence to the contrary. As to the third theory—Canada duped—the interactions between the U.S. and Canadian governments prove more complicated than that, and more important: For Canada, the problem of humanitarian intervention is in large part and often a problem of affecting U.S. action.

This is an exploratory case study, drawn principally from interviews with government and United Nations (UN) officials in Ottawa, Washington and New York. The willingness of so many of the participants to share their recollections of those exhausting and turbulent weeks, and to venture their own interpretations and misgivings, testifies to the power of this episode still to mystify, and to trouble, the men and women at the heart of it.

CRISIS AND INTERVENTION

The images that November were as distressing as they were familiar—television pictures of a distant but terrible suffering, this time among Rwandan refugees caught in the squalor

and violence of camps in eastern Zaire. But in this case, as Canadian officials would later recollect, the news on CNN counted among the forces that shocked the Canadian government into bold and immediate action. Jean Chrétien, weekending at the Canadian prime minister's Harrington Lake retreat near Ottawa, had given special attention to these latest reports of humanitarian crisis. He reflected for a while, remembering a telephone conversation with President Clinton three days earlier, then spent the rest of that Saturday and Sunday in a sudden burst of telephone summitry—calling South Africa's Nelson Mandela, Britain's John Major, French President Jacques Chirac, Kenyan President Daniel Arap Moi, the prime ministers of Belgium and Japan and Italy, the president of Senegal and others—all to argue for an international intervention to rescue the refugees from catastrophe, to “prevent another Rwanda.” By Monday (Remembrance Day, as it happened) Chrétien had summoned ministers back to Parliament Hill for an extraordinary cabinet meeting. And before the day was out, the prime minister and cabinet members were agreed: the Canadian government would attempt not just to support but actually to lead an armed intervention into the middle of Africa.

It was an initiative unprecedented in the history of Canada's foreign relations; never before had Canada led a multinational force authorized under Chapter VII of the UN Charter. Equipped with the most modest of armies, defensive of its remaining reputation as a beneficent peacekeeper, cautious when it came to joining in any use of force abroad, the Chrétien government also knew that it was proposing to lead a military action that would have to be conducted mostly by others. Nor were the prospects of international agreement altogether promising. In Washington, the voices of superpower foreign policy sounded as equivocal and divided as ever: reluctant, after the U.S. experience in Somalia, to lead a multinational force in Africa—and just as reluctant to commit troops to a force led by anyone else. In the capitals of Europe and Africa, meanwhile, humanitarian impulse struggled with geopolitical calculation and intuitive caution. All could agree that a fearful evil seemed about to repeat itself in the sorrows of the Zairian refugee camps; none could say for certain how to stop it.

But now, with the prime minister committed, the Canadian government was about to invest an extraordinary commitment of foreign-policy resources in its new and urgent objective—to assemble a “coalition of the willing,” governments ready and able to deploy a multinational force for refugee relief in eastern Zaire.

It was immediately understood by Canadian officials (if not explicitly by the prime minister) that the government would have to overcome a variety of disadvantages to succeed. One such disadvantage was the scarcity of Canadian diplomatic resources in the conflict region. At the time, Canada had in the field only one officer in Kinshasa, a small aid office in Kigali, and no resident officers in Bujumbura or Kampala. In negotiating a broad multilateral consensus on intervention, policy-makers in Ottawa knew from the start that they had scant intelligence sources of their own in Central Africa, and little leverage in the complex international politics of the region.

Above and before all else stood one requirement for a Canadian success: the U.S. government would have to support the Canadian-led enterprise. Not only did the U.S. hold a determining veto over the essential decision of the Security Council to follow; it alone commanded the military wherewithal to stage such a large and remote intervention. As Canadian diplomats soon discovered, no other country would commit its troops to eastern Zaire unless the U.S. committed its own to a deployment on the ground.

* * *

Prime Minister Chrétien's extraordinary decision—to assert Canadian leadership of a multinational force into the heart of Africa—triggered intense activity and some anxiety in the government's own foreign-policy and defence bureaucracies. For all but a few specialists in African affairs, aid, or in peacekeeping/security policy, the intricate and bloody conflicts of Central Africa were far away and little understood. In the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT), DND and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), only preliminary planning had been completed for a modest Canadian participation in a still-hypothetical international intervention in eastern Zaire. Meanwhile, other problems and uncertainties were occupying the minds of senior Canadian officials: intra-NATO disputes over Bosnia, the contested candidacy of Boutros Boutros-Ghali for re-election as UN secretary-general, impending summit meetings of Asia-Pacific Economic Co-operation (APEC) and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), the reorganization and installation of the second Clinton administration in Washington, and landmines-treaty diplomacy, to name a few.

The prime minister's decision, relayed to deputy ministers and others on Saturday, November 9, refocused those energies. Departmental managers ordered up urgent briefings and policy options in preparation for meetings Sunday and Monday with Chrétien and ministers. Those briefings necessarily went to the basics of Zairian geography, ethnography and recent political history—the underlying facts of what was an undeniably complicated situation on the ground. As one DFAIT officer recalled, “there were some minutes actually spent teaching the management how to say Banyamulenge.”

As the crisis unfolded, the demands grew considerably more sophisticated. There were problems understanding what was happening in the refugee camps and jungles of eastern Zaire, and in the turbulent geopolitics of Central Africa; problems of creating and enforcing a coherent policy response inside the Canadian government; problems of forming and managing a coalition of states participating in the proposed intervention; problems of negotiating with the U.S. government. And when the crisis was over, less than two months later, there were problems comprehending its disappointingly ambiguous conclusion.

Onset

The origins of the conflict in eastern Zaire in 1996 were rooted in the Rwandan genocide of 1994—itsself a fiercely complex phenomenon of ethnic division earlier exacerbated by German and Belgian colonial administration, post-colonial misrule, economic hardship and persisting social inequalities. Although readily and popularly depicted at the time as a chaotic “tribal” or ethnic bloodletting between majority Hutu and minority Tutsi communities, what happened in Rwanda was something even more sinister. It was genocide. In that slaughter, an estimated 500,000-800,000 people were killed (out of a population no larger than seven million). Nearly all the victims were minority Tutsi—the rest generally described as “moderate” Hutus insufficiently active in the killings or otherwise objectionable to the *génocidaires*. When Tutsi forces ultimately prevailed, more than two million people fled as refugees to neighbouring countries, and perhaps half as many remained internally displaced inside Rwanda.

For Canadian decision-makers in late 1996, the Rwandan catastrophe retained a haunting relevance in at least two respects. First, of the mostly-Hutu refugee population, as many as 1.1 million had settled in camps in eastern Zaire (with about 144,000 refugees from Burundi). Among them lived at least 10,000 and as many as 40,000 soldiers of the Forces Armées Rwandaises, the so-called ex-FAR, the army of the former and now defeated Hutu regime in Rwanda. As well in the camps there were an uncertain number of Hutu militiamen, and a still less certain number of civilian directors of the genocide. But these ex-FAR soldiers, militias and other *génocidaires* were not simply mixed into the Hutu refugee population; they were, in effect, governing it. The United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), pursuing standard practice, had facilitated aid distribution in the camps by leaving governance to the refugees themselves. And in practice, this meant the genocidal Hutu regime of 1994 was replicated in the camps in Zaire along Rwanda’s border. Any aid to the refugees would likely aid the ex-FAR and militias, known chiefly as Interahamwe; indeed, aid agencies acknowledge that at least some of the aid distributed to the camps from 1994 to 1996 was seized by ex-FAR and militia groups. Moreover, it was not long after the refugee influx of 1994 that armed Rwandan Hutus were in violent conflict with indigenous Zairian Tutsis—another dimension of the crisis that erupted in 1996.

The second relevance of the 1994 Rwandan genocide for Canadian authorities lay in their conviction that the tragedy had been preventable—that the West specifically could and should have acted to save lives, and was therefore culpable in the slaughter. An authoritative post-mortem of the Rwandan case, led by the Danish aid agency Danida (and including Canadian representation) concluded that “through hesitations to respond and vacillation in providing and equipping peacekeeping forces, the international community failed to stop or stem the genocide, and in this regard shares responsibility for the extent of it.” The Danida report reached the highest levels of the Canadian government when it was released in March 1996; the prime minister and Foreign Affairs Minister Lloyd Axworthy were thought by officials deeply committed to the belief that the catastrophe of Rwanda must not be repeated—and that the international community bore an obligation to

prevent such a repetition. The belief was held all the more acutely because a Canadian had commanded the inadequate UN force in Rwanda in 1994. So the moral significance of the 1994 crisis—as it was understood in Ottawa—imposed a normative obligation to act in 1996.

The prospects for eastern Zaire in 1996 looked truly appalling. Sadako Ogata, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, warned in late October of “a catastrophe greater than the one we knew in 1994.” Emma Bonino, humanitarian coordinator for the European Union, reportedly found that one million people could die in Zaire, and accused the world of standing aloof from the conflict. Stephen Lewis, a former Canadian ambassador to the UN with a long personal knowledge of Africa, foresaw the possibility of “the worst human disaster on the continent.” CARE Canada, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, Médecins Sans Frontières and other NGOs active in Zaire mounted intense media-lobbying campaigns agitating for armed intervention. Television pictures grew grimmer by the day.

Violence in eastern Zaire had been escalating throughout the year, while the identities and objectives of the combatants sometimes bewildered even close observers. There was, first of all, the recurring conflict between the undisciplined Zairian army (and its kleptocratic political leadership in Kinshasa) and local Tutsi populations, which had been in eastern Zaire for some 200 years. In September and October 1996, local Zairian officials threatened Zairian Tutsis with early expulsion to Rwanda; their insecurity seemed all the greater because Zairian authorities had denied them Zairian citizenship, notwithstanding the community’s presence in Zaire over several generations. There was also rising violence between Hutu militias and ex-FAR soldiers in the refugee camps and local Zairian Tutsis—with indigenous Tutsis (some known collectively as Banyamulenge) retaliating with increasing force against the Hutu refugees. Finally (to simplify), there was an alliance of forces led by the career guerrilla Laurent Kabila, who enlisted the Banyamulenge in the rebellion that ultimately overthrew the regime of Zairian President Mobutu Sese Seko in 1997.

* * *

By mid-October 1996, thousands of refugees had been forced by the fighting (and by the intimidation of Hutu gunmen) to flee the UNHCR camps under the rule of the gunmen. At the same time, UN and non-governmental humanitarian agencies were forced to withdraw personnel and suspend deliveries of food, water and medical help. By the end of October, hundreds of thousands of refugees—some in makeshift camps, some hiding in the hills—were cut off from all aid. One by one, Zairian towns (and airports useful for delivering aid) fell to the Kabila rebels. The Zairian government, fighting the uprising of the Banyamulenge and Kabila, described itself in a state of war with Rwanda, which it accused of attacking and occupying Zairian territory in fraternal support of the Tutsis.

“Now we are confronted by a new genocide,” declared Boutros-Ghali on November 8. “I call it a genocide by starvation. . . . So we must act, and we must act immediately.”

In Ottawa, members of DFAIT and DND had been expecting trouble in the African Great Lakes region—but in Burundi, not Zaire. “I must say we were actually following Burundi much more closely,” recalled an army colonel later. The analysis at Foreign Affairs was the same, as one diplomat acknowledged: “When people were looking at the next crisis they were looking at Burundi.” Several memos had even been sent up to Axworthy, dealing not with Zaire but with Burundi’s July 25 coup, and the deep-seated Hutu-Tutsi conflict in Burundi that brought to mind Rwanda’s own ghastly past.

But if DFAIT was energetically searching out a possible Canadian role in Central Africa, DND was not. On May 10, 1996, DFAIT’s Africa and Middle East Bureau sent a cable off to the Canadian High Commission in Nairobi, referring to the Organization for African Unity and with instructions that “Canada will explore feasibility of contributing to the operation of the OAU military observer mission in Burundi.” Attached to a copy of that cable in DND files is a May 13 note, hand-written and initialled by Kenneth Calder, DND’s assistant deputy minister for policy, addressed to his director-general of policy operations. Its two sentences read: “You should go back to DFAIT and express our displeasure (up to and including the DM level) at not being consulted. You can also tell them we are not interested.” This would not be the last disagreement between Foreign Affairs and National Defence (and CIDA, come to that)—and it spoke to a dissonance in Canadian policy-making that would later become more apparent.

The Crisis Acknowledged

Interested or not, DND would soon find itself fully engaged in the crisis of eastern Zaire. On Saturday, October 26, Canadian Ambassador Robert Fowler at the UN took a phone call from Boutros-Ghali; the secretary-general wanted to appoint a “special envoy” to Africa’s Great Lakes region—someone preferably of ministerial rank, fluent in French and English, free of any imperial associations in the area. Fowler called Gordon Smith, deputy minister at DFAIT; Smith called Axworthy and Axworthy called the prime minister—who immediately recommended his nephew Raymond Chrétien. The name of Canada’s ambassador to the United States was relayed through Fowler back to Boutros-Ghali, who quickly agreed. On October 27, the prime minister spoke personally with Boutros-Ghali about the appointment. On Thursday, October 31, at UN headquarters, Ambassador Chrétien and Boutros-Ghali agreed to terms: a short assignment lasting at most until Christmas, high-profile with full media coverage, no interference from Secretariat bureaucrats—and an airplane, security and secure fax and phones provided by the Canadian Forces. Chrétien left Washington on November 5 (U.S. election day) for the South of France, where he would start his mission by meeting Zairian President Mobutu who was recovering from prostate surgery. The Canadian government was now directly

involved in the Zairian conflict. “Canada is pleased to be entrusted with this vitally important role,” said an October 30 DFAIT news release. “As former Ambassador to Burundi, Rwanda and Zaire, Mr. Chrétien possesses extensive knowledge of the region, which will help him assess the situation and make sound recommendations to the Secretary-General.”

Ambassador Chrétien’s UN assignment engaged Canadian policy-making in two ways. First, his almost-daily faxes to Boutros-Ghali were at the same time routed to Ottawa, and examined with care by senior officials at DFAIT as they formulated Canadian responses to events; he spoke with Deputy Minister Smith almost every day. Second, Ambassador Chrétien spoke by telephone with the prime minister several times—not to recommend Canadian leadership of a multinational force (he later said he would not have imagined such a thing), but to impress on the prime minister the desperate urgency of international action to prevent a disaster in eastern Zaire. The ambassador spoke to his uncle at least twice on November 8 and 9, as the prime minister was deciding on the Canadian initiative. The two men were personally close; separated in age by only a few years, friends describe them more as brothers than as uncle and nephew. Any explanation of the prime minister’s otherwise uncharacteristic boldness in asserting Canadian leadership in the Zaire crisis must acknowledge the effect of the energetic and self-confident Raymond on his proud and admiring uncle—who was anyway moved by the TV images of suffering at the Zaire-Rwanda border.

But there were other and more formal pressures working on Canadian decision-makers. At 2 a.m. on Saturday, November 9, the Security Council unanimously adopted Resolution 1078. “Determining that . . . the present humanitarian crisis in eastern Zaire constitutes a threat to peace and security in the region,” (but without expressly citing Chapter VII) the Council called on UN members “to prepare the necessary arrangements” to allow the immediate return of humanitarian agencies and the safe delivery of aid to refugees and displaced persons. States were urged as well “to help create the necessary conditions for the voluntary, orderly and secure repatriation of refugees.” Finally, the resolution asked the secretary-general to “draw up a concept of operations and framework for a humanitarian task force, with military assistance if necessary,” with the objectives of delivering short-term aid; assisting the UNHCR with the protection and voluntary repatriation of refugees and displaced persons; and “establishing humanitarian corridors for the delivery of humanitarian assistance and to assist the voluntary repatriation of refugees”

Resolution 1078 bore all the marks of a compromise, which indeed it was. France (with a few others) had bargained vigorously for a Security Council authorization to deploy a multinational force; the United States refused. What was agreed, sometime after midnight, was an invitation to the willing to mount an operation if they could—and if the Security Council later approved. Canada had taken virtually no part in the argument or the outcome in New York that week.

On November 6, however, the prime minister had raised the crisis in Zaire in a phone conversation with Clinton, drawing the president's attention to his own concern and to Canada's role in the person of Ambassador Chrétien. The next day the subject was discussed in a phone conversation between Jim Bartleman, assistant cabinet secretary for foreign and defence policy, and Anthony Lake, Clinton's national security adviser. Lake told Bartleman during that conversation that the only country the Clinton administration "might conceivably" allow to command its troops would be Canada; this seems to have been the first mention by anyone in authority of a Canadian leadership of a multinational force in eastern Zaire. Then, on November 8, as the Security Council was negotiating 1078, Deputy Minister Smith at DFAIT took a phone call from Peter Tarnoff, undersecretary of state for political affairs in Washington. In the course of that call Tarnoff asked Smith, "would you fall off your chair if you were asked, if Canada were asked, to lead this force?" Smith replied that he would report the question immediately to the prime minister, which he did. Smith took the Tarnoff remark as more than just thinking out loud, but less than a formal proposal; it was a serious feeler. "I think this all comes back to the American reluctance to go to the party," Smith reflected in an interview afterward. "I think that the Americans were concluding that there was tremendous pressure on them to do something. They sure didn't want to lead it. Who could they find to lead it they could trust?" And did Smith suspect the Americans were also looking for someone they might manipulate? "Yes, of course," Smith answered. "Yes, exactly." By all accounts, Lake and Tarnoff had concluded that a Canadian leadership role would allow the Clinton administration to contribute to an intervention (if ultimately necessary) without incurring the domestic controversy and opposition that U.S. leadership would provoke.

So these were the factors evidently pressing on the prime minister on November 9 at Harrington Lake: telephone conversations with Raymond Chrétien in Africa; knowledge of the Lake and Tarnoff feelers; the inconclusive irresolution of the Security Council; evident lack of international leadership to address the crisis; and the awful pictures of refugees dying in eastern Zaire (their condition made more visibly dismal by a seemingly endless rain). By then, too, Ambassador Chrétien was discovering that French leadership of a multinational force (MNF) would be unacceptable to key actors in the region, including Rwanda, Burundi and Uganda. By Sunday, when the prime minister had assembled Axworthy, Smith, Deputy Defence Minister Louise Fréchette, along with the president of CIDA (Huguette Labelle), the acting Chief of the Defence Staff (Vice-Admiral Larry Murray) and others, he had decided to assume leadership of an MNF that had only been hinted at in Resolution 1078. Chrétien did not ask for advice when he went into that meeting; there was no canvassing the pros and cons of leadership, no measuring the costs and benefits of action or inaction. "He had made his mind up when he walked in," one senior official later recalled. "He didn't know and didn't want to know all the details. . . . It was a top-down decision, and we were told to do it, to find a way of making it happen."

* * *

The belief at DFAIT was that the attempt to lead the MNF was risky but achievable. Fréchette and Murray, on the other hand, left that first meeting shaking their heads and wearing expressions that others read as terror. (Defence Minister Doug Young, out of town, did not attend that Sunday meeting but was present Monday.) To Axworthy—eager to act—and some others at Foreign Affairs, it would sometimes seem in the days to follow that DND and the Canadian Forces were simply trying to do nothing, in hopes that in due course nothing would be done. Remembered one official in a later interview: “I wondered whether they were in cahoots with the American military to try to do that. . . .” In truth, DND was already under stress, heavily deployed in Bosnia and Haiti and experiencing the cautionary and demoralizing effect of the televised Somalia hearings then under way; on October 8 the prime minister had announced the (forced) resignation of General Jean Boyle as Chief of the Defence Staff.

The first organizational response to the prime minister’s decision was the creation inside DFAIT of a special task force, under the joint leadership of two assistant deputy ministers (ADMs) and reporting to the deputy minister. (Two other ADMs often attended task force meetings, chiefly because of their African experience and the frequent absence of one of the co-chairmen.) The formation of the task force effectively flattened the hierarchy in Foreign Affairs for the duration of the crisis, drawing desk officers in regional (African) and functional (peacekeeping/security) areas directly into daily contact with the deputy minister and sometimes the minister. Its other effect—and main purpose—was to assemble all of DFAIT’s rather scarce expertise on Central Africa and military operations in the same enterprise. In so doing, the task force may have strengthened DFAIT’s influence in the interdepartmental bargaining that ensued.

The second organizational response in the Canadian government was the formation in the days after the prime minister’s decision of the Zaire Interdepartmental Task Force—known to all at the time as the ZIT. Consisting of eight officials from DFAIT, DND, CIDA and the Privy Council Office (PCO), the ZIT was led by James Judd, who had just left DFAIT as an assistant deputy minister to become an ADM at Finance. The career path was relevant. Judd was chosen, by the clerk of the Privy Council and others, because he was acceptable to the deputy ministers at DFAIT and DND and to the president of CIDA: he had served as deputy cabinet secretary for foreign and defence policy, was a career foreign service officer and was known at DND as sympathetic to military concerns. Judd also brought a reputation for hard-nosed frank speech and a readiness to confront senior officials face to face.

The ZIT was originally conceived as a co-ordinating body, without operational roles in diplomacy or in the field; as well, said one of its members, “we had no intention of making our existence known to the media, or responding to the media.” But those two principles were soon amended. Before long the ZIT was faxing media lines twice daily to

its constituent departments and ministers' offices—guidance on how to answer questions and explain policy. And on operations, “we ended up quickly managing policy.” Judd would usually chair a morning interdepartmental meeting (departments represented by ADMs or equivalent), often followed by meetings between Axworthy and Young. Axworthy and Young were not kindred spirits, and the ZIT's chief objective sometimes was to resolve differences between the two. The differences were severe and personal enough that “neutral ground” needed to be found for these meetings, generally in the cabinet room or the PCO boardroom, with Judd in the chair. The process of composing press lines and preparing ministers for the Commons question period became an instrument of conflict resolution. Judd also briefed each minister for almost-daily conference calls with the prime minister, who was travelling in Asia and Europe; Judd and Bartleman (with the prime minister) would sit on extension phones as silent listeners and later direct follow-up action. The ZIT also faxed a “Daily Report” to constituency departments (“Secret—Canadian Eyes Only”) which usually summarized events on the ground in Central Africa, some of the diplomatic developments of the past 24 hours, and sometimes the tone of media coverage.

Judd's role seems to have been crucial in resolving interdepartmental strife. CIDA's interest in the crisis was to restore access to refugees for NGO and UN-agency aid deliveries, and to facilitate the refugees' safe repatriation. CIDA was regarded by some in the ZIT as the best informed about refugee conditions, with intimate contacts with NGOs and agencies in the field and well-practised plans for humanitarian relief operations. Foreign Affairs was less endowed with hard information and less certain of its objectives as conditions changed; one CIDA official said in an interview she found DND easier to deal with than DFAIT, if only because DND and CIDA were both more concerned with practicalities and less with diplomatic/political ephemera. But DFAIT executives knew they were working with the full personal authority of the prime minister—and so did executives in the other departments. At DND, on the other hand, senior civilian and military officers were profoundly reluctant to become involved in Central Africa and raised a succession of reasons not to. As officials at DFAIT laboured in the first days of the crisis to create an operational strategy and answer U.S. demands, they found their DND colleagues almost mutely unhelpful. The televised Somalia hearings were proceeding just down the street from DND headquarters; rancorous fault-finding was erupting in Paris, Brussels and Ottawa as a fuller understanding of the Rwanda genocide emerged; and DND authorities keenly felt their lack of intelligence, airlift and other capabilities for leading an intervention. They also had few soldiers to spare. However, Judd used two arguments with DND. First, “the PM has got us so far out on this one that we cannot let him hang in the wind.” And second, DND success in eastern Zaire would begin to win back reputation and morale lost in Somalia. (This last was an argument also reported in press accounts at the time, and endured after the fact as received wisdom. But it was an artifact created outside the department, and not strongly accepted within.)

The ZIT also negotiated directly with U.S. officials on some occasions. More than once Judd telephoned Lake, whom he had known from his earlier PCO days. But in large part the structural divisions in Washington reflected themselves in the conduct of policy from Ottawa; specifically, Young and U.S. Defence Secretary William Perry met several times on their own as did Canadian and U.S. military officers at various ranks.

On Monday, November 11 (the prime minister now having been encouraged by more calls to heads of government around the world, and to Boutros-Ghali), the cabinet formally decided after brief discussion to advance Canada as the leader of the coalition to manage an intervention in Zaire with command of the MNF itself. The decision was communicated to the UN and to various capitals—but with conditions attached. There would have to be a satisfactory chain of command, adequate funding, a clear mandate, a finite timetable for completion of the mission, solid commitments from coalition partners to contribute 10,000-12,000 troops and, of course, Security Council authority under Chapter VII. Beyond these conventional provisos, however, little else was certain about the Canadian government's plan or intentions. Above all, it remained quite unclear what exactly the MNF would do when it arrived in Africa. What it would *not* do—and this was insisted by Canadian and other military officers from the start—was to try to separate forcefully the “intimidators” in the camps from the rest of the refugee population. In fact, issues of operational mandate and purpose would persist throughout the crisis.

* * *

Then began a week of very busy diplomacy. In Washington on November 12, Smith, Bartleman, Fréchette and Murray, with Lt.-Gen. Maurice Baril (the prospective MNF commander), gathered for a meeting in the White House chaired by Lake. Representatives of the State Department and the Joint Chiefs of Staff also attended, but it was Lake who led the questioning and discussion on the U.S. side and who dominated what Canadian participants remember as several painful hours of grilling about their plan.

It is evident in hindsight that Lake was pursuing multiple objectives: prevent an escalation of violence in Rwanda and Burundi by way of “blowback” from the conflict in Zaire; contribute to Rwandan security, which the United States had earlier concluded meant arranging for the successful repatriation of Rwandan refugees; head off military violence in Zaire; preserve Zaire as a single state, if possible; avoid U.S. military intervention; and, avert a humanitarian catastrophe. It was this mix of U.S. interests and objectives that seemed to drive U.S. conduct throughout the coming weeks. But, to Canadian officials it was an unstable and variable mix, with different elements apparently determining U.S. actions at different moments of the crisis.

Policy and Politics in Washington

Bill Clinton had not won the presidency in 1992 with any prominent or tightly reasoned platform of foreign policy. But, in that campaign, he did advocate a more interventionist

policy to improve human-rights performance in China, restore the elected government in Haiti, and reverse the horrendous course of “ethnic cleansing” in Bosnia, along with support for a strengthened UN. And there was a reinforcing consistency of logic between his foreign and domestic agendas: multilateral burden-sharing in pursuit of international order would free scarce resources for domestic purposes. Still (as Ivo Daalder has since written), as the Clinton administration took over the U.S. government in early 1993, “there remained one crucial constituency that was less enamoured with the prospect of greater U.S. involvement in multilateral peace operations, and that was the American military.”

What followed, therefore, was a long and arduous struggle in Washington over the definition of U.S. policy on intervention and what was called “multilateralism,” formally triggered by Presidential Review Directive 13 in February 1993. The intensity and acrimony of the argument was aggravated by the degeneration of the U.S. intervention in Somalia, where four U.S. servicemen were killed in August 1993 and 18 more in October. “My experiences in Somalia,” Clinton said at an October 14 news conference, “would make me more cautious about having any Americans in a peacekeeping role where there was any ambiguity at all about what the range of decisions were which could be made by a command other than an American command, with direct accountability to the United States here.” The Somalia experience, with the congressional and media criticism it inspired, was already having its effect on declarative policy. In September 1993 Lake delivered a speech—“From Containment to Enlargement”—in which he both defended the principle of humanitarian intervention and limited its application. Public pressure for humanitarian engagement would be increasingly driven by television pictures, he said.

But we must bring other considerations to bear as well: cost, feasibility, the permanence of the improvement our assistance will bring, the willingness of regional and international bodies to do their part, and the likelihood that our actions will generate broader security benefits for the people and the region in question.

While there will be increasing calls on us to help stem bloodshed and suffering in ethnic conflicts and while we will always bring our diplomacy to bear, these criteria suggest there will be relatively few intra-national ethnic conflicts that justify our military intervention. Ultimately, on these and other humanitarian needs, we will have to pick and choose.

These conditions and qualifications ultimately found formal expression in Presidential Decision Directive 25 (PDD-25), a public version of which emerged as “The Clinton Administration’s Policy on Reforming Multilateral Operations.” In its 14½ single-spaced pages, PDD-25 purports to define with fastidious care the conditions the U.S. would place on its support for, or participation in, any future multilateral intervention; it goes to particular lengths to explain rules under which U.S. forces might serve under the

“operational control” of a foreign commander. The conditions of U.S. support or participation ran to two full pages, and included all the familiar U.S. criteria: that participation “advances U.S. interests;” that U.S. participation is necessary for the operation’s success; “an endpoint for U.S. participation can be found;” command and control arrangements are acceptable; “domestic and congressional support exists or can be marshalled;” etc. “It is not U.S. policy to seek to expand either the number of UN peace operations or U.S. involvement in such operations,” the paper declares. “Instead, this policy . . . aims to ensure that our use of peacekeeping is selective and more effective.” [underline in original]

Taken literally, PDD-25 could be interpreted to exclude U.S. military participation in multilateral interventions almost entirely. But it did not stop Clinton from intervening (eventually) in Haiti, and later in Bosnia. And it does contain the following passage in justification of U.S. intervention:

While the President never relinquishes command of U.S. forces, the participation of U.S. military personnel in UN operations can, in particular circumstances, serve U.S. interests. First, U.S. military participation may, at times, be necessary to persuade others to participate in operations that serve U.S. interests. Second, U.S. participation may be one way to exercise U.S. influence over an important UN mission, without unilaterally bearing the burden. Third, the U.S. may be called upon and choose to provide unique capabilities to important operations that other countries cannot.

By 1996 the Clinton administration may also have been somewhat encouraged by the outcome of the 1994 intervention in Haiti: the credible threat of an imminent Chapter VII invasion had removed the junta and restored the Aristide presidency, followed by a Chapter VI peacekeeping presence led by Canada. In short, although the U.S. held both procedural and practical vetoes over intervention in eastern Zaire, it was reasonable to believe the Clinton administration might be persuaded not to use them.

At the same time, however, the Canadians soon sensed they were witnesses throughout to the struggles and bargains of interagency politics in Washington. It was Lake’s apparent role from the start of this crisis to negotiate agreeable terms with the Canadian and other governments while simultaneously accommodating interdepartmental interests and objectives in his own capital.

International negotiations were more than once held hostage to negotiations among the Washington bureaucracies and political factions. For example, the State Department had clearly been fostering closer U.S. relations with Rwanda and Uganda in recent months; Canadian officials knew that Rwandan Vice-President Paul Kagame had met Tarnoff and others in Washington in August. The department had also (and unsuccessfully) been trying to negotiate with the corrupt and fumbling Mobutu regime to

arrange some peaceful transition in Zaire. But the State Department itself did not speak with one voice on the subject of intervention: Madeleine Albright, then U.S. ambassador to the UN, was known to be much more activist than Secretary of State Warren Christopher—and impatient with generals reluctant to put their forces at risk of being used.

And the generals were certainly reluctant. Throughout the crisis the Pentagon and Defence Secretary William Perry took every opportunity to question, challenge and delay a U.S. deployment to Africa. The U.S. military, like Canada's, had reconstituted its Somalia experience as a warning against peace operations in confused African conflicts. Day after day, moreover, U.S. television screens were now replaying those images of U.S. servicemen being dragged through the streets of Mogadishu three years earlier.

As mediated through Lake, therefore, U.S. purposes appeared to the Canadians as diverse and to some degree contradictory: invite Canada to lead an MNF, but avoid (unless necessary) a U.S. commitment to follow with a deployment of U.S. forces; achieve the humanitarian objective without risking U.S. casualties; perhaps secure the removal of Mobutu without breaking Zaire apart; reassure Rwandan authorities without inciting more ethnic bloodshed in Rwanda or Zaire. But the question was, did the U.S. government have other unspoken and undetected purposes as well?

* * *

In any event, the leading issue for Lake and the Americans at that first White House meeting on November 12 was plainly command and control, and the recurrent U.S. resistance to placing U.S. troops under foreign command. As usual, this was in part a constitutional question for U.S. authorities, and in part a political/bureaucratic problem of aggregating domestic consent for U.S. military action abroad. (A spokesman for Senator Jesse Helms, Republican chairman of the Senate foreign relations committee, would a day later mutter to a reporter that “this smells like Somalia all over again.”) The U.S. side at one point startled the Canadians by proposing that a U.S. general command the MNF for the first month, then turn it over to a Canadian. Smith and the others refused, but it took more hours (and more than one call by Bartleman to the prime minister in Ottawa) to work out command and control details. Still, Canadian officials thought the issue was largely resolved that long evening (the Americans had ordered in pizza to keep the meeting going) by simulating the NATO-Bosnia command formula. At U.S. insistence, the Canadian side agreed to the creation of a Steering Group of major troop-contributing and MNF-financing countries which would give political direction to the MNF (and in which all participants, including specifically the United States, would hold a veto on decisions). The Steering Group would oversee an MNF commanded by General Baril, who would have operational control; a U.S. deputy commander would be interposed between Baril and U.S. forces, who would remain as always under the national command of the president. But that left other matters unsettled: rules of engagement; a mandate

that would not include fighting the intimidators (or anyone else); the problematic mission of opening “safe corridors” between camps and the Rwandan border; a time limit; and designs for a follow-on program of peacekeeping and a long-term regional political settlement.

In Ottawa that same day, Prime Minister Chrétien was holding his news conference to announce the Canadian initiative and his intentions. He was frustrated, he said, to hear excuses instead of action from the international community, and he was ready to contribute Canadian leadership to an international intervention in Zaire. “*Nous avons le devoir moral d’intervenir avant qu’il ne soit trop tard. Nous avons le devoir moral de ne pas rester passif devant ce drame humain. Nous avons le devoir d’agir.*” He was asking the Security Council “to pass a resolution mandating a Canadian-led international military force to take action as soon as possible,” the prime minister said. “Canada may not be a superpower but we are a nation that speaks on the international scene with a great moral authority. Now is the time to use that moral authority to stop suffering, to avert disaster.” (A Canadian diplomat in Washington later recalled that some U.S. officials seemed offended by this foreign invocation of moral authority, an authority the United States routinely claimed for itself. The prime minister’s words became known within minutes to Lake’s delegation inside the White House meeting, and did not ease the negotiation.)

By the time the Canadian group boarded the government Challenger for the late-night flight back to Ottawa, Lake and the Americans had made two facts plain. First, the Americans were yet unconvinced that Canada was ready and competent to take command of an intervention in Zaire—an intervention the U.S. could join. A “White House official” was quoted in *The New York Times* the next morning describing the Canadian plan as “rudimentary” and saying that the United States was “still looking for firm answers on how a mission would be undertaken, what the command and control structure would be, and what the objectives would be on the ground.” But the second plain fact was that U.S. authorities, Lake specifically, placed the highest importance on securing those answers from Canada: Lake himself travelled to New York for a meeting with Canadian, Permanent Five and other officials on November 14, and to Ottawa the following week, in order to press personally for answers the U.S. administration wanted to hear. Both sides considered it extraordinary that the national security adviser would venture outside Washington to negotiate directly with foreign governments on such a matter.

On November 13 (after another Chrétien-Clinton phone conversation that morning) the White House greatly encouraged the Canadians when Press Secretary Mike McCurry announced the two governments had reached “general agreement on the mission definition, command and control arrangements, and duration of the mission.” U.S. briefers let it be known to journalists that a U.S. deployment would amount to as many as 4,000 troops, 1,000 in Zaire and up to 3,000 in nearby countries. As a result of the White House meeting on November 12 and Clinton’s talk with Chrétien, McCurry said, “the President has decided that the United States is willing, in principle, to participate in a

limited fashion in this mission under certain conditions.” McCurry then set out six conditions:

First, “we must be able to validate our core assumptions, including those regarding the threat environment, the availability of other properly trained and equipped forces, and the consent of concerned countries in the region.”

Second, the MNF’s mission must be to facilitate aid and voluntary repatriation. “The force will not separate or disarm militants, conduct forced entry, or police operations in the camps.”

Third, the MNF would have “robust rules of engagement” and operate under Chapter VII, “but will not be a UN blue-helmet mission.”

Fourth, troop contributors would pay the costs, but other states would be invited to finance participation of African countries.

Fifth, the mission would likely last four months, with a “follow-on presence” to be discussed.

Sixth, “the potential contribution of the U.S. would consist of airport security at Goma airfield, assistance in airlifting deploying forces, airfield services, and the provision of security along approximately a three-mile corridor from Goma to the Rwandan border. We anticipate a significant number of those U.S. troops deployed would be based outside of Zaire in neighboring countries.”

McCurry added these three sentences at the end of this statement: “As always, U.S. troops would remain at all times under U.S. command. While serving under the operational control of the Canadian commanding officer, the U.S. would provide the deputy force commander, and all U.S. troops in Zaire would operate under U.S. commanders. A final decision on U.S. participation will depend on the findings of the military assessment team sent to the region yesterday; its view of the utility and viability of a humanitarian mission; and whether the mandate, rules of engagement, exit strategy, and other essential aspects of the mission can be defined satisfactorily and agreed among the key participants in a potential force.”

This was not an unqualified commitment. But winning U.S. participation in the intervention was now urgent. The prime minister himself had acknowledged in his November 12 news conference that “the United States is vital to the success of any mission.” Indeed, military commanders in Canada and abroad were adamant that a U.S. troop contribution was a *sine qua non* of their own deployment. As a DND briefing note—labelled SECRET (CANADIAN EYES ONLY)—flatly stated at the time: “We need USA ground troops.” Practically alone among prospective contributors, the U.S. commanded the aircraft, communications, intelligence production and forces judged

necessary for an intervention of 10,000 troops in eastern Zaire. Other governments, having in mind U.S. performance in Somalia and the former Yugoslavia, wanted tangible, physical proof of a reliable U.S. political commitment. In effect, these demands for U.S. collaboration invested Washington with a veto over the whole project. If the U.S. did not go, nobody would.

Such considerations simultaneously influenced negotiations commencing at the UN to craft a Security Council resolution authorizing a Canadian-led MNF in Zaire. These negotiations—unlike those over Resolution 1078 a week earlier—found Canadian diplomats among the key players; the Canadian mission at the UN produced the first drafts (based on Haiti and Bosnia precedents) and led the process of bargaining and agreement, with U.S., British and French delegations in particular. The Lake visit to Manhattan was part of the exercise.

When members of the Permanent Five delegations met at the Canadian mission on Second Avenue, the novelty of the experience was apparent to all; the great powers were unaccustomed to someone else designing a Chapter VII military operation. Canadian participants in those meetings sensed a complex set of P5 responses to the Canadian initiative: the French were skeptical of leadership by (North American) Canadians and suspicious of U.S. motives, but advocated an intervention; the British were unhelpful and unforthright; the U.S. tried to be constructive and to push the project forward without actually committing itself; Russia and China were both largely passive. Indeed, it was soon obvious that the complicated dynamics of these multilateral negotiations over several weeks were bound to affect Canadian capacity to influence U.S. actions and lead the deployment of an MNF. As a Canadian negotiator would later remark, “we had some fairly difficult allies.” Difficult—and often hard to read as Canadian officials tried to discern competing purposes in the negotiations.

Among the Africans, for example, interests clearly diverged. The Tutsi leadership in Rwanda was proving profoundly hostile to the UN, which had failed so comprehensively to prevent or respond to the 1994 genocide. The Kigali government showed an equal animosity toward the French, identified as pro-Hutu; after all, the French intervention in Rwanda in 1994, *Opération Turquoise*, albeit authorized by the UN, had the effect of creating a safe haven for Hutu *génocidaires* and allowing their escape into eastern Zaire.

In Zaire, on the other hand, affinities with France were still strong. President Mobutu was resting in sumptuous convalescence on the Riviera, where he would remain for the next several weeks. His regime understandably welcomed an MNF that would arrest the progress of the Kabila rebellion and put a stop to Rwandan interference along the border. But in its corruption and decrepitude, the Mobutu government could hardly be called reliable as a diplomatic partner.

Canadian officials began to spend considerable effort attracting the participation of other African states in the intervention, but it was a difficult challenge in the context of regional politics. Ugandan President Museveni was something of a patron to the government in Rwanda, and seen as a menace in Kinshasa. Uganda, Rwanda and Ethiopia formed the core of what was called in Africa (and in Paris) the “anglophone axis”—countries aligned with Anglo-U.S. interests. Zambia, another regional player, was understood by Canadians to be supplying arms to the Hutus in Zaire.

British officials, at those first New York meetings and after, doubted Canada’s leadership capacities and were unforthcoming with contributions to an MNF on the ground. By contrast, French diplomats were eager for an intervention—even if led by North Americans. Unlike the British, successive French governments had treated African affairs actively, as matters important to French interests; they tended also to treat African conflicts as collisions of French and U.S. objectives. (At least one Canadian diplomat saw a danger here: the risk that a U.S. refusal to join an intervention would tempt the French to launch their own operation, if only to recover political ground lost in their own controversial *Opération Turquoise*.)

Intervention Decided

U.S. reservations about the Canadian plan were answered sufficiently enough to achieve Security Council consensus on Resolution 1080, passed unanimously November 15 after 3½ hours of discussion. Resolution 1080 (this time citing Chapter VII) determined again that the situation in eastern Zaire constituted “a threat to international peace and security in the region;” welcomed members’ offers to establish “for humanitarian purposes . . . a temporary multinational force to facilitate the immediate return of humanitarian organizations and the effective delivery by civilian relief organizations of humanitarian aid . . . and to facilitate the voluntary, orderly repatriation of refugees . . . as well as the voluntary return of displaced persons;” and it authorized member states “to conduct the operation . . . by using all necessary means” The cost would be borne by the participating states “and other voluntary contributions.” Participants in the operation would report through the secretary-general at least twice monthly. The resolution specified that the operation “shall terminate” March 31, 1997, unless the Council decided otherwise. The resolution also expressed the Council’s intention to authorize “a follow-on operation” to succeed the MNF, but no more was said of that.

Resolution 1080 was conspicuously silent on the ground-level operations of the proposed MNF, except to specify its double objective of facilitating the re-supply of aid and the refugees’ voluntary repatriation. U.S. Ambassador Albright left no doubt that these details remained unresolved when she spoke in the Council meeting before the vote. “The United States strongly supports the initiative of the Canadian Government,” she said. “The United States is working closely with the Canadian and other Governments . . . to determine precisely the humanitarian requirements and how we might usefully participate

in these humanitarian efforts. . . . Although considerable progress has been made, some outstanding questions concerning the organization and operation of the mission remain to be worked out.”

Canadian Ambassador Fowler was emphatic that the MNF would carry out only its two objectives, “no more and no less.” But he was more explicit about what the MNF would not do than what it would do:

We do not, therefore, envisage disarmament or interposition as elements of the force’s mandate. Indeed, disarmament cannot be part of this mandate. If it were, we would require a much larger and more robust force and would need to engage in a war with those who most evidently do not wish to be disarmed. Such a war would bring enormous and immediate harm to the very people we are trying to save, as the elements with guns continue to find sanctuary within the refugee population that they continue to hold hostage.

As it was, Fowler said that more than 10,000 troops had already been committed by over 20 countries. “While the main body of troops committed to date are from France, the United Kingdom, the United States and Canada, we now have firm offers from Europe, North America, Africa and Latin America, as well as expressions of interest from Asia.”

The reliability of those commitments would soon be tested. But the carefully negotiated rationale of Resolution 1080 was already being overtaken by a dramatic change of fortunes along the Zaire-Rwanda frontier. It was left to the Rwandan representative at that Security Council meeting to oppose the MNF as “no longer relevant,” and to declare that whatever humanitarian aid might flow should be sent to Rwanda, not Zaire. In fact, the whole logic of the Canadian initiative was now challenged by a new confusion of facts on the ground.

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Just as the Security Council was completing the terms of Resolution 1080, an enormous and astonishing migration of refugees formed on the roads out of Zaire to Rwanda. Literally within hours, hundreds of thousands of Rwandans were reported streaming toward the border. The Kabila/Tutsi forces, it seemed, had attacked refugee concentrations and successfully separated the Hutu ex-FAR and militias from the mass of the refugee population. No longer under the rule of their “intimidators,” the refugees were suddenly free to head home. In growing numbers, they did.

The political effects were immediate. In Ottawa, these new developments encouraged DND officials to advocate a fast withdrawal from the intervention plan. “The generals started saying, it’s a done deal, we’re out of here,” as one insider put it. In

Washington, officials were similarly quoted as “reassessing” the need for an MNF and for U.S. participation in it. At the UN, Rwanda (for one) quickly withdrew its pre-November 15 support for the MNF as envisaged in Resolution 1080 and argued for a redirection of resources to Rwanda to support refugee re-integration. In eastern Zaire, Kabila himself was telling reporters he did not “think the international community has any reason . . . to come here. We have fulfilled the will of the international community peacefully.”

It was hardly peaceful, but Kabila was half-right: The long-standing UN objective of releasing the refugees from the Hutu gunmen to allow their repatriation did appear to be occurring. And humanitarian assistance, denied for so long, seemed likely to be accessible to most of the refugees once back inside Rwanda. But how many refugees were actually returning to safety? How many were instead walking west, deeper into the Zairian jungle? And of those, how many were not so much refugees as fugitives, *génocidaires* hurrying away from the justice (or retribution) they might get in Rwanda? The future of the Canadian-led intervention was shaped to some degree in the bitter and inconclusive arguments over these numbers.

By November 17 attitudes were clearly shifting. That day on *Meet the Press*, U.S. Defence Secretary Perry sounded even more unconvinced than before about a U.S. deployment. “We have not made a decision on that yet,” he said. “We are not the Salvation Army.” The next day he told Pentagon reporters that if the trend of refugee repatriation continued “it will change substantially the nature of the humanitarian problem in the region.” He added, however, that “we have not made, at this point, a change in our plans. We are standing by in a ready mode to move forward with humanitarian support, and just as soon as we get the detailed information from our survey team . . . then we will make our decision and move, and we will tell you when that happens.” The television story was also changing. In place of the earlier disturbing images of disease and bloodshed came pictures now of refugees returning by the thousands to Rwanda, in apparent safety and reasonably good health.

Reporting from Africa, Ambassador Chrétien detected an abrupt loss of enthusiasm for the MNF—which was anyway suspect in some African capitals as an unwanted intrusion. The Rwandan government, as its UN delegate had said, now expressed doubt for the need of the MNF. The Zairian government (such as it was, Mobutu still convalescing at his Riviera villa) was now ambivalent about an MNF deployment inside Zaire; Zairian authorities were hostile to any *tractations* between the MNF and the Kabila rebels. Burundi authorities held that the MNF’s objectives were already being accomplished, and were trying to exchange their approval for the MNF for relief from the economic sanctions imposed on it months earlier by several neighbouring countries. Nevertheless, Ambassador Chrétien remained convinced that an MNF deployment was necessary, if only to rescue the masses of displaced Zairians who had joined the refugees in flight from rebel-government fighting.

In Ottawa November 18, the House of Commons returned from a week's recess. Leading off a one-day debate on the Zaire crisis (which demonstrated general all-party support for the government), Axworthy began by attributing the sudden return of so many of the refugees at least partly to the triggering effect of the Canadian initiative. "The international community's presence that would soon be felt became a strong and compelling influence in terms of that massive movement that we now witness daily." There was no way of knowing, Axworthy said, whether the rest of the refugees would join the march to Rwanda. "We must be prepared to do what we can," he said.

At the present moment we are gathering the information intelligence, working with our allies, working with the African states, the Europeans and the Americans to ensure that in Eastern Zaire itself that as the problem begins to be resolved, we also do not see remaining pockets where there is still continued violence, insecurity or instability. . . . We are beginning to look at how we can meet the objectives but perhaps use a different mix of tools.

Defence Minister Young, for his part, told the Commons it was "much too early to say the crisis is over. . . . We believe there are still approximately 500,000 refugees in Zaire. There are still people in need." But in Young's phrasing, what had once been an urgent mission was now a "possible deployment." By the end of that day, he said, the Canadian Forces would have about 250 personnel in theatre, with four Hercules and one Airbus aircraft committed to the operation, along with other equipment and vehicles. "But any decision to participate in a humanitarian relief effort . . . will be based on specific guidelines." The minister went on to list five: acquiescence to the MNF by all governments in the region; agreement on "a clear and achievable mandate;" agreement on a "limited duration;" "robust rules of engagement;" and "a clear and effective command and control structure." Young was still more specific about what an MNF would not do. It would "not conduct forced entry operations;" it would "not be responsible for overall repatriation or integration of refugees;" it would "not intervene in factional or local conflicts;" it would "not deal with territorial disputes;" it would "not separate the intimidators from the refugees, nor . . . disarm the intimidators;" it would "not secure the perimeter of refugee camps;" and it would "not provide police functions within the camps." Taken together, of course, Young's recitation bore striking similarity to that of the Clinton administration.

Young's own list also struck some Canadian participants in the decision-making process as surpassingly cautious. (CIDA officials were becoming particularly dissatisfied with the pace of deployment.) But it faithfully reflected the military and civilian advice Young was getting from his own department. And it might have gone some distance in answering the concerns of Anthony Lake, who was in Ottawa the same day. Again it was obvious (to Canadian negotiators) that Lake was trying to restrict the reach of the MNF's mandate, to clarify its operational objectives, to put in place a mechanism for political

direction and accountability—and perhaps simply to delay action while realities evolved on the ground.

Meanwhile, it could not have escaped Lake's notice that Canada's own military commitment to the MNF was remarkably modest for the country assuming command. By November 18, when DND officers briefed members of Parliament, the planned Canadian deployment of 1,500-1,600 people consisted of the following: a task force headquarters, drawn primarily from the First Canadian Division headquarters and signals regiment at Kingston, Ontario (General Baril and a small staff arrived in Africa November 19); personnel from Air Transport Group headquarters at Trenton, Ontario; the Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART), mainly medical and engineering staff; an air transport flight of up to three Hercules freighters from Trenton; and various support elements. It was an admittedly humble contribution for the lead government in an MNF originally conceived as requiring at least 10,000 troops, to which the U.S. had been contemplating a contribution of up to 4,000. The modest size underlined the necessity of recruiting far greater commitments from the "coalition of the willing" that the Canadian government was trying to assemble. DFAIT and DND officials were already asking themselves: Did the small Canadian military commitment undermine Canada's capacity to solicit and enforce the commitments of others?

That attempt resumed in New York on November 20, when Canadian officials, led by Deputy Minister Smith, convened a "consultative meeting" of troop-contributing and other interested governments and agencies. Smith's prepared objectives were to remind coalition members of the Resolution 1080 mandate—to facilitate aid delivery and voluntary repatriation—and to persuade other governments that the mandate remained valid despite changed circumstances. It was too soon to conclude that a military intervention was not required, Smith maintained; what was needed was to gather better intelligence about what was happening in Zaire. In Washington, however, the Clinton administration was already scaling back the provisional U.S. contribution from 4,000 to fewer than 1,000—none to be deployed in Zaire itself. With consensus apparently dissolving, the critical military issues were again put off; senior military commanders and diplomats were to meet at the U.S. airbase in Stuttgart, Germany, in two days to refine the possible options. To this point, no country except Canada had deployed any of the promised troops to General Baril's command in Africa.

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The negotiations in Stuttgart, which stretched over three days, remain in the memories of Canadian officials and NGO observers as another crucial turning point in the crisis; they were hard, acrimonious and ultimately disappointing. Much of the difficulty and bad temper was rooted in continuing disputes over the numbers, intentions and whereabouts of refugees still in Zaire. Aid agencies put the total of those still in need of rescue at up to 700,000; the U.S. government estimated 150,000-200,000. The number accepted at the end of the meeting was “at least” 250,000. But that left unresolved the contentious issue of what to do. The United States, backed by Britain, resisted deployments of almost any kind—yet, at least. The French, with Spanish, Belgian and Senegalese support, sought a deployment directly to eastern Zaire itself. For Canadian participants, including the Canadian chair of the meeting, Lt.-General Armand Roy, the argument generated only frustration. “The commitments didn’t add up to a hill of beans,” one Canadian colonel later said. In the end the only country to keep its commitment to assign troops to the MNF command was Canada. “Clearly the instructions that were given by the various countries to their militaries were: Be involved in the discussions, find out what’s going on, but don’t commit yourself to anything.” For a very senior Canadian diplomat at the meeting, this was insupportable. “Bullshit,” he interjected at one point, “we’re the only ones there. If this is so goddamn important, where *are* you all?”

This was to no avail. All that emerged from Stuttgart were five options to be presented to governments:

- A) Hold to the status quo (reconnaissance, planning, intelligence gathering);
- B) Establish MNF headquarters in the region;
- C) Facilitate aid and repatriation “in a permissive environment,” including an airlift into eastern Zaire;
- D) The same as C, but in a non-permissive environment using required force for protection;
- E) Redeployment, i.e., withdrawal.

It was made clear that the U.S. and British delegations would accept nothing stronger than option B, establishment of a headquarters, possibly in Uganda. To the prime minister and officials in Foreign Affairs, option B was unacceptable because it would not allow for the delivery of humanitarian assistance to as many as 300,000 genuine Rwandan refugees still in eastern Zaire. On that basis, and after a conference call from the prime minister who was then in Asia, Canadian officials elaborated a “B+” option of their own—a headquarters in Uganda, plus preparations for airdrops of relief supplies into Zaire or (if

possible) escorted convoys. It was this proposal that the Canadians took to the next meeting of the troop contributors on November 26 in New York.

From Africa, meanwhile, came unsettling accounts of further complications. There was still no reliable agreement on the number or locations of refugees or displaced persons in eastern Zaire. (The rain clouds that followed the refugees like a curse impeded aerial and satellite surveillance.) And Ambassador Chrétien was describing hardening attitudes in both the Zairian and Rwandan governments. While Washington was opposing deployment of U.S. troops in Zaire, some officials in Kinshasa were now insisting that the MNF set up its headquarters on Zairian territory; they evidently saw the MNF as an instrument for stopping the rebel advance. On the other hand, officials in Kigali were pressing for a refocus of the mission to finance the resettlement of refugees already back in Rwanda. The ambassador believed that the Rwandan authorities were using delaying tactics, “*manoeuvres dilatoires*,” to prevent any MNF deployment (which they regarded as threatening an untimely interruption of the Kabila-Tutsi successes in eastern Zaire). Ambassador Chrétien was also reporting that there was clear evidence of Rwandan army participation in the Kabila offensive against the refugee camps around November 15. Furthermore, he had warned that while a large-scale war between Zaire and Rwanda was not imminent, there was some danger the Zairian army would try to retake by force the territory it had lost to the Kabila rebels. The atmosphere of sabre-rattling was not hospitable to any MNF deployment, he wrote; but, on the other hand, the remaining refugees would be exposed to any intensification of fighting. Also visiting African capitals during these days was Christine Stewart, Canadian secretary of state responsible for Africa; as she sounded out regional opinion about short-term intervention prospects and longer-term peace initiatives, she encountered similar divisions and doubts.

Nor was DFAIT reassured by the news from Washington. Defence Minister Young, briefing journalists with Defence Secretary Perry at the Pentagon on November 25, remarked that, “at this stage, there’s been no definitive decision on whether or not there should be” a military deployment in Africa. “Whether or not we have to do something militarily in the traditional sense of peacekeeping or humanitarian support is difficult to tell at this point.” When a reporter asked, “What do you want from the U.S.?”, Young replied: “. . . I don’t think it’s anything specific to the U.S. at this point other than the fact that they’re there and we’re still talking, and that there may be some need in terms of that humanitarian aid for airlift capacity.” Axworthy, when he learned of this exchange, was later described as apoplectic. At a moment when Canada’s minister of foreign affairs was applying all his energies to securing a U.S. military commitment (at least for “B+”), Canada’s minister of defence was allowing that maybe nothing at all was needed—or wanted—from the U.S. government.

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It was in the context of these tensions that delegates of interested governments met again in New York on November 26; Paul Heinbecker, an assistant deputy minister at DFAIT, chaired the session. About 25 governments were represented as well as 11 UN agencies, the International Committee of the Red Cross, and the OAU. Heinbecker began by condemning Stuttgart's option B as inadequate, and advanced what amounted to an ultimatum to the other governments: Inform Canada within 36 hours of your commitment to a MNF headquarters and participation in airdrops, and maybe later in protected convoys. Canada would then decide, within another 24 hours, whether there was enough support to proceed; if so, the envisaged Steering Group would be established.

There was some dissent. Humanitarian agencies raised questions about the efficacy and safety of airdrops, while African governments reiterated dissatisfaction with the level of African participation in the unfolding plan (their participation would be diminished further if the operation were limited to airdrops). Still, Canadian officials returned to Ottawa believing progress had been made. Axworthy and Prime Minister Chrétien, if not Young, were determined to press on.

On November 28 Axworthy and Young held a news conference to announce that "more than 20 nations" had now offered support, including the United States, France, Belgium, South Africa, Malawi, Senegal, Denmark and Japan (offering money, not troops), among others. "The international community has agreed to set up a multinational headquarters in the region and to put in place the capability to carry out air drops of food into eastern Zaire," their news release said. As well, a Steering Group of "the major participating nations" would "take responsibility for providing political direction and co-ordinating the efforts of the international community. . . . Decisions on next steps will be taken by this body. Canada will be chair, but this group will work by consensus." By now, the news release added, more than 600 Canadian Forces personnel were assigned to the mission, "Operation Assurance," including just under 300 in the Great Lakes region itself.

The ministers were surely putting the best possible light on things. The British in fact remained so obdurate against airdrops (or any alternatives) that a senior Canadian diplomat at one point asked them not to bother attending any more meetings if they did not plan to be helpful; they seemed startled by the suggestion, and continued attending. The U.S. government notionally had endorsed the concept of airdrops, but expressed so many reservations in public that *The New York Times* reported "the possibility that even this more modest relief operation might not take place." Among those U.S. conditions: the coalition planes must not be fired upon, and approval would have to be secured from all parties including the Rwandan government and the Zairian rebels. As the *Times* reported in the same story, the Rwandan government strongly criticized the "B+" plan and objected to the use of Entebbe airport as the operational base. The White House said in a

statement that the U.S. would work with Canada and others to draft airdrop plans. “Once that planning is complete, we expect to make a final decision as to what can be accomplished effectively and what precise role the U.S. will play.”

This was a remarkably non-committal “commitment,” and it did not sound any stronger when the new Steering Group held its first meeting on November 29 in Ottawa. In addition to Canada, 13 governments were represented (Belgium, Cameroon representing as well the OAU, France, Ireland for the European Union, Italy, Japan, Senegal, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Uganda, the United Kingdom and the United States); the Netherlands joined the Group at its second meeting. But the November 29 meeting agreed to little more than to establish an MNF headquarters and await more information from General Baril. Heinbecker told reporters at the end of the day: “General Baril and his people are going to be on the spot and they are going to make an assessment.” In Washington on December 3, State Department Spokesman Nicholas Burns described the operation as “still in the planning stage.” The airdrop option was still under discussion in the Steering Group, he said, but the Group “operates on a consensus basis, and there is . . . no consensus” yet.

In Africa, circumstances were not growing easier. On November 28, so that he could more accurately gauge the potential for aid deliveries, General Baril met the rebel leader Laurent Kabila in Goma, Zaire. While Baril won Kabila’s tentative approval for airdrops in rebel-held territory, the meeting alienated the Zairian authorities in Kinshasa, whose hostility to airdrops became all the stronger. With every day that passed, more Zairian towns came under Kabila’s control and the Zairian army retreated westward. At the same time there were accumulating accounts of atrocities committed by Kabila’s forces—and just as troubling, the disappearance of refugees and displaced persons by the hundreds and even thousands. Paradoxically, these disappearances were used by some governments as evidence that airdrops and other measures were unnecessary; when a British surveillance airplane returned from a sortie with photographs of empty roads, British military officers offered them in argument against airdrops. There was still no consensus on the population of refugees and displaced persons now in Zaire; estimates ranged from fewer than 200,000 to more than 700,000.

In a November 29 report to the Security Council Boutros-Ghali was similarly uncertain. “. . . It is difficult at the present stage to provide . . . a comprehensive concept of operations for a humanitarian task force,” he wrote. “Indeed, it is still unclear what the scope of such a force’s tasks would be, especially when the nature, strength and modus operandi of the multinational force . . . have yet to be finalized.” Of 1.1 million Rwandans who had been in Zaire, Boutros-Ghali reported, his estimates now put the number remaining at “between 300,000 and 700,000” as of November 25. He went on to say that the policy of the Zairian government now was “that refugees must repatriate and international assistance should no longer be made available in Zaire but in their countries of origin.” The secretary-general concluded, however, that he still believed “that a

practical way to avoid a humanitarian disaster is the establishment of some form of military presence in the region.” It was left again to the Council, and now the Steering Group, to negotiate the means to that end, if they could.

In Cap-Martin on the Riviera, Ambassador Chrétien paid one more call on President Mobutu. Chrétien urged on Mobutu the value of opening a dialogue with Rwanda, notwithstanding that Rwandan forces had quite obviously participated in the ascendant Kabila rebellion. But before leaving, Chrétien also left Mobutu a letter noting that Zaire recently had made statements contrary to its earlier support for the MNF. The Canadian government, his letter said, would greatly appreciate a public statement by the president dispelling all ambiguity and reaffirming his government’s support for this humanitarian intervention. There is no trace on the public record that Mobutu ever acceded to Chrétien’s request.

In New York on December 5, in accordance with the requirements of Resolution 1080, Ambassador Fowler submitted a progress report on the MNF. The return of “a large number” of refugees was welcome, he said, but it was “possible there might be an appreciable number of refugees and displaced persons in eastern Zaire who still require assistance.” The MNF was undertaking aerial and ground reconnaissance “to obtain a clearer picture of the location, number, needs and intentions of the remaining refugees and displaced persons.” Aside from a short account of the creation and first meeting of the Steering Group, there was no more to report. To the regret of Fowler and (some of) the other Canadians engaged in the enterprise, the endgame had begun.

Standing Down

All these uncertainties opened still wider the divisions among Steering Group governments. From Europe, especially France, there were continuing pressures on Canada to activate the MNF, at least with airdrops. In Washington there was increasing resistance, and suggestions that perhaps the Canadians in their enthusiasm for their leadership role simply did not know when to stop. Canadian missions in Europe and Africa were at the same time cabling Ottawa with warnings against a premature or unprepared end to the intervention that would damage Canada’s reputation for dependability. At DFAIT, officials by early December were scripting various exit scenarios.

But there were analogous divisions inside the Canadian government itself. Axworthy remained committed to the utility and the possibility of mounting an MNF operation—by willing countries even without Steering Group consensus, if consensus were unobtainable. Officials at CIDA were similarly convinced that intervention was necessary and practical, with a strong preference for convoys over airdrops; CIDA’s NGO partners vigorously insisted that refugees and displaced Zairians urgently needed help, but in the main opposed airdrops as dangerous and inefficient. By contrast, DND

showed ever more open willingness to stand down Operation Assurance now that conditions had so significantly changed in Zaire. Young himself voiced his distaste for the prospects of a military operation in a scrum with reporters in Ottawa December 5. Was it at the point now, he was asked, “where you don’t need the multinational headquarters?” “Well, I’m not sure,” he replied. “We’re still there, we’re mounting it and General Baril is continuing with his discussions. There is certainly a lot less need for military support for humanitarian aid than there was because the situation has changed so dramatically. . . . And if the humanitarian aid can be delivered by NGOs in a relatively acceptable environment, then that is what will happen.” Young also said that DND’s DART disaster response team, which had been on stand-by at Trenton, had returned to base in Edmonton.

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On December 10, in a lengthy report (26 pages including five annexes, and a three-page covering letter), General Baril made a decisive recommendation to the Canadian government to withdraw the MNF and abandon the intervention. “It is my assessment that the MNF mission has largely been accomplished and therefore the mandate should come to an end,” he wrote in his covering letter, noting that his views had “been discussed with the US and UK contingent commanders in Kampala and there is general agreement at this level on the conclusions reported.” Baril said the objectives had “mostly been met” by the voluntary return of Rwandan refugees. “For those Rwandan refugees who remain in eastern Zaire, and who may not want to return for security concerns, needed assistance can be provided by the humanitarian relief agencies in co-operation with local authorities, in due course, and as the security situation permits.” The general commented in his covering letter that “reports received from outside the mission area indicate that some HRAs [humanitarian relief agencies] persist in their attempt to paint a continued humanitarian crisis in the making and deny the factual information made available to them at the local level.” He continued: “We do not and cannot claim to have accurate information on the location and condition of all refugees left in eastern Zaire since several thousands have moved west out of our observation zone of 100 km from the Zaire/Rwanda border. We must be prepared for criticism of a Steering Group decision that would end the mission and have a communication strategy in place and co-ordinated.” As for Canada’s own contribution: “Canadian Forces resources deployed with MNF are unique national resources and should only remain with MNF if these capabilities can not be provided by the humanitarian agencies. They should be withdrawn as soon as possible in order to be available for other real humanitarian emergencies.”

Baril went to some trouble in his report to analyse the problem of numbers. Starting with a widely accepted estimate of 50,000 Interahamwe and other Hutu militias blamed for most of the 1994 genocide, and adding 40,000 ex-FAR soldiers and another 10,000 people who were otherwise accomplices in the killing, Baril calculated that almost 100,000 “may have a strong wish not to return to Rwanda.” “[G]iven the average Rwandan family size,” that meant that it was “not unreasonable to conclude that there may

be as many as 250,000 refugees who would resist repatriation.” To derive the total number of refugees still in Zaire, Baril began with the UNHCR pre-November figure of 1.1 million, and reduced it to 900,000 to take account “of possible over-estimates . . . based on generous food distribution and over-registration.” Some 640,000 were known to have returned to Rwanda in recent weeks, leaving (if all this was true) about 260,000 in Zaire. If 250,000 were avoiding repatriation, that left only perhaps 10,000 refugees still in Zaire involuntarily.

These calculations have since been strenuously and angrily disputed. But the impact of Baril’s recommendation was irresistible. And it was reinforced by his political observations—that neither Rwanda’s government nor the “new authorities” (Kabila) in eastern Zaire favoured an MNF deployment in eastern Zaire. “. . . It is now increasingly clear that regional support for the continued presence of the MNF is rapidly eroding. It is therefore time to cease operations and re-deploy from the region.” There was also no comfort in his observation that “no nation other than Canada has authorized the transfer of authority of their elements deployed at Entebbe and Kampala to the MNF.”

Two days later, on December 12, Boutros-Ghali sent Ambassador Chrétien’s final report on to the Security Council. *Inter alia* (the ambassador’s negotiating and exploratory work touched subjects far beyond the MNF), Chrétien observed that with the return of 600,000 or more refugees, “the need for the deployment of a multinational force . . . has changed.” He also acknowledged that the massive flow back into Rwanda “caused Rwanda to question publicly the rationale for the multinational force.”

Ambassador Chrétien rather soberly observed that fighting between Zairian and Ugandan troops on November 30 did “not bode well for peace and stability in the region.” And he pointed out that, “while the immediate humanitarian crisis may have eased somewhat, the underlying political and military causes of instability in the region have yet to be addressed.” On the whole, however, there was nothing here to dissuade those ready to stand down the MNF—or to strengthen the hand of those who would stay.

In Washington the same day, the Pentagon announced it had withdrawn half of the 450 U.S. soldiers deployed (under its own command) to Central Africa in the crisis. “The momentum seems to be moving away from an international mission there,” a spokesman told a news conference. At about the same hour, the State Department issued a statement to say “the United States Government remains deeply concerned by the situation in eastern Zaire”—specifically by the fighting and by the refugees unaccounted for. “We urge all parties to enter into negotiations,” the statement said, and called for “dialogue” between Zaire and Rwanda and within Zaire itself. The statement, running to 540 words, made not a single reference to the MNF.

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The Canadian position, it is fair to say, was now in flux, if not in a muddle. The prime minister, who had conceived of the operation as a moral duty, was getting conflicting advice from the two ministers pre-eminently responsible: Axworthy determined to carry on, Young advising a prompt withdrawal. This conflict had not truly been resolved even as the Steering Group gathered in New York on December 13 for its second meeting. The indecision naturally represented a problem for Heinbecker, again in the chair and Canada's chief delegate. The problem was made no easier by the message Heinbecker got from Ottawa just before calling the meeting to order: Your prime minister wants the MNF wound up now, he was told, and your minister of foreign affairs says to keep it going; good luck.

In the event (and with Baril personally briefing the Steering Group with his own recommendation) Heinbecker told the meeting that Canada agreed with Baril's assessment. Canada intended to end its own involvement in the MNF December 31.

What followed was for the most part a recitation of familiar views. The French delegate argued for a continued effort, given that several hundred thousand refugees (1.1 million minus 600,000 returned, in his calculation) might still need aid. Britain accepted Canada's recommendation, emphasizing the urgency of organizing a political settlement in the region. Belgium sided with France. South Africa was equivocal. The Dutch believed the MNF headquarters at least was still useful, and that other approaches must be found if the MNF were closed down. UNHCR and the World Food Program argued vigorously for maintaining the MNF.

The U.S. representative, George Moose of the State Department, began by accepting the Canadian recommendation; conditions on the ground had changed and the MNF of Resolution 1080 was no longer appropriate. But Moose then surprised the Canadians by suggesting that some element of the MNF headquarters stay in place to monitor events and permit a military response if necessary. Heinbecker's prompt response was that Canada after all was the only country with forces under MNF command and Canada was leaving. No other government took up Moose's suggestion. Ambassador Fowler then thanked all present and undertook to report the decision of the Steering Group to the secretary-general. The meeting was adjourned. In Ottawa, the Prime Minister's Office issued a news release announcing the end of the MNF. "Those attending the meeting agreed that the remaining problems in eastern Zaire and Rwanda can best be addressed through a co-ordinated international effort under civilian leadership," the statement said. "The focus needs to be on providing support to the humanitarian agencies and on addressing the political problems that are at the root of this crisis."

In a brief letter to Boutros-Ghali dated the same day, Fowler wrote:

After consulting with our partners in the Steering Group, Canada has now concluded that, with the return to Rwanda of the majority of refugees, the dispersal of the remaining number over large areas of eastern Zaire and the growing access of international humanitarian agencies to the remaining refugees, displaced persons and civilians at risk, the multinational force at the current authorized force level has very little utility.

Canada will therefore withdraw its command and Canadian elements of the multinational force by 31 December 1996. . . . Canada recommends that the Security Council terminate the mandate of the multinational force, effective 31 December 1996.

Baril left his African headquarters for the last time December 20 and all the Canadians were out by early January.

On January 6, 1997, the Zairian mission at the UN wrote to the Security Council bitterly denouncing the outcome of Resolution 1080: the force was never deployed; Baril “established contact with the aggressors and their illegal administrations;” no safe corridor had been established; the policy of providing humanitarian aid did not achieve its objective; Rwanda attacked the refugee camps to pre-empt the MNF’s deployment; and the number of refugees still in Zaire “exceeded 800,000.”

In a year-end television interview, Prime Minister Chrétien put it differently. “We woke up the international community, we triggered the movement for these people to go back,” he said. “And it is the biggest movement of human beings with no violence, you know, probably for ever. . . . The goal was to give them food, medication and help them return home. And that’s exactly what happened.”

* * *

In truth, it had been a mysterious and worrying episode. How many thousand lives had been saved by the Canadian action? How many thousand people were abandoned to suffering and death by the result? What could explain the course and outcome of these negotiations? And in the end, can a middle power like Canada initiate and manage a large-scale humanitarian intervention?

CONCLUSION

It is not for nothing that these are called complex emergencies. The humanitarian crisis in eastern Zaire confounded understanding in myriad ways—in the number and variety of

state and non-state actors, in the difficulty of interest-accommodation and decision-making, in the changing uncertainties and complications of the conflict on the ground, in the potentially deadly consequences of every action or inaction.

In the context of these confusions, it is not enough to attribute Canadian conduct to a prime minister's vain reach for Nobel glory (for which there is no evidence) or to a Department of National Defence eager for redemptive action (it was not). To begin to explain these events and their outcome, it is better to look in other directions—to the dynamics of multilateral bargaining and to the interactions of political and bureaucratic processes in the Canadian and U.S. governments.

From the onset of the crisis, Canadian policy was formulated and executed in multilateral terms; it was never doubted that success, if possible at all, could only be achieved by co-ordinated multilateral action. Even if multilateralism was an impediment to early and effective intervention, it was also a necessary instrument.

Without calling up the entire and expanding literature on multilateral negotiation, it is enough here to draw from it three suggestive propositions. First, crisis can make agreements or break them, sometimes unpredictably. The crisis of impending famine and slaughter served to create a consensus sufficient for the adoption of Resolution of 1080. Crisis of a different kind—the startling refugee movement back to Rwanda—served as pretext at least for hesitation and then defection by some states from the earlier (apparent) consensus.

Second, problem definition is an important preparatory phase to a negotiated solution. If the problem in this case was defined in Resolution 1080, it was suddenly and radically “un-defined” by new and differently understood facts on the ground. In a sense, because events and perceptions never stabilized, bargaining repeatedly recycled back to prenegotiation and problem-redefinition.

Third, confusion has its effects—two to be mentioned here. One, high degrees of risk and uncertainty in crises tend to generate position-taking, not problem-solving. In this case, the effect was to reinforce formulaic and contradictory imperatives: “do something” (anything) as against recitals of the normative and prudential arguments against intervention. And two, uncertainty draws decision-makers to the reassuring advice of experts—epistemic communities. In this case, the transnational community of shared knowledge with the most influence on governments was the military community. Here, especially among NATO governments, were experts with a shared knowledge (even a claimed monopoly of knowledge) and with a mostly shared reluctance to deploy forces in Central Africa. The Canadian military counted itself part of this community, which did not speed the work of Canadian diplomats trying to negotiate an intervention.

To repeat: these dynamics of multilateral bargaining worked in a negotiation of exceptionally dissimilar parties, many of them seemingly operating with mixed motives and hidden objectives. It is now uncontroverted, but was not so at the time, that Rwandan Vice-President Kagame (who was also defence minister) had aided and probably had stimulated the Kabila/Tutsi uprising in eastern Zaire in 1996. Kagame has since told *The Washington Post* that in October 1996 he learned of a plan by the Hutus in Zaire to attack the Banyamulenge Tutsis and invade Rwanda. In pre-emption, Kagame armed and contributed troops to Zairian Tutsi assaults on the Hutu camps. The assaults succeeded and entire towns fell under rebel control.

Then came talk of a U.S.-backed UN intervention, a deployment of foreign troops that threatened to stop Kabila and the Zairian Tutsis just as they were gaining ground. To forestall the MNF's arrival, Kagame says, he triggered the November 15 Kabila/Tutsi attack on the huge Mugunga camp outside Goma. With the Hutu ex-FAR and militias in flight, the Hutu refugees then began the walk to the Rwandan border. At that point, Rwandan objectives became relatively clear-cut and apparent to Ambassador Chrétien and other Canadian officials: Rwanda would not support any MNF deployment that might interrupt the Kabila/Tutsi rebellion, which was now turning its sights westward to Kinshasa. Rwanda would resist any use of its territory as an operations base for the MNF and insist that international resources be spent on reintegrating Rwandan refugees back in Rwanda, not on the stragglers and fugitives still in Zaire.

Then there was the riddle of U.S. objectives in Central Africa—a confusion of declared and undeclared purposes that Canadian officials more than a year later said they still had not resolved with certainty. Inside the White House, Anthony Lake's purposes were primarily security-related and interest-based—prevention of conflict escalation in Rwanda, Burundi and Zaire; preservation of Zaire as a single state; avoidance of a U.S. military deployment. At the bottom of Lake's list was the humanitarian purpose of averting another humanitarian catastrophe. A former very senior State Department official put things the other way round when asked what U.S. objectives were: "Primarily humanitarian. We were concerned that on the ground there was a development leading to a possible human tragedy. . . . That was above all our overriding concern."

The point here is not just that the U.S. government exhibited mixed motives and intentions, but also that ambiguities in the U.S. position helped generate suspicions in other governments of ulterior U.S. objectives. "Certainly the French were persuaded there was an American game going on," as one Canadian official later said. Simply summarized, at least some French and African officials believed the U.S. government was manipulating its qualified support of the intervention in an attempt to promote Rwandan interests, activate a Kabila/Kagame collaboration, and do nothing to rescue the discredited Mobutu (a former but now quite worthless U.S. ally). That might explain why, as the Kabila rebellion advanced, the United States appeared to lose enthusiasm for intervention. But U.S. equivocation, whatever the cause, greatly complicated the formation of multilateral

consensus in the Steering Group. Said a high-level Canadian diplomat of U.S. objectives: “I never had the impression that they really wanted to agree. Which led back to the question, Why not?”

A last short note on the multilateral context. Historically and frequently, from Korea to the Gulf, Canadian decision-makers have conceived of the UN itself as an instrument for enlarging middle-power influence—especially in cases of intervention. As in the Gulf case, however, enmeshing the United States in the constraints of UN norms and procedures invites the danger that UN decisions themselves are driven by U.S. objectives and energies. In the eastern Zaire case, the *de jure* U.S. Security Council veto, combined with its *de facto* political veto (created by others’ insistence on U.S. deployment) magnified U.S. power over collective decisions. In the event, no coalition that Canada could assemble in the Steering Group could outweigh the legal and political power of the U.S. government to say “No.” It needs remembering as well that Boutros-Ghali’s organizational authority in this case, which might ordinarily have assisted Canadian efforts, was dissipated by his simultaneous and losing contest to stay in office—and by the coincidence that his chief and successful rival was his deputy responsible for peacekeeping operations, the U.S.-backed Kofi Annan.

Bureaucrats and Politics in Ottawa and Washington

It was a lament of Canadian participant-officials, at that time and afterward, that U.S. interests and objectives were never fully intelligible, stable or mutually compatible. Likewise, the U.S. decision process was not wholly transparent to outsiders. (Clinton, like Chrétien, was travelling abroad through much of this period, which might at times have created some sense of disconnection.) Within this setting, Canadian officials felt pressed and often disadvantaged by the dominating U.S. negotiating approach, which was to ask and re-ask questions about MNF mandate and operations, developments on the ground, political management of the MNF, and the changing (and diminishing) need for deployment. Especially galling to the Canadians was the strong suspicion that the Americans already had the answers. “You knew that they probably had great books with all this stuff,” as a senior Canadian later said. Another Canadian official noticed an organizational asymmetry between the U.S. and Canadian sides: Canadian delegations would usually be led by senior DFAIT officials at the assistant deputy minister rank or higher, all extremely capable generalists with authority; the U.S. side often sent experts in the problem at hand, armed with specialist questions—and little apparent authority. When the agenda was to question Canadian competence and readiness, the Canadians were thus disadvantaged. What the Canadian negotiators did not know for sure was whether the U.S. side was genuinely seeking information and reassurance or playing for time. And when Canadian officials reversed this Socratic dialogue and pressed for U.S. answers and explanations, they were rebuffed. Recalled one Canadian: “I never got a straight answer.”

After the fact, interviews with former high U.S. government officials suggest that Lake had his own preferred outcome. The national security adviser believed (or hoped, perhaps) that a credible threat to deploy an MNF in eastern Zaire would by itself provoke the Kabila/Tutsi rebels to attack the Rwandan Hutu soldiers and militias in such force that the mass of refugees would be released from the gunmen's control. This belief was consistent with Lake's preference that Canada succeed in securing commitments, that the Security Council adopt a convincing resolution for intervention—but that no U.S. deployment actually take place. Lake would not want a U.S. deployment to occur, not only because of Pentagon and congressional opinion against it, but also because a deployment big enough to have effect would also be big enough to freeze the status quo in eastern Zaire. This could leave a large and hostile armed Hutu population in Zaire just across Rwanda's border, an alarming prospect to the Rwandan government. It might also save the unattractive Mobutu regime.

This is not to say, however, that the U.S. government smoothly duped the Canadian government into organizing an intervention that was never meant to materialize. In the first place, key parts of the U.S. government (especially in the State Department) seem to have wanted an intervention. In the second place, given the confusions on the ground and in the diplomacy, the duping theory looks too clever by half: Lake, even if he had been able to turn the entire U.S. government to his view, could not have foretold with the necessary precision exactly how events would unfold. The likelier explanation is that Lake was prepared to recommend U.S. deployment if necessary, preferred to avoid deployment, and soon concluded that deployment was unnecessary.

The point has been made above that Washington's overlapping bureaucratic and political circles were divided on intervention. In the customary course of long and open policy arguments in Washington, Canadian authorities from time to time can intervene in the process—building coalitions with sympathetic interest groups, assembling alliances in the bureaucracy and Congress, engaging the U.S. media. In this case, however, the argument in Washington was neither long nor open. It was over in a matter of weeks, and the facts were few, misunderstood and controversial. The speed of events and decisions, and the relatively closed circles of influential players, constricted Canada's opportunities to improvise useful coalitions that would promote the intervention.

But coalition-formation was not entirely absent from the case. DND, with its decades-long experience of collaboration with the Pentagon, a shared culture, and its shared apprehension about any deployment in Africa, enjoyed a strategic advantage in Washington's bureaucratic politics that other factions of the Canadian government did not. At the MNF command level, General Baril began his mission to Africa with several hours in the Pentagon. Even in Africa, diplomats perceived that when the advance units of Canadian soldiers had messed for a few days with their U.S. opposite numbers in the field, the Canadians soon lost whatever small appetite for intervention they might have brought to the mission. And it was not by chance that the first cabinet-level officials to speak

openly of withdrawal from the intervention were Defence Secretary Perry and Defence Minister Young.

Finally and briefly, five speculative observations on the problem of influencing the U.S. government in cases of humanitarian intervention:

1. The Canadian government's influence on U.S. policy and conduct is maximized when time is sufficient to allow coalition-formation with actors inside the U.S. policy community.
2. Canadian influence is maximized to the extent that the policy debate in Washington is open. Closed debate means ownership of an issue remains with those in the bureaucracies best placed to rewrite history and frame the policy issue to their own advantage.
3. Canadian influence is maximized when Canadian negotiators can demilitarize the intervention question. To the extent that a problem is defined in Washington as a problem of military security and troop deployment, the first U.S. response will be one of reluctance and/or unilateralism. Canada can increase its influence by appealing to normative obligation and by infusing the intervention with non-military, political content. A policy problem defined operationally as strictly military will become the privileged property of DND and DOD.
4. The Canadian government's influence is maximized when it can create or participate in an international "coalition of the willing" which is capable of mounting an intervention without a U.S. contribution, or strong enough to survive a U.S. defection. In the Zaire case, without the fall-back of their *de facto* veto, U.S. decision-makers might—just might—have recalculated their interests as better served by being involved in the deployment, shaping the outcome, rather than outside and left behind.
5. Canadian government influence would be increased by UN agreement to strengthen international capacity for Chapter VII operations. Rapid-reaction capabilities, or creation of an operational stand-by "high-readiness" brigade, could accelerate deployment times in crises, enhance middle-power competence, and reduce reliance on *ad hoc* U.S. contributions. Endowed with such capacity, the disadvantages that Canada and other activists carried into the Zaire case would be diminished in future. More important, regime-formation of this sort might save lives in future emergencies.

A NOTE ON SOURCES

To assemble the facts of this case and to elicit interpretations of the events from participants, 31 open-ended interviews were conducted in 1997-98 with 27 present and former officials of the Canadian and U.S. governments, the United Nations Secretariat, and CARE Canada. With one exception, participants submitted to interviews (and in some instances opened files) on the condition that material not be attributed to them by name. The exception was Gordon Smith, former deputy minister at DFAIT, who collaborated with the author on a chapter for an anthology of case studies (*Herding Cats: The Management of Complex International Mediation*, published by the United States Institute for Peace, 1999). Anonymity, requested for the usual reasons, was granted with the usual reluctance. In the end, these contributions have been used when tested successfully against other evidence and when their value outweighed the risks and disadvantages.

Much of the documentary record remains secret in government files. However, about 1,000 pages of records were released under the Access to Information Act by DND in January 1998, as Case (A) 96-1168. Other useful documents include the booklet "Lessons Learned from the Zaire Mission," by James Appathurai and Ralph Lysyshyn of DND and DFAIT respectively, circulated in 1997 by their departments. The best single account of the 1995 genocide in Rwanda is "The International Response to Conflict and Genocide: Lessons from the Rwanda Experience," (five volumes), the 1996 report of the Danish-led International Joint Evaluation of Emergency Assistance to Rwanda. A useful history, with informed insights into France's role and the crisis in eastern Zaire, is Gérard Prunier's *The Rwanda Crisis*, revised edition, 1997.

A complete bibliography, including the abundant literatures on Washington policy processes, bargaining theory and U.S.-Canada relations, and journalistic coverage of the Zaire crisis, is attached to the author's MA thesis, *Conditions of Influence: An exploratory case study of the Canadian government's effect on U.S. policy in the case of intervention in eastern Zaire* (unpublished), The Norman Paterson School of International Affairs, Carleton University, Ottawa, 1998.

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John B. Hay, a former journalist, is a consultant in foreign policy and international affairs in Ottawa.

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