

## Contributor Profile: Guatemala

Orlando J. PEREZ  
Millersville University

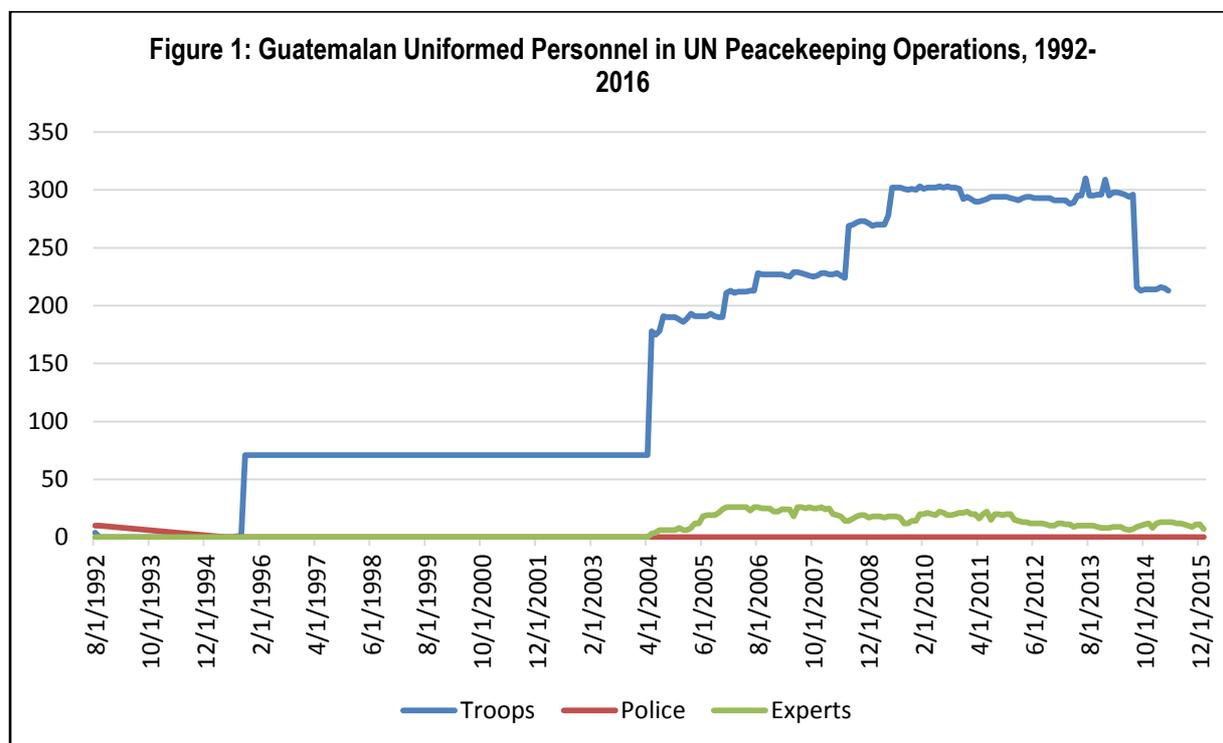
Active Armed Forces <sup>1</sup>	Helicopters & fixed-wing transport	Defense Budget	UN Peacekeepers	UN Contribution Breakdown	Other Significant Deployments
18,050  World Ranking (size): <b>97</b>  Army: 15,550 Navy: 1500 Air Force: 1,000  Paramilitary: 25,000	17 transport helicopter  2 MRH helicopter	2015: US\$275m (0.43% of GDP)  2014: US\$264m (0.45% of GDP)  2013: US\$259m (0.48% of GDP)  2012: US\$211m (0.42% of GDP)  World Ranking: <b>96</b>	225 (14 women) (30 April 2016)  Ranking: <b>58<sup>th</sup></b>  (6 <sup>th</sup> largest contributor from the Americas)	MINUSCA 2 (2 observers) MINUSTAH 54 troops MONUSCO 151 (151 troops, 1 expert) UNIFIL 2 experts UNISFA 1 (1 observer) UNMISS 4 (2 on servers, 2 troops) UNOCI 4 observers	None
Defense Spending / Active troop: <sup>2</sup> <b>US\$15,278</b> (compared to global average of approx. US\$6,054; and Latin America and the Caribbean average of: US\$2,618)					

### Part 1: Recent Trends

Guatemala's provision of military personnel in UN peacekeeping began in 1994-95 with a small contingent in the UN Mission in Haiti ([UNMIH](#)). Guatemala also hosted a peacekeeping mission in 1997: the UN Verification Mission in Guatemala (MINUGA), which oversaw the implementation of the Peace Accords that ended the 36-year civil war. This experience provided an understanding of the mechanisms and structures that are needed for successful peacekeeping. To date, Guatemala has contributed to UN peacekeeping forces in Haiti, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Darfur, Lebanon, South Sudan, Nepal and the Ivory Coast. As part of its contribution to UN peacekeeping, Guatemala has deployed three types of contingents: Kaibil Special Forces who served in MONUSCO in the DRC; military police, who participated in MINUSTAH in Haiti; and individual officers assigned as military observers to MONUSCO, MINUSTAH, ONUCI, UNMISS, UNIFIL, UNISFA and MINUSCA.

The Guatemalan Army has participated in MINUSTAH since 2004; deploying twelve rotations of military police that have delivered facility security, guard duties, planning for crime prevention activities, drug trafficking control, and other domestic security functions. The Guatemalan contingent in MINUSTAH is small compared to countries such as Brazil and India. Nonetheless, its contribution to the mission has proven important because Guatemalan personnel monitor the peacekeepers themselves. For example, Guatemalan personnel were assigned to supervise the investigation of four Uruguayan troops who

allegedly sexually assaulted a young man in the southern town of Port-Salut. The Guatemalan contingent also assists in the provision of potable water and vital supplies to local orphanages.



In 2005 a Regional Center for Peace Operations ([CREOMPAZ](#)) was founded in Coban, Alta Verapaz, to prepare Central American military contingents for participation in international peacekeeping missions. The Center serves as the regional hub for the Conference of Central American Armed Forces (CFAC) multinational battalion training.

Since 2006, a dozen rotations of Kaibiles Special Forces have been deployed to the DRC as part of MONUSCO, the UN’s largest peacekeeping force. They carry out patrols, establish temporary operational bases, and guard civil agencies and humanitarian organizations. The core responsibilities of the Kaibiles contingent include protecting civilians and humanitarian personnel, and supporting the DRC government in its stabilization and peace consolidation efforts. The Kaibiles’ experience and training in tropical guerrilla warfare has been a key contribution to the mission. The sharp decrease in peacekeeping contributions in 2014, as shown in Figure 1, seems to be explained by a rotation of Kaibiles Special Forces that occurred at the end of 2014 and beginning of 2015.

Guatemala deploys civilians as translators and medical personnel, and military personnel as observers, staff officers and liaison officers. These personnel normally volunteer for a one-year tour of duty, and are required to show English language proficiency, good conduct record, capacity to work under pressure, possess good health and physical condition. Though Guatemala did not attend the World Leaders Summit organized by the Obama administration in September 2015, and are unlikely to attend the follow-up summit organized by the United Kingdom in September 2016, Guatemala is likely to continue to contribute to peacekeeping operations in the years to come, mainly due to the benefits for the military associated with this, and the positive additions to the image of the country. However, any significant

casualties or scandals related to Guatemala's participation in peacekeeping operations could put pressure on the Guatemalan government to curb this participation.

## **Part 2: Decision-Making Process**

Guatemala's participation in peacekeeping is decided at the highest level of state by the President, who acts on the advice of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of National Defense, and the armed forces. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Office of Multilateral Policy for the UN is the key agency in charge of coordinating government agencies operationally responsible for Guatemala's participation in peacekeeping operations. Within the armed forces, it's the Command for Peacekeeping Operations that coordinates the military's participation and personnel selection at the operational level. The Regional Command for Training of Peacekeeping Forces, which is part of the armed forces' Command for Peacekeeping Operations, additionally houses, CREOMPAZ, the Regional Center for Peace Operations. Since 2005, CREOMPAZ has trained personnel for peacekeeping operations from throughout Latin American and the Caribbean. The regional center receives assistance from the U.S. Global Peace Operations Initiative (GPOI) as well as academic support from Canada's Pearson Peacekeeping Centre (before it was closed down), and the Canadian Defense Academy and the Directorate-Military Training & Cooperation (DMTC).

## **Part 3: Rationales for Contributing**

*Political Rationales:* On December 29, 1996, a peace treaty between the Guatemalan government and leftist guerrilla forces ended the country's 36-year civil war. The Peace Accords established a long-term agenda for development that was intended to overcome both the causes and consequences of the armed conflict. The Agreement on Strengthening Civilian Authority and the Role of the Military (AFPC) was designed to reverse the historical power of the armed forces in politics. The process also included the participation of troops in peacekeeping and humanitarian support missions. Internationally, providing UN peacekeepers has given the Guatemalan government a certain degree of leverage. Participation in peacekeeping, particularly in Haiti, has been praised by the United States and has softened opposition in the US Congress towards providing military assistance to Guatemala, after its curtailment during the civil war. Additionally, these multilateral deployments foster regional cooperation, thus reducing the likelihood of conflict with neighboring states.

*Institutional Rationales:* Guatemala's participation in peacekeeping operations was institutionalized by the National Defense Book published in November 2003, which describes participation in peacekeeping as a fundamental component of the new vision and mission of the armed forces to respond to non-traditional transnational threats. For the military, the driving force for participation was the ability to promote the post-civil war process of transforming and modernizing the Guatemalan armed forces. On a professional level, peacekeeping missions provide an opportunity for military officers and troops to operate in complex environments that often require the development of interoperable capabilities by cooperating with other militaries. Such cooperation also facilitates the exchange of experiences and ideas that can serve to improve institutional capabilities back home.

*Economic Rationales:* Part of the process of reforming the military after the civil war entailed substantial reductions in military spending and troop levels. Participation in peacekeeping operations provided both an opportunity for additional pay and reimbursement for operational costs incurred during deployment. In Guatemala's case, of the UN reimbursement rate of

approximately US\$1,300 per soldier per month, 90% is passed on to the officers, NCOs receive 60%, and soldiers receive approximately 50%. Members of the Kaibil deployed as peacekeepers are said to receive a slightly higher percentage than their non-Kaibil colleagues. The remaining UN funds are absorbed by the Defense Ministry.

*Normative Rationales:* Participation in peacekeeping missions was crucial in improving the image and prestige of the Guatemalan armed forces after its politicization and human rights abuses during the country's 36-year civil war, which tarnished its reputation both domestically and internationally. During the war, multilateral assistance drastically reduced and large sectors of Guatemalan society saw the military as an enemy rather than a protector. Peacekeeping operations, however, allowed the armed forces to become valuable players in the government's foreign policy, bringing praise and recognition. Linking UN participation to democratic ideals adds further motivation for the government to deploy their troops as UN peacekeepers since UN missions provide these armed forces with a new role that requires obedience to civilian authority as a condition for inclusion.

*Security Rationales:* Guatemala's security concerns are mostly domestic and related to criminal networks, rather than international conflicts.

#### **Part 4: Barriers to Contributing**

*Resistance in the military:* Guatemala's participation might run into personnel constraints because of the military's 15,500 personnel strength ceiling. To date, Guatemala's peacekeeping commitments are less than 300 personnel, but this number must be multiplied by a factor of three to account for troop rotations. In addition, Guatemala provides specialized personnel (most notably military police) rather than infantry troops and the Guatemalan military force structure contains only a limited number of such personnel (less than 400 military police). Addressing the shortage of military police (who are also in high demand to provide support to Guatemala's National Civilian Police) by increasing the number of personnel is not a viable option as it would negatively impact the military's ability to implement its modernization program. For this reason, the Guatemalan military is exploring the idea of emulating other countries by not counting deployed peacekeepers against its personnel ceiling, an idea that would likely generate strong political opposition from civil society and human rights groups, as well as the political opposition. Breaching the personnel ceilings might be perceived as a violation of the 1996 Peace Accords.

*Discomfort with the expanding UN peacekeeping agenda:* Another obstacle is the possibility of casualties affecting public sentiment toward peacekeeping operations, thereby reducing the political will to support continued participation. For example, on 23 January 2006 eight Guatemalan peacekeepers [were killed](#) in the DRC in a failed covert mission to capture a top Ugandan rebel. The deaths sparked [heated debate](#) about the UN's peacekeeping tactics and Guatemala's role in MONUC. Sergio Morales, Guatemala's human rights ombudsman, said Guatemalan troops were "[doing the dirty work](#)" of the UN. UN officials admitted the operation was "pushing the limits" of their mandate. Participation in offensive UN operations or robust mandates might be difficult for Guatemala because of political opposition from civil society and personnel limitations. However, the Kaibiles Special Forces are trained in capabilities that might be useful in offensive operations such as those in the DRC.

*Difficult domestic politics:* Guatemala has among the highest levels of crime and violence in Latin America. The military is increasingly used to support and assist the National Civilian Police in combating domestic security challenges. Public and elite support for peacekeeping

participation might hinge on the extent to which the government is able to curtail the levels of crime domestically and thus reduce pressure to divert resources (e.g. Military Police, Special Forces, etc.) from peacekeeping to domestic security.

### **Part 5: Current Challenges and Issues**

[Public fatigue](#) with peacekeeping participation is a challenge, especially if casualties are incurred. Some Guatemalans see participation in peacekeeping operations boosting the image and resources of the military, which might undermine the demilitarization process of the Peace Accords. The participation in PKOs of the Kaibiles Special Forces, in particular, is challenging because of the [historical human rights record](#) of this unit. The public's support is contingent on the government and military's ability to continue selling the benefits of peacekeeping missions while avoiding casualties. A [repeat of the 2006](#) incident in the DRC might [weaken public](#) and political support beyond repair. Sergio Morales, Guatemala's human rights ombudsman, [argued at the time](#) that Guatemalan troops were "doing the dirty work of the United Nations."

### **Part 6: Key Champions and Opponents**

Guatemala's government seems committed to supporting participation in UN peacekeeping operations. The government views participation as a way of enhancing Guatemala's positive image as a responsible global citizen. The resources and training obtained by the military are an additional reason for the government's support. The senior leadership of the Guatemalan armed forces strongly supports participation in peace operations as a vehicle for enhancing the professionalization of the Guatemalan military (principally through exposure to other military forces and through experience gained in out-of-area joint operations). On the other hand, some academic analysis has shown that peacekeeping missions may simply reinforce old historical practices to the detriment of military professionalization and democratic civil-military relations back home (Sotomayor 2013).

Perhaps no Guatemalan has been more supportive and instrumental in promoting the country's participation in peacekeeping than Edmond Mulet, who served as Ambassador to the European Union and the United States. He was a member of Guatemala's National Congress for 12 years, including one term as its President. He served as the UN's Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations from 2007 to 2015, with a term from 2010 to 2011 as Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of MINUSTAH. He served previously as Special Representative and Head of MINUSTAH, from 2006 to 2007. In November 2015, the UN Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon, appointed Mulet as Chef de Cabinet (Chief of Staff).

Opposition has come from human rights groups who argue the military's participation in peacekeeping obfuscates the institution's history of human rights abuses. Since participation in peacekeeping is thought to increase the prestige and legitimacy of the armed forces, some critics see this as a problem because they want to further reduce the military budget and the number of personnel. At times, public opinion has questioned peacekeeping participation as wasteful of resources that could best be used to tackle insecurity at home. A former Guatemalan diplomat and minister of foreign relations, Gert Rosenthal Königsberger, has raised questions about offensive peacekeeping operations because they can "[complicate](#)" reconciliation efforts and raise complex issues about the proper use of military force.

### **Part 7: Capabilities and Caveats**

Guatemala's capabilities are linked to the country's history of counterinsurgency operations. While these operations are controversial because of the history of human rights abuses and violence, they provide the military with skills that might be useful for certain UN peace operations. Additionally, Guatemala's military police and Kaibiles Special Forces possess particular skills with regard to crowd control and responding to non-traditional threats. Another important advantage of Guatemalan participation is the Regional Center for Peace Operations (CREOMPAZ), a valuable resource for training and promoting peacekeeping participation among the countries of Latin America. With increased funding, CREOMPAZ could play an expanded role in peacekeeping training. There is an opportunity for additional female peacekeepers as women participation in the Guatemalan military increases. However, women do not participate in combat and are not trained as Kaibiles Special Forces, so female frontline troop participation will be limited. Therefore, increasing offensive peacekeeping operations might also limit the number of women that Guatemala would be willing to deploy as any potential female casualty will have a very negative effect on public support for PKO participation.

### **Part 8: Further Readings**

- Fishel, J.T. (2007), *Capacity building for peacekeeping: the case of Haiti* (Potomac Books).  
Pérez, O. J. (2015), *Civil-military Relations in Post-conflict Societies: Transforming the Role of the Military in Central America* (Vol. 12) (Routledge).  
Sotomayor, A.C. (2013), *The myth of the democratic peacekeeper: civil-military relations and the United Nations* (John Hopkins University Press).

---

### **Notes**

<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise stated, data is drawn from IISS *Military Balance 2016* (London: IISS/Routledge, 2016).

<sup>2</sup> Armed Forces spending is a country's annual total defense Budget (in US dollars) divided by the total number of active armed forces. Figures from IISS, *The Military Balance 2016*.