

Country Profile: Uganda

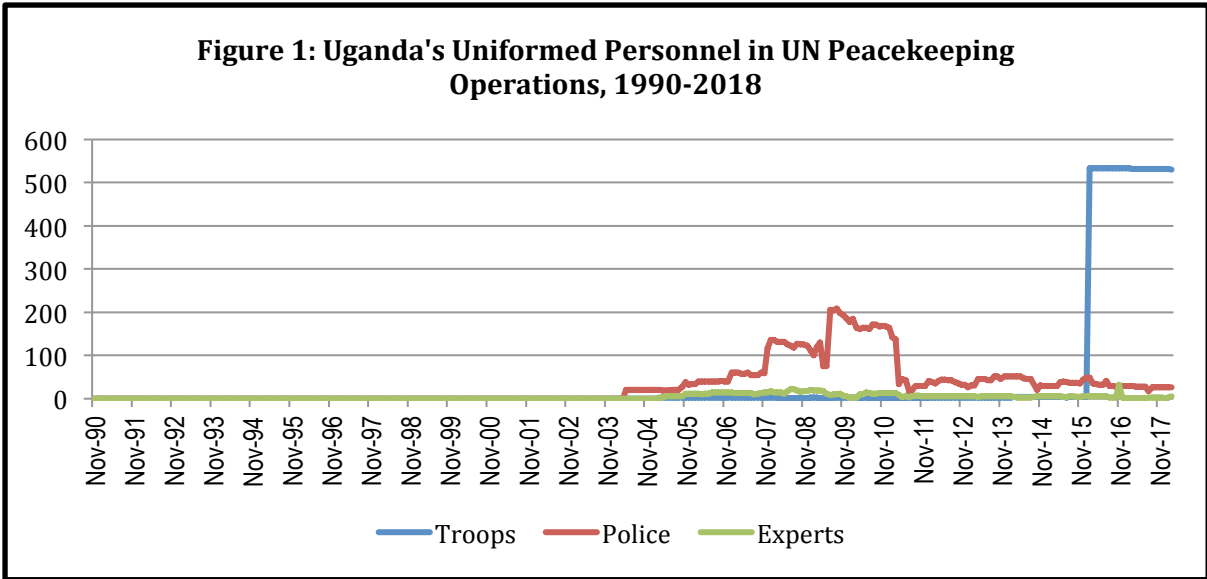
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Active Armed Force ¹	Helicopters	Defense Budget	Uniformed UN Peacekeepers	UN Contribution Breakdown	Other Significant/Official Deployments
40,000-45,000	12	2017: US\$436m (1.65% of GDP)	561 (44 women) (31 Mar 2018)	UNMISS: 28 (26 police, 2 staff officers)	AMISOM: 6,223 troops and Force Commander
World Ranking (size): 65th	Attack: 1 (2 more non-op)	2016: US\$481m (1.88% of GDP)	Ranking: 40th (22 nd African contributor)	UNSOM: 532 (530 troops, 2 experts) [Guard Unit]	
Army: 40,000-45,000	Multirole: 5 (1 more non-op)	2015: US\$358m (1.47% of GDP)		UNSOS: 1 expert	
Air force: n/a	Multirole / Transport: 4 (incl. 2 VIP)	2014: US\$405m (1.55% of GDP)			
Para-military: 1,400	Light: 2				
Reserve Force: 10,000					
Defense Spending/Active troop: ² US\$9,689-US\$10,900 (compared to global average of approx. US\$67,959)					

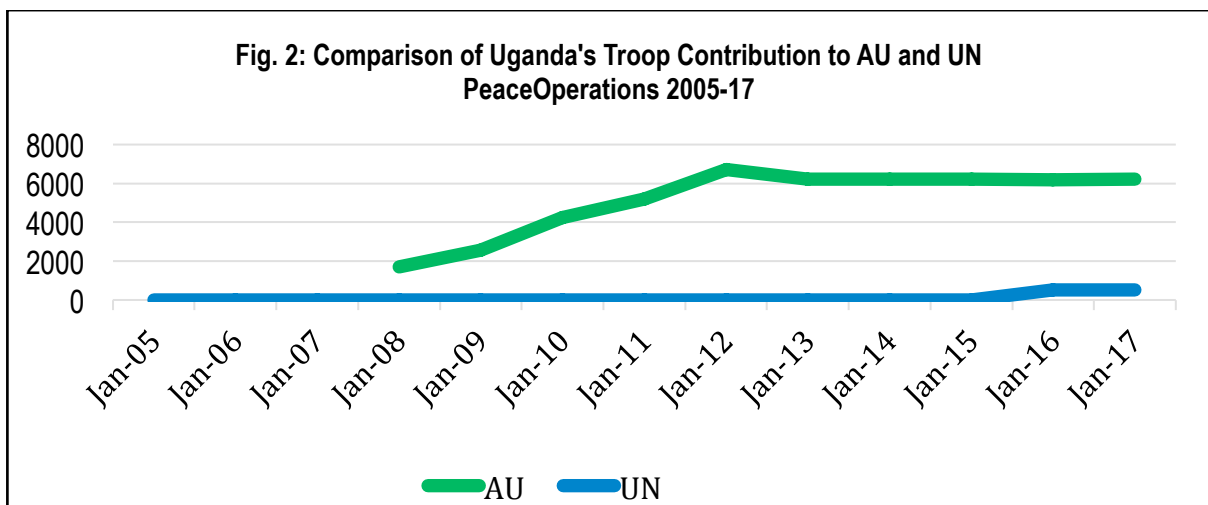
Part 1: Recent Trends

Uganda is a relative newcomer to United Nations peacekeeping. In part, this is due to its history of civil and regional conflict that only really subsided in 2006. Since coming to power in 1986 the National Resistance Movement (NRM) was engaged in combat in northern Uganda until 2006 and in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) until 2004. Uganda has participated in some peacekeeping operations in the 1990s, including providing some troops and the Deputy Force Commander Brigadier (now Lt-Gen rtd) Ivan Koreta to the UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL). However, it was only after national deployments post-2004 were drawn down that peacekeeping became a real option for the Ugandan military.

In the last fifteen years Ugandan contributions to UN peacekeeping have mainly been in the form of staff officers, police, prison officers and civilian experts. However, Uganda has recently increased its contributions to UN missions, mainly in support of activities in Somalia to compliment Ugandan efforts in the AU mission ([AMISOM](#)). Uganda hosts the UN's [Regional Service Centre Entebbe \(RSCE\)](#) and a peace operations support hub at Entebbe, which provides logistics and administrative support to UN missions in Africa, but also peacekeeping training courses to missions and related offices in the region.



At the same time Uganda is a leading troop contributor to African Union peace operations (see Figure 2), which partly explains why its contributions to UN missions are much lower. Uganda was the first country to deploy troops to Somalia as part of the African Union Mission ([AMISOM](#)) in 2007. Although other states have joined AMISOM, Uganda remains the largest contributor, providing over 6,000 troops and police officers, mostly in Sector 1 around Mogadishu, Sector 3 around Baidoa and in the Multinational Force Headquarters also in Mogadishu. The current and four previous AMISOM Force Commanders were also Ugandan. In addition, around 2,000 Ugandan soldiers, along with troops from CAR, DRC and South Sudan, were part of a Regional Task Force (RTF) targeting the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) before [the mission closed in 2017](#). As well as a leading contributor to AMISOM, Uganda is also instrumental in the development of the Eastern Africa Standby Force ([EASF](#)) and other AU-affiliated conflict management initiatives. Uganda has provided the director for EASFCOM, participated in several joint multinational military exercises in the region and has developed a Rapid Deployment Capability (RDC) for future AU/EASF missions.



Peacekeeping reflects Uganda’s broader international relations in dealing with the UN and other bodies. It is based on a pragmatic strategy driven by national interests underscored by Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni’s ideological lens of Pan-Africanism. Although

Uganda has consistently contributed peacekeepers to UN missions, the numbers are far lower than some neighboring states and other countries with similar defense capabilities and budgets. However, Uganda has been at the forefront of developing AU capabilities, reflecting a commitment on the part of the leadership to implementing African-led initiatives. This trend is likely to continue with Uganda seeing mainly AU peace operations as serving its regional priorities and security concerns, but also as an invaluable bargaining chip with international donors. This is partly explained by the ethos of the Ugandan leadership, which has typically been distrustful of UN missions and the UN in general. AU peace operations on the other hand are seen as part of a [Pan-African project](#) where African states can make decisions about their own continent without being dictated to from outside. In practical terms, the AU serves Uganda's interests far better than the UN given the influence Kampala can wield within the continental body.

Part 2: Decision-making process

Ugandan military deployments and activities, including peacekeeping, are enshrined in the [Ugandan People's Defense Force \(UPDF\) Act of 2005](#). The President of Uganda as Commander in Chief (CiC), in collaboration with the military High Command and Defense Forces Council, determines UPDF deployments. The Defense Council comprises the Minister of Defense, Chief of Defense Forces (CDF), Deputy CDS, Joint Chief of Staff (JCOS), Service Commanders, Divisional Commanders and a few select others. Security advisers, the Chief Political Commissar, Inspector General of Police (for police deployments) and other senior NRM security figures are also involved. Once deployed, the CDF has strategic oversight of UPDF forces in theatre. After the initial decision to deploy has been made, forces are trained at Singo peacekeeping training camp on either a collective or individual basis depending on the mission. Collective training is paid for by the US, UK, France and EU.

Peacekeeping, as with other deployments, should in theory also be approved by Uganda's parliament. Parliament is supposed to regulate and oversee UPDF activity as stipulated in the constitution and the [Defense White Paper of 2004](#). In practice, however, parliament has limited oversight and accountability of UPDF deployments and tends to accept the decisions of the UPDF high command on military matters. The President, security advisers, and UPDF high command are the key decision-makers for peacekeeping deployments, although approval from parliament is sought.³

Part 3: Rationales for Contributing

Political Rationales: Ugandan peacekeeping and motivations for deployment are driven by several political imperatives. First, addressing African security concerns, especially perceived threats to Uganda, is an important motivation for contributing forces to peacekeeping missions. Kampala has only deployed significant peacekeepers within Africa, as opposed to UN missions across the globe, reflecting a genuine commitment on the part of the leadership to address some of the continent's security concerns.⁴ Furthermore these missions have mainly been AU and not UN indicating a preference for African-led initiatives.

Uganda also sees peacekeeping as one of its key foreign policy tools when engaging with international actors and other African states. Consistent contributions to UN missions, albeit limited in number and mainly police officers, is part of Uganda's diplomatic engagement with the UN. However, the small number of contributions to UN missions has a limited effect in terms of political bargaining power. More significant is Uganda's contribution to AU missions, specifically AMISOM. Deploying the UPDF to Somalia is part of Uganda's

diplomatic and foreign policy strategy with donors and regional states. Uganda [deployed to AMISOM](#) in 2007, a year after President Museveni was elected for a second time, having abolished presidential term limits. Furthermore, there was growing international criticism over the closing of political space and Ugandan military involvement in DR Congo. Since deploying to AMISOM, some international actors have been more hesitant to criticize Uganda's domestic politics. Museveni for his part has threatened to pull troops in [2010](#) and [2013](#) from Somalia as a last resort when under fire from international donors.⁵

Economic Rationales: Peacekeeping deployments also inform part of Uganda's economic strategy, although not as decisively as its political, normative and institutional rationales. Peacekeeping has provided the Ugandan government with some reimbursements for troops, kit and equipment and other supplies, which are either compensated or provided by the UN or donors. However, it was not until 2011 that AU compensation rates for AMISOM mirrored those of the UN. Before then AMISOM rates for uniformed personnel were much less than in UN missions, and often went unpaid. Since then, AMISOM benefits and compensation rates have been brought up to UN scales, [at least until 2016](#). More lucrative have been the support packages provided by the US, UK, France, EU as well as the UN, including fully funding training centers, non-combat equipment and various other support activities (including the Logistics Hub in Entebbe). Muted criticism over domestic politics such as crackdowns on opposition figures is perhaps also partly due to Uganda's leading role in AMISOM.

Individuals have financial incentives to deploy to AMISOM as they receive high pay scales and benefits as well as training and career opportunities. Uganda's regional peacekeeping role is also part of its longer-term regional economic strategy such as future oil production, regional integration and trade with neighbors. [Significant oil deposits](#) have been found in almost all of AMISOM's troop-contributing countries, [including Uganda](#), with plans for pipelines across East Africa. Integration in security activities such as AMISOM compliments growing economic integration by bringing neighboring political elites closer together in addressing the regions issues.

Security Rationales: Given the small number of Ugandan peacekeepers in UN missions security imperatives are not a consideration and other motivations dictate UN deployments. AU missions have been different, with security concerns invoked as one of the principal motivations for deployment, if in practice other interests are equally important. UPDF deployment in Somalia is also legitimized as part of the "Global War on Terror" with Uganda positioning itself as a frontline state against Islamic fundamentalism in the Horn of Africa. Previous deployments to the Regional Task Force against the LRA were also legitimized as a security threat against a terrorist outfit, although the LRA has been pushed out of Uganda since 2006. Other regional security concerns are also an incentive for peacekeeping such as helping to curb the proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) in the region, which has affected Uganda directly, especially in Karamoja and Northern Uganda. The influx of refugees from regional conflict hot spots such as DRC, Somalia, South Sudan and elsewhere is a further motivating factor to effectively deal with regional conflict issues.

Institutional Rationales: Participating in peacekeeping has been identified by the UPDF leadership as helping to professionalize the military but also providing activities to occupy troops. Although highly capable, the UPDF is still transitioning from a liberation guerrilla movement to a professional armed force. Access to training (both collective and individual) and multinational experiences are seen as serious benefits to aid in the professionalization of the military. Providing operational and battle experience for the military is a further

institutional rationale. Uganda's increased commitment to (AU) peace operations followed the period of withdrawal from combat operations in DR Congo and Northern Uganda. This would suggest that AMISOM provides an avenue for occupying the armed forces, especially those that could be a potential threat such as newly integrated forces from demobilized armed groups and potentially dissenting officers. Notions of professionalization and control also apply to the Uganda National Police.

Normative Rationales: Uganda's contribution to UN peacekeeping is framed in terms of playing its role as a "good international citizen" and as part of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). AU peace operations are different, informed, in part, by the "Global War on Terror" but also by the ideology of Pan-Africanism and "African Solutions to African Problems." Senior defense officials have stated that "helping our African brothers in Somalia"⁶ was part of the motivation to intervene in Somalia. Indeed, the significant contributions to AU initiatives as opposed to piecemeal contributions to UN missions would support this. President Museveni and many of the senior leadership are heavily influenced by Pan-Africanist ideals and philosophy that should not be discounted.⁷ In addition, AU peace operations are also thought to serve national interests in regional and international policy priorities. As one of the AU's largest TCC's Uganda is able to wield disproportionate influence within the continental body and importantly with its regional and international diplomatic relations.

Part 4: Barriers to Contributing

Alternative institutional preferences for crisis management: Uganda prefers to work through the AU, regional mechanisms such as the EAC, coalitions of likeminded regional states, and sometimes unilateral intervention. Participating in UN peacekeeping is hence low on the priority list of crisis management activities. The UN is broadly mistrusted and seen as a last resort reflecting perceptions of North-South power dynamics by the Ugandan leadership but also recognition of some of the UN's failures. Museveni has been [openly critical of UN peacekeeping](#) seeing it as a "euro-centric" approach and has gone as far as calling UN peacekeepers in DR Congo "[military tourists](#)." Uganda's role in the DRC and intervention in South Sudan in support of President Salva Kiir demonstrates Uganda's preferences for crisis management. Museveni chose to engage with the DRC unilaterally, as part of a coalition of forces, through local armed groups, through the regional mechanism of the International Conference on the Great lakes Region (ICGLR) and the AU Joint Verification Mechanism. Furthermore, in 2013 Uganda tried to deter the deployment of an offensive intervention brigade to support the UN stabilization mission in the Congo ([MONUSCO](#)), preferring an African-led initiative under the ICGLR (which Museveni chaired at the time). The unilateral military deployment in South Sudan in January 2014 and in [DRC in December 2017 against ADF rebels](#) are further examples of Ugandan preferences for crisis management.

Alternative political or strategic priorities: UN peacekeeping is a low priority given the ideological issues outlined above. As a result, foreign policy priorities, regional security, and national interests are of far more immediate concern than peacekeeping. However, UN peacekeeping can become a tool for Kampala when serving these interests. For instance, UN operations against the ADF in eastern DR Congo have been encouraged by Uganda as have UN logistical support and financial support to AMISOM and to the Regional Task Force against the LRA before the mission was disbanded. Uganda's deployments to UNSOM and UNSOS are also a pragmatic decision to support the wider Ugandan effort in Somalia and the Horn that includes AMISOM.

Resistance in the Military: There is minimal resistance in the military for peacekeeping at all levels. The senior leadership sees peacekeeping as a policy tool but also as career development for senior officers, an enhancer of professionalization of the military and police, and crucially, a way of providing experience to, and preoccupying, the armed forces. The majority of the troops are keen to deploy to peacekeeping operations given the financial benefits and career opportunities.

Part 5: Current Challenges and Issues

There are several challenges and issues that could constrain Ugandan peacekeeping efforts. Regional security threats could occupy the UPDF for national defense purposes to the detriment of regional and international peacekeeping. Uganda has [declined to deploy to Mali](#) because the UPDF is overstretched. Escalating conflict in South Sudan already generated a UPDF unilateral intervention in January 2014 as has conflict in DR Congo at various times, most recently in December 2017. Various anti-Kampala armed groups still operate in neighboring countries such as the LRA, but also ADF/NALU in DR Congo. Instability in CAR, DR Congo, and South Sudan saw the UPDF either intervene directly or deploy along the borders with these states. Further regional instability could impact on Uganda's security and could mean that domestic or unilateral deployments are prioritized over peacekeeping.

Growing terrorism in East Africa from *al-Shabaab*, the ADF and affiliates (but also *al-Qaida* and potentially ISIS) along with future terrorist attacks within Uganda could hinder future peacekeeping, especially to missions such as AMISOM that are seen to be part of the "Global War on Terror." Although the Kampala bombs detonated by *al-Shabaab* in 2010 only strengthened the resolve of the government to support AMISOM, future attacks could lead government officials and the public to question Ugandan presence in Somalia and future peacekeeping deployments generally. In a similar vein national issues such as a growing and more violently active opposition and issues around public order management could constrain police deployments to peacekeeping in the future although this is unlikely in the short term.

Part 6: Key Champions and Opponents

The military leadership, including the President, is extremely proud of UPDF peacekeepers and peace operations have become part of the military's role and to a lesser extent the police. Some senior military and police officials have occupied Force Commander, Police Commissioner, Contingent Commander and other senior roles and have seen the benefits in terms of their own career development. However, these same officials are more hesitant to deploy large numbers of peacekeepers to UN missions, which are seen as bureaucratic, ineffective, 'euro-centric' and serving Western interests. There have occasionally been criticisms raised about the number of Ugandan peacekeepers killed on foreign deployments, [including AMISOM](#).

Part 7: Capabilities and Caveats

As a former guerilla liberation movement still transitioning to a national armed force, the UPDF is extremely capable in the areas of infantry, intelligence and Special Forces. Deemed one of the best by donors in terms of African peacekeeping capability, the UPDF is highly regarded within and outside of Africa, and justifiably so given the successful operations conducted in Somalia and elsewhere. At the same time, donors also have concerns over a small number of [corruption scandals](#) involving UPDF troops. Other areas of capability include Senior Mission Leadership, mission planning, logistics, CIMIC and police (Uganda

deployed the first Formed Police Unit to AMISOM in 2012). Although [there are far fewer women than men in uniform](#) they are not discriminated against in terms of deploying to peacekeeping missions. Both the UPDF and the national police have capable women in uniform at all levels. The MoD is also staffed with capable civilian civil servants in support of defense priorities. A major shortcoming is the lack of attack helicopters (only 1 is operational out of 3). This is partly due to an accident where [three Ugandan helicopters crashed](#) around the Mt Kenya area en route to Somalia in August 2012. Lack of strategic lift is also a major shortcoming.

Part 8: Further Reading

- Fisher, Jonathan, “Managing Donor Perceptions: Contextualizing Uganda’s 2007 Intervention in Somalia,” *African Affairs*, 111/444 (2012): 404-23.
- Jowell, Marco, *Peacekeeping in Africa: The Failure of Foreign Military Assistance* (I.B. Tauris, 2018).
- Lindemann, Stefan “Just another change of guard? Broad-based politics and civil war in Museveni’s Uganda,” *African Affairs* 110, 440 (2011): 387–416.
- Mwenda, Andrew and Roger Tangri, “Military Corruption & Ugandan Politics since the late 1990s,” *Review of African Political Economy*, 30:98 (2003): 539-52.
- Ochen, Eric Awich, “The Military in Uganda: war, peace and support for democratic consolidation” in David Francis (ed.), *Africa Peace Militaries* (Routledge, 2018).
- Williams, Paul, D. “Fighting for Peace in Somalia: AMISOM’s Seven Strategic Challenges,” *Journal of International Peacekeeping*, 17:3-4 (2013): 222–247.
- Williams, Paul, D. “Joining AMISOM: why six African states contributed troops to the African Union Mission in Somalia,” *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, 12:1 (2018): 172-92.

Notes

- ¹ Unless otherwise stated, data is drawn from IISS, *The Military Balance 2018* (London: IISS/Routledge, 2018) and from the UN peacekeeping website <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/data>.
- ² Armed Forces Spending is a country’s annual defense budget (in US dollars) divided by the total number of active armed forces. Using figures from IISS, *The Military Balance*.
- ³ Author’s communication with Member of Parliament, Kampala, January 2018
- ⁴ Author’s communication with senior UPDF officer, Kampala, January 2014
- ⁵ Author’s communication with Senior Political Affairs Officer, Security Council Affairs Division, UN, New York, November 2012 & Diplomat, UK Foreign & Commonwealth Office, London, July 2012
- ⁶ Fisher, “Managing Donor Perceptions.”
- ⁷ Yoweri Museveni, *Sowing the Mustard Seed* (London: McMillan, 1997).