

Contributor Profile: The Republic of Croatia

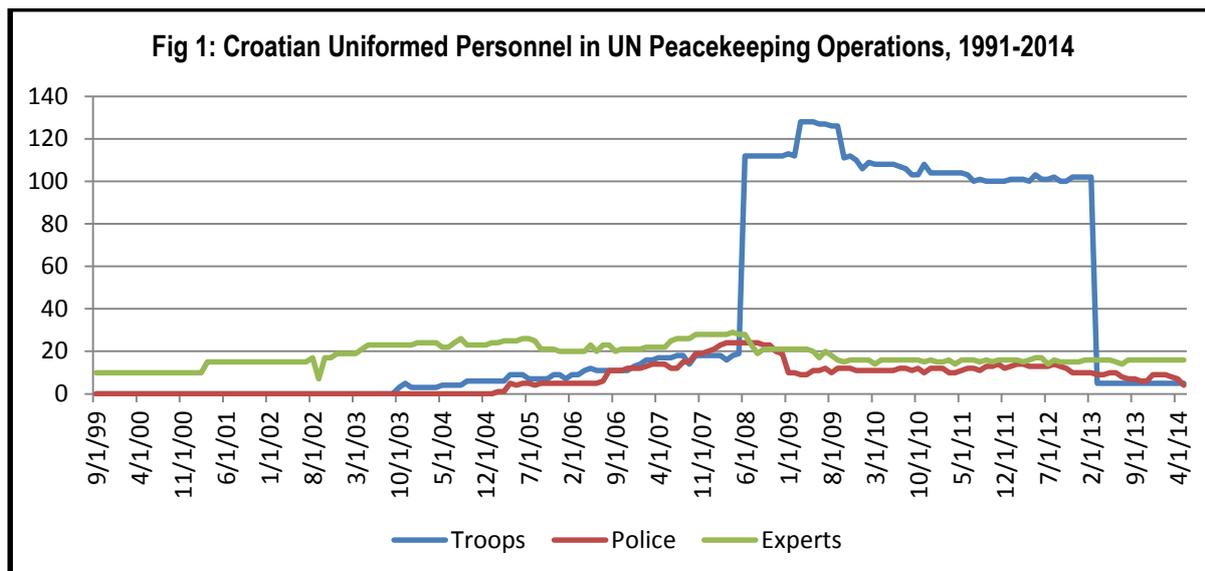
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Active armed forces ¹	Helicopters & fixed-wing transport	Defense Budget	UN Peacekeepers	UN Contribution Breakdown	Other Significant Deployments
14,790 ² (as of 16 June 2014)	MRH 11 Mi-8 MTV Hip H	2014: US\$769.5m ³	24 (1 female) (31 July 2014)	MINURSO 6 experts	Afghanistan (NATO ISAF) 174 troops + police
World ranking (size): 95th	TPT 21 <u>Medium</u> 13: 3 Mi-8T Hip C; 10 Mi-171Sh;	2013: US\$813m (1.35% of GDP)	Ranking: 88th	MINUSTAH 3 police	EUPOL Afghansitan (police)
Army 11,250 Navy 1,600 Air 1,850 Joint 1,850	<u>Light</u> 8 Bell 206B Jet Ranger II	2012: US\$827m (1.44% of GDP)		UNFICYP 3 (1 police, 2 troops)	Bosnia & Herzegovina (OSCE) 2
Plus 3,000 Paramilitary	Transport Helicopter: 2 sqn with Mi-8 MTV Hip H; Mi-8T Hip C; Mi-171Sh	2011: US\$776m (1.24% of GDP)		UNIFIL 1 troop	Serbia (NATO KFOR) 22
				UNMIL 2 troops	Kosovo (OSCE) 5 EULEX Kosovo (police)
				UNMOGIP 9 experts	EUMM Georgia (police) EUPOL COPPS Palestine (police)
Defense Spending / Troop: US\$47,824 compared to a global average of US\$70,000.					

Part 1: Recent trends

After declaring its independence in 1991, Croatia was involved in military conflict both in Croatia itself and in Bosnia and Herzegovina until 1995. During the 1991-95 war, Croatia hosted several UN peace operations (UNPROFOR, UNCRO, UNTAES and UNPSG), which ended in 1998 when Eastern Slavonia was integrated into Croatia. Since then, Croatia has started to become pro-active as security provider within the UN. Croatia [participated as an observer in international peacekeeping operations in 1999](#) by contributing ten military officers to the UN Observer Mission in Sierra Leone. More proactive engagement started in 2003 after a Memorandum of Understanding between the Croatian Government and the United Nations was signed concerning contributions to the UN's stand-by arrangements system.

Between 1999 and 2014, [Croatia participated](#) in 19 UN peacekeeping missions, deploying around 1,300 military personnel in total. Croatia's most significant contribution was to the UN Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) in the Golan Heights after 2008 where 100 soldiers were deployed. However, in March 2013, Croatia withdrew its troops from UNDOF following media [reports](#) that Croatia was supplying arms to Syrian opposition fighters. The official explanation for the withdrawal offered by Prime Minister Milanović suggested instead that Croatia withdrew its troops because of the increasingly risky situation in the Golan Heights. This reduced Croatia's overall contributions to UN missions to about 30 personnel. Croatia's participation in peace operations has been dominated by military personnel and later by police officers with few other civilians deployed.



The fact that Croatia joined NATO in 2009 and the EU in 2013 also influenced its participation in peace missions. Croatia has been active in NATO's ISAF mission in Afghanistan since February 2003, [with 174 soldiers deployed in 2014](#). Although the Croatian government announced that it would withdraw its troops by the end of 2014, the most recent [statements from high-ranking military personnel](#) suggest that Croatia is planning to stay in Afghanistan beyond 2014 as part of *Operation Resolute Support*. Since 2009, Croatia has also been active in NATO's KFOR mission in [Kosovo by contributing air assets](#). During its EU accession period, Croatia also participated in EU-led missions, which continues today.

Part 2: Decision making process

The Croatian Constitution regulates the decision-making process concerning the deployment of armed forces abroad. Decisions on participation abroad are made by the Croatian Parliament (by a majority vote of all representatives) at the proposal of the government and with the consent of the President of Croatia. If the Croatian President withholds consent for deployment, the Croatian Parliament can decide by a two-thirds majority vote of all representatives. The decision to participate in military exercises overseas is made by the Croatian Government with the prior consent of the President.

In 2002, the Croatian Parliament adopted the [Law on Participation of Military Personnel, Police, Civil Defense and Civil Servants in Peace Mission and Other Activities Abroad](#). This law provides the overall legal framework for sending primarily military personnel to peace operations and also provides some regulation for the deployment of civilians. In the recent changes of the [Law on Defense \(June 2013\)](#), the Ministry of Defense (MOD) excluded military staff from the *Law on Participation of Military Personnel, Police, Civil Defense and Civil Servants in Peace Missions and Other Activities Abroad* and decided to regulate the participation of military and representatives of the MOD in peace operations through the new [Law on Defense](#), the [Law on Serving in Armed Forces of Republic of Croatia](#), and through the revised *Bylaw on Participation of Armed Forces and Representatives of MOD in Peace Operations and other Activities Abroad*. In this way, Croatia separated deployment of military personnel from the deployment of civilians. In November 2013, the Government decided to establish the [Committee for International Missions and Operations](#). This is chaired by the Minister of Foreign and European Affairs and comprises the Ministers of Defense,

Interior, Justice, Finance, the representative of the President, the Prime Minister's Foreign Affairs Adviser, and the Joint Chief of Staff. The Committee's goal is to coordinate military and civilian engagements in international peace operations.

The new *Law on Defense* regulates the decision-making process for participation in peace operations abroad. Under this law, the President, based on the decision made by the Parliament, orders the use and allocation of the relevant parts of the armed forces to international (UN/NATO/EU) commands. In the event of having to change the mandate of any deployed Croatian forces in a peace operation – for example, due to the need to use force or because of increased security risks – a decision on the continuation or termination of the participation of the armed forces can be made by the Croatian Parliament on the basis of a proposal from the Government and with the prior approval of the President. If members of the armed forces in the operation abroad are exposed to severe risks, the President, on recommendation of the Chief of Military Staff and with the approval of the Minister of Defense, can make a decision to withdraw.

Decisions regarding the deployment of civilians are still regulated by the *Law on Participation of Military Personnel, Police, Civil Defense and Civil Servants in Peace Mission and Other Activities Abroad*. The decision to send civilians is made by the Government on the basis of a proposal from the competent Minister or Head of the competent State agency. This decision requires the approval of the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs.

Part 3: Rationales for contributing

Political rationales: Before becoming a full NATO and EU member, Croatia's primary motivation was to participate in NATO and EU missions to prove its commitment to membership. After accession, Croatia continued to fulfill its commitments on deployment to NATO and EU peace operations and [announced its intention](#) to participate in more EU missions. UN missions were of second order priority. In May 2014, the Croatian Government adopted a national [Strategy on Participation of Croatia in International Missions and Operations](#) (SPCIMO), which contains very general political arguments for participation. It emphasizes that Croatia participates in international missions and operations in accordance with the values and interests that are shared with other members of its international and regional organizations, such as UN, EU, NATO, OSCE and the Council of Europe. Croatia wants to contribute to international peace, security, stability, the development of democracy in post-war societies, the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms and the rule of law in countries and regions where they are endangered, with special attention to vulnerable groups of society, especially women and children. For Croatia, [priority is given to international missions and operations where their engagement strengthens alliances with strategic partners, primarily with the US and European countries.](#)

Economic rationales: The SPCIMO generally recognizes that Croatia is also interested in strengthening economic and development cooperation with regions where its armed forces and civilian experts participate in international missions. There is thus some economic interest in participating in missions. Other economic rationales such as calculations of how much peacekeeping reimbursement from the UN will return to Croatia are not known. In the past, through its international (primarily NATO) engagement, Croatia has received [donations](#) of military equipment and vehicles, [mainly from the United States](#), which is also a consequence of long-term partnership between the Croatian and US militaries. The military staff also emphasizes the additional income for participation in missions.

Security rationales: The SPCIMO refers to the National Security Strategy, a key document that has not been revised since 2002. Two security objectives from that period (achieve full NATO and EU membership) have been attained. New national security objectives remain unarticulated. This makes it difficult to assess security rationales for participation in contemporary peace operations. However, the SPCIMO refers to efforts to respond to transnational threats to international security, such as the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, terrorism, organized crime, regional conflicts, failed or weak states, as well as cyber threats and energy security. Croatia's priority is participation in international missions that contribute to security and stability in South-Eastern and Eastern Europe, the South Caucasus, and the Southern Mediterranean or regions that have a significant impact on Croatian national security.

Institutional rationales: Initially, providing peacekeepers was seen as important for advancing security and military reforms in Croatia. Today, the most emphasized argument views peacekeeping as a source for operational experience for the military, particularly in terms of interoperability. Lately, more effort has been placed on deploying civilians to peacekeeping operations, which reflects improvements in civil-military relations.

Normative rationales: Due to its specific experiences of political, economic and social transition, the Homeland War and the peaceful reintegration of Croatian territories, Croatia wants to [profile itself](#) as a country that can significantly contribute to international crisis management in its region and the wider Euro-Atlantic area. In the past, Croatia participated in peace operations primarily with its armed and police forces. Recently, however, Croatia has decided to work on enhancing its capacity to deploy civilians to peace operations, including members of the justice system, customs, foreign service and other professionals, such as political advisors, consultants for development issues, human rights, gender issues, and if necessary, other specialties and professions.

Part 4: Barriers to Contributing

Alternative institutional preferences for crisis management: Since 1995, Croatia has developed a close partnership with the US, which also advocated for Croatian membership in NATO. This friendship endured despite Croatia's refusal to participate in US-led military missions that did not have UN approval (such as in Iraq). Croatia is engaged in crisis management primarily through NATO operations and will be more proactive within the EU's common defense and foreign policy. Deployment through the UN is still recognized in strategic documents but is in the second line of priorities.

Alternative political or strategic priorities: For many years Croatia lacked a key document which defined its main threats and security concerns. The first (and thus far only) [National Security Strategy](#) was adopted in 2002 and is outdated since Croatia in the meantime has become a full NATO and EU member. There were several attempts by different governments to adopt a new Strategy, all of which have failed. At the moment Croatia lacks an adequate National Security Strategy and hence a clear overview of potential threats and security concerns. This also affects the policies of different security and foreign policy institutions (military, police, intelligence, MFEA), which are not guided by clear strategic objectives as a response to possible threats or national interests.

Financial costs: Constant cuts to the state budget due to the ongoing recession are one of the primary barriers for increased contributions to peacekeeping missions. The cuts have been

made across almost all lines of the state budget due to the constant budget deficit and a sixth consecutive year of negative economic growth. Peace missions are just one of the areas where there have been budget cuts. However, Croatia has been cutting the budget for peace missions since 2011. For 2013, the overall budget for peace missions in the Ministry of Defense was around US\$46.7m (US\$40.3m for NATO led missions, US\$6.03m for UN missions, and US\$0.4m for EU missions). In 2014, the budget was further cut and in April 2014 the overall budget for peace missions was US\$29.13m (US\$28.1m for NATO-led missions, US\$0.63m for UN missions, and US\$0.39m for EU missions). Further reductions have been announced in the budget planning for 2015. At the same time, there are no public data available to calculate the level of reimbursement Croatia receives from its participation in UN operations.

Discomfort with the expanding UN peacekeeping agenda: Croatia is comfortable with the expanding UN peacekeeping agenda and recognizes that the UN has developed the broadest global mechanism to achieve and maintain international peace and security. Croatia supports the further development of UN peacekeeping. In this sense, Croatia supports measures for further confidence-building between the UN Secretariat and the Member States. Croatia is also interested to support improvement of interoperability in the field of command and would like to contribute more to the evaluation of military units' efficiency.⁴

Exceptionalism: This is not related to Croatia's involvement in UN peacekeeping missions.

Difficult domestic politics: There are no major disagreements among the political parties about the role of Croatia in the UN. Most of the decisions about deploying Croatian troops are voted on unanimously in Parliament. Moreover, some civil society groups are calling for stronger involvement of Croatia within UN mechanisms due to the Croatian war-time and post-war experience. Domestic opinion does not support the deployment of military forces made without UN approval.

Damage to national reputation: The recent scandal over the withdrawal of Croatian troops from UNDOF attracted considerable attention in Croatia. However, the public did not blame the UN system for this scandal, but rather the Government, which made poor decisions in its arms trade policy. So far, there have been no fatalities among Croatia's UN peacekeepers. Some [smaller incidents](#) happened in the NATO/ISAF mission such as [self-injuring during weapon maintenance](#) or [light injuries during preparation for operations](#), which did not lead to broader public discussion on the Croatian contribution to this mission.

Resistance in the military: There are no reports of resistance to peacekeeping in the Croatian military. In general, recruitment for those posts goes smoothly due to the financial, social and professional benefits for staff deployed on these missions.

Lack of fit with legislative, procurement and operational timelines: Croatia has regulated its deployment process through laws and by-laws, and in practice, decisions related to deployment to peace operations are going smoothly. Recently (since November 2013) the Committee for International Missions and Operations makes recommendations for deployments.

Legal obstacles: There are no legal obstacles with regards to the deployment of Croatian armed forces or police abroad.

Part 5: Current Challenges and Issues

Croatia shows a clear commitment to continue to participate in UN peacekeeping missions, although those actions will be limited due to Croatian participation in NATO and EU-led missions, which are considered higher priorities. There is also a clear trend that Croatia is planning to be more active in EU missions, but through civilian capacities. What is needed in the future is a clear strategy on deployment to peacekeeping missions that will justify and explain to the public the objectives and reasoning behind Croatia's participation in UN missions. However, the biggest challenges at the moment are financial limitations within the state budget and lack of a broader vision on the importance of Croatian participation in UN peacekeeping missions. After the withdrawal of Croatian soldiers from UNDOF there has been no proposal to engage in new missions. Perhaps this is because the public is not particularly interested in this issue, meaning that there is little, politically, to be gained by investing political and financial capital in supporting further UN peacekeeping contributions. There is a general lack of public interest in Croatian foreign policy and state institutions are not initiating broader discussions on Croatia's role in the UN.

Part 6: Key Champions and Opponents

As Croatian engagement in UN mechanisms is not a subject of great public interest, it is difficult to highlight champions in the field of UN peacekeeping. However, the Croatian General Dragutin Repinc was a commander of the UN peacekeeping mission UNMOGIP in India and Pakistan from 2005 to 2007. This attracted some media attention. In 2011, General Repinc became commander of Croatian military land-forces and during his nomination his role in UNMOGIP was emphasized as a successful example of Croatian engagement in the UN system. Interestingly, the experience of hosting a UN peacekeeping mission (UNTAES) in the Croatian Danube region in the 1990s is usually referred to in Croatian public discourse as one of the most successful UN peace missions. This shows how the UN can be successful within the framework of well-defined, realistic and achievable mandates. Indeed, in 2008, former Croatian [Prime Minister Sanader stated](#) at the UN Security Council that the "Reintegration of eastern Croatia was shared success, both for my country and the UN." Unfortunately, Croatia lacks think tanks, NGOs, or training institutes which might provide detailed discussion on Croatia's role in UN peacekeeping. But this also reflects the lack of opponents to UN peacekeeping. Political parties in their programs rarely mention the role of Croatia in the UN, but will always emphasize the importance of NATO and, some of them, the importance of EU membership.

Part 7: Capabilities and Caveats

Croatia has limited capabilities to participate in peace operations. Its biggest deployment is in the NATO/ISAF mission where at one point up to 350 soldiers participated in Provincial Reconstruction Team Feyzabad, led by Germany. Overall, Croatia's approach to peacekeeping is not to take a leading role but rather to integrate within existing frameworks on the ground. It is interesting to note that [150 female military personnel](#) were engaged in the NATO/ISAF mission (out of 4,275 soldiers deployed in the last eleven years). In 2014, for the first time, one Croatian woman was temporarily promoted to "brigadier general" to perform the role of adviser on gender issues in the ISAF Command in Afghanistan. In 2013, 376 members of the armed forces participated in the foreign language courses with most learning English (86%), then German (6%), Italian (6%) and French (only 2%).

The preparatory trainings for operations are taking place at the [International Military Operations Training Center](#). Although all [training courses](#) do not have a UN certificate, they are run according to UN standards. The trainings for police officers are run in the training

center for UN police peacekeepers in Valbandon, which also often hosts [international participants](#).

Part 8: Further Reading

Ministry of Defense, [Yearly Defense Report for 2013](#) (in Croatian).

[Strategy on Croatian Participation in the International Missions and Operations](#) (in Croatian).

Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs, [International Peace Missions and Operations](#) (in Croatian).

[News on current events related to Croatian participation in international peace missions](#) (in Croatian).

Notes

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

² Croatian Armed Forces <http://www.osrh.hr/>

³ Ministry of Finance, state budget for 2014 (last revision on March 2014), <http://www.mfin.hr/hr/drzavni-proracun-2014-godina>

⁴ Strategy on Participation of Croatia in International Missions and Operations, May 2014