

PART II Airlift: Lifeline for UN Missions*

From its earliest peacekeeping experience, the United Nations has used airlift to deploy, employ, and sustain its missions, especially in difficult conflict zones in remote locations. To move military forces and their equipment, including the weapons and ammunition, from around the world in a timely manner, air transport remains essential. Locally, ground transport is usually too slow or even impossible because roads were primitive or impassable, if they exist at all in remote war zones.

The United Nations gets its air transport from nations and from contractors. It does not have its own aircraft. Part II looks at how national contributions are made. Chapter 4 presents a case study of the Canadian aircraft provided to the UN mission in Kashmir, which was mandated to oversee a shaky ceasefire between Indian and Pakistani forces in that divided territory. Matthew Trudgen shows how the Canadian airlift traversed the mighty Himalayas to support these UN observer missions. The national dilemmas and decision-making illustrated are typical of many nations involved in many UN missions, past and present.

The emergency humanitarian operation in Haiti provides excellent examples of aerial coordination with national forces, especially the US Air Force. After the devastating January 2010 earthquake, the international community poured humanitarian aid into the long-suffering country. The local infrastructure in Haiti, however, could not support the world's generosity. The Haitian government gave permission to the US Air Force to run the country's main airport in Port-au-Prince. Robert C. Owen was a keen observer of that effort and he shares his insights on the vital US–UN cooperation in Haiti in Chapter 5.

The UN fleet of aircraft deployed in conflict areas is not solely arranged by and for peacekeeping missions. The United Nations Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS), run by the World Food Programme based in Rome, charters over 50 aircraft to service the humanitarian community, not only for United Nations and governmental agencies but also to assist nongovernmental partners. A. Walter Dorn and Ryan W. Cross provided a pioneering academic paper on this little-known but life-saving UN service in Chapter 6. The UNHAS airlift and airdrops serve as a living lifeline for millions.

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