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**V. V. VOROBETS**

*Kharkiv National University of Internal Affairs, Ukraine*

## **THE ROLE OF THE AFRICAN POLICE IN PEACEKEEPING MISSIONS**

In recent years, there has been a dramatic increase in the number of African police deployed in peacekeeping operations in different states, as well as the number of peacekeeping police deployed in Africa. African nations have increased their contributions of police to international peacekeeping missions, both those led by the UN and the African Union, at a time when police contributions from Western nations have declined. This African contribution to international peace and security brings with it both opportunities and concerns. African police are playing significant roles at all levels of peacekeeping missions. Several African nations, notably Nigeria and Senegal, have emerged as major sources of “formed police units”, paramilitary police units in demand by peacekeeping missions because they are trained to secure law and order in unstable situations. African nations contribute both police advisors and rank and file police. Beyond the obvious fact that African contributions help meet the demand for sheer numbers of police in UN missions, African police bring potentially useful language skills and cultural competencies to peacekeeping missions deployed in Africa. African nations have also been moving toward a regional peacekeeping capacity, through missions like the African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS), and proposed structures like the African Standby Force. Western nations, NGOs, and international institutions have a number of programs in place to train African peacekeepers. Police training is a relatively recent addition to most programs, but is now getting attention. The UN also provides premission training and training materials used by national police training programs. Logistical and material support has been harder to come by. Despite advances, many challenges remain. African nations still encounter difficulties contributing police whose skills meet international standards, and their ability to contribute is limited by the need for police at home. Africa’s homegrown peacekeeping structures are still weak and police tend to be a low priority for planners. Africa’s police contribution to international peacekeeping should be welcomed and encouraged by the world community. By assessing the current state of African peacekeeping police, one should think of aims to provide a basis for determining how Africa can continue to develop its police capacity.

*Language advisor A. Ye. Korshenko*