

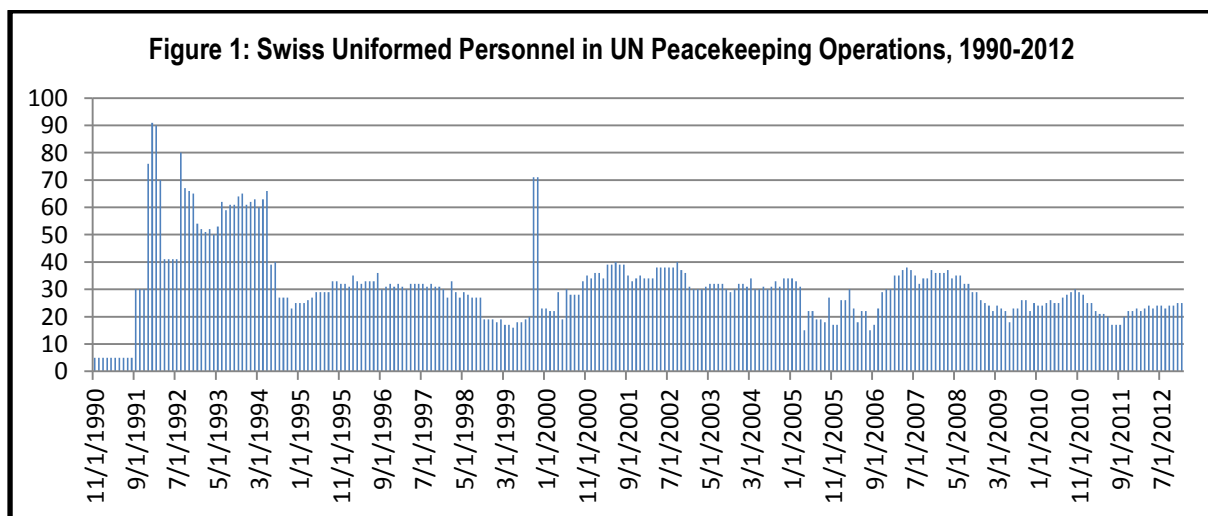
Contributor Profile: Switzerland

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Active Armed Forces ¹	Helicopters	Defense Budget	Uniformed UN Peacekeepers	UN Contribution Breakdown	Other Significant Deployments
Active 25,287 ² World Ranking (size): 85 <u>Reserves:</u> 172,330 Army: 123,720 Air: 22,503 Logistics: 9,103 Command Support: 17,004 <u>Civil Defense:</u> 76,000	Attack: none Multi-role: none Transport: 47 (27 Medium; 20 Light)	2010 \$4.61bn (0.87% of GDP) 2011 \$5.48bn (0.85% of GDP) 2012: \$4,79bn	24 (1 woman) (31 Jan. 2013) Ranking: 85	MONUSCO: 5 (1 police, 4 experts) UNMIL: 3 police UNMISS: 5 (1 police, 2 troops, 2 experts) UNTSO: 11 experts	Bosnia-Herzegovina: 20 (EUFOR) 1 (OSCE) Kosovo: 220 (KFOR) Republic of Korea: 5 (NNSC)
Defense Spending / Troop: ³ US\$213,895 (compared to global average of approximately US\$59,000)					

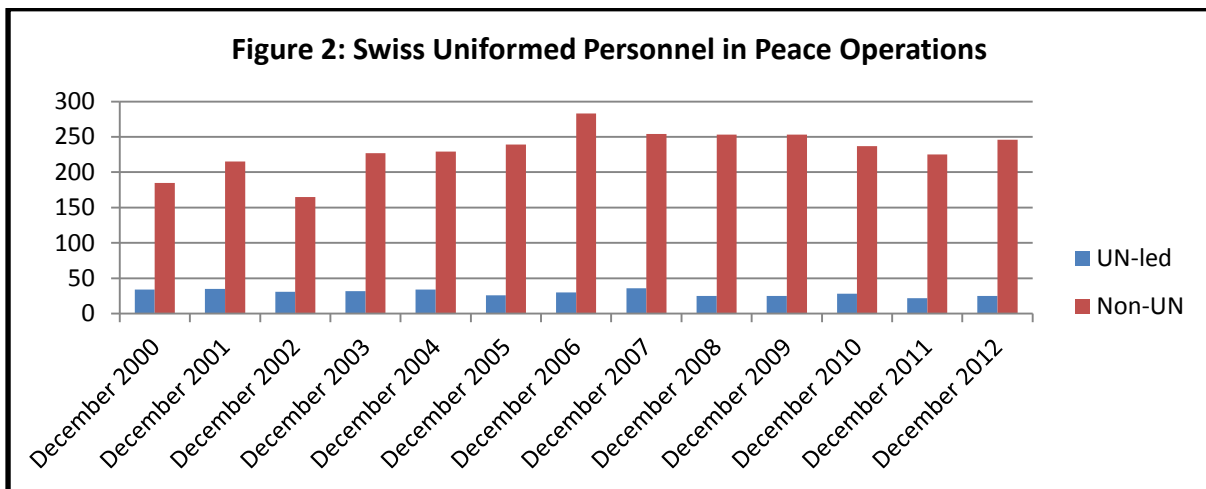
Part 1: Recent Trends

Switzerland's first participation in an international peace operation was a company-size deployment to the Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission mandated to supervise the armistice between the two Koreas in 1953. This early engagement carries on in the form of a small but steady contribution of around five Swiss military observers to the NNSC. From the 1960s, the Swiss occasionally took on small logistical, technical and humanitarian roles in UN and non-UN peacekeeping operations. Switzerland's military contribution to peacekeeping has remained modest overall and with regard to the UN limited to small numbers of unarmed military observers and specialists.



Switzerland’s most significant contributions have occurred in the Balkans, in peacekeeping operations led by NATO and the EU. They include the sole significant military engagement in quantitative terms, the 220-strong Swiss Company (Swisscoy) deployed with NATO’s Kosovo Force (KFOR) since 1999. Since 2004, Switzerland has also deployed approximately 20 soldiers to EUFOR ALTHEA in Bosnia-Herzegovina in so-called Liaison and Observations Teams. From 1996 to 2000, Switzerland provided logistical, technical and medical support to the OSCE mission in Bosnia-Herzegovina through the Swiss Headquarters Support Unit (manned with 55 unarmed yellow berets on average).

Members of the Swiss Armed Forces have participated in UN peacekeeping operations for the most part as unarmed military observers. Over the past decades, Switzerland has contributed a low but steady number of uniformed specialists (e.g. experts in international humanitarian law or humanitarian de-mining) that are often in short supply and valued by the UN. In the early 1990s, medical units of the Swiss army deployed to Namibia (UNTAG) and the Western Sahara (MINURSO). Other specialist contributions to UN peacekeeping have included experts on humanitarian demining, small arms and ordinance disposal, security sector reform, as well as financial, administrative logistical and technical advisers. Around 20 Swiss officers are currently serving as unarmed military observers – so-called blue berets – with the UN in the Middle East and Africa (UNTSO, MONUSCO, BNUB and UNMISS). Given the existing legal and political constraints on foreign engagements by the Swiss Armed Forces (see below) the limited observer role of UN blue berets offers a possibility for Switzerland to support UN peacekeeping without stirring up controversy in domestic politics.



As a neutral country, Switzerland does not belong to any defensive alliance but cooperates with other states in the military realm for training purposes. The [Federal Constitution](#) and the [Military Act](#) assign three central missions to the Swiss Armed Forces: defense; support of the civilian authorities; and the promotion of peace within an international context. The latter was first identified as a task for the armed forces in the military reform of 1992. International engagement suffered a setback in 1994, however, when the Swiss population rejected the participation of armed Swiss soldiers in UN blue helmet missions in a popular referendum (at the time, Switzerland was not a UN Member State). Yet the government continued to steer Switzerland towards international cooperation. In 1996, Switzerland joined NATO’s Partnership for Peace (PfP) and in 2002 became the 190th Member State of the United Nations. In a referendum on the partial revision of the military law in 2001, a majority of voters approved of arming Swiss soldiers (for self-defense) in peacekeeping operations. The

initially unarmed Swisscoy in Kosovo – which relied on the Austrian contingent for protection – was henceforth able to take on traditional military tasks.

Part 2: Decision-Making

Decisions over the use of the military are within the purview of the federal government according to the Swiss constitution. The [Swiss military law](#) of 1995 stipulates that contributions to international peacekeeping must be in line with the principles of Switzerland's foreign and security policy and require as legal basis a mandate by the United Nations or the OSCE (Art.66). Members of the Swiss military participate on a voluntary basis in international peacekeeping. Swiss military law prohibits participation in combat action by Swiss troops for peace enforcement purposes (Art.66a). This prohibition has not excluded the participation of Swiss soldiers in UN operations mandated under Chapter VII in other, non-combat functions (e.g. as SSR specialists in UNMISS).

Decision-making authority for troop contributions lies with the Swiss Federal Council (executive branch) which is also authorized to conclude the necessary international agreements. The Federal Council decides on a case-by-case basis whether Swiss troops should be armed for self-defense and for the fulfillment of their mandate. If Swiss peacekeepers are to be armed, the Federal Council is required to consult with the foreign and security policy committees of both chambers of Parliament prior to the deployment (Art.66b). The approval of the National Assembly (legislative branch) must be obtained for deployments of more than 100 armed troops or those lasting longer than three weeks. In an emergency, the Federal Council can request this authorization retroactively. Troops, as well as equipment and supply goods of the Swiss military, can be deployed in support of humanitarian missions at the request of individual states or international organizations, or to protect people or property abroad where Swiss interests are affected (Art.69). If more than 2,000 troops are deployed, or if the operation lasts longer than three weeks, the National Assembly must approve the deployment in its next regular session.

The legal framework governing international deployments constrains the Federal authorities in their ability to respond in a swift and authoritative manner to troop requests from international partners. Timeframes for decision-making can be several months due to the parliamentary approval process. The absence of standing contingents can lead to further delays, as troops have to be recruited within the Swiss militia system on a voluntary basis and trained for each new mission.

Part 3: Rationales for Contributing

Switzerland's modest contribution to UN peace operations results from the absence of strong rationales to contribute uniformed personnel to UN peacekeeping. The limited number of individual and small unit deployments is only rendered possible through a combination of mainly political, security and normative rationales. While economic considerations are largely non-existent, there are conflicting interests at the institutional level.

Political and Security Rationales: Although the Federal government is not enthusiastic about Swiss participation in UN peacekeeping operations and military peacekeeping *per se*, it holds the view that Switzerland should participate in peace operations on moral and, more importantly, political grounds. The participation of the Swiss Armed Forces in the promotion of international peace is considered an expression of Switzerland's solidarity with the rest of the world and intended to advance the country's international standing and reputation as well as to avoid political isolation. Simultaneously, the Federal authorities consider specific

peacekeeping contributions to advance Switzerland's security. In line with a broad understanding and definition of security, even remote crises and armed conflicts are seen as having a potential impact on Switzerland's security through migratory waves and transnational threats like terrorism. For these political and security rationales, military peacekeeping is – according to the military law – one of the Swiss Armed Forces' three tasks, and (at least on paper) of equal importance as national defense and domestic support tasks.

Economic Rationales: For its small size, Switzerland pays relatively substantial annual contributions to the UN and, as a corollary, to UN peace operations. Switzerland is the 16th largest contributor to the overall UN budget, of which it covers 1.13%. In 2010, it paid roughly US\$120 million to the UN peacekeeping budget of around US\$7.7 billion. It has, however, no direct economic interest in peacekeeping. More specifically, UN compensation payments would be insufficient to cover the expenses of a battalion-size peacekeeping deployment. But in the debate over a potential Swiss participation in EU NAVFOR *Atalanta*, proponents – who were eventually in the minority – advanced the indirect economic rationale that this operation helped protect Swiss trade interests. This argument has yet to be made in relation to UN peace operations, which generally do not take place in countries or sub-regions of major economic interest to Switzerland.

Institutional Rationales: Given the legal requirement of a UN or OSCE mandate, the UN constitutes an ideal framework for Switzerland's contributions. However, its most significant peacekeeping contribution to date – Swisscoy in Kosovo – was to a NATO-led operation. But with the return to a relatively strict interpretation of neutrality over the past decade, recent and new deployments are increasingly limited to UN missions – even though this trend is masked by the on-going participation in KFOR. From a purely military perspective, peace operations are the sole opportunity for Swiss officers and soldiers to gain practical military experience. But the military establishment is divided over the need for first-hand military experience, and its beneficial impact on the future development of the Swiss Armed Forces. While those with an international security outlook believe that peacekeeping provides lessons for training, those with a more traditional approach prefer to focus on territorial defence and domestic tasks.

Normative Rationales: The Swiss government sees participation in peace operations as part of Switzerland's humanitarian tradition. In line with this reasoning, Switzerland is not only meant to help victims during and after armed conflict, but also to participate in the containment of violence.

Part 4: Barriers to Contributing

Alternative political or strategic priorities: International military cooperation in general and peacekeeping in particular do not have priority status in Switzerland. The current defense minister privileges the Swiss Armed Forces' two other tasks, namely national defense and the support of civil authorities at home. Moreover, UN peace operations, the majority of which are in Africa, do not fall within the strategic priorities of Swiss peacekeeping, which so far has concentrated the brunt of its efforts on the Balkans and the European periphery. In order to trigger a substantial peacekeeping deployment, the area of conflict should be in the geographic vicinity of Switzerland, i.e. Europe, and the security issue must negatively affect the Swiss population.

Alternative institutional preferences for crisis management: As a consequence of Switzerland's strategic outlook, the only company-size Swiss peacekeeping contribution is in

the Balkans (KFOR). At the time of the Swisscoy deployment (1999), Switzerland's institutional preference for international crisis management lay with NATO in line with its recent membership of the Partnership for Peace (PfP) in 1996. At the beginning of the new millennium, when the EU's Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP) was gaining momentum, the preference shifted towards the EU, as illustrated by the Swiss participation in EUFOR Althea in Bosnia-Herzegovina from 2004 on. But as stated above, because of a narrower interpretation of neutrality, the UN has since gained in prominence, while both the EU and NATO have lost some of their appeal.

Financial costs: The limited Swiss participation in UN peace operations does not constitute a financial burden for Switzerland. If the government expanded its UN peacekeeping contributions, the costs would certainly become an issue of political debate, especially in relation to overall defense spending.

Discomfort with the expanding UN peacekeeping agenda: The expansion of the UN peacekeeping agenda in general is welcomed by Switzerland, especially the inclusion of peacebuilding activities. The proliferation of Chapter VII mandates in recent years and the increasing use of force, by contrast, are significant obstacles to Swiss participation in UN peace operations. The majority of Switzerland's political establishment fears that Swiss soldiers could become embroiled in war-fighting, and that this would be in breach of neutrality.

Difficult Domestic Politics: The conservative Swiss People's Party, which is currently the strongest party in parliament, is generally opposed to the armed forces' peacekeeping role and privileges national defense. The argument runs that military deployments abroad are in conflict with Switzerland's neutrality status and policy. Meanwhile, many Social-democrats and the Green Party have a strong preference for civilian peacebuilding, which they not only believe to be more effective, but also in line with Switzerland's humanitarian tradition. A minority of peacekeeping advocates are to be found in the middle of the political spectrum, which has suffered important political losses over the last decades.

Resistance in the Military: Even if they would ultimately remain under national command, there is a certain fear of loss of control if Swiss troops are placed under a UN command structure, especially with regard to the use of force. But more importantly, even though many militia and professional soldiers and officers see the benefits of UN peacekeeping, the participation in peace operations can be detrimental to their military career, for an international security outlook is viewed with suspicion by some in the highest echelons of the Ministry of Defence.

Legal obstacles: There are no legal obstacles to the participation of Swiss troops in UN peacekeeping operations *per se*. But according to the military law, members of the Swiss Armed Forces are not allowed to actively take part in peace enforcement and are armed for self-defence only (if at all).

Part 5: Current Challenges and Issues

Switzerland's contributions have settled at around 270 troops in total across different missions over the past years – in spite of declarations of intent by the government to double the peacekeeping contingent to 500 troops. No legal or structural adjustments for a quantitative increase have been initiated to date. In its most recent report on the Swiss Armed Forces (2010), the Federal government merely notes that the envisaged enlargement has

failed to materialize. In its [Security Policy Report](#) of the same year, the Federal government advocates for a qualitative increase in peacekeeping contributions and greater focus on air transport, ground transport and logistics and high-quality niche capabilities. An intermediate defense policy (the so-called “[Development Step 2008/11](#)”) has identified the support to domestic civil authorities as the most likely deployment scenario for the Swiss Armed Forces. As the security policy debate in Switzerland becomes more inward-looking again, company-size contributions to military peacekeeping, beyond the current engagement in Kosovo, look highly uncertain.

Swiss engagement in Kosovo came about through a specific constellation of leadership and opportunity in domestic politics, humanitarian motives as well as security- and migration-related rationales. Swiss voters were generally supportive of the mission, the Swiss army welcomed the opportunity to gain experience in a multinational operation, the effort was appreciated by partner states and sufficient volunteers for the mission were found in the Swiss militia system. Stability in Kosovo was in Switzerland’s interest not least because of its relative geographic proximity and a substantial influx of refugees from the region to Switzerland. The then Defense Minister saw an opportunity to put the policy of “Security through Cooperation,” which was under discussion at the time, into practice. Absent such confluence of interests, niche contributions in the form of high-value assets and experts (e.g. transport, SSR/DD&R) are more likely to garner domestic political support than the deployment of troop contingents. Yet in terms of international recognition, expert contributions have considerably lower visibility.

Decision-making on Swiss peacekeeping is strongly shaped by domestic political debates on the future of the armed forces and the appropriate level of international engagement in light of Switzerland’s neutral status. At current, there appears to be limited interest in military peacekeeping within the defense and foreign affairs ministries and scant consensus among political parties over the role of the armed forces. External factors, such as the financial crisis, the politics of peacekeeping or doctrinal developments within the UN have relatively little impact on the debate. It remains to be seen whether migration – and security-related arguments – which have prompted a greater focus among EU countries on capacity-building, rule of law and SSR activities, for instance on the African continent – will influence policy in Switzerland.

Part 6: Key Champions and Opponents

In the early 1990s and 2000s, the Swiss population was called to vote on UN peacekeeping and the arming of its peacekeepers respectively. Successive defense ministers promoted an international outlook for the Swiss Armed Forces. Today, however, Switzerland’s participation in UN peace operations does not figure prominently on the political agenda. As stated above, the current defense minister and his party, the Swiss People’s Party, are generally opposed to international military commitments. Nevertheless, the Armed Forces Staff’s International Relations Section tries to expand Switzerland’s UN peacekeeping contributions. The armed forces possess with [SWISSINT](#) a UN and NATO certified training centre, which offers domestic and international courses, especially for military observers. This training and expertise is complemented by the so-called Geneva centres: the Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces ([DCAF](#)), the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining ([GICHD](#)), and the Geneva Centre for Security Policy ([GCSP](#)). The MoD sponsored Center for Security Studies ([CSS](#)) at ETH Zurich sporadically researches and publishes on issues related to peacekeeping.

Part 7: Capabilities and Caveats

The Swiss Armed Forces have limited but high quality capabilities in logistics, engineering and transport. The Swiss Armed Forces are organized on the basis of a militia principle, wherein all male citizens found suitable for service undergo initial training at the age of 18 and return to confirm and deepen their skills at regular intervals. The professional (civilian) background of Swiss militia soldiers and officers is an asset in these enabling roles. The same holds true for SSR and Rule of Law functions, which benefit from civilian competencies and expertise. The Swiss militia system can also be an advantage in capacity-building, for it provides the ability to quickly turn civilians into soldiers. More specifically, as a partly Francophone country, Switzerland could provide French-speaking soldiers and officers. The Swiss Armed Forces are also well equipped. Yet much of their military hardware is unsuitable for extra-European and, especially, desert and tropical conditions. There is also a downside to the militia system, which strongly limits the active personnel reservoir for peacekeeping, and other long-term deployments. Finally, military peacekeeping has not been a decisive factor in the structural development of the armed forces. The organizational and logistical structures are not sufficiently geared towards long-lasting and large operations abroad.

Part 8: Further Reading

[Security Policy Report 2010](#) presented by the Swiss Federal Council to Parliament (in French, also available in [German](#)).

[Report on the Swiss Armed Forces, 2010](#) adopted by the Swiss Federal Council (in French, also available in [German](#)).

Daniel Möckli and Valentin Misteli, “Swiss Military Operations Abroad,” [CSS Analysis no. 67](#) (2010), *Center for Security Studies*, ETH Zurich.

Marco Wyss, “[Is Kosovo the Beginning and the End? Swiss Military Peacekeeping](#)”, *Baltic Security and Defence Review* 13:1 (2011): 51-70.

Marco Wyss, “[Peacekeeping in Afrika und die militärische Friedensförderung der Schweiz](#)”, in Wenger, Andreas and Daniel Trachsler (eds.), *Bulletin 2012 zur Schweizerischen Sicherheitspolitik* (Zurich: Center for Security Studies, ETH, 2012), pp.9-37.

[Swiss Peace Supporter](#): Journal on Swiss contributions to international peace support published by the Swiss Federal Department of Defence, Civil Protection and Sport (since 1999).

Notes

¹ Unless otherwise stated, data is drawn from IISS, *The Military Balance 2012* (London: IISS/Routledge, 2012).

² The Swiss Ministry of Defense reports the number of active forces as [154'376 for 2012](#). .

³ 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 2012*.