

# U.S. Debt to the United Nations

United States debt to the United Nations, in both the regular and peacekeeping budgets, exceeded \$1.5 billion at the start of 2009. After passage of the 2009 appropriations bills, U.S. debt for peacekeeping alone was over \$1.3 billion. These arrears make the United States the largest debtor to the United Nations and threaten its ability to leverage the international community toward achieving key U.S. national security priorities.

## Current U.S. Debt to the United Nations (in millions)

Budget Category	Contested Arrears	Uncontested Arrears	FY 2009 Shortfalls	Total Debt <sup>2</sup>
UN Peacekeeping (CIPA)	\$461	\$174 <sup>1</sup>	\$669	\$1,304
UN Regular Budget	\$169	\$88	\$0	\$257
<b>Totals</b>	<b>\$630</b>	<b>\$262</b>	<b>\$669</b>	<b>\$1,561</b>

<sup>1</sup> Accumulated arrears due to legislative cap of 25% on contributions to UN peacekeeping from 2005 - present.

<sup>2</sup> Based on Fiscal Year 2009 Omnibus Appropriation.

## UN Peacekeeping

The UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) has more than 100,000 troops and personnel, almost none of which are from the United States, deployed to 16 peacekeeping missions, making it the second-largest deployed military in the world. It directly affects the lives of more than 200 million people and indirectly affects over one billion people, for a total cost for July 2008 to June 2009 of \$7 billion—of which the United States pays 26%. The U.S. assessed contributions to UN peacekeeping operations are funded through the State Department’s Contributions to International Peacekeeping Activities (CIPA) account.

In 1999, Congress placed a 25% legislative cap on U.S. contributions to UN peacekeeping payments. Until 2005, Congress would temporarily lift the cap allowing the United States to pay its assessments in full and prevent new arrearages from accruing. However, between 2005 and 2008, Congress did not lift the cap, resulting in an additional \$174 million in unpaid bills.

Failure to fulfill our obligations means that peacekeeping missions must go without necessary resources and that the countries we rely on to deploy soldiers—key U.S. allies such as India, Pakistan, and Brazil—are not compensated for their efforts as they have been promised. In addition to

undermining U.S. credibility, this endangers the fundamental viability of critical missions in places like Darfur, Haiti, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and makes countries less willing to contribute personnel and equipment to future missions.

## **UN Regular Budget and Contributions to International Organizations**

The UN regular budget finances the General Assembly, the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council, the International Court of Justice, and the Secretariat. In December 2007, the UN General Assembly approved its biennium budget for the 2008/2009 period for a total of \$2.43 billion each year, of which the United States owes 22%.

The U.S. assessed contribution to the UN regular budget is included—along with 43 other UN-system, regional, and non-UN organizations—in the State Department’s Contributions to International Organizations (CIO) account. Due to inadequate budget requests, the United States is currently \$88 million in debt to the United Nations. The United States has another \$167 million in previous arrears to the United Nations because of policy restrictions and unilateral withholdings. In addition, the United States began this year short in meeting its commitments to the other treaty-based international organizations that it belongs to, including the International Atomic Energy Agency, the World Health Organization, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. These arrears are above and beyond the United States’ counterproductive practice of paying its assessments to these organizations a year or more late.

## **Deferred Payments to International Organizations**

The United States began deferring payments to some international organizations back in the 1980s with the adoption of a budgetary mechanism (known as the Stockman provision) to garner one-time budgetary savings by deferring dues payments by nine months—into the next fiscal year. Ten international organizations were put onto a permanent deferred payment status, meaning that even though they might issue assessments on January 1, the United States would deliberately not pay until after October 1. Because of recent budgetary shortfalls in the CIO account, the United States has extended and expanded payment deferrals to virtually every major treaty organization to which it belongs.

The late payment of U.S. dues forces the United Nations and other international organizations to engage in budgetary practices that are neither sound nor responsible, leaving these organizations open to criticism of their financial management.

In order to pay its assessments on time, Congress—working with the Administration—should begin to lay the groundwork to catch up on \$1.3 billion in timing differentials in the CIO account by resynchronizing U.S. payments with international organizations’ billing cycles. Short-changing our obligations to these organizations undercuts our foreign policy goals, undermines our reputation, and undermines global burden sharing—even as the United States is increasingly relying on international organizations to further our security interests globally.

## Steps toward Repaying our Debt

- **Current Debt:** Congress should address *current* U.S. shortfalls and arrears to UN peacekeeping in the CIPA account, which stand at \$884 million, and to the UN regular budget, which currently stand at \$88 million.
- **‘Contested Arrears’:** The incoming Administration, working with Congress, should devise a plan for eliminating the debt owed to the United Nations from prior to 1999. The United States has no intentions of repaying this debt but it will remain in UN records until a compromise is made.
- **Peacekeeping Cap:** Congress should permanently lift the 25% peacekeeping cap, which could be done through the State Department Authorization bill or the State, Foreign Operations Appropriations bill. This is a unilateral withholding that only serves to increase our overall debt.
- **Meeting our Commitments:** Congress should fully pay its anticipated UN peacekeeping assessments for all 16 peacekeeping missions in FY 2010 on time, in full, and without preconditions. The United States supports UN peacekeeping because it serves vital U.S. national interests by working to maintain peace and lay the groundwork for stability in places like Darfur, Lebanon, and Haiti. And UN peacekeeping amplifies American reach throughout the world for a fraction of what it would cost U.S. forces to do alone and without sacrificing American lives.
- **Resynchronization:** In planning for FY 2010, Congress and the U.S. Administration should work together to lay the groundwork for catching the United States up on \$1.3 billion in timing differentials in the CIO account in order to resynchronize U.S. payments with international organizations’ billing cycles.