# Under US pressure, UN agrees deep cuts to peacekeeping

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<https://www.yahoo.com/amphtml/news/deal-reached-cuts-un-peacekeeping-diplomat-140629913.html>

United Nations (United States) (AFP) - A tentative deal to cut nearly $600 million from the UN peacekeeping budget was reached on Wednesday, capping weeks of tough negotiations over US demands for a sharp reduction in costs, UN diplomats said.

Under the deal agreed by a budget committee of the General Assembly, the United Nations will spend $7.3 billion on peacekeeping in the coming year, down from the current $7.87 billion -- roughly a seven percent cut -- according to diplomats familiar with the negotiations.

The United States, the biggest financial contributor to UN peacekeeping, had sought a nearly $1 billion cut to the bill and the European Union had also pushed for savings to bring costs down to $7.3 billion.

Hardest hit by the cuts will be the UN missions in Sudan's troubled region of Darfur and in the Democratic Republic of Congo, the two costliest operations with budgets that run over $1 billion.

The closure of the UN mission in Haiti in October will also generate savings.

A Security Council diplomat who spoke on condition of anonymity said however there will be "cuts across the board" in the 13 missions as a result of US pressure.

But French Ambassador Francois Delattre said the cuts will allow the missions to continue their peacekeeping work "while being more efficient."

"The savings proposed in the budget have been carefully targeted," Delattre told AFP.

Washington pays 28.5 percent of the peacekeeping budget and 22 percent of the UN's core budget of $5.4 billion.

US Ambassador Nikki Haley wants to bring the US share of the peacekeeping budget down to 25 percent. China, Japan, Germany and France are the four biggest peacekeeping financial backers after the United States.

The budget deal falls short of what UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres was seeking. He had put forward a budget of $7.97 billion for the year which runs from July 1 to June 30, 2018.

It also drops below the budget proposal of African countries which had sought $7.7 billion.

The deal is expected to be approved by the UN General Assembly on Friday.

- Big cuts to Darfur mission -

The Security Council is expected to vote as early as Thursday on significant cuts to the 17,000-strong joint African Union-UN mission in Darfur known as UNAMID.

Britain on Wednesday circulated a draft resolution that provides for a two-stage drawdown over the next 12 months, in line with the recommendations of a joint AU-UN report released last month.

The measure would cut UNAMID force levels to reach 8,735 troops and 2,500 police by June 2018, a 44 percent cut in military personnel and nearly 30 percent in police, according to the draft text obtained by AFP.

The drawdown however could be reviewed if the Sudanese government fails to ensure protection in those areas from where the peacekeepers will withdraw.

Under the proposed measure, Guterres will report to the council after six months on whether "conditions on the ground remain conducive to further reductions."

The draft resolution welcomes a "reduction in military confrontations between government forces and rebel groups," but rights groups maintain that the conflict in Darfur is far from over.

Human Rights Watch has criticized the proposed cuts as "misguided," saying civilians in Darfur still need protection.

Darfur has been engulfed in conflict since 2003, when ethnic minority insurgents mounted a rebellion against President Omar al-Bashir, complaining that his Arab-dominated government was marginalizing the region.

The council is expected to vote this week on the UN mission in Mali, but that peace operation is not expected to face drastic cuts.