

Scholar's findings suggest illness-related fatalities are on the rise in U.N. peacekeeping

December 9 2016, by Hilary Hurd Anyaso

Illness-related fatalities among U.N. peacekeepers are growing at a significant rate, despite the fact that overall U.N. fatalities are not substantively on the rise, according to new Northwestern University research.

A recently published report with the International Peace Institute analyzes trends in U.N. peacekeeping fatalities using a new dataset compiled by the U.N. Department of Peacekeeping Operations.

As a result of the new data employed and methodological innovations, this report constitutes the most detailed study of U.N. [fatality](#) trends to date.

"Many analysts think fatalities among U.N. peacekeepers are on the rise because they get increasingly deployed to quite dangerous places, for example, Mali, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Sudan," said political scientist and author of the report Marina E. Henke. "Using sophisticated statistical methods, I find, however, that's not exactly the case. My research suggests instead that overall U.N. fatalities are not increasing."

However, Henke, assistant professor of political science in the Weinberg College of Arts and Sciences at Northwestern, said this decline does not equally apply to all types of U.N. fatalities.

"While fatality numbers and ratios due to accidents and malicious acts are decreasing, the same cannot be said for illness-related fatality

numbers and ratios," she said. "There is strong evidence that U.N. fatalities due to illness are on the rise. U.N. fatality ratios due to illness are also trending upward, though the increase is not statistically significant. Increasingly, troops, police and military observers die due to illness-related causes while serving in U.N. missions."

The U.N. does not provide any data on the specific illnesses contributing to the rise in fatalities. Henke said that's one of the objectives of publishing the report—to get the U.N. to release such data.

The dataset accounts for monthly U.N. fatalities by cause of fatality (accident, malicious act, illness and other causes), nationality of the deceased and U.N. personnel type of the deceased for each U.N. operation worldwide from 1948 to June 2015.

Despite limitations, Henke said the new dataset allows for reducing U.N. fatalities and therefore, strengthening the overall effectiveness of U.N. peacekeeping operations, but she notes that further research is needed to adequately examine whether U.N. peacekeeping missions have become more dangerous in recent years.

Due to medical advances, many wounded U.N. peacekeepers are able to survive. As a result, to assess the evolution of U.N. peacekeeping risks, data on U.N. attacks and injuries also needs to be taken into account. However, the U.N. has not published such data as of yet.

More information: "Has UN Peacekeeping Become More Deadly? Analyzing Trends in UN Fatalities." [www.ipinst.org/2016/12/has-un- ...nds-in-un-fatalities](http://www.ipinst.org/2016/12/has-un-...nds-in-un-fatalities)

Provided by Northwestern University

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