

# Corruption fills United Nations

By Neil Feldman  
Staff Reporter

Editor's note: This analysis is part one of two about the United Nations.

The United Nations' immense bureaucracy, a topic most sources tend to veer around, has become riddled with corruption.

While the United Nations, like all major international governmental organizations, has always had to confront corruption, its degree was previously controlled or suppressed.

But its impact is now grand, and the organization appears to be stumbling over its own feet.

Former Under Secretary General Brian Urquhart noted recently that the corruption associated with the United Nations was "an enormous ramshackle structure."

Although the list is extensive, some of the more significant areas of corruption include:

- overspending on travel, such as the Law of the Sea talks in Jamaica, which produced very little other than a rest from New York's hustle and bustle.

- an enormous budget for data publications that are issued in tremendous volumes and are largely out-of-date.

- internal negotiations that last for long periods of time, cost money and don't normally amount to much, such as debating whether to install a "war room" at U.N. headquarters.

As Marrack Goulding, a U.N. official, put it, the United Nations is "trying to prevent wars, not make them." The "war room" was not installed, but critics of the system had little difficulties slamming the organization for wasting so much time during a period when regional crises were reigning abroad.

- Total unpaid peacekeeping dues now stand at \$642 million, and the United States owes \$290 million of that.

Broken promises by member states are very common, but the General Assembly never seems

to get especially concerned. David Hendrickson, an international affairs expert and a critic of the United Nations, recently suggested that a specially appointed commission above the General Assembly should be formed to ensure that the money was paid. Hendrickson says he believes financial difficulties will put a dent in the United Nations' future.

The list goes on and on, and the matters range from useless offices around the world, which do nothing but expand the United Nations' global presence, to mismanaged relief officials in Africa.

Rakiya Omaar, an African human rights official, expressed a great deal of anger toward the United Nations during the zenith of Somalia's cacophony.

"I think there's a great deal of incompetence, there's a lot of corruption, and there's no accountability," Omaar said.

Another form of corruption exists with officials of various U.N. agencies.

According to a recent report, officials of different agencies in Ethiopia, Somalia, Sudan, Zaire, Angola and Iran have used an array of schemes to consume large amounts of U.N. money.

Stipulating unrealistic monetary exchange rates for personnel and grossly exaggerating refugee problems to bring in more food and supplies than necessary were listed as two of the more common schemes.

A Tanzanian U.N. official, recently quoted in the Washington Post, asserted that such corruption did not exist.

"That's an absolute lie," the official said.

But critics of the system, many of whom are former U.N. employees, claim it is preposterous to say that corruption is not a serious problem.

One critic pointed to a development agency in Nairobi, Kenya, which had to write off at least \$368,000 stolen by an African employee over a two-year span. The money was taken through a scheme involving payments to phony companies for items that were never delivered.

## Percent of the U.N. budget paid by various countries

U.S.	25.0%	Canada	3.1%
Other	18.9	Spain	2.0
Japan	12.5	Brazil	1.6
Russia	9.4	Netherlands	1.5
Germany	8.9	Austria	1.5
France	6.0	Ukraine	1.2
Britain	5.0	Belgium	1.1
Italy	4.3	Sweden	1.1



Brian Shellito/DN

## Profile

Continued from Page 1

Leung said that if he heard about a culture and found it interesting, he would try to find out more about it. But wanting to go someplace and actually having the ability to reach it, he said, were two different things. He said tour guides didn't know how to get to all remote areas, so getting information could be tough. The best way to go about it is to head out and get directions along the way, he said.

He said a trip to Ecuador in 1991 was one of his favorite and most eventful adventures.

Leung said the first thing he noticed was the natives' clothing. The toddlers ran around bottomless or without any clothes at all, he said, and adults' clothing indicated their caste.

Many of the natives he met in Ecuador were "reformed" headhunters. He said, however, that because many of the cultures were so remote, headhunting laws were almost impossible to enforce. It's easy for a village not to adhere to the laws.

Leung said when he got to his first village in Ecuador, he was disappointed "because the owner of the boat didn't want to go any farther because he didn't feel comfortable or safe to do that."

Leung said he had heard a story about a Catholic bishop visiting a village only 25 miles away from his location. He said the instant the helicopter dropped off the bishop, he was killed by the headhunters in the village.

"You just don't kill for the head," he said, "you also eat the guy."

Leung said he didn't fear being killed. He joked that he was not worth the trouble.

"They'd try to get one with more meat than me."

However, Leung said, "It's easy to say that now in an office in Lincoln, Ne-

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— Leung  
astronomy professor

braska. But when you're in a certain area, you're aware that you're very mortal."

Leung said one group of natives in Ecuador wanted his gasoline. Leung tried to explain that his group needed the gas to make the 300-kilometer trip back to his camp.

The natives were not interested in his story, and when his group realized they were outnumbered, they gave the natives the gas.

Luckily, Leung said, they kept enough gas to make it back.


Headhunters weren't the only problem he encountered, Leung said. Disease is a serious problem, one that requires Leung to carry two bags of medicine on all trips.

This May, Leung said he was planning to go to Thailand to work on a National Science Foundation research project. After his work is completed, he said he planned to do some exploration in nearby Cambodia.

Leung said the many diverse cultures he had visited had affected his outlook on life and made him view his own culture differently.

For instance, he said, while the headhunters of Ecuador might kill once in a while, many more people are being slaughtered in former Yugoslavia.

"In many senses, a lot of these societies and cultures are a lot more civilized than any of the industrial world's cultures," he said. "At least they don't kill people massively."



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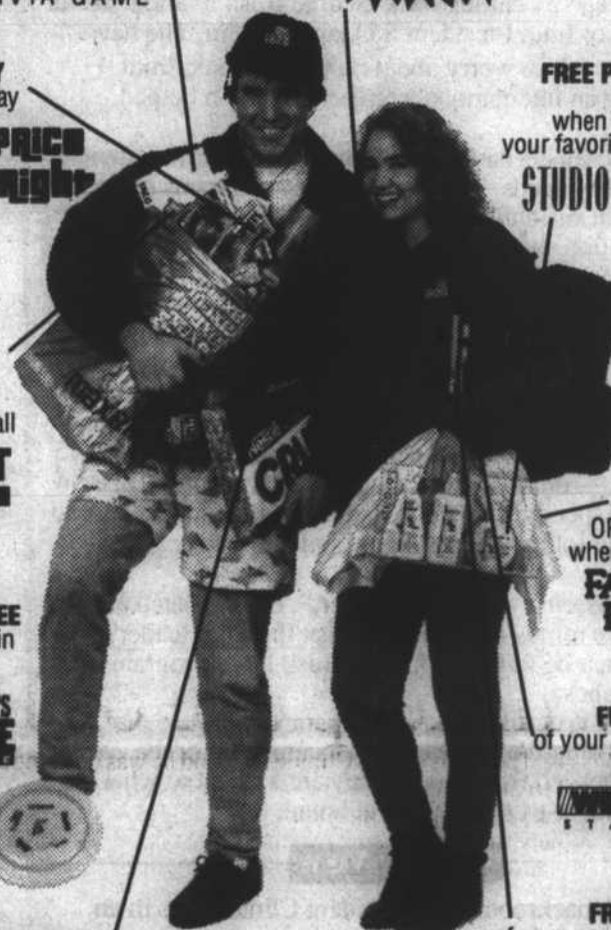
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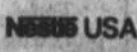


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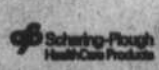
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