

STAFF SAFETY AND SECURITY MANAGEMENT

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The purpose of this note is to update the Standing Committee on current efforts that UNHCR has taken – and plans to take – in order to achieve its humanitarian mission, while meeting its obligation to ensure staff safety through a professional security management approach within the context of the United Nations and the global security environment.

II. The 2005-2006 SECURITY REFORM

2. In 2004, the High Commissioner requested a comprehensive review of UNHCR's security management and security policy in light of the changing global security context and specific attacks against United Nations operations. The study revealed that UNHCR had tried to respond actively to the changing security environment, but that more could be done to provide staff with increased security knowledge and skills.

3. In particular, the review indicated there was a need to return "ownership" of security management to UNHCR's line leadership. This implies:

- selection of the right managers for leadership roles in higher risk locations; and
- providing those leaders with the skills and resources to integrate security obligations into the management of operations.

4. The process resulted in a comprehensive report (Steering Committee on Security Policy and Implementation) that concluded UNHCR could and should do more to integrate security into its management and culture. A number of recommendations were made and in January 2005 UNHCR launched a two-year work plan¹ with the goal of improving its security policy and management.

III. PROGRESS TO DATE

5. As with any institutional change process, progress is rarely straightforward. To date, our approach has been to reconcile the need for a stronger security management system with the demands of the overall programmes into which the security management system is embedded.

¹ The Work Plan will be issued separately.

6. The report of the Steering Committee on Security Policy and Implementation made over 80 recommendations, of which at least half had minimal or no direct cost implications (from creating a more streamlined Field Safety Section at Headquarters to rewriting policies). However, the Steering Committee recognized that these measures alone were only part of the solution. This is why it prioritized training among the first tier of urgent needs, particularly for managers in high-threat duty stations, and consequently this is where much of our focus has been in 2005.

A. Training and capacity building

7. To date, training has focused on three levels: substantive workshops for Representatives, week-long trainings for Field Safety Advisors (FSAs) and short, opportunity-based simulations for Headquarters-based staff.

8. During this reporting period, UNHCR's Emergency and Security Service (ESS) held two Field Safety Adviser Workshops for UNHCR FSAs from around the world. The workshops' objectives were to define and instil a strong security culture among UNHCR FSAs – combining the highest standards of technical expertise with the operational and humanitarian approach of UNHCR and ESS – and to raise professional skills in targeted areas.

9. The workshops concentrated on developing skills, approaches and attitudes to enable FSAs to maximize their effectiveness in UNHCR's operational humanitarian environment, making them more effective and understood in interaction with management and staff. In short, the goal was to encourage FSAs to view their role as being "agents of change" in bringing about the culture of security envisioned in the Security Report of September 2004.

10. In September, November and December, UNHCR and the eCentre² will be conducting workshops specifically designed to enable line managers to use security risk management in the planning of humanitarian operations. In addition to imparting knowledge and skills, these workshops will simulate stressful situations as realistically as possible. This is a resource-intensive approach, but the costs need to be seen in context and judged against the expenses currently incurred in material and specialist support.

11. In an organization that deploys staff to high-threat duty stations, training is an essential part of a balanced strategy to manage risk. Training both line managers and security professionals to prepare for and manage risk has a cascade effect: it impacts, directly or indirectly, on the majority of our staff working in high-threat duty stations.

12. This does not mean that security training can substitute for hardening measures like those envisioned in MOSS, but lack of training would result in some of the investment in physical measures going to waste. Protective measures will still be needed, so UNHCR is working to ensure our limited financial resources are deployed in areas with the most significant needs.

² Regional Centre for Emergency Training in International Humanitarian Response.

B. Organizational resources

13. In early 2005, UNHCR began an assessment of the status of MOSS implementation in order to identify critical unmet security gaps. This summer the Office conducted an analysis based on the responses to the security questionnaire. This world-wide MOSS-compliance status report reveals that the majority of UNHCR offices located in Phase III and higher areas are generally covered with a few notable exceptions.³

14. While it is now a distinct possibility that capital-based United Nations offices in developed countries are at greater risk of being targeted by extremists, UNHCR believes that the main share of its limited resources must be allocated to field locations at the heart of the Office's work. To this end, the 2005 regional budgetary allocations have been distributed to operations with the most significant vulnerabilities. The survey substantiates the need for some \$6.5 million in 2006, but this figure does not include security support for major operations, such as Sudan, plans for which are still evolving or are subject to potential developments outside UNHCR's control. On the basis of trends and experience the Office's current estimate is that the total security requirement for 2006 could exceed \$10 million.

15. The survey has also highlighted a need for UNHCR to develop:

- improved systems for identifying, and monitoring the implementation of, physical security measures in the Field, in order to better allocate and prioritize resources;
- "Security Multipliers" which will allow UNHCR to make more effective use of the limited resources available (for example, security training for line managers as an investment in reduced future expenditure).

C. Headquarters security issues

16. Work in conjunction with the Swiss authorities and the United Nations Office at Geneva continues. Blast-resistant filming of UNHCR's offices in Geneva will be completed before the end of 2005.

17. The Swiss authorities began to install the new physical security measures around UNHCR's main office in rue de Montbrillant (MBT) in early July 2005 and the work will continue through October. The measures include: the installation of security bollards, tree planters and vehicle access barriers around the perimeter of the building, construction of a plexiglass wall across the fountain behind the cafeteria and limitation of vehicle access to the Coop Plaza. The main vehicle access to the front of the building and the garage will be moved to where the exit of the VIP parking on the rue de Montbrillant slip road is currently situated. The exit onto the rue de Montbrillant will be closed off and all vehicles will exit onto the avenue de France. Finally, the avenue de France entrance to the garage will be reserved exclusively for deliveries.

³ Sudan and other large, underfunded or unanticipated emergencies with security risks.

18. UNHCR had intended to incorporate the Global ID project in the renewal of its access control systems (badges), particularly for its offices on chemin Louis Dunant (VNG) where the system is antiquated. Unfortunately, this project has come to a halt and United Nations auditors advise that its implementation has been pushed back several years. Discussions are under way with the landlord for the MBT building to cooperate in the replacement of the VNG access control and to upgrade the system in MBT. The project will provide MBT and VNG with the same centrally controlled system.

D. Policy and operational guidance

19. UNHCR believes that one of the most long-lasting and effective means of ensuring the mainstreaming of security concerns is to integrate these into existing systems and to develop policy and guidance.

20. Security considerations were included in the 2006 Country Operations Plan (COP) process. As UNHCR seeks to deliver humanitarian services to the maximum extent possible under prevailing conditions, it was essential that all precautions be fully integrated into the details of the specific plan for the operation. As such, this incorporation was conducted with a particular emphasis on the security considerations of UNHCR programmes such as reintegration operations, camp management, registration exercises and asylum interviews as well as general MOSS compliance. This work was done in close consultation with the Bureaux and was regarded as a very positive undertaking by the desks as well as the Field Safety Section (FSS). Since the COP undertaking, ESS has noted an increase in the number and frequency of security discussions taking place between and among the Bureaux and FSS.

21. UNHCR is now promoting the inclusion of a “Programme Assessment” element into the Security Risk Model (SRM). The Office has elaborated on the existing security risk management model, and proposes some further developments to the programme assessment component of the existing model. Refinement of the SRM would be particularly welcome to the humanitarian agencies, which have to balance and reconcile the demands to address “humanitarian imperatives” with the necessity of managing the risks to staff and beneficiaries. As well as reconciling these conflicting demands, planning needs to factor in the (positive or negative) impacts which humanitarian activities have on security situations. Greater emphasis on the integration of programme and security management is consistent with the mission of the United Nations’ Security Management System in order to enable United Nations operations to be conducted with due regard for staff safety.

E. Partnership with the United Nations Security System

22. UNHCR is pleased to report that this year has been marked by strong and consistent engagement with the Department of Safety and Security (DSS).⁴ DSS was formally launched in January 2005 under the leadership of Under-Secretary-General Veness, who is working closely with United Nations operational agencies, funds and programmes and who has stressed DSS’ role as one of enabling the effective and efficient conduct of United Nations activities whilst ensuring the security and safety and well-being of staff.⁵

⁴ Resolution A/RES/59/276 (XI) adopted on 23 December 2004, approved the creation of the Department of Safety and Security (DSS). The new department unifies the existing security structures within the United Nations, including the Office of the United Nations Security Coordinator (UNSECOORD), the United Nations Safety and Security Services, and the civilian security component of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations.

⁵ Report on Progress to Designated Officials from Sir David Veness, 5 July 2005.

23. Under-Secretary-General Veness has also noted that there is no realistic prospect of eliminating risk from the activities of the United Nations: the task is to achieve reasonable balance. UNHCR finds this realistic assessment useful and complementary to its own work to enhance operational ability in order to deliver on its mandate in some of the most demanding locations in the world. UNHCR contributed to the inter-agency agreement on a revised and updated (security) accountability framework.⁶ This was the main outcome of the Inter-Agency Security Management Network (IASMN) meeting in April 2005.

24. Agencies, funds and programmes agree that agency heads must remain responsible for the security of their own staff. DSS concurs that an official responsible for security exists in each agency headquarters both as an advisor to the head and as a focal point within the United Nations security management system. There is growing acceptance that specialized agencies need to lead the development of security doctrine related to their own agency's operational role. Finally, UNHCR will participate in the upcoming New York-based interview process for the recruitment of over 200 new DSS field staff. While economies of scale are expected once an expanded DSS presence is established in country operations, UNHCR doubts any significant savings will be realized until 2007.

IV. NEXT STEPS

25. As with any working document, the Security Work Plan will adjust to changes in the internal and external environment. After seven months of implementing the Security Work Plan and making good progress, future efforts will be focused on areas of greatest influence and impact. As such, the focus will continue on training, MOSS compliance and policy integration.

26. In the latter part of 2005, training will focus on Heads of Offices who frequently work in the most remote duty stations and are often assigned by the Designated Official to undertake area security responsibilities.

27. ESS plans to produce a short, practical FAQ (frequently asked questions) booklet to aid United Nations staff and leaders with fundamental knowledge on security issues (for instance: What is the role of the Representative in the Security Management Team? and How do UNHCR and DSS work together?).

IV. CONCLUSION

28. UNHCR will strive to ensure the Work Plan is not a one-off project but rather a paradigm shift in direction for the management of security within the humanitarian and UNHCR-specific context. There will continue to be a significant amount of work and development beyond the "shelf-life" of the Work Plan. UNHCR is committed to pursuing this course indefinitely and trusts that support will be forthcoming from its partners when needed.

⁶ The new accountability framework will be presented to the High Level Committee on Management on 10-11 October 2005.

29. UNHCR expects that this process will result in the following:

- a planning and management capacity which enables UNHCR to maximize the delivery of humanitarian assistance in potentially hazardous environments without exposing staff to an unacceptable, unnecessary or unforeseen level of risk;
- a process which raises security management to levels similar to protection or gender issues within UNHCR, recognizing it as a fundamental element underpinning all operations;
- a comprehensive approach which considers the security implications in all aspects of UNHCR's operational planning, and from the earliest stages;
- a dynamic process which enables leaders and staff continuously to re-evaluate and adjust the conduct of operations in the light of changing security environments; and,
- a holistic approach and philosophy which assists managers and staff to *think through* their planning in an iterative manner, producing a balanced reconciliation between humanitarian objectives and essential security.